
AMEN Bible Study 2026

“The Shock of Sovereign Grace

Romans 9:1-29
February 12, 2026

Introduction

I. An Anguishing QUESTION Is Anticipated (v.1-6a)

A. “What about the Jews?”

1. Paul Articulates the Advantages Israel has long had:
 - a. The Adoption [cf. Ex. 4:21; Ezek. 16; Hos. 11:1]
 - b. The Glory [Ex. 40: 1 Kgs. 8:10-11; 2 Chr. 5:13-14; 7:1; Ps. 26:8]
 - c. The Covenants [Noah; Abraham; Moses; David; “New” (Jer. 31; Ezek. 36)]
 - d. The Law [Ex. 19-24; Whole O.T.]
 - e. The Worship [Leviticus; Temple]
 - f. The Promises [of Messiah, unto a New Heavens/Earth]
 - g. The Patriarchs
 - h. Genealogy climaxing in the Messiah, Jesus
2. God’s People Are Estranged from Their Messiah??!!

B. If God’s Old Covenant People can be Separated from His Love, What About Us???

1. Consider the Agony of Real Fathers in AMEN
2. Massive Promises to Us and Our Children
3. Many of our children forsake Jesus and His Ways -- All You hold most dear

C. Has God’s Word FAILED????!!! (v.6a)

1. Paul abruptly and emphatically personalizes the agony (v.1-2)
2. He could wish himself cursed, if it would save his brethren

II. An Anguishing FOUNDATIONAL ANSWER (v.6b-13)

A. “Not All...Israel belong to Israel” (v.6b)

1. God makes Distinctions between Descendants of Abraham:
2. We See this frequently in Scripture
 - a. Aaron’s Sons [Lev. 10]; Samuel’s Sons [1 Sam. 8:1-3]; David’s Sons Amnon, Absalom, Adonijah; Hezekiah’s Son Manasseh
3. God’s Promises NEVER FAIL, but HOW they are FULFILLED is COMPLEX

B. These DISTINCTIONS are Based on GOD’S Sovereign CALL, not OURS

1. Paul Cites Choices in first two generations: Isaac, not Ishmael; Jacob, not Esau

C. The BASIS for God’s Choice/Election – PURE GRACE!!! (v.10-13)

1. *Illus.* Jacob and Esau
 - a. Same exact start in Life
 - b. Before either had been born – or done anything good/bad
2. Stated NEGATIVELY: Election is NOT based on Our Worthiness, Goodness,
 - a. God’s People are *chosen*, not *choice* (e.g. 1 Cor. 1:26-29)
3. Stated POSITIVELY: God’s Choice is based on God’s “Love-Call” alone (echo of 8:30)

- a. “Unconditional Love” – if it’s unconditional with respect to us, then it can’t depend upon whether we’re worthy of it, open/receptive to it, etc.

III. Implication #1: We’re UTTERLY at God’s Mercy (v.14-18)

A. “Paul anticipates another question: “Is God Unjust?”

B. Salvation is a matter of MERCY, not Justice

- 1. If we want Justice, we want Judgment... Judicial “Hardening” ... Wrath

C. If we’re chaffing with Romans 9, our real chafe is with Romans 1-3,5!

- 1. Are we RIGHTLY JUDGED GUILTY by God?
- 2. If so, God has a right to do with us exactly as He deems right (e.g. 2 Sam. 15:26)
- 3. He HARDENS whom He HARDENS
 - a. God “gave him over to...” [a hardening heart] (cf. Rom. 1:24,26,28)
 - b. T. Keller: “all those whom He hardens *want* to be hardened.”
- 4. God has MERCY, on whom He Has MERCY

D. Main Pt: “it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who has the mercy” (16)

IV. Implication #2: We’ve ALWAYS Been “at God’s Mercy” . . . (v.19-23)

A. Another Question: “Why does God still find fault? For Who Can Resist His Will?”

B. Paul’s Answer: “Who Are You, O Man, to Answer Back to God?”

- 1. If That Seem Harsh, What would It Mean to Give Paul “the Benefit of the Doubt”?

C. Paul is confronting the very nub of Gen. 3 Fallenness

- 1. Root sin of Gen. 3 – We think we determine Good/Evil better than God
 - a. We think we know what we need better than God
- 2. We insist on human Autonomy, even before God!!!
 - a. We’ll come to him WHEN, WHERE, HOW, WHY we want

D. WHO Do We Think WE Are? WHO do We Think We’re DEALING WITH????!!

- 1. We are ENSLAVED to sin; GUILTY under God’s Law; CONDEMNED under Wrath
- 2. We are utterly at His mercy
 - a. The issue is NOT: “Our Decision about Him;” BUT: “His Decision about Us”
- 3. He is just and right to let us keep preparing ourselves for destruction (cf. 1:24,26,28; 2:5)
- 4. It is SHEER MERCY when He prepare Us for the glories of His Grace

V. Implication #3: ...Unto ever-WIDENING, ever-DEEPENING Mercy (v.24-33)

A. SUDDENLY...God’s Word opens up to a Vast New Expanse – “all nations...”

- 1. Quotes Hosea regarding Israel under judgment
- 2. Now Applying Hosea to All Nations under judgment

B. Election is God’s SOVEREIGN GRACIOUS GUARANTEE:

- 1. AGAINST:
 - a. “Ingrown, Unloving Church” hording the Grace of God
 - b. “Our Self-Righteous Superiority” against Unbelievers
 - c. Any kind of dehumanizing “-ism” enduring in God’s People
 - i. Racism...Sexism...Classism; Political Tribalism; etc.
- 2. FOR:
 - a. The Success of the Gospel in CONVERTING Sinners
 - b. The Success of the Gospel in RENEWING the CHURCH (v.27-29)

- i. Otherwise, we'd all end up like Sodom/Gomorrah!

C. Salvation is by Sovereign Mercy and Grace ALONE (v.30-33)

- 1. Old Covenant Israel somehow turned "Grace" into "Works"
- 2. If Old Covenant Israel can do this, SO CAN WE!
 - a. please read and re-read Tim Keller, *Prodigal God!!!*

VI. Our RESPONSE? (v.1-2; cf. 10:1; ch.8)

A. Anguished PRAYER (10:1; cf v.1-2) – what Paul's first response is

- 1. Sovereign Grace emboldens us to pray
 - a. If Paul can get knocked off his high horse and get saved, *anyone can!*
- 2. Paul's Anguish Reflects JESUS' Own Anguish (e.g. Lk.13:34)
 - a. Lk. 13:34 – "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... How often would I have gathered your children together..., and you were not willing!"
 - b. Jesus actually *was accursed* for our salvation!
- 3. Paul's Anguish Reflects THE FATHER'S Own Anguish
 - a. Ezek. 18:23: " 'Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked?' declares the Sovereign Lord. 'Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?' "

B. HUMILITY – God really is GOD

- 1. As a *creature*, I am not my own to do with as I please (9:20-21).
- 2. As a *sinner*, I am at God's mercy (Rom. 3:9-20; 9:14-18).
 - a. My salvation is, to no extent, in my hands; it is solely of God (9:16).
 - b. I am not loved because I am lovely but because God loves on me (Dt.7:7; Eph.4:6)
- 3. I do not believe because I am more smart, humble, receptive, righteous than unbelievers. I believe because God changed my heart (Ezek. 36:26).

C. COMFORT – "...Jacob I Loved." (v. 13; cf. Rom. 8)

- 1. God's love truly is unconditional (with respect to us).
- 2. My salvation is not based on whether I muster up enough *faith, desire, or remorse* over sin; it is based solely on God's *sovereign mercy*.

D. Growing DEPENDENCE on God

- 1. God's PROMISES – Lead us to Faith and Hope
- 2. SOVEREIGN ELECTION – Leads us away from Presumption and Pride

Three Commonly Asked Questions

QUESTION #1: Doesn't Romans 9 render Preaching, Prayer, Evangelism and Missions futile for isn't God going to do what God is going to do, irrespective of our efforts?

RESPONSE: The doctrine of predestination is the greatest encouragement, not discouragement, to the evangelist and missionary. In it, God guarantees that our labors will not be in vain. When Paul came to Corinth, God exhorted Paul to keep preaching fearlessly, telling him that He had many chosen people in the city (Acts 18:9-11). Not surprisingly then, William Carey, the man considered the father of the modern missionary movement in the last few centuries, affirmed predestination.

When we pray for our unsaved friends, we are intuitively exercising our faith in God's sovereignty over salvation. After all, if it was entirely up to the free will of man, God would answer our prayers saying, "I want them saved, too. But I cannot compromise their free will by imposing Myself on them." When we pray, we are asking God to *do something* so that our loved ones *believe*. In short, we want God to impact their will, just exactly what we believe God does (Phil. 2:12-13).

QUESTION #2: Isn't the doctrine of Predestination inconsistent with the Biblical charge to extend the call of the Gospel to every person in the world, not just the elect?

RESPONSE: Jesus himself doesn't seem to think there is an inconsistency here. In Matthew 11:25-30, Jesus celebrates the sovereign will of God in revealing the Gospel to "babes" while leaving it hidden to the "wise". But in the very next verses, Jesus speaks one of the most universal calls of the Gospel ever issued: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest...."

QUESTION #3: If predestination is true, does that mean that God loves my unsaved friends and family members less than I do?

ANSWER: This is a super vulnerable question! There is immense mystery involved in the electing love of God, by which God brings many to salvation while passing by others. But one thing Scripture makes clear: *we cannot out-love God! For anyone!* Jesus *wept* over unrepentant Israel (Lk. 19:41), and He lamented elsewhere: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, *how often* I have *longed* to gather your children together, ... but you were not willing" (Mt. 23:37)! Jesus "*loved*" the rich young ruler, who walked away (Mk. 10:21). Jesus, whose heart was never out of alignment with the heart of His Father, reveals a profound love for the person who never believes.

Ezekiel 18:23 (cf. 18:31; 33:11) God says, " 'Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked?' ... 'Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?' " How is this passage reconciled with Romans 9? Commenting on Ezek. 18:23 and Election, John Calvin, writes with nuance:

"We hold, then, that God wills not the death of a sinner, since he calls all equally to repentance, and promises himself prepared to receive them if they only seriously repent. If anyone should object – then there is no election of God, ... the answer is at hand: ... God's will is simple [non-contradictory], yet great variety is involved in it, as far as our senses are concerned. Besides, *it is not surprising that our eyes should be blinded by intense light, so that we cannot certainly judge how God wishes all to be saved, and yet has devoted all the reprobate [those who never believe] to eternal destruction, and wishes them to perish*" (emphasis added).

The bottom line is that God, *in the infinite wonder of His heart, somehow maintains an immeasurable love for the unrepentant, a love that makes Jesus weep at their lack of faith. Yet, in the secret counsel of His own sovereign will, He does not grant them saving faith. Our love for our lost loved ones pales in comparison to God's love for them. How God desires that all be saved, but does not sovereignly predestine it, is a mystery held together in the very heart of God.*

AMEN Action Steps

“The Shock of Sovereign Grace”

Romans 9:1-33

HEAR the Word

*“Open my eyes, that I might behold wondrous things out of your law.”
-Psalms 119:18*

1. What is, or has been, hard for you yourself to accept in this chapter of Scripture? If we give God the “benefit of the doubt,” how is this text anguishing, humbling and comforting to you?
2. For whose salvation do you suffer great anguish of heart, like Paul expresses in v.1-5?

PRACTICE the Word

*“...Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on a rock”
-Matthew 7:24*

1. If you came to Jesus from within an unbelieving family, how did the “Hound of Heaven” get your attention? How did He, little by little, bring you to a point of following Him? Be detailed in this reflection.

If you grew up in a believing home, how did you “grow in wisdom and stature, in favor with God and man”, as Jesus did? What were the individual steps of growth God used to corral your heart and life?

2. How might you yourself be as guilty as long-time “believer” like Old Covenant Israel of having such Gospel privileges as they, and yet be missing the heart of Jesus himself? If you haven’t yet, consider reading Tim Keller’s *Prodigal God*, focusing on the elder brother.

RETELL the Word

*“Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you...”
-Mark 5:19*

1. Think of unbelieving people for whom you care. Who seems so far gone, or so hard of heart, that they feel like “lost causes”? Knowing that God can sovereignly chase down someone as murderously hard-hearted as Paul himself (read Acts 9), how might the teaching of Romans 9 encourage your heart to pray for God’s sovereign in-breaking into people so hard, only Jesus Himself can get to them? And then be ready to share with them your story, if/when God opens the door.