

1. **Introduction:** In 9:6-13 Paul reminded his readers that the promises God made to Abraham and his descendants did not include all physical descendants but was limited to his spiritual descendants. The Biblical stories of Ishmael and Isaac, as well as of Esau and Jacob, illustrate that limitation. The spiritual line of descent flowed initially from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob. Ishmael, Abraham's first son by Hagar, was not included in the spiritual line. And so it was with future descendants. Not all Israel was included in God's promise. Those included in the promise did believe. God's promise has not failed.
2. **Romans 9:14-18:** *“What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! ¹⁵ For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” ¹⁶ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” ¹⁸ So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.”*
 - Can anyone correctly say that God is unjust in allowing so many Jews to be unbelievers. Paul's answer is no!
 - He begins his answer by pointing out that for anyone to question the justice of God's salvation is the wrong question.
 - In Exodus 33:19b, God tells Moses He will be gracious and will show mercy to whom He chooses. All have sinned and fallen short of God's requirements.
 - If strict justice were the rule, no one would be saved. Justice is not the issue in God's gift of salvation. The source of salvation is God's love, grace, and mercy.
 - God mercifully gives salvation rather than the justice deserved.
 - Paul next quotes from Exodus 9:16 where God informs Pharaoh that the reason he is ruler of Egypt is that God might display His power in him.
 - Verse 18 repeats the Exodus message that God has mercy on whomever He wills, and Paul adds that God hardens whomever He will.
 - What does it mean for God to harden someone? It is not an action against the will of the person being hardened. Leon Morris in his commentary on Romans points

out (correctly I believe) “Neither here nor anywhere else is God said to harden anyone who had not first hardened himself.”

- From the pertinent sections of Exodus, it is obvious Pharaoh hardened his heart against God and stubbornly refused to humble himself.
- God’s hardening of Pharaoh was a judicial act abandoning Pharaoh to his own stubbornness.
- This view is consistent with Paul’s chapter 1 comments where God in His wrath “gives over” the ungodly to their own depravity.
- The general meaning of God hardening a person appears to be God’s judicial action giving that person over to the consequences of their own depravity.
- In summary, if the question is, was God unjust in allowing so many Jews to be unbelievers, Paul’s response is that it is an inappropriate question.
- God shows mercy to whomever He pleases, and He “gives over” whomever He pleases by allowing them to follow their own stubbornness to its logical conclusion.

3. **Romans 9: 19-29:** *“You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?”²⁰ But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?”²¹ Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?²² What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,²³ in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—²⁴ even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?²⁵ As indeed he says in Hosea, “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’”²⁶ “And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people, ‘there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’²⁷ And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: ‘Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved,²⁸ for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.’²⁹ And as Isaiah predicted, ‘If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah.’”*

- Verses 15 and 18 imply salvation is a consequence of God’s will. So Paul’s next question is, since no one can resist God’s will, **“Why does He still find fault?”**

- If God wants people to believe, they cannot resist His will.
- Yet, unbelievers are subject to God’s wrath. Why?
- That is a tough question. In answer Paul provides three Scripture illustrations.
- Taken together, the three are intended to show that the proper starting point for trying to interpret what God is doing in the world is a correct understanding of who God is – right knowledge of His nature, power, and character.
- As Creator, God has the right over what He makes as does a potter. He can make anything He chooses out of the clay.
- The clay has no capacity or right to question what it is becoming.
- Paul’s “clay” illustrations correctly highlight the distinction between creator and created but omits something.
- Scripture affirms that people are created in God’s image. Even after the Fall the differences are not total. Though distorted, there remains a likeness to God.
- As God’s image-bearers (though distorted) people are rational, responsible, moral, spiritual beings, able to converse with God, and encouraged by God to explore His natural and special revelations, to ask questions and to think thoughts after Him.
- Not only are people to acknowledge God’s power and infinite greatness, but they must never deny human dignity or human responsibility.
- When people are bewildered and genuinely seeking God’s truth, it is not only OK to ask questions, but it is wrong to not ask them.
- In verses 22-23 Paul says to those questioning God’s limited election, how do you know God doesn’t have good reasons for what He does? The answer is we assume He does have good reasons though He does not reveal them to us.
- In verses 24-26 Paul uses quotes from Hosea to point out that while the Jews were called first, God always intended for the Gentiles to join the spiritual remnant of Israel as believers.
- In verses 27-29 Paul turns to Isaiah to show that while physical Israel had grown to great numbers, only a spiritual remnant of Israel would be saved. ***“As Isaiah predicted, ‘If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah.’”***
- Gentile believers were added, and a large portion of Israel was excluded.
- Paul’s perspective is that God is God and an understanding of His nature, power, and character are essential to understanding what God is doing in the world.

- That is a valuable perspective in thinking about Election.
- God always acts consistent with His nature, consistent with His character. God's power is sovereign, His character holy, His nature loving and merciful, He is full of grace, and He is not vindictive or cruel.
- He is compassionate. He desires the best for His creation. Even as Jesus hung on the cross, He asked His Father to forgive those who put Him there, saying that they didn't truly understand what they were doing. His mercy is beyond understanding!
- My personal approach to election is to trust our loving, compassionate, merciful God. His love for us has been demonstrated in many ways.
- Will not He who made us all, who provided for our salvation through His Son, will He not do what is right?
- It is true Scripture not only indicates that not everyone will be saved, but also indicates that God can save the foulest sinner. Why does He not save all?
- We don't know how or why God chooses in election, but we do know that His every choice is subject to His holy purpose.
- That some are lost seems to be related to God releasing His restraint and "giving them over" to live out their own choices.
- When a troubling question comes along, my goal is to focus attention on Christ who is full of grace, mercy, and truth. He willingly become flesh, took our sins upon Himself and freed us to follow Him.
- There are many perplexing questions beyond my ability to understand. But I know the One who has all the answers, and I trust Him to do what is right.
- Doctrine is man's attempt to systematize the information the Holy Spirit has given us in Scripture. Scripture is God's Word, but Doctrine is man's interpretation of its meaning and intent.
- Even careful well-informed interpretation is subject to error and bias. I have two books, one named "Why I am not a Calvinist" the other "Why I am not an Armenian."
- These two books were written at the same time by knowledgeable people giving their interpretations. Both use essentially the same Scripture verses to justify nearly opposite viewpoints.
- I believe that, when we finally know the TRUTH, we will be shocked at some things we got very wrong. Bottom line is – don't worry about election.

- If someone asks what happens to an infant who dies, my answer is Jesus loves little children. He will take care of infants. I thoroughly believe this.
- So it is for people who lack the mental capability to affirm God's truth. If God's dominant attribute was justice, no one would be saved. But, to our blessedness, God pours out His love and mercy upon undeserving sinners.

4. **Romans 9:30-33**: *“What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹ but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. ³² Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, ³³ as it is written, ‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.’”*

- Israel failed to recognize God's gift through Christ of a righteousness apart from the Law. They believed God had given them the only way to achieve righteousness which was perfect obedience to God's Law as given through Moses.
- No doubt it was inconceivable to them that God would enable obtaining righteousness any other way.
- They did not grasp that Jesus could and did vicariously satisfy all requirements of the Law, including the death penalty for sin, on behalf of those who would believe.
- The consequence was they continued to pursue righteousness through works, a task that, because of fallen human inability, they could not accomplish.
- The sad result was they stumbled over the stumbling-block of Jesus. They failed to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ who was and is the one and only way to righteousness before God.

5. **Romans 10:1-4**: *“Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. ² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”*

- Paul again expresses personal anguish at Israel's widespread disbelief.
- It is his hearts' desire and prayer that the Jews might be saved. As we saw in chapter 9, he is obviously perplexed at the fact that despite the Jews privileges before God, they are prejudiced against the gospel.

- In this passage, the Jews true zeal for God contrasts with their ignorance of what God has accomplished in Christ.
- Paul is personally well-acquainted with extreme zeal for religion in the absence of true or complete knowledge. That describes Paul before his conversion.
- His zealousness without knowledge led him to persecute believers. Proverbs 19:2 tells us that desire (zeal) without knowledge is not good.
- Sincerity is never enough. Anyone can be sincerely wrong. Unfortunately, zeal without knowledge far too often leads to fanaticism, a dangerous state of mind.
- Specifically, the unbelieving Jews' ignorance shows up in two areas.
- (1.) They failed to recognize God's provision of a way out of the dilemma created by inability for anyone to perfectly obey the Law.
- Through Jesus, God provided a righteousness which satisfied the Law but did not require perfect obedience to the Law to obtain that righteousness.
- Righteousness by faith in Jesus, who satisfied the Law on their behalf, seemed wrong and impossible to the Jews.
- (2.) When they heard about the righteousness from God apart from the Law made possible by Jesus, they did not believe it (see also Philippians 3:8-11).
- The danger of self-righteousness is always a real present threat.
- Calvin said, "the first step in obtaining the righteousness of God is to renounce our own righteousness."
- Paul says, "*Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*" What does he mean?
- Christ and the Law are both gifts of God, each given with a purpose directed toward salvation. The Law served to reveal sin, and in the attempt to fully obey the Law, demonstrated that full obedience was impossible for fallen people.
- When Christ accomplished salvation by His death and resurrection, He ended the role of the Law as the required means to obtain righteousness before God. He did not abolish the moral Law.
- If salvation is by Christ through faith, it is not by Law.

6. **Romans 10:5-13**: *For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. ⁶ But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷ "or 'Who will descend into the abyss?'"*

(that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).⁸ But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim);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.¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.¹¹ For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.”¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.¹³ For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

- Unbelieving Jews failed to understand that the Law they were so proud of demonstrated to them that they were sinners in need of a Savior. **Galatians 3:24:** *“So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.”*
- In effect, the Jews worshipped the Law but rejected the Savior. They worshipped the signpost, which could never take them to their desired destination, and rejected Christ who could bring them into God’s Kingdom which was their fervent desire.
- Outward obedience to the Law is not sufficient. Inward obedience from the heart is necessary. You can control outward obedience but inward inclinations are beyond your direct control.
- By emphasizing the external obedience to the Law and defining a specific set of do’s and don’ts, the Pharisees came up with a form of the Law that could be obeyed. However, the inward “heart” requirements made that effort useless.
- In Romans Paul says that when he realized that “do not covet” of the tenth commandment could only be obeyed internally, he was undone.
- As a Pharisee, he had been focused on outward obedience only. That worked after a fashion for the first nine commandments but could not work for the tenth. All his life he had falsely believed he was completely obedient to the Law.
- Paul quotes from Moses speech in Deuteronomy 30 to remind that Christ and His righteousness are not far from us. They are immediately accessible by faith.
- The Law declares if you obey perfectly you will ultimately be justified before God.
- The Gospel says, believe you will be justified and enabled by the Holy Spirit to progress in sanctification and ultimately glorified (freed from all sin).
- Believe in your heart that Jesus is who He says He is, did for us what He says He did, was raised from the dead, and sits at the right hand of the Father.

- The heart believes and God ,the Father, will justify the ones who believe.
- The reality of belief and confession is true required for Jews and Gentiles. In salvation, there is no distinction. *“For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved”* (10:13).

7. **Romans 10:14-15**: *“How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’”*

- Paul argues the case for vigorous evangelism. He asks four questions.
- His four questions are best understood if his verbs are placed in reverse order and expressed negatively.
- Christ sends heralds; heralds preach; people hear; hearers believe; believers call on Jesus name; those who call on His name are saved.
- The point is that all these things are necessary and it begins with someone to preach.
- Unless some people are commissioned for the task, there will be no gospel preachers.
- Unless the gospel is preached, sinners will not hear Christ’s message of hope.
- Unless sinners hear Him, they will not believe the truth about His life, death, and resurrection.
- Unless they believe these truths, they will not call on Him.
- Unless they call on His name, they will not be saved.
- Paul uses this set of questions to structure the next paragraph which concerns the reason for Israel’s unbelief. We will consider that in the next lesson.

8. **What is Next**: Romans 10:16 – 21.

