

The Christian Manual: Study 12, Romans 9

Romans Studies for Teens by Mike Apodaca, MA



Begin with prayer for wisdom from God and for the presence of the Spirit.

Note: In a Bible Study, as much as possible ask the questions and let the students answer. Where they cannot, you supply the answer and keep everything flowing.

Introduction: What happened to the Jews? They had every advantage and did not finish the race. Why? Paul is the one most suited to answer this. Remember, he was agreeing with the stoning of Stephen. He knows how the Jewish people think.

The Jews have it all—except the most important thing

Section 1: Romans 9: 1-5 The Benefits of Being Jewish

I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit—²I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, ⁴the people of

Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises.⁵Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

Paul declares the unthinkable. It is so out there that he has to convince the reader that he is not lying and that even the Holy Spirit has confirmed the truth of this. What does he declare? That he is willing to be separated from Christ, to be back in the position of having to account for his own sins—essentially, to go to hell—for the sake of the Jewish people. There are people who will give up their lives for those they love. But how many would give up their eternal salvation? This is love deeper than I can imagine.

The Jews had every advantage.

Theirs was:

- The adoption as sons. God adopted Israel for His own.

Exodus 4:22, Then say to Pharaoh, 'This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son,

- The divine glory. God was in their midst.

1 Kings 8:11 And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled his temple.

- The covenants. God made binding promises to Israel.

Exodus 24:7 Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey. 8 Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

- The receiving of the Law. God revealed the perfect code for life.

Psalms 147:19 He has revealed his word to Jacob, his laws and decrees to Israel.

- The temple worship. Israel had God in their midst in the temple.

Isaiah 56:7 Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.

- The promises. The Old Testament is brimming with promises to Israel.

Deuteronomy 30:6-7 And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

⁷ And the LORD thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee.

- The patriarchs

Deuteronomy 10:15 Yet the LORD set his affection on your forefathers and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations, as it is today.

- The Messiah's lineage. God promised that the Messiah would come through the seed of Abraham and the seed of David.

Genesis 22:17-18 indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

Jeremiah 23:5-6 "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Paul's point here is that Israel had every advantage and blessing from God.

Section 2: Romans 9:6-29 God can do what He wants

⁶It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. ⁷Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." ⁸In other words, it is not the children by physical descent who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. ⁹For this was how the promise was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son."

¹⁰Not only that, but Rebekah's children were conceived at the same time by our father Isaac. ¹¹Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: ¹²not by works but by him who calls—she was told, "The older will serve the younger." ¹³Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

¹⁴What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! ¹⁵For he says to Moses,

"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

¹⁶It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy. ¹⁷For Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." ¹⁸Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

¹⁹One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?" ²⁰But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" ²¹Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?

²²What if God, although choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction? ²³What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his

mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory—
²⁴even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? ²⁵As he says in Hosea:

“I will call them ‘my people’ who are not my people;
and I will call her ‘my loved one’ who is not my loved one,”
²⁶and,

“In the very place where it was said to them,
‘You are not my people,’
there they will be called ‘children of the living God.’”

²⁷Isaiah cries out concerning Israel:

“Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea,
only the remnant will be saved.

²⁸For the Lord will carry out
his sentence on earth with speed and finality.”

²⁹It is just as Isaiah said previously:

“Unless the Lord Almighty
had left us descendants,
we would have become like Sodom,
we would have been like Gomorrah.”

It is easy to see that this weighed on Paul’s mind. How could the people of Israel, with every religious advantage, still have turned their backs on God to the point where they were yelling, “Crucify him!” when He came to them?

Paul entertains a radical idea: What God does is always right, even if it doesn’t make sense to us. He is the potter and has complete control over the clay. God calls all of Israel, but only part of Israel is saved—just like God called the seed of Abraham, but Jacob was chosen and Esau was rejected. Israel’s rejection was not a surprise to God. He is not nervous about Israel’s unbelief. All of this is according to God’s plan. His desire is to save all men. Israel was given these benefits not to save them alone, but that they would be the vehicle for salvation for all mankind. In the end, God is God.

Section 3: Romans 9:30-33 The only important thing

³⁰What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness, have not attained their goal. ³²Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. ³³As it is written:

“See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble

and a rock that makes them fall,
and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame.”

Psalm 110:22 The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;

This is a key verse in Scripture. Jesus quotes it in Matthew 21:42.

Peter quotes this verse in Acts when he explains that God had healed the paralyzed man and that Jesus whom they crucified was the Messiah. He makes the point that they are the builders who have rejected the cornerstone (Acts 4:11).

Paul alludes to it when he explains Jesus is the cornerstone of a new temple, the church of God (Ephesians 2:20-22, see also 1Peter 2:4-8).

What was the difference between the Gentiles who came into Christ and the Jews who did not? Faith. The Gentiles knew they were sinful. They understood that they had nothing in themselves to earn or merit salvation. They believed in God’s perfect sacrifice, Jesus on the cross. They put their trust in Jesus. The Jews tried to reach God on their own righteousness, the performance of the Law, their own works. They put their trust in themselves.



WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Paul was a Jew. He had been a terrible persecutor of Christians, dragging them out of their homes, imprisoning them. He had hated the Way. It went contrary to everything he loved.

And then, he met Jesus on the road to Damascus. Suddenly traditions and training and upbringing fell in the face of personal encounter. Paul was changed. Whereas before he had attacked the church, now he was their strongest, most boisterous advocate.

Although Paul now understood that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises, the hope of Israel, he ached inside for his Jewish brothers. Paul spent a great deal of his time in synagogues trying to persuade his countrymen of what he now knew to be the truth.

Israel was given every advantage above mankind. They were, of all people, closest to God and the most revelation. He had dwelt among them in the tabernacle and temple. He had given revelation to the patriarchs and his law to Moses. And the Messiah was promised to come through Israel. And yet, in spite of every advantage, Israel chose the way of works and an attempt to reach God through their own self-righteousness. The way of faith, the way that leads to grace, was far from them.



CONNECT: Icebreaker

Meet together in groups of four or five. Have the following discussion:

1. Is there anyone you desperately want to see come to Christ? Have you shared with this person your witness and the reason why you cling to Christ? Have you told them why you chose for Christ in the first place? If so, what was the response?
2. Pick two people in your group to do a role play where one is a person who is against Christianity. Have a discussion the Christian will try to convince this hostile person that Jesus is their savior. Remember, make it personal. Explain what Christ means to you personally.
3. If time permits, have another two people in your group try this.



WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Section 1 Romans 9:1-5

Paul would exchange his own salvation to save the Jews. The Jewish people have every advantage. God had revealed Himself most completely to the Jews, even adopting them as sons.

Section 2 Romans 9:6-29

God has always made choices. He took Jacob and not Esau. He hardened Pharaoh's heart. He is God, after all. And now His choice is to take in the Gentiles, who come to Him by faith, and to put aside the Jews, who will not believe in Him and instead try to approach Him on their own merits. Paul ends this section showing that God had promised that not all Israel would come to him, that most of them would reject Him. Only a remnant would really come to Him and show themselves His people. This remnant, this faithful part of Israel, is the church.

Section 3 Romans 9:30-33

David prophesied that there would be a stone that the builders would reject. This stone would become the cornerstone (the stone by which all other stones are fitted). The Israelites who had rejected Christ had rejected this most important cornerstone.

What was their rejection? It was their unwillingness to let go of their way of approaching God, through their works. In their pride of being Israelites, God's chosen people rejected God's own Son, the promised messiah. It was the Gentiles, people who had no standing before God, who came to God through faith, who accepted grace.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Section 1 Read Romans 9:1-5

1. How deeply did Paul love his Jewish brothers? What was he willing to give up for them?
2. What advantages did the Jewish people have? How do you think it was possible for the Jewish people to have all these advantages and still not recognize and embrace the Messiah when He arrived? Why would Paul feel so strongly for the Jews and their ultimate fate?
3. Americans have a lot of information about Jesus. We celebrate Christmas and Easter. Many know the Bible stories. So why do you think so many reject Jesus?

Section 2 Read Romans 9:6-29

1. Can God do anything that is wrong? If God chooses some and not others for His own reasons, can we find fault with Him? How do you feel about the fact that some will come to Christ while others will not?

Section 3 Read Romans 9:30-33

1. What was the one main difference between the Gentiles and the Jews? Why is it surprising that the Gentiles would come to Christ while the Jews did not?
2. Explain the metaphor of the stumbling stone. Why was this such a strong metaphor in the Christian movement (see Matthew 21:42, Acts 4:11, Ephesians 2:20-22, and 1 Peter 2:4-8).

HOW DOES IT APPLY?

There are people we would all love to see come to Jesus and be saved. We all know people who have heard of Jesus, who can even quote Scripture, or tell Bible stories, and yet remain unbelievers.

No matter how much we might want them to be saved, some people will never accept Christ. Does this mean God is unfair? People we know and love might spend all of eternity separated from God, unable to fulfill the purpose for which they were created. They will be in hell. Does this mean God is unrighteous?

Paul had to come to grips with the damnation of those he loved. We must also.

It is essential to our faith that we understand, as Paul did, that God can be trusted. He is righteous in everything He does. If anyone we know and love rejects Him and His salvation, God will be found blameless.

Here is the wonder of our God. He has created a universe in which all men and women have complete free will as to their own salvation. Everyone who has ever lived will have had a chance to reconcile with God on the basis of faith. Those who reject God and His salvation, do so of their own volition. And yet, God, being omniscient and all powerful, created the universe knowing ahead of time who would and would not accept Him. Only God could do this. Only He could create this universe where He is completely sovereign and man is still completely free to choose Him. He is God, after all.