

## ROMANS

### Chapter 9:1-33

In 57 A.D. Paul wrote this letter to Jesus' friends in Rome. Many say, aside from the Bible, *Romans* is "the greatest theological document ever." Its theme: "**Getting right with God.**" Paul recaps sin's chasm between God and man and reveals the new "mystery" Gospel which the risen Christ gave him.

This *secret* has temporarily delayed God's "kingdom on earth," permitting Gentiles may be welcomed into His family (Galatians 1:11-17; Ephesians 3:1-12). To all of us who, by faith, accept His forgiveness, God promises (a) to NEVER hold our sins against us; (b) WHATEVER happens to us is for our ultimate good; and (c) NOTHING can separate us from Him.

God's key to this puzzling, even maddening ch. 9? "My ways (are) higher than your ways, and my thoughts (are) higher than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9). **Let's read Romans 9:1-33.**

#### F.O.G. lites

#### Romans 9:1-5

As a Hebrew, Paul anguishes over Israel's rejection of Jesus (John 1:11). If they'd embrace Christ, he'd willingly go to hell in their place. But the Jews preferred to work for their righteousness rather than receive it by faith. Yet God gave special spiritual honors only to Israel who saw themselves as Friends of God (F.O.G.).

- They're His "chosen" ones (Deuteronomy 7:6).
- God came to them in person (Exodus 33:18-23).
- He made binding promises to them (Genesis 15:18-20).
- He gave Moses "the Law" (Deuteronomy 5:1-22).
- He authored rabbi-led temple worship.
- He gave them great patriarchs.
- Messiah was a Jew (Matthew 1:1).

God promised His kingdom only to Jews. Jesus sent His disciples only to the "lost sheep of Israel" (Matthew 10:5-6). Converting to Judaism was the only way idolatrous Gentiles could worship GOD (John 4:19,20). But now God invites ALL to receive Him, not through religious effort or middlemen but by faith!

**DISCUSS: Why did God replace Judaism with salvation by faith alone?**

**Who's Yo' Mama?**

## Romans 9:6-9

Because Israel had rejected Messiah doesn't mean God's given up on the Jews. God's covenant was not with *all* descendants of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; Philippians 3:3-11). Despite being a reproductive relic, Abe believed God that Sarah would bear a son. Unable to wait, Sarah sent her maid Hagar to bed with "If You Insist" Abe, birthing Ishmael, father of the Arabs. God had planned Messiah to come not from Ishmael but from the "child of His promise" who was Isaac (Genesis 21:12).

From the rim you see that past the Colorado river's next bend is treacherous whitewater. Rafters below can't see it yet, but you can. Similarly, God knows what's ahead. Has He chosen whom He'll save? If so, can we believe John 3:16's "God so loved (everybody)" or "EVERYONE who calls on the Lord will be saved" (10:13)? God chooses, or we choose? Paul is mum.

**DISCUSS: What do we really need to know that only God knows?**

### **"He Loves You, He Loves Me Not"** **Romans 9:10-13**

God *mercifully* "called" sinner Abraham that through him "all people will be blessed" by Christ's sacrifice (Galatians 3:28,29). God's "right-to-choose" also touched Isaac and Rebekah's twins (Genesis 25:21-26; Malachi 1:2,3). Before their birth, God chose Jacob to be in the line of Christ, rejecting Esau. Bible translators use "hate" instead of "reject." But the ancients often used "hate" in a legal, not emotional sense.

**DISCUSS: Compare man's view of fairness with God's view of justice.**

### **"It's Just Not Fair"** **Romans 9:14-18**

God is not swayed by public opinion polls. He needs no help. Let's read Job 1:1-22; 38:1-18; 40:1-14; 42:1-17.

In the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. God was speaking to and through His prophet Isaiah about a time coming two centuries later when the Jews would be captives in Babylon. God is who He says He is, and here's how He says it. Let's read Isaiah 40:13-31 and 45:1-25.

Who's up to the task of challenging God's wisdom? He's not obligated to save ANYone, yet He wants no one to be lost (2 Peter 3:9). Without His grace and mercy, Earth would be "all Sahara all the time!" God dispenses mercy and hardens hearts at His discretion. Theologian William R. Newell said, "A believer's heart is not fully yielded to God until it accepts (that as truth) without question and without demanding softening."

Yet He loves all people and gave His Son as the total sacrifice for all our sins (2 Corinthians 5:18-21). He set Pharaoh on Egypt's throne to show His power by wrenching Israel from his grasp (Exodus 7:1-7). "The street" soon learned that God shapes history as He will. Paul never explains this (11:33-34; Exodus 15:14-18; Deuteronomy 29:29). You won't need "Question Authority" stickers in heaven.

DISCUSS: Why does God need to showcase His majesty and strength?

## **Multi-Tasking as Judge, Jury and Jailer** **Romans 9:19-26**

One side of the coin is God's sovereignty (i.e., supreme, controlling influence). The flip side is His love: "God our Savior wants **ALL** men to be saved and know the truth (1 Timothy 2:3-5). "God is restraining himself for you, holding back the End because he doesn't want anyone lost," but His patience has a limit (2 Corinthians 6:1,2).

Until we see that God isn't giving us what we deserve (mercy), we can't appreciate that He's giving us what we don't deserve (grace) (2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). God's the Potter; we're clay. As a friend says, "I've learned that there is a God, and I'm not Him." Swiss theologian Karl Barth summarized his lifetime of Bible study, saying, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

**DISCUSS: Imagine a player questioning Bear Bryant, Vince Lombardi, Bobby Knight or Woody Hayes! So why do we question God?**

## **“Watch Your Step”** **Romans 9:27-33**

The Jews strove to gain God's approval, but were never sure of it. Conversely, Jesus' "mystery" Gospel given to Paul frees us from performance-based religion's intimidation and insecurity (5:7; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Galatians 5:1). You'll either stumble over Jesus or stand securely on Him, never to be put to shame (Revelation 20:11-15). On the cross Jesus bore the blame that should have brought shame to your name and mine. He adds, "All that my Father has given me shall come to me. Whoever comes to me I will never cast out" (John 6:37, 44).

God chose – and you chose – to be here today to hear Jesus speak from the pages of His written word. What did you hear Him say?

His Deal

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\* For more on Romans 9: HARD SAYINGS OF THE BIBLE By Walter C. Kaiser Jr., Peter H. Davids, F.F. Bruce, Manfred T. Brauch, InterVarsity Press

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