

## GOD'S WORD IS LIFE

### The Book of Romans: Session Eight – Study Outline for Romans 9:1-33

**Introduction: The Sovereignty and Mercy of God** In Romans 9, Paul shifts from the triumph of life in the Spirit to the mystery of God's sovereignty in election. Addressing Israel's unbelief, he emphasizes that God's Word and promises have not failed, but rather, God's purposes unfold through His divine will and mercy. Romans 9 challenges the notion of human control over salvation, affirming that it is God who chooses and calls according to His grace, revealing the depths of the theology of the cross—where God's wisdom and power are hidden in what seems weak and foolish to the world.

**Purpose:** Paul's aim is to demonstrate that God's promise is not limited to ethnic Israel but extends through faith to all whom God calls. He underscores that God's mercy and election are not based on human effort or will but on God's sovereign choice, reflecting the ultimate reality of the theology of the cross.

#### Themes:

- God's sovereign election
- The purpose of God's promise
- Mercy over works
- The inclusion of Gentiles in God's plan
- The stumbling stone of Christ

**Objective:** To grasp the depth of God's sovereignty in salvation, understanding that His ways are beyond human comprehension and that His mercy is displayed most clearly through Christ crucified, the true fulfillment of His promises.

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#### I. God's Sovereign Choice (Romans 9:1-13)

God's election is rooted in His sovereign will, not human decision or effort.

- **Verses 1-5:** Paul expresses deep sorrow for Israel's unbelief. Despite their privileged status as God's chosen people, possessing the law, covenants, and promises, they have stumbled over Christ.
- **Verses 6-9:** Paul emphasizes that not all who are descended from Israel are part of true Israel. The promise was always based on God's word and calling, as shown in Isaac's selection over Ishmael.

- **Verses 10-13:** Using Jacob and Esau as examples, Paul illustrates that God's choice is not based on human actions but solely on His mercy and purpose. This reflects the theology of the cross, where God's ways defy human expectations.

## II. God's Mercy and Hardening (Romans 9:14-18)

God's mercy and hardening demonstrate His absolute sovereignty.

- **Verses 14-16:** Paul asks, "Is God unjust?" and answers with a resounding 'no'. God's mercy is not earned; He shows compassion according to His will. This echoes the theology of the cross, where grace is given freely, not as a reward for human achievement.
- **Verses 17-18:** Pharaoh serves as an example of God's sovereign will to show His power. God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart illustrates that even resistance to God serves His redemptive purposes, pointing to the hidden nature of God's actions in history.

## III. The Potter and the Clay (Romans 9:19-29)

God, as the potter, shapes humanity according to His purposes, beyond our understanding.

- **Verses 19-21:** Paul confronts the question of human accountability by affirming God's right as the Creator to do as He pleases with His creation, like a potter with clay.
- **Verses 22-24:** God's patience with "vessels of wrath" destined for destruction serves to make known the riches of His glory to "vessels of mercy." This highlights how God's actions are always directed toward revealing His grace and mercy, even through suffering and judgment.
- **Verses 25-29:** Paul turns to Hosea and Isaiah to show that God's plan includes calling not only Jews but also Gentiles. This demonstrates that God's promise was never limited to one nation but always intended to include all who come to faith, reflecting the expansive reach of God's grace.

## IV. The Stumbling Stone of Christ (Romans 9:30-33)

Christ, the fulfillment of God's promise, becomes a stumbling stone to those who seek righteousness through the law.

- **Verses 30-31:** Paul contrasts the Gentiles, who attained righteousness by faith, with Israel, who pursued the law but failed to reach it. This demonstrates that righteousness before God is a gift received through faith, not achieved through works.
- **Verses 32-33:** Israel's failure to attain righteousness was because they sought it by works, not faith, and stumbled over Christ. Quoting Isaiah, Paul presents Christ as the "stone of stumbling," emphasizing that God's ultimate revelation of mercy and salvation comes through the cross, where human expectations are overturned.