

THE NINTH CHAPTER  
OF THE  
BOOK OF ROMANS

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## SYNOPSIS

In the letter to the Romans, chapters 9, 10 and 11, contrary to the beliefs of some, the Apostle Paul does not address the topic of predestination of individuals to be saved, but rather explains why Israel, who were God's chosen people from the time of Abraham, for the most part were not saved. The Apostle Paul was very sad about this and reminded the believers at Rome, that God gave many promises to Israel through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and then through the law which He gave to Moses on Mount Sinai. God even promised that the Messiah would come out of Israel. So why then were they not turning to Christ, while the Gentiles were? The Jews knew about these promises and believed that they were saved simply because they were the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But Paul told them that being descendants of these "fathers" does not guarantee them salvation. God was going to use Israel to usher in the promised Messiah, but there could only be one family line through which He would do it. Thus, God chose Abraham's son Isaac instead of his other son Ishmael, and He then chose Isaac's son Jacob instead of his brother Esau, through which the Messiah and the promises would be delivered to Israel. Because God is all powerful and knows all things, even things which happen in the future, God chose these individuals through whom the promise would come, before they were even born - before they knew how to do good or evil. Jacob was later renamed "Israel" by God, and became a great nation.

However, through the passage of time, Israel became disobedient and rebelled against God, committing all forms of idolatry and sin. God judged them with invading armies and eventually took them into captivity into Assyria and later to Babylon. Many in Israel had distanced themselves so far from God that as a judgment, He hardened their hearts, "lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed" (Is 6:9-10; Matt 13:15). This hardening continued even unto the time of Christ and the Apostles. The Jewish leaders and people rejected Christ even after he had shown clear evidence through his wisdom and miracles that, he indeed was the Messiah as foretold by the prophets. Apostle Paul in light of the known history of Israel said that, despite Israel's stubbornness and rejection, God would be faithful in fulfilling His promises to Abraham. God is sovereign and He will achieve what He had set He would. God withheld His wrath from disobedient Israel, and was very patient and longsuffering towards those who were the "vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction" (Rom 9:22). Just as God did not immediately destroy Pharaoh for his stubbornness, but preserved him, so He also did not immediately destroy Israel for their continued disobedience. Just as God, for the purposes of making known His glory to the rest of the world, hardened Pharaoh's heart (after Pharaoh had already hardened his own heart several times), so God also confirmed Israel in their already hardened state, to work out a greater purpose. Just as God showed his glory to the rest of the world through Pharaoh by the events of the miraculous ten plagues and the liberating of Israel from slavery in Egypt, so He also showed his glory to the rest of the world by using Israel to "make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy [the Gentiles]" (Rom 9:23). God used Israel's rebellion to allow the Gentiles to enter to accept His salvation (Rom 9:24), just as He had promised Abraham that through him would all the nations of the earth be blessed.

God demonstrated that he had power over disobedient Israel, just as the potter has over the clay. When the potter found an imperfection in the clay, he did not throw the clay away but rather remolded it until his purpose was accomplished. Even though most of Israel as a nation had not accepted Christ as Saviour, God did not cast them away, but was longsuffering in shaping Israel so that those who were obedient to him, and believed in His Son Jesus, would be saved. Those who are righteous in God's eyes are not those who are merely the physical descendants of Abraham, or those who tried to be righteous by their own works. Instead, God accepts those who have the faith that Jesus Christ died on the cross for their sins in order to make the righteous (Rom 9:31-32). These are called the children of promise, because they accepted the promise given to Abraham, by faith. God is not unfair by not accepting those who "work so hard" for their salvation and accepting those who "just believe" in His Son. This is done so that the promise to Abraham, according to election, and not by works, might stand (Rom 9:11).

## INTRODUCTION

Does Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Romans chapter 9, teach that God in His sovereignty, has already predetermined who will be saved before they are even born? Are the examples of the choosing of Isaac and Jacob over Ishmael and Esau proof that God predetermines certain individuals to eternal glory and others to eternal damnation? A careful examination of this chapter in context with the entire letter to the Romans, the teachings of Christ and in fact, the entire Bible, will reveal that the Apostle Paul is not saying that God predetermined which individuals will be saved. It is rather, a response to his introductory question, which is paraphrased as follows: "If most of Israel has not been saved, has God gone back on His promises which were given firstly to Abraham and then re-iterated through many other of God's prophets and leaders?" In other words, the main message in chapters 9, 10 and 11 of Apostle Paul's letter to the church at Rome is an answer to the questions regarding why God's chosen people Israel, as a nation were not saved and how the Gentiles, who were not chosen at first, were entering in great numbers into God's covenant, which He had promised to Abraham.

Even though most of Israel was not saved, God still used the nation of Israel to usher in the Messiah and restore God's created order after it had fallen through the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve. Many Jews who did believe that Christ was the Messiah, also believed that Christ had come to maintain the law and the institutions of Judaism, and therefore, entrance into the Messianic kingdom was possible only through the gate of Judaism, and that both Jewish and Gentile believers must remain true to all the ordinances and commandments of the law of Moses. The role of Jew and Gentile in God's great plan is a recurring theme throughout the letter to the Romans, but especially in the aforementioned chapters. It is the endeavor of this author to demonstrate that Romans 9 does not address the concept of particular individual election, but rather explains why Israel as a nation was not yet saved.

## CONTEXT IS IMPERATIVE

The ninth chapter of Romans cannot be interpreted in isolation, but rather in the context of the entire word of God. Romans 9 belongs to a section of chapters, Romans 9-11 which in turn belong to Apostle Paul's letter to the church at Rome, as a whole. The letter to the Romans is part of the New Testament which provides us with the entire message of salvation, the gospel of Christ and was delivered by the New Testament writers and by Jesus Christ, himself. The New Testament writers wrote and believed that the events of the New Testament were the climax of Biblical history. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was the focal point through which all of world history should be viewed. In order to understand this climactic point in history, we need to know the story that preceded it. For example, when we see a climactic statement such as, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes", we need to know what the law is, what righteousness is and why Christ had to come in the first place. All of these things can only be understood if we know what happened before them. This is where the Old Testament must be consulted. It is not just a story book from which we can extract some good moral points, but is full of accounts which are telling the story of the world, the story of Israel and most importantly, the story of God. It is important to know who God is, what His nature is like, what His inclinations, desires, purposes and intentions are and how He acted in the world towards mankind in general and towards Israel in particular.

## RETELLING OF THE STORY OF ISRAEL

When God created the world, His creation was inherently good. God was the creator of the entire world, the entire cosmos and it was all good. Adam and Eve then fell because of their sin as recorded in Genesis 3. It was not just that the human intellect or will that was impaired, but the entire created order was affected. God cursed the ground to bring forth thorns and thistles, and by the sweat of his brow would man eat his bread (Gen 3) and the whole of creation was to groan and travail until restoration - the deliverance from the bondage of corruption would come (Rom 8:22). If the whole created order fell, then the restoration is not just of individuals, but of the entire created order. God's desire is for the redemption of the entire creation (Rom 5:12-19; Rom 8:19-22) and individual salvation must be seen as fitting into the restoration of the entire order. Not only will men be restored by obtaining new hearts and new spirits (Eze 36:26), but there will be new heavens and a new earth (Isa 65:17, Isa 66:22, 2 Pe 3:13, Rev 21:1). God elected Israel to be the means of salvation for not only Israel, but also for the entire world. He elected Israel, not just to be a light unto themselves or a blessing in their own right, but a means through which He would restore the entire created order. God chose Abraham through whom the nation of Israel would come and through whom eventually all the nations of the earth would be blessed:

Gen 12:2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: [3] And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were the selected leaders of the nation of Israel through which He would work to redeem everything and fulfill his covenantal promises. Through the lineage of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would come the Messiah and through Israel's restoration would come the restoration of the entire world.

However, if Israel is being used as the means of restoration, then what if Israel is not saved? What if Israel who as a nation, had a great part in ushering in the Messiah, has in fact rejected the Messiah? Is it not expected that before the world is restored, Israel the nation, must first be restored? Israel was elected not for himself, but to be a witness or light to all nations. The following passages emphasize that Israel was chosen first (as shown in Gen 12:2-3) and then the Gentiles:

Isa 41:8 But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. [9] Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.

In chapter 42, Isaiah continues writing about this servant, but now in the Spirit prophesies that out of the nation of God's servant Israel, will emerge of Christ, the Messiah:

Isa 42:1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles..... [4] He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.

Isa 42:6 I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

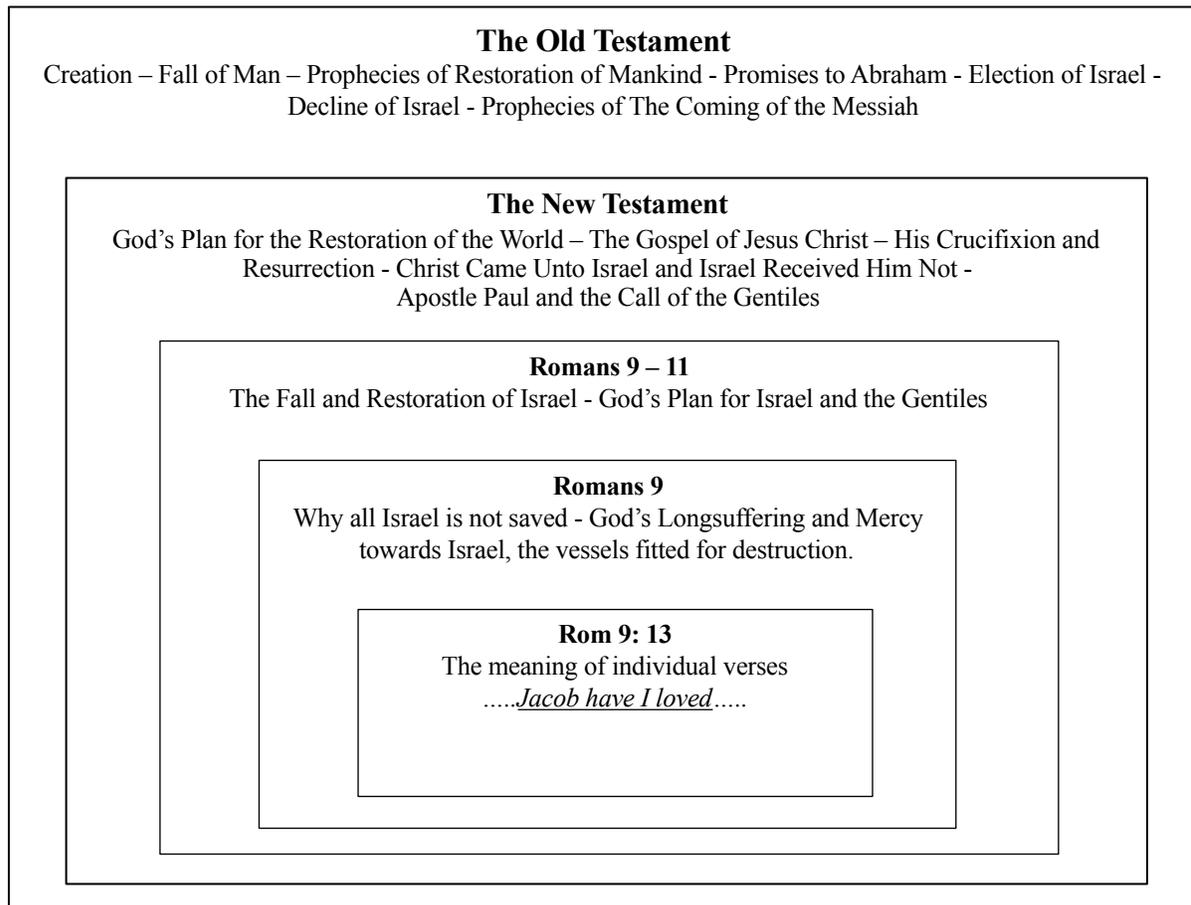
In chapter 49, Isaiah's language also describes an individual person which is distinguished from the nation Israel, whose role is to restore the historic nation, and rebuild the country from its ruins (Isa 49:8):

Isa 49:5 And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength. [6] And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my

salvation unto the end of the earth. [7] Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee. [8] Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

At the same time, this servant is still in some sense “Israel”; for the term is directly applied to the nation where Isaiah makes it very clear that Israel is God’s servant in whom He will be glorified (Isa 49:3). In this passage of scripture, Israel is personified as a restorer and projected upon the future as a figure displaying the most genuine characteristics of the nation. It is evident that what this individual is prophesied to perform, the nation of Israel has never performed. This is clearly speaking of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who was manifested to the world through the nation of Israel.

Jesus even told the Canaanitish woman that he was “not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (Mat 15:24) Having established the above understanding, the intent of this booklet is not to be an exhaustive study on election and predestination, but rather a commentary primarily on the 9th chapter of Apostle Paul’s letter to the Romans. It is this author’s hope to write another booklet, more comprehensively on election and predestination. In order to give context, it is needful to spend some time on the chapters leading up to chapter 9. As the diagram below shows, each verse in Romans 9 is to be taken in context with chapters 9-11, which tells the story of Israel in God’s plan of salvation which is told in the New Testament gospels and letters, including the letter to the Romans, which was foretold in the Old Testament.



The ensuing sections will show the role of the Israelite throughout the entire letter to the Romans, which will shed more light on what the Apostle Paul is really saying in Romans 9.

## ROMANS CHAPTER 1

### THE PREDICAMENT OF MAN

After an impassioned introduction in Romans 1, stating that he was called to his ministry by the grace of God, the Apostle Paul commends the Romans for their faith, which is manifested in the “whole world”. He is not ashamed to preach the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile (Greek). This is important in Paul’s argument because he is addressing both Jewish and Gentile believers in Rome. It will be seen that threaded throughout the Letter to the Romans, the Apostle is endeavouring to answer the Jewish objections regarding the salvation of the Gentiles and the privileges granted to them. As will be shown, the unity of the Jew and Gentile in the church of God was one of Paul’s constant concerns.

The Jews in general had no doubts as to the absoluteness of God’s sovereignty, since this flattered their self-complacency and national pride. They believed that they were the elect according to God’s promises, and all others were reprobate. Paul’s proclamation of Messianic privilege to the Gentiles did perhaps, quite as much to evoke Jewish hatred against himself, as his allegiance to the Jesus whom the Jews had crucified as a malefactor. In this chapter, the Apostle already introduces the topic of salvation, coming first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles.

Rom 1:13 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles. [14] I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise....[16]For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Another very prominent theme in the book of Romans is stated in verse 17, which is, the righteousness of God. The word “righteousness” is mentioned 39 times in 33 verses in the book of Romans, and the word “unrighteousness” is mentioned 7 times in 6 verses. It is God’s righteousness, which is revealed from faith to faith. Paul quoted the prophet Habakkuk, who came to the conclusion that “the just shall live by faith.” Then in the next verse he says:

"Rom 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness"

God, through the Apostle Paul then charges what appears to be the ancient world, with unrighteous living, suppressing (holding down) the truth in unrighteousness, not worshipping God as God, and ultimately being unthankful for all of God’s providence. Because they:

*..did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind.*

*..changed the truth of God into a lie, God gave them up unto vile affections:*

*..changed the glory of God into corruptible images, God also gave them up to uncleanness,*

God has given mankind over to the consequences of his own sin, because he refused to worship God as He should be worshipped. They were confirmed in their hardened states and this is what termed by Biblical scholars as judicial hardening by God. This hardening is evidenced with the Jews when Israel had distanced themselves so far from God that as a judgment, He hardened their hearts “lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed” (Is 6:9-10; Matt 13:11-15; John 12:40; Acts 28:25-28; Rom 11:8).

## ROMANS CHAPTER 2

### HOW GOD JUDGES MEN

Having charged mankind with all of his crimes (unrighteous living) against God, Apostle Paul then turns to the “moral” man (likely the Jew, as he is mostly addressed) - the one who judges others, as sinners and sees himself as righteous. He says that whoever this man may be, he is inexcusable, because he does the same thing which he judges others for. This self-righteous man will not escape the judgment of God because God will judge him according to the following:

- truth ( Rom 2:2)
- God’s righteous judgment (Rom 2:5)
- every man’s deeds (Rom 2:6)
- without partiality – to the Jew first, and then the Gentile. God will treat the Jew and Gentile alike (Rom 2:7-11). There is no respect of persons.
- the Jews, according to the law (Rom 2:12-13)
- the Gentiles, according to their consciences (Rom 2:14-15)
- the secrets of men by Jesus Christ (Rom 2:16)

The Apostle Paul then turns to certain “moral” Jews (Romans 2:17-29) and exposes their hypocrisy. He addresses those who see themselves as guides for the blind, lights for those in darkness, instructors of the foolish, and teachers of babes who have some form of knowledge and truth, in the law. He accuses them of allowing the name of God to be evil spoken of by the Gentiles, because of their own evil deeds. While teaching and instructing the Gentiles of immoral behaviour, they themselves were doing the same things. The Apostle concludes chapter 2 by stating that it is not the performing of outward rituals such as circumcision that makes one accepted of God, but rather the inward circumcision of the heart.

Rom 2:29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

One can begin to see perhaps why the Jews were having difficulty coming to Christ. They did not seem to be any less hypocritical than the Pharisees that Christ himself, rebuked.

## ROMANS CHAPTER 3

### ALL ARE GUILTY OF SIN - JEW AND GENTILE

The Jews of Paul’s time believed that salvation was theirs through the merit of being descendants of Abraham - that is, by being part of the covenant seed. The Apostle Paul tells them that being a Jew doesn’t justify them. Man is not justified by keeping the law because only the Jews had the law and so the Jews are no better than Gentiles without Christ. Furthermore, the Jews who had the law were not living any more godly lives than many Gentiles, because even though the law revealed their sin, it never gave man power to help conquer sin. Instead God made it possible for both to be justified through faith in Christ.

If that is true, the Jew then asks, “what advantage then do I have of being born and raised in the Jewish religion?” Paul’s response is that the chief advantage or benefit is that the Jew has been handed down through the ages, the law of God. He has been very well informed of God’s demands for righteousness and the penalty for not attaining to it. Along with the privileges of belonging to the chosen race, the Jew has even greater accountability because he has been given the law which reveals to him, the will of God.

But what if some of the Jewish nation did not believe or even abused their privileges? Shall their wickedness annul the promise which God made to Abraham (see the parallel in Romans 9:6), namely

that God would, by an everlasting covenant, be a God to him and to his seed after him? Not at all! God will remain faithful to those who are “true” Jews and he will judge the world, including the Jew that lives in unrighteousness! What is the conclusion of the whole matter? Are Jews better (spiritually closer to God) than Gentiles just because they are Abraham’s physical offspring? In no wise!

Rom 3:9 What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;

Both Jew and Gentile are under sin and there is none righteous, no, not one - for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and not even the Jew can be justified, made acceptable or righteous in God’s eyes by keeping the law (Rom 3:20-23). The law was introduced to reveal sin, but not to justify anyone. God chose another way to make one righteous and acceptable to Him, even before the law was given to Moses and Israel.

Rom 3:21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; [22] Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

Observe the parallel passages in the Epistle to the Galatians:

Gal 3:8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

Gal 3:14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Gal 3:17 And this I say, that the covenant [made with Abraham], that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law [given to Moses], which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

God in His sovereignty chose to justify all people, Jews and Gentiles alike, though faith in Jesus Christ, and not through the deeds of the law. This was a promise He had made to Abraham 430 years before the law was given to Israel. Just as God’s word did not fail in Romans 9:6, so His promise to Abraham could not be annulled by the law given to Moses. Justification came by promise and not by obedience to the law, and furthermore, the promise could only be received by faith (Gal 3:14). This was the conclusion of Romans chapter 3:

Rom 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. [29] Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: [30] Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. [31] Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

The Apostle Paul continues to explain how both Jew and Gentile are dealt with in the same manner by God. He is the God of both Jew and Gentile and both must be justified by faith. The law has its purpose in salvation and is confirmed to be necessary. The function of the law is to reveal the sin of man, as shall be seen in Romans chapter 7.

## ROMANS CHAPTER 4

### SAVED BY GOD’S GRACE - NOT BY WORKS

This entire chapter deals with Abraham the father of faith and how he is given as an example of one that is justified by faith and not by works (See Rom 9:31-32). It is concluded both in Romans 3 and Galatians 3 that since we are justified by faith, we have nothing to boast about, because we did not earn any part of our salvation by the works of the law. Salvation is a gift, by the grace of God.

Rom 4:16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all....

Rom 4:18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.

What is very significant in verse 18 is the phrase “So shall thy seed be”. According to Strong’s Greek concordance, the word “so” here means “in this fashion” or “in like manner”. In other words, Abraham was an ante-type or precursor of the type of people that would eventually receive the promise. The person that is a child of Abraham is one who has the saving faith of Abraham.

Luke 19:9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

Jesus said that Zacchaeus was saved because he was also a son of Abraham. Why then did not Jesus say that of the other Jews that were present? Were they not also sons or descendants of Abraham? Of course they were physically, but not spiritually. In fact when the Jews in John 8:33 claimed to be Abraham’s children, he acknowledged that they were the physical seed in John 8:37, but told them that spiritually they were not. They did not have the faith of Abraham and hence would not do his works:

John 8:39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham.

Already in Romans chapter 4 the Apostle Paul is agreeing with his epistle to the Galatians by saying that man receives the promise of salvation by having the faith of Abraham, and therefore it is a gift by God’s grace; it cannot be received by works - the penitent sinner’s faith is counted to him as righteousness. God imputes or credits a soul with His righteousness when the soul believes in his heart that Jesus died on the cross, shedding his blood for his sins and rising again for his justification (Rom 4:24-25). This promise was not only to the Jew.

Salvation is conditional on true faith in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. God gives grace to the humble and when the sinner hears the convicting word of the gospel and humbles himself, God gives more grace and sheds more light. That is why in the parable of the sower (Matt 13:12) Jesus said that to him that has, more shall be given. In Matthew 7, Jesus commands us to seek and we will find, ask and it shall be given, and knock and it shall be opened. When there is a co-operation with God, with the little light He offers, more light is given to the hearer. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God or Christ (Rom 10:17). Make no mistake - it is the sinner’s faith, which God gives when the sinner humbles himself or herself. Calvinists believe that salvation has nothing to do with any act on the sinner’s part, because that would be considered a “work” and we are not saved by works but by grace. What is essential in understanding this chapter is that faith is contrasted with works and therefore it is not a work to believe and accept the salvation of Christ through faith. Faith is a *condition* of salvation and not the *ground* of salvation. The ground of salvation is the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. Faith is what God gifts us with, as we seek him and study his word. Faith comes by hearing the word of God. It pleases God to save us through our faith:

1Co 1:21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

God justifies us by our faith in Christ, as we see in the next chapter also.

## ROMANS CHAPTER 5

### PEACE WITH GOD BY FAITH IN CHRIST

The Apostle Paul concludes that being justified by faith (contrasted with works in chapter 4) we now have peace with God, only through our Lord Jesus Christ. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given to us and we then have open access to God’s grace through that very same faith, so that we rejoice in the hope of one day being glorified also. It was

God's love, which motivated Him to provide the world with his Son as the atonement for the sins of men, even while we were his enemies.

The Apostle goes on to explain how through one man, Adam, sin came upon all men and with it death or separation from God. Again he emphasizes that all have sinned. Even so, also by one man, Jesus Christ (the second Adam), came the remedy for sin.

Rom 5:18 Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

Verse 18 unequivocally states that the gift of salvation was made available to as many as upon whom judgment came – all men. However, only those that have the faith of Abraham can receive this gift. This chapter concludes by saying that God introduced the law so that the heinousness of sin could be amplified, and allow grace to abound.

## ROMANS CHAPTER 6 POWER OVER SIN

We must not abuse the boundless goodness of God by continuing in sin, under the false and wicked persuasion that, “the more we sin the more the grace of God will abound”. Why should we who have died with Christ to sin and have been buried in baptism together with Christ, ever want to go back into sin? We have been made new creatures and have submitted ourselves to a new Lord - namely, Jesus Christ. Why should we go back and serve our old master, sin?

Rom 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. [15] What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

We have been created for the purpose of serving God, to produce good works. The Gospel makes no provision for living in sin, any more than the law did, and those who are continually committing sin, are the slaves of sin. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## ROMANS CHAPTER 7 THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW

The Apostle Paul opens this chapter by asking a question, specifically to the Jewish believers – that is, those that know the law. He reminds them that the law has power over a man as long as he lives, just as a wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. He is essentially addressing the insistence of Jewish believers for the mandatory keeping of the law of Moses and insisting that the Gentiles must do so in order to be accepted by God. This theme pervades the Book of Acts and the letters of the Apostles. A person cannot be married to Christ, the second Adam, as long as he is united to the first Adam by the law of sin and death. The Christian is delivered from the authority of the Mosaic law and is united with Christ Jesus by the law of the Spirit of life:

Rom 7:4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

If we are delivered from the law, what good is the law, then? The Apostle assures the Jewish believers that the law still has a place and purpose. The law was given to reveal our sin but it gives no power to overcome it; yet it is holy, just, and good. The Mosaic law was not a solution for sin, for

it resulted in transforming “ignorant wrong” into “conscious sin”. It can only convince us of sin and condemn us, and hence it is called the law of sin and death. The only way to be delivered from its curse is through faith in Jesus Christ.

## ROMANS CHAPTER 8

### NO MORE CONDEMNATION BY WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

Apostle Paul talks about the blessed state of those who believe in Christ, and walk under the influence of his Spirit and not the flesh. Once again he emphasizes that God sent his Son into the world to redeem men from sin because the law could not do so. God has given us the Spirit of adoption to empower us to live righteous lives and the same Spirit witnesses to us that we are God’s children and joint heirs with Christ of all the promises, so that one day we will be glorified with Christ. But until then, Christians will go through suffering as a reminder that we still live in a cursed earth and Christians are awaiting the day when there will be new heavens and a new earth. These sufferings are common to all men, and from which Gentiles and Jews have the hope of being finally delivered, if they continue believing and having hope in Christ (for by hope we are saved - Rom 8:24). In our suffering the Spirit makes intercession for us. All things work together for good to them that love God, and who act according to his gracious purpose in calling them.

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. (Rom 8:29-30)

This passage is referred to the “unbreakable chain” by Calvinists. Does this mean that God predetermined that only certain individuals will be saved? If so, does that mean that by default God predetermined who will go to hell? It is the author’s intent to address the verses dealing with election and predestination in a forthcoming booklet. Suffice it for now, it is the author’s view that predestination is primarily corporate and secondarily individual. Predestination is corporate unconditionally and, individual conditionally. This explains why it is possible for someone who has been saved, to fall away or depart from the faith.

## ROMANS CHAPTERS 14 & 15

### UNITY AT THE CHURCH OF ROME

In order to further show how the Jew-Gentile relationship was an issue of great concern in the Apostle Paul’s heart, it is needful to address chapters 14 and 15 of Romans to give a little more context to the three chapters of Romans 9, 10 and 11. In the church at Rome, the Gentile sees the Jew following cultural laws and says that the Jew has not accepted the full work of the Messiah by faith, as he has. Conversely, the Jew sees the Gentile not eating kosher food and says that the Gentile is not following the law and therefore he is not really part of the family of God because he is not observing their law and traditions. The Apostle Paul dealt with this issue by writing two chapters to address it – Romans 14 and 15.

In essence, the Apostle Paul informed the Roman believers to tolerate one another’s practices regarding which days they observed as holy and what they allowed themselves to eat, and not to judge or criticize each other. These practices were liberties that both Jew and Gentile were taking and had nothing to do with their salvation or standing before God. Similar counsel was given to the Corinthian believers regarding the eating of meat offered to idols. At the conclusion to the Letter to the Romans, the Apostle exhorted the Jewish and Gentile believers to “with one mind and one mouth glorify God” (Rom 15:6) and that the “Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy” (Rom 15:9). He charged them to “mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine”

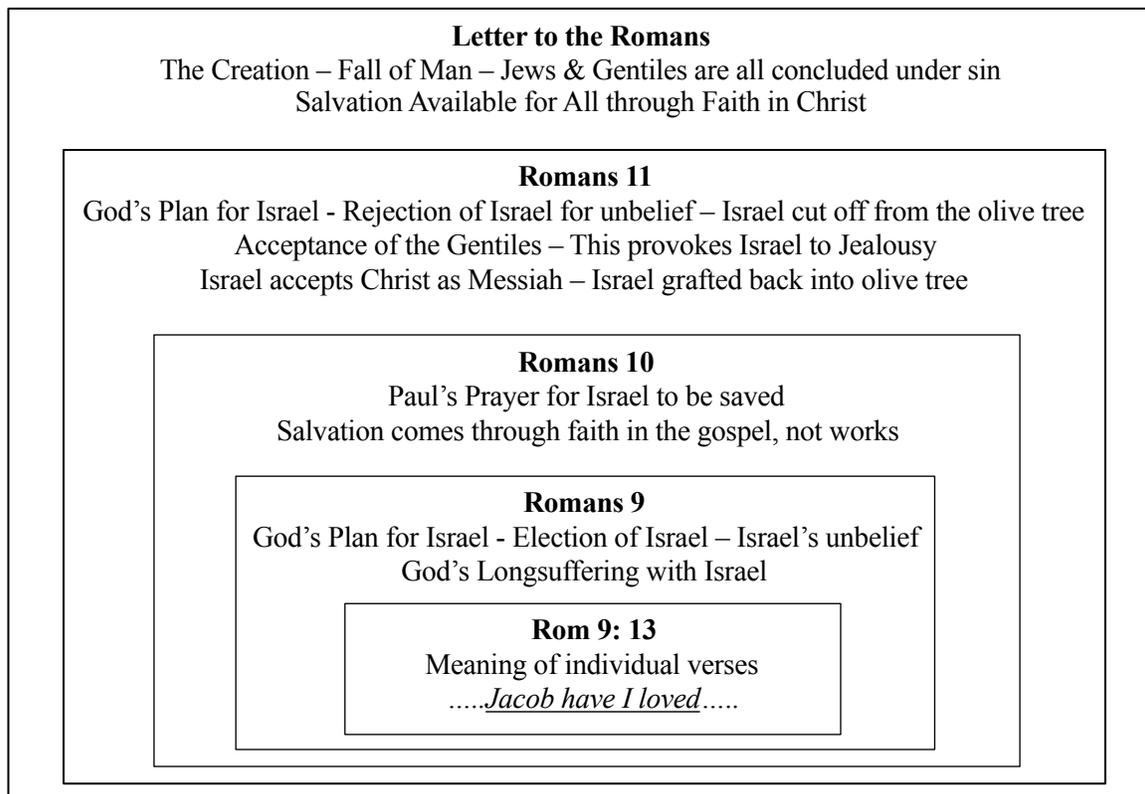
which they received of him (Rom 16:17) and reminded them how the revelation of the mystery of salvation was “made known to all nations for the obedience of faith” (Rom 16:25).

From the summary above it can be seen that the role of Jew and Gentile in God’s plan of salvation is one of the main themes of the Letter to the Romans in Chapters 1 – 8 and 14 & 15. This theme intensifies in chapters 9 - 11.

## ROMANS CHAPTERS 9-11 A SUMMARY

It has been shown that chapters 1 through 11 of Romans are clearly speaking about God’s plan of salvation for the world – both Jews and Gentiles. Romans chapters 1, 2 and 3 conclude that all of mankind [Jews and Gentiles] is under sin, which is repeated at the conclusion found in Romans 11:32, “For God hath concluded them all [Jews and Gentiles] in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all”.

It will be shown that Romans 9 begins with a question about why God’s elect nation Israel is not saved, as God’s promises state. The end of Romans 9 answers that question - because they sought salvation “by the works of the law”. The conclusion is that the Jews were not accepted because they had no faith in Jesus Christ. (Rom 9:31-32). The apostle Paul begins Romans 10 with a prayer for the salvation of Israel and ends with quotations from Moses and Isaiah about God’s longsuffering with disobedient Israel. “But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people” (Rom 10:21). Romans chapter 11 begins with Paul stating that God has not rejected Israel, the people he foreknew or knew before (in the Old Testament Books. In fact, Israel rejected God’s offering of Christ). Israel was broken off the natural olive tree, so the Gentiles could be grafted in. The Jews are then provoked to jealousy and grafted back into the root or stump. So we have “election-rejection-election” of a group or body of people (corporate election). Rom 11:25-32 ends with Paul stating that “For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.” Below is an overview of Romans 9, 10 and 11.



Having given the context of Romans 9 within the whole book and furthermore within the section of Romans 9-11, the ninth chapter will now be discussed, verse by verse.

## ROMANS CHAPTER 9

### GOD'S PLAN FOR ISRAEL

How does one explain that the chosen nation of the Jews did not believe in Christ, the Messiah? What is the role of Israel in God's plan of salvation for the world? Has God really been faithful to his promises to Israel? What is the role of the Gentiles in His plan? In order to answer these questions, Paul starts to re-tell the story of Israel. He emphasizes point for point, Israel's election, disobedience and preservation despite their continued obstinacy. He shows how God is longsuffering with them for the sake of showing His mercy to the world, and in the end showing mercy both to Gentiles and Jews. The Gentiles joining the family of God, is a sign of God's restoration of the created order. This section is not about unconditional individual election, but about Israel's unbelief, Paul's anguish over his kinsmen and God's eventual restoration of "all Israel".

Rom 9:1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, [2] That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. [3] For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

The Apostle is greatly pained that God's chosen people were not saved. This is a great mystery that Paul would, if it were possible, be cursed and take the damnation of Israel upon himself, if that would bring them all to salvation. Moses had the same self-sacrificial attitude when he asked God to take his name out of the book of life, and not punish those involved with the worshipping of the golden calf (Ex 32:32).

The Apostle lists the covenant privileges of the Jewish people and points out the manner in which God chose to communicate the knowledge of His name to both Jews and Gentiles. He shows how He deals, whether in judgment or mercy, with individuals and uses the examples of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Esau, and Pharaoh. God shows mercy and judgment as He sees fit, and none have a right to question His decisions. God has the same power over Israel (and the human race for that matter) as the potter has over the clay. The prophets predicted the calling of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews. The Gentiles have attained to the knowledge of God's manner of saving sinners, while most Jews have not attained this knowledge. The reason why the Jews have not attained the salvation provided for them in the Gospel is given in Romans 9:32 and 33. This is confirmed in Romans chapter 10:21 where Apostle Paul states that God in His longsuffering was reaching out to the Jews "all day long" but they refused Him:

Rom 10:21 But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

Why would God be reaching out to a people "all day long" if he had predetermined not to save them before the world began? The apostle has largely proved in the preceding chapters, that the grace of God extends to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews; and that the dispensation of God's mercy was absolutely, free to all who believe, whether Jews or Gentiles. His grace cannot be obtained through any works or conformity to the law or simply because of their ancestry. The Jews have access to the blessings of God's covenant by faith, as do the Gentiles. The apostle has not considered the Jews as forever rejected, but believes that they can find access to God through faith, even as the Gentiles do, seeing He is God of both Jew and Gentile:

Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. (Rom 3:29 -30)

However, in Chapters 9, 10 and 11 of Romans, the apostle considers the receiving of the Gentiles into the kingdom and covenant of God under the notion of calling or invitation, and of election or choice. He considers the Gentiles as invited into the kingdom of God, and as chosen to be his people, but the greater part of the Jews as left out and rejected, at least for the time being. The greater part of Israel had rejected the gospel of Christ. Perhaps the Apostle perceived that God was about to judge them, destroy their temple, and disperse them over the face of the earth. Thus he knew they would be accursed, or anathematized from Christ, and reduced to a level with the heathen nations of the world. This in fact did happen in 70 AD when the Roman general Titus, stormed Jerusalem after an extended siege.

The insertion of chapters 9, 10 and 11 is not a side-step onto a different topic. It is a continuation of a thread throughout the previous 8 chapters - how both Jew and Gentile can attain to the righteousness of God. It can be readily seen that in these three chapters, Paul treats his fellow countrymen with great tenderness and care. In chapters 9 and 10, he never mentions their rejection, perhaps because it is extremely painful for him to do so. In fact, if it were possible as already mentioned, he could wish that he himself were accursed, if it could mean the salvation of them. Then in chapter 11 he has many good things to say about the Jews, even though they have been temporarily rejected (not every single Jew, but as a nation or corporately) to allow access into the commonwealth of Israel, to the Gentiles (Eph 2:12). God in turn chose this means to provoke the Jews unto jealousy in order to win them back. That is, the Jews as a nation were temporarily rejected, but that doesn't preclude individual Jews from being grafted back into the vine.

## THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S ELECTION OF THE GENTILES

God made it clear through His servant Moses that the Jews were His chosen people – His elect, but the Gentiles at that time, were outside of the commonwealth of Israel. After all, God had chosen (elected) them:

Deu 7:7 The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: [8] But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. [9] Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations

Even when Jesus commanded his disciples to go out, he strictly told them not to go to the Samaritans, but strictly to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. It was only later commanded that they should go from Jerusalem to Judah to Samaria and then to the uttermost parts of the world. This was the great mystery the Apostle Paul was talking about that was hid to the Old Testament saints - that the Gentiles would be received into the covenant promised to Abraham.

Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: (Eph 3:4-6)

Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure? which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: (Eph 1:9-10)

It is obvious that the mystery God is speaking about in the letter to the Ephesians in chapters 1 and 3 is, the Gentiles being accepted into God's beloved, which is one of the points Apostle

Paul makes in Romans 9 (vs 23-26, 30). It is strange that any should apply his doctrine of election to the unconditional reprobation and election of individuals. It is the rejection of the Jews (Chapter 11) upon which the calling and election of the Gentiles rests. The Jews had a hard time dealing with the fact that Gentiles were being accepted, and even if they could accept it, many of the Jews demanded that the Gentiles adhere to the law of Moses in order to be justified in God's sight.

## APOSTLE PAUL'S AGONY OVER BLINDED ISRAEL

To better understand Apostle Paul's arguments in this ninth chapter, the Jewish view at that time, of their relationship to God and of salvation, needs to be addressed. It can be readily observed in scripture and extra-biblical literature that the Jews commonly believed that they were saved just because they were of the seed of Abraham:

Mat 3:9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

John 8:33 They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

The Mishnah<sup>1</sup> (Sanhedrin 10:1) begins with the words: "All Israel has a share in the World to Come" but then continues that some Israelites, for example, those who deny the resurrection or that the Torah is from Heaven, do not have a share in the "World to Come". In the Tosefta (Sanhedrin 13:2) there is a debate between Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Joshua on whether the "World to Come" is reserved for Jews or whether this blissful state is the reward of Gentiles as well. The Talmud, Bavli Sanhedrin 11:1-2, Folios 90A-92a, states "All Israel shall have a portion in the World to Come".

Justin Martyr states, "They suppose that to them universally, who are the seed of Abraham, no matter how sinful and disobedient to God they may be, the eternal kingdom shall be given". The Jew believed that because he belonged to Israel, he was part of that elect nation and therefore saved. It is with this belief of the Jew of his day, that the Apostle begins the ninth chapter of the epistle to the Roman church. A similar objection is raised in the fourteenth verse of this same chapter.

## ISRAEL'S HERITAGE - LINE OF THE MESSIAH

Rom 9:4 Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; [5] Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

The Apostle acknowledges that his kinsmen are Israelites and indeed the promises, blessings and privileges of the covenant were given initially to Abraham, the covenant head, and then renewed through Moses (Deut 29:1). They were adopted into God's family (Ex 4:22 - "Israel is my firstborn"). Israel was entrusted with God's word, the law (see Rom 3:2 and 9:4) and performed the ministry in the tabernacle and temple. Their lineage is from the fathers - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his sons, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David and so on. From this line came the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Here we also see that Jesus is without a doubt God, in the flesh - "God blessed, forever" - so let it be!

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<sup>1</sup> The Jewish Mishnah (from the Hebrew - "study by repetition"), is the first redaction (compilation of multiple source texts) of the Jewish oral traditions known as the "Oral Torah". It is also the first major work of Rabbinic literature. The Mishnah was redacted by Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi before his death around 217 AD in a time when the persecution of the Jews and the passage of time raised the possibility that the details of the oral traditions of the Pharisees from the Second Temple period (536 BC - 70 AD) would be forgotten.

## WHO IS A TRUE ISRAELITE?

God's promises have not failed...and here is why...

Rom 9:6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: [7] Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

Keeping in mind that God elected Israel (Deut 7), the passage Rom 9:7-13 speaks about the further election of Jacob and Isaac as the means through which He would restore the world. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were the patriarchs of the Jewish nation and the Old Testament passages (Is 42 and 49) speak about Jacob being restored. When the scriptures refer to Jacob, in many cases they mean Israel and refer to Israel by the virtue of the patriarchs. God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and Israel's line would be preserved through Isaac, not Ishmael.

The Apostle Paul was preaching that whether you are Jew or Gentile, the only way to salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ. The objecting Jew realized that the majority of the Jews were not believers in Christ, but as alluded to in Romans 3:3, God is not unfaithful to his covenant with Abraham. God's promises have not failed, because He did not promise that all of the physical seed of Abraham would be saved. Ishmael was of the physical seed of Abraham, but God did not choose him as the seed bearer through whom the Messiah would come. In other words, this election of Isaac over Ishmael, was not unto salvation, but for deciding the lineage of the Messiah.

Although it appears that Israel has been rejected, yet not all Israel is considered to be true Israel. The true Israelite is one who is circumcised in the heart and not of the flesh (Romans 2:28-29). We can now see a pattern emerging. The Apostle is saying that election is not arbitrary and unconditional, but rather election is of a type or class of people. That is, God unconditionally decided to choose or elect for Himself a "body of people", which is also known as "corporate election". However, God conditionally chose or elected individuals based on their acceptance of God's way of salvation, namely, through faith. Despite the fact that individuals are named in this chapter, we shall clearly see that the Apostle is speaking of how God does His choosing or electing. The concept of ante-types or foreshadows is not strange to the Old Testament. An ante-type is a type that goes before the reality. Melchisedec was as an ante-type of Christ, as was Moses a kinsman-redeemer, who pre-figured the coming of the true deliverer and redeemer, Jesus Christ.

In Rom 9:6 Paul is saying, "Just because you belong to the nation Israel, it doesn't automatically qualify you for His kingdom". Just because they are part of the visible nation of Israel does not make them "True Jews" as already mentioned. Furthermore, just because Abraham was their "father", it does not guarantee them an inheritance of the promises. Abraham had many sons, one of whom was Ishmael. Abraham even cried to God that Ishmael would be the one to inherit his promises (Gen 17:18). Yet, it is "not he that willeth", that is not because Abraham desired it, but the scriptures say that "in Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Heb 11:18). Abraham is the father of many nations; and his seed is not only that which is of the law, but that also which is of the faith of Abraham (Romans 4:16-17). The Gentiles were included in the Abrahamic covenant as well as the Jews; and therefore the Jews have no exclusive right to the blessings of God's kingdom. To summarize, election is particular, but it is of those who are of a particular type. It is corporate unconditionally, but particular individual election to salvation is conditional on faith in Jesus Christ. There is also individual election to service as can be observed with the prophet Jeremiah (Je 1:5) and the Apostle Paul (Rom 1:1; Gal 1:1,15).

## THE CHILDREN OF THE FLESH AND THE CHILDREN OF PROMISE

Rom 9:8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

Here in verse 8, the Apostle reveals who indeed is chosen. He confirms that those who God elects are the children of promise and not children of the flesh. When scripture uses terms such as “a child of the devil” or “children of wrath” or “son of perdition”, it really describes their characteristics. In the same way God is saying that those who are the elect have the specific characteristics that were exemplified in certain individuals, enumerated in this chapter. This will become increasingly clearer as this study continues.

For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. (Rom 9:9-13)

In Romans 9:11, the apostle Paul is calling the choosing of His people “election”, for the purpose of contrasting election with works. Paul was speaking about God choosing Jacob over Esau through whom He would usher in the Messiah and carry out His plan of redemption. It had nothing to do with moral character of the Jacob and Esau, but according to God’s sovereign choice of choosing the children of promise, as promised to Abraham. The Jews for the most part had not attained the righteousness imputed to Abraham, because they wanted to attain it through their own works, and not through faith.

Verses 9 to 13 are used by the proponents of Calvinistic thought to argue that God does in fact predetermine which individuals will be saved. However a closer examination will demonstrate that is not the case. It is quite clear that the promise was becoming a reality to Abraham when the angel said “Sarah shall have a son”. Secondly, when Isaac became of age and married, his wife Rebecca had twins - Jacob and Esau. Once again, many are quick to say “See, God chose Jacob over Esau before they were even born. In fact he loved Jacob and hated Esau”.

Let us examine this very carefully. The Apostle is referring to Genesis 25.

Gen 25:21 And Isaac entreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. [22] And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the LORD. [23] And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.

## COVENANT HEADS REPRESENT THE NATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Of course, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are individuals, but they are also the covenant heads of Israel the nation. It is common in the Old Testament, for a nation to be referred to by the leader who is the representative head (e.g. Esau is the head of Edom).

Num 24:5 How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!

Num 24:17 I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel.....

Psa\_ 14:7 Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

God addressed Israel as if speaking to Jacob, the man:

Isa 41:8 But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. [9] Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.

Isa 43:1 But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine

## JACOB AND ESAU – THE NATIONS

First note that God was telling Rebekah that in her womb were two nations and that two types or manner of *people*. The one *people* shall be stronger than the other *people* and the elder shall serve the younger. The Apostle Paul, even more so, the LORD was not saying that Jacob was chosen for salvation and Esau not, but that the nation which is raised from the loins of Esau will serve the nation which comes from Jacob. While Esau was alive, he never did serve Jacob; as a matter of fact Jacob was so afraid of Esau that he fled back to Mesopotamia to escape his wrath. Even when he returned 20 years later, he still feared Esau, insomuch that he divided his caravan into two so that if Esau captured one half, the other would escape. In Gen 32:4 Jacob even instructed his servants to tell Esau “Your servant Jacob says...”. On the contrary, Jacob was subject to Esau. The last scene in which they are together actually shows Jacob asking forgiveness for supplanting his brother and obtaining the birthright through devious means.

Romans 9:13 is actually a quote from the Book of Malachi, which was written about 1500 years after the birth of Jacob and Esau.

Mal 1:1 The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. [2] I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, [3] And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. [4] Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever. [5] And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel.

The Jews felt God’s heavy hand for 70 years in exile in Babylon and may be doubting if they are still God’s own. They are now rebuilding the temple and their worship was not deep and meaningful, as they had become very lax. Israel feels in despair, having nothing and just waiting for revival and perhaps also felt that God had rejected them. It is likely in this context that they were asking God, “In which way did you love us?” (Malachi 1:2a). However, in response, God wanted Israel to know how much He did love them and He still had a plan for them. In this context God said, “Was not Esau Jacob's brother? yet I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau...”. God could have chosen Esau and used his nation through whom salvation would be brought to the world but, instead He said, “yet I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness” (Mal 1:2-3). In fact God uses the name Edom by which Esau was also known as (Gen 25:30) and which became the name of his nation that followed (Num 20:14; Obadiah 1:1). Esau never said, “We are impoverished....” and neither were his personal mountains or heritage laid waste. If that is how the prophet understood it, there is no reason that the Apostle Paul would have understood it differently. If neither the prophet nor the apostle speaks personally of Jacob and Esau, but of their resulting nations, then it is evident that God “loving Jacob” and “hating Esau” had was not associated with their eternal destinies. If it were true that the Apostle was equating “loving Jacob” with salvation, then it would mean that all of Jacob’s descendants should be saved - but they are not. Neither can we say that none of Esau’s descendants will ever be saved just because they are his physical descendants. This is consistent with the argument that the Apostle so masterfully develops through the agency of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle has already concluded that

all Israel is not the true believing Israel (hence not all Jacob is Jacob). Thus there is no Scriptural or rational ground found in this verse for the decree of unconditional personal election and reprobation, which many claim. Thus, it was an election of a nation to service, and not of an individual to salvation! It is quite clear that the prophet Malachi is not speaking about Jacob or Esau the person, but about the nations that stemmed from them.

This choice was not based upon purity of descent or moral character, since both children were by the same father and lawful mother and furthermore, Jacob was a deceiver. It was based solely on God's sovereign choice. God decided to choose Jacob to preserve the line through whom the seed of the Messiah would come, in order to fulfill His plan to restore the world. Jacob was later renamed Israel. It was an election to service.

What the Apostle Paul is continuing to demonstrate is that God is sovereign and has a right to bless as He chooses, not necessarily those who claim a right to it, as did the nation Israel. God chooses to give salvation to man, not in the ways man expects or devises, but according to His infinite wisdom, goodness and purpose. Therefore, God chose the Jewish people from all others, and revealed Himself to them. Thus they were the chosen nation through whom the Messiah and salvation would come. When the fullness of the time came He revealed himself also to the Gentiles, who gladly received the Gospel - the Jews rejecting it, were cast off. Thus the elect (Jews) were rejected and the rejected (Gentiles) were elected.

## PAUL'S PARALLEL PASSAGES

As was mentioned in the beginning, scripture interprets scripture. In order to confirm the above interpretation, let us look at parallel passages, written by the same author, the Apostle Paul. Apostle Paul develops a similar argument to the Galatian churches since they had a similar problem.

Gal 3:6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. [7] Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. [8] And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. [9] So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Again he is saying that those that are characterized by the faith of Abraham are really the spiritual children of Abraham. We can even see that the scriptures were "foreseeing" or prophesying that the Gentiles, not named individuals, would be justified by faith. Chapter 3 of Galatians concludes with the same conclusion as in Romans 10 and Romans 4:12.

Gal 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. [27] For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. [28] There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. [29] And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

It is important to recall what the Apostle says in the parallel passage in his letter to the Ephesians:

Eph 3:4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) [5] Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; [6] That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

Furthermore, observe what the Apostle states in chapter 4 of Galatians.

Gal 4:22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. [23] But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. [24] Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. [25] For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

Clearly, the Apostle Paul is using the same technique as in Romans 9 of showing how the promises went through Abraham and then to Isaac, not Ishmael. He calls this Old Testament account as an allegory. According to Collins Dictionary, an allegory is,

“a poem, play, picture, etc, in which the apparent meaning of the characters and events is used to symbolize a deeper moral or spiritual meaning”

or,

“anything used as a symbol or emblem”

Even though individual names were used in both Romans 9 and Galatians chapters 3 and 4, they were only used as covenant heads which represent the nation of Israel and ante-types of those who God elects. That is, the children of promise were those that believed, as Abraham believed. As Galatians 4:28 says, “Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.”

God predestined a people. God had in His plan before the foundation of the world to save those who believed in Christ! The simple gospel tells us that.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Rev 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

Whosoever believes shall be saved. If we believe that God is not willing that any should perish and also accept that God arbitrarily saves some and demands that all repent, when God will never give them the power to do so, we portray God as demanding something that He doesn't desire to happen.

## GOD CHOOSES TO WHOM HE WILL SHOW MERCY

It must be understood that from the very first verse of Romans 9, the Apostle Paul is dealing with question of why the Jews are not all saved. He is not endeavouring to settle the Calvin-Arminian debate on election. His arguments may contribute somewhat to that discussion but it is not the main burden on his heart.

Rom 9:14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. [15] For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

What conclusion can we make knowing the above? Do we suggest that God's bestowing peculiar privileges in what appears to be “unequal manner” on those who otherwise are in equal circumstances, is inconsistent with His justice and equity? By no means. Whatever God does is right, and He may dispense his blessings to whom and on what terms He pleases. The Apostle is basically responding to the same objection as in verse 6. If Israel was God's covenant people, is there unrighteousness with God for not saving all Israel? Not at all, because the Apostle Paul demonstrates that just as God in his sovereignty chose through which line the Messiah would come, He is also sovereign in the way He chooses to save. He does not save the Jew just because he is a part of the nation of Israel or just because he works, or wills. God saves on His own terms as in:

1Co 1:21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

In order to establish the context of Rom 9:15, it should be noted in Exodus 32 that Moses pleaded for the lives of those who had made the golden calf. He, like Paul, would have been accursed for the sake of his kinsmen in the flesh. He asked for his name to be blotted out of God's book, but God told Moses that those who had sinned would be blotted out and then destroyed the guilty with a plague. In the next chapter, God tells Moses to keep moving to the promised land, and He would

send an angel to drive out the enemies before them, but God Himself would not go with them, lest He consumed them for their stubbornness.

Exo 33:5 For the LORD had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiffnecked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee.

The people then mourned and Moses pleaded for God to go with them and show His glory. God then responded:

“My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest” (Exo 33:14).

It was in this context that God told Moses that He would have mercy upon whom He would have mercy.

Exo 33:17 And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. [18] And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. [19] And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.

The words of God to Moses in Exodus in 33:19, show that God has a right to dispense his blessings as He pleases. For, after God declared that he would spare the Jews who worshipped the golden calf (Exo 32:14), and persevere in the relationship with his peculiar people, (when in fact, they had deserved to have been cut off for their idolatry), God said to Moses:

“I will make all my goodness pass before thee; and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion”.

As if God said: “I will make such a display of my glory and grace as to demonstrate to Israel that I AM merciful, kind and gracious.” God is not a debtor to any of his creation. His benefits and blessings are merely from His own good will. Nor can any people, much less a rebellious people, challenge God about His decisions. God spared the Jews then, not because Moses interceded, or that the Jews had any claim upon His favor, but of His own free grace He chose to show mercy and compassion to them. This same mercy is confirmed on Israel now, as shown in Rom 9:22. In fact in Exodus 34, as God was passing by Moses, He said:

Exo 34:6 “...The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, [7] Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation”.

God did not arbitrarily give mercy just because He was sovereign. God stated that He will deal with Israel by taking into consideration their obedience or disobedience. God destroyed the idolaters in Exodus 32 and He promised to be merciful to His people and forgive their sins (if they repent, is implied), but He will not clear the guilty (if they did not repent, is implied). The implication is justified because God cannot, “forgive sin” and also “not clear the guilty” at the same time, unless they are distinguished by repentance. This demonstrates God’s sovereignty. God was plainly showing his graciousness to Moses and Israel when He could have easily consumed the people, but chose to demonstrate His goodness and justice through His longsuffering (Rom 9:22). In His sovereignty, God has the freedom and right to do so, but only within his character. He is not arbitrary. He has stated in other scriptures on whom he will have mercy – “the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him” (Psalm 103:17). God could have had David killed for his sins, but instead had mercy. When David pleaded for mercy in Psalm 51, he

clung to the truth that God will not despise, but will accept a broken and contrite spirit (verse 17). He was not bound to be merciful to those who had the blood of Abraham but not the faith of Abraham.

An example of the above verse (Exo 34:6) is that Abraham willed that Ishmael, his firstborn, inherit the covenant blessings, but Isaac was chosen. Esau ran after venison to please his father Isaac, but Jacob was chosen. Why? Because...

Rom 9:16... it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.

The main focus of Christ's teaching in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15) was not the repentance and coming back of the prodigal, but on the gracious and loving heart of the Father. Based on the prodigal's disobedient and sinful life, the father could have easily and justly rejected him, but he chose to have compassion on him. Jesus gave this parable in response to the Jews' murmuring about his acceptance of sinners and publicans. God could have consumed the Jews in the wilderness (Ex 33 & 34) but he was longsuffering with the vessels of wrath and decided to continue with Israel. The heart of the sovereign God was revealed in the wilderness, as being merciful and gracious [when He could have destroyed them], because it pleased Him to do so. God in His sovereignty chose to save those who believe (1Co 1:21). God chose to justify the sinner by faith and not by works. The Jewish nation was insistent that they be justified by the works of the law. They felt that they could demonstrate being worthy of the kingdom by going about to establish their own righteousness (once again we come back to the theme of attaining to God's righteousness).

Rom 10:3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. [4] For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Paul states that the law was introduced to reveal sin, but when it comes to justification, only Christ could do that, through the faith of the repentant sinner. Paul goes on to further emphasize the fact that God is no respecter of persons when it comes to salvation:

Rom 10:12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. [13] For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

## WHAT ABOUT PHARAOH?

Some would like to use Pharaoh as the proof that God determines the actions of man, saying that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, not giving him a choice in the matter.

Rom 9:17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. [18] Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

However, the scriptures actually state that Pharaoh hardened his (own) heart or Pharaoh's heart was hardened for the first five times in the book of Exodus (Exo 7:14-24; Exo 8:1-15; Exo 8:16-19; Exo 8:20-32; Exo 9:1-7). Only on the sixth time does it say that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exo 9:8-12). In other words, Pharaoh's response to God's miracles was a conscious decision to harden his own heart, and then eventually God did it for him. The fact that God foretold that He would eventually harden Pharaoh's heart (cf Ex 4:21), in no way predetermined that Pharaoh would first harden his own heart. It was Pharaoh's own free choice. God did indeed harden Pharaoh's heart, but this hardening was not arbitrary. We are responsible for responding to the conviction of the word of God and the Holy Spirit regarding our heart's condition and this is made clear in the scriptures which exhort us to "harden not your hearts" (1 Samuel 6:6, Psalm 95:8, Mark 8:17, Hebrews 3:8, 15 & 4:7). As mentioned earlier, Romans 1 speaks about God judicially hardening or "giving up" on

those who continually reject His call. When exactly that occurs is in God's divine knowledge and will.

Apostle Paul also writes to the Ephesians and says about the Gentiles:

“This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness”. (Eph 4:17 -19)

Even regarding Israel, the Apostle writes:

According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear; unto this day (Rom 11:8).

After Israel had left Egypt, God said of the Edomites, who were the descendants of Esau, “Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he is thy brother: thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian; because thou wast a stranger in his land” (Deut 23:7). It can be seen that God blesses those that bless Israel and curses those that curse Israel. The reason that God said “Esau have I hated in Malachi may have had to do with the fact that at the time of the Exodus they refused permission to the Israelites to pass through their land (Num 20:14-21), and from that time on maintained an attitude hostility toward them. So why is it a problem to the Jew? Is there unrighteousness with God (Rom 9:14)? He did that for other people and nations who disobeyed Him. God does judicially harden people. As He did with Pharaoh then, He does with Israel now. God hardens them to bring about the fulfillment of His will and glorify Himself.

Rom 3:5 But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)

This sounds just like verse 19:

Rom 9:19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?

Paul's objector is a Jew who has become calloused and is being judicially hardened in that condition. Romans 1 says that no man has an excuse. But if we believe in predeterminism, we have every excuse under the sun. The father chose to have mercy on the returning prodigal son (Luke 15) when he could have easily rejected him for what he had done because he deserved it. But there is a time in God's own mind, when He will harden those who oppose Him.

## DID GOD PREDETERMINE PHARAOH TO SUFFER ETERNAL DAMNATION?

Rom 9:17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

Did God bring Pharaoh into the world for the sole purpose of showing His glory through him, and then destroying and consigning him to eternal damnation? Instead of showing mercy to the Israelites, God might justly had allowed them to have continued in sin, until he made plain, His wisdom and justice in their destruction, which appears to have occurred. God in His word declares His dealings with Pharaoh and the Egyptians:

For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. And in very deed for this *cause* have I raised thee up, for to shew *in* thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.  
 (Exo 9:15-16)

The Hebrew wording for the phrase “raised thee up” is “made thee stand” or “preserved thee”. Compare the following translations:

“I made thee to stand”	American Standard Version (ASV)
“I have kept you from destruction”	1965 Bible in Basic English (BBE)
“I kept you alive”	Common English Version (CEV)
“I have made you stand”	Modern King James Version (MKJV)
“I have caused thee to stand”	Young’s Literal Translation (YLT)

This interpretation is in agreement with the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament. In other words, this is not saying that God prepared Pharaoh before the foundation of the world to carry out his wickedness, for the sole purpose of fulfilling His plan for delivering Israel from Egypt. Rather, God was longsuffering with this obstinate ruler so that both he and his people would not all be destroyed by the ten plagues that would come upon all Egypt. Instead, God preserved him (kept him alive) for this very purpose, to demonstrate to the Hebrews and Egyptians that Jehovah, was the only one, true God that the Hebrews should follow and that the Egyptians should fear. It is not as some interpret, that God predetermined Pharaoh to be destroyed, having no have a choice to repent and be saved. This had nothing to do with Pharaoh’s ultimate salvation or damnation, but rather that God’s power be demonstrated through Pharaoh to the rest of the world.

Now, there appears to be a contradiction in Exodus 9:15 in the KJV because it was translated in the future tense. When the pestilence came in fact, Pharaoh was not cut off. If the words were correctly translated, as they ought from the Hebrew, in the subjunctive mood, and past tense, it would read as most other translations have it, as follows:

Exo 9:15 (ASV) For now I had put forth my hand, and smitten thee and thy people with pestilence, and thou hadst been cut off from the earth:

Exo 9:15 (ESV) For by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth.

Thus God was in effect saying to Pharaoh:

“I could have destroyed you, but for this very cause have I preserved you (despite the plagues and pestilences sent on Egypt) and withheld your deserved destruction for a future day, that I may through you, give such a demonstration of my power in your final overthrow, that all mankind may learn that I AM God, the righteous judge of all the earth, the avenger of wickedness”.

This is a very important point illustrating how God in fact used Pharaoh to glorify Himself (in not immediately destroying Pharaoh, but deferring punishment in His longsuffering). Pharaoh’s is not an isolated story about how God can treat an individual just because “Pharaoh is just a man” and He is God. Instead, the Apostle Paul illustrates that as Pharaoh was then, so Israel is now. Paul is drawing parallels between Pharaoh then and Israel now. Pharaoh was disobedient, God hardened his heart, but was longsuffering and kept Pharaoh in power. Israel was disobedient, God hardened their hearts, but was longsuffering and preserved them. In Exodus 9:16, God did not destroy

Pharaoh immediately, but preserved Pharaoh and through the hardening process God would accomplish His purposes for glorifying Himself and saving Israel.

Pharaoh was hardened so God's name would be proclaimed throughout the world. At the end of the Exodus, Israel could say "God rescued us from Pharaoh" and if the people asked, whose God is that, they could tell them that He is the God of Israel who rescued us from Egypt, from the most powerful man in the whole world.

## WHY DOES GOD THEN, YET FIND FAULT?

Rom 9:19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?

Apostle Paul is saying that the Jew in Romans 9 is objecting in a similar manner as the Jew in Rom 3:7, where he says:

For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?

That is, if the faithfulness of God in keeping His promises made to our fathers, is made far more glorious through our unfaithfulness, why would God blame us for something that gives Him more glory? Likewise in Romans 9:19, the question here can be understood as, "If God's glory is so manifested and magnified by the obstinacy of the Jews, and He allows them to continue in their hardness and unfaithfulness, why does He find fault with them for that which seems to be according to His good pleasure?" In order to answer this question, the Apostle turns to the parable of the potter and the clay.

## THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? (Rom 9:20-21)

The Apostle Paul is likely alluding to the passages of scripture contained in Isaiah 29:16, 45:9 and Jeremiah 18:6-10, regarding the analogies of the potter working with his clay:

Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding? (Isa 29:16)

Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands? (Isa 45:9)

In the preceding chapter (Isa 44) God rebuked the foolishness of those in Israel who chopped down trees and burned part of the logs in a fire to bake bread and with the leftover wood carved out their idols. God then demonstrated His sovereignty over the nations by foretelling how His "shepherd", whom He already named Cyrus, will enter the open gates of Babylon (Isa 45:1, 2). This actually occurred about two hundred years later when Cyrus the Persian overthrew Babylon, and was given the treasures of the city (see also Daniel 5). In Isaiah 45, God called Israel His elect (nation) and said "I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me" (v. 5). He then stated that He was God and there was no other god beside Him. God will make the Egyptians, Ethiopians and Sabeans, submit to Israel, acknowledging that He is in Israel (v. 14) and save Israel with everlasting salvation (v. 17). It was in this context that God exclaimed, "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?" (v. 9). God was rebuking those who were challenging His sovereignty, making it very clear how He would deal with the nations. Likewise, the Apostle Paul in Romans 9 merges the passages from Isa 29, Isa

45 and Jeremiah 18 to convey a similar point, that God is sovereign and will hold Israel accountable for their obstinacy. God chooses how He will deal with the Gentiles and with Israel, Paul's kinsmen in the flesh.

God can deal with rebellious nations, especially the Jews, as He pleases (recall that Paul is speaking about his nation Israel from the beginning of Romans 9). As the potter has a right, out of the same lump of clay, to make one vessel to a more honourable use, and another to a less honourable use, according to His own judgment and will, so God in His infinite wisdom may decide under what terms salvation comes not only to Israel but to the Gentiles also. No potter will make a vessel just for the sake of having pleasure in smashing it to pieces. God told Jeremiah to go down to the potter's house, who then watched the potter work. The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah saying,

O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them. (Jer 18:6-10)

God told Israel the nation, "Don't I have the same power over you as the potter does with the clay? Israel is the clay in my hands and I will use it as I will". This did not mean that God would not take into consideration anything done by Israel in coming to a decision about them. It is clearly seen in verses 7-10 that if Israel turned from their evil, God would change His mind about the punishment that He was prepared to mete out to them. God was not obligated to refrain from punishing Israel just because they were His chosen people. On the other hand, if Israel became disobedient, He would withhold the benefits which He was prepared to provide them. The potter did not throw the clay out, but persevered and reshaped it for another of his own purposes. Likewise, the Apostle Paul in Romans 9 merges the passages from Isaiah 29, Isaiah 45 and Jeremiah 18 to bring across a similar point, that because God is sovereign, He chooses how He will deal with the Israel in order to accomplish His plan for them and the Gentiles. Israel rejected the Messiah and so God rejected them in part and for a time. Now through the Gentiles, they will accept the Messiah, although a smaller number, and become one with the Gentiles under One God and Lord.

God is not obligated to save rebellious children of Israel on their own terms. They wanted to obtain His favour claiming a right to it, by earning it. They went about to establish their own righteousness, and not the righteousness of Christ through faith in him. Israel felt salvation was merited to them by their heritage and works, but God said that it shall not be so. The Book of Deuteronomy tells us that God chose Israel to be His people (Deut 7:7), and Jews of New Testament times accepted that as unconditional election to salvation. However Jesus tells the Jews otherwise. When Jesus saw the faith of the centurion who felt so unworthy for Christ to even come to his house and heal his servant, he tells those Jews who thought they were the elect of God in the Old Covenant, that they would be thrust out of the kingdom. Why? Because they sought not the kingdom by faith, as this centurion manifested. Jesus chose this example as a stark contrast between those who wanted to be justified by their own works and lineage, and the Gentile centurion who exhibited a faith which Christ could not even find in Israel.

Mat 8:10 When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. [11] And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. [12] But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. [13] And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.

The analogy of the potter and the clay also demonstrates God's right to deal with His creation as He chooses, but does not mean that His decisions must always be unconditional choices. When we read in the Bible that God will do as He chooses, we need to ask the question, "What does God choose to do?" When we read in Romans 9:15 that God will have mercy and compassion on whomsoever He wills, it behooves us to ask: "On whom does God will to show mercy and compassion? There are many examples in the Bible which answer this question, one of which was that of the Philippian jailer who cried out to Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul's response was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:30-31). When God chooses someone who believes in Him, it should never be considered as a decision that God is forced to make, since the whole plan of salvation was God's from the beginning.

To summarize, the parallel is as follows:

1. Israel rejects the gospel
2. Apostle Paul turns to the Gentiles.
3. Israel sees the Gentiles experiencing the blessings of the gospel and they desire to have them also. (Rom 10:10; Rom 11:11)
4. God uses their jealousy and disobedience to show mercy to all, Jew and Gentile alike.
5. God can use imperfect material to show his mercy and fulfill his sovereign plan.

## WHAT IF GOD WILLING TO SHOW HIS WRATH?

Rom 9:22 What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

Pharaoh and the Egyptians were vessels of wrath – people that were very guilty before God; and by their stubborn rejection of His grace and abuse of His goodness, they had fitted themselves for that destruction which God's justice inflicted, after He had endured their rebellion with much long-suffering. This is proof that the hardening of their hearts, and their ultimate punishment, were the consequences of their own stubborn rejection of His grace and abuse of His goodness. The account in Exodus clearly shows this, and this is in perfect alignment with Romans 2:6-9.

The Jews at the time of the Apostles had sinned in a similar manner to the Egyptians, hardening their hearts. They abused God's goodness, even after experiencing God's long-suffering and kindness. They were thus fitted for destruction and deserving of punishment. The power which God was making known to them for their salvation was so long abused and rejected that God instead used it in their destruction as a nation. But even in this case there is not a word of their final damnation as a nation, even though as individual Jews, they were in danger of this very thing (Matthew 23:33); and so it was not a sovereign decree before the foundation of the world which reprobated them, but it was their sins which were the cause of their punishment, and the reason that they were damned.

Thus Romans 9:22 is asking "What if Israel was ripe for destruction because of their disobedience, but instead God was longsuffering and patient with them, so that He could show mercy to the other vessels, the Gentiles?" The entire passage from Romans 9:17-21 is plainly showing God's mercy, even when Israel is at its worst. After Israel's election by God, Israel was disobedient but God is merciful to them by being longsuffering and enduring their obstinacy and unbelief.

## THE RICHES OF GOD'S GLORY TAKEN FROM THE JEWS AND GIVEN TO THE GENTILES

Rom 9:23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

Paraphrasing Romans 9:22-23:

What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known on Israel who deserved it, and what if instead, God endured with much longsuffering the nation of Israel who were "ripe" for or "deserving" of destruction: And that God might make known the riches of his glory on the Gentiles, which He had before, prepared for glory [clearly corporate election], Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

God endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath to show His wrath and, not only to make His power known, but also that, He might make known the riches of His glory on the "vessels of mercy". The Jews were fitted for destruction long before; but the "fittest" time for God to destroy them was after He had prepared the believing Gentiles unto glory.

Christ was first sent to the Jews (John 4:22, Matt 15:24) who resisted God's grace, not only for themselves, but also opposed the gospel being spread to the Gentiles. They persecuted the church and Gentiles who wanted to enter it. They rejected God's way of salvation, and instead sought their own way (Rom 9:33; Rom 10:3; Rom 11:11-30), thus forfeiting the God's abundant grace which was instead received by the Gentiles. This is how God made known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which were the Apostles and the early believers from among the Jews and the Gentiles, through the preaching of the cross.

## BLESSINGS OF ABRAHAM GIVEN TO NOT ONLY JEWS, BUT ALSO GENTILES

Rom 9:24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? [25] As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. [26] And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God. [27] Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: [28] For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. [29] And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.

All the Jews and Gentiles called by the preaching of the Gospel are justified by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and have come to the wedding feast (Matt 22:1-14). The Apostle Paul quotes the prophet Hosea (Hos 2:23), where he shows that this calling of the Gentiles was no arbitrary thing, but a firm purpose in the mind of God. By rejecting the calling of the Gentiles, the Jews in effect renounced their prophets and resisted God. The apostle says that God had rejected a great part of the Jews for their unfaithfulness, and only a few of them would embrace the Gospel, and be saved from destruction which was now coming to sweep them and their nation away. The Prophet Isaiah cries out that there will only be, a small remnant saved (Isa 10:22-23). If God had not preserved a very small remnant, to keep up the name of believing Israel and the existence of believing Israel as a nation, it would have been cut off and extinct, as Sodom and Gomorrha were. Therefore we can see that it is not a new thing with God to abandon the greatest part of the Jewish nation, when corrupt, and to place His favor and blessing only to a righteous, believing few. Instead of the word "remnant", the apostle used the word "seed", indicating that there were left just enough of the righteous to be a seed, so that the godly were not utterly destroyed. Some remained, and the harvest of true believers, was to occur in the days of the apostles.

When the Apostle Paul was under house arrest in Rome, he invited certain Jews in Rome, to tell them that he was bound in chains for the hope of Israel and wanted to testify to them of the kingdom of God (Acts 28:20-23). Some believed, and some did not believe, so before they departed he quoted to them, the prophet Isaiah:

“Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. (Act 28:25-28)

God placed the responsibility on Israel because they chose to close their eyes and shut their ears and God is able at any time to confirm them in their unbelief by judicially hardening their hearts (Matt 13:11; John 12:40; Rom 11:7-8). This is not unlike Paul and Barnabas turning from the Jews to the Gentiles:

Act 13:45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Act 13:46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

God's desire that Israel be saved, but since rejected the gospel, God left them in their unbelief, and turned to the Gentiles, which is what He had promised to Abraham.

## THE GENTILES ATTAINED TO THAT WHICH THE JEWS DID NOT

Rom 9:30 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. [31] But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. [32] Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; [33] As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

The apostle continues to speak about groups of people and not individuals. The Apostle Paul ends Romans Chapter 9 with the reason the majority of the Jewish nation was rejected. The conclusion was that they did not seek after God's righteousness, but their own. If the whole discourse was to demonstrate that God predetermines those who are saved and those who are not, then surely this would have been at least a part of his conclusion. The Gentiles which followed not after righteousness obtained it. The Jews who tried to establish their own righteousness, did not attain to the righteousness of God. The Gentiles were called and adopted into the family of God, purely by the grace and mercy of God, which was received by faith in Christ. But the Jews, who are God's chosen people, though they had been observing the law given to them by Moses, did not seek God's acceptance through faith in Christ. They were ignorant of God's righteousness and tried to establish their own. They did not seek to be justified through the Abrahamic covenant, which stands on the principles of grace and faith, but rather to be justified by the works of the law of Moses. They thought that their obedience to that law gave them a right to the blessings of the Messianic kingdom.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout the Letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has clearly conveyed the gospel of Jesus Christ, and weaved into it specifically, the place of the Jew and Gentile, in God's plan of salvation. He has demonstrated how all sinners, both Jew and Gentile, can through faith accept the atoning work of Christ on the cross and be saved. The Jews were privileged in that they were the covenant people of God, and had the advantage in that they were given God's law through Moses. They were also the first to have the gospel preached unto them. This advantage however made them all the more accountable for their sin and brought the more condemnation upon them for rejecting the Messiah and his gospel. God has chosen (elected) those individuals who have responded to His calling in faith, and rejected those men and women who have rejected His way of righteousness and insisted on justifying themselves with their works.

The election spoken of is corporate and has to do with the types of people God saves. Both Jew and Gentile who, accept salvation through faith, are called the children of promise. The Jews that went about to be accepted of God through their works, are called the children of the flesh. The Apostle Paul ends Romans chapter 9 by giving the reason why the Jews in mass, were rejected. The conclusion was because they did not seek after God's righteousness but their own. If the whole discourse in Romans 9 was to demonstrate that God predetermines those who are saved and those who are not, then surely this would have been his conclusion.

Finally, in Romans 9, the Apostle Paul is not painting a picture of God narrowing down the numbers of those who will be saved by particular individual election and demonstrating his sovereignty by reprobating the rest of humanity to eternal damnation. Instead God is shown as ever being longsuffering and merciful by which He is seeking to give opportunity to save not only Israel, but the Gentiles also. God used Israel to bring restoration to the entire world and then in turn used the Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy in order to save the remnant of the Jews who would believe. Thus Romans 9 is not settling the predestination debate, but is a response to those who were questioning if God's promises to Israel had failed, and the response was that God's promises had not failed, but God was using Israel's obstinacy and faithlessness, to bring the Gentiles into the covenant and through them to save a remnant of Israel, by faith.