



The God Who Choses In Mercy

“So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy” (Romans 9:16).

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“I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, 2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. 3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: 4 Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; 5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. 6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: 7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. 8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. 9 For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. 10 And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; 11 (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) 12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. 13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. 14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. 15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy” (Romans 9:1-16).

Introduction

Romans chapter 9 stands as one of the most solemn and profound passages in all Scripture. The Apostle Paul opens his heart concerning Israel, reveals the sovereignty of God in salvation, and reminds us that divine mercy is not earned by human effort, ancestry, or achievement. This passage humbles pride, exalts grace, and magnifies the purposes of God. This passage teaches us three great truths:

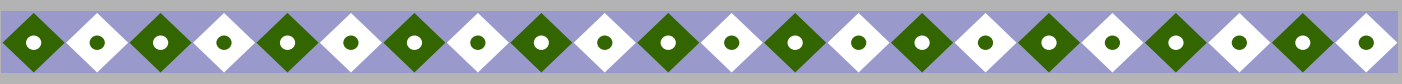
- True spiritual privilege does not guarantee salvation.
- God’s purposes stand by His sovereign calling based on foreknowledge.
- Salvation rests entirely upon divine mercy.

In an age where humanity glorifies self-determination, achievement, and entitlement, Romans 9 reminds us that grace cannot be earned, inherited, or demanded. It is bestowed by God. We will look at this study in five parts:

- 1) A Burdened Heart for the Lost
- 2) Spiritual Privilege Does Not Guarantee Salvation
- 3) God’s Promise Has Not Failed
- 4) God’s Choice Is According to His Purpose
- 5) God’s Mercy Is Sovereign

I. A Burdened Heart for the Lost

“I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Romans 9:1-3). Paul begins not with theology alone, but with tears. Before he discusses election, mercy, or sovereignty, he reveals compassion. True doctrine never removes love for souls.



Paul's sorrow for Israel echoes the burden of Moses. After Israel worshipped the golden calf, Moses prayed: "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written" (Exodus 32:32). Both Moses and Paul demonstrate sacrificial concern for God's people. Consider the Lord Jesus Christ Himself: "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it" (Luke 19:41). Christ wept over Jerusalem because they rejected the day of their visitation. Divine truth and deep compassion walked together in Him perfectly.

Secular History records that during the Second World War, many rescuers risked their own lives to save others from destruction. Men such as Oskar Schindler sacrificed wealth, safety, and reputation to preserve lives. Though imperfect human examples, they illustrate the principle that genuine love bears burdens for others. The modern Church often has opinions about the lost, but little anguish for them. Paul teaches us that truth without compassion becomes cold orthodoxy.

II. Spiritual Privilege Does Not Guarantee Salvation

"Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen" (Romans 9:4-5). Israel possessed extraordinary privileges such as The covenants, The Law, The promises, The patriarchs, The temple worship, and The lineage of Christ. Yet privilege alone could not save them. Paul explains: "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children:" (Romans 9:6-7). There is a difference between physical and spiritual descent - "That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." (Romans 9:8). Paul references God's word to Abraham: "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Genesis 21:12).

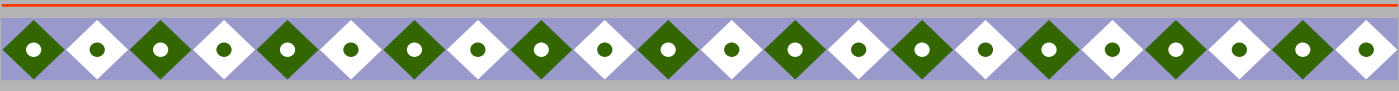
John the Baptist warned Israel: "And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father" (Matthew 3:9). Likewise Jesus declared: "For not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 7:21). These underscores the points that religious heritage is not regeneration. A person may attend church faithfully, know Scripture intellectually, come from a Christian family, hold religious office, and still not know God savingly.

Judas Iscariot walked with Christ physically, heard His teachings, witnessed miracles, yet remained unchanged. Jesus said of him: "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John 6:70). Nearness to holy things is not the same as salvation.

In the secular, a person may grow up in a royal household and yet never possess the character worthy of the crown. Living in Buckingham Palace would not automatically make one virtuous. In the same way, proximity to spiritual privilege does not produce spiritual life.

III. God's Promise Has Not Failed

"Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Romans 9:6). Paul explains that God's promises were never intended for mere physical descendants alone. "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children" (Romans 9:7). He then points to Isaac over Ishmael. "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Romans 9:7). God distinguished between natural birth and covenant promise - "That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (Romans 9:8). Paul repeats this truth in Galatians: "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (Galatians 3:7). Salvation has always been by promise and faith, not by bloodline. Ishmael was Abraham's son by natural means, but Isaac was born according to God's promise. "For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set



time of which God had spoken to him” (Genesis 21:2). Human effort produced Ishmael; divine promise produced Isaac. The Church must remember that:

- Christianity is not inherited genetically.
- Salvation is not transferred by culture.
- Grace is not automatic through denomination or nationality.

Every soul must be born again. “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7).

IV. God’s Choice Is According to His Purpose

“For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand” (Romans 9:11). Paul now moves to Jacob and Esau. Before either child acted morally, God declared: “The elder shall serve the younger” (Romans 9:12). And later Scripture says: “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated” (Romans 9:13). This passage confronts human pride directly. God’s purposes are not governed by human merit.

This does not mean God acts unjustly or capriciously. Scripture consistently teaches God’s righteousness and decisions based on fore knowledge. Moses asked: “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25). God’s election magnifies grace because no sinner deserves salvation, as supported by these scriptures:

- “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world” Ephesians 1:4).
- “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace” (2 Timothy 1:9).
- “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” (Romans 8:29-30).


David was chosen while overlooked by men. God told prophet Samuel—“Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). Even Samuel expected Eliab to be king, but God chose the shepherd boy. God often chooses contrary to human expectation, so that His glory alone may stand. Similarly, He chose:

- Abel over Cain
- Isaac over Ishmael
- Jacob over Esau
- David over his brothers
- the fishermen over the scholars

In many secular fields, selectors look beyond appearance. A skilled orchestra conductor may choose a musician not because of fame or outward reputation, but because he hears qualities others miss. Human selection is imperfect, but it illustrates that choice is based upon purposes often unseen by other observers.

V. God’s Mercy Is Sovereign

“What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid” (Romans 9:14). Paul anticipates the objection immediately. Human beings instinctively resist the idea of divine sovereignty. But God told Moses: “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion” (Romans 9:15). This quotation comes from Exodus 33:10 - “And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy”.



Mercy, by definition, cannot be demanded. If salvation were earned, it would cease to be grace. "And if by grace, then is it no more of works" (Romans 11:6). Therefore Paul concludes: "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Romans 9:16). Human effort cannot save the soul as confirmed in these scriptures:

- "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us" (Titus 3:5).

The thief on the cross had no time for good works, religious rituals, or moral reform, yet Christ declared: "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). That is mercy.

In the secular, a condemned prisoner receiving a royal pardon does not boast that he earned freedom. Mercy flows from the authority and compassion of the one granting pardon. Likewise salvation is an act of divine mercy, not human achievement.

In Summary, the Practical Lessons from Romans 9:1–16 are:

1. We Must Have Compassion for Souls. Doctrine should deepen evangelistic concern, not diminish it. "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Romans 10:1).

2. Religious Privilege Cannot Save. Church attendance, family background, and knowledge alone cannot regenerate the heart. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3:7).

3. Salvation Is Entirely of Grace. No sinner can boast before God. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded" (Romans 3:27).

4. God's Purposes Stand Forever. Human failure does not overthrow divine promise. "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Romans 11:29).

5. God's sovereign choosing never excuses sin or removes human responsibility. Scripture equally declares: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10:13). The Bible holds both truths together: (a) God is sovereign, (b) Humanity is responsible. Where finite minds struggle, faith bows before divine wisdom.

Conclusion

Romans 9 humbles man and exalts God. It teaches us:

- compassion for the lost,
- the insufficiency of religious privilege,
- the certainty of God's promises,
- the sovereignty of divine grace,
- and the wonder of mercy.

Salvation is rooted in the sovereign mercy of God. Yet this same God invites sinners to "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28). And again: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). The proper response is not pride, argument, or presumption, but worship. Paul later concludes: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Romans 11:33). And for every believer, salvation becomes a testimony not to human strength, but to divine mercy. "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory" (Psalm 115:1). For in the end: "Salvation is of the Lord." (Jonah 2:9).