

ROMANS CH.9

MAJOR THEME: THE GOSPEL: THE RIGHTEOUSNES OF GOD REVEALED IN SOVEREIGN CHOICE

Hymn: #437 I Know Who I Have Believed

(Modified Outline of John A. Witmer- Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology, Dallas Theological Seminary; The Bible Knowledge Commentary; SP Publications; 1983; p.438)

- 1) INTRODUCTION AND THEME (1:1-17)
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 - D) Power for Sanctification (8:1-17) "Life Through The Holy Spirit"
 - E) Goal of Sanctification (8:18-27) "Future Glory"
 - F) Certainty of Sanctification (8: 28-39) "More than conquerors"

5) RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD REVEALED IN SOVEREIGN CHOICE (Ch. 9-11).

In the real estate world the great catch phrase is "location, location, location". In the biblical interpretation world, the great catch phrase is "context, context, context". Few passages in the Bible are more important in which to apply this principle. Chapters 9, 10 and 11 form a "trilogy of thought" for the Apostle Paul.

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However, for many this trilogy is seen simply as a three chapter “parenthetical rabbit trail” that Paul threw in as an aside to his overall thoughts of the Righteousness of God Revealed in the book of Romans. For others, this section is viewed as the “head waters” from which to fill one’s “individual doctrine of election bucket” with numerous proof texts. Neither of these views, I believe, honour the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul or the hermeneutical principle of context. Here’s why:

First, this is not just a three chapter “parenthetical rabbit trail”, but rather there are doctrinal reasons why the Holy Spirit and Paul put this long discourse on Israel here in Romans. Paul has just finished introducing the great truths of election, foreknowledge, predestination, and calling in Ch. 8. He concluded saying that the believer is secure in Jesus Christ and that God’s election would stand (8:28-30). But Paul, as he often did (3:5-8), anticipated push back and questions that might arise in his hearers minds. “Someone might ask, ‘What about the Jews? They were chosen by God, yet now you tell us they are set aside and God is building His Church. Did God fail to keep His promises to Israel?’ In other words, the very character of God was at stake. If God was not faithful to the Jews, how do we know he will be faithful to the Church? *(Wiersbe; Romans- Be Right; p.109)* Paul takes three chapters to provide a solid theological response to this legitimate question and he does so by showing Israel’s past election (Ch. 9), Israel’s present rejection (Ch. 10) and Israel’s future reception (Ch. 11). *(Another helpful overall view of Romans is to see Ch. 1-8 as Doctrinal; Ch. 9-11 as Dispensational; Ch. 12-16 as Duty. Recognizing Ch. 9-11 as Dispensational keeps us from the anti-Semitic Replacement Theology)*

Second, God’s Sovereign Choice in election in Ch.9-11 is displayed in the context of national Israel. Paul is NOT discoursing here on the Christian doctrine of personal election. We must look elsewhere in the Bible for that, such as Eph. 1:4-6; Eph. 3:10-11; Rom. 8:28-30. As we will discuss, personal election actually fifth stage in the great doctrine of election. In terms of instrumentality and chronology from our perspective, God himself is first, Jesus Christ is Second, Israel is third, the Church is fourth and finally in fifth position is your personal election and mine. What Paul is setting forth is how God’s Righteousness is seen in His Sovereign election of the instruments through which He is accomplishing His eternal purpose. In the process, he can be trusted and will be absolutely faithful to both the elected instrument and His purpose. Israel, God’s chosen instrument has failed. They rejected their Messiah when He came to them. Does this mean God has abandoned elected Israel? Absolutely not!

One last comment before we unpack this chapter. These chapters invariably raise the apparent paradox between the Sovereignty of God in election and the free will of man in personal responsibility. It’s been said that “If you try and explain election, you may lose your mind. If you try and explain it away you may lose your soul.” To avoid losing one’s mind or one’s soul, Christians have historically parked themselves in one of two doctrinal camps: Calvinism or Armenianism. This polarized situation has not been particularly fruitful or healthful to the world or Christians, though there is a sense of security there in not losing either your mind or soul. I plan to view and articulate this seeming paradox of election through the lens of a Trinitarian pair of glasses. This view, when coupled with the lifting of the restraint of time (*something God is not burdened with*), I hope the eyes of our hearts may be opened to see a new and beautifully secure place to pitch out tent. Perhaps we may even find the ease of Charles Spurgeon, who when asked how he reconciled the Sovereignty of God in election and the free will of man in personal responsibility, replied: “I never try and reconcile friends”.

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A) God's Sovereign Choice Enunciated (9:1-29)

i) Israel's Privileges (9:1-5)

(1) Israel was clearly chosen by a Sovereign act of God beginning with His selection of one man. A pagan from Ur of the Chaldeans known for its worship of the moon and from a family of idol worshippers. His name was Abram. From his election, Israel found its election and with that many privileges that witness to their election

(a) Adoption as sons

- (i) Ex. 4:22-23 Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, "Let my son go, so he may worship me."
- (ii) Hos. 11:1 "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. But the more I called Israel, the further they went from me."

(b) The Covenants

- (i) The Abrahamic Covenant- Gen 12:2- "I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you"; it establishes the nation of Israel, and confirms, with specific additions, the Adamic promise of redemption.
- (ii) The Mosaic Covenant- Ex 19:5- gave them the Law and condemns all men, "for all have sinned."
- (iii) The Palestinian Covenant -Dt 30:3- promises Israel the land and secures the final restoration and conversion of Israel.
- (iv) The Davidic Covenant -2Sam 7:16- establishes the perpetuity of the Davidic family (fulfilled in Christ, Mt 1:1 Lk 1:31-33, Rom 1:3 and of the Davidic kingdom, over Israel, and over the whole earth; to be fulfilled in and by Christ 2Sam 7:8-17; Zech. 12:8; Lk 1:31-33; Acts 15:14-17; 1Cor 15:24.)

(c) The receiving of the Law

(d) The Temple worship

(e) The Promises

(f) The Patriarchs

(g) The human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

(2) With privilege comes responsibility, but sadly Israel as a nation failed in her responsibility. He came unto His own and His own received Him not (John 1:11)

ii) **The Choice Illustrated (9:6-18)** But Paul is quick to show that "the failure of the Jews to respond to the Gospel of Christ did not mean God's Word had failed. Instead this rejection was simply the current example of God's Sovereign choice established in the OT." (*John Witmer- Dallas Theological Seminary- Bible Knowledge Commentary; p. 476*). Paul shows this using three OT examples with the reminder "that not all who are descended from Israel are Israel."

(1) Isaac not Ishmael (9:6-9)

(a) Isaac was the "promised" child. Ishmael came by Abraham and Sarah's "scheming". God chose to make belief in His promise, as embodied in the chosen instrument of Isaac, the means of salvation.

- (i) Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness (Rom 4:3)
- (ii) Gal. 4:28 "Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise."
- (iii) Faith is living without "scheming". When we start scheming, we are no longer believing.

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(2) **Jacob not Esau** (9:10-13)

- (a) V. 13 “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated” has proven to be problematic for many people and a proof text for double predestination for others. If we remember four things about this verse it may solve much of what appears problematic.
- (i) The statement here in context has to do with national election, not an individual’s personal election.
 - (ii) The statement comes from Mal. 1:1-2 which refers to nations (Israel and Edom) not individuals.
 - (iii) The statement was made 1400 years AFTER Jacob and Esau lived, not before they were born. It was said AFTER Esau has lived and confirmed himself, by his own choice, to be a godless (Gen. 25:30-34; Heb. 12:16) and wicked man and enemy of his brother. Esau is Edom (Gen.36:8,9,19; Obadiah 1,6,10,18)
 - (iv) “Hatred” here in this sense is not “absolute hatred” but is relative to a higher choice as in Luke 14:26 “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters - yes, even his own life - he cannot be my disciple”

(3) **Moses not Pharaoh** (9: 14-18)

- (a) V. 14 “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion” has also been problematic for many people and a proof text for double predestination for others. But if we apply the real estate principle of “context, context, context” we can avoid a theological blind alley.
- (i) This statement comes from Exodus 33 in the context of Israel’s idolatry while Moses was up on Mt. Sinai receiving the Law. The whole nation deserved to be destroyed, but instead God only destroyed 3,000. Not because the others were less wicked than the 3,000 who died, but purely because of His grace and mercy. (*Incidentally, 3000 is the same number who were saved on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came down and inaugurated a new dispensation from Law to Grace*)
 - (ii) This verse must also be read in the greater context of Romans 11:32 “For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.” This immediately dispels any notion of God, in eternity past and in hatred, electing some individuals for damnation.
- (b) V. 17-18 have also proven problematic for many. But if we keep anchored in the context of God’s sovereign election of instrumentality, namely Israel, to fulfil His eternal purpose (*“His Word” in v.6*), then we see God chose Israel through Moses in mercy and did not chose Egypt through Pharaoh in hardening.
- (i) God raised up (“spared” in Ex. 9:16) Pharaoh to display His power so that His Name might be proclaimed in all the earth. Pharaoh had the choice to cooperate with this or to resist it. Cyrus is an example of a pagan world ruler who cooperated with God’s purposes, even though he didn’t acknowledge God or follow Him (Is. 44:28; 45:1, 3-5, 11, 13; Ez.1:1-4). Yet, Pharaoh chose to “set himself against” God’s people (Ex. 9:17)
 - (ii) God “hardens” by letting people go their own way. In Romans 1: 18 the wrath of God is revealed in the form of giving people over to their own choices (v. 24, 26, 28).
 1. Pharaoh had already hardened his heart in Ex. 5:2 “Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the

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LORD and I will not let Israel go.", BEFORE God tells Moses he will harden his heart in Ex. 7:3

(iii) God simply let Pharaoh go his own way and in doing so, Pharaoh hardened his own heart as we shall see in v.22

iii) The Choice Explained (9:19-29)

- (1) Having clearly established the fact of Israel's election by God's Sovereign choice he now explains how their rejection of the Messiah has resulted in God turning to another elected instrument of mercy, the Church.
- (2) V. 19 "Who resists his will" the obvious answer is no one. This is certainly true in the context of election. We have said earlier that Jesus Christ is the sphere of our individual election (Eph. 1:4). There is no other individual election but that which is "in Him", and no one can change the sovereign choice of God to make the election of Jesus Christ, our own election as well. We, like Pharaoh may choose to cooperate with our election in Jesus Christ or we may choose to resist it and fight against God's eternal purpose but either way, we CONFIRM our election in Him. Here's how:
 - (a) Jesus Christ as the God-Man is the "Electing God" and the "Elected man".
 - (i) As the Electing God he came to give us the Righteousness of God and take us into Glory in Resurrection and Ascension.
 - (ii) As the Elected Man he came take from us the Sin of Adam by suffering rejection, judgement and death upon a cross, taking us down into death with him; a judgement and death he bore for us; one we could not bear without being completely lost.
 - (iii) If we receive Him by faith we confirm our election and enjoy that which the God-Man Jesus accomplished as the Electing God.
 - (iv) If we resist Him, we still confirm our election, but do so in the judgement and death which the Elected Man underwent for us and did not want us to experience.
 - (v) So if we must speak of election as a "double predestination" then let us define it in Jesus Christ who as the God-Man fulfils both forms; salvation and judgement. Equally, let us confirm our election in grace by faith, not in judgement by unbelief.
- (3) V. 22-23 Israel as God's third stage of election, is the elected community which is currently confirming her election in judgment and death as a result of her unbelief. The Church, comprised of both Jews and Gentiles, is God's fourth stage of election; an elected community which is currently confirming her election in grace as a result of faith.
 - (a) God has borne "with great patience the objects of his wrath prepared for destruction". (ie: Pharaoh and now Israel)
 - (i) Prepared" here in v. 22 is the verb καταρτίζω- "fitted"; "ripened". It is a perfect participle in the middle voice thus making it carry the reflexive meaning of "fitted themselves" for destruction. (*Wiersbe; Romans- Be Right. p.115; John Witmer- Dallas Theological Seminary- Bible Knowledge Commentary; p. 478*)
 1. Pharaoh and Israel "prepared themselves" for wrath by their own choice; they "fitted themselves" and "ripened themselves" for wrath even as God bore with great patience giving them every opportunity to turn.

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- (ii) "Prepared" in v. 23 is a different word entirely, it is προετοιμάζω- meaning lit. He prepared beforehand in advance.
 - 1. By faith, called Jew and gentile form the elected instrument and community of the Church which God has prepared in advance for glory.
 - a. 1 Pet. 1:20 "He was chosen before the creation of the world..."
 - b. Eph. 1:4 "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world..."
 - c. 2 Tim. 1:9 "This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time..."
- (4) V. 24-26 When Paul says "even us" he includes himself in the elected community which is currently confirming her election in grace as a result of faith- The Church.
 - (a) He then goes on to **apply** Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 to gentiles (**NOT reinterpret them to mean Israel is part of the Church**) as proof that even believing gentiles are sovereignly prepared in advance for glory.
- (5) V. 27-29 Paul is showing that even in God's judgement on rebellious Israel, He always preserves and saves a remnant. (Ex. The returned captives; those who survived 70 AD; holocaust survivors; the 144,000; today the "remnant" is seen in Messianic believers- "a remnant chosen by grace" 11: 5; a group which Paul included himself in 11:1)

B) God's Sovereign Choice Applied (9:30-10:21)

i) Israel's Stumbling (9:30-33)

- (1) Paul then brings us right back to the main theme of Romans- the Righteousness of God, and demonstrates once again how it is attained by faith not by works. The Jews, in spite of their election, stumbled and fell when they rejected Jesus Christ who is the long prophesied "stumbling stone" of Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16.

Let's summarize with the helicopter view of the details of Ch. 9 which is about national Israel's election, not the fertile ground of proof texts for building a doctrine of individual election. The election of two communities is seen here: The Election of Israel and the Election of The Church. Israel's election and peculiar service is as "hearers only" (Rom.10:18) and thus serve as the representatives of the divine judgement, from which God has rescued man. The Church's election and peculiar service is as "believers of the promise" and thus serve as the representatives of the divine mercy, which God desires for all man.

Israel cannot escape its appointed service, but must now discharge it in a manner corresponding to its adopted attitude of rejection; that is in judgement. Israel resists its divine election, but they are not rejected. Rather as we shall see, they have been temporarily hardened in part (Romans 11:25) to serve the divine purpose of God to graft the gentiles into the salvation blessings prophesied to Abraham our father of faith... "...and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Gen 12:3