ROMANS 9

Great Sorrow and Sovereign Mercy

Paul's grief for Israel, the line of promise, the Potter's right, and the Stone of stumbling

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

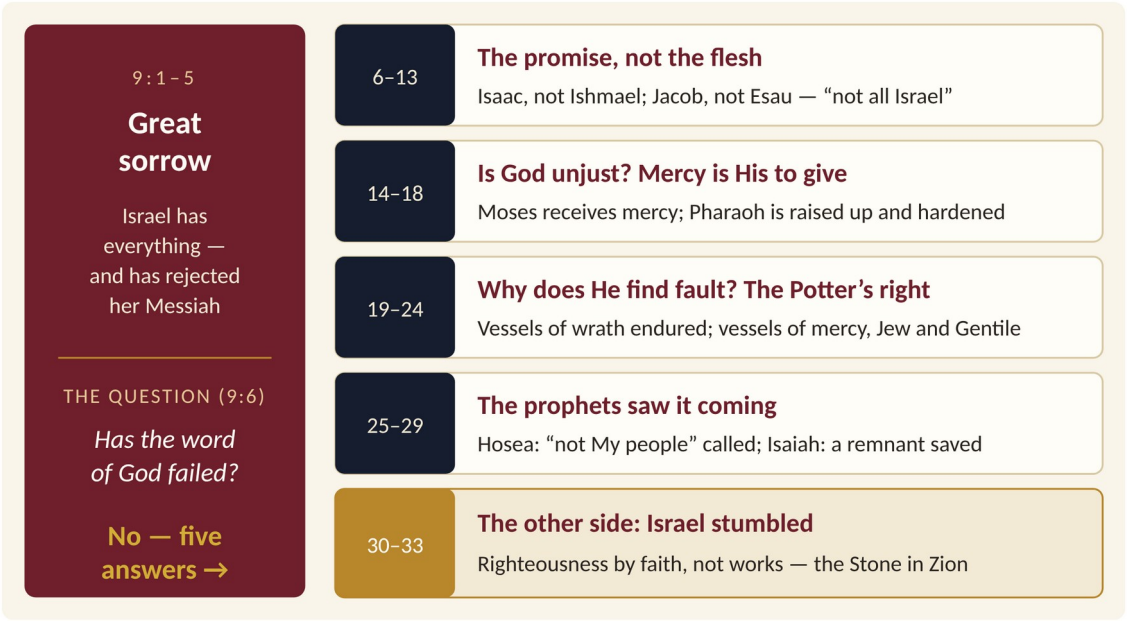
A SMITH FOR CHRIST STUDY · FOUR VOICES: GUZIK · SPROUL · SPURGEON · HENRY

Where Paul has brought us

1. 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).

2. Chapters 9–11 are Paul’s answer, and chapter 9 is its first and hardest part.

3. Almost every line rests on the Old Testament.



Great Sorrow for My Kinsmen

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

ROMANS 9:4

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,

DAVID GUZIK

Paul feels Israel as separated from God's love; Moses' heart; Christ called God.

R.C. SPROUL

Strongest language Paul ever uses; walks the privileges; the church owes Israel.

C.H. SPURGEON

A continual sorrow, no fitful emotion; you must love before you can plead.

MATTHEW HENRY

Adoption external and typical; grace does not run in the blood; Christ God blessed forever.

ἀνάθεμα … ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ

ANATHEMA · "ACCURSED"

Anathema is the thing devoted to God for destruction — the Septuagint's word for the ḥērem, the ban placed on Jericho.

Israel's eight privileges (9:4–5)



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

Not All Israel Is Israel

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

ROMANS 9:11

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,

DAVID GUZIK

Promise, not flesh; hate means rejected for the covenant inheritance; choices not capricious.

R.C. SPROUL

Individual, unconditional election; rejects national, temporal and foreseen-faith readings.

C.H. SPURGEON

Jacob loved by sovereign grace; Esau sold his own birthright; the two doctrines are friends.

MATTHEW HENRY

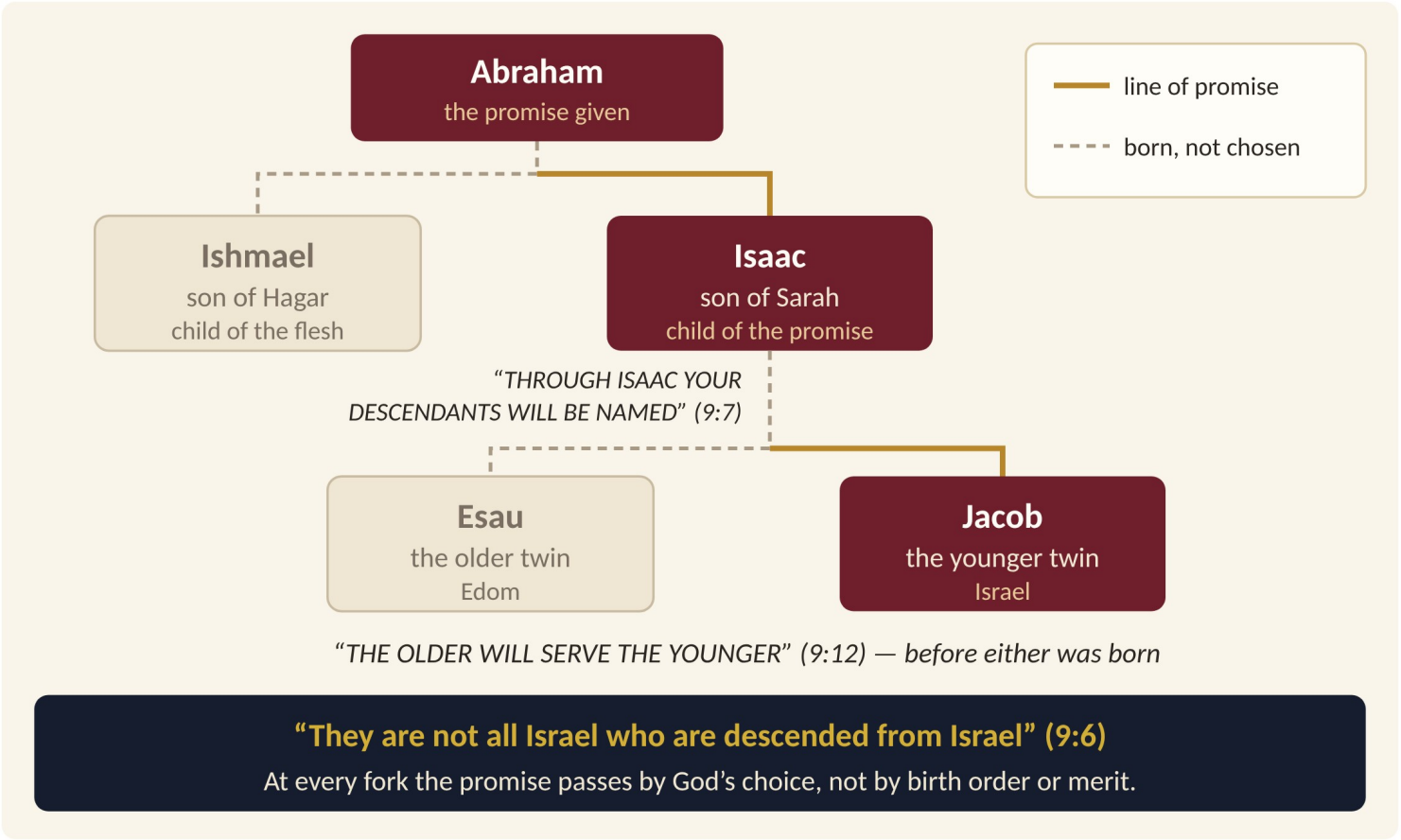
Primarily peoples considered complexly — Israel and Edom — typical of another election.

ἡ κατ' ἐκλογὴν πρόθεσις

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

Prothesis is a purpose "set before," the word of 8:28 — "called according to His purpose."

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.

Is There Injustice with God?

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

ROMANS 9:14

What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!

DAVID GUZIK

Mercy obliged is no mercy; Pharaoh hardened his own heart and God allowed it.

R.C. SPROUL

Mercy is outside justice; the elect get grace, the non-elect justice; God hardened a hard heart.

C.H. SPURGEON

Salvation hinges on God's will; grace is never received against a man's will.

MATTHEW HENRY

God as owner and benefactor; effectual grace to some; hardening withdraws softening grace.

ἐλεήσω … οἰκτιρήσω

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

God's words to Moses in Exodus 33:19, spoken just after the golden calf, when Israel deserved nothing.

The Potter and the Clay

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

ROMANS 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?

DAVID GUZIK

The creature cannot cross-examine the Creator; vessels of wrath do an adequate job on their own.

R.C. SPROUL

Humanity a mass of perdition; election is grace; what if He showed wrath to me?

C.H. SPURGEON

Scripture never says God fitted men for destruction; they fitted themselves.

MATTHEW HENRY

Sinners fit themselves for hell; God prepares saints for heaven.

κεραμεύς … πηλός … φύραμα

KERAMEUS … PĒLOS … PHYRAMA · "POTTER … CLAY … LUMP"

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…

Not My People, and the Remnant

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

ROMANS 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."

DAVID GUZIK

Not My People was never final; at least a remnant will survive.

R.C. SPROUL

Gentiles called as no people; only a remnant of Abraham's multitude saved.

C.H. SPURGEON

Give up none as hopeless; sovereign grace is the hope of the fallen.

MATTHEW HENRY

Former badness no bar to grace; a wonder that all are not destroyed.

οὐ λαός μου … υἱοὶ θεοῦ ζῶντος
OU LAOS MOU … HUIOI THEOU ZŌNTOS · "NOT MY PEOPLE … SONS OF THE LIVING GOD"

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).

The Stone of Stumbling

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

ROMANS 9:32

Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone,

DAVID GUZIK

The other side of the coin: Israel responsible for its own condition.

R.C. SPROUL

You did not find anything; He found you. Israel tripped over grace.

C.H. SPURGEON

Christ offends because His gospel is intolerant of sin; believers will not be ashamed.

MATTHEW HENRY

Unbelief made the rock of salvation a rock of offence; their blood on their own heads.

προσέκοψαν τῷ λίθῳ τοῦ προσκόμματος

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

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…

DIAGRAM

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.

What to carry from this chapter

1

The doctrine of election begins in tears.

Paul does not open Romans 9 with a decree but with “great sorrow and unceasing grief.”

2

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.”

3

“Grace does not run in the blood.”

Being born to Abraham — or to a Christian home — never made anyone a child of the promise.

4

The question proves the teaching.

No one would ask “Is there injustice with God?”

More to carry

5

Mercy that is owed is not mercy.

“If God is obliged to show mercy, then it is not mercy – it is obligation.”

6

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.”

7

Two truths, friends — not rivals.

“These two doctrines are friends with one another.”

8

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.

Talk it through

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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

CLOSING

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

Full Deep Dive, O·I·A study, reflection journal and film: see the Romans study page.