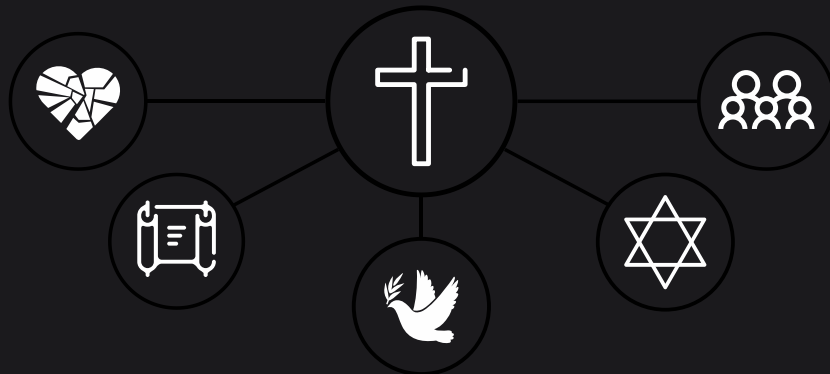




ROMANS AND THE FUTURE GOSPEL

ROMANS 1-7



Title: Romans and the Future Gospel

Text: Romans 9:1-13

Date: April 16, 2023

Main Idea: All those who are part of Israel, by faith, are the true Israel.

Lecture Tip: If your style is largely lecture style, you can use the headings and questions to make your main points for the text. Then as you teach, you could follow-up with application and apply questions sprinkled into the explanation of the text in your teaching.

Personal Study Guide

READ ROMANS 9:1-13

The next three chapters (9-11) are all about Israel. Remember, this is written to Jews and Gentiles. It's written to the church in Rome, that is filled with both Jews and Gentiles, so the question of Israel is an important and big one. In these next 3 chapters, Paul is answering the question "so what about the Jews?"

Highlight – What stands out?

1. Who is Paul talking about in Romans 9:1-13? Remember who is audience is in Romans.
2. Paul mentions a lot of Old Testament stories and references. Who are all the characters/bible stories listed here?
3. What is Paul's tone in this chapter? Is he angry or sad? How do you know this?
4. What theological concepts or ideas does Paul talk about in these verses?

Explain – What does this mean?

Let's dig into the Old Testament stories mentioned in Romans 9. This is the longest section of the lesson because there are a lot of Old Testament references in these verses.

Tip for Lecture Style: As you write your lesson, you can summarize these details and explain them in your lesson to your class.

| Romans verse | Old Testament Reference | Details of the Story |
|-------------------|---|----------------------|
| The Adoption | Exodus 4:22 | |
| The Glory | Exodus 40:34, 1 Sam. 4:21, 1 Kings 8:11 | |
| The Covenants | Genesis 12, 15, 17 | |
| Isaac and Abraham | Genesis 18 | |
| The Law | Exodus 19-20 and 24 | |
| Jacob and Esau | Genesis 25:19-28; 28:13-15; 32:28 | |

1. In light of what Paul says in Romans 8 about our assurance of salvation, why is it important that he bring these stories up? What is the tension between these stories and Romans 8:31-39?
2. Look at verse 6. What is at stake if we don't understand what Paul is saying here?
3. How does Paul answer the internal question about the failure of God's word?
4. Look up the word election in a bible dictionary (can be an online one). What does it say?
5. Look up the word faith in a bible dictionary. What does it say?
6. In Romans 9:11, Paul explains God's purposes in election. What is that basis?

7. Based on these verses and the Old Testament examples, what defines God's people? How do we know who represents true Israel? Look back at Romans 4 to help you answer this question.

8. Look up Hebrews 11. What do we know about the people listed in this chapter? What is the basis for their salvation? What is their character like?

Apply – How does this change me?

1. Sometimes when it feels like the Bible contradicts itself it leads to unbelief in God's word. If someone were to ask you why God's word has not failed, how would you explain it based on Paul's examples in verses 7-13?

2. One commentator says: "the true Israel comes not through ancestry, but through promise."¹ Are there ways that we trust in our own lineage or what family we come from rather than what Christ has done for us?

¹ St. Helens Bishopsgate Romans study: Read, Mark, Learn, Christian Focus Publishers, 178

3. This commentator also says: “the true Israel comes not by man’s works but by God’s choice.”² Where do you see that in this text and in the Old Testament texts? How are you tempted to trust in your own works for salvation (or even sanctification) rather than the work of God?
4. Look at verses 10-13. How does that land on you when you read “hate” and “love”.

Read this quote: “Although this is undeniably hard teaching, we should not misunderstand the language of ‘love’ and ‘hate’ (v.13). These are not emotions felt by God, but actions carried out by Him. ‘Love in this sense is synonymous with election, God’s action of stepping in to rescue his people and call them to Himself. ‘Hate’ is the opposite, i.e. not intervening but leaving us to our own destructive devices.”³ How does this help explain verses 10-13? How is it different than how we view love and hate?

Respond – What’s my next step?

1. This text is meant to comfort, not condemn. How is it a comfort to you? Think particularly about your best days as a Christian. And your worst days. How does this text level the playing field regarding earning your salvation?

² IBID, 178

³ IBID, 179

2. Think back to Paul's heart in verse 1-3? Is that your heart towards those who do not believe in Christ? Why or why not? What needs to change in your life to lead you towards Paul's response?

Teacher Tip in preparing your lesson. Try to summarize what Paul is saying in a few sentences before you read the commentary. That will help anchor your lesson, whether you're discussion style or lecture style. Then use the commentary to reinforce what you have personally learned from the text. The John Stott commentary below is a supplement to the F.F. Bruce commentary you were given in August.

Commentary: Taken from John Stott's commentary on Romans 9:1-13

Note to Group Leaders: You also have your F.F. Bruce Commentary on Romans you were given on Team Night. You can use that one, in addition to this one, to help you grasp the text. Reach out to Courtney Reissig if you need one or haven't received yours.

C. The plan of God for Jews and Gentiles

Romans 9-11

'Romans 9-11 is as full of problems as a hedgehog is full of prickles,' Dr Tom Wright has written. 'Many have given it up as a bad job, leaving Romans as a book with eight chapters of "gospel" at the beginning, four of "application" at the end, and three of puzzle in the middle.'¹ Some regard Romans 9-11 as no more than a 'parenthesis', 'excursus' or 'appendix'. Even Martyn Lloyd-Jones calls these chapters 'a kind of postscript' dealing with a specific topic,² although he fully recognizes their great importance. Others go to the opposite extreme and consider Romans 9-11 the heart of the letter, to which the remaining chapters are only introduction and conclusion. These chapters are 'the climax of Romans', writes Bishop Stendahl,³ its 'real centre of gravity'.⁴ In between these more extreme positions, most commentators recognize that, far from being a digression, Romans 9-11 are integral to the apostle's developing argument, and are 'an essential part of the letter'.⁵

¹ Wright, p. 231.

² Lloyd-Jones, vol. 8, pp. 367f.

³ Stendahl, p. 4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁵ Nygren, p. 357.

It is also almost universally acknowledged that these three chapters are concerned with relations between Jews and Gentiles, and particularly with the unique position of the Jews in God's purpose. Paul has already alluded to these topics in a number of previous passages.⁶ Now he elaborates them. But within these general parameters, on what does he concentrate? It is here that there is widespread disagreement. His focus is said by different scholars to be on God's sovereign election in relation to Jews and Gentiles (Robert Haldane), on the inclusion of the Gentiles and the exclusion of the Jews (Charles Hodge), on the place of the Jews in the fulfillment of prophecy (a contemporary evangelical preoccupation), on Jewish-Gentile solidarity in the family of God (Krister Stendahl), on whether justification by faith is compatible with the promises of God to Israel (Anders Nygren, John Ziesler), on the Christian mission to Gentiles which also includes Jews (Tom Wright), and on the vindication of God in relating his purpose and promises to present Jewish unbelief (John Murray, James Denney, D. M. Lloyd-Jones). Even those scholars who seek to identify a single major theme readily acknowledge that these chapters also contain subsidiary themes.

The dominant theme is Jewish unbelief, together with the problems which it raised. How could the privileged people of God have failed to recognize their Messiah? Since the gospel had been 'promised beforehand ... in the Holy Scriptures' (1:2; cf. 3:21), why did they not embrace it? If the good news was truly God's saving power 'first for the Jews' (1:16), why were they not the first to accept it? How could their unresponsiveness be reconciled with God's covenant and promises? How did the conversion of the Gentiles, and Paul's unique mission as apostle to the Gentiles, fit in with God's plan? And what was God's future purpose for both Jews and Gentiles? Each chapter handles a different aspect of God's relation to Israel, past, present and future:

1. Israel's fall (9:1–33): God's purpose of election
2. Israel's fault (10:1–21): God's dismay over her disobedience
3. Israel's future (11:1–32): God's long-term design
4. Doxology (11:33–36): God's wisdom and generosity

12. Israel's fall: God's purpose of election

9:1–33

Each of these three chapters (9, 10 and 11) begins with a personal statement by Paul, in which he identifies himself with the people of Israel and expresses his profound concern for them. To him Israel's unbelief is far more than an

⁶ *E.g.* 1:16; 2:9f.; 17ff.; 3:1ff., 29ff.; 4:1ff.; 5:20; 6:14f.; 7:1ff.; 8:2ff.

intellectual problem. He writes of the sorrow and anguish he feels over them (9:1ff.), of his prayerful longing for their salvation (10:1), and of his conviction that God has not rejected them (11:1f.).

It may be helpful to sum up the argument of chapter 9. Paul begins by confessing that Jewish unbelief causes him not only anguish of heart (1–3), but also perplexity of mind as he asks himself how the people of Israel with their eight unique privileges could have rejected their own Messiah (4–5). How can their apostasy be explained? Paul's questions and answers proceed consecutively.

First, is it that *God's word has failed* (6a)? No, God has kept his promise, which was addressed, however, not to all Israel but to true, spiritual Israel (6b) whom he had called according to his own 'purpose in election' (11–12).

Secondly, *is God not unjust* to exercise his sovereign choices (14)? No. To Moses he stressed his mercy (15), and to Pharaoh his power in judgment (17). But it is not unjust either to show mercy to the undeserving or to harden those who harden themselves (18). Both mercy and judgment are fully compatible with justice.

Thirdly, *why then does God still blame us?* (19). Paul's threefold response to this question uncovers the misunderstandings of God which it implies. (a) God has the right of a potter to shape his clay, and we have no right to challenge him (20–21). (b) God must reveal himself as he is, making known his wrath and his glory (22–23). (c) God has foretold in Scripture both the inclusion of the Gentiles and the exclusion of Israel except for a remnant (24–29).

Fourthly, *what then shall we say* in conclusion (30)? The explanation of the church's composition (a Gentile majority and a Jewish remnant) is that the Gentiles believed in Jesus whereas the majority of Israel stumbled over him, the stone God had laid (30–33). Thus the acceptance of the Gentiles is attributed to the sovereign mercy of God, and the rejection of Israel to their own rebellion.

Paul begins with a strong threefold affirmation, intended to put his sincerity beyond question and to persuade his readers to believe him. First, *I speak the truth in Christ*. He is conscious of his relationship to Christ and of Christ's presence with him as he writes. Secondly, as a negative counterpart, *I am not lying*, or even exaggerating. Thirdly, *my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit* (1). He knows that the human conscience is fallible and culturally conditioned, but he claims that his is illumined by the Spirit of truth himself.

What, then, is this truth which he asserts with such force? It concerns his continuing love for his people Israel, who have rejected Christ. They cause him *great sorrow and unceasing anguish of heart* (2). He goes on to call them his *brothers* and those of his *own race*. For membership of the Christian brotherhood and of God's 'holy nation' does not cancel our natural ties of family and nationality. *I could wish*, he continues, *that for their sake I myself were cursed (anathema) and cut off from Christ* (3). Paul is not literally expressing this wish, since he has just stated his conviction that nothing could ever

separate him from God's love in Christ (8:35, 38f.) His use of the imperfect tense conveys the sense that he could entertain such a wish, if it could possibly be granted. Like Moses, who in his plea for Israel's forgiveness dared to pray that otherwise God would blot him out of the book of life,¹ Paul says he would be willing even to be damned if only thereby Israel might be saved. Denney calls it 'a spark from the fire of Christ's substitutionary love', for he is prepared to die in their place.² And Luther comments: 'It seems incredible that a man would desire to be damned, in order that the damned might be saved.'³

The apostle's anguish over unbelieving Israel is the more poignant because of her unique privileges, some of which he has mentioned earlier (2:17ff. and 3:1ff.), but of which he now gives a fuller inventory. *Theirs is the adoption as sons*, since God had said, 'Israel is my firstborn son'⁴ and 'I am Israel's father';⁵ *theirs the divine glory*, namely the visible splendour of God, which filled first the tabernacle⁶ and then the temple,⁷ and which came to be permanently localized in the inner sanctuary, so that Yahweh could be described as 'enthroned between the cherubim that are on the ark.'⁸ *Theirs too are the covenants*, especially of course God's foundational covenant with Abraham, but also its multiple renewals and elaborations to Isaac and Jacob, Moses⁹ and David;¹⁰ *the receiving of the law*, the unique revelation of God's will spoken by his voice and written with his finger;¹¹ *the temple worship* (though 'temple' does not occur in the Greek sentence), comprising all the prescribed regulations for the priesthood and sacrifices; *and the promises* (4), particularly those relating to the coming of the Messiah as God's prophet, priest and king. In addition, *theirs are the patriarchs*, not only Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but also the progenitors of the twelve tribes and other great figures such as Moses, Joshua, Samuel and David; and above all, *from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ* (5a), literally 'the Christ according to the flesh', whose genealogy Matthew traces back to Abraham, and Luke to Adam. Calvin justly comments: 'If he honoured the whole human race when he connected himself with it by sharing our nature, much more did he honour the Jews, with whom he desired to have a close bond of affinity.'¹²

¹ Ex. 32:32.

² Denney, p. 657.

³ Luther (1515), p. 380.

⁴ Ex. 4:22; cf. Ho. 11:1.

⁵ Je. 31:9.

⁶ Ex. 29:42ff.; 40:34ff.

⁷ 1 Ki. 8:10f.

⁸ 2 Sa. 6:2; cf. Lv. 16:2; Heb. 9:5.

⁹ Ex. 24:8.

¹⁰ 2 Sa. 23:5.

¹¹ Dt. 4:7f.

¹² Calvin, p. 195.

Paul does not stop there, however. The final words of verse 5 are: *who is God over all, for ever praised! Amen*. The question is whether these words refer to Christ or to God the Father. And the difficulty in deciding for certain is due to the absence of punctuation in the original manuscript. We have to supply it. Three main positions are held.

First, the traditional view from the early Greek Fathers onwards has been to apply all three expressions ('over all', 'God' and 'for ever praised') to Christ, as with slight differences-in AV, JB, JBP and NIV, and in the margin of RSV and REB. The second view applies the expressions to God the Father. By placing a full stop after 'Christ', what follows becomes an independent sentence: 'God who is over all be blessed for ever' (RSV; cf. REB). The third way is a compromise. It applies the words 'over all' to Christ, but the remaining words to God the Father (REB mg.).

The real problem is not whether Paul would have described Christ as 'over all', since he regularly affirmed his universal sovereignty,¹³ but whether he would have called him 'God' and ascribed to him everlasting praise. It is argued that Paul usually designated Jesus 'Son of God' (e.g. 1:3f., 9; 5:10; 8:29) or God's 'own Son' (e.g. 8:3, 32), not 'God', and also that biblical doxologies are normally addressed to God,¹⁴ not to Jesus.

On the other hand, Paul gives Jesus the divine title 'Lord',¹⁵ calls him 'the Lord of both the dead and the living' (14:9), affirms his pre-existence,¹⁶ describes him as both 'in the form of God' and having 'equality with God',¹⁷ and declares that 'all the fulness of the deity lives in bodily form' in him.¹⁸ These expressions accord him divine honours and powers, which are tantamount to calling him 'God'. Further, Hebrews 13:21 appears to contain a doxology to Christ.

Charles Cranfield regards it as 'virtually certain' that Paul intended to describe Christ as 'God over all, for ever praised'. He adds: 'There is ... no good

AV The Authorized (King James') Version of the Bible (1611).

JB The Jerusalem Bible (1966).

JBP *The New Testament in Modern English*, by J. B. Phillips (Collins, 1958).

NIV The New International Version of the Bible (1973, 1978, 1984).

RSV The Revised Standard Version of the Bible (NT, 1946; second edition, 1971; OT, 1952).

REB The Revised English Bible (1989).

RSV The Revised Standard Version of the Bible (NT, 1946; second edition, 1971; OT, 1952).

REB The Revised English Bible (1989).

REB The Revised English Bible (1989).

mg. Margin.

¹³ E.g. Rom. 14:9; Eph. 1:20ff.; Phil. 2:9ff.; Col. 1:18f.

¹⁴ E.g. 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3; cf. 1 Pet. 1:3.

¹⁵ E.g. Rom. 10:9, 13; Phil. 2:9ff.

¹⁶ Gal. 4:4; 2 Cor. 8:9.

¹⁷ Phil. 2:6 mg.

¹⁸ Col. 2:9.

ground for denying that Paul here affirms that Christ, who, in so far as his human existence is concerned, is of Jewish race, is also Lord over all things and by nature God blessed for ever.¹⁹

One would think that Israel, favoured with these eight blessings, prepared and educated for centuries for the arrival of her Messiah, would recognize and welcome him when he came. How then can one reconcile Israel's privileges with her prejudices? How can one explain her 'hardening' (11:25)? Paul now addresses himself to this mystery. He asks himself, or his imaginary interlocutor, four questions.

Question 1: Has God's promise failed? (6–13).

At first sight it would appear that God's promise to Israel had failed, or literally 'fallen'. For he had promised to bless them, but they had forfeited his blessing through unbelief. Israel's failure was her own failure, however; it was not due to the failure of God's word (6a). *For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel* (6b). That is, there have always been two Israels, those physically descended from Israel (Jacob) on the one hand, and his spiritual progeny on the other; and God's promise was addressed to the latter, who had received it. The apostle has already made this distinction earlier in his letter between those who were Jews outwardly, whose circumcision was in the body, and those who were Jews inwardly, who had received a circumcision of the heart by the Spirit (2:28f.).

He now refers to two well-known Old Testament situations in order to illustrate and prove his point. The first concerns Abraham's family. Just as not all who are descended from Israel are Israel, so not all who are descended from Abraham are *Abraham's children*, his true offspring (*cf.* Rom. 4). *On the contrary*, as Scripture says, *'It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned'* (7),²⁰ and not through Abraham's other son Ishmael, who is not even mentioned. *In other words*, who are *God's children*, who can also be designated *Abraham's offspring*? It is not *the natural children*, literally 'the children of the flesh', but *the children of the promise*, who were born as a result of God's promise (8). And this was the wording of the promise: *'At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son'* (9).²¹

From Abraham and his two sons Isaac and Ishmael, Paul turns for his second illustration to Isaac and his two sons Jacob and Esau. He shows that just as God chose Isaac, not Ishmael, to be the recipient of his promise, so he chose Jacob, not Esau. In this case, however, it was even clearer that God's decision had nothing whatever to do with any eligibility in the boys themselves, for there was nothing to distinguish them from one another. Isaac and Ishmael had had different mothers, but Jacob and Esau had the same mother (Rebekah). *Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the*

¹⁹ Cranfield, vol. II, p. 840. *Cf.* also Metzger (1973), pp. 95ff.

²⁰ Gn. 21:12; *cf.* Gal. 4:23ff.

²¹ Gn. 18:10, 14.

same father, namely Isaac (10), and moreover they were twins. Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad, God had made his decision and revealed it to their mother. This was deliberate, *in order that God's purpose in election*, his eternal purpose which operates according to the principle of election, *might stand* (11).

Perhaps there is a conscious contrast between the question whether God's promise had 'fallen' (6, literally) and the statement that his purpose must *stand* (11). What 'God's purpose in [literally, according to] election' means is clear beyond doubt. It is that God's choice of Isaac (not Ishmael), and of Jacob (not Esau), does not originate in them or in any *works* they may have done, but in the mind and will of *him who calls* (12a). To clinch this, Paul quotes two Scriptures referring to Jacob and Esau. The first declares that '*The older will serve the younger*' (12b),²² putting Jacob above Esau.

The second Scripture says: '*Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated*' (13).²³ This bald statement sounds shocking in Christian ears and cannot possibly be taken literally. Although there is such an emotion as 'holy hatred', it is directed only to evildoers and would be inappropriate here. So several suggestions for softening the statement have been proposed. Some suggest that the reference is less to the individuals Jacob and Esau than to the peoples they fathered, the Israelites and the Edomites, and to their historical destinies. Others interpret the sentence as meaning, 'I chose Jacob and rejected Esau.'²⁴ But the third option seems best, which is to understand the antithesis as a Hebrew idiom for preference. Jesus himself gives us this interpretative clue, since according to Luke he told us that we cannot be his disciples unless we hate our family,²⁵ whereas according to Matthew we are forbidden rather to love them more than him.²⁶ Although this makes the wording more acceptable, the reality behind it stands, namely that God put Jacob above Esau-as individuals too, not just in the sense that the Israelites were God's people, not the Edomites.

We have also to remember that Esau forfeited his birthright because of his own worldliness²⁷ and lost his rightful blessing because of his brother's deceit,²⁸ so that human responsibility was interwoven with divine sovereignty in their story. We should also recall that the rejected brothers, Ishmael and Esau, were both circumcised, and therefore in some sense they too were members of God's covenant, and were both promised lesser blessings. Nevertheless, both

²² Gn. 25:23.

²³ Mal. 1:2f.

²⁴ Calvin, p. 202.

²⁵ Lk. 14:26.

²⁶ Mt. 10:37.

²⁷ Gn. 25:29ff.

²⁸ Gn. 27:1ff.

stories illustrate the same key truth of 'God's purpose according to election'. So God's promise did not fail; but it was fulfilled only in the Israel within Israel.

Many mysteries surround the doctrine of election, and theologians are unwise to systematize it in such a way that no puzzles, enigmas or loose ends are left. At the same time, in addition to the arguments developed in the exposition of Romans 8:28–30, we need to remember two truths. First, election is not just a Pauline or apostolic doctrine; it was also taught by Jesus himself. 'I know those I have chosen,' he said.²⁹ Secondly, election is an indispensable foundation of Christian worship, in time and eternity. It is the essence of worship to say: 'Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name be the glory.'³⁰ If we were responsible for our own salvation, either in whole or even in part, we would be justified in singing our own praises and blowing our own trumpet in heaven. But such a thing is inconceivable. God's redeemed people will spend eternity worshipping him, humbling themselves before him in grateful adoration, ascribing their salvation to him and to the Lamb, and acknowledging that he alone is worthy to receive all praise, honour and glory.³¹ Why? Because our salvation is due entirely to his grace, will, initiative, wisdom and power.⁴

²⁹ Jn. 13:18; cf. 15:16; 17:6.

³⁰ Ps. 115:1.

³¹ Rev. 5:12f.; 7:10ff.

⁴ John R. W. Stott, [*The Message of Romans: God's Good News for the World*](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 261–268.