

1. **Introduction:** Romans chapters 9, 10, and 11 Paul examines issues concerning how the majority of the Jews, God’s chosen people, could possibly have failed to believe in the promised Messiah, Jesus, when He came to them. As a Jew, Paul is both perplexed and in anguish that his fellow Jews can’t seem to see the truth.
  - Did God’s promises to Abraham and his descendants fail?
  - Salvation is entirely by God’s will. He can save anyone He chooses.
  - Regeneration is entirely of God’s grace. How important is regeneration in salvation? Regeneration gives a person new spiritual life preparing them to receive the other elements of salvation.
  - Is God unjust in not drawing more of the Jews to Himself in salvation?
  - Is God at fault for continuing to hold them accountable for not believing?
  - In chapter 9 Paul asks these questions and answers “no.” His conclusion in verses (30-33) is that Israel’s unbelief is not in any way due to God’s failure.
  - They Jews failed by not acting in faith, and instead pursuing the Law as if the Law could be satisfied by works.
  - God’s sovereignty and human responsibility are both true in salvation and everything else.
  
2. **Romans 9:1-5:** *“I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit— <sup>2</sup> that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. <sup>3</sup> For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. <sup>4</sup> They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. <sup>5</sup> To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.”*
  - The love of God is steadfast. God loves the Jews. How can it be that so many of them failed to believe in Jesus, their expected Messiah, who walked among them?
  - Paul confesses his unceasing anguish of heart over their unbelief.
  - Only a minority believed. Paul’s sorrow over the Jews’ plight is so great that, if it would do any good, he would give up his own salvation to save his kinsmen.

- Paul is aware that giving up his salvation is impossible, and even if he could give up his salvation, that would not save anyone. Jesus Christ is the one and only savior. Paul cannot save anyone no matter what sacrifice he makes.
- In Paul's case, like so many of his ethnic kinsmen, Paul was originally an unbeliever who willingly persecuted those who did believe.
- By his own power, Paul cannot cause anyone to be converted. What he can do (and does) is preach the Gospel, teach the Scriptures, and pray **God** will use him to draw people to Himself. But only Jesus saves!
- From a human perspective, Paul's fellow Jews have historically been given every possible advantage to prepare them for belief in Messiah, but most did not.
- But "human perspective" is the wrong tool for measuring what enables one to be saved. God's perspective reveals the truth.
- Whether from a devout Christian family or from an animal-worshipping tribe in the jungle, each human being, before conversion, is fallen and dominated by sin.
- God must give the ability to believe. He gives faith after He regenerates a person.
- There are no human advantages that can of themselves cause belief, nor disadvantages that hinder it. God may or may not use human situations in bringing a person to belief.
- Think of Paul's own call and regeneration. He from a devout Jewish family. He is committed to protecting Judaism by persecuting believers.
- On his way to Damascus to continue his battle against believers, Paul was dramatically confronted by the risen Christ. He fell to the ground and was overcome, only able to ask, "who are you, Lord?" What would you have me do?
- Paul's conversion shocked him, but forever afterward he faithfully followed Jesus.
- Of course, it is a wonderful advantage to grow up in a believing family, but it is not enough. To become spiritually alive requires God's regenerating intervention.
- Belief is the consequence of God's foreknowing (foreloving), predestining, regenerating, and effectually (inwardly) calling. Belief is God's gift. The basis of God's choosing lies entirely with Him (Deuteronomy 29:29).

3. **Romans 9:6-13**: *But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, <sup>7</sup> and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named."*

<sup>8</sup> *This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but*

*the children of the promise are counted as offspring.* <sup>9</sup> *For this is what the promise said: “About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.”* <sup>10</sup> *And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac,* <sup>11</sup> *though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—* <sup>12</sup> *she was told, “The older will serve the younger.”* <sup>13</sup> *As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”*

- Rejection does not violate Scripture. Paul is convinced that God’s rejection of some does not imply God’s Word of Promise to the Jews has failed.
- Paul uses two examples from Scripture to prove his argument. First though, he distinguishes between physical and spiritual descendants.
- Scripture says, not all physical descendants of Abraham are his spiritual children.
- Abraham’s first son, Ishmael, and his descendants are not spiritual children.
- Abraham’s spiritual descendants are to be found through Isaac. Why?
- It is God’s choice. God is sovereign. To be sovereign means there is no greater authority than the sovereign one.
- Ishmael and Isaac have the same father but different mothers. They were born at different times. Sara was past child-bearing age and had never conceived.
- Ishmael was conceived with Sara’s bondwoman of child-bearing age.
- But surprisingly, the previously barren Sara did conceive and bore Isaac, not through the power of her aged body, but through the power of God who promised.
- God’s choice of Isaac to continue Abraham’s spiritual line emphasizes the promise.
- We see God’s purpose of “election and rejection” again when Isaac’s wife Rebekah conceived twins. This is a different situation from Ishmael and Isaac.
- Here we have one couple conceiving twins, the same mother and father. Before the twins were born (therefore, before they could do anything good or bad), Rebekah was told that contrary to normal practice the younger would take precedence over the older. **As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”**
- What does “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated” mean? One thing it means is that, though the boys are twins, one will be chosen to continue Abraham’s line of spiritual descendants and the other rejected for that purpose.
- That is God’s sovereign choice which is not based on anything the twins have done.
- John Stott outlines arguments for several possible meanings of the love/hate phrase.

- His conclusion is that the contrast between love and hate shown in the phrase is most likely a Hebrew idiom expressing preference or choice.
- The preference idiom can be seen in comparing Luke 14:26 (we cannot be Jesus' disciples unless we hate our family) with Matthew 10:37 (Jesus forbids believers to love family more than Him). Luke 24:26 means a believer must put Jesus first.

4. **Election**: Election is God's sovereign choice in eternity of who will be saved. There are several different human interpretations of election. Each version is based on inspired Scripture. Each version has different assumptions and implications.

- What human problem is election intended to solve? Since Adam and Eve's Fall, no human in their own power and inclination seeks God.
- All have sinned and are under condemnation.
- You must be holy to come into God's presence, but all are fallen, none are holy.
- To live in eternity in the presence of God, people must be redeemed from condemnation and made holy. Only God can redeem and make holy.
- God has chosen to redeem. How then shall redemption be assigned to individuals?
- Two possible categories come to mind. (1.) God could choose to save all or save some but maintain active control to assure all He chose chosen are truly saved.
- (2.) Alternatively, God could make salvation available to all who will believe but leave to individuals the decision of whether or not they will believe and be saved.
- The first way recognizes God's sovereignty. The second way attempts to preserve God's sovereignty but also allow human free will to choose or reject salvation.
- All versions of election seem to fall under one or the other of the two categories.
- Whatever interpretation one accepts, the matter remains entirely with God.
- God's decree is His alone and human speculation cannot change it.
- We rightfully attempt to understand, but it seems no mortal human will ever fully understand God's election (Deuteronomy 29:29).
- Predestination is often a contentious topic that can cause people to lose their cool.
- God's purpose and implementation in predestination are fixed and immutable. It is what it is. People may violently disagree about what they think it means, but God's meaning is not affected by what people think.

5. **Westminster Confession on Election**: Election is a part of God's eternal decree.

- The Westminster Confession Chapter 3 says:

- **“God from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.”**
  - This is a difficult statement which may appear to be contradictory but is not.
  - Since Adam’s Fall, everyone born into the world is born spiritually dead.
  - Spiritually dead people cannot meet the requirement to obey God in thought, word, and deed and so are destined to remain condemned unless God intervenes.
  - How can anyone who is spiritually dead achieve salvation? Everyone needs salvation but cannot achieve it in their own power. God must intervene.
  - God begins with election. How does election work? How are the elect determined and what happens to those who are not among the elect?
  - Logically, God’s provision for salvation must be either limited or unlimited.
  - 2 Peter 3:9 mentions that God does not wish for any to perish. Peter does not say “none will perish” only that God does not **wish (or desire) for any to perish**.
  - But the message found throughout Scripture is that some will be saved but not all.
  - That means some people are destined to perish. If God truly “ordained whatsoever comes to pass” then God at least permits some people to perish.
  - Many Christians believe salvation is limited, but some believe it is unlimited.
  - Because limited salvation seems obvious in Scripture, most Christians have some **form of doctrine** explaining how some acquire salvation but others do not.
6. **Election Part 2**: Is God’s work of salvation monergistic (one working) or synergistic (two or more working together)?
- Views on election are connected to belief in a monergistic or synergistic view of salvation. The reformed view is salvation is entirely of God (monergism).
  - But that is not the only view. For example, the Wesleyan view is synergistic.
  - The Wesleyan view says that God gives everyone “prevenient” grace which enables them to choose Christ but leaves the choice up to the individual.
  - Hyper-Calvinism is monergistic in the extreme and believes God actively works to ensure the destiny of both those to be saved and those who will perish.
  - The Reformed view is monergistic. God’s active work is directed at ensuring the elect’s salvation. Those not among the elect are left to their own resources.

- Specifically, God does nothing to cause those “not elect” to be condemned. The “not elect” remain in their fallen state and simply follow their own inclination.

**7. Election Part 3:** All people are born into the world as fallen creatures.

- To fulfill His purpose of creating a holy people for Himself, God sovereignly chooses to intervene in the lives of some of the fallen, giving them new spiritual life and drawing them to Himself.
- His choice is purposeful but is not determined by foreseen goodness or badness. He has not revealed the basis for His choice.
- God is always purposeful, but He often does not reveal His purpose.
- For those in whose lives He chooses to intervene, He does everything necessary to make them holy and bring them to Himself.
- For those in whose lives He chooses to not intervene, He allows them to live according to their own choosing (Romans 1).
- The one exception is that through His common grace and restraining hand, God keeps all people from being as bad as they might otherwise be. God never influences anyone to be worse than they are in themselves.
- The implications of doctrines on election are often raise questions of justice and fairness that are difficult to answer.
- If everyone begins life spiritually dead and unable to respond to God, justice requires that all perish, but divine love, mercy, and grace intervenes to save some.
- It goes against human pride to think God elects and bestows mercy without using human input. Humanly, it seems unfair that before they are born some are chosen for redemption and some are passed over.
- A frequent question is why aren't the “passed over” given an opportunity to believe. The gospel is indeed offered to everyone, but only some will believe.
- How can God hold people responsible for the outcome of their life if He makes the most vital decision of their life (to be regenerated or not) without their input?
- Almost everyone (saved and unsaved) reacts to election with apprehension and often with doubt and confusion. To an unbeliever, election is unlikely to make sense and will probably seem cruel.
- Ultimately, believers who accept Scripture to be God's Word accept election because it is found in Scripture.

- My impression is that, even when accepted as true, almost everyone continues to struggle with the implications of the reformed doctrine of election, particularly concerning the spiritual state of family members and friends.
  - We see that struggle in Paul over his unbelieving fellow Jews.
  - Even with his deep understanding of election, Paul is in emotional anguish at the widespread unbelief he sees among his Jewish relatives and friends.
  - Knowing the Jews to be the people God chose, trained, and otherwise prepared to be the ancestors of Christ's human nature, how can it be that so few of them appear to be among the elect?
  - Paul asks, "is God being unjust in election?" His answer is "no." He clearly states so and supports his answer from Scripture.
  - Most believers are apprehensive that God's sovereign choice might result in passing over of relatives and friends. Can God be trusted to make the right choice?
  - Without God's intervention, everyone is a condemned sinner. It is through God's mercy alone that some are saved.
  - Does God have the power to intervene in every life and draw all people to Himself? Yes! Then, why does He limit the number of the elect? We don't know.
  - Is it unjust for God to show mercy to some while others are left to go where their fallen nature leads them? Has God failed to keep His promises to Israel? Who is in Israel? Is spiritual descent the determining factor or is it physical descent?
  - Is God unfair to withhold saving grace from some? Paul declares God is not at fault in any way. God's purpose and plan remain constant through the ages.
8. **Election Part 4**: Who is elect? No one should ever presume to know for certain whether a person, living or dead, is of the elect. That is totally in God's hands.
- Behavior and life events do provide clues to a person's spiritual state but not with 100% certainty. Only God knows for sure.
  - The reformed view says that, when a person is born, they are already either among the elect or not. If elect, God's call to saving faith does not occur at any predictable time during a life. It may occur early in life and it might not occur until near death.
  - Knowing a person's spiritual state requires examining a person's heart, which only God can do with the one exception that each person can examine their own heart.
  - Since we can never know whether people we meet are elect or not, we are to assume everyone, no matter how good or bad they seem to us, is elect.

- Believers are to minister to people on that basis, praying for them. A person may seem today to be a dreadful sinner, but tomorrow may be repentant, regenerated and justified. That is one reason Jesus says, “love your enemy.”
- Your enemy may be elect. A seemingly implacable, unregenerate enemy may well be one of God’s elect who tomorrow will receive God’s call, be regenerated and justified, and become our brother or sister in Christ.
- Another question that tugs at our hearts is, how can we be certain we are among the elect? Even after many years of believing to be a Christian, we will still think and do sinful things that shock us. How can we do such things if we belong to Christ?
- The Apostle John instructs believers to regularly confess their sins, repent, and ask for forgiveness. He does so because he knows even believers will continue to sin.
- Knowing we sin is worrisome and even following John’s admonition we may wonder if we are regenerate.
- Matthew 7:21 concerns people who think they are regenerate but are not. It is a frightening verse. Jesus says, not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven. Only those who obey the will of the Father will enter.
- Increasing obedience in thought, word, and deed is positive evidence of being converted. In John 15 Jesus says that if we love Him we will obey His commands.
- As far as I know, obedience is the only criteria given in the Bible for judging whether we love God and His Christ.
- Unsurprisingly, that also happens to be the criteria for entering the kingdom of heaven. A key factor in judging whether we are elect, regenerated, justified, and being sanctified is to examine our progress in obedience.

9. **Election Part 5:** Assurance of salvation is a vital function of Scripture.

- Here are some examples of what Scripture affirms. John 3:16: ***“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”***
- 1 John 5:11–13: ***“And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup> Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. <sup>13</sup> I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.”***



- They who have the Son can be sure they have life. So, who has the Son? It is those who genuinely believe in Him.
- Here are a few verses that help. John 1:12: ***“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”*** Acts 16:31: ***“And they said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and all your household.’”*** Romans 10:9: ***“because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”***
- If you are personally concerned about your state of election, here are some questions to ask yourself.
- Have you REPENTED? Do you BELIEVE Jesus died, paying the penalty for your sins, suffering the wrath due your sins, and rose again from the dead (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21)? Do you TRUST Him alone for salvation?
- If your answer to these questions is “yes,” you have been saved!
- Assurance means freedom from doubt. If you believe God’s Word, have repented, believed, trust, and obey, then you should have no doubt about the reality of your eternal salvation.
- Jesus assures those who believe in Him. John 10:28–29: ***“I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.”***
- Eternal life is exactly that—eternal!

10. **What is Next**: Begin with Romans 9:14.