

## **Romans 9 – God’s People, God’s Free Choice**

### **Read Verses 1-5**

After outlining the glory and hope of the gospel through chapters 1-8, Paul now seems to change topic and tone quite abruptly at the start of chapter 9. **What is Paul so upset about?**

In what sense is it a personal issue, and in what sense is it a theological problem (note also v6)?

### **Read verses 6-13**

Paul is tackling the issue created by the majority of the Jewish people rejecting the gospel of Jesus. People are asking: “How can God have kept his promises to save his people when so many of the Jews failed to accept this salvation?”

What is Paul’s basic answer to the objection (v6-7)?

How does he use the examples of Abraham’s and Isaac’s children to make this point? (note: ‘loved’ and ‘hated’ in v13 are an expression for ‘chosen’ or ‘not chosen / rejected’).

Paul has already argued in Chapter 4 that it’s sharing the faith of Abraham that makes you a true child of Abraham, not whether you’re a physical descendant of Abraham or whether you keep the law. **What related but different point does he make here?**

Paul contrasts ‘by works’ with ‘by him who calls’. **How do verses 10-12 help us understand the link between the doctrine of ‘election’ and the fact that God’s salvation is ‘by grace, and not by works’?**

### **Read verses 14-18**

Paul anticipates that we might feel it’s unfair for God to choose some people to be saved and not others.

What is his basic answer to the question?

Do you find that satisfying? Why / why not?

When we think it’s unfair for God to show mercy to some and not to others, what does that say about our understanding of ‘mercy’?

In the sermon, Matt argued that God's mercy and hardening are not equal and opposite actions. When God shows mercy he changes their situation and their destination, giving them something they don't deserve and they wouldn't receive otherwise. **How is God's hardening different?**

What does Paul suggest God's purpose is in hardening some hearts? (v17, 22-23)

### **Read verses 19-21**

Paul has emphasised that God has the right to show mercy to whomever he wants, and even to harden others in their sin for his own purposes (even if this is not fundamentally changing their relationship to him). He knows we will struggle with what he's saying, and imagines one of us saying "Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?" (v19)

What is Paul's answer?

Do you think this is a reasonable answer? Why / why not?

### **Read verses 22-29**

In these verses Paul moves beyond the example of Pharaoh and anticipates his argument in chapter 11. He's hinting that the hardening of some of the Jews in their rejection of God's word is ultimately to magnify the riches of God's glory and mercy to those he has called.

And his final point is to emphasis that God has called people from both the Jews and the Gentiles to belong to him and receive mercy.

How does Paul use the quotes from the prophets Hosea and Isaiah to:

- a) show that God always intended to call gentiles as his own people?
  
- b) show that only a portion of the Jewish people would belong to God's saved people?

### **Reflection**

This passage has emphasised that God is the one who ultimately chooses who his people are. **What do you find difficult about this teaching? Why?**

What do you find helpful and encouraging about it? Why?