

## Romans 9B (2017)

- What about Israel?
  - That's the question Paul set out to answer in Chapters 9-11
    - At the end of Chapter 8, Paul had just concluded his compelling argument for our eternal security in Christ
    - Paul demonstrated that God sets in motion a chain of events to bring us into glory
    - And that chain is unbreakable, for God determined we would receive His mercy before the foundations of the earth
    - So what God has determined for our sake from before Creation began cannot be thwarted by anything in Creation
  - Yet at the same time, Paul recognized that Israel's rejection of their Messiah seemed to argue an opposite conclusion
    - To the casual observer, it seemed God promised Israel a Messiah only to set Israel aside when the promised Messiah finally arrived
    - For if God predestines His elect to salvation and nothing can challenge His will, then why didn't He save Israel?
    - Why did God reject His own people Israel while permitting the Gentiles to enter in His grace?
  - Even more concerning, what does God's rejection of His own people in this way suggest about His trustworthiness?
    - Might God reject us too one day?
    - Can we trust in the promises we've received in Christ or will we end up like Israel?
- Because Paul knew these questions would be on the mind of his Jewish readers (and perhaps some Gentiles), Paul felt compelled to address the question of what about Israel?
  - So Paul suspends his discourse on righteousness to answer several critical questions in defense of God's faithfulness
    - Paul will explain why God didn't call the nation of Israel into faith when He delivered on His promise to bring the Messiah

- He'll explain where God's plan is going next for Israel
- And he'll show how God will remain faithful to His promises to Israel in a day to come
- Paul organizes his response chronologically, explaining Israel's past, present and future circumstances from God's perspective
  - Chapter 9 reviews Israel's past, specifically who received the promises of God
  - Chapter 10 explains Israel's present circumstances of having rejected the Messiah and His Gospel
  - And Chapter 11 reveals God's eventual plans to fulfill His promises to His people Israel
  - Perhaps most importantly, Chapter 11 also explains why it was necessary that God enact such a complex plan
- Last week we ended at Romans 9:13, just as Paul finished explaining God's prerogative to decide who may receive His promises
  - The Lord made promises to Abraham concerning a nation of people called Israel
    - But as Paul explained, God had a very specific "Israel" in view when He issued His promises
    - God's promises were intended only for a certain group of descendants from Abraham
    - Not everyone who descended from Abraham would be included in God's grace
  - To prove his point, Paul cited examples from Abraham and Isaac's own family
    - In both men's cases, God preselected one of their children to receive His promises and excluded another
    - God communicated His selections in advance of their births and without regard to the children's behavior or desires
    - In short, God simply chose one child and passed over the other
  - Paul's point is that throughout Israel's history, God alone determined who will be included in His promises

- Not all born of these men were automatically included in God's plan
- God's grace is dispensed not on the basis of birthright or our effort to win His favor or even according to our will or desire, as John 1 taught
- Rather, God extends His grace to those whom He chooses in advance
  - In Israel's case, God chose some of Abraham's descendants to receive His promises, but not all of them
  - As I said last week, to be considered part of God's Israel, it was necessary to descend from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but it was not sufficient
- Therefore, the first lesson we learned concerning Israel's past is that God never intended to bless all Jews with His promises
  - Only a subgroup of Jews, called the elect, were selected to receive the promises of God
    - Furthermore, God's selectivity among His people is not the exception but rather the rule
    - Therefore, we shouldn't be surprised to see that pattern repeating when Jesus appeared to Israel
    - Some Jews were appointed to receive the promised Messiah upon His arrival, but most were not
  - This fact raises some difficult questions...questions Paul anticipated we would ask
    - Beginning with the question that opens tonight's teaching:

**Rom. 9:14** What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!

**Rom. 9:15** For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

**Rom. 9:16** So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

**Rom. 9:17** For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth."

[Rom. 9:18](#) So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

- Upon hearing Paul explain that God selects only some to receive His promises, we immediately wonder if this is just?
  - We know God is good and righteous in all that He does, and yet Paul's explanation seems to paint God in an unfavorable way
    - Isn't Paul's explanation depicting God as cruel or even unjust?
    - Isn't a God who only extends His mercy to some unfair, unkind, & unloving to those He passes over?
    - And as a result, we may be tempted to reject Paul's teaching out of hand or seek an alternate interpretation to explain it away
  - Paul knew we would feel this way, because it's the natural reaction of an untrained spiritual mind
    - When it comes to deciding justice and mercy, the accused always feels as if he knows better than the judge what the proper judgment should be
    - But of course, the opposite is true
- So Paul asks the question on our behalf in v.14 so he may put this objection to rest
  - Paul says emphatically, God is never unjust
    - Notice, Paul doesn't retreat from his earlier teaching at all
    - He simply denies that the reality of God's selectivity suggests that He is unjust
  - In other words, God is both selective with His mercy and just in doing so
    - Our natural thinking assumes that God owes every human being an opportunity to receive grace
    - As if we were born with an entitlement to His mercy
    - So we define "justice" and "love" as extending opportunity for mercy
  - But this is not a biblical concept nor is it even logical

- The Bible never claims that love is defined as giving everyone an opportunity for mercy
- On the contrary, love is defined this way:

[John 15:13](#) “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

[John 15:14](#) “You are My friends if you do what I command you.

[John 15:15](#) “No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.

[John 15:16](#) “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

- Notice that Jesus says the greatest love is laying your life down for “friends”, not for everyone
- Furthermore, Jesus adds that these disciples were His friends because He chose them, they didn’t choose Him
- So to say that all mankind has a right to God’s mercy is contrary to the very meaning of the word grace
  - Grace means receiving something you were not entitled to have
  - No one has a right to grace, and God is not obligated by fairness or justice to extend salvation to everyone
  - The Bible says plainly God extends His mercy to those He chooses
- And once again, Paul turns to a prominent example from Israel’s past to illustrate this truth at work
  - He cites the example of Moses in Exodus
    - And brilliantly, Paul chooses as his proof God’s own words concerning this very topic
    - In explaining His ways of dealing with His people, the Lord told Moses in Exodus 33 that He decides who will receive His mercy
    - To paraphrase, God says He will have mercy and show compassion on those whom He chooses

- Some people receive God's compassion and His mercy, and some do not
  - And this outcome is solely God's prerogative
  - God isn't moved to showing us mercy by something within us or even in response to something we say or do
  - God says He extends His compassion and mercy solely on the basis of His sovereign will and purpose
- When doctors make life or death decisions concerning the future of a terminally ill patient, we commonly say the doctors are playing God
  - In that comment, we're acknowledging that life and death decisions are reserved for God alone
  - God alone has the power to determine the course of a life
  - The Bible says you can't add a day to your life...God alone determines how long you live
- So we acknowledge God's sovereignty over our physical life, but then we try to deny Him that same privilege concerning our spiritual life
  - We claim true love means man retaining the ultimate control over our eternal future
  - But if we're willing to extend God that privilege in one circumstance, then we cannot deny Him the same in the other
  - If He is God over physical life and death, than surely He is also God over spiritual life and death
  - And that's what God declares concerning Himself
- Paul summarizes God's statement in v.16 with a profoundly important principle
  - Paul says it does not depend on a man's willing, or working, but on God's choice
    - The "it" in that statement obviously refers back to v.15
    - It means God's mercy and compassion
  - So first, Paul says God's mercy doesn't depend on the man who wills
    - Our will refers to our desires, our own thoughts and assumptions about God

- No man or woman wills their way into receiving God's mercy
- Paul already demonstrated earlier in Chapter 3 that man's fallen never seeks for God in any case
- So our will is not a factor in God's decision to extend mercy
- Secondly, Paul says God's mercy won't depend on the man who runs
  - Running is a euphemism for doing good works
  - To run represents someone expending effort to please God hoping to be rewarded with mercy
  - Like someone running a race to receive a prize
- But of course, God's mercy can't be earned, as Paul showed earlier in Chapter 4
  - So, God's mercy can't be chosen and it can't be earned
  - It only comes when God determines to extend it
- If Paul's teaching wasn't challenging enough already, Paul presses us harder with an example from Exodus in v.17 – one that provides a corollary to the first example
  - During the confrontation with Pharaoh in Egypt, the Lord reassured Moses that the Pharaoh would play a role that God assigned to him
    - God determined that Pharaoh would be His antagonist
    - God was ready to redeem His people from Egypt, just as He promised Abraham 400 years earlier
    - And God determined that He would do so only through a great display of His power and might
  - Therefore, God required an adversary leading Egypt who would resist God until a time when God was ready to end the battle
    - That man would be Pharaoh, who God raised up specifically to oppose Moses and God Himself
    - God told Moses that He raised up Pharaoh so God could display His power in defeating Pharaoh
  - You can see further evidence of God's intentions when you look at the record of the plagues in Exodus

- Altogether there were ten plagues against Egypt
- And we know God intended to deliver all ten plagues against Egypt even before the first one began
- We know this because God declared it to Moses before Moses even entered Egypt

**Ex. 4:21** The Lord said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.

**Ex. 4:22** “Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord, “Israel is My son, My firstborn.

**Ex. 4:23** “So I said to you, ‘Let My son go that he may serve Me’; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn.””

- Notice the Lord says the plagues will culminate in the killing of the first born
  - That’s the tenth plague
  - It’s the one that gives us the Passover observance
  - It’s the plague that pictures the work of Jesus Christ as our sacrificial lamb
- Obviously, we couldn’t imagine the Exodus story taking place without a tenth plague, and neither could God
  - Which is why God told Moses that He must harden Pharaoh’s heart to ensure that all ten plagues take place as planned
    - God knew that no man, no matter how stubborn, can withstand His wrath for very long
    - Not even Pharaoh could maintain his opposition to God through ten plagues
    - Yet God had predetermined there would be ten plagues before Israel was released
  - So at a certain point in their confrontation, when Pharaoh’s resistance was weakening, God stepped in to harden Pharaoh’s heart so he would continue to battle



**Ex. 7:1** Then the Lord said to Moses, “See, I make you as God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet.

**Ex. 7:2** “You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh that he let the sons of Israel go out of his land.

**Ex. 7:3** “But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.

- Notice the Lord says He will harden Pharaoh’s heart “to multiply” His signs and wonders in Egypt
- In other words, hardening Pharaoh’s heart would ensure the conflict continued and the plagues piled up higher
- And He did all this to demonstrate His power among the nations
- During the first six confrontations with Moses, scripture reports that Pharaoh’s heart hardens itself
  - Pharaoh resists the will of God through his own stubbornness and disobedient will
  - But at a certain point, Pharaoh couldn’t resist any longer
- After the sixth plague of boils, the text changes in a notable fashion

**Ex. 9:12** And the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not listen to them, just as the Lord had spoken to Moses.

- Sure enough, the Lord stepped in to harden Pharaoh’s heart against Moses just as the Lord promised
  - Without the Lord’s intervention, Pharaoh would have given up
  - Not even a man as stubborn and defiant as Pharaoh could withstand God’s wrath any longer
- But there were four more plagues remaining, so quitting wasn’t an option for God
  - So God hardened Pharaoh’s heart, ensuring the continuation of the plagues until the point God determined they should end
  - Just as He told Moses He would do

- Once again, Paul's point in his corollary example is as disconcerting as it is undeniable
  - Just as God dispenses His mercy upon those whom He chooses, God also displays His wrath against those He chooses
    - Now, no one could deny that Pharaoh deserved God's judgment
    - He was unquestionably a sinner
    - He was so opposed to God that he willingly endured six plagues rather than submit to God's authority
    - So we know his judgment was well-deserved
  - But God didn't wait to see Pharaoh's sinfulness before selecting Him to receive His wrath
    - Nor did the Lord ever give Pharaoh an opportunity to repent or receive mercy
    - The text of scripture says clearly that Pharaoh was raised up for the very purpose of opposing God
  - And even when Pharaoh was ready to relent and submit to God's authority, God hardened His heart to continue to battle
    - Just as the Lord said He would do before the battle started
    - God didn't make Pharaoh a sinner...he was born that way
    - But God chose to put Pharaoh's sin to work rather than to rescue him from it
  - And this is God's sovereign right, Paul says in v.18
    - God extends mercy to those He chooses, softening their hearts, and bringing them into glory
    - And likewise, God hardens those He chooses, confirming their opposition, ensuring their just condemnation
    - Therefore, among Abraham's descendants there were those who received God's mercy (Isaac) and those who didn't (Ishmael)
- As difficult as this concept may be for us to accept, God is no less holy, no less just, and no less good because He acts in this way
  - Paul said as much back in v.14

- So we must accept that the truth of v.14 and the truth of v.18 work together in scripture
- Everyone is born a sinner and justly due God's judgment
- So God's goodness is evidenced in the fact that He extends mercy to anyone
- Nevertheless, many Christians over the centuries have stopped at this point in Paul's argument and refused to go any further
  - They simply cannot accept the God Paul is describing
  - They believe Paul's depiction of God is at odds with the God who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life
  - The God of John 3:16 doesn't sound like a God who only extends His mercy to some while hardening others
  - He sounds like a cruel, capricious God, some would say
- Furthermore, if it's true God's mercy doesn't depend on our will or works but only on His choice, than it means God could grant salvation to everyone
  - And if God has the power to grant salvation to everyone, then wouldn't the God of John 3:16 wish to save everyone?
  - Wouldn't that be what a loving God would do?
- Paul knew we would ask that question about now, and so he answers it next

**Rom. 9:19** You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?"

**Rom. 9:20** On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?

**Rom. 9:21** Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?

- Paul expected you to respond to his teaching by saying, "Why doesn't God just save everyone then? Why condemn anyone?"
  - Paul phrased the question a little differently in v.19, but that's what he's saying

- Interestingly, when you hear someone pose this question in the course of this discussion, they're usually not interested in the answer
- Because the question is actually intended as critique of the doctrine of election
- In itself, the question is ridiculing election by saying...
  - Since we know God is loving...
  - And since a loving God would certainly want to save everyone if He could...
  - Yet we know that not everyone is being saved...
  - Therefore, God must not be in control of who receives His mercy, and therefore the doctrine of election can't be true
- In other words, unless and until Paul gives us an explanation for why God doesn't save everyone, we won't accept what Paul is teaching
  - Notice Paul's initial response to this subtle critique
  - He calls us out for our arrogance and unbelief in the face of God's revealed word
- Who are we to doubt God's word?
  - Don't you know that the words Paul wrote are the inspired revelation of the Creator God?
  - God didn't have to reveal this truth to us, yet in His mercy and kindness He has graciously given us this truth
  - Yet we dare to stand in judgment of Him and refuse to accept what He has given us unless God first satisfied our doubts and critiques?
- We should expect to hear God respond as He did to Job:

**[Job 38:3](#)** "Now gird up your loins like a man,

And I will ask you, and you instruct Me!

**[Job 38:4](#)** "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Tell Me, if you have understanding,

**[Job 38:5](#)** Who set its measurements? Since you know.

Or who stretched the line on it?  
[Job 38:6](#) "On what were its bases sunk?  
Or who laid its cornerstone,  
[Job 38:7](#) When the morning stars sang together  
And all the sons of God shouted for joy?  
[Job 38:8](#) "Or who enclosed the sea with doors  
When, bursting forth, it went out from the womb;  
[Job 38:9](#) When I made a cloud its garment  
And thick darkness its swaddling band,  
[Job 38:10](#) And I placed boundaries on it  
And set a bolt and doors,  
[Job 38:11](#) And I said, 'Thus far you shall come, but no farther;  
And here shall your proud waves stop'?  
[Job 38:12](#) "Have you ever in your life commanded the morning,  
And caused the dawn to know its place,  
[Job 38:13](#) That it might take hold of the ends of the earth,  
And the wicked be shaken out of it?  
[Job 38:14](#) "It is changed like clay under the seal;  
And they stand forth like a garment.  
[Job 38:15](#) "From the wicked their light is withheld,  
And the uplifted arm is broken.  
[Job 38:16](#) "Have you entered into the springs of the sea  
Or walked in the recesses of the deep?  
[Job 38:17](#) "Have the gates of death been revealed to you,  
Or have you seen the gates of deep darkness?  
[Job 38:18](#) "Have you understood the expanse of the earth?  
Tell Me, if you know all this.

- God puts Job in his place, reminding the man that mankind has no place to question God in anything He does, for we know nothing by comparison
  - How dare any of us answer back to our Creator, our God and Savior, the Maker of all things, as if we know better how He should extend His mercy
    - And don't be self-deceived...that's what we're doing when we question why God doesn't save everyone

- It's hardly shocking that we should demand God give everyone opportunity to receive His mercy, because that suits our own interests
  - It just reveals our biased thinking and pride
  - We are demanding God prove Himself to be loving according to our definition of the word before we will accept His word
- Using the analogy of pottery, Paul rebukes us for our hubris saying, "Who are you, oh man, (i.e., mere man) to question God?"
  - We have as much worth and importance in comparison to God as a lump of clay has to a potter
    - We're dirt, and we exist to be molded by our Creator
    - Clay's only purpose is to be shaped by a greater power into something useful to the potter
  - A potter has a purpose in mind as he begins the process of creating a pot from clay
    - He may have an honorable use in mind
    - An honorable pot refers to pottery intended for dining on special occasions, similar to your fine china
    - The potter forms the pot intending it will serve guests in this way
    - And based on the potter's decision, the course of that pot's future is predetermined
  - Conversely, the potter also needs jars to hold refuse
    - That's what a dishonorable pot did...it was a toilet that held refuse
    - Once again, the potter set forth to mold the clay for that purpose
    - And once he was finished, the future of that pot was predetermined and could not change
    - For obvious reasons, you never took a pot created for use as a toilet and converted it to use as a dining pot
- Likewise, we have no right to question God's choices for who will receive His mercy any more than clay could question a potter
  - It's preposterous to consider a pot questioning its purpose

- And it's preposterous that we should question God's choices in how He determines the outcomes for our lives
- Should God choose to use Pharaoh's life in one way and Moses' life in another, it's His prerogative
- And we have no place to judge His decisions
- Both men were lumps of clay in their Maker's hands, and God did as He knew was best with each to reflect glory upon Himself
- Moreover, the Lord will not explain Himself to our doubting hearts
  - Because that's not how doubts are erased
  - As Abraham told the rich man in Hades
  - If we will not accept [the word of God] as it is written, then we will not be persuaded by the truth even if someone rises from the dead
- Your doubts will only be satisfied if you first accept the word of God for what it says
  - Then in time trust the Lord to reconcile your heart to this truth so that you may accept it
  - In time He will show you how the truth of a sovereign God is consistent with the truth of a loving God
- And that's where Paul moves next, to offering us the biblical explanation for why a loving God has chosen to bestow His mercy on some but not all

[Rom. 9:22](#) What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

[Rom. 9:23](#) And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

[Rom. 9:24](#) even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

- Paul phrases his explanation as a question, which makes it a little harder for us to understand what he's saying
  - Yet his choice to word v.22 as a question is an important detail

- Paul is subtly mocking our foolishness in judging God's actions and motives
- It's as if Paul's saying, so you think you know how to decide if God is just...
- Well, what would we say about God if I remind you that God is willing to immediately destroy all ungodly mankind in the moment of their birth
  - Which is what the ungodly justly deserves
  - Yet God patiently endures their ungodliness
  - He allows even the most ungodly men and women to live long and even enjoyable lives
  - Men like Pharaoh or Herod or the rich man in Jesus' story of Lazarus
- These people are an offense to a holy God and every day they live on earth they test God's patience
  - They mock God, persecute His children and pollute His earth with their evil ways
  - Still, God allows them to be born, to live long lives, to prosper and even to grow rich and powerful
  - That's more mercy and grace than such people ever had reason to receive
- As Jesus says, this is the standard by which we should measure God's goodness

[Matt. 5:44](#) "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

[Matt. 5:45](#) so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

- The very fact that God allows the wicked such mercy during their lives on earth is evidence of his long-suffering patience and mercy
- But Paul says this will be the extent of God's mercy for the wicked



- Paul calls these wicked people vessels of wrath prepared for destruction
  - Like dishonorable pottery, the Lord has brought these people into the world on a course leading to destruction
  - Why did God even allow such people to be born in the first place?
- Paul gives us that answer in v. 23
  - The verse opens with “and God did so...”
  - Meaning, here’s the reason God allowed people destined to destruction to be born and to live side by side with the elect
  - And that reason was to teach His elect, those vessels prepared beforehand to receive His glory, about the riches of His mercy
- Paul is describing the power, the necessity of contrast
  - Even though He was willing to destroy the wicked, or perhaps to prevent them from even being born at all
  - Yet God patiently permitted the wicked to exist on earth so that God’s elect could appreciate the magnitude of His grace extended to us
  - So that we who have been elected to receive God’s mercy might see the lives of the ungodly and appreciate what we have received
- That’s the power and necessity of contrast
  - If you have never known darkness, you can’t possibly appreciate the glory of light
  - If all you’ve ever known is light, then light is meaningless
  - Or if you’ve never known sadness, then the concept of joy has no meaning
- The same is true for concepts like grace, mercy, forgiveness and love
  - If no one received God’s judgment, then how could we appreciate God’s forgiveness
  - If there were no one deserving of God’s wrath, then how could we be thankful for His forgiveness?

- If no one was rejected by God, then who would praise Him for His love?
- Remember what the Lord told Moses in Exodus
  - He said He raised up Pharaoh to oppose Him so that He could display His power in defeating Pharaoh
    - In a nutshell, that's the purpose for all Creation including mankind
    - God made this Creation and everything in it to reflect glory upon Him
    - So that we might know God and glorify Him for Who He is
  - And to praise and worship God for Who He is, we must know all of Him
    - We must know His love and His anger
    - His mercy and His judgment
    - His grace and His wrath
    - So there must be those among men who receive one and others who receive the other
- You can test this truth with a thought experiment
  - Go back to the moment in the Garden when the Lord came upon Adam and Woman having just fallen into sin
    - Consider God's range of options for how He might have responded to the fall of mankind in that moment
    - There are only three options possible
  - First, God could have chosen to save no one
    - He could have rejected Adam and Woman and every son and daughter that came from them through all generations
    - He could have justly condemned all humanity to an eternity in Hell
  - Secondly, God could have chosen to save every member of humanity
    - He could have justified Adam and Woman by faith

- And thereafter, every child that came in Adam's line would have likewise received God's mercy
- Everyone born for all generations would enter into glory and Hell remained an empty place
- Or thirdly, God could choose to save some of Adam's descendants
  - God would elect some from among fallen humanity to receive His mercy
  - From generation to generation, two kinds of people would exist: those destined for rescue and those destined to receive the judgment they deserve
- God could save none, all or some
  - What criteria would God use to decide which choice He should make?
  - What criteria does the Lord give for why He creates anything? Why does everything exist at all?

**Is. 43:7** Everyone who is called by My name,  
And whom I have created for My glory,  
Whom I have formed, even whom I have made."

**Psa. 86:8** There is no one like You among the gods, O Lord,  
Nor are there any works like Yours.

**Psa. 86:9** All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord,  
And they shall glorify Your name.

**Psa. 86:10** For You are great and do wondrous deeds;  
You alone are God.

- The Lord's criteria for every choice He makes is what maximize His glory
  - And the choice that gave God the most glory in His Creation was to save some
    - If He saved none, then clearly there would be no one to praise His name and His glory into eternity
    - And if He saved all people, then we would never appreciate the magnitude of the gift we've received

- You can't fully appreciate eyesight unless you've known blindness
- Imagine a world where everyone ever born was automatically and inevitably ushered into grace
  - No one would pray for themselves to receive mercy, much less for the lost
  - No one would live in gratitude for salvation
  - No one would think about repentance much less about maintaining a holy and righteous witness
  - What's the point in those things when everyone ultimately receives God's grace?
  - In fact, God Himself would be an afterthought at best
- God would receive far less glory in a world where His grace was taken for granted
  - And so for our sakes the Lord has patiently endured ungodly men and women to teach us something about grace
    - In v.24 Paul says God established this plan for the benefit of us, those who are called by God into His grace
    - Both Jew and Gentile
    - People predestined from before the foundations of the earth to know Him and to receive His mercy
    - God has established this plan for our sake, Paul says
  - Today, you and I look out upon a lost and dying world and we see ourselves before grace
    - We can appreciate what it means that the Creator of the Universe has chosen to rescue us from that hopelessness
    - What's more, our gratitude increases all the more as we come to understand that our present circumstances were assigned to us before the foundation of the earth
    - Not for any reason of ourselves, but purely because the Lord chose us to receive it

- How humbling is this truth? How inexplicable, how marvelous, how freeing and how glorious!
  - To understand the doctrine of election is to truly understand God's love
  - We still know sin, we still experience suffering like the world of ungodly
  - But we know these things will not be the end of us, and we can rejoice knowing we have been prepared for glory
- So the key to understanding Israel's past is recognizing that God is in the business of selecting who received His mercy, both among those in Israel and among the Gentiles
  - And Paul proves that this has been God's way since the beginning, with quotes from Old Testament prophets

**Rom. 9:25** As He says also in Hosea,

"I will call those who were not My people, 'My people,'  
And her who was not beloved, 'Beloved.'"

**Rom. 9:26** "And It shall be that in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,'

There they shall be called sons of the living God."

**Rom. 9:27** Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved;

**Rom. 9:28** for the Lord will execute His word on the earth, thoroughly and quickly."

**Rom. 9:29** And just as Isaiah foretold,

"Unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left to us a posterity,  
We would have become like sodom, and would have resembled Gomorrah."

- First, Paul quotes from Hosea the prophet, who told Israel that in a day to come their God would shift His mercy away from Israel and toward Gentiles
  - God would begin to call a people who were not His people
  - These who previously were not receiving His mercy would now begin to receive His mercy
  - Obviously, God is telling Israel that in a day to come, the Gentile nations would receive His mercy in place of the nation of Israel

- Nothing demonstrates the truth of God's election more clearly than His shift away from Israel and toward Gentiles
  - History demonstrates that at the Messiah's coming, Israel ceased to receive God's mercy in large part
  - During the following centuries, very few Jews have embraced Jesus as Messiah
  - Yet in that same time, Gentiles have come to Jesus in the billions
- This pattern is unexplainable except as God shifting His choice from one people group to the other
  - For if such things were merely the result of social patterns or human thinking, then we would have expected exactly the opposite
  - A Jewish Messiah coming in fulfillment of Jewish scripture should have held great interest to Jews
  - Jews were primed by teaching and tradition to receive their Messiah when He came
- On the other hand, a Messiah should have held virtually no interest for Gentiles
  - Gentiles were generally repulsed by Jewish culture and religious practices (and many still are today)
  - And few Gentiles understood the concept of a Messiah, much less held any interest in embracing one
- Yet history records that a dramatic role reversal took place at Jesus' coming
  - Within a few decades, the church was largely Gentile
  - While faith in Jesus among Jewish people was dying out
  - Nothing explains this trend except a movement of God to shift His mercy away from Israel and toward Gentiles
- But notice in v.26 Paul includes a second statement by Hosea where the prophet says this shift away from Israel isn't the end of the story
  - From out of their place of rejection, Israel will eventually receive mercy again

- In the same place where they were previously declared to no longer be God's people, God will speak again in a future day
- In that future day, God will once more declare Israel to be His people
- Once again, this statement reflects God's election of who receive His mercy
  - You can't explain this in-out-back-in pattern in human terms
  - It's only explainable as the result of God's sovereign choice for who receives His mercy
- Next, Paul quotes from Isaiah 10 that God has always extended His mercy to a minority of Jacob's descendants
  - Just as God loved Jacob but hated Esau, so it has gone with everyone in the nation
  - Some have received His grace and others have not
  - And Isaiah says the ratio between these two groups has never been equal
- Throughout history, God has been electing a few to receive mercy while passing over the larger majority
  - The Lord refers to the minority in Israel who receive His mercy as "the remnant"
  - There has always been a remnant of Israel, a minority within the nation who are receiving mercy
  - Paul talks more about the remnant later in these chapters
  - But for now it's enough to understand that Israel's past has always been a story of a few saved Jews living within a nation of unsaved
- Finally, Paul quotes from Isaiah 1 to remind us that God's choice to extend His grace to some in Israel was never made on the basis of their merits
  - Isaiah speaks as a member of the remnant saying that had it not been for the Lord's mercy, they would have been no different than those in Sodom

- This is one of the strongest statements of God's sovereign election in the chapter
- Those praising God faithfully in the temple could just as easily have been engaged in depravity in Sodom
- The only reason they weren't was because the Lord stepped in to change their lives by His mercy
- Leaving them a posterity, which means a share in His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
- So summarizing what we've learned in Chapter 9 concerning God's faithfulness to His promises:
  - Israel had so far rejected the Messiah because the Lord hadn't elected them to receive His mercy
  - But this isn't evidence of God being unfaithful to His promises, nor is it even new
  - God has always been selective for who within Israel receives His promises
- Only a minority within Israel and among Gentiles are called to receive God's mercy
  - This is God's plan to demonstrate the riches of His mercy to His elect
  - That by leaving some in their sins while rescuing others by His mercy, the Lord can rightly receive all glory
- Next time we meet, we finish Chapter 9 as a transition into Chapter 10; Israel's present
  - What is God's plan for His people during this present time?
    - If God has redirected His mercy to the Gentiles, is this unfair to the generations of Jews who will be born and live during this time?
    - Is God being unfair to these Jews, excluding them from the opportunity to be counted among the remnant of God?
    - And even if Israel is restored in a future day, doesn't this interim rejection still cast doubt on His faithfulness to His promises?