

ROMANS: CHARTER OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH
"Part XIII: Grasping And Adjusting To God's Sovereign Election"
(Romans 9:1-33)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) Many Christians, like myself, have been faced with the teaching that Romans chapter 9 in the Bible teaches God **arbitrarily** chooses **who** will **believe** in Christ to be saved, and **who** will **NOT** be **allowed** to believe, but rather be **hardened** by God **against** doing so:

(a) We may have been told that Romans 9:17-18 present the Pharaoh of the Hebrew Exodus was hardened by God unto damnation. Verse 18 powerfully states, "Therefore hath he (God) mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

(b) Then, we may read Romans 9:21, which cites the Jeremiah 18:1-10 text on God being a Potter and Israel the clay. "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" That is given as added insight that God **arbitrarily** decides **who** will **BELIEVE!**

(c) What usually hits a nerve is the reading of Romans 9:11-13 where, before Jacob and Esau were **born**, Paul cites Malachi 1:2-3 quoting God to say, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

The question finally arises as follows: DOES GOD ARBITRARILY DECIDE TO LOVE OR HATE AN INFANT BEFORE HE IS BORN, AND THUS MOLD HIM TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST OR TO REJECT CHRIST AND SEND HIM TO HELL? IF SO, HOW can God be said to be a LOVING God, or a JUST God?!

(2) This question takes on deep emotional overtones when applied to beloved **unbelieving** friends or relatives: one may ask, **"If my parents or child have not yet come to Christ, is it possible that they CANNOT believe because God has HARDENED them AGAINST Christ so they HAVE to enter eternal damnation?!"**

Let me say at the OUTSET that this is NOT the case, that God hardens NO one AGAINST BELIEVING in Christ. However, we need to EXPLAIN Romans 9, and apply it to relating to unsaved friends, relatives and associates we know!

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "Some teach Romans 9 shows God chooses WHO will believe in Christ before they are born, and thus locks in their destiny! IS this so, and IF so, is there any hope my RELATIVES or FRIENDS with their religious heritages or lack thereof even CAN be saved?!"

- I. **To understand Paul's teaching on divine election in Romans 9, we note WHY he WROTE the chapter from Romans 9:1-5 as follows:**
 - A. Paul viewed a large majority of his Hebrew countrymen as headed for eternal damnation for not having trusted Christ for salvation, 9:1-3.
 - B. This destiny was true of these countrymen of Paul's **regardless** of the fact that, **externally**, they had been granted so many spiritual **advantages** toward knowing and receiving Christ's Gospel, 9:4-5:
 1. Paul's Hebrew countrymen had been adopted by God as His nation, had been associated with God's glorious revelations, and had received God's covenants, law and service of the temple, 9:4.
 2. Paul's beloved unbelieving Hebrew brethren had a rich spiritual heritage given them by the Hebrew patriarchs, and had been granted the coming of the Messiah, Jesus, into their midst, 9:5.
 - C. Hence, Paul needed to **explain WHY** such beloved countrymen would still be headed to eternal damnation **regardless** of their having received so **many spiritual heritage ADVANTAGES!**
- II. **So, Paul revealed that God SAVES people NOT based on their HERITAGE ADVANTAGES, but based on GOD'S SOVEREIGN CHOICE of WHO He WANTS to save, Romans 9:6-30:**
 - A. Paul revealed that not all who are **physically members** of the Hebrew nation are God's **TRUE** "Israel," Romans 9:6.
 - B. Then, he illustrated this fact in Israel's Biblical history, Rom. 9:7-13:
 1. Only Isaac of Abraham's several sons was the promised seed, the one selected who was a true believer in Abraham's God, 9:7-9.
 2. Likewise, Genesis 25:23 is cited by Paul to reveal that Rebecca's son Jacob would be loved but his twin brother, Esau hated by God **before** they had been **born**, Romans 9:10-13.
 - C. Realizing that his readers would object to what appeared to be such a fatalistic statement about Esau, Paul revealed God was **right** in deciding just **WHICH** ones could receive His mercy, Rom. 9:14-16.
 - D. To back up his claim that God rightly chose **who** could receive His **mercy**, and **who** He could **harden** for **judgment**, Paul reviewed the case of the Exodus Pharaoh whose heart God had hardened, 9:17-18:
 1. God stated in Exodus 9:16 that He had raised Pharaoh up to demonstrate His power by hardening his heart, Rom. 9:17-18.

2. [Keep in mind that this occurred after God gave Pharaoh a chance to obey Him in Ex. 3:18b-20: indeed, his "hardening" was the result of God's prolonged tolerance of Pharaoh's own repeated rejections of Moses' appeals, Exodus 5:2; 6:1]

E. Paul anticipated his readers' response that God was unjust to judge since no "hardened" party could resist His will: so, he cited Jeremiah 18:1-10 about the potter's sovereignty over the lump of clay in Rom. 9:19-24, 25-29. [Keep in mind that Jeremiah 18:7-10 reveals that God, the "Potter" WOULD HAVE CHANGED His MIND either to destroy OR PRESERVE the "vessel" nation involved if it had respectively decided NOT to repent OR TO repent!!]

III. After establishing the fact that people are saved based on God's sovereign choice of who is saved, Paul explained WHAT WAS the BASIS God used to decide just WHO He WOULD save, 9:31-33:

- A. In summary to the chapter, Paul noted **many** Gentiles who had **not** had the **spiritual heritage ADVANTAGES** of the Hebrews had obtained God's righteousness by faith in Christ where **many** Hebrews who **possessed** these **ADVANTAGES** had not, Romans 9:31-32.
- B. Then, to explain **WHY** this was **so**, Paul did **not** say God's election chose **who** would **believe**; rather, the **fact** that many Hebrews had sought justification by works where the Gentiles had sought it by faith had been the determining **factor** in this matter, Romans 9:32a.
- C. Thus, Israel's **stumblingstone** was **not** a selection of God in eternity past of just **WHO** would **believe** to be saved: the **stumblingstone** for **ISRAEL'S** spiritual failure was the truth that salvation was by **faith** in **Christ** as **Savior**, and **not** by way of **Israel's heritage**, 9:32b-33!

Application: To receive eternal life, (1) BELIEVE on Christ as Savior from sin and GOD will give us eternal life REGARDLESS of our spiritual heritage in this life, or even LACK of it, John 3:16; Romans 9:30-31a. (2) Then, like Paul, REGARDLESS of the religious background of our countrymen and relatives, or LACK thereof, we can pray for them to be SAVED! (Rom. 10:1)

Lesson: Romans 9 does NOT teach God decides WHO will BELIEVE in Christ: rather, it reveals God has sovereignly resolved to save only those who DO BELIEVE in Christ REGARDLESS of their heritage! >

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

To encourage you to pray and to hope for the salvation of **anyone** we care about **regardless** of his background, allow me to share with you a testimony:

Years ago, while my Dad was working as a building contractor in Nigeria, West Africa with the Sudan Interior Mission, a youth named Byang lived in a nearby village as the son of a witch doctor.

One day, a single missionary lady came into Byang's village, and shared the Gospel of Christ with the people there. Byang Kato heard and believed her message, putting his faith in Jesus Christ as his Savior. Later, he attended a day school, and recalled seeing my father.

Many years later, as I applied to study at Dallas Seminary, Byang Kato was in the process of attending the seminary and obtaining his doctorate in Theology there. It was because of Dr. Kato in part that the seminary was moved to consider my application for enrollment.

While attending Dallas Seminary, Byang Kato gave me his copy of the Hebrew Bible. I still have it, with his name written in the flyleaf of the Bible, and dated May 20, 1972.

Though Dr. Kato died in a drowning accident in the late 1970s, I keep the Hebrew Bible he gave me, and use it for my translations from the Hebrew text, as a reminder of the **power** and **love** of God to save **all** trust in Christ for salvation, **regardless** of their **heritage**.

Thus, (a) God used white missionaries to reach by faith into what had two generations before been called the "white man's graveyard", inland Nigeria, to lead a son of a witch doctor to faith in Jesus Christ. (b) God then used that witch doctor's son to enable a missionary's son who was extremely indulged with rich fundamental, Evangelical spiritual heritage to have an opportunity to be educated at Dallas Seminary. (c) God then used that saved witch doctor's son in part to equip the missionary's son with a Hebrew Bible to disciple YOU at NEPAUG CHURCH. (d) Now God discipled all on the internet who read this testimony!