



## Part 4

### 3 more studies in Romans

#### Please Note the following:

1. It is not necessary to look up all the Bible cross references listed in a particular question; your Growth Group Leader will summarize these Bible cross references for you.
2. Just a reminder that sometimes in our Growth Groups, people feel comfortable sharing very personal and sensitive things about their lives. This information **MUST BE CONFIDENTIAL** and **NEVER LEAVE THE GROUP**

## Study 1 – Blessings of being God’s Children

Romans 8:18-39

*(Sermon on 05-May-2024)*

**Before we begin:** Remind yourself what truths Paul mentioned in Romans 8:1-17

*Here are the key points from Romans 8:1-17:*

- a. From verse 1 – there is **no condemnation** (no guilty verdict or punishment for our sins) for those **IN** (believing **IN**) Christ!
- b. Because we have the Holy Spirit – **we are free from law and sin** – i.e. breaking the law and sin and death – are no longer a problem for us, because Jesus has taken the punishment for our sin away from us – and He has defeated death, so we don’t have to be afraid of dying either
- c. We have the **mindset of the Holy Spirit** – so in all our relationships we must have the same mindset as Jesus – **WWJD!**
- d. We are **ruled by the Spirit now** – not by our flesh
- e. And we are **children of God** and **co-heirs with Jesus** – this means **sharing in both Jesus’ glory and Jesus’ suffering**. The road to glory is suffering – as Jesus showed!

### Read Romans 8:18-22

1. Why would Paul speak about sufferings here. See Romans 8:17.

*Paul talks about suffering here, because he just mentioned in verse 17 that we must share in Jesus’ suffering in order that we may also share in His glory!*

2. What is Paul saying about our present sufferings in verse 18?

*There’s no comparison between our present suffering as Christians and the glory that will be revealed in us. This glory to come is the amazing splendour of God, eternal, immortal and incorruptible!*

*Paul was not ignorant or blind to the sufferings of human existence; he experienced more suffering than most of us today. Yet he still considered that the future glory of Heaven far outweighed his present sufferings.*

*These sufferings amount to a) opposition because we are Christians and b) our own frailty both physical and moral.*

3. **Ponder:** How would you answer the question: **“is it really worth it to be a Christian and experience suffering now?”**

*Personally, I think it's fair to say, I have had more suffering in my life (serious illnesses and many trials) since I became a Christian at age 33. Sometimes I question whether it's worth it. Since entering into ministry, the suffering has increased. However, I have also had the privilege: of seeing people come to Christ; of seeing people grow in Christ; and of seeing people go to be with Christ in Heaven. I've also had the privilege of helping people through similar trials and so my suffering has proved useful for others as well as helping me grow in trusting the Lord. I trust God doesn't make mistakes and also look forward to Heavenly glory which is beyond my imagination.*

*So, yes; suffering as a Christian is worth it!*

#### 4. What is creation waiting for in verse 19?

*It's like broken creation [broken because of sin and the Fall) is eagerly waiting for this glory to be revealed publicly and to show everyone who the children of God are! And Paul's saying it will happen one day!*

*Isaiah 11:6-9 describes this redemption of creation in that day: The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.*

#### 5. How is creation described in verses 20 & 21? What events is Paul referring to? (See Genesis 3:17-19; 5:29; John 1:12)

*Creation is described as:*

- *Subject to frustration by God Himself but not without any hope*
- *One day creation will be liberated from its bondage of decay*
- *One day creation will be brought into freedom and glory shared by the children of God. Here we have a future restoration of the broken Creation!*

*Genesis 3:17-19 – describe what happened when sin and death came into the world and creation was subjected to a curse*

*Genesis 5:29 – describes how Noah’s father, Lamech, named his son Noah because Noah sounds like the Hebrew word for “comfort” – who “will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the Lord has cursed”*

*John 1:12 – describes how Jesus enters time and place – leaves Heavenly glory and comes to this Earth to restore things and allows all “who believe in His name, to have the right to become children of God!”*

*In Matthew 19:28 Jesus promises “the renewal of all things”*

*In Revelation 21-22, John tells us of a New Heaven, a New Earth, a New Jerusalem and the Garden of Eden restored.*

6. What metaphor does Paul use in verse 22?

*Paul uses the **metaphor of child-birth** to describe the current condition of Creation. Just like when a woman has a tough pregnancy [full of groaning] for 9 months and experiences labor pains; so too Creation goes through a tough pregnancy and labor pains. But at the end of the 9 months of pregnancy and labor, comes the glory of the newborn baby – a new creation. In the same, the old broken/cursed creation will become a new restored creation.*

*Bible commentator Leon Morris says: “Creation is not undergoing death pangs/pains...but birth pangs/pains”. In other words, there’s future hope and glory not only for the children of God but for creation as well!*

7. **Ponder:** What is causing you to “**groan**” at the moment?

*Typically, Christians might “groan” about any of the following:*

- a. The suffering and injustice in this world: Gaza, Israel, Ukraine, Russia, North Korea, Afghanistan for example. Natural disasters, floods, famines, fires. Things like poverty, oppression and violence.*
- b. Their own personal struggles: physical illness; mental health issues; relationship problems; financial hardships and spiritual battles*
- c. Sin and its consequences. Even though Christians have repented of past sins, they might have to live with (and struggle with) the consequences [including the guilt and shame] of those past sins and wish those consequences would end!*

- d. *Temptation to sin in a particular way that they used to.*
- e. *Longing for fulfilment and purpose – the tension we all live in as Christians – we are saved already but not quite yet!*

### **Read Romans 8:23-25**

8. What does Paul mean in verse 23 that we have the “**firstfruits**” of the Spirit? (2 Corinthians 5:5)

*The Holy Spirit living inside us is making us sure about what the future holds. In the meantime, we groan silently inside whilst we wait for God to show us that we are His children. Paul says it’s a bit like waiting for our adoption to sonship to come through. Then our bodies are redeemed so our physical being matches our spiritual being.*

*In 2 Corinthians 5:5 - Paul describes us receiving the Holy Spirit as a bit like getting a deposit or guarantee of what is to come in the future. A foretaste of what is to come. That is why Paul calls it “firstfruits of the Spirit”. There’s plenty more fruit to eat and enjoy; what we have is just the first mouthful!*

***As Christians we have a dilemma. We are caught up in the tension between what God has inaugurated (by giving us His Spirit) and what He will consummate one day (in our final adoption and redemption); so, we groan with discomfort and longing. The indwelling Spirit gives us joy (Galatians 5:22 & 1 Thessalonians 1:6) and the coming glory gives us hope (Romans 5:2), but the interim suspense and waiting gives us pain!***

9. What does Paul mean in verse 23 that “**we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship**”? (Galatians 5:5)

*We are waiting for our adoption. Although there is a sense in which we are already adopted (Romans 8:15), there is also a sense in which we wait for the consummation of our adoption which will happen at the redemption of our body. God does not ignore our physical bodies in His plan of redemption. His plan for our bodies is physical resurrection, when the corruptible must put on incorruption, and the mortal must put on immortality (1 Corinthians 15:53). Paul in Galatians 5:5 says what we are waiting for is “the righteousness for which we hope” – when we will be truly like Jesus in body and spirit!*



10. What does Paul mean in verse 24? (2 Corinthians 4:18)

*When we became Christians, we were saved for Heaven. We haven't seen Heaven yet; we still hope for Heaven in the future. In doing so, Paul says, we are hoping for something we haven't seen yet; we can't hope for something we already have otherwise it wouldn't be hope anymore.*

11. How are we to wait for the hope we have in verse 25? (Psalm 37:7)

*In the meantime, we keep on waiting patiently for that hope of Heaven. Psalm 37:7 says: Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; The Greek Word for patiently here also means: enduring; steadfastness and perseverance. In the NT the Greek word used for patience here means: the characteristic of a person who is not swerved from their deliberate purpose and their loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings.*

### **Read Romans 8:26-27**

12. How does the Spirit help us as we wait for our hope of Heaven?

*The Spirit helps us with our weaknesses.*

*Even when we can't pray – the Holy Spirit will intercede for us and even interpret our wordless groans.*

*The Spirit will also search our hearts – and has the mindset of the Spirit – and can intercede so we do/say/think what the Spirit wants and not what our flesh wants. In this way, the Spirit helps God's people to do the will of God; not their own will!*

*"Christians have two divine intercessors: Christ is their intercessor in the court room of Heaven (Hebrews 7:25 and Romans 8:34) and the Holy Spirit is their intercessor in the theatre of their own hearts" (John Murray)*

### **Read Romans 8:28-30**

13. You might have heard verse 28 many times, but what does it really mean? Is this verse for **ALL** people?

*God's sovereignty and ability to manage every aspect of our lives is demonstrated in the fact that all things work together for good to those who love God, though we must face the sufferings of this present time (Romans 8:18). God is able to make even those sufferings work together for our good and His good.*

*Notice: God is able to work all things, not some things. He works them for good together, not in isolation. This promise is NOT FOR ALL PEOPLE but for those who love God in the Biblical understanding of love, and God manages the affairs of our life because we are called according to His purpose.*

*Personally: Despite my first marriage ending; me becoming a Christian and my Dad dying prematurely and suddenly – all of which happened within a very short space of time. God worked all of this to achieve His purposes.*

*A good example of this verse 28 is the story of Joseph in the Old Testament (Genesis 37-50) Joseph was hated by his brothers; thrown down a disused well; sold as a slave to some slave traders; taken from Canaan to Egypt; declared dead by his brothers; falsely accused by the wife of an Egyptian captain and wrongly imprisoned. But God used all of these terrible events so that Joseph became Prime Minister of Egypt; and ultimately Joseph saved his father and brothers from starvation. Joseph had the awareness to say to his brothers at the end of all these events in Genesis 50:20: “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives”. That’s what Romans 8:28 means!*

*Similarly, Jeremiah wrote in God’s name a letter to the Jews in exile in Babylon after the catastrophic destruction of Jerusalem and said: “I [God] have plans for you, plans to prosper you, not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11)*

*The ultimate reversal from wicked to good is found in the Cross. Human beings’ evil plan to kill Jesus were actually all part of God’s plan of salvation – God’s purpose and foreknowledge (see Acts 2:23)*

14. What chain of events are described in verses 29 & 30? How might that help you if you are undergoing suffering right now?

*The chain of events are:*

- *God **foreknew** those whom He would save.*

*Note: foreknowledge is God’s sovereign, distinguishing love. See Moses’ great statement to the Israelites: “The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you*

*were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath, he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 7:7-8)*

- God **predestined** that they would be made/conformed to the image of His Son
- He **called** them to Himself – God made the initiative
- He **justified** them – made them right with Him and approved by Him – through Jesus’ death and resurrection
- He **glorified** them

*“Paul is saying that God is the author of our salvation, and that from beginning to end. We are not to think that God can take action only when we graciously give him permission.” (Morris)*

*“Of course, I believe in predestination, since it’s plainly taught in the Scriptures. The doctrine could be assumed, even if the word was never explicitly used. It’s a thrilling truth that doesn’t upset me at all. The fact that He chose me and began a good work in me proves that He’ll continue to perform it. He wouldn’t bring me this far and then dump me.” (Smith)*

*It might help people who are suffering to know that God had a plan for them from the start – and what He has planned and started; He will bring to completion (Philippians 1:6)*

15. What is the “**goal**” of verse 29?

*God’s plan and “goal” is: to adopts us into His family (Romans 8:15) for the purpose of making us like Jesus Christ.*



16. **Ponder:** Verse 29 mentions pre-destination. What objections might people have about pre-destination? Does it mean we shouldn't bother evangelizing if God "foreknew" and "predestined" those who will believe?

*People might say God is unfair.*

*People might say that 'what's the point of evangelising, if God already knows and predetermines who is saved'*

*However, God calls people through the Gospel message. It is when the Gospel is preached to people with power, and they respond with obedient faith, that we know God has chosen them. So, evangelism (the preaching of the Gospel) far from being superfluous because of God's predestination, is actually indispensable, because it's the various means God has ordained by which His call comes to His people and awakens their faith.*

*Jesus established His "church" as the vehicle or instrument to call people whom God has predestined to believe. We don't know who those people are; we simply obey the commission to "go and make disciples to the ends of the Earth"*

### **Read Romans 8:31-32**

17. What conclusion [of verses 18-30] does Paul make about a Christian's present sufferings and future glory, in verse 31? Do you find comfort in this?

*If all we had were the first few chapters of the Book of Romans, some might believe that God was against us. Now that Paul has shown the lengths that God went to save us from His wrath and equip us for victory over sin and death, who can doubt that God is for us?*

*This is of great comfort to me. In fact, verse 31 is the verse that I became a Christian on. At a time in my life when I was lost; felt alone and was experiencing great suffering; this verse comforted me and led me to believe in Jesus because I knew and believed God could only be "for me" if I was reconciled to Him, through Jesus!*

18. What's Paul's reasoning in verse 32?

*Paul's reasoning is: if the Father already gave His ultimate gift, how can we think that He won't give us the smaller gifts?*

*The cross is the guarantee of the continuing, unfailing generosity of God.*

## Read Romans 8:33-39

19. Where does Paul quote from in verse 36? This verse describes the experience of God's people throughout the ages; do you agree?

*Paul quotes from Psalm 44:22.*

*At the end of verse 35, Paul mentions danger or sword that Christians might face – and even this danger or sword cannot separate a Christian from God's love. He then quotes from Psalm 44:22: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered"*

*Paul's highlighting the fact that God's people throughout the ages suffer for God's sake because of their loyalty to Him. A willingness for martyrdom is the final test of Christian faith and faithfulness. Are we willing to die for our faith?*

20. In verses 33 to 39, Paul details the security believers have in God's love. List the benefits in these verses:

a. Verse 33

*No one can bring a charge against us – God has chosen us and that's that!*

b. Verse 34

*No one can condemn us – charge us as guilty of our sin and sentence us to the death penalty for our sins – because Jesus has died (for our sins) and been raised from the dead (to defeat our death) – and so we are free from sin and death for good!*

c. Verse 35

*Not any trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness – or the danger or sword we mentioned earlier – can separate us from the love of Christ Jesus!*

d. Verse 37

*We are more than conquerors – through Jesus – who loves us!*

e. Verse 38

*Even [the calamities] of death and life; [the supernatural good and bad of] angels or demons, present or future [time] or any powers can separate us from the love of God in Jesus*

f. Verse 39

*Even [space] height nor depth; nor anything in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Jesus.*

*Together – verses 33 to 39 affirm that absolutely NOTHING can frustrate God’s purpose (since He is for us) or quench His generosity (since He has not spared His Son) or accuse or condemn His elect (since He has justified them in Christ) or separate us from His love (since He revealed it in Christ Jesus) – John Stott.*

21. **Ponder:** How do you need the truth – that nothing can separate you from God’s love – to comfort you today?

*It’s always a comfort to know that nothing can separate us from the love of God because of what Jesus has done; especially when we are battling severe trials in our lives and we start to lose hope. We can always come back to this promise.*

22. **Share:** If you feel comfortable, share a time in your life when Romans 8:31-39 helped you.

*I’ve already shared that verse 31 was instrumental in helping me come to faith in our Lord Jesus; at a time when I was feeling very vulnerable and lost and without hope!*

23. **Ponder:** If God perseveres in His love for us; how might that change how we love other people?

*If we understand how God perseveres in His love for us despite our battle with a sinful nature; despite the times we neglect to spend time with Him and despite the times we neglect to read and follow His Word; then that should make us realize that just as he perseveres with us, we should persevere in our love for others even when they let us down at times!*

### **Read Isaiah 41:8-10**

24. How does **Isaiah 41:8-10** relate to **Romans 8:18-39**?

*Isaiah speaks of how God chose Israel and called them to Himself.*

*Isaiah reasons that if God has chosen Israel; they are not to be afraid; they are not to be dismayed; because He is their God and He will strengthen them and help them; and uphold them with His righteous right hand.*

*Isaiah 41:8-10 speaks of God's faithfulness to His chosen people, assuring them of His presence and help in times of trouble. It emphasizes that they need not fear because God is with them, strengthening and upholding them. Similarly, Romans 8:18-39 speaks of the assurance and comfort believers have in God's faithfulness and love. It discusses the sufferings of the present time being incomparable to the glory that will be revealed in them. It also emphasizes that nothing can separate believers from the love of God in Christ Jesus.*

*Both passages highlight the theme of God's steadfastness and care for His people, even in the midst of trials and tribulations. They emphasize the assurance and hope that believers have in God's promises, regardless of their circumstances.*

What's the **BIG IDEA** of Romans 8:18-39?

**The confidence and assurance we can have as God's children**



What **light globe moment** did you have in this study?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

**Share the verse** that had a special meaning to you in this study?

**There are too many special verses in Romans 8:**

<sup>28</sup> And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose

<sup>31</sup> What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

<sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup> neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Finish in prayer:** Give thanks that nothing can separate us from God's love that is in Christ Jesus our Lord!

## Study 2 – Paul’s Anguish over Israel

Romans 9:1-6a

*(Sermon on 12-May-2024)*

**Before we begin:** Write a short paragraph summarizing chapters 1 to 8.

*In chapters 1 to 8 of Romans, Paul lays out the foundations of the Christian faith. Paul begins by talking about the **sinful nature of humanity**, **God’s wrath because of sin** and the **universal need for salvation**. Paul emphasizes the **righteousness of God and how it is revealed through faith in Jesus Christ**, not through any human effort or adherence to the law. Paul discusses the role of **justification by faith in Jesus** and the peace that comes through reconciliation with God. Paul also mentions the **struggle between the human flesh and the Spirit**, highlighting the **transformative power of the Holy Spirit** in believers' lives.*

### Read Romans 9:1-6a

1. It might seem like chapters 9 to 11 are a bit out of place and unrelated to the previous 8 chapters; especially if you were to read Romans 8:39 and then skip to Romans 12:1, it seems to continue on quite logically. Why do you think Paul raises the issue of his fellow Jews here in chapter 9?

*In Romans 9 to 11, Paul deals with the problem associated with the condition of Israel. What does it mean that Israel has missed and rejected its Messiah? What does this say about God? What does it say about Israel? What does it say about our present position in God?*

*It’s like Paul is asking ‘How can I be secure in God’s love and salvation to me when it seems that Israel was once loved and saved, but now seems to be rejected and cursed? Will God also reject and curse me one day?’*

*Or as Leon Morris puts it: “If God cannot bring his ancient people into salvation, how do Christians know that He can save them? Paul is not here proceeding to a new and unrelated subject. These three chapters are part of the way he makes plain how God in fact saves people”*

2. How does Paul describe his feelings in verses 1 to 3?

*Firstly, Paul emphasizes he is **speaking the truth**; he’s **not lying** and his **conscience is clear** through the Holy Spirit.*

*Secondly, Paul has **great sorrow and unceasing anguish in his heart** for his people, the Jews/Israelites, because they have mostly missed and rejected Jesus, their Messiah!*



*Third, he just finished telling us at the end of Romans 8 that nothing can separate us from God's love; but here are a bunch of people, and they're his people, and they are separated from God's love because they don't know Jesus. This is causing Paul such great distress and sorrow!*

**3. Ponder:** What do you make of Paul's staggering statement in verse 3?

*This is a dramatic declaration of Paul's great love and sorrow for his people (the Jews). Paul says he himself is willing to be separated from Jesus if that could somehow accomplish the salvation of Israel.*

*We should not think that Paul is using a dramatic metaphor or hyperbole here. The solemn assurances he gave in verse 1 show us that Paul is being completely truthful.*

*This great passion for souls gave Paul perspective. Lesser things did not trouble him because he was troubled by a great thing — the souls of men. "Get love for the souls of men — then you will not be whining about a dead dog, or a sick cat, or about the crotchets of a family, and the little disturbances that John and Mary may make by their idle talk. You will be delivered from petty worries (I need not further describe them) if you are concerned about the souls of men... Get your soul full of a great grief, and your little griefs will be driven out." (Spurgeon)*

*Paul reflects the same heart Moses had in Exodus 32:31-32: Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin; but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written."*

*Paul's statement is amazing when we consider that when it came to ministry, the Jews were Paul's worst enemies. They harassed and persecuted him from town to town, stirring up lies and violence against him. Yet he still loved them this passionately.*

**4.** In verses 4 and 5, Paul lists the benefits that Israel were given — yet most of the Jews still rejected Jesus Christ when He came. Read the following Old Testament and New Testaments passages for each benefit listed and make some notes why Paul's own people should not have missed who Jesus was/is and how these benefits should have prepared and pointed them to Jesus.

*The pain Paul feels for his lost brethren is all the more severe when he considers how God has blessed them with all the privileges of being His own special people. These privileges are: **adoption to sonship; divine glory; the covenants; the receiving of the Law; the temple worship; the promises; the patriarchs; and the fact that from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah!** We will look at each of these privileges in detail.*

**Adoption to sonship** (Exodus 4:21-23; Exodus 6:6-8; Deuteronomy 7:6; Jeremiah 31:9; Mark 8:37-38; 14:36)

*Exodus 4:21-23* - <sup>21</sup> The LORD said to Moses, "When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. <sup>22</sup> Then say to Pharaoh, 'This is what the LORD says: Israel is **my firstborn son**, <sup>23</sup> and I told you, "Let my son go, so he may worship me." But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son.'"

*God tells Moses that Israel is His firstborn son!*

*Deuteronomy 7:6* – <sup>6</sup> For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, **his treasured possession**.  
*Here God says He chose Israel and they are His treasured possession.*

*Jeremiah 31:9* – They will come with weeping; they will pray as I bring them back. I will lead them beside streams of water on a level path where they will not stumble, because **I am Israel's father, and Ephraim is my firstborn son**.

*Here God says He is Israel's father and they are His firstborn.*

*Mark 8:37-38* - <sup>37</sup> Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? <sup>38</sup> If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

*Here Jesus warns the Jews against the severe danger [losing their souls to Hell] of being ashamed of Him and His words; which is what many of the Jews did in Jesus' time.*

*Mark 14:36* - <sup>36</sup> "**Abba**, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

*Here Jesus uses the Aramaic for Father/Daddy which is Abba. Here Jesus is saying He is God's Son and submits to the will of His Father in Heaven.*

*Paul's point is that the fact that Israel was called God's "son" should have prepared Israel for Jesus' teaching that through Him, we can approach God on intimate terms such as "Abba" as Jesus did in Mark 14:36.*

### **Divine Glory** (Exodus 29:42-45; 2 Samuel 6:2; 1 Kings 8:10-11; John 1:14)

*Exodus 29:42-45 – <sup>42</sup> "For the generations to come this burnt offering is to be made regularly at the entrance to the tent of meeting, before the LORD. There I will meet you and speak to you; <sup>43</sup> there also I will meet with the Israelites, and the place will be consecrated by my glory.*

*Here, God promises the priests of Israel to meet with them and the Israelites at the Holy Place of the tabernacle where they will experience the Divine Glory of God (called the Shekinah)*

*2 Samuel 6:2 – <sup>2</sup> He and all his men went to Baalah in Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name, the name of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim on the ark.*

*The Israelites had the privilege of experiencing the Divine Glory of the Lord Almighty as He was enthroned between the cherubim on top of the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the 10 commandments.*

*1 Kings 8:10-11 – <sup>10</sup> When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the LORD. <sup>11</sup> And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled his temple.*

*When the temple was built instead of the mobile temple/tabernacle, the Divine Glory of the Lord filled the temple. The Temple was symbolic of God's divine presence being with His people, the Israelites.*

*John 1:14 – <sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

*When Jesus came to this Earth – when He (the Word) became flesh – He lived among human beings, even though He was God's one and only Son. In doing so, all those who saw and met Jesus saw His divine Glory as the only Son of the Father.*

*Paul's point is Israel has always experienced God's Divine Glory – in the most amazing ways; why would they not see God's Divine Glory – in Jesus – sent by the Father?*

*Paul's point is that Jesus is a greater manifestation of the God's presence than those appearances in the Old Testament, because "the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory" (John 1:14)*

**The Covenants** (through Abraham in Genesis 15; through Moses in Exodus 24:8; and through David in 2 Samuel 23:5; and also, the promise of a future figure who will fulfill: Genesis 12:1-3; Deuteronomy 18:18; 2 Samuel 7:12-13)

*Genesis 15 – God promised Abraham a son and as many offspring as the number of stars. God also promised Abraham a new land; the Promised Land. And to show that God meant what He said – He made a covenant with Abraham – and even promised that there would be a time – 400 years later – that Abraham's descendants would be slaves in a foreign land [Egypt] and afterwards they would come out with great possessions. To seal His covenant God passed between animals cut in half – in effect saying – if He broke the covenant – that's what would happen to Him. In other words, this was an **unbreakable covenant** with His people.*

*Exodus 24:8 – <sup>8</sup> 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."*

*After Moses had received the commandments from God (Exodus 20) and given the law to the people; Moses made an offering to God and the blood of the sacrificed animals was sprinkled on the people to seal the covenant God had made with His people!*

*2 Samuel 23:5 - <sup>5</sup> "If my house were not right with God, surely he would not have made with me **an everlasting covenant**, arranged and secured in every part; surely he would not bring to fruition my salvation and grant me my every desire.*

*David speaks with confidence that God has made an **everlasting covenant** with him. That everlasting covenant has its fulfilment in Jesus!*

*Genesis 12:1-3 – The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. <sup>2</sup> "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."*

*God makes a covenant with Abraham and promises him – land, a great nation, a great name and blessings! One of Abraham's descendants (Jesus) will cause all people on Earth to be blessed!*

*Deuteronomy 18:18 - <sup>18</sup> I will raise up for them **a prophet like you** from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. **He will tell them everything I command him.** God promises Moses of a prophet like him among his fellow Israelites. That prophet, of course is our Lord Jesus.*

*2 Samuel 7:12-13 - <sup>12</sup> When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>13</sup> He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and **I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.** Here God promises David, his offspring (Solomon) will succeed him and build God's house (the Temple) and his kingdom will be a forever kingdom because one of David's descendants (Jesus) is a forever King!*

*Paul's point is that in each case of the covenants mentioned above, God creates a relationship with the Israelites and promises to bless them. In all the cases, He tells them of a Messiah or future figure who will come to fulfil this covenant agreement.*

### **The receiving of the law (Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 4:7-8)**

*Exodus 20:1-17 – In these verses God gives Moses the 10 commandments on stone tablets.*

*Deuteronomy 4:7-8 - <sup>7</sup> What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? <sup>8</sup> And what other nation is so great as to have **such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?***

*Having given the Israelites the whole law of God, here Moses makes the point that no other nation has their god so near to them and no other nation has such righteous decrees and laws as the ones the Lord God has given them. The Israelites are in such a privileged position to have God so close to them and to have so clearly stated what God requires of them.*

*Paul's point is that the Israelites are in the privileged position of having God's Word and His commandments. Jesus is the fulfilment of the law and the commandments and the only one who can keep the law perfectly. In Romans 2 Paul told us that if we truly understand the law, we will see that we that we cannot gain salvation from it, because we can't keep it and so we must come to the only one who can keep it; Jesus. How could the Jews not see that?*



## **The temple worship (Hebrews 9:1-5; Hebrews 8:1-6)**

*Hebrews 9:1-5* – Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. <sup>2</sup> A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand and the table with its consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. <sup>3</sup> Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, <sup>4</sup> which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. <sup>5</sup> Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now.

*The Israelites had a set form of worship, initially at the tabernacle which was mobile and later at the permanent temple in Jerusalem. The set formula for worshipped outlines how people were to approach God; they couldn't approach Him willy nilly!*

*Hebrews 8:1-6* – Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, <sup>2</sup> and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by a mere human being.

<sup>3</sup> Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer. <sup>4</sup> If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already priests who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. <sup>5</sup> They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." <sup>6</sup> But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises.

*Worship needed to include a blood sacrifice, a washing and preparation for purification, and a priest to go in on the people's behalf. All these God-given rituals showed that people could not approach God in just any manner – people need blood to atone for sin, and a priest-substitute. Jesus is now our sacrifice, our priest, our purity etc. What the Old testament priest did was just a mere shadow or copy of what is in Heaven. Jesus' ministry is superior and He is the mediator of a superior (new) covenant.*

**The promises** (Genesis 3:14-19; 49:10; Psalm 2:2-7; Psalm 16:9-10; Psalm 22; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7; 52:13-53:12; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Micah 5:2)

*Genesis 3:14-19 – As well as these verses dishing out punishment to Adam, Eve and the Serpent; there is a promise in verse 15 – And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel. which is often referred to as proto-evangelion – first mention of the Gospel good*

*news. God promises that Satan's head will be crushed by Eve's offspring (which is Jesus) even though Satan will strike Jesus' heel.*

*Genesis 49:10 – The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his.*

*Here God promises that a ruler from the tribe of Judah shall come. Jesus is a descendant of King David from the tribe of Judah!*

*Psalms 2:2-7 –*

<sup>2</sup> The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the LORD and against his anointed, saying, <sup>3</sup> "Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles." <sup>4</sup> The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. <sup>5</sup> He rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, <sup>6</sup> "I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain." <sup>7</sup> I will proclaim the LORD's decree: He said to me, "You are my son; today I have become your father."

*Here God laughs and scoffs at human beings rebellion and promises He will install His Son as King on the mountain of Zion (Jerusalem)*

*Psalms 16:9-10 –* <sup>9</sup> Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, <sup>10</sup> because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.

*Here God promises that His faithful one (David – then Jesus) will not be abandoned to the realm of the dead or see decay. In other words, this is a promise of resurrection.*

*Psalms 22 – This Psalm is known as the "Psalm of the Cross" – the first verse – My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? reminds us of the words of Jesus from the cross. As we read Psalm 22 – yes, it's David saying how he feels during the many trials and difficulties he faced – but it's more applicable to read it in the light of Jesus suffering and crucifixion.*

*Isaiah 7:14 –* <sup>14</sup> Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

*Here God promises a virgin [Mary] will give birth to a son [Jesus] – called Immanuel – which means "God is with us"*

*Isaiah 9:6-7 –* <sup>6</sup> For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup> Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's

throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

*Here we have the promise of a child to be born [Jesus] and some amazing descriptions of who He is!*

*Isaiah 52:13-53:12 – These verses describe a promised suffering servant and describe the suffering in such detail that it cannot be anyone else but Jesus!*

*Jeremiah 31:31-34 –* <sup>31</sup> “The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. <sup>32</sup> It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD.

<sup>33</sup> “This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. <sup>34</sup> No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

*Here God promises a new covenant with His people which is introduced by Jesus – who also promises to send the Holy Spirit – which helps put the law in people’s minds and to write it on their hearts!*

*Micah 5:2 –* “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

*Here God foretells where the Messiah will be born; namely, Bethlehem!*

*Paul’s point is God has made so many promises in His Word about the coming of a Messiah; how could his fellow Jews not see how Jesus fulfils all these promises?*

**The patriarchs** (Abraham [Genesis 12:1-3 and Genesis 22]; Isaac [Genesis 22:6-8], Jacob [Genesis 28:10-22]; Joseph [Genesis 37-50], Moses [Deuteronomy 18:15-19], Joshua [Joshua 1:1-9], Samuel [1 Samuel 3:19-21] and David [2 Samuel 7:12-16])

*Genesis 12:1-3 – God promised the patriarch Abram (Abraham) that He would make him a great nation; bless him; and that all peoples on Earth would be blessed through Abram.*

*Genesis 22 – God tells the patriarch Abraham to go and sacrifice his son, Isaac, on a mountain – pointing to Jesus’ sacrifice.*

*Genesis 22:6-8 – When the patriarch Isaac asks his father Abraham where the sacrifice is coming from; Abraham replies that God Himself will provide the sacrifice. This points to God sacrificing his only Son, Jesus; for the sin of the world.*

*Genesis 28:10-22 – The patriarch Jacob has a dream of a stairway going up to Heaven and God speaks to Jacob and re-confirms the promises He made to Abraham and Isaac. Jacob was later renamed to Israel (Genesis 35:10)*

*Genesis 37-50 – Jacob has 12 sons (aka 12 tribes of Israel). These chapters tell the story of one of those sons, Joseph. He is a saviour figure – eventually saving his family and God’s people from starvation; which points to Jesus saving God’s people through His death and resurrection.*

*Deuteronomy 18:15-19 – God promises the patriarch Moses that He will raise up a future prophet like Moses, who will teach the Israelites’ everything God has commanded. This promised future prophet is Jesus!*

*Joshua 1:1-9 – Patriarch Joshua is Moses’ successor and leads God’s people into the Promised Land; which points to Jesus leading us into the Promised Land [Heave]*

*1 Samuel 3:19-21 – God was with the prophet Samuel – as Samuel ushered in a new era which brought the Kings of Israel – pointing to the King of Kings, Jesus.*

*2 Samuel 7:12-16 – God promised the patriarch David that there would be a forever King on David’s throne; this points to Jesus as that forever King!*

*Paul’s point is that God spoke to these patriarchs in many ways and on many occasions; predicting and foreshadowing the coming of a Messiah/Saviour figure, which is Jesus! And of course, the Jews missed it!*

**From them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah (Matthew 1:1-16; Romans 1:3)**

*Matthew 1:1-16 – gives the genealogy of Jesus. 14 generations from Abraham to David; fourteen generations from David to the Exile to Babylon; and fourteen generations from the Exile to Jesus, the Messiah. Romans 1:3 – says that Jesus, the Messiah, is a descendant of David.*

*Paul’s point is an obvious one but often overlooked. Jesus was Jewish. For the Son of God, to become a human, he had to become part of some race and culture. By Jesus becoming a Jew, God was not only giving the Jews a great honour, but making it “easier” for the Jews to relate to the Son of God than any other nation!*

5. **Ponder:** Does it surprise you that the Jews did not recognize their often-promised, long awaited King and Messiah?

*It's not so surprising when we read Stephen's speech to the Sanhedrin in Acts 7.*

<sup>51</sup> "You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! <sup>52</sup> Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him— <sup>53</sup> you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it."

6. How is Jesus described in verse 5b? (cf. John 1:1; Colossians 2:9) and what should be everyone's response to Him?

*Jesus is described in verse 5b as "God over all". Here, Paul plainly states the deity of Jesus!*

*John 1:1 supports this:* In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. *Where Jesus is the Word!*

*Colossians 2:9 also:* For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,

*According to verse 5b, Jesus [God] should be forever praised!*

7. What answer to the question "**how come most of the Jews did not recognize Jesus?**" does Paul rule out in verse 6a? (Isaiah 55:10-11; Hebrews 4:12)

*The answer that Paul rules out is that the Jews failure to recognize Jesus, the Messiah, had absolutely nothing to do with God's Word failing!*

*Isaiah 55:10-11 say:* <sup>10</sup> As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, <sup>11</sup> so is my word that goes out from my mouth: **It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.**

*Hebrews 4:12:* For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

8. What radical and important distinction does Paul make in verse 6b, which will be our focus in the next study?

*The important distinction that Paul makes in verse 6b is that: "...not all who are descended from Israel are Israel"*

*Paul hints that there is a "spiritual" Israel as well as a "physical" nation of Israel!*



*Paul has already mentioned in Romans 4 that Abraham was counted righteous by his faith way before the nation of Israel and God's law were established. In this way, God's people includes people outside of Israel and furthermore, not all of Israel believe!*

### **Read Isaiah 11:1-12**

9. How might Isaiah 11:1-12 answer the dilemma Paul raises in Romans 9:1-6a?

*Isaiah 11:1-12 speaks of a "stump" of Jesse (David's father) and of a "Branch". This "stump" or "Branch" will be the Spirit and wisdom of God and will judge in righteousness and justice. He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth; with the breath of His lips, He slays the wicked. Righteousness will be His belt and faithfulness the sash around His waist.*

*As a result of this righteous judge [JESUS], Isaiah paints a picture of the restoration and renewal that this righteous judge will bring in verses 6 to 9:*

- <sup>6</sup> The wolf will live with the lamb,  
the leopard will lie down with the goat,  
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;  
and a little child will lead them.
- <sup>7</sup> The cow will feed with the bear,  
their young will lie down together,  
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.
- <sup>8</sup> The infant will play near the cobra's den,  
and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.
- <sup>9</sup> They will neither harm nor destroy  
on all my holy mountain,  
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD  
as the waters cover the sea.

*The remaining verses 10-12 go on to describe the future hope of gathering the remnant Jews from all nations where they have been dispersed.*

*The prophecy in Isaiah 11 gives the future hope that God still has the nation of Israel in His plan of redemption.*

What's the **BIG IDEA** of Romans 9:1-6a?

**Paul's concern that his fellow Israelites/Jews do not believe in Jesus**



What **light globe moment** did you have in this study?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

**Share the verse** that had a special meaning to you in this study?

*Romans 9:5 - **Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.***

**Finish in prayer:** Thank God for His Word and that it never fails but is alive and active, sharper than a double-edged sword; it penetrates even to divide soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

### Study 3 – God’s Sovereign Choice

Romans 9:6b-29

*(Sermon on 19-May-2024)*

**Before we begin:** What was Paul’s anguish from Romans 9:1-6a from the last study? What was he even prepared to do in Romans 9:3.

*Paul’s anguish was that most of his fellow Jews – even though they were God’s people and had been given 8 privileges by God [namely: **adoption to sonship**; **divine glory**; the **covenants**; the **receiving of the Law**; the **temple worship**; the **promises**; the **patriarchs**; and the fact that from them is traced the **human ancestry of the Messiah**]– they totalled missed who Jesus is/was and rejected Him. This meant that most of Paul’s fellow Jews were missing out on Heaven and headed for Hell.*

*Paul was so distressed by the fact that most of his fellow Jews had missed and rejected Jesus that he was even prepared to miss out on Heaven himself and wind up in Hell, if it meant that his fellow Jews were saved. That is an amazing statement by Paul.*

### Read Romans 9:6b-29

1. What radical and important distinction does Paul make in verse 6b?

*Paul’s radical and important distinction is: “For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel”.*

*In other words, from the time Israel began as a nation – not all people were included in God’s plan and promises.*

*Paul has already made this distinction in chapter 2 (2:28f) between those who were Jews outwardly whose circumcision was in the body, and those who were Jews inwardly, who had received circumcision of the heart by the Spirit.*

2. What Old Testament example does Paul use in verses 7 to 9 to prove his point from verse 6b that “**not all who are descended from Israel are Israel**”? What point is Paul making in these verses?

*The Old Testament example that Paul uses is the sons of Abraham.*

*When Abraham was 75 – and told to go to a land he didn’t know; God promised Abram [Abraham] and his wife Sarai [Sarah] a son in their old age. But there was a long delay in this promise being kept because Sarai was barren. So, Abram and Sarai took matters into their own hands and Sarai told Abram to sleep with one of her maidservants Hagar. Hagar had a son by Abram called Ishmael.*

*But Ishmael was not the son that God had promised Abram and Sarai. Abraham [age 100] and Sarah [age 90] finally had the son that God had promised; namely Isaac.*

*Paul's point is God's promise of future blessings was through the son Abraham had with Sarah; namely Isaac - and not through the son Abraham had with Hagar, namely Ishmael.*

*So even from the start – 'not all who are descendant from Abraham are to be included in Israel' – anyone from Ishmael's family line were excluded from God's promises made to Abraham!*

3. What Old Testament example does Paul use in verses 10 to 13 to prove his point from verse 6b that “**not all who are descended from Israel are Israel**”? What point is Paul making in these verses?

*The Old Testament example that Paul uses is that Isaac and Rebekah had twin boys, Jacob and Esau; but before the twins were born; and before they had done anything good or bad; God chose to bless Jacob the younger and not Esau; and God chose that Esau the older would serve Jacob the younger (Genesis 25:23) and chose to love Jacob and hate (in comparison) Esau (Malachi 1:2-3).*

*Paul's point is God's promise of future blessings was only through ONE of the twins; namely Jacob; and not Esau. So “not all descendants of Jacob [who later was named Israel] were actually Israel; only those descendants of Jacob were included; not those descendants of Esau.*

4. Where is Paul quoting from in verse 13? What objections might people (including ourselves) have with the statement in verse 13?

*In v13, Paul quotes from Malachi 1:2-3: “Jacob I loved and Esau I hated”.*

*The objection we might have is a) why God chooses Jacob and not Esau – and it appears that choice has NOTHING to do with their behaviour, because the choice was made before their birth; and b) how can God “hate” Esau.*

*The answer to a) Our greatest error in considering God's election [choice] is to think that God chooses for arbitrary reasons, as if He made choices in a random way of choosing. We may not understand God's reasons for choosing and they may be reasons He alone knows and answers to, but God's choices are not crazy,*

*without reason, or random. They make perfect sense knowing everything God knows and seeing everything God sees.*

*The answer to b) In his commentary on Romans (where Paul quoted this Malachi passage in Romans 9:13) Leon Morris cited examples where hate clearly seems to mean something like “loved less” (Genesis 29:31-33, Deuteronomy 21:15, Matthew 6:24, Luke 14:26, John 12:25). Yet he agreed with Calvin’s idea that the real thought here is much more like “accepted” and “rejected” more than it is like our understanding of the terms “loved” and “hated.”*

*Spurgeon says: We should remember the reason why election is brought up here: not to exclude, but to comfort and reassure. “A woman once said to Mr. Spurgeon, ‘I cannot understand why God should say that He hated Esau.’ ‘That,’ Spurgeon replied, ‘is not my difficulty, madam. My trouble is to understand how God could love Jacob’” (William Newell in his commentary on Romans).*

*Timothy Keller says this about “Jacob I loved and Esau I hated”. We must be careful not to think of this hatred as identical to the emotion we ordinarily call by that name. There is a Hebrew idiom [peculiar phrase] behind this. Jesus told His disciples they had to ‘hate’ their families to follow Him (Luke 14:26). That does not mean literally to hate our families, but to prefer Jesus over our families.*

*Nevertheless, Paul is saying that God chose to put Jacob above Esau, but not because of anything about Jacob that was morally superior to Esau. [Although we should note: Esau did forfeit his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of lentil stew, so human responsibility is interwoven with God’s sovereignty in their story]. The only reason Jacob received God’s promise was because of God’s gracious choice. This teaching is easy to understand but not easy to accept!*

*Does this mean that God is arbitrary? Does God choose people by saying: eeny, meeny, miney, moey? No. Paul is not saying that God has no reasons for His choice; all we are told is that the reasons are not in us. There is no superiority of believers over non-believers!*

*Why do we have to insist on the doctrine of election [God’s sovereign choice]. It causes so many problems. Yes “election” is difficult to accept. But the best reason for accepting the doctrine is that without “election” we compromise the central teaching of the Bible that we are saved by grace alone through faith, and not by works. If the difference between a believer and an unbeliever is ultimately in us (a*



*greater humility, a greater openness, etc.) then we become the authors of our own salvation.*

5. Paul raises the question in verse 14: ***“What then shall we say? Is God unjust?”***. What’s Paul’s short answer in verse 14b? What’s Paul’s longer answer and reasoning in verse 15? (cf. Exodus 33:19)

*The short answer to the question “what then shall we say? Is God unjust?” is “not at all!”*

*The longer answer is a quote from Exodus 33:19: “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion”. In other words; as the Creator and sustainer of all things and because God is sovereign, He can choose whom He has mercy on!*

*By definition “mercy” is undeserved; otherwise, it wouldn’t be mercy. So, if everyone deserves to be punished for their sin and die for it; and God chooses that some people are shown mercy; that He’s prerogative as a Sovereign God!*

*Timothy Keller puts it this way: Mercy by its definition cannot ever be an obligation. To say that mercy is “unfair” is to say that mercy is owed to all. But mercy is undeserved and free. Paul’s argument is: to say: it is unfair for God to only have mercy on some is a self-contradictory statement. Paul is reasoning: Are you saying that God owes anyone salvation? Of course not! And if God owes no-one salvation, then He is free to give to a) all people; b) some people or c) no people. Salvation is about God’s mercy and gift, not about our work and our rights!*

*John Stott says: God is not unjust. The fact is, Paul demonstrated in earlier chapters that all human beings are sinful and guilty in God’s sight (3:9, 19, 23), so that nobody deserves to be saved. If God hardens some, He is not being unjust, for that is what sin deserves. If on the other hand, he has compassion on some, He is not being unjust, for He is dealing with them in mercy. **The amazing thing is: not that some are saved and others are not; but that anybody is saved at all! For we deserve nothing at God’s hand but judgment. If we receive what we deserve (which is judgment), or if we receive what we do not deserve (which is mercy), in neither case is God unjust.***

6. What example does Paul give in verses 16 to 18 to elaborate on his answer from verse 15?

*Paul says – v16 – that God’s choice is NOT based on human effort but on God’s mercy! The example Paul uses is the example of Pharaoh of Egypt and quotes from Exodus 9:16 where God, through Moses, tells Pharaoh: “I have 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”. And Paul says, God has mercy on whom he wants and He hardens the heart of whom He wants. God chose to harden Pharaoh’s hearts to show His power in sending the 10 plagues (see Exodus 7:3; 14:4, 17). Other examples of this are in Deuteronomy 2:30 and Joshua 11:20)*

*However, God’s sovereignty works with human responsibility. If we read Exodus 4-14, we see a fascinating picture. On the one hand God hardens Pharaoh’s heart (Exodus 4:2; 7:3; 9:12, 17; 10:1, 20, 27) and yet on the other hand, we are told “Pharaoh hardened his [own] heart” (Exodus 8:15, 19, 32; 9:17, 34) and God tells Pharaoh that he is being punished because “you...set yourself against my people” (Exodus 9:13-18). Basically, as per Romans 1:24 – God’s hardening of Pharaoh’s heart was “giving him over” to his own stubbornness. Pharaoh decided to resist God and God reinforced Pharaoh in that stance; and gave Pharaoh what he chose! God hardens those He wants to harden and all those he hardens want to be hardened!*

7. What objection does Paul raise in verse 19? Why does he raise this objection?

*The objection Paul raises in v19 is: “Then, why does God still blame us? Who is able to resist His will?”*

*He raises this objection because if God hardens hearts (like He did with Pharaoh) then how can Pharaoh be blamed for that; he had no choice but to be hardened and he could not resist God.*

8. What answer does Paul give in verses 20 and 21 to his objection raised in verse 19?

*Answer in v20 – how can a human being (the one formed by God) talk back to God (the one who created them) and ask ‘why did you make me like this?’*

*Answer in v21 – Another example of a potter and a lump of clay. The potter can make two different things out of the same lump of clay; one thing could be for special use and one could be for common use. The potter (as the creator) can*

*choose what He wants to make out of the clay; likewise, God has that same choice when He creates each human being; who will achieve God's purposes!*

*We must beware of standing in judgment over God, rather than remembering that God is judge over us.*

*We must all beware of recreating God in a way that is more pleasant or palatable, rather than acknowledging that He is our Creator. He is the divine Potter; we are human clay (verse 21).*

9. What do verses 22 to 24 have to say about God's right to glorify Himself how He sees fit?

*V22 – Again Paul refers to the example of Pharaoh and the Egyptians. God chose to show His wrath and make His power known, by patiently dealing with Pharaoh and the Egyptians, by sending plague after plague. These plagues glorified God and showed His power; but ultimately Pharaoh and the Egyptians were already decided to be God's 'objects of God's wrath' and 'prepared for His destruction'.*

*V23 – Paul's saying these plagues sent on Egypt were chosen by God to make the riches of His glory known to the objects of His mercy [the Israelites in slavery in Egypt] – whom he decided in advance for His glory!*

*V24 – Paul's saying even "us" – Christians – are called not from Jews – but also from Gentiles. In other words, if God wants to show mercy to the Gentiles as well as the Jews (of course, never being less than fair to either), who can argue with Him or oppose Him?*

*In summary, in election, God comes in, softens our hearts and make us good. In hardening, God simply passes over and lets people have the way they have chosen. In John Stott's words: "if anybody is lost, the blame is theirs, but if anyone is saved, the credit is God's! This is a mystery which our present human knowledge cannot solve; but it is consistent with scripture, history and experience.*

10. What does Paul say the prophet Hosea had to say about God's right to choose in verses 25 & 26? (cf. Hosea 2:23 and 1:10)

*In Hosea 2:23 – God declares His right – to “call people ‘my people’ who are not my people; and to call someone ‘my loved one’ who is not my loved one”.*

*Also, in Hosea 1:10 – God declares the right – “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’.*

*Both these verses from Hosea show the mercy of God!*

*Paul is using what Hosea says as a template for what God is now using for Gentiles. He is saying to the Jews: You know God has always been the God who blesses those who do not deserve it and could not have predicted it. If the Gentiles are flocking to become Christians, should that really surprise you Jews? Also even in the Old Testament history, God never promised to bless all ethnic Israel. In fact, the reverse is true. And Paul then quotes Isaiah at the time of the exile in verses 27-29...*

11. What does Paul say the prophet Isaiah had to say about God’s right to choose in verses 27-29? (cf. Isaiah 10:22-23; 1:9)

*The passage quoted from Isaiah 10:22-23 speaks first to God’s work in saving a remnant from the coming Assyrian destruction. The suffering of God’s people at the hands of the Assyrians and others would make them feel as if they would certainly be destroyed. God assures them that this is not the case. **He will always preserve His remnant.***

*God has always dealt with a remnant. “It was stupid to think that, since the whole nation had not entered the blessing, the promise of God had failed. The promise had not been made to the whole nation and had never been intended to apply to the whole nation.” (Morris)*

*Sodom and Gomorrah were completely destroyed in judgment [Genesis 19:24-29]. This quotation from Isaiah 1:9 shows that as bad as Judah’s state was because of their sin, it could have been worse. It was only by the mercy of God that they survived at all. Sodom and Gomorrah were both totally destroyed, with not even a very small remnant to carry on. It was only God’s mercy on a remnant from Judah*

*that prevented the whole of Israel from being destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah!*

*Paul is saying: You know God has always been the God who rejected those who thought they deserved his blessing and presumed on it! So if the Jews are rejecting Jesus and His followers, should that really surprise us?*

*Paul's overall point is that throughout God's dealing with the nation of history; when they deserved to be totally destroyed; God showed mercy to the tribe of Judah and left a remnant. And there will always be a remnant!*

12. **Ponder:** How would you use Romans 9:6b-29 to answer someone who says God is unjust?

*As God's created beings (creatures) we are NEVER in a position to talk back to God and question what He is doing. We ALL deserve to be cut off from God because of our sin; but God chooses to show mercy [through Jesus] to whom He chooses; and we are not in a position to question that!*

*The fact that God chooses to save ANYONE is amazing grace and mercy!*

13. **Meditate on Romans 9:20-21.** How does this humble you and help you exalt God?

*Verses 20-21 put me in my correct position as a creature of God who is at God's mercy. The fact that God has chosen to allow me to be saved by Jesus, when I could easily have been cut off, is very humbling indeed. So, God is to be forever praised for His grace and mercy in sending Jesus to save those lost from God; and we do not know whom God has chosen to save!*

14. **Ponder:** Do you have any questions about this doctrine [God's sovereignty to choose] that you need to wrestle with or found out more about?

*None.*

15. **Optional question:**

**Read Job 38-42.** How does Job's reply to God in **Job 42:1-6** help you with God's sovereignty?

*The Book of Job is a complex and profound exploration of human suffering, faith, and divine justice. God allows Satan to test Job's faith by bringing about various tragedies, including the loss of his wealth, children, and health. Despite Job's immense suffering, Job refuses to curse God. Throughout the book, Job and his friends engage in philosophical debates about the nature of suffering, the justice of God, and the mystery of divine providence.*

*In chapters 38-42 – God presents a series of rhetorical questions to Job, emphasizing His power and wisdom in creating and sustaining the whole universe. God rebukes Job's friends for their misguided attempts to explain Job's suffering and instructs them to seek Job's forgiveness.*

*In Job 42:1-6 – Job acknowledges that God can do all things; that God's purposes cannot be thwarted; and Job admits that he spoke of things he did not fully understand. And so, Job repents and acknowledges God's sovereignty in all things*

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Romans 9:6b-29**?

God's sovereign choice



What **light globe moment** did you have in this study?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

**Share the verse** that had a special meaning to you in this study?

***<sup>6</sup> It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.***

***<sup>15</sup> For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."***

***<sup>27</sup> Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved."***

**Finish in prayer:** Thank God for that He is sovereign in all things and that "His purposes will stand, and He will do all that He pleases" (Isaiah 46:10)



**Studies prepared by Paul O'Rourke**  
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**Resources:**

The MacArthur Study Bible

New Bible Commentary (Carson, France, Moyter & Wenham)

Romans 8 to 16 for you (Timothy Keller)

The Message of Romans (John Stott)

Romans (Geoffrey B. Wilson)

Romans 1 to 8 (William Hendrikson)

The Epistle to Romans (Floyd E. Hamilton]