SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Romans 9

Great Sorrow and Sovereign Mercy — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-09 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

God's word to Israel has not failed: the promise always ran through God's free choice and mercy, never through birth or effort. Paul teaches it with tears for his people, and ends with a Stone that trips the proud and holds up everyone who believes.

00 The Text

ROMANS 9 (NASB95), MARKED

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

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.

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."

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.

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.

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."

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."

Marked in the text

- **v2** "great sorrow and unceasing grief" — Time / place / contrast
- **v3** "accursed, separated from Christ" — Sin / warning
- **v4** "the adoption as sons" — Promise / blessing
- **v4** "the adoption" — Promise / blessing
- **v4** "the promises" — Promise / blessing
- **v5** "God blessed forever" — God — His character & actions
- **v6** "the word of God has failed" — Time / place / contrast
- **v8** "the children of the promise" — Promise / blessing
- **v11** "God's purpose according to His choice would stand" — God — His character & actions
- **v11** "not because of works but because of Him who calls" — God — His character & actions
- **v13** "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED" — Time / place / contrast
- **v14** "There is no injustice with God" — God — His character & actions
- **v16** "on God who has mercy" — God — His character & actions
- **v17** "TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU" — God — His character & actions
- **v18** "He hardens whom He desires" — Sin / warning
- **v20** "who are you, O man, who answers back to God" — Sin / warning
- **v21** "the potter have a right over the clay" — God — His character & actions
- **v22** "vessels of wrath prepared for destruction" — Sin / warning
- **v23** "vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory" — Promise / blessing
- **v24** "not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles" — Time / place / contrast
- **v26** "SONS OF THE LIVING GOD" — Promise / blessing
- **v27** "IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED" — Promise / blessing
- **v30** "the righteousness which is by faith" — Promise / blessing
- **v32** "as though it were by works" — Sin / warning
- **v32** "They stumbled over the stumbling stone" — Sin / warning

- **v33** “HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED” — Promise / blessing

- **v15** “mercy” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

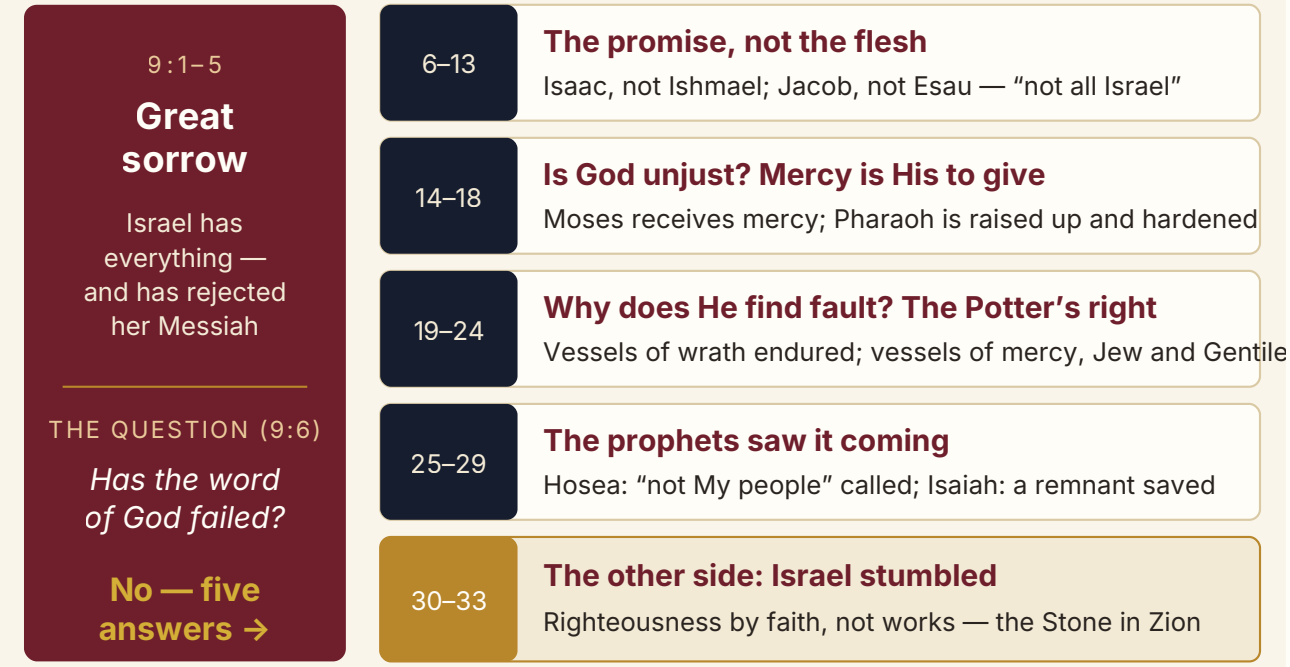
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ROMANS 9:6

"But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;"

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.

Setting. Romans 8 ended with "no separation" (8:35–39). Romans 9 opens with Paul's solemn declaration — "I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying" — confessing "great sorrow and unceasing grief" for his own people, Israel (vv1–3). Chapters 9–11 belong together: Israel's past (election), present (unbelief) and future ("all Israel will be saved," 11:26).

Structure:

- vv1–5 — **Paul's grief and Israel's gifts.** He could wish himself accursed for his kinsmen. To them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the Law, the temple service, the promises, the fathers — and the Christ, "who is over all, God blessed forever."
- vv6–13 — **The word has not failed.** "They are not all Israel who are descended from Israel." Isaac, not Ishmael (vv7–9); Jacob, not Esau, chosen before birth, "not because of works but because of Him who calls" (vv10–13).

- vv14–18 — **Is God unjust? May it never be!** "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY" (Moses). Pharaoh raised up to show God's power. "He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires."
- vv19–24 — **Why does He still find fault?** "Who are you, O man?" The potter and the clay; vessels of wrath endured with patience; vessels of mercy prepared for glory — "even us," Jews and Gentiles.
- vv25–29 — **The prophets foretold it.** Hosea: "not My people" become "sons of the living God." Isaiah: only a remnant saved; without a posterity Israel would be Sodom.
- vv30–33 — **What shall we say then?** Gentiles attained righteousness by faith; Israel pursued it by works and stumbled over the stone in Zion. "HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."

Repeated words, with counts (NASB95, counted in the text):

- **mercy** ×5 — vv15 (twice), 16, 18, 23; plus **compassion** ×2 (v15). Seven times in nine verses.
- **Israel** ×5 — vv6 (twice), 27 (twice), 31; plus **Israelites** (v4).
- **righteousness** ×4 — vv30 (three times), 31.
- **children** ×4 — vv7, 8 (three times); **sons** ×3 — vv4, 26, 27.
- **call / called / calls** ×4 — vv11, 24, 25, 26.
- **descendants** ×3 — vv7 (twice), 8; and **posterity** (v29) — the same Greek word, *sperma*.
- **flesh** ×3 — vv3, 5, 8.
- **vessel(s)** ×3 — vv21, 22, 23.
- **pursue / pursuing** ×3 — vv30, 31, 32.
- **works** ×2 (vv11, 32) against **faith** ×2 (vv30, 32).
- **"What shall we say then?"** ×2 — vv14, 30: the two turning points.
- **God** ×9 — every section is about what He does.

Contrasts: flesh ⟷ promise (v8); Isaac ⟷ Ishmael; Jacob ⟷ Esau; older ⟷ younger (v12); works ⟷ Him who calls (v11); mercy ⟷ hardening (v18); the potter ⟷ the clay (v21); honorable use ⟷ common use (v21); vessels of wrath ⟷ vessels of mercy (vv22–23); "not My people" ⟷ "My people" (v25); sand of the sea ⟷ the remnant (v27); Gentiles who did not pursue ⟷ Israel pursuing (vv30–31); faith ⟷ works (v32); stumbling stone ⟷ the one who believes (v33).

Shape of the chapter: tears (1–5), then one question — has God's word failed? — answered five ways: from the patriarchs (6–13), from Moses and Pharaoh (14–18), from the potter (19–24), from the prophets (25–29), and from Israel's own choice (30–33). Paul quotes the Old Testament about a dozen times in 33 verses.

Chapter theme (my words): God keeps His promise His way — by mercy He chooses, not by birth or effort we bring. Paul says it weeping for Israel, and ends with the Stone everyone must either trip over or stand on.

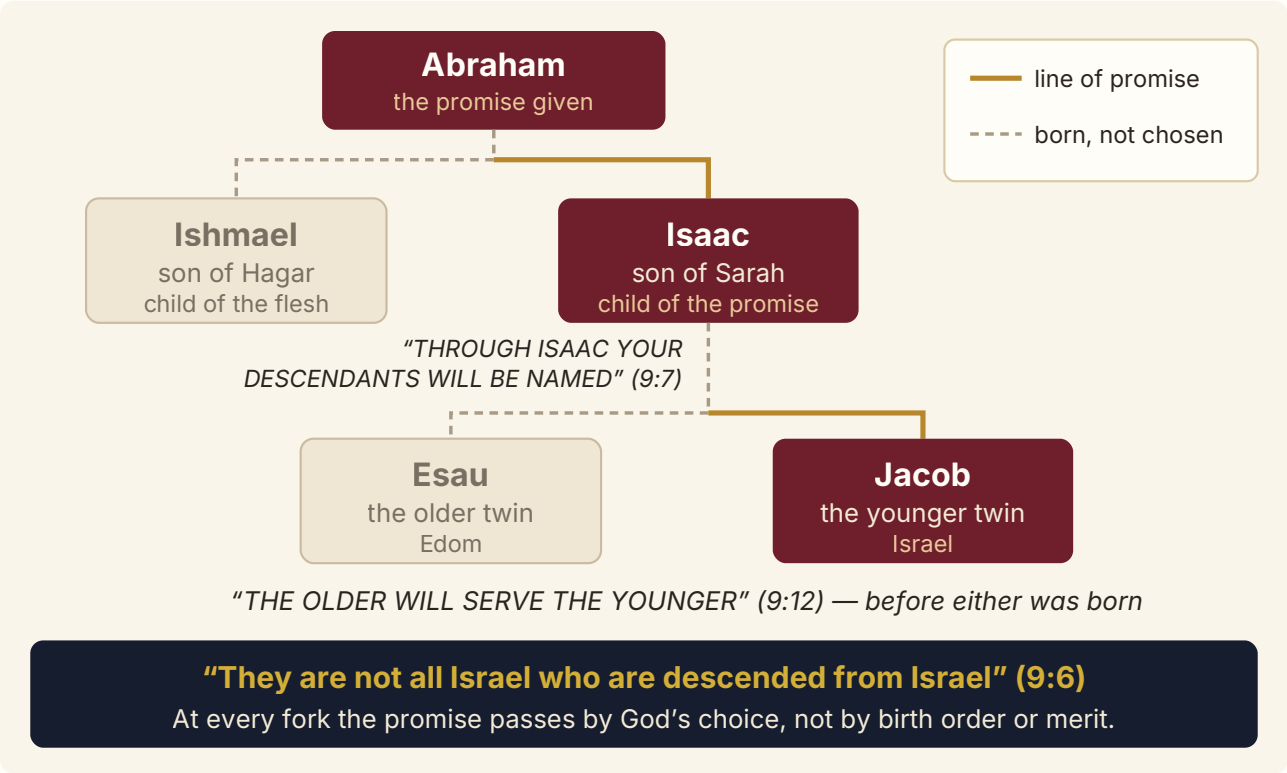
02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · 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,"

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.

Why the grief? Because Israel had every privilege and still rejected her Messiah. Guzik: Paul is looking at a people who seem to be separated from God's love — the very thing 8:39 says cannot happen to those in Christ — and his heart echoes Moses at Sinai (Exodus 32:32). Sproul: *anathema* is the strongest language Paul ever uses. Henry: "a very high pang of zeal and affection for his countrymen." Spurgeon: "It always grieved him to think that his kinsmen should reject Christ." This is where I start with Israel too — love before doctrine.

Christ is God (v5). Guzik, Sproul and Henry all read the NASB95 punctuation: Christ "who is over all, God blessed forever." Henry: "he is not only over all, as Mediator, but he is God blessed for ever." Guzik fairly notes that some scholars punctuate it as a separate blessing of God.

"Not all Israel" (v6). God's word did not fail, because the promise was never carried by physical descent alone. Henry: "Grace does not run in the blood." Sproul applies it to the visible church — membership is no guarantee.

Jacob and Esau — what kind of election? This is where the teachers part, and I want to hear each fairly:

- **Sproul:** individual, unconditional election to salvation. He rejects the national, temporal and foreseen-faith readings because Paul names two persons, the context (ch. 8) is salvation, and the purpose clause says the choice was "not because of works." "The ground of our election is never found in us."
- **Henry:** the twins stand first for *peoples* — Israel and Edom — "people considered complexly," and the choice is "typical," a shadow of "some other election," which he says is "very applicable to" individuals. In vv14–18 he speaks plainly of "effectual grace, which is given to some particular persons."
- **Guzik:** God hated Esau "in regard to inheriting the covenant, not in regard to blessing in this life or the next"; yet "one was the heir of God's covenant of salvation, and one was not." God's choices are "not capricious."
- **Spurgeon:** Jacob was loved by "sovereign grace"; Esau was hated because he "sold it himself." "Salvation all of grace, and damnation all of sin." He will not reconcile them: "These two doctrines are friends with one another." All four agree "hated" is not malice — Sproul calls it "such a lower degree of love."

Is God unjust? (vv14–18). Mercy can't be owed. Guzik: "If God is obliged to show mercy, then it is not mercy – it is obligation." Sproul: "If grace is owed, it is not grace"; the elect get grace, the non-elect justice, no one injustice. On Pharaoh: Guzik stresses Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exodus 7:13) and God allowed it; Sproul says "God hardened a man whose heart was already hard" by giving him over; Henry, God "withdraw[s] softening grace, leave[s] him to himself." Three ways of describing a real, just hardening of a man already hard.

The potter (vv19–24). The creature cannot put the Creator on trial (Isaiah 29:16; Jeremiah 18:6). Watch the verbs: vessels of wrath "prepared for destruction" (no agent named); vessels of mercy "which He prepared beforehand." Henry: "Sinners fit themselves for hell, but it is God that prepares saints for heaven." Spurgeon: "they fitted themselves." Guzik: "Those vessels do an adequate job on their own." Sproul calls election a doctrine of grace — humanity a "mass of perdition" from which God saves some.

The prophets (vv25–29). Hosea's "not My people" is reversed for the Gentiles; Isaiah promises a remnant. Bruce, in Guzik: "But if only a remnant will survive, at least a remnant will survive." The remnant is not the end of Israel's story — 11:5 and 11:26 carry it on.

The other side of the coin (vv30–33). Guzik: Paul now shows "the side of human responsibility, instead of the side of God's sovereign choice" — Israel stumbled because she pursued righteousness by works. Sproul: "Israel tripped over grace." Spurgeon: "Christ offends men because His gospel is intolerant of sin." Romans 9 holds both sides in one chapter, and so must I.

Word study (Greek):

- **accursed — *anathema* (G331):** devoted to destruction; Paul's wish to be cut off for Israel.
- **adoption as sons — *huiothesia* (G5206):** Israel was God's son first (Exodus 4:22).
- **purpose — *prothesis* (G4286); choice — *eklogē* (G1589):** God's purpose according to election, so that it would stand.
- **hated — *miseō* (G3404):** a Hebrew-style contrast of choice (Genesis 29:31; Luke 14:26), not malice.
- **have mercy — *eleeō* (G1653); compassion — *oiktirō* (G3627):** the chapter's key word.
- **hardens — *sklērynō* (G4645):** the Exodus word; Pharaoh hardened himself and God hardened him.

- **prepared — *katartizō* (G2675) vs. prepared beforehand — *proetoimazō* (G4282):** no agent for wrath; God the agent for glory.
- **remnant — *hypoleimma* (G5275); posterity — *sperma* (G4690):** the seed of v7 is the seed of v29.
- **stumbling — *proskomma* (G4348); offense — *skandalon* (G4625); disappointed — *kataischynō* (G2617).**

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. The doctrine of election begins in tears — whatever I conclude, it must not make me colder toward the lost or toward Israel.
2. Israel's eight gifts end in the Messiah, "God blessed forever."
3. "Grace does not run in the blood" (Henry).
4. The objection "Is there injustice?" shows the choice was not based on works (Sproul).
5. Mercy that is owed is not mercy (Guzik).
6. The verbs change between vessels of wrath and vessels of mercy.
7. Sovereignty and responsibility are "friends" (Spurgeon).
8. The seed of v7 is the seed of v29 — the line of promise and the remnant are one thread.
9. Israel tripped over grace — and Paul holds her responsible.
10. The chapter ends with a guarantee for whoever believes.

Cross-references: Exodus 4:22; 32:32; 33:19; 9:16 · Genesis 21:12; 25:23 · Malachi 1:2–3 · Isaiah 1:9; 8:14; 10:22–23; 28:16; 29:16; 45:9 · Jeremiah 18:6 · Hosea 1:10; 2:23 · Ezekiel 33:11 · Matthew 23:37 · John 6:37 · Ephesians 1:4–5 · 1 Peter 2:6–10 · Romans 8:28–39; 10:1; 11:1–5, 26

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ROMANS 9:33

"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.""

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

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"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."

Example to follow — Paul's tears for Israel. Before Paul teaches one word about election, he weeps for his people. I love Israel, and this chapter tells me how to love her: not with a chart, but with "great sorrow and unceasing grief" that turns into prayer (10:1). I owe Israel the covenants, the Scriptures and my Savior. This week I will pray by name for the Jewish people I know, and for the peace of Jerusalem.

Sin to confess — trusting in my pedigree or my running. "It does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs." I confess the times I've thought I was in because of my background, my ministry, my years sober or my good week. Grace does not run in the blood, and it doesn't run on my effort either. The men I sit with — some fresh out, some decades in recovery — need to hear it from me plainly: nobody earns mercy, and nobody is too far gone to receive it.

Warning to heed — answering back to God. "Who are you, O man, who answers back to God?" When I don't understand what God is doing — in my life, in a brother's relapse, in Israel's story — I can bring Him my questions, but not my verdict. The clay doesn't cross-examine the Potter.

Promise to trust — He who believes will not be disappointed. The same Stone that trips the proud holds up the one who believes (v33; 10:11). I don't have to solve every question in this chapter to stand on that promise tonight. Spurgeon: "None may give up themselves in despair."

Command to obey — keep both truths and keep preaching. Paul holds God's sovereign choice and Israel's responsibility in one chapter, and so will I. I'll tell every man: God's mercy is free, and the door is open — "whosoever will." And I'll love brothers who read Romans 9 differently than I do.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Paul would have given up his own place in Christ for his people. Who is the one person whose lostness grieves you most? When did you last pray for him by name? (9:1–3; 10:1) *"You must love before you can plead."*
2. What spiritual privileges were you born into or given — and have you treated any of them as if they saved you? (9:4–8) *Grace does not run in the blood.*
3. Spurgeon's difficulty was not why God hated Esau, but how God could love Jacob. Which question feels harder to you, and why? (9:10–13; Mal 1:2–3) *Every man at the table is a Jacob.*
4. Where are you still running to earn what God gives by mercy? (9:15–16; Eph 2:8–9) *Mercy cannot be owed; it can only be received.*
5. How can brothers who read Romans 9 differently still pray, evangelize and love Israel together? (9:14–24; 14:1) *All four teachers agree on grief, mercy, responsibility and the Stone.*
6. What does stumbling over the Stone look like in a man's life today — and what does building on it look like? (9:30–33; 1 Pet 2:6–8) *A trip-hazard to the proud, a foundation to the believer.*

Worship. God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — You keep Your word. Your mercy is Yours to give, and You gave it to me, a Gentile who was "not My people." From Israel, according to the flesh, came the Christ, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

Prayer. Father, give me Paul's heart for Israel and for every lost man I know. Break my pride where I've thought I earned Your mercy. When I don't understand Your ways, keep me from answering back, and keep me on the Stone You laid in Zion. Let me tell everyone that whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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