
“God’s Sovereign & Merciful Plan of Salvation”

ROMANS 9:1-11:36

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AT A GLANCE

Romans 9-11 reveals God’s sovereign plan of salvation, showing that righteousness comes not by lineage or works but through faith in Christ alone. Paul wrestles with the tension between divine election and human responsibility, ultimately affirming God’s justice, mercy, and wisdom in both Israel’s partial hardening and the inclusion of the Gentiles. This passage calls believers to humility, gratitude, and a passionate commitment to proclaiming the Gospel to all people.

INTRODUCTION

Romans 9-11 is one of the most theologically rich and challenging sections of Paul’s letter, addressing God’s sovereignty in salvation and His plan for both Jews and Gentiles. Paul makes it clear that being a physical descendant of Abraham does not guarantee inclusion in God’s covenant family; rather, it is those who are children of the promise who are counted as true heirs.

This passage raises difficult questions about divine election, human responsibility, and God’s justice, which Paul carefully answers using Scripture and historical examples. As we walk through these chapters, we will see how God’s plan has always been about mercy, grace, and faith rather than human effort or lineage. Ultimately, Paul’s teaching in these verses should lead us to humility, gratitude, and a renewed passion for sharing the Gospel with the world.

ROMANS 9:6-8

⁶ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷ and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” ⁸ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

THE CHILDREN OF PROMISE

In **Romans 9:6-8** Paul makes reference to Abraham’s two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. Only Isaac was the child of promise. Ishmael was an offspring of Abraham, but not according to God’s promise.

Just because you can trace your lineage back to Abraham does not mean you’re a **child of Abraham** in the salvific sense. Consider also Isaac’s two sons, Jacob and Esau, referenced in **verses 10-13**. Two men born of Isaac, but God said the older will serve the younger. Paul’s assertion is simple: God has the right to elect some to salvation and not others.

IS GOD UNJUST?

The doctrine of election might leave some wondering, “Is that fair?” Paul addressed this objection in **verses 14-16** ¹⁴ **What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God’s part? By no means! ¹⁵ For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on**

whom I have compassion.”¹⁶ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.

Paul has appealed to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and now Moses. These are pillars of the faith and Paul is metaphorically calling them to the witness stand to testify to the truth.

He’s bringing their words to the forefront to show that what God is doing among the Gentiles with Paul’s Gospel ministry is not unlike what He has done throughout the ages, going all the way back to Abraham. God is sovereign over our salvation, and it is completely a gift of divine mercy – for Jew and Gentile alike.

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

For God to have mercy on one and not another might cause someone to throw up their hands and say it’s just not fair. “Who can resist God’s will?!” Paul cautions us in **verses 20-21²⁰ But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?”²¹ Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?**

Paul reminds his hypothetical antagonist that they’re a lump of clay molded into a vessel of the potter’s choosing. It would be more appropriate for a clay pot to talk back to its human creator than for a man to talk back to God.

Afterall, the human creator is flawed. He could have made a mistake. He could have meant to make a vase and ended up with an ashtray. That ashtray has grounds to object! Not so with man. God is perfect and has every right to do what He pleases. No one has the right to presume upon His merciful salvation.

If you were a Jew in Paul’s day **verses 22-29** are pretty scandalous. Paul says that God spoke through his prophets of old indicating His plan to extend His grace beyond the Jews while only sparing a remnant of Israel. What are we to make of this apparent contradiction? The answer is found in **verses 30-32.**

RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH

³⁰What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. ³²Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works.

Israel missed the point. Abraham was counted righteous by faith, not works. His offspring are therefore his children when they exercise the faith Abraham had.

THE SIMPLICITY OF SALVATION

You can tell Paul agonized over this for his fellow Jews.

Romans 10:1-4¹ Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. ²For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. ⁴For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

These are Paul’s kinsmen, his blood relatives, his ancestors. He could say they were sincere in their religion, but they were sincerely wrong. One of the most heart-breaking assertions in these verses is found in **verse 3, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.**

How many people in the world today are doing exactly this? They are trying to make themselves good enough. They are trying to close the gap between their life and God's holiness.

But what does God expect? It is not ascension! Paul made that clear in **verses 5-7**. Right standing with God is not about climbing up or plunging the depths.

Verses 8-10 tells us what He does require, ⁸ **But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim);** ⁹ **because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.** ¹⁰ **For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.**

Religion says make every effort to climb up to God, do more, try harder! The Gospel says confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead.

It doesn't matter who you are or what your background is, this is the path of salvation. **For, as verse 12 says, there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.** ¹³ **For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."**

God has spoken through His prophets – Paul quoted Malachi, Isaiah, and Joel in these summary verses. Salvation has always belonged to anyone who would receive it by faith.

THE CALL TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

This begs the question that Paul is going to answer in **verses 14-17**. "How is it, practically speaking, that people come to faith?" ¹⁴ **How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?** ¹⁵ **And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" ...** ¹⁷ **So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.**

This is one of undergirding presuppositions of Wildwood Church. It operates in the background of all we do. Unless people are sent out with the message of the Gospel, no one will hear, and no one will believe it.

Churches can be *about* so many things, many of them are trivial, or worse, counterproductive. We will be *about* taking this passage seriously. We will be *about* equipping our people to speak and teach the gospel to their children and grandchildren, making disciples in their own homes.

We will be *about* equipping our people to go into their communities, taking the gospel *across the street*; and equipping some who will sell everything they own and take the gospel *around the world* to unreached peoples and language groups.

This we will do by God's grace and for His glory, convicted that Paul isn't speaking hypothetically.

In **verses 18-21** Paul returns to his rhetorical questioning of Israel's salvation, citing from the Psalms, Deuteronomy, and Isaiah; a threefold witness to the faithlessness of Israel, begging the question, "Is Israel doomed forever?"

To this the Apostle Paul turns his attention in **chapter 11**. In **verses 1-4** he asks the obvious question, 'has God rejected His people?' "By no means!" he exclaims. While most of Israel has rejected Jesus and the Gospel, there remains a remnant.

THE REMNANT ISRAEL

Let's pick up in **Romans 11:5-7** So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. ⁶ But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. ⁷ What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened...

For God to choose some for salvation while hardening others may seem like an injustice, but justice means we'd all get what we deserve, which is death. God's election is sheer grace.

GOD'S PLAN FOR ISRAEL AND THE GENTILES

Paul continues in **verses 11-15** ¹¹ So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. Was God just being mean? No, there's a purpose that He is working.

¹² Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!... ¹⁵ For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?

You and I have much to be grateful for, not least of which is the partial hardening of Israel. While Israel remains hardened, the gospel is going out to the Gentiles that perhaps some Jews would be jealous for the blessings and promises to Abraham and come to faith themselves.

God's divine election, especially of the Gentiles, of you and I, should lead us to greater humility before God, not arrogance toward the Jews. This partial hardening is limited not only in scope, but also in time. It will come to an end.

PRAISE FOR GOD'S WISDOM

Verses 25-30 ²⁵ Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶ And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; ²⁷ "and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins." ²⁸ As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. ²⁹ For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

One day Israel will see Jesus for the Messiah He is. The partial hardening will be lifted and Israel will submit themselves to Jesus. It will be that Israel confesses that Jesus is Lord and believes in their heart that God raised Him from the dead that saves them, not their obedience to the Law.

As Paul laid out for the church in Rome God's incredible plan to save His people among the gentiles and Jews, he is left somewhat speechless. He erupts into praise as he drew this section of his letter to a close. **Verses 33-36** read, ³³ Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! ³⁴ "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" ³⁵ "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" ³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

God's mind and His ways and His judgments are so much loftier than our own. All we can do is respond with Paul, **to Him be glory forever. Amen!**

OUR RESPONSE TO ROMANS 9-11

But what should we as Christians do with Romans 9-11? Let me humbly posit that we should respond gratefully, humbly, and passionately.

Grateful that the Lord has chosen us to reveal the glory of His Son. Grateful that while Israel is partially hardened, the gospel has come to the Gentiles generally, and to you specifically.

Humble, knowing that what you have been given is by sheer mercy. God has been merciful to you despite your unworthiness.

Passionate, recognizing the path of salvation is the preaching of the Gospel. Who will preach? Who will go? How blessed to be the feet that brings good news!

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