

# ROMANS 9

Verse by verse commentary.  
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## **PREFACE**

The Apostle Paul understood the Scripture well (Genesis to Malachi), and was writing to people who understood the law of God (Rom. 7:1). However, the entire Bible is God's Word which points us to Yeshua for He came in the volume of the book (Heb. 10:7). Romans 1-2 sets up the book of Romans. Romans 3-8 references God's Plan in Yeshua. Romans 9-10 highlights the inappropriate response to Yeshua. Romans 10-15 talks about our response to Yeshua.

## **COMMENTARY**

**Romans 9:1-8** *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, 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. But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. 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.*

Paul is saddened for his kinsmen (the Israelites). For God revealed Himself through the law, adoption, promises, service and they (a large majority) haven't recognized the Messiah. He starts to highlight the implication of those who reject God's plan. Not all who are born of Israel are born of Israel - but those who are of the Seed (the promise of the Messiah). Those who are of Christ, these are the children of promise, these are the sons of God. Paul sets them up and then in Romans 10:9 tells them how they can be of Christ. Not Isaac but IN Isaac (the Seed) – huge difference. The lineage points to the Messiah. Jacob is the starting point of the Israelites

(Jacob's name was changed to Israel), thus uses the starting point to show them the focus is on the Messiah (the Seed) from the very beginning.

**Romans 9:9-10** *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.*

What is the word of promise? The Messiah would come ("I will come") by the will of God and noted by the miracle. Sarah conceived in her old age, revealing that it was ordained by God, and had a son (Isaac). The seed didn't stop at Isaac but continued. Rebecca had 2 Sons, where would the seed go through? Notice the importance or emphasis isn't about either of the people but on the promise, the plan of God.

**Romans 9:11-12** *(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."*

God chose the seed to come through Jacob and said, "*Older will serve the younger before they were born.*" Jacob was Rebecca's favorite and Esau was Isaac's favorite, but God has no favorites, yet He chose Isaac to carry the seed. For this reason, Esau was to serve Jacob. God set the course of the Seed but Esau didn't honor it, and actually rebelled against it. He not only did not serve Jacob but wanted to kill him. Esau disregarded his mother, became bitter towards Jacob and sold his own birthright for food (Heb 12:16). This heart was perpetuated through his descendants for centuries. Paul is comparing the Israelites to Esau who didn't recognize nor honor the plan of God. They were focused on the flesh of the first born (lineage) but missing the point, like Esau and his descendants. They not only rejected God's plan (Yeshua) but killed him.

**Romans 9:13** *As it is written, "JACOB I HAVE LOVED, BUT ESAU I HAVE HATED."*

Due to the continual rejection of God's Plan by Esau and his descendants, many centuries later during the time of Malachi, God made this statement "*JACOB I HAVE LOVED, BUT ESAU I*

*HAVE HATED*". Even in Malachi His statement is in reference to Esau's descendants. Mal 1:1-4 *The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. "I have loved you," says the LORD. "Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?' Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" Says the LORD. "Yet Jacob I have loved; but Esau I have hated, and laid waste his mountains and his heritage for the jackals of the wilderness." Even though Edom has said, "We have been impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places," Thus says the LORD of hosts: "They may build, but I will throw down; they shall be called the Territory of Wickedness, and the people against whom the LORD will have indignation forever."*

Side Note: Some may argue, "Did God know that Esau would do this?" Whether He knew about it before or not, who knows, sometimes God has chosen not to know e.g. He regretted making Saul King (1 Sam 15:11; 35), or for delivering the Israelites from Egypt and then wanting to kill them (Exo 32:10). The point is that this reasoning has nothing to do with the statement that God made. His statement was His response AFTER (many centuries after) they had rejected God's plan of not serving Jacob. It was NOT before Esau was born! In addition, this statement wasn't only for Esau, but also his descendants. Those who received Paul's letter would have known this because they studied the scriptures. Paul was comparing these Israelites who were not surrendering to the Messiah, to Esau.

**Romans 9:14** *What shall we say then - Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!*

Is there unrighteous with God – for what? For choosing the younger Jacob and not Esau to carry the seed. Also, for not penalizing Esau who had rejected the plan of God.

**Romans 9:15** *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."*

Mercy and compassion are both very good. Mercy is not giving the punishment one deserves, and compassion is helping them out. God showed Esau both mercy and compassion (Gen 33:9, Mat 5:45). He also gave Esau's descendants Mount Seir as an inheritance and told Israel not to take it (Deu 2:5).

Side Note: What is interesting with this statement is that God was about to show Moses His Manifested Presence (His Glory - Exo 33:18-19).

**Romans 9:16** *So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.*

It is not our will or our effort to create a plan, but it is His mercy, His plan. He has protected His plan throughout the centuries through Israel. Esau was to serve Israel (Jacob) and throughout the centuries they didn't. Esau rejected God's plan and sought his own way to make right with God, and was therefore rejected. In Heb 12:14-17 *Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.*

**Romans 9:17-18** *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.*

For this very purpose, "God's mercy on Israel in whom He placed the seed." He raised Pharaoh up every time he buckled under the pressure in order for Pharaoh and all the world to know in whom the seed is. His mercy was on Israel because of the seed (Rom 9:8). After the plagues all feared Israel because of their God (Jos 2:9-10).

The word "raised" does not mean "raising him from birth" nor "raised him to power" but that God raised him up every time he buckled under the pressure of the plagues. The Greek word "raised" in OT (through the Septuagint) and the NT never refers to before birth or raised from birth. 10% of the time it refers to being raised to power, authority. However, 90% of the time it is refers to being raised from a position of rest or death or collapse (1 Cor 6:14; Job 5:11; Dan 12:2, etc.). This statement was given by the LORD to Moses to say before Pharaoh. This was

given before the 7<sup>th</sup> Plague was to be released (Exo 9:16) affirmed being raised up these last 6 times. God raised him up by hardening him each time he wanted to give up.

But isn't hardening going against his will? God could have killed Pharaoh for what he had done to the people of God (as God is the judge) but instead of killing him, He used him. And instead of putting something in his heart or changing his will, all God did was harden what already existed. Recall God told Moses He was going to harden him, not that He had hardened him but that He will (Exo 4:21). It was a future time, during the plagues.

Even before God hardened Pharaoh, Pharaoh was already hard against Israel. We know that Israel cried out to God because "Pharaoh" was suppressing them (Exo 2:23-24). God could have killed Pharaoh but decided to use him to glorify His name. God knew that when the pressure was on, Pharaoh would buckle so He hardened him so that he could stand strong against the pressure. God hardened Pharaoh 6 times and Pharaoh hardened himself twice (Exo 8:15; 9:34). Even the Philistines knew that the hardness was a result of Egypt hardening their own hearts against God of Israel, "*Why then do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When He did mighty things among them, did they not let the people go, that they might depart?*" (1 Sam 6:6).

Paul is drawing the comparison of Israel rejecting God's plan to Pharaoh rejecting God's plan in Israel. They are rejecting the plan of God (the Messiah) and they too will reap the consequences. Rom 9:33 As it is written: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STUMBLING STONE AND ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND WHOEVER BELIEVES ON HIM WILL NOT BE PUT TO SHAME."

Therefore, God hardens and has mercy not based on before they are born, but based on the "very purpose" of His plan (His seed, the Messiah). And He will harden and have mercy based on how people respond to His *Plan* (Rom 1:21-24; 10:2-4). *Similar to what Yeshua said about those who rejected God's plan, "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them."* (Joh 12:40). Like Paul was saying that Esau (Esau and descendants) who rejected serving Jacob, God ended up hating.

**Romans 9:19** *You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?"*

YOU will say, not what Paul will say but YOU will say. Why? It is the wrong question, the real question is, why aren't they responding to His plan, not why are they ending up like this? They are looking at the symptoms and not the cause. Paul is saying they are resisting God's will and then blaming God for the consequences. They will say who has resisted His will, His plan? Implying that no one can resist His will, but that is a lie! That's why they say it and not Paul. Throughout scripture people have resisted God, starting with Adam even unto today (Psa 78:41; Mar 7:13; Mat 13:58). Stephen said the same thing to the Israelites in Act 7:6-37 and concludes with Act 7:51, *You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.* The issue is they are the ones who rejected God's will in the first place and then blame Him for His plan and the consequences.

**Romans 9:20-21** *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?*

Paul responds to them who say, "Who has resisted His will?" Firstly, by challenging them for replying against God as if they are righteous. Then secondly, for ignoring why He made them. They didn't make themselves therefore they are to listen to the Potter and follow His instructions about the purpose. Doesn't the Potter have the power to make Jacob (Israel – to lead people to God) for honor, and Esau for dishonour (to serve Jacob)? Paul said to Timothy, *"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. And In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work"* (2 Tim 2:19-21). Both the honourable and the dishonourable that have Christ are both to purge themselves from iniquity.

If they refuse to obey God's plan then destruction is best for them. The destruction can be instant or over time or delayed, waiting for them to change, to repent and do what He said. Jer 18:5-10 *Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?" says the LORD. "Look, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel! The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, **if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it.** And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it."*

**Romans 9:22** *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,*

Paul gives us an example of what God can do, not saying it is the only way but "IF" God wanted to show His wrath and make His power known like Pharaoh. God used Pharaoh to bring glory to His name and make His power known (Rom 9:17-18; Jos 2:9-10). He could have killed Pharaoh instantly like He did to Herod (Act 12:23) or like Ananias (Act 5:5). Or God could give them a consequence so that they repent like Nebuchadnezzar in (Dan 4). Or God can just hand them over to their own desires, no more trying to stop them and they feel the consequences of their own decisions (Rom 1:21-24, 1 Cor 5:1-5; 1 Tim 1:20; Or 5).

**Romans 9:23** *and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,*

To make known the "riches/the benefits" of His glory ON the vessels of mercy. The plan of God was prepared beforehand for these vessels who surrender to God's plan receive mercy. This mercy comes through Yeshua the Messiah. It is not that the vessels of mercy are prepared beforehand, but that the "riches" of His glory are prepared beforehand for the vessels of Mercy. Those who surrender to His plan. Benefits are prepared for them and summed up in Eph 2:7-11, *That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward*

*us through Christ Yeshua. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Yeshua unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

God has before appointed that we should walk in the good works that He has prepared from the beginning. We can only walk in the good works through Yeshua.

**Romans 9: 24-26** *even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? 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."*

Even the Gentiles who by design were not God's people, yet because they surrendered to God's plan through the Seed (the Messiah), they are more than His people, they are called sons of God. Act 17:30-31 *Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.*

**Romans 9: 27-28** *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."*

Because of the choices of many, only a remnant will be saved (Mat 22:1-14). It is not God's will that a remnant be saved, but it is a result of man rejecting God's plan (God's seed, God's invitation). His people the Israelites (vessels of honour) should have known better, yet many rejected God's plan of faith through Yeshua and focused on their own way of righteousness through the law. Therefore, these vessels of honour have become vessels of destruction (Rom 9:33; Joh 3:36). *God desires ALL men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:4). The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count*

*slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that ANY should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet 3:9).*

**Romans 9:29** *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."*

God left us the Seed, the Messiah, so that we don't become like Sodom and Gomorrah. He gives all the opportunity to respond to His plan.

**Romans 9:30-33** *What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STUMBLING STONE AND ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND WHOEVER BELIEVES ON HIM WILL NOT BE PUT TO SHAME."*

The key to this passage is Paul rebuking them for not seeking the seed through faith like Abraham (Gal 3). The law is good but is unable to make one righteous. All this shows our weakness and the need for the Messiah. They tried to obtain righteousness of the law but failed because they are unable to do it by faith. If they had the seed then they would be able to establish the law (Rom 3:31).

In Chapter 10 Paul goes on to tell them how he desires that Israel be saved. Because they have zeal, which is good, but not according to knowledge. For the scripture reveals the Messiah who they are to trust in (Rom 10:3).