



## LETTERS TO THE CHURCH [ROMANS 9]

Romans 9 addresses a difficult question that would have weighed heavily on his Jewish readers: If God is faithful to His promises, and if Israel was God's chosen people, why did so many Israelites reject Jesus as the Messiah? Paul begins by expressing deep sorrow for his fellow Jews, reminding readers of Israel's remarkable story—God chose Abraham, rescued Israel from Egypt, established David's kingdom, and promised future restoration. Yet when Jesus arrived, He did not match many of Israel's expectations. Instead of a military conqueror, He came as a suffering servant who welcomed outsiders, challenged religious leaders, and was crucified by Rome.

Paul's answer is that God's promises have not failed. Throughout Israel's history, belonging to God's covenant family was never simply about ethnicity, heritage, or external religious privilege. It was always about responding to God in faith. Using examples such as Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Pharaoh, Paul argues that God has always been sovereignly directing His redemptive plan according to His mercy and purposes. Rather than presenting a detailed doctrine of individual predestination, Paul's primary concern is showing that God remains faithful as He expands His covenant family to include both Jews and Gentiles through Jesus Christ.

The chapter culminates with Paul's conclusion that many Gentiles have entered God's family through faith, while many Israelites stumbled because they pursued righteousness through works, privilege, or status. Far from abandoning His promises, God is fulfilling them in a surprising way by creating one new, multi-ethnic family centered on Jesus. Romans 9 challenges readers to view Israel's story—and their own story—through the lens of Christ rather than through cultural assumptions and expectations.

Just as many Israelites interpreted God's promises through their own cultural and national hopes, we can be tempted to reinterpret Jesus through the values of our culture. The challenge of Romans 9 is not merely to understand Israel's failure, but to examine our own hearts. Are we allowing Jesus to define our faith, priorities, and understanding of success, or are we subtly reshaping Him into someone who fits our preferences?

### Discussion Questions

1. Paul argues that God's promises to Israel did not fail, even though many Israelites rejected Jesus. What was the difference between simply being part of Israel and being part of God's covenant family according to Romans 9? Why is that distinction important for us today?

2. What assumptions or expectations about God, faith, success, or discipleship have you had to rethink because of Jesus? What helped you see things differently?

3. Many Christians in our cultural moment prioritize theological knowledge over becoming more like Jesus. In your own life, where is it easier to learn about Jesus than to obey Him? How can our house church help one another pursue transformation rather than merely information?

4. Of the seven ways the Western church may resemble Israel, which one do you think poses the greatest danger to Christians today: security, politics, individualism, comfort, certainty, success, or something else? Why? Where do you see evidence of that danger in yourself, our church, or the broader Christian culture?

5. If someone examined your calendar, spending habits, prayers, and major decisions over the last year, would they conclude that your highest value is faithfulness to Jesus or something else (comfort, security, achievement, reputation, political influence, certainty, etc.)? What specific changes might God be inviting you to make in response to that realization?