

Study 9

GOD'S PURPOSE OF ELECTION

Romans 9

In The Group

- ◆ If you had a one-wish 'magic wand' what would you change about the world?
- ◆ What are the obstacles to people coming to know Christ?
- ◆ When you get to Heaven what is one question you're going to ask God?

We now enter into a 'parenthesis' in Paul's epistle to the Romans. We usually refer to *parentheses* as "brackets" (these things on each end of this phrase). By now we have seen that Paul has made the case that all people have fallen short and need God's saving grace. By taking our time and looking at this epistle verse-by-verse and chapter-by-chapter, we are doing something that many Christians don't do: *we are studying God's Word systematically*. Letters are meant to be read from the beginning to the end. But for some reason many Christians "cherry pick" their Bible reading. This means that they are missing out on both the context of the verse, paragraph or chapter they are reading; and, from appreciating "the weight of Scripture". By "the weight of Scripture" we mean the emphasis that Scripture gives certain themes. When we consider the 'weight' that Romans gives to certain themes, it should become evident quite quickly what it considers to be important for followers of Christ to know and believe.

1. What are the few themes that Romans chapters 1 to 8 have given great weight to?

Romans gives tremendous weight to what it means to be saved. It reveals that mankind has fallen and needs a Saviour. It shows that Christ has become the Saviour by dying as the sacrifice for mankind's sins and becoming our 'propitiation' (*the object of divine wrath*, Romans 3:25). Thus Christ has satisfied God's demands for justice. This is why Christ suffered our due punishment on the cross - yet Christ has also demonstrated God's infinite love toward mankind by laying down His life as our Substitute (Romans 5:8). This gracious gift from God of forgiveness for sins is not all that our salvation entails.

2. What else has God graciously bestowed upon those who receive His grace? (Include a Romans' Scripture reference)

e.g. Glory, honour, and peace Romans 2:10

HOW ARE JEWS SAVED?

A segment of the Church in Rome was comprised of Jewish converts. Many Jews regarded Jewish Christians as *Jewish* (Christians) - that is, Christians were merely part of a denomination of Judaism. (The epistle to the Hebrews addresses and corrects this.) It was as if some Jews regarded right standing with God as being attained by being or becoming Jewish.

3. The Apostle Paul addresses those Jews who feel that their ethnicity is what makes them right with God despite how they live. How does he address this in Romans 2:18-24?

4. What does the Apostle Paul say determines whether someone is a Jew? (Romans 2:28-29 and Romans 9:7)

5. But why was the Apostle Paul so sorrowful according to Romans 9:1-2 and how does this answer the claim that being Jew is in itself a means of salvation?

6. How far was the Apostle Paul prepared to go in his desire to see his countrymen saved based on Romans 9:3? How might this be a challenge to us?

Paul answers the question, *is there an advantage to being a Jewish Christian?*

7. Noting Romans 9:4-5, how does Paul answer this question?

Paul makes a controversial statement that would have seemed shocking to his original Jewish audience. In Romans 9:6-8 he states that a ‘child of God’ is not a matter of ethnicity, but of spiritual connection entered into by faith in Christ. To support this, he cites the Old Testament story of the birth of Abraham’s two sons, and then Isaac’s two sons. He then re-introduces a theme he considers integral to the Gospel: *divine election*.

8. According to Romans 8:29, what is God’s purpose for those He has *predestined* for salvation?

Paul elaborates on election and predestination in Ephesians 1.

9. Why God elects certain people to salvation may be a mystery to us. But it cannot be a mystery *that He does*. Is it unfair of God to only elect *some*? (Note the Apostle Paul’s response in Romans 9:16, 21.)

The great English preacher, Charles Spurgeon, taught that the doctrine of divine election was one of the most glorious teachings in the Bible because it magnified God’s grace. Romans 9:16 makes it reasonably clear that we saved because of God’s grace from start

to finish. That is, it is God who reveals to us our need for a Saviour. It is then God who grants to us the gift of faith to be able to turn to Him, accept His forgiveness and repent. And it is God who sanctifies us. None of this is because *we* made a “decision” to become a Christian (“...it does not depend on human will...”). We may never know *who* God has elected to salvation, but praise be to Him that He has! This is why every person who has been born-again by the Spirit of God is “a vessel of mercy” (Rom. 9:23). But even though we do not know *who* is elected to salvation, we can be absolutely certain that we are commissioned to preach the Gospel to all - in the hope that all may come to know Christ!

10. What was central to God’s predestined plan according to Acts 2:23?

11. How does Romans 9:24 reveal that God’s heart people was bigger than just one nation or ethnic group? How should this affect the way we see people from different ethnic backgrounds to us?

12. What does Romans 9 teach us about the Gospel?

13. Who can you share with this week, what you have now just learned?

14. In which part of this study did you sense God was speaking to *you*? How and why?

15. Write out your prayerful response to God -

Amen.