SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES



DEEP DIVE

Romans

Chapter Nine, Verses 1–33

Great Sorrow and Sovereign Mercy — Paul's grief for Israel, the line of promise, the Potter's right, and the Stone of stumbling

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

Romans 8 ends in a song that nothing can separate us from the love of God; Romans 9 opens in tears. Paul grieves for his own people — and then shows that God's word to Israel has not failed, that mercy is God's to give, and that Israel stumbled over the very Stone God laid in Zion. Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind Paul's key words.

THE PASSAGE

Romans 9:1–33

Grief · promise · mercy · stumbling

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

Contents

Six movements from Paul's tears to the Stone in Zion

—	**How to Read This Study** · *the four voices & their colors*	3
—	**Before the Passage** · *from "no separation" to "great sorrow"*	3
I	**Great Sorrow for My Kinsmen** · *Romans 9:1–5 · Paul's grief and Israel's gifts*	5
II	**Not All Israel Is Israel** · *Romans 9:6–13 · the line of promise*	7
III	**Is There Injustice with God?** · *Romans 9:14–18 · mercy and Pharaoh*	9
IV	**The Potter and the Clay** · *Romans 9:19–24 · the Potter's right*	11
V	**Not My People, and the Remnant** · *Romans 9:25–29 · Hosea and Isaiah*	12
VI	**The Stone of Stumbling** · *Romans 9:30–33 · faith, works and the Stone*	14
VII	**The Passage in the Whole Bible** · *cross-references*	16
†	**At a Glance** · *the four voices side by side*	18
†	**Key Insights & Questions for the Table** · *discussion*	18
†	**Sources** · *where each voice comes from*	20



"For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." — Romans 9:3

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

Romans 9:1–33

Great Sorrow and Sovereign Mercy — a broken heart for Israel, a word that has not failed, and a mercy no one can earn

† How to Read This Study

This study walks Romans 9 in 6 movements, in Paul's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the argument so you can see where Paul is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

- DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word
- R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
- C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle
- MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · ROMANS 9:16

"So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but △on God who has mercy."

† Before the Passage

Romans 8 ends at the summit: "nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (8:39). The very next breath is grief. Guzik asks the question every reader feels: "So why has Paul now become so somber in his tone?" Because a question hangs over everything Paul has just promised. If God chose Israel, gave Israel the covenants and the promises, and sent the Messiah through Israel — and Israel, as a nation, has rejected that Messiah — has God's word failed? And if God's word to Israel can fail, what is the promise of Romans 8 worth to anyone else?

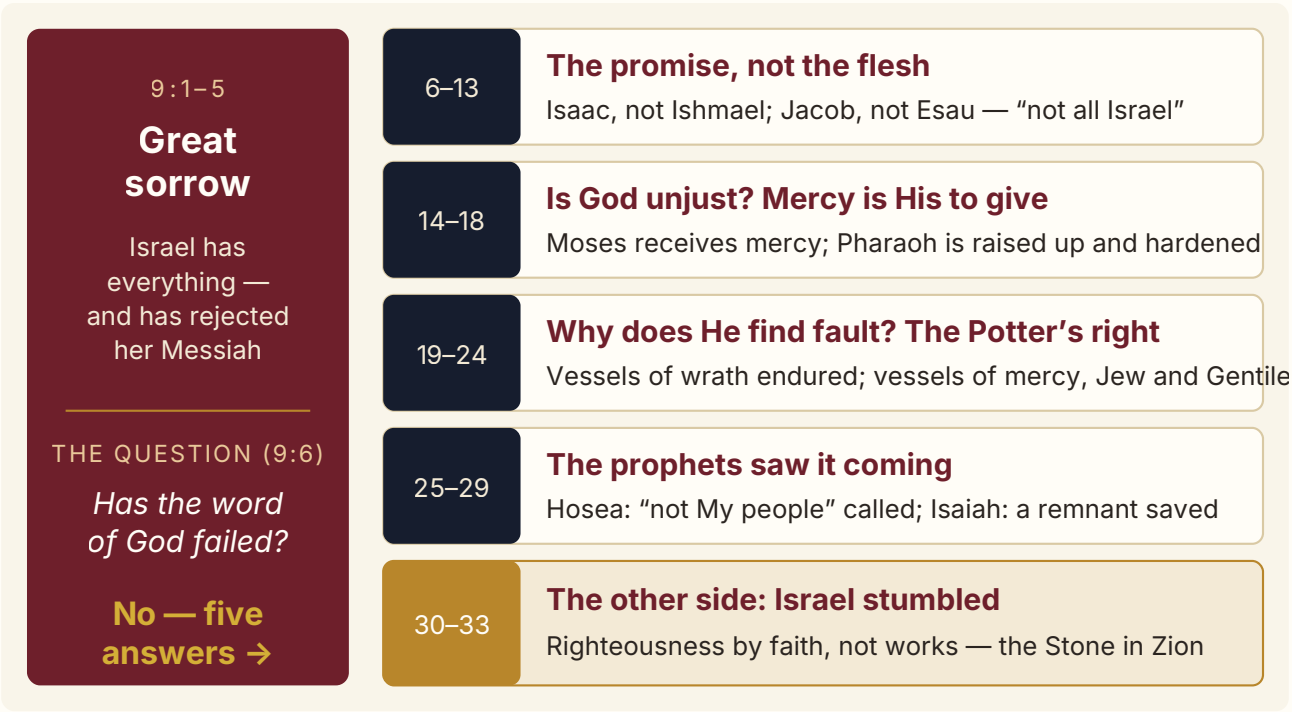
Chapters 9–11 are Paul's answer, and chapter 9 is its first and hardest part. He answers in five steps: God's promise never ran through mere physical descent (vv. 6–13); God is not unjust when He shows mercy as He wills (vv. 14–18); the creature has no standing to put the Creator on trial (vv. 19–24); the prophets foresaw both the calling of the Gentiles and the saving of a remnant (vv. 25–29); and Israel stumbled because it pursued

righteousness by works instead of by faith (vv. 30–33). Chapter 10 will press that last point — "my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation" (10:1) — and chapter 11 will answer, "God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be!" (11:1).

Almost every line rests on the Old Testament. Paul quotes Genesis (Isaac, Sarah, Rebekah's twins), Exodus (Moses and Pharaoh), Malachi (Jacob and Esau), Hosea ("not My people"), and Isaiah five times (the remnant, Sodom, the stone in Zion), and he alludes to the potter of Isaiah and Jeremiah. He is not inventing a doctrine to explain Israel's unbelief; he is reading Israel's own Scriptures back to her.

This is contested ground, and this study will not pretend otherwise. R.C. Sproul reads the chapter as Scripture's clearest statement of God's unconditional election of individuals to salvation. Matthew Henry reads Jacob and Esau first as peoples and their privileges, while still speaking of "effectual grace" given to particular persons. Spurgeon preaches sovereign grace and full human responsibility in the same breath and refuses to reconcile them. Guzik walks the text carefully and, at the end, turns the coin over to "the side of human responsibility." All four agree on what matters most: the chapter begins with a broken heart for Israel, and it ends with a promise to anyone who believes.

FIGURE · THE SHAPE OF ROMANS 9



Read the left panel first: Paul's grief raises the question, and every block on the right is one of his five answers — the last one turns from God's side to Israel's.

I
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 9:1–5

Great Sorrow for My Kinsmen

Paul would trade his own place in Christ for Israel — and lists all she has been given

[1] *I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit,* [2] *that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.* [3] *For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,* [4] *who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises,* [5] *whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.*

ROMANS 9:1–5

"But now, if You will, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!"

EXODUS 32:32

FIGURE · ISRAEL'S EIGHT PRIVILEGES (9:4-5)

ROMANS 9:4–5 · "WHO ARE ISRAELITES, TO WHOM BELONGS …"

1 **The adoption** Exodus 4:22	2 **The glory** The Shekinah	3 **The covenants** Abraham to David	4 **The Law** Given at Sinai
5 **Temple service** Altar and priests	6 **The promises** A coming King	7 **The fathers** Abraham to Jacob	8 **The Christ** Born of Israel

"who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen."

Every gift was a signpost to Him — and Paul grieves because Israel walked past the last one.

Seven gifts lead to the eighth: the Messiah came from Israel "according to the flesh," and He is "over all, God blessed forever."

ἀνάθεμα … ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ

ANATHEMA · "ACCURSED" · G331

Anathema is the thing devoted to God for destruction — the Septuagint's word for the *ḥērem*, the ban placed on Jericho. Paul uses it of false gospels in Galatians 1:8–9; here he uses it of himself, "accursed, separated from Christ." The verb is *ēuchomēn*, an imperfect: "I could wish" — the wish he would make if it could be granted, though he knows (8:38–39) it cannot. Beside it stand two words for pain: *lypē* (G3077), "sorrow," and *odynē* (G3601), "grief," a word for deep, aching pain. And it is "unceasing" (*adialeiptos*) — the word Paul uses for his unceasing prayer in 1:9.

υἱοθεσία

HUIOTHESIA · "ADOPTION AS SONS" · G5206

"Son-placing." In Romans 8:15 and 8:23 it is the Christian's adoption by the Spirit; here it heads Israel's list, because Israel was God's son first: "Israel is My son, My firstborn" (Exodus 4:22). Then come the glory (*doxa*, the Shekinah over the tabernacle), the covenants (plural), the giving of the Law (*nomothesia*), the temple service (*latreia*, G2999), the promises, the fathers — and last and greatest, the Christ "according to the flesh." Most readers, with the NASB95, take the next words as one phrase about Christ: "who is over all, God blessed forever."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik hears the grief first: Paul feels this way "because he considers a people who seem to be separated from God's love" — the very thing chapter 8 said could never happen to those in Christ. He notes that "Paul reflects the same heart Moses had in Exodus 32:31-32," who asked to be blotted out of God's book rather than see Israel destroyed, and that both men echo Christ, who actually became a curse for us (Galatians 3:13). On verse 5 he argues, with Robertson, that Paul here calls Christ "the eternally blessed God," while fairly noting Morris's report that many recent scholars resist that reading. He also passes on Spurgeon's counsel: "Get your soul full of a great grief, and your little griefs will be driven out."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul opened the chapter (August 2006) by admitting that Romans 9 is where election is set out most clearly, and that people — himself included — naturally resist it. But before the doctrine comes the grief. Paul's words are a solemn declaration made "in Christ," and his wish to be *anathema* is, Sproul says, the strongest language in all his letters. Then he walks the privileges one by one: "Israel was the adopted son of God"; "It was to Israel that God first manifested His glory"; "These covenants belong to them"; "We owe our law to the Israelites." He reminds the church of its debt, citing Luther: salvation is of the Jews.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In "Concern for Other Men's Souls," Spurgeon calls Paul's grief "a continual sorrow, for it was no fitful emotion": "It always grieved him to think that his kinsmen should reject Christ." Paul loved the very people who were hunting him; he would, if he could save them by his own destruction, "wish to stand in their stead." Spurgeon turns it on the hearer: "You must feel deeply for the souls of men if you are to bless them," and "You must love before you can plead." Soul-winning, he says, "is a heart, not a head business" — and such love makes a man more like Christ, and drives him to prayer.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry calls Paul's wish "a very high pang of zeal and affection for his countrymen." He is careful with the privileges: the adoption here is "not that which is saving, and which entitled to eternal happiness, but that which was external and typical" — Israel as a nation was God's son, and that was a real honor, but it did not save any one Israelite by itself. Hence his famous line: "Grace does not run in the blood." Yet the list ends in glory: Christ came from Israel by the flesh, and "he is not only over all, as Mediator, but he is God blessed for ever."

II
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 9:6–13

Not All Israel Is Israel

The word of God has not failed — the promise always ran through the line God chose

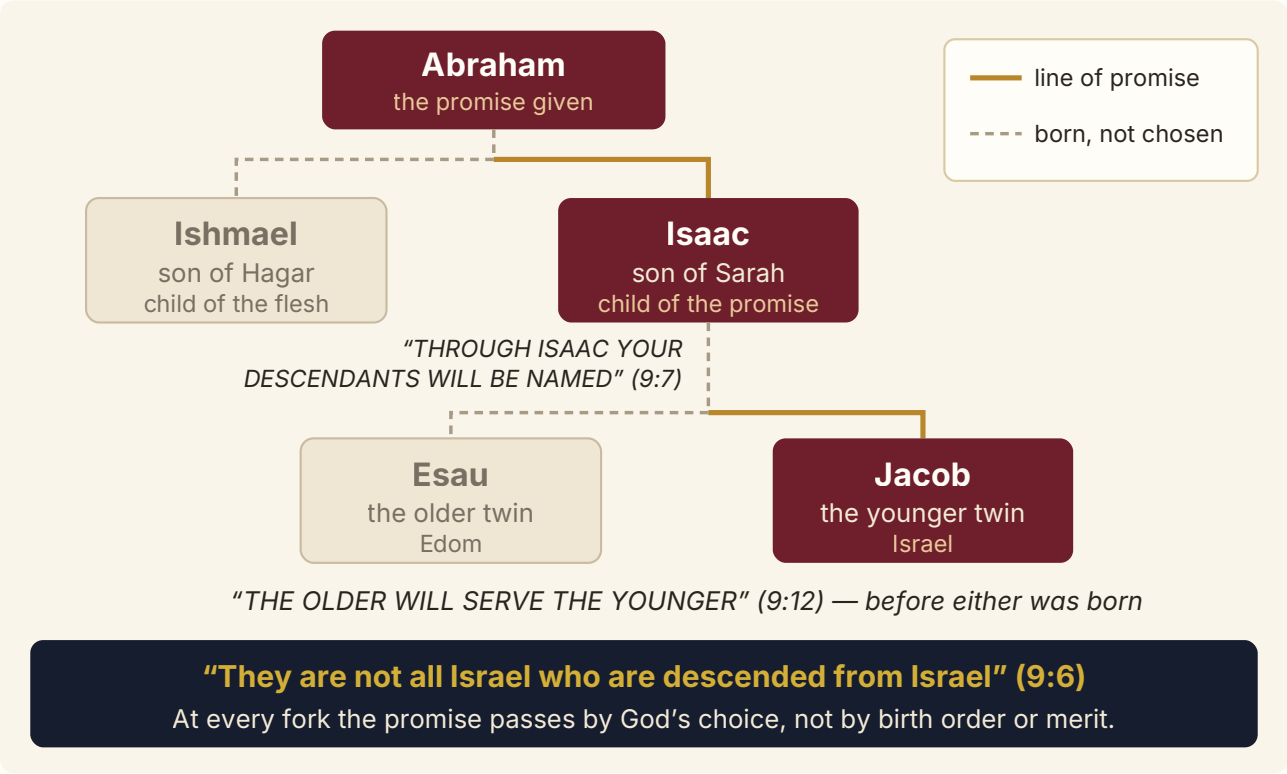
6 But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;
7 nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS
WILL BE NAMED." 8 That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the
promise are regarded as descendants. 9 For this is the word of promise: "AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH
SHALL HAVE A SON." 10 And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one
man, our father Isaac; 11 for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that
God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, 12 it
was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER." 13 Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I
HATED."

ROMANS 9:6–13

""I have loved you," says the LORD. But you say, "How have You loved us?" "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?"
declares the LORD. "Yet I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation
and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness.""

MALACHI 1:2–3

FIGURE · THE LINE OF PROMISE



Follow the gold line: at each generation one son carries the promise and one does not — which is how "not all Israel" can be Israel.

ἡ κατ᾽ ἐκλογὴν πρόθεσις

HĒ KAT' EKLOGĒN PROTHESIS · "PURPOSE ACCORDING TO CHOICE" · G4286 · G1589

Prothesis is a purpose "set before," the word of 8:28 — "called according to His purpose." *Eklogē* is a choosing out, "election" (KJV); Paul will use it again of the remnant "according to God's gracious choice" (11:5). The clause is a purpose clause — *hina … menē*, "so that … would stand" — and it is framed by two negatives in time and deed: the twins were "not yet born," and had done nothing "good or bad." The ground is stated outright: "not because of works but because of Him who calls."

ἐμίσησα

EMISĒSA · "I HATED" · G3404

Aorist of *miseō*, quoting Malachi 1:2–3, written more than a thousand years after the twins, when Edom was a people and its mountains a desolation. Hebrew idiom often sets love and hate as a contrast of choice — Jacob "loved Rachel more than Leah," and Leah is called "unloved," literally "hated" (Genesis 29:30–31); Jesus says His disciple must "hate" father and mother (Luke 14:26). Our teachers agree the word is not malice. They differ on what was chosen — persons for salvation, or peoples for covenant privilege — as the voices below show.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik answers the chapter's question with Paul: God has not failed, because not every physical descendant of Israel is governed by the promise; Isaac, not Ishmael, carried it. The choice of Jacob was made before the twins had done good or evil, so it rests on God's call, not their works — and God's choices are "not capricious." On "hated" he follows Morris and Calvin toward "accepted" and "rejected": "God hated Esau in regard to inheriting the covenant, not in regard to blessing in this life or the next." Yet he does not shrink the stakes: "One was the heir of God's covenant of salvation, and one was not." And he tells Spurgeon's reply to a puzzled woman: "My trouble is to understand how God could love Jacob."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul (August 20, 2006) names four ways readers escape this text — avoiding it, making it national election, making it temporal blessing, and grounding it in God's foreknowledge of faith — and rejects all four. Paul names two individuals, the context of chapter 8 is personal salvation, and twins with the same parents and the same womb leave no room for a difference in them. Paul uses a purpose clause "that indicates, without ambiguity, purpose." His conclusion: "The ground of our election is never found in us." "Hated" is comparative — "It is not that God is filled with loathing toward him"; it "may as well be called hatred because it is such a lower degree of love."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "Jacob and Esau" (New Park Street, January 1859) calls this "a terrible text, and I will be honest with it if I can." He separates two questions. Why did God love Jacob? "It is sovereign grace" — "There was nothing in Jacob that could make God love him." Why did God hate Esau? Because of Esau: "Esau sold it himself; he sold it for a mess of pottage." He will not reconcile the two halves by philosophy: "I cannot see how God can be omnipotent and man be free; but it is so, and I believe it." The doctrines, he says, "are friends with one another." His summary of his own preaching: "salvation all of grace, and damnation all of sin."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry opens with Paul's thesis — God's word has not failed — because "they are not all Israel who are of Israel." On Jacob and Esau he weighs the readings. He rejects making the choice rest on foreseen qualities — that "very much strains the scripture." But he also notes that Malachi speaks of the twins as ancestors, and prefers to read it "of the election and rejection of people considered complexly" — Israel and Edom. Even so, "all this choosing and refusing was typical, and intended to shadow forth some other election and rejection," which he says is "very applicable to" God's dealings with particular persons.

III
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 9:14–18

Is There Injustice with God?

Mercy cannot be owed — Moses receives it, Pharaoh is raised up to show God's power

> 14 *What shall we say then? △ There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!* 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 does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but △ on God who has*

> *mercy*. [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."* [18] *So then He has ⟳ mercy on whom He desires, and ⚠ He hardens whom He desires.*
>
> ROMANS 9:14–18

ἐλεήσω … οἰκτιρήσω

ELEĒSŌ … OIKTIRĒSŌ · "I WILL HAVE MERCY … COMPASSION" · G1653 · G3627

God's words to Moses in Exodus 33:19, spoken just after the golden calf, when Israel deserved nothing. *Eleeō* is to show mercy, help to the helpless; *oiktirō* is to feel pity, compassion from the gut. Verse 16 then gives the sentence with no verb at all: *ou tou thelontos oude tou trechontos alla tou eleōntos theou* — "not of the one willing, nor of the one running, but of the mercy-showing God." Mercy is the chapter's key word: five times in vv. 15–23, twice more as compassion.

ἐξήγειρά σε … σκληρύνει

EXĒGEIRA SE … SKLĒRYNEI · "I RAISED YOU UP … HE HARDENS" · G1825 · G4645

Exegeirō means to raise up, to bring onto the stage — God set Pharaoh in his place in history (Exodus 9:16). *Sklērynō*, to make hard or stiff, is the Septuagint's word in Exodus 4–14, where the text says both that Pharaoh hardened his heart (8:15, 32) and that the LORD hardened it (9:12; 10:20). Paul quotes only God's side here; he gives Israel's own side in vv. 30–33.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik defines the terms: mercy is "not getting what we do deserve," and God is never less than fair — He only reserves the right to be more than fair with whom He chooses. The point is simple: "If God is obliged to show mercy, then it is not mercy – it is obligation." On Pharaoh he leans on Exodus: "Pharaoh did harden his own heart, according to Exodus 7:13," and "in hardening the heart of Pharaoh, God simply allowed Pharaoh's heart to pursue its natural inclination." He adds Harrison's note that Paul leaves Pharaoh's own part unmentioned here in order to stress the freedom of God's action.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

For Sproul (August 27 and September 3, 2006) the objection itself proves what Paul is teaching: no one accuses God of injustice for choosing those He foresaw would believe. Mercy is not a kind of injustice; it is outside the category of justice altogether. "If grace is owed, it is not grace." So "Jacob gets mercy; Esau gets justice. The elect get grace; the non-elect get justice" — and no one gets injustice. On Pharaoh he holds a "positive-negative" view, rejecting a symmetrical one: "God hardened a man whose heart was already hard," for "giving over to sin is itself a judgment on sin."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "God's Will and Man's Will" (No. 442, March 1862) takes verse 16 as its text, set beside Revelation 22:17. He faults two kinds of men — those who "magnify sovereignty at the expense of responsibility," and those who uphold responsibility "at the expense of divine sovereignty" — each putting the telescope to his blind eye. First, "SALVATION HINGES UPON THE WILL OF GOD, AND NOT UPON THE WILL OF MAN." Then, man's will has its place: "When a man receives the grace of Christ he does not receive it against his will." And so: "If thou art willing, depend upon it that God is willing."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry sees God here not merely as a judge applying rules but as an owner and benefactor, free with His own. The favors in view are of two kinds: church privileges, and "the favour of effectual grace, which is given to some particular persons and denied to others." God "picks out some from this fallen apostatized race, to be vessels of grace and glory." Pharaoh God "raised him up, brought him into the world, made him famous"; to harden is to "withdraw softening grace, leave him to himself." All these differences, he concludes, "must be resolved into his absolute sovereignty."

IV
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 9:19–24

The Potter and the Clay

"Why does He still find fault?" — the Creator's right, His patience, and the riches of His glory

19 *You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?"* 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?* 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?* 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?* 23 *And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon ☆ vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,* 24 *even us, whom He also called, ◷ not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.*

ROMANS 9:19–24

"Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?" declares the LORD. "Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel."

JEREMIAH 18:6

κεραμεύς … πηλός … φύραμα

KERAMEUS … PĒLOS … PHYRAMA · "POTTER … CLAY … LUMP" · G2763 · G4081 · G5445

The *kerameus* works the *pēlos*, wet clay, and from one *phyrama*, one kneaded lump, makes two kinds of vessel (*skeuos*): one "for honorable use," one "for common use" — the NASB's fair rendering of *eis atimian*, "for dishonor" (KJV). Verse 20 calls man *to plasma* (G4110), "the thing molded," the language of Isaiah 29:16 and 45:9. Theologians have long asked whether the lump is humanity as created or humanity already fallen; Sproul takes up that question, and Henry speaks of vessels picked "from this fallen apostatized race."

κατηρτισμένα … προητοίμασεν

KATĒRTISMENA … PROĒTOIMASEN · "PREPARED … PREPARED BEFOREHAND" · G2675 · G4282

Paul changes his grammar between the two vessels. The vessels of wrath are *katērtismena eis apōleian*, "prepared (fitted) for destruction" — a perfect participle, middle or passive in form, with no agent named. The vessels of mercy are those "which **He** prepared beforehand for glory" — *proētoimasen*, an active verb with God as its subject. And the vessels of wrath God "endured with much patience" (*makrothymia*, as in 2:4). Henry, Guzik and Spurgeon all lean on this difference.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik hears verse 19 as the next objection: if God chooses, is man still responsible? Paul's answer is first a rebuke — the question "Why have you made me like this?" is disrespectful in the mouth of a creature — and then the potter, who has the rights of a Creator over what he makes. But Guzik reads the verbs closely: Paul "does not say that God has prepared them for destruction." "Those vessels do an adequate job on their own." He also passes on Morris's point that Israel assumed God could only ever make her a vessel of honor — the very assumption Paul is breaking.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul (September 24, 2006) takes up the lump — creation, or fallen humanity? He rejects the supralapsarian framing because it seems to make God the author of sin, and he speaks of humanity as a "mass of perdition" from which God saves some. Election, he insists, is a doctrine of grace, not an abstract display of power: "This doctrine more than any other reveals to us that grace really is amazing." "We bring nothing to the table." And he turns the question on himself: "What if God were pleased to show His wrath toward me?" Those whom God calls, Jew and Gentile, "are bound for glory."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In "Jacob and Esau" Spurgeon reaches for this verse to guard the second half of his doctrine. He reads verse 22 and points to what it does not say: "it does not say anything about fitting men for destruction; they fitted themselves." The vessels of mercy, by contrast, God "had afore prepared unto glory." That is his whole theology of the chapter in one contrast — the saved owe everything to grace, and the lost owe their ruin to themselves: "Your damnation is your own election, not God's; you richly deserve it."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry answers "Why doth he yet find fault?" from the potter: "The rude and unformed mass of matter hath no right to this or that form." The vessels of wrath are "vessels filled with wrath, as a vessel of wine is a vessel filled with wine," and they are "fitted by their own sin and self-hardening." He puts the asymmetry in one sentence: "Sinners fit themselves for hell, but it is God that prepares saints for heaven."

V
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 9:25–29

Not My People, and the Remnant

Hosea promised the outsiders a name; Isaiah promised Israel a seed

> 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.'"* 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."* 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;* 28 *FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND*
> *QUICKLY."* 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."*
>
> ROMANS 9:25–29

οὐ λαός μου … υἱοὶ θεοῦ ζῶντος

OU LAOS MOU … HUIOI THEOU ZŌNTOS · "NOT MY PEOPLE … SONS OF THE LIVING GOD" · G2992

Hosea named his children for Israel's judgment — *Lo-ruhamah*, "no compassion," and *Lo-ammi*, "not My people" (Hosea 1:6–9) — and then promised the names would be reversed (1:10; 2:23). Paul hears in it the calling of the Gentiles, who were never God's *laos*, and who are now called "sons of the living God." Peter applies the same verses to the scattered church (1 Peter 2:10). The word "called" (*kaleō*) runs through the whole chapter: vv. 7, 11, 24, 25, 26.

τὸ ὑπόλειμμα … σπέρμα

TO HYPOLEIMMA … SPERMA · "THE REMNANT … POSTERITY" · G5275 · G4690

Hypoleimma, "what is left over," is Paul's word for the remnant of Isaiah 10:22 (the Septuagint has its twin, *kataleimma*) — though Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved. Then Isaiah 1:9: had the Lord of Sabaoth ("of hosts") not left a *sperma*, Israel would be Sodom. That is the same word translated "descendants" in v. 7 — the seed named through Isaac. The line of promise in vv. 6–13 and the remnant in vv. 27–29 are one idea.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik explains that Hosea's child called "Not My People" pointed to a judgment that would not last forever, and Paul sees that promise widened to the nations. Then Isaiah: Israel was never promised that every member would be saved. He quotes Morris: "It was stupid to think that, since the whole nation had not entered the blessing, the promise of God had failed." And he notes the mercy hidden in the warning — Judah was spared Sodom's end — with Bruce's line: "But if only a remnant will survive, at least a remnant will survive."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul (September 24 and October 1, 2006) reads Hosea's marriage and the names Lo-Ruhamah and Lo-Ammi as a picture of God's rejection of faithless Israel — and then His call to a people who were no people, the Gentiles grafted in as wild branches. Of Isaiah he says: "Out of that vast multitude of descendants of Abraham, only a remnant would actually be saved." He presses it on the visible church: membership does not guarantee salvation, though the remnant is found where the means of grace are. The seed left after the harvest is destroyed is God's doing, not Israel's.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "A People Who Were No People" preaches the Hosea promise to the hopeless. To be "not my people" is "a terrible description, including all the unsaved" — "This is the worst case that can be; worse than to be left alone." But grace calls such people by a new name, and "this fact is our encouragement in preaching the gospel." His conclusions are pastoral: "We must give up none as hopeless"; "None may give up themselves in despair"; and "Sovereign grace is the ultimate hope of the fallen."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry rejoices over Hosea: "A blessed change! Former badness is no bar to God's present grace and mercy." From Isaiah he draws the sober side: "only a remnant shall be saved; for many are called, but few are chosen." Yet the Lord "will finish the work," and the remnant is itself a wonder: "it is a wonder of divine power and mercy that all are not destroyed." The Lord of Sabaoth left a seed when Israel had earned the fate of Sodom.

VI
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 9:30–33

The Stone of Stumbling

The other side of the coin — Gentiles found by faith, Israel tripped by works

30 *What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even* ✩ *the righteousness which is by faith;* 31 *but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law.* 32 *Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but* ⚠ *as though it were by works.* ⚠ *They stumbled over the stumbling stone,* 33 *just as it is written, "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND* ✩ *HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."*

ROMANS 9:30–33

"Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, A costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed.""

ISAIAH 28:16

προσέκοψαν τῷ λίθῳ τοῦ προσκόμματος

PROSEKOPSAN … PROSKOMMATOS · "THEY STUMBLED OVER THE STUMBLING STONE" · G4350 · G4348

Proskoptō is to strike the foot against something; the stone is a *lithos proskommatos*, a stone to trip on, and a *petra skandalou* (G4073 · G4625), a rock that springs the trap — *skandalon* was the trigger-stick of a snare. Paul fuses two Isaiah texts: the cornerstone God lays in Zion (28:16) and the LORD Himself as a stone of stumbling to both houses of Israel (8:14). Peter fuses the same two (1 Peter 2:6–8).

οὐ καταισχυνθήσεται

OU KATAISCHYNTHĒSETAI · "WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED" · G2617

To be put to shame, let down, disgraced — the NASB's "disappointed," the KJV's "ashamed." The Hebrew of Isaiah 28:16 says the believer "will not be disturbed" (or "will not hurry"); Paul follows the Greek Septuagint, "will not be put to shame." He will repeat the promise in 10:11 and widen it: "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." The chapter that began in grief ends with a guarantee.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik reads verses 30–33 "according to a human perspective." Gentiles who were not looking for righteousness found it by faith; Israel pursued the law and missed it. Here Paul "shows that Israel is responsible for their present condition," and the stumbling stone is the crucified Christ. Guzik insists this is no contradiction of verses 6–24: Paul "simply presents the problem from the other side of the coin" — "the side of human responsibility, instead of the side of God's sovereign choice." Both sides are true, and Paul keeps both in one chapter.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul (October 1, 2006) loves the irony of verse 30: "Here we are receiving the benefits of the gospel when we never even sought it." Recalling the old "I Found It" campaign, he answers: "You did not find anything. He found you." Israel, meanwhile, "were looking for justification by works and they stumbled over Jesus." "Israel was offended by the rock. They were ashamed of a suffering servant." In a word, "Israel tripped over grace." The law's job is to expose us: "The law sends you packing. It sends you rushing to the cross."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In "Un-Believers Stumbling; Believers Rejoicing," Spurgeon traces why men trip over Christ — His holiness, salvation by faith, the doctrines of grace, the faults of His people. "Christ offends men because His gospel is intolerant of sin," and "Christ will not shape His doctrine to suit thy carnal taste." At bottom: "You will not have this man to reign over you." Then he turns to the promise in capitals — "WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH ON HIM SHALL NOT BE ASHAMED" — and answers for the believer: "We have ventured our all upon Christ."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry closes the chapter where Paul does: Israel sought righteousness by the works of the law, and "This was the stumbling-stone at which they stumbled." Their unbelief made "the rock of salvation a rock of offence." He will not soften where the blame lies — "their blood is upon their own heads" — and he sets the Gentiles beside them, who came to the same Stone by faith and found it a foundation.

VII
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

Paul's tears, God's choice, and the open invitation — held together across Scripture

FIGURE · THE OLD TESTAMENT IN ROMANS 9

ROMANS	WHAT PAUL QUOTES	SOURCE	SECTION
9:7	*Through Isaac your descendants*	Genesis 21:12	LAW
9:9	*At this time I will come*	Genesis 18:10, 14	LAW
9:12	*The older will serve the younger*	Genesis 25:23	LAW
9:13	*Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated*	Malachi 1:2–3	PROPHETS
9:15	*I will have mercy on whom …*	Exodus 33:19	LAW
9:17	*For this very purpose I raised you up*	Exodus 9:16	LAW
9:20–21	*The thing molded … the potter (allusion)*	Isa 29:16; Jer 18:6	PROPHETS
9:25	*Not My people … My people*	Hosea 2:23	PROPHETS
9:26	*Sons of the living God*	Hosea 1:10	PROPHETS
9:27–28	*The remnant will be saved*	Isaiah 10:22–23	PROPHETS
9:29	*Unless the Lord of Sabaoth …*	Isaiah 1:9	PROPHETS
9:33	*A stone of stumbling … will not be disappointed*	Isaiah 28:16 + 8:14	PROPHETS

Torah for the line of promise and for mercy · the Prophets for Gentiles, remnant and Stone

Paul answers from Israel's own Scriptures — the Law for the line of promise and mercy, the Prophets for the Gentiles, the remnant and the Stone.

> *"Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation."*
>
> ROMANS 10:1

> *"I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew."*
>
> ROMANS 11:1–2

> *"In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice."*
>
> ROMANS 11:5

> *"just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,"*
>
> EPHESIANS 1:4–5

> *"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."*
>
> JOHN 6:37

> *"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling."*
>
> MATTHEW 23:37

> *"Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the Lord GOD, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?'"*
>
> EZEKIEL 33:11

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul keeps Romans 9 tied to its neighbors. The context, he argues, is the personal salvation of Romans 8 — "called according to His purpose" (8:28) — and the remnant of 9:27 is the narrow gate of Matthew 7:13–14: "Out of that vast multitude of descendants of Abraham, only a remnant would actually be saved." Yet he began the chapter by comparing Paul's grief to Jesus' lament over Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37). The doctrine and the tears belong together.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "God's Will and Man's Will" set Romans 9:16 beside Revelation 22:17 — the same pairing these cross-references make, John 6:37 beside Matthew 23:37. The Spirit's work "is to change the human will," and yet "We are as free under grace as ever we were under sin." So he ends Romans 9 not with a chart but with an invitation: "Whosoever will, let him come." "So come and drink, sinner; God wills it."

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, one chapter — and on Romans 9 they do not all say the same thing. Read across each row: where they agree (Paul's grief, mercy that cannot be owed, Israel's responsibility for unbelief) and where they part (individual or corporate election, how God hardens).

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · Grief (1–5)	Paul feels Israel as separated from God's love; Moses' heart; Christ called God.	Strongest language Paul ever uses; walks the privileges; the church owes Israel.	A continual sorrow, no fitful emotion; you must love before you can plead.	Adoption external and typical; grace does not run in the blood; Christ God blessed forever.
II · Promise (6–13)	Promise, not flesh; hate means rejected for the covenant inheritance; choices not capricious.	Individual, unconditional election; rejects national, temporal and foreseen-faith readings.	Jacob loved by sovereign grace; Esau sold his own birthright; the two doctrines are friends.	Primarily peoples considered complexly — Israel and Edom — typical of another election.
III · Mercy (14–18)	Mercy obliged is no mercy; Pharaoh hardened his own heart and God allowed it.	Mercy is outside justice; the elect get grace, the non-elect justice; God hardened a hard heart.	Salvation hinges on God's will; grace is never received against a man's will.	God as owner and benefactor; effectual grace to some; hardening withdraws softening grace.
IV · Potter (19–24)	The creature cannot cross-examine the Creator; vessels of wrath do an adequate job on their own.	Humanity a mass of perdition; election is grace; what if He showed wrath to me?	Scripture never says God fitted men for destruction; they fitted themselves.	Sinners fit themselves for hell; God prepares saints for heaven.
V · Prophets (25–29)	Not My People was never final; at least a remnant will survive.	Gentiles called as no people; only a remnant of Abraham's multitude saved.	Give up none as hopeless; sovereign grace is the hope of the fallen.	Former badness no bar to grace; a wonder that all are not destroyed.
VI · Stone (30–33)	The other side of the coin: Israel responsible for its own condition.	You did not find anything; He found you. Israel tripped over grace.	Christ offends because His gospel is intolerant of sin; believers will not be ashamed.	Unbelief made the rock of salvation a rock of offence; their blood on their own heads.

ROMANS 9:1–33 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **The doctrine of election begins in tears.** Paul does not open Romans 9 with a decree but with "great sorrow and unceasing grief." Whatever a reader concludes about election, he has not read the chapter rightly if it leaves him colder toward the lost — and toward Israel. THE TEXT
- **Israel's gifts end in the Messiah.** Eight privileges, and the last is the greatest: "from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever." The Gentile church is a guest at a table set for Israel first. THE TEXT
- **"Grace does not run in the blood."** Being born to Abraham — or to a Christian home — never made anyone a child of the promise. Isaac, not Ishmael; Jacob, not Esau. HENRY
- **The question proves the teaching.** No one would ask "Is there injustice with God?" of a choice based on foreseen faith; Paul raises the objection because the choice was made "not because of works but because of Him who calls." SPROUL

- **Mercy that is owed is not mercy.** "If God is obliged to show mercy, then it is not mercy – it is obligation." Nobody in this chapter receives injustice; some receive more than justice. GUZIK
- **The verbs change between the two vessels.** The vessels of wrath are "prepared for destruction," with no agent named; the vessels of mercy are those "which He prepared beforehand for glory." "Sinners fit themselves for hell, but it is God that prepares saints for heaven." THE GREEK
- **Two truths, friends — not rivals.** "These two doctrines are friends with one another." Spurgeon preached "salvation all of grace, and damnation all of sin," and refused to trim either to fit the other. SPURGEON
- **The seed of v. 7 is the seed of v. 29.** *Sperma* — "descendants" through Isaac and the "posterity" the Lord of Sabaoth left — is one word. The line of promise and the remnant are the same thread. THE GREEK
- **Israel tripped over grace.** The Gentiles were found without looking; Israel pursued a righteousness by works and struck its foot on the Stone God laid in Zion. Paul holds Israel responsible — "the other side of the coin." GUZIK
- **The chapter ends with a guarantee.** "He who believes in Him will not be disappointed." Paul starts in grief and ends in a promise open to anyone — and in 10:11 he says "whoever." THE TEXT

† Questions for the Table

1 **Paul would have given up his own place in Christ for his people. Who is the one person — family, cellmate, old friend — whose lostness grieves you most? When did you last pray for him by name?**

Spurgeon: "You must love before you can plead." Grief that never becomes prayer is only sadness.

ROMANS 9:1–3; 10:1

2 **Look at Israel's eight privileges. What spiritual privileges were you born into or given — a praying mother, a church, a Bible in your language — and have you treated any of them as if they saved you?**

Henry: "Grace does not run in the blood." Privilege is a door, not a destination.

ROMANS 9:4–8

3 **Spurgeon said his difficulty was not why God hated Esau, but how God could love Jacob. Which of those two questions feels harder to you, and what does your answer reveal about how you see yourself?**

Every man at the table is a Jacob — loved without anything in him to earn it.

ROMANS 9:10–13; MALACHI 1:2–3

4 **"It does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs." Where are you still running to earn what God gives by mercy — in recovery, in ministry, in your marriage?**

Mercy cannot be owed; it can only be received.

ROMANS 9:15–16; EPHESIANS 2:8–9

5 **The four teachers disagree about how God chooses and how He hardens. How can brothers who read Romans 9 differently still pray together, evangelize together and love Israel together?**

All four agree on grief for the lost, mercy as gift, human responsibility, and Christ as the only Stone.

ROMANS 9:14–24; 14:1

6 **Israel stumbled because she pursued righteousness "as though it were by works." What does stumbling over the Stone look like in a man's life today — and what does building on it look like?**

The same Stone is a trip-hazard to the proud and a foundation to the believer.

ROMANS 9:30–33; 1 PETER 2:6–8

Romans 9 begins with a man in tears for Israel and ends with a Stone laid in Zion. Between them Paul teaches that mercy belongs to God alone to give — and that no one who believes in Him will ever be put to shame. Pray for Israel; trust the mercy; build on the Stone.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry died in 1714 having reached Acts; the Romans volume of his *Commentary* was completed by his successors (John Evans) from his notes and method, and is cited under his name as it is published. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

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