Romans 9:1-29

Intro:

--It would seem easy to skip right over this section and go to chapter 12. The first sentence of **12:1** would make perfect sense after **8:39**, but Paul doesn't do that. He knows that both Jews and Gentiles are faced with questions and challenges about God and His promises to the nation of Israel in the OT.

--These chapters **(9-11)** are about God's righteousness in His dealings with elect Israel. We must remember that Paul constantly had to defend the fact that his gospel was no new religion or cult doctrine but the very fulfillment of the OT patriarchs, promises, and covenants. He also had to address the fact that Israel's current rejection of their Messiah was not God's ultimate rejection of them as a people.

--Paul was used of God to reveal that the Gentiles were being brought into the blessings of God promised in the OT **(Acts 15:13-17)** and that this was part of the plan still yet to be completed by Jesus **(1:5-6): *Through Him we have received the grace of apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, among whom you also are called of Jesus Christ.***

--Paul needed to explain the ***mystery*** of his gospel that he talks about in **16:25-27**, which was an unexpected time period where God is offering salvation to Jew and Gentile in Christ.

--This part of the plan was confusing for Jews. They expected a kingdom Vs. a church. They expected to be first among the nations Vs. brought into a family with no walls of separation. They expected to have their Messiah rule the world Vs. be despised strangers and pilgrims. They expected peace and prosperity Vs. persecution and no reputation.

--The practical question is: *Has the word of God taken no effect, or failed?*

--The theological question is: *Does the church supersede, or fulfill the nation of Israel in God's eternal plan or election? Or will God literally fulfill all His promises to national Israel?*

--If God's promises to Israel have failed, why couldn't His promises to us in the gospel dispensation also fail?

--There are real, born-again brothers and sisters in Christ who believe that the church has taken Israel's place in God's plan and that His original promises to the Jews as a people no longer stand because the people of Israel have been rejected by Him. *I love those saints, but seriously disagree with their position (I would also recommend Dr. Michael Vlach's book *Has The Church Replaced Israel* for anyone who would like to study more).*

--Their theological problems—in short—are threefold:

1) They assume that the OT and NT are not on equal footing authoritatively. Because of how the NT *sometimes—(in rare occasions)*—quotes the OT, they believe they have interpretive license to give the NT higher authority.

--In reality, both Testaments are equally inspired by the same Holy Spirit, and their specifically skewed hermeneutics ignore the greater amount of NT/OT usage. The NT does not cancel any OT promises. The NT complements them.

2) Anyone who believes the church has replaced Israel has to prove that the clear OT promises and prophecies of Israel's restoration do not mean what they meant *when they were first written*. *Even Jesus never denied this! **Acts 1:6: *Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?****
--All OT prophecy and NT prophecy will be fulfilled literally and not spiritually alone. The first coming of the Messiah was fulfilled literally. His second coming and kingdom promises will also be fulfilled just as literally.

3) Theology can be both/and Vs. either/or, like the tabernacle, which was both a real structure and also filled with types and symbols. In their rush to emphasize the equality in the body of Christ between Jew and Gentile, they forget the fact that equality of salvation does not mean equality of function or purposeful distinctions. *Men + Women/Spiritual gifts/Eternal rewards/Israel & Church.*
--The Word of God makes it clear that God still has a purpose and plan for the nation of Israel and that all of His promises to them will be literally fulfilled.

Verses 1-5:
--**(1-3)** ***I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh,***
--Paul, who had just written such heavenly things about our salvation, is now heavily grieved when he thinks about his people who are without that salvation! This is very logical and spiritual in its progress.
--He, of all people, knew Jewish religious life without the Spirit of God. He is, in fact, so brokenhearted that if it were possible, he would surrender himself for their salvation (as Moses in **Exodus 32:32-33**). *What a Christlike heart of love!*
--By calling the Israelites ***brethren,*** Paul is placing national Israel as an elect community. That does not mean that all of Israel will be saved at all times, as he will soon explain, but it does mean that Israelites as a people group are still inside of God's purposes as an elect community, not outside of them.
--**(4-5)** ***who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.***
--Paul then lists their blessings as Israelites:

-***the Adoption:*** Israel was called God's son or sons (See: **Ex. 4:22-23; Deut. 7:6; Isa. 66:22; Amos 3:2; Hosea 1:10. 11:1**).
-***the Glory:*** God's presence in the pillar, the tabernacle, the temple, etc.
-***the Covenants:*** With Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, etc.
-***the Giving of the Law:*** Certainly, at Sinai and the ten commandments.
-***the Service of God:*** Their method and worship of God was true and acceptable worship.
-***the Promises:*** So many! Both conditional and unconditional.
-***the Fathers:*** The history of faithful witnesses.
-Finally, the greatest of all: ***from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.***
--Jesus Christ, the Messiah, was and is a Jew! The King of Kings assumed their nationality! The Mighty God of **Isaiah 9:6** is, according to the flesh, an Israelite.
--Now, there is some debate in this verse as to whether Christ is to be connected to the ***eternally blessed God.*** I think these issues are really theological and not in the simple reading of the text. Paul makes it clear that the Messiah is also God.
--He does so to:
1) Exalt the majesty of the Divine Nature.
2) To remind Israel that Jesus may be Israeli, but He doesn't belong to them alone, as He is also the God of all eternity.
--All this might seem a bit technical for us, but I think it is important to see. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to put down his heart for his people because there is instruction here for us. The God of Israel was still loving His people through Paul.
--Paul wanted to stay in Jerusalem when he was first saved, but was driven away as the religious leaders tried to kill him. Paul was constantly charged with false accusations by his own countrymen:
Acts 21:28:** ***This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.*
--He was regularly chased, harassed, and persecuted by the Jews. Still, he first went to the synagogue when he preached the gospel in new cities. Paul's love was independent of the Jews (he had joy in Christ), but not indifferent (he couldn't just ignore them and go on).
--As independent: He gave up all his national privileges, his culture, his home, his worship, his family and friends, his respect, money, and easy life all for God and considered it as nothing, as dung to surrender. His love for God was independent of all these things!
--Yet not indifferent: He put his very life on the line, and the safety of his heart, for those he loved. He didn't need them, but he loved them.
--This is the mature balance of the love of God.

--For some of us, we are not independent enough, God is not yet enough for us. We are not content with God if we must also leave home, careers, respect from men, friends, or family. For others, it is certain sins, thinking God would never call them to Himself apart from desires, etc.
--For others, we are too indifferent. We are good with God, but we are also good with others who are not good with God! We don't need something or someone, but our hearts do not break for those we should love who are still without salvation. We may even work to isolate our hearts so that they are not grieved for the lost around us.
--You see, we are actually fighting the same cultural battle Paul was, whether we know it or not. I have been challenged by Paul's heart. Does my love look like this? Is my love mature enough to be independent of all but not indifferent to any?

Verse 6a:

--***But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect.***

--This is the central issue of the next three chapters. Has the clear Word of God to Israel failed, been broken, or taken no effect? Is God still righteous in His actions toward elect Israel and this new elect church that Paul is talking about?
--It is important to keep this in mind because the other theological issue of this section relates to election. And people use these passages to expound on the topic of election in ways that are totally foreign to the context.
--We must remember that Paul was not writing about election to work out the issues of our modern theological systems. This was not a defense of God's election to people who don't believe in it or to convince them that election is only individual and not corporate.
--All of this is in the context of God's Word to elect Israel. The Jews already believed in election, wholeheartedly in fact! This is a defense of God's righteousness as it relates to His own Word.
--The discussion is built around three questions:
1) **(6)** Has the Word of God taken no effect?
2) **(14)** Is there unrighteousness with God?
3) **(19)** Why does He still find fault?
--So Paul is defending God's Word, God's righteousness, and God's ways.

Verses 6b-13:

--***For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son."***

And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau I have hated."

--Paul's initial answer is that true Israel was always an elect (not natural) seed. God had chosen to select out of Israel a certain people of faith and not blood or works.
--Paul knew the initial reaction to that idea would be shock. So he brings two examples that all Jews would immediately have to agree with.
--First, the promises of God were given to Isaac and not to Ishmael—who was also a blood son of Abraham. If God's promises were purely along the lines of blood or nationality, Ishamel would also deserve the same position and promise as Isaac, as a blood-son of Abraham.
--Second, if any Jew argued that Isaac was a unique case as a miracle son, Paul pointed out Jacob and Esau. Rebecca had two sons and if God's elect way, promise, or word was to blood or flesh, or merited by works, he could have never said verses **12+13**.
--God's election of Israel did not mean that every person born a Jew would get to inherit all the promises of God. ***For they are not all Israel who are of Israel.***
--Both John the Baptist and Jesus taught the same thing! *Jesus' discussion in **John 8***
Matthew 3:9:** ***And do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.*
Luke 13:28-29:** ***There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God.*
--Paul is not trying to decide for modern theologians whether election is national or individual alone. Paul is making the point that God's Word is not broken because God's election of Israel was never strictly national.
--The fact that many Israelites refused to believe didn't mean God's plan was frustrated. Look at what He did with people like Jacob and Esau!
--The fact that God chose Isaac and Jacob as the means to further His promises doesn't mean that He, as a necessary byproduct, rejected Ishmael and Esau eternally. Ishmael was clearly still loved by God **(Gen. 16:10-14; 17:20; 21:13-21)** and the language of him being ***gathered to his people (Gen. 25:17),*** infers he died in faith like Abraham **(Gen. 25:8),** Isaac **(Gen. 35:29),** Jacob **(Gen. 49:33),** Aaron **(Num. 20:24),** and Moses **(Deut. 32:50)**.
--Esau's rejection was as to the line of promise. Esau's eternal rejection was because of his own profane rejection of God's purposes in his life.

Verses 14-18:
--***What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.***

--Does choosing in mercy make God unjust? Unjust toward Israel? Is He unfair in furthering His own plans by choosing Isaac instead of Ishmael or Jacob instead of Esau? Paul's answer is simple. ***Certainly not!***

--Injustice is withholding good deserved or inflicting evil undeserved. God has done neither to Israel, who deserves no mercy. God spoke to Israel through Moses (in a time when Israel had just broken His covenant with them and made a golden calf!) and made it clear He has the right to show mercy and compassion, on His own terms.

--Israel did not earn their heritage through their own will or works. They were not elected or chosen by God because of something in them.

Deuteronomy 7:7-8:** ***The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*

--God must be, and always is, the first cause. This was His plan from before the foundation of the world. Nothing outside of Him is forcing Him to act, or He is no longer God! God is a free agent—*The* free agent—and He is bound to none save those He willingly binds Himself to.

--Paul then shows that God's purpose will ultimately use all men to declare Himself all-powerful, even one as obviously against God's will as Pharaoh, whom God *made to stand* (or ***raised you up***). *From **Ex. 9:15-16***

--How does this all work in time? Does Pharaoh harden his own heart first, and God confirm that? Does God remove His grace from Him because Pharaoh desires sin and rebellion? Paul does not tell us! Why? Because clearly that is not Paul's point!

--Paul's point to these confused Israelites—his countrymen according to the flesh—is that God never guaranteed them the promises simply because they were born Jews. In fact, God was always very clear about the fact that He reserved the right to show mercy and harden whom He will.

--His pleasure will be done whether people submit or fight against Him.

Verses 19-24:

--**(19-21)** ***You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?***

--Well then, why does God still hold people accountable if everything is all according to His will? No one can resist God's will! This is basically humanity saying: *We don't like the way God has chosen to show mercy or harden those against His will!*

--Paul's answer is to show the foolishness of this complaint. God is our Creator, and we are His creation, whether we like it or not. It's time for humanity to come face-to-face with reality. We are not God. We are not running the universe! Time and eternity are God's, and it is about time that we live in accordance with that reality.
--Paul uses an example these Israelites would be very familiar with. The language of the Potter and the clay is used numerous times in the Scriptures: **Job 10:9; Isaiah 29:16; 45:9; 64:8; Jeremiah 18:2-6; 2 Timothy 2:20-21**.
--**(22-24)** ***What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?***
--Paul is establishing the way that God worked in the OT and was currently working in the NT. God was, and is, long-suffering with ***vessels of wrath prepared for destruction*** as part of His purpose to show mercy on both Jews and Gentiles.
--Paul does not explain *how* they are prepared. By their own works? By God's hand? That is not Paul's point. Paul's point is that God is not answerable to the Israelites—or us—for the ways that He has chosen to display election in mercy and longsuffering in wrath. Even so, He will be true to His own character and will get glory from His creation one way or another.
--Or if I can put it another simpler way: *It is not God's responsibility to conform to us. We conform to Him. He is Creator and we are creation.*

Verses 25-29:
--Having brought both Jews and Gentiles into the flow of God's great purposes ***prepared beforehand,*** Paul quotes from Hosea and Isaiah to establish the fact that Israel's history of a constant believing remnant which displayed faith in God's Word—and currently believed the gospel Paul preached—was proof that God's purposes in saving Israel as a nation **(11:26)** will yet happen.
--**(25-26)** ***As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved, who was not beloved. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' there they shall be called sons of the living God."***
--In Hosea, God's people had been unfaithful to Him like Hosea's wife. Yet because of who God was in Himself, they were not cast off.
--Peter would pick up this same principle in reference to the Gentiles in **1 Peter 2:4-10**.
--Jews and Gentiles both stumble at God's way, His choice in showing mercy, yet He is still faithful and will not cast them off completely.

--**(27-29)** ***Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved. For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth."***

And as Isaiah said before: "Unless the LORD of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we would have become like Sodom, and we would have been made like Gomorrah."

--Paul twice quotes from Isaiah, showing that the Word of God anticipated times when only a small number of Israelites would remain, such as after the Assyrian invasion. He says they would have made themselves into another Sodom and Gomorrah had God's mercy not been there for them.

--Isaiah would even name his son Shear-Jashub, which means *Remnant will return*. He was a living prophetic sign **(Isa. 7:3; 8:18)**.

--So too, because of God's election, national Israel is still around today. Existing with a faithful remnant who is Israel within Israel, and God will keep it so until the end of time.

Matthew 24:22:** ***And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.*

--Even when Israel had been so unfaithful as to no longer be His people, and even when they were so small in number that the remnant was nearly invisible, God was the continuing principle for Israel's hopes and existence.

--Whenever Israel's will and works utterly failed, God could still righteously fall back into Himself, where their election was safe in His eternal purposes, and call them His people again.