

Criminals At The Bar Of Justice
Romans 9:1-33

The Problem: Why are all of the Jews not saved? Rom 9:1-5

1. Paul's compassion for his lost countrymen. Rom 9:1-3.
 - ◆ His attention to his lost countrymen is a logical response to Romans 8:28-39
 - ◆ His willingness to be damned so his lost friends could be saved is overwhelming!
 - ◆ His understanding of the doctrine of election has not made him indifferent.
2. Paul recounts the incredible blessings that the Jews have. Rom 9:4-5.
 - ◆ *The adoption as sons.* They are His national covenant children. Ex 4:22; Hos 11:1.
 - ◆ *The Divine glory.* They saw the visible splendor of God. Ex 29:42ff; 40:34ff; I Ki 8:10f.
 - ◆ *The covenants.* God promises to Adam, Noah, Abe, Moses, David -- all pointing to Christ
 - ◆ *The giving of the Law.* They had Holy standards & ceremony pointing to Christ. Deut 4:7f
 - ◆ *The temple service.* They had the true worship of the true God.
 - ◆ *The promises.* They had prophets who foretold of Christ.
 - ◆ *The fathers.* They had a true spiritual heritage of saved forerunners.
 - ◆ *From whom is the Christ.* The Messiah is from their own family.
 - ◆ Spiritual privileges do not guarantee spiritual life! Not all of them were saved!

ANSWER #1: God's Promise Did Not Fail Because God Never Determined To Save All The Jews. Rom 9:6-24

God's saving choice doesn't include all people. He did not elect every Jew. Rom 9:6-13

1. The statement: "*they are not all Israel who are from Israel*" means: being an Israelite does not automatically make one God's child. Not all born in Israel are the true people of God.
 - ◆ Proof #1 (Vs. 7-9): God sovereignly selected Isaac and not Ishmael. Ishmael was an ethnic Israelite born of the loins of Abraham, just like his brother Isaac, yet he was lost. God unilaterally declared, "*Through Isaac your Seed shall be named*" (9:7). In effect, He did not plan to save both boys!
 - ◆ Proof #2 (Vs 10-13): God sovereignly selected Jacob and not Esau. Furthermore, Jacob and Esau were twins, but only Jacob was included in God's saving plan, God said concerning these two, "*The older will serve the younger...Jacob I loved and Esau I hated*" (Rom 9:12-13). God's "Word" did not fail, because His saving promise clearly was directed to only some and not all Jews.
2. God's saving choice is of individuals not nations (6-13,24). The question was, why are so few Jews saved? If Paul is referring to nations, then he's saying that the reason not all the nation is saved is that God has chosen the nation. That's unintelligible! Paul's demonstrating how *some* descendants of Abe (Isaac & Jacob) are saved while others (Ishmael & Esau) are not.
3. God's saving choice of individuals was made irrespective of merit or demerit (Vs 9:11). God differentiated between Jacob & Esau before they were born. He differentiated between them before they did anything good or evil. Hence their behavior had *nothing* to do with God's choice. He says, "*though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad in order that God's choice, not because of works....*" When Paul adds that God's choice was not on the basis of works, He clearly denies the notion of God looking ahead to see faith. God's choice was not contingent on anything about them! One more thought. When Paul says, "*Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated,*" he is pointing to the fact that Jacob received a special portion of the love of God, but not Esau. When he says that Esau was "*hated*" by God he apparently means that God withheld His saving mercy from Esau.
4. God's saving choice was based upon His own good pleasure (Rom 9:11). While denying that the basis of God's predetermination is anything in people, Paul affirms

what that basis is: His purpose. In other words, the reason why God saves one and not the other is grounded in His own will. He does what He does for His own good pleasure.

God's saving choice reflects His mercy, not injustice. Rom 9:14-18.

1. Paul assumes that there will arise a logical question in the reader's mind. Now think carefully, does the question of God's justice even arise in the free-will system of salvation? It does *not*. In that system, God has done all that He could do for every person, and each person ultimately determines his own destiny. To us that seems logical, fair, even democratic. Would you agree that it is only in the doctrines of grace system of salvation that the question even arises? If you do, you have just admitted that these doctrines are the correct view of the Bible, because the question is *here in your Bibles!* The question could only arise if unconditional election is what Paul in fact teaches.
2. Since God unconditionally elects, isn't it unfair for Him to pass over some (like Esau) & choose others (like Jacob)? He answers *No!* God's not unjust. We misunderstand two things:
 - ◆ We misunderstand ourselves. What is it that fallen people deserve? If you think it is heaven then you don't understand human depravity. What we deserve is eternal judgment. That's what God owes us. There's no injustice when sinners are condemned.
 - ◆ We misunderstand God's mercy. What do those who are chosen (like Jacob) receive? The apostle says, "*For He [God] says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and compassion on whom I have compassion'*" (Rom 9:15). Paul insists that God's choice to save certain people (Isaac & Jacob) and not let them perish (like Ishmael & Esau) is based upon mercy not injustice. No one thinks it wrong for God to show mercy, they think it is wrong for God to not show mercy to all. When we think this way it shows that we do not understand mercy. Mercy is *not* something that God owes us, otherwise it is not mercy, it is a debt. God is not in debt to fallen people for anything except to give them justice. We have it all backwards.
3. God's saving choice does not depend upon our choice (Rom 9:16-18). Paul sums up what he already said in verse 11. Notice he's stating the doctrine of unconditional election, and that is now in universal terms, "*So then it [salvation] does not depend on the man [not just Isaac, but now any person] who wills or the man who runs [either good works or bad works or even faith], but on God who has mercy.*" Paul substantiates his claim by appealing to Exodus 9:16 where God claims His sovereignty over wicked Pharaoh. The inference he draws is that since God is sovereign over even evil people, He is clearly sovereign over salvation; He has mercy on whom He desires and He hardens whom He desires.

It is not wrong for God to sovereignly display His own glory through the election of some sinners & the passing over of the rest of fallen mankind. Rom 9:19-24.

1. God's saving prerogative must not be questioned (Rom 9:19-20). Here Paul anticipates an angry objection, "*Why does He [God] still find fault? For who resists His will?*" Rephrased: If God sovereignly rules over a lost person's rejection of God, then it's unfair of God to condemn the individual for that response -- On what basis does God hold sinners morally accountable for their sin?
 - ◆ Paul never alleges that God forces *good* people to sin & reject God. He said earlier in Romans that people are *already* fallen. Hence the clay *lump* [humanity] of verse 21 is *fallen* clay. God "*endures*" vessels of wrath because they're already guilty vessels
 - ◆ The objector is not simply raising the question *how* these things can be. He is indignant that these things *ought not* to be because they are unjust. Paul's answer is swift and poignant: As a mere human being you do not have the right to question God in this way. Puny human beings *cannot* bring Almighty God before their bar of justice.
2. God's saving choice glorifies His own character (Rom 9:21-24). God has the undisputed right to display His attributes by saving some of the lost race of humanity. Just as a craftsman displays his skills by molding a vessel in the way he sees fit, so God demonstrates the riches of His glory and His mercy by saving some. Including Gentiles!