

Romans 9A

- Nothing can separate us from the love of God
 - That was Paul's resounding conclusion to the first part of his essay on righteousness
 - If God is for us, who can be against us?
 - Though we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered, in all these things we will overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us
 - Yet one question remains: what about Israel?
 - Didn't they get promises from God much like the Christian is receiving promises today?
 - If the Jew was to take comfort in what Paul has taught in Romans 8 concerning the security of the believer, then they need Paul to address the problem of Israel
- Israel did not embrace their Messiah
 - By the time the letter was written, the nation had all but forgotten about Jesus of Nazareth
 - Yet Paul just made a conclusive argument from scripture that only by faith in Jesus is there hope for redemption
 - So how do the Jews reconcile two seeming opposites
 - 1. Only through faith in Jesus can the nation of Israel receive the promises given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
 - 2. The Messiah has come and gone, and the nation rejected Him – doesn't this mean they will never receive what God promised.
 - 3. So what does that say about God's promises? Are they worth anything? It seems that something separated the Jews from the love of God.
 - So much for God's sovereignty and His having elected the nation of Israel

- So Paul sets out in chapters 9-11 to reveal a mystery to the Roman church
 - In passing, there's an irony here
 - While the church at Rome was a little put off that Paul hadn't visited them yet
 - Paul reserves for them the revelation of probably the greatest NT mystery outside the book of Revelation itself
 - The mystery of God's plan for Israel
 - Now there is an important shift in Paul's teaching here that we must understand
 - For most of chapter 1-8, Paul was dealing with the topic of righteousness as it relates to every individual, Jew or Greek
 - The focus was on individual righteousness
 - But in chapters 9-11, Paul is addressing Israel as a nation
 - So the focus shifts to a discussion of nations or people groups, not individuals
 - Don't let your thinking drift back into a personal discussion, or else you will misunderstand what he teaches at several points
 - And the three chapters correspond to the past, present and future circumstances of the nation

[Rom. 9:1](#) ¶ I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit,

[Rom. 9:2](#) that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.

[Rom. 9:3](#) For I could wish that I myself were accursed, *separated* from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,

[Rom. 9:4](#) who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the *temple* service and the promises,

[Rom. 9:5](#) whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

- Here's Paul, the diplomat, back at work again in the church of Rome
 - It always helps to draw a point of identification with your audience, and in Paul's case he uses his most powerful weapon

- Paul was a Jews' Jew.
- So he begins this sidebar by making the obvious point
 - I am telling the truth
 - In fact, I have two witnesses who will back up my claim
 - My position in Christ and my conscience united with the Holy Spirit
 - This is the Jewish justice requirement for two witnesses in court testimony
 - And of what would they testify?
 - That Paul shared the grief and sorrow of all Christian Jews
 - The sorrow that all Jews has not embraced their Messiah
 - I don't think that as Gentiles we can ever fully appreciate the pain felt by a first century Jew who knew the truth concerning Jesus and also watched as their brothers and sisters rejected their salvation
 - This was a salvation they had long hoped for, and then it came and they were shut out from the glory of the kingdom
 - It was almost too much for them to bear
 - And it was so hard that it threatened to put a barrier between them and their very faith
 - How could they accept the promises of a God Who appeared to break His promises concerning Israel?
 - If you want a glimpse of just how painful it was for Jews to see their nation rejecting the Messiah, consider Paul's words in verse 3
 - Paul would be willing to be accursed – separated from Christ for the sake of his brethren
 - How many people in this world would you be willing to forgo salvation itself in order to save?
 - If you really understand the enormity of what they would require, it would probably cause all us to pause for a long time before considering such a possibility

- Paul was ready to make that deal if it could save the Jewish nation in his day
 - This was the strongest he could make to prove his love for his people
- So Paul wants the readers to understand that he is not teaching out of hatred for the Jewish people
 - He wasn't trying to condemn them with the truth of Gospel
- Paul goes on to describe his people in terms of their heritage and significance to in God's plan
 - He calls the Jewish nation his kinsmen, which means relatives (like family members)
 - But then he adds according to the flesh, or by physical descent
 - He speaking of the physical nation of Israel, those who are physically descended from Abraham
 - The Israelites
 - That term means of Israel, and Israel was the name God gave Jacob
 - Refers to being the people God chose
 - To these people belong the adoption as sons just like Christians are called adopted sons of God
 - They received the glory of God and His covenants and the Law and the temple and the promises of an inheritance in the promised land
 - The same people who gave the nation their fathers like Abraham
 - And from whom the Christ Himself was descended in the flesh
- In other words, these people are not trivial
 - They are not a footnote in history
 - Not to Paul and not to God

- So Paul's teaching in Romans 1-8 was never meant to suggest the Jewish people were insignificant or had been written off by God
 - Their significance was assured and continues
 - But if this is so, why have they been shut out from salvation?
 - If God is in control of all things and the destiny of all men, then why didn't God bring the nation to receive their Messiah?
 - Why has God's word concerning their promises failed?

[Rom. 9:6](#) ¶ But *it is* not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel;

[Rom. 9:7](#) nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED."

[Rom. 9:8](#) That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.

- God's word has not failed
 - We may think it has failed with respect to Israel, but that's because we are looking at the wrong Israel
 - In fact, not all who are descended physically from Abraham are counted as Israel by God
 - Paul is saying two things to his readers
 - First, God's promises concerning Israel have not failed
 - He is keeping His promises concerning Israel
 - Secondly, the problem is you haven't noticed God keeping His promise to Israel because you are looking at the wrong Israel
 - Paul begins by proving that there are two kinds of Israel
 - He says not all those who are descended from Abraham are part of God's Israel
 - Every Jew knew that Abraham had two sons
 - Ishmael and Isaac

- Ishmael was the oldest and the one Abraham had preferred to bless with God's promise
 - But God said no
 - In Genesis 21, God told Abraham that it would only be through Isaac that your descendents would be counted as Israel
 - So when we say Israel, we already accept that an entire branch of Abraham's descendents are excluded
- What was the difference between Ishmael and Isaac?
 - God extended His mercy to one son and rejected the other
 - The promise sGod gave Abraham was specifically intended to be fulfilled through a certain son, a son of God's choosing
 - A son that God promised to Abraham even before any child had been born
 - Abraham's own righteousness had come by faith in that very promise
 - The promise that he would have a son named Isaac
 - And therefore only those who descended from that son, the son of the promise, could be considered children of the promise
 - But it doesn't stop there....

[Rom. 9:10](#) And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived *twins* by one man, our father Isaac;

[Rom. 9:11](#) for though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to *His* choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls,

[Rom. 9:12](#) it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER."

[Rom. 9:13](#) Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED."

- Isaac's own children were marked by a similar moment of God's election
 - Rebekka conceived twins by Isaac

- But even before the twins were born, God elected one to carry the promise forward
 - He told the parents that the younger would serve the older
- Now Paul wants to emphasize that God is always in control of His plan of redemption, including His plan to select only a certain Israel
 - So Paul adds that God's decision of which son would carry the promise forward was made before they were born
 - So that we would know that the decision came before either could have been said to do anything good or bad
 - So, as Paul says, so that we could see God's purpose at work
 - And know that God's plan of redemption never makes accommodation for man's works
 - It is always based entirely on God's gracious call
 - And in Isaac and Rebekah, God extended His call to Jacob but not to Esau
 - As it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated
- Now much has been made of this statement from Malachi
 - The most common is to say that God loved Jacob and hated Esau because He foreknew who would follow Him and who wouldn't
 - But if we read the text, it's clear that Paul is saying that this choice was made before birth so that we wouldn't come to the conclusion it was based on the works of these two men
 - To assume otherwise is to confuse foreknowledge with predestination
 - God predetermined who he would elect for the promises of Israel
 - And in that context, to select is to love, to not select is to hate

- Paul's building a point here that not everyone is Israel merely because they share a physical kinship with Abraham or Isaac
 - That's never been the point
 - The key is who shares in the promises of God
 - And God's promises are extended only to those He elects to receive them
 - And He goes out of His way to make clear that He is the one making these decisions
 - And that He is making them not on the basis of our having earned them, but strictly on the basis of His sovereign choice
 - If you look for it, this is a common pattern of God in scripture
 - God commonly chooses those who the world would not expect to receive the honor
 - Isaac was the younger, but God chose Him over the older
 - Same for Jacob over Esau
 - Same for Judah over Reuben
 - Same for Joseph over his brothers
 - Same for David over his brothers
 - And men like Moses, Gideon, the prophets, the apostles, Paul particularly

[1Cor. 1:25](#) Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

[1Cor. 1:26](#) ¶ For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;

[1Cor. 1:27](#) but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,

[1Cor. 1:28](#) and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,

[1Cor. 1:29](#) so that no man may boast before God.

[1Cor. 1:30](#) But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,

[1Cor. 1:31](#) so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."

- Paul's point is to remind the reader of the past of Israel
 - The concept of God electing a people didn't begin with the church
 - God has been at work in electing men and women since the beginning
 - God elected a certain people to form the nation of Israel for eternal purposes
 - This is Israel's history and it continues until today
 - The nation has always been a group of people God elected to be His children
 - But it inevitably meant that some descendants were not chosen
 - Israel's past was prologue for what's happening to Israel today
- Doesn't the truth of God's sovereign election reveal God to be mean and unfair?
 - This is probably the single most common, natural thought for every person who grasps the Biblical truth of God's sovereign election
 - In fact, it's easily the most common reason for why some people refuse to accept this truth
 - It's become a particularly strong sentiment in the Western Hemisphere in the last 200 years
 - Probably because independence, freedom, equality, and being self-made are so ingrained in our culture
 - We automatically count it unfair anytime someone is without equal opportunity or complete self-determination
 - The idea that anyone or anything else may be in control of our destiny is offensive and just plain wrong
 - Specifically, isn't it wrong that God is at work electing some but leaving others outside the family

- Paul not being one to duck a tough question, he asks it himself on behalf of his readers

[Rom. 9:14](#) ¶ What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!

[Rom. 9:15](#) For He says to Moses, " I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION."

[Rom. 9:16](#) So then it *does* not *depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

[Rom. 9:17](#) For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, " FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH."

[Rom. 9:18](#) So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

- So what are we saying here, is God unjust?
 - Specifically, can we accuse God of being unjust simply because He is selective
 - Can God's decision to be selective rather than all-inclusive with His mercy be the basis for a charge of injustice?
 - Another way to ask this question is: Does God have the right to select some and not all?
 - Paul answers the charge first by denying it outright
 - May it never be said that God is unjust
 - Then Paul brilliantly quotes God's own words
 - Who better to defend God's decision to be selective than God Himself
 - God said I will have mercy and compassion on whom I will have mercy and compassion
 - Simply put, this is God's creation
 - We are all the work of His hands
 - He has the right to do with it what He wishes
 - And God cannot be judged because He decides to be selective in His mercy and compassion

- Friends, this is what it means to be God
- When doctors make life or death decisions about terminally ill patients, we common say the doctors are playing God
 - When we say that, we're acknowledging that decision over who lives and who dies are God's alone
 - That to be God means to be free to determine the course of life
 - We can't extend to God that privilege in one circumstance and deny Him in another
 - He is either God or not
- So Paul makes the only conclusion possible in verse 16:
 - It doesn't depend on the man who wills or runs, but on God who has mercy
 - What's it?
 - Our selection into God's elect
 - In the case of those who would be Israel, "it" means the opportunity to be counted a part of the promises made to Israel
 - It doesn't depend on the man who wills
 - A man's will cannot place in the promises extended to Israel
 - A man may desire to receive the inheritance promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, like many who lived under the apostate kings of Northern Israel
 - A man yearn to be considered a descendent of promise, like the Samaritans of Jesus' day who desperately wanted to be considered the true Israel
 - But a man's will cannot force God's hand
 - Nor does it depend on a man who runs

- Running here is a metaphor for the man working diligently to earn God's favor
- Like the Pharisees who ran harder than anyone to demonstrate their worthiness before God
 - But our work will never impress God, nor can it compel Him to reward us with inclusion into His family
- Rather, our inclusion in God's elect is totally dependent on His mercy
 - Pharaoh's life in Egypt gives clear evidence of God's sovereign choice over men's lives
 - In the time of Moses, God told Pharaoh through Moses that God had raised up Pharaoh and allowed him to hold his position strictly so that he could be an enemy of God's people
 - Sometimes this is explained away as merely God's confirmation of Pharaoh's heart
 - Pharaoh hardens his heart then God begins to harden the heart
 - As if Pharaoh blew his chances with God and got what he deserved
 - But Paul's teaching here and the quote from Exodus both work to directly contradict that thinking
 - Whether Pharaoh played a part in his own undoing or not, it was always God's intention that Pharaoh not release the Israelites until all ten plagues had come and the Pharaoh's son had died
 - Before Moses even left for Egypt, he heard this:

[Ex. 4:21](#) ¶ The LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.

[Ex. 4:22](#) "Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, " Israel is My son, My firstborn.

[Ex. 4:23](#) "So I said to you, ' Let My son go that he may serve Me'; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn.'""

- So again the conclusion is simply unavoidable

- God has mercy on whom He has mercy and He hardens whom He hardens
 - Because that is what it means to be God
- So in answer to the charge that God is unjust in electing some and not all, Paul's answer is that this is what it means to be God
 - You can't make a judgment against God for doing what is completely within His right to do as God
 - He elects some, both today in the church
 - And before with the establishment of the nation of Israel
- Next week we look at the next logical question you might ask
 - Even though God has the right to select whomever He wants, why doesn't He elect everyone?