

Lesson 22 – Does Romans 9 Teach Calvinism?

Romans 9 is one of the most misunderstood chapters in all of Scripture. The misunderstanding of this chapter makes it controversial for many theologians and Bible teachers. It is important to examine Scripture in the light of its context – both immediate and extended.

It is easy to make the Scriptures appear to teach Calvinism, Arminianism, Pentecostalism, Adventism or Any-Other-IsM. It is done by taking passages out of context and redefining the words of the Bible. That is careless interpretation at best and dishonest interpretation at worst.

In order to understand what God wants us to know in Romans 9, we need to first look at its context, and then examine the words used He used in writing the chapter.

The Book of Romans follows the general pattern of the Pauline Epistles. The first section is doctrinal (chapters 1-11); the second section deals with practical Christian living (chapters 12-16).

Understanding the context of chapter 9 in the doctrinal section of Romans is crucial to understanding the teaching of the chapter. Without this understanding, it is very easy to insert errant theology into Romans 9.

1. Condemnation: The Guilt of Sin – chapters 1-3
 - a. The heathen are guilty of sin – Chapter 1
 - b. The moral and religious Jews are guilty of sin – Chapter 2
 - c. All are guilty of sin – Chapter 3
2. Justification: The Remedy for sin – chapters 4-8
 - a. Abraham the example of justification by Grace – Chapter 4
 - b. Results of justification by Grace – Chapter 5
 - c. Know, Reckon and Yield (Living the Justified Life)– Chapter 6
 - d. Conflict of Two Natures (Challenge of the Justified Life)– Chapter 7
 - e. Victory Through the Spirit – Chapter 8
3. Perceived Dilemma: What’s God going to do with Israel? – Chapters 9-11

Paul’s readers knew that God had chosen Israel, and that Israel had rejected God. Now the Gospel was going out to the Gentiles, and multitudes of Gentiles had responded to God’s invitation, and they were now children of God. And it was obvious that God was operating outside of the established leadership of Israel. That being the case, what is God doing about His ancient people, whom He had chosen? Would He go back on His promise and cast them off? Or did He still have a plan for them?

 - a. God makes the rules because He is God – Chapter 9
 - b. God invites individuals to Christ – Chapter 10
 - c. God’s rejection of Israel is partial and temporary – Chapter 11

In looking at the context, God is using chapter 9 to show how He will be dealing with Israel in the New Testament era. Gone is their special status as the chosen people of God. He has the right to do this, for He is God. That is the theme of chapter 9. He draws from the Old Testament to illustrate His undeniable right to make the rules. In chapter 10, He is closing the door to the old, and He is opening the door of invitation for individual Jews (and everybody else) to come to

Lesson 22 – Romans 9 and Election

Christ, the Fount of Living Water and drink. He is not dealing with Israel as a nation any more, but He has not stopped loving them. And in chapter 11, He is showing us that His purpose is for Israel to have a glorious future – as a nation – during the Millennium.

1. Paul's Compassion for Disobedient Israel, is countrymen – 9:1-5

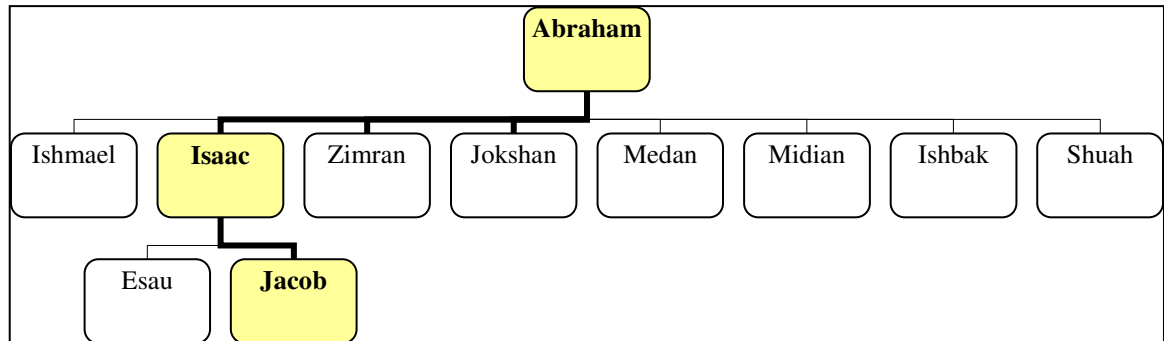
- a. He is getting ready to write some negative things about Israel
- b. He wants his audience to know how much he cares for his fellow Jews
- c. He is setting the stage for the message that
 - i. God is setting Israel aside
 - ii. He is reaching out to the Gentiles in a big way
 - iii. He will once again restore Israel in Christ in the future – Rom. 11
- d. His message of compassion – he was willing to endure the curse of God in order that they might be saved – 9:1-3
- e. His acknowledgment of Israel's historic position with God – 9:4-5
 - i. The adoption
 - ii. The glory
 - iii. The covenants
 - iv. The giving of the Law and the Theocracy
 - v. The service of God
 - vi. The promises – 9:5
 - vii. The line through which Christ came “according to the flesh”

2. God's Purpose for Israel as shown in His election – 9:6-21

- a. The children of Abraham – 6-9 *God Promised Isaac*
 - i. Not all the children of Abraham are Israel
 1. Hagar bore Abraham a son, Ishmael
 2. After Sarah died, Abraham married Keturah and had other children – Gen 25:1-4
 3. The children of God's promise came through Isaac – 7
 - a. Isaac was the promised son
 - b. God chose Isaac to be in the line of Israel and Messiah
 - c. Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac – Gen. 25:4
 - ii. Although the birth of Ishmael was not part of God's plan, God, in His sovereignty, permitted it to happen.
 1. God could have refused to allow us to do things that are not part of His will, but He didn't.
 - a. Sin is not His will
 - b. Disobedience is not His will.
 - i. It's never His will for sinners to refuse Christ
 - ii. It's never His will for believers to sin
 2. God permits us to get out of His will. He gives us the choice.
 3. When we do things outside of His will, we always suffer consequences.
- b. The children of Isaac – 9:10-13
 - i. God predetermined to choose Jacob before Jacob and Esau were born
 - ii. Therefore His determination took place before either of them did anything – good or evil.

Lesson 22 – Romans 9 and Election

- iii. God’s call had to do with His choice, not with their works “that the purpose of election might stand.”
- iv. God’s promise – His election of Jacob
 1. The elder shall serve the younger
 2. God said he loved Jacob and hated Esau
 - a. The Greek word “hate” *miseo* is a relative term, as illustrated in other passages of Scripture
 - i. Our love for God should be so strong that our love for our families should appear to be hate – Luke 14:26
 - ii. Our love for God should be so strong that we should appear to hate our own lives in comparison – John 12:25
 - b. Given the meaning of the Greek word for *hate* in the Bible, did God really hate Esau in the way that we use the word *hate* today?



3. God’s purpose revealed here
 - a. He exercised His right to select the people through whom He was going to build a great nation, and through whom He would send Messiah.
 - i. He chose Abraham – 7
 - ii. He chose Isaac, whom He had promised to Abraham
 - iii. He chose Jacob, to whom he gave the name Israel – 10-13
4. What this passage doesn’t teach
 - a. That God predestined Jacob for salvation
 - b. That God predestined Esau for Hell
5. Remember, this passage has nothing to do with God choosing some people for salvation and some for damnation. It has to do with God’s choosing the nation of Israel and its ancestors. To read anything else into this passage is to read something that isn’t there!
- v. What was God’s purpose for Jacob as revealed here?
 1. To select the son through whom He was going to build a great nation.

Lesson 22 – Romans 9 and Election

2. To select the line for Messiah – as we see throughout the Old Testament and in the genealogies in Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-38.
- c. The justice of God in His decisions – 9:14-21
 - i. It is God who sets the rules. It's His game – 9:14
 - ii. He chose to show special mercy to Israel – 9:15
 1. This does not refer to individuals that God arbitrarily chose for salvation, and others that He chose to send to Hell.
 2. This has to do – as the context dictates – that God showed special favor and mercy to the nation He chose through the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
 - iii. God had the right to choose Israel. He is setting them up to show that He also has the right to turn from Israel to the Gentiles (and to the individuals from Israel who believe in Christ).
 1. This was a hard teaching for Israelites. They thought they were better than the Gentiles, because God had chosen them.
 - iv. God's mercy on Israel demonstrated through Pharaoh – 9:16-18
 1. Pharaoh had a very hard heart to begin with.
 - a. He was a heathen king with a heathen religion.
 - b. He was very hard on God's people – Exodus 1:8-11, 15, 22
 - c. He had no regard for God.
 2. God took the evil Pharaoh and allowed him to be in a position of power over His people, so He could demonstrate His power of deliverance – 9:17
 3. He used Pharaoh to show His prerogative in dealing with Israel
 - a. He had mercy on Israel as demonstrated by His deliverance in the Exodus.
 - b. He took an evil king with a hard heart and made his heart harder.
The same sun that melts ice hardens clay.
 4. God was not responsible for Pharaoh's hard heart. Pharaoh was, and God used it.
 - a. As Pharaoh fought against God and His people
 - i. He started with a hard heart
 - ii. He hardened his own heart – Exodus 8:15, 32; 9:34
 - iii. God made it harder – Exodus 4:21; 7:3; 8:32; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14, 8, 17
- d. The conclusion of the matter – 9:19-24
 - i. What right do you have to reply against God? – 9:20
 - ii. Who are you to tell God what to do? – 9:20
 - iii. God has absolute right and authority over His creation as a potter has over the clay.
 - iv. He has the right to show His wrath on the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction – 9:23
 1. This does not say God prepared them for destruction.
 2. The verb for *prepared* is in a form that is either middle voice or passive voice. Both voices of the Greek verb are the same in this particular word.

Lesson 22 – Romans 9 and Election

- a. If it is Passive voice – they were prepared for destruction, but no mention of God preparing them.
 - b. If it is Middle voice – they prepared themselves for destruction. (We don't have Middle Voice verbs in English).
- v. God has the right to make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy

Observations about Romans 9:

1. There is no reference to God choosing Jacob for salvation and Esau for damnation.
2. There is no reference to God choosing Pharaoh for damnation. Pharaoh was a lost sinner, but there is no evidence that God specifically chose him for damnation.
3. There is no evidence that the vessels fitted for destruction were so because God had chosen to create them for that specific purpose.
4. This chapter teaches that God can do what He wants with His creation because He's God.
5. God was using this chapter to help His people understand
 - a. Why Israel no longer had favored nation status with God
 - b. Why God was turning to the Gentiles
 - c. Why individual Jews had to come to God the same way Gentiles had to come.
6. This chapter leads up to
 - a. Chapter 10 – Israel's rejection of the Gospel
 - b. Chapter 11 – Israel's temporary loss of favored nation status with God