

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33

Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

The Problem of the Gospel

Paul deals with the problem of the Jewish rejection of God's Plan (ch 9-11)..Some concepts here were introduced in 8:29-30

Things to Remember:

God is **Sovereign**
-Psa 135:6
-Dan 4:35
-Eph 1:11

God is **Omniscient**
-Jn 21:17
-1Jn 3:20
-Heb 4:13
-Jer 1:5
-Isa 46:10

Man has **Free Will**
-Jn 3:16
-Act 16:30,31

Salvation is **Available to All**
-Rom 5:18-19

Questions to Consider:

- What is the problem?
- Why does this problem concern the Gentiles?
- Who created this problem?

Advantages of the Jews

-Rom 3:1-2

- (1) Adoption
- (2) Glory
- (3) Covenants
- (4) Law
- (5) Worship
- (6) Promises
- (7) Patriarchs
- (8) Christ

⁽¹⁾I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—
⁽²⁾that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

⁽³⁾For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

⁽⁴⁾They are Israelites, and to them belong the ⁽¹⁾adoption, the ⁽²⁾glory, the ⁽³⁾covenants, the giving of the ⁽⁴⁾law, the ⁽⁵⁾worship, and the ⁽⁶⁾promises.

⁽⁷⁾To them belong the ⁽⁷⁾patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is ⁽⁸⁾the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

⁽⁸⁾But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from *Israel* belong to **Israel**,

⁽⁹⁾and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “*Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.*” < Gen 21:12

⁽¹⁰⁾This means that it is not the *children of the flesh* who are the children of God, but the *children of the promise* are counted as offspring.

⁽¹¹⁾For this is what the promise said: “*About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.*”

⁽¹²⁾And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, ⁽¹³⁾though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—

⁽¹⁴⁾she was told, “*The older will serve the younger.*”

⁽¹⁵⁾As it is written, “*Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.*”

⁽¹⁶⁾What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God’s part? **By no means!**

⁽¹⁷⁾For he says to Moses, “*I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.*” < Exo 33:19 (It is God’s plan)

⁽¹⁸⁾So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, *who has mercy.*

⁽¹⁹⁾For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “*For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.*” < Exo 9:16

Spiritual Israel

Physical Israel

Gen 18:10

Who are the true children of the promise to Abraham?
Gen 12:1-3
Mat 3:9
Luk 3:8
Rom 4:13-17
Gal 3:7,27-29; 4:28

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Who was the natural heir of Isaac? Why was he not the child of the promise?
-Heb 12:15-17

What did God know about Jacob or Esau before they were born? What impact did this have on choosing Jacob to be the child of the promise?
-Gen 18:19
-Gen 25:23
-Heb 11:20

Does God’s foreknowledge nullify man’s free will?
-2Th 2:13

Hated = Loved Less
-Mal 1:1-5
-Gen 29:30-33
-Lk 14:26
-Lk 18:29-30
-Jn 19:25-27

What are the conditions for receiving God’s mercy and compassion?
-Rom 3:21-31

There are 9 references to Pharaoh hardening his own heart:
-Ex 7:13, 14, 22; 8:15, 32; 9:7, 34, 35; 13:15
and 9 that describe God’s role in the hardening:
-Ex 7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17

Was Pharaoh born to be evil? What does it mean that God raised him up to demonstrate His power?

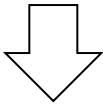
Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33

Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

Hardens...

-No suggestion of direct intervention
-God simply takes his hands off and lets willful rejection of Him produce its ugly results in human life
-Rom 1:21-32
-1Co 5:1-5
-1Ti 1:18-20

Who should think it extraordinary that God would at last reject that nation which had so long been rejecting him?
- It had been foretold!!



Hos 2:23 / 1:10

The inclusion of the Gentiles as a part of spiritual Israel - "sons of the living God."

Isa 10:22-23

Only a remnant of physical Israel will be saved?

"did not pursue righteousness" i.e. by works

¹⁸So then he **has mercy** on *whomever he wills*, and he **hardens** *whomever he wills*.

¹⁹You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?"

²⁰But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?"

²¹Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for **honorable use** and another for **dishonorable use**?

²²*What if God*, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,

²³in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—

²⁴even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

²⁵As indeed he says in Hosea, "*Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.'*" < Hos 2:23

²⁶"*And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'sons of the living God.'*" < Hos 1:10

²⁷And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "*Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved,*

²⁸*for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.*" < Isa 10:22-23

²⁹And as Isaiah predicted, "*If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah.*" < Isa 1:9

³⁰What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who **did not pursue righteousness** have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is **by faith**;

³¹but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law.

³²Why? **Because they did not pursue it by faith**, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone,

³³as it is written, "*Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.*" < Isa 28:16 / 8:14

God does not make us robots, programmed to follow his Word. We are creatures of free will with the ability to choose a life of honorable use or dishonorable use!
-2Ti 2:20, 21

The conclusion to Paul's argument AND the fulfillment of the prophecy

Stone of Stumbling
Rock of Offense

= The Christ

1Pe 2:3-8

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

Romans Chapter 9 - Questions for Discussion

Romans 9:6 (ESV)

⁶ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel

Things to Consider...

1. God is _____
(vv. Psa 135:6; Dan 4:35; Eph 1:11)

2. God is _____
(vv. John 21:17; I John 3:20; Heb 4:13; Jer 1:5; Isa 46:10)

3. Man has _____
(vv. John 3:16; Acts 16:30, 31)

4. Salvation is _____
(vv. Rom 5:18-19)

Why does Paul now deal specifically with Israel's rejection of the Gospel? Why would this discussion be relevant for the Gentile Christians in Rome?

What advantages did the Jews have? (vv. 4-5, 3:1-2)

Who are the true heirs of the promise made to Abraham? How would most Jews of that day have answered this question? Is this promise restricted to the Jews only? How does this discussion of "the promise" relate to Paul's discussion of faith in chapters 1-8? (vv. 6-8, Matt 3:9 ; Luke 3:8 ; Gen 12:1-3 ; Gal 3:7,27-29)

Explain the example of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Were Isaac and Jacob predestined to be children of the promise without regard for their lives? If not, then what characteristics did they possess which allowed them to be children of the promise? Does God's foreknowledge nullify man's free will? (vv. 7-13 ; Gal 4:28 ; Mal 1:1-5; II Thess 2:13)

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

What are the conditions for God’s mercy and compassion (vv. 14-15; 3:21-31)

What two things can never **earn** God’s mercy? (vv. 11, 16)

Was Pharaoh born to be evil? What does it mean that God raised him up to demonstrate His power? (v. 17)

In the latter part of this chapter Paul quotes from two OT prophets. Which prophet predicts the inclusion of the Gentiles as “sons of the living God?” Which prophet predicts that only a remnant of Israel will be saved? (vv. 25-29 ; Hos 1:10 ; 2:23 ; Isa 10:22-23)

How did some Gentiles attain righteousness? (v. 30)

Why did many Jews not attain righteousness? (vv. 31-32)

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

God is Sovereign

Psalms 135:6 (ESV)

⁶ Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps.

Daniel 4:35 (ESV)

³⁵ all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, “What have you done?”

Ephesians 1:11 (ESV)

¹¹ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,

God is Omniscient

John 21:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.

1 John 3:19-20 (ESV)

¹⁹ By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; ²⁰ for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.

Hebrews 4:13 (ESV)

¹³ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Jeremiah 1:5 (ESV)

⁵ “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

Isaiah 46:8-10 (ESV)

⁸ “Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, ⁹ remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, ¹⁰ declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,’

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

Man has Free Will

John 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Acts 16:30-31 (ESV)

³⁰ Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” ³¹ And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

Salvation is Available to All

Romans 5:18-19 (ESV)

¹⁸ Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹ For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.

Advantages of the Jews

Romans 3:1–2 (ESV)

¹ Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? ² Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

Genesis 21:12 (ESV)

¹² But God said to Abraham, “Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named.

Genesis 18:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ The Lord said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him.

Hebrews 12:15–17 (ESV)

¹⁵ See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; ¹⁶ that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. ¹⁷ For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

Genesis 18:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.”

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

Genesis 25:23 (ESV)

²³ And the Lord said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger.”

Hebrews 11:20 (ESV)

²⁰ By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau.

2 Thessalonians 2:13 (ESV)

¹³ But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

Children of the Promise

Genesis 12:1-3 (ESV)

¹ Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Matthew 3:8-9 (ESV)

⁸ Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹ And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.

Luke 3:8 (ESV)

⁸ Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.

Romans 4:13–17 (ESV)

¹³ For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression. ¹⁶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷ as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

Galatians 3:7 (ESV)

⁷ Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.

Galatians 3:27-29 (ESV)

²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

Galatians 4:28 (ESV)

²⁸ Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.

Hated = Loved Less

Malachi 1:1–5 (ESV)

¹ The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi. ² “I have loved you,” says the Lord. But you say, “How have you loved us?” “Is not Esau Jacob’s brother?” declares the Lord. “Yet I have loved Jacob ³ but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert.” ⁴ If Edom says, “We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins,” the Lord of hosts says, “They may build, but I will tear down, and they will be called ‘the wicked country,’ and ‘the people with whom the Lord is angry forever.’” ⁵ Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, “Great is the Lord beyond the border of Israel!”

Genesis 29:30–33 (ESV)

³⁰ So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and served Laban for another seven years. ³¹ When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. ³² And Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben, for she said, “Because the Lord has looked upon my affliction; for now my husband will love me.” ³³ She conceived again and bore a son, and said, “Because the Lord has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also.” And she called his name Simeon.

Luke 14:26 (ESV)

²⁶ “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Luke 18:29–30 (ESV)

²⁹ And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, ³⁰ who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life.”

John 19:25–27 (ESV)

²⁵ but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

Mercy of God

Exodus 33:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ And he said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The Lord.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

Romans 3:21–31 (ESV)

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. ²⁷ Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸ For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. ²⁹ Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰ since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. ³¹ Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

Pharaoh

Raised You Up

Exodus 9:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.

Pharaoh Hardened His Heart

Exodus 7:13 (ESV)

¹³ Still Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

Exodus 7:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh’s heart is hardened; he refuses to let the people go.

Exodus 7:22 (ESV)

²² But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts. So Pharaoh’s heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

Exodus 8:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

Exodus 8:32 (ESV)

³² But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and did not let the people go.

Exodus 9:7 (ESV)

⁷ And Pharaoh sent, and behold, not one of the livestock of Israel was dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

Exodus 9:34 (ESV)

³⁴ But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet again and hardened his heart, he and his servants.

Exodus 9:35 (ESV)

³⁵ So the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people of Israel go, just as the LORD had spoken through Moses.

Exodus 13:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all the males that first open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.'

God's Role in the Hardening

Exodus 7:3 (ESV)

³ But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt,

Exodus 9:12 (ESV)

¹² But the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them, as the Lord had spoken to Moses.

Exodus 10:1 (ESV)

¹ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may show these signs of mine among them,

Exodus 10:20 (ESV)

²⁰ But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go.

Exodus 10:27 (ESV)

²⁷ But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go.

Exodus 11:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, and the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go out of his land.

Exodus 14:4 (ESV)

⁴ And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord." And they did so.

Exodus 14:8 (ESV)

⁸ And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the people of Israel while the people of Israel were going out defiantly.

Exodus 14:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen.

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

Hardened

Romans 1:21–32 (ESV)

²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. ²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. ²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

1 Corinthians 5:1–5 (ESV)

¹ It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. ² And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. ³ For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. ⁴ When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, ⁵ you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

1 Timothy 1:18–20 (ESV)

¹⁸ This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, ¹⁹ holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, ²⁰ among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Honorable and Dishonorable Vessels

2 Timothy 2:20–21 (ESV)

²⁰ Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. ²¹ Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

Foretelling of Gentile Inclusion and Remnant of Israel

Hosea 2:23 (ESV)

²³ and I will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, ‘You are my people’; and he shall say, ‘You are my God.’ ”

Hosea 1:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, “You are not my people,” it shall be said to them, “Children of the living God.”

Isaiah 10:22–23 (ESV)

²² For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return. Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness. ²³ For the Lord God of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in the midst of all the earth.

Isaiah 1:9 (ESV)

⁹ If the Lord of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we should have been like Sodom, and become like Gomorrah.

Stone of Stumbling / Rock of Offense

Isaiah 28:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ therefore thus says the Lord God, “Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: ‘Whoever believes will not be in haste.’

Isaiah 8:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

1 Peter 2:3–8 (ESV)

³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. ⁴ As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵ you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” ⁷ So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” ⁸ and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

Appendix A

Five points of Calvinism (From Wikipedia)

Calvinist theology is sometimes identified with the five points of Calvinism, also called the doctrines of grace, which are a point-by-point response to the five points of the Arminian Remonstrance (see History of Calvinist-Arminian debate) and which serve as a summation of the judgments rendered by the Synod of Dort in 1619. Calvin himself never used such a model and never combated Arminianism directly, as Calvin died before Arminius's birth. The Articles of Remonstrance were authored by opponents of Reformed doctrine and monergism. They were rejected in 1619 at the Synod of Dort, more than 50 years after the death of Calvin.

The five points therefore function as a summary of the differences between Calvinists and Arminians on the doctrines in question, but not as a complete summation of Calvinist theology. In English, they are sometimes referred to by the acronym TULIP[unreliable source] (see below), though this puts them in a different order from the Canons of Dort.

The central assertion of these canons is that God saves every person upon whom he has mercy, and that his efforts are not frustrated by the unrighteousness or inability of humans.

1. **“Total depravity,”** also called “total inability,” asserts that as a consequence of the fall of man into sin, every person is enslaved to sin. People are not by nature inclined to love God but rather to serve their own interests and to reject the rule of God. Thus, all people by their own faculties are morally unable to choose to follow God and be saved because they are unwilling to do so out of the necessity of their own natures. (The term “total” in this context refers to sin affecting every part of a person, not that every person is as evil as they could be). This doctrine is derived from Augustine's explanation of Original Sin.
2. **“Unconditional election”** asserts that God has chosen from eternity those whom he will bring to himself not based on foreseen virtue, merit, or faith in those people; rather, his choice is unconditionally grounded in his mercy alone. God has chosen from eternity to extend mercy to those he has chosen and to withhold mercy from those not chosen. Those chosen receive salvation through Christ alone. Those not chosen receive the just wrath that is warranted for their sins against God.
3. **“Limited atonement,”** also called “particular redemption” or “definite atonement”, asserts that Jesus's substitutionary atonement was definite and certain in its purpose and in what it accomplished. This implies that only the sins of the elect were atoned for by Jesus's death. Calvinists do not believe, however, that the atonement is limited in its value or power, but rather that the atonement is limited in the sense that it is intended for some and not all. Hence, Calvinists hold that the atonement is sufficient for all and efficient for the elect. The doctrine is driven by the Calvinistic concept of the sovereignty of God in salvation and their understanding of the nature of the atonement.
4. **“Irresistible grace,”** also called “efficacious grace”, asserts that the saving grace of God is effectually applied to those whom he has determined to save (that is, the elect) and

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33

Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

overcomes their resistance to obeying the call of the gospel, bringing them to a saving faith. This means that when God sovereignly purposes to save someone, that individual certainly will be saved. The doctrine holds that this purposeful influence of God's Holy Spirit cannot be resisted, but that the Holy Spirit, "graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ."

5. **"Perseverance of the saints"** (or preservation) of the saints (the word "saints" is used to refer to all who are set apart by God, and not of those who are exceptionally holy, canonized, or in heaven) asserts that since God is sovereign and his will cannot be frustrated by humans or anything else, those whom God has called into communion with himself will continue in faith until the end. Those who apparently fall away either never had true faith to begin with or will return to the faith.⁽¹⁾

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calvinism>

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

Appendix B

Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament - Romans 9 (Public Domain)

Verse 1

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit.

Although in no sense an oath, Paul here spoke in the most dogmatic and convincing manner possible, thus emphasizing the utmost accuracy and solemnity of what he was about to say. The use of both positive and negative statements for the sake of emphasis is common in scripture. For example, Isaiah has this: "Thou shalt die and not live" ([Isaiah 38:1](#)). Likewise, in the New Testament, there is this: "He confessed and denied not" ([John 1:20](#)).

In Christ ... in the Holy Spirit ...

These terms are synonymous, a person never being "in" Christ or the Holy Spirit unless he is in both. David Lipscomb stressed the certainty of this verse's being in no sense an oath, quoting Hodge, Meyer, Lard, and Schaff in the technical arguments making it impossible to view it as a form of oath. ^{E2}

Verses 2, 3

That I have great sorrow, and unceasing pain in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

Paul had more than sufficient reason, if he had been of a mean and vindictive spirit, to hold bitterness against his Jewish kinsmen because of their unrelenting persecutions and harassment of his ministry and apostleship. Forty of them, on occasion, had bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had murdered him; and emissaries from the Jews in Jerusalem had dogged his every step on the mission field. They had preferred charges against him before kings and governors; and yet, despite all this, his love for Israel was undiminished. How noble are Paul's thoughts in such a context as that which frames them here.

Lard and others have pointed out that Paul here omitted a clause which is essential to his meaning, that being "I have great grief and continual sorrow in my heart ON ACCOUNT OF MY COUNTRYMEN." For Paul, that was the unspeakable thing, and he could not, at that point in this letter, bring it out; and thus he approached it from a different angle. Lard has this with reference to this amazing fact:

His countrymen had repudiated Christ; that was the fact which caused his grief and sorrow; that any person should do this is painful enough; that one's own kin should do it is exquisitely so. The apostle does not yet name the fact that gave him pain, but conceals it until he can bring it out with better effect. ^{E3}

I could wish ...

is the key to understanding Rom. 9:3. As Hodge wrote:

The expression is evidently hypothetical and conditional, "I could wish, were the thing allowable, possible, or proper." ^{E4}

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

Paul's grief was like that of Jesus who "had compassion on the multitude" ([Matthew 9:6](#)), and like that of Moses who said, "Blot me out of thy book, I pray thee" ([Exodus 32:32](#)); and yet it was not possible for Paul to do the thing which he mentioned, nor should his statement here be viewed as a true expression of what he actually desired to do. That this is true appears from God's response to the similar request of Moses. The Lord said,

Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book ([Exodus 32:33](#)).

That Moses truly felt such a desire and expressed it to God in prayer is a scripturally-authenticated fact; and we may credit Paul with exactly the same emotion here. How great is such love!

Anathema ...

is used only five times in the New Testament, the other instances of its use being in Acts 23:14, 1 Cor. 12:3 and 16:22, and Gal. 1:8,9. It means "accursed" and implies eternal death as well as physical death. After a careful and critical study of the New Testament texts where this word is used, Hedge declared that

An anathema was a person devoted to death as accursed. ^{E5}

Verse 4

Who are Israelites; whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.

Paul mentioned such things as these to show his appreciation for the position that Israel had indeed enjoyed in God's plan of redemption. Paul loved Israel, and the fact of his becoming a Christian had not diminished this love nor his appreciation for the part Israel had had in bearing witness to God's will on earth.

Israelites ...

is an extension of the word "Israel," which means "prince of God," or "one who contends with God," the same being the name given to Jacob by an angel of heaven at Peniel. This God-given name implied more than membership in the covenant race, imputing to them status as God's children ([Exodus 4:22](#); [Deuteronomy 14:1](#); [Jeremiah 31:9](#)); but the sonship of Israel was of an inferior kind, compared to that of Christians, although sufficiently significant to stand as a type of the latter. "Israelites," as Paul used it here, included, by implication, the other privileges enumerated.

The adoption ...

refers to the sonship of Israel. In a very real and paternal manner, God made the Israelites his children and looked after them, despite their sins and rebellions, until the purpose of bringing in the Messiah was realized.

The glory ...

might not refer to any specific thing, such as the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, or the halo that glowed upon the face of Moses, but would seem to signify the prosperity and progress of Israel through the long centuries of their enjoyment of the providential care and blessing of the Almighty.

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

And the covenants ...

The use of the plural is similar to Paul's usage in Ephesians 2:12 and takes into account the many covenants that God made with Israel, especially including the one called in Hebrews "the covenant", or "the first covenant."

And the giving of the law ...

brings into view the exceedingly impressive events at Sinai when the decalogue was given. A reading of the Biblical account of the wonders connected with the giving of the law of Moses will convince anyone that the events there enacted were as spectacular and impressive as any ever seen on earth.

And the service of God ...

refers to the entire liturgical and sacerdotal system of the Hebrews, especially the great religious ceremonials connected with occasions such as the Day of Atonement, the Passover, etc.

And the promises ...

These were that great body of testimony looking to the advent of the Christ, and the hope of universal redemption in him. These great promises, sometimes called merely "the promise," were repeated, emphasized, and typified by numerous devices in the Mosaic system. Through: (1) the prophetic word; (2) the lives of typical people; (3) the typical meaning of the ceremonies and sacrifices, and through (4) architecture, furniture, the plan, and the arrangement of the tabernacle, and temple, etc. - in all these things there was only one purpose, that of foretelling the Christ and making certain of his identification when he should come. Significantly, all these were of Israel; and, for the great apostle who believed so intensely in Jesus Christ, the glory of the Lord as it had been prophetically witnessed in Israel intensified his love and appreciation for the great people through whom the witness had come.

Verse 5

Whose are the fathers, and of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

One cannot but be ashamed of such a rendition of this verse, in which the translators stooped to the device of making the name of the ineffable God a common adverb, as when one might say, "This is a God beautiful day! ... God blessed for ever"! Godet translated this verse thus:

Whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is God over all, blessed for ever. Amen. ^{EG}

There is absolutely no doubt that Godet has the true meaning of this verse. The objections that people have to this rendition stem not from critical reasons, nor from gradations in the meaning of Greek words, but from theological reasons on the part of some who are reluctant to admit identification of Jesus Christ with deity, notwithstanding the fact that Christ is called "God" no less than ten times in the Greek New Testament, the other nine passages where this is done being John 1:1; 20:28; Acts 20:28; Heb. 1:8; Philp. 2:8; Col. 2:9; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1; and 1 John 5:20. Objectors to the obvious meaning here allege that Paul nowhere else makes such a statement of Christ's deity. Barrett, for example, wrote:

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

Nowhere else in any epistle does Paul call Christ God. ^{E7}

Barrett's view is almost incredible when it is considered that no less than three of the passages cited above were written by Paul; and if, as we think probable, Paul authored Hebrews, then four places are found in Paul's writings in which deity is unequivocally ascribed to the Lord Jesus - this passage ([Romans 9:5](#)) making five!

Space forbids any lengthy analysis of the objections people make to the rendition in the English Revised Version (1885) (where the true meaning is clear enough, despite the ridiculous punctuation), where the words "over all" are unequivocally applied to Christ, thus affirming his godhead, and permitting the truth to glow even through the punctuation. The English Revised Version (1885) translators made only one concession to the objectors (that being the punctuation), but even that was too much to concede. Godet's rendition above may be viewed with absolute certainty as the correct one.

Whose are the fathers ...

No people ever had more distinguished ancestors than the Jewish patriarchs. Such men as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were so noble, and so excessively beyond other men in character and integrity, that God himself deigned to identify himself as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" ([Exodus 4:5](#)). Abraham, especially, stands upon the horizon of pre-Christian history like a great monolith casting its shadow over centuries and millenniums of history. Three great religions, like streams coursing down from some mighty mountain and finding their issuance in various oceans, descend from Abraham; Muslims, Jews and Christians all alike hailing Abraham as their father. Paul truly appreciated the heritage that was his and Israel's in such distinguished progenitors of their magnificent race.

Of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh ...

Even the Saviour of all the world was a descendant (in the fleshly sense) from Abraham, the first verse of the New Testament hailing the fact. That it was a signal honor for any race to be commissioned as the flesh-bearer for the Messiah, is evident from the exclamation in Hebrews: *For verily not of angels doth he (God) take hold, but he taketh hold of the seed of Abraham (Heb. 2:16, alternate rendition).*

Christ who is over all ...

Independently of the punctuation already discussed, and the attempt to pass the name of God off as an adverb, this expression thunders the message of the deity of Christ. The greatest of the Greek scholars are dogmatic and positive about the meaning here. Hodge, with reference to the words "over all," wrote:

There is but one interpretation of this passage which can, with the least regard to the rules of construction, be maintained. The words "over all" mean "over all things," not "over all persons," being neuter, and not masculine (as in Acts 10:36 and 1 Cor. 15:28). It is supremacy over the universe that is here expressed Paul evidently declares that Christ, who, he had just said was, as to his human nature, or as a man, descended from Israelites, is, in another respect the supreme God, or God over all, and blessed for ever. ^{E8}

Amen ...

This word is hardly noticed by any of the commentators; but the impression prevails that this

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

word was intended to affirm Paul's dogmatic reference to the deity of Christ. If Paul did not mean to ascribe deity to Jesus Christ, why this "Amen"? Would the mild statement that Christ was God blessed (!) have called forth a word like this? Read again the glorious final paragraph of the eighth chapter, and consider that not even that called for Paul's solemn "Amen"; therefore, this word proves that the world-shaking truth had just been uttered; and that truth could not possibly have been anything other than a statement of the deity of Christ.

For those interested in an extensive study of this verse as a witness of Christ's deity, John Murray's Appendix A of Volume II, *New International Commentary on the New Testament*, is a lengthy treatise in which every critical aspect of the problem is examined exhaustively and the conclusion maintained that here indeed is a statement that Christ is God.

Aside from the plain texts of the New Testament which affirm Christ's deity, the implication of it is in every line of the New Testament. For example, who but God could say (in reference to himself),

But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats ([Matthew 25:31,32](#)).

And every one that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundred fold, and shall inherit eternal life ([Matthew 19:29](#)).

It is no exaggeration to say that hundreds of New Testament passages carry the mandatory meaning that Christ is God come in the flesh. Amen!

Verse 6

But it is not as though the word of God hath come to naught. For they are not all Israel that are of Israel.

Paul had not yet spoken plainly that Israel, through their rejection of Christ, was at that time itself rejected by God, although that thought dominated his mind. Before saying that unsayable thing, he would move to soften it by showing that what he was about to say did not apply to every Israelite. Paul stressed the fact that not all of Abraham's children were Jews, that some were associated with Israel who were not really Israelites in the true sense, and that such a condition had extended back all the way to Abraham, Ishmael not being counted as Abraham's seed at all, a fact which he would immediately stress.

Verse 7

Neither because they are Abraham's seed, are they all children: but in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

Abraham had many children besides Isaac, their number running perhaps into the hundreds, since he had a plurality of concubines, besides Hagar; and after Sarah's death he was married to Keturah, thought by many to have already borne the sons attributed to her, during the period of her concubinage. From whatever source, the Bible states that 318 servants were born in his

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

house (see more on this in my Commentary on Hebrews, p. 271). At the very least, all of the sons of Keturah and Hagar were among the “sons of Abraham” but were not so reckoned among the Jews, hence the validity of Paul’s reasoning here to the effect that mere fleshly connection with Abraham did not make one an Israelite.

Paul had preparing to announce God’s rejection of Israel from being a favored nation, because of their rejection of Christ, and the great corollary of God’s calling all people (Jews and Gentiles) into His kingdom, without regard to physical descent from Abraham; and Paul knew the vehemence with which the Jews in general would reject such an idea. He knew the grounds on which they would base their utter rejection of such a concept, the principal one being that they were the children of Abraham, to the exclusion of all others, and that they alone were heirs of the great promise to Abraham. Both Christ and John the Baptist had addressed themselves to that same adamant Jewish position. They trusted in being Abraham’s seed, the Rabbis going so far as to say that no circumcised person could ever enter hell, regardless of life or character. Paul, in this verse, was showing tactfully (and tenderly, at first) that Abraham had sons, notably Ishmael, who were not regarded as the seed of Abraham, as indicated by the quotation from Gen. 21:12, “In Isaac shall thy seed be called,” and thus laying down the premise that, even from the very first, it was Abraham’s spiritual seed, as distinguished from his mere posterity, who were to receive the blessing and who were the legitimate heirs of the Abrahamic promise.

To the Jews of Paul’s day, any suggestion to the effect that God would reject Israel would have been vociferously refused on the ground that such a rejection of themselves would have brought God’s word to naught, hence Paul’s introductory proposition that “It is not as though the word of God hath come to naught.” Before Paul was through with this line of reasoning, he would show that, on the contrary, the word of God itself taught both the rejection of Israel and the calling of the Gentiles. The specific argument from this verse is that, just as God had rejected Ishmael who was a son of Abraham, so God was also free to reject the Jews of Paul’s day (for due cause, of course), although they too are Abraham’s sons (as was Ishmael), the determinator being something other than fleshly descent.

Verse 8

That is, it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed.

With what deliberate caution Paul approached the dreadful announcement he was obligated to deliver to his beloved kinsmen! He first laid the logical support of what he had to say by citations from the Old Testament scriptures, and then built up the premises upon which he would rest his conclusion. This verse spells out the deduction to be made from the history of Abraham’s sons, only one of which, namely, Isaac, was his true seed, all the others being rejected. Just so it is today, Paul was saying, not merely the fleshly children of Abraham are his seed, but the children of the promise, this reference to the promise pointing to Gen. 12:3, where not Jews only, but “all the families of the earth” were to be blessed.

Children of promise ...

has in view the fact that Isaac was not born in the due course of nature, but in respect of God’s promise, which was providentially fulfilled when both Abraham and Sarah were long past the age of child production. This fact regarding Isaac is typical of Christians who, in another sense, are children of Abraham, by promise, as stated thus by Paul:

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

Now we brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise ([Galatians 4:28](#); [3:29](#)).

Paul's argument from this, of course, was that, just as Ishmael did not inherit, though a literal son, the Jews of Paul's day might not inherit, unless their claim was founded on something else, other than fleshly descent from Abraham. Only those who received and accepted God's promise to Abraham of the Seed which is Christ, and honored and obeyed him, now that he had appeared upon the earth only those persons (the Christians) were the true children of Abraham and heirs according to the promise.

Verse 9

For this is a word of promise, According to this season will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.

In distinction from all the other sons of Abraham, Isaac was the child of promise; and Paul here left nothing unsaid with reference to it, citing the very passage that recorded God's promise ([Genesis 18:10](#)). Now, Christ is the antitype of Isaac (my Commentary on Hebrews, p. 277); and therefore Jesus Christ (along with the spiritual seed who are "in him") has the same preference over all the fleshly descendants of Abraham that Isaac had over his fleshly brothers. God's righteousness, the great theme of Romans, was ever before Paul's mind; and his purpose in these verses was to show that God's actions in the calling of the Gentiles and rejection of Israel were in no degree blameworthy, but righteous. Even the rejection of Israel as a favored nation and the admission of Gentiles to the kingdom of God did not, in any sense whatever, exclude Jews, the only injury to them in such actions being the destruction of their sinful pride. All of the marvelous blessings of the kingdom of Christ were available to all Jews and Gentiles alike, without preference, and upon the same terms; and the blessings and privileges of the new kingdom were far superior in every way to anything the Jews had enjoyed under the old system.

Verses 10-13

And not only so; but Rebecca also having conceived by one, even our father Isaac - for the, children being not yet born, neither having done anything good or bad that the purpose of God according to the election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. Even as it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.

This passage details another restriction upon the identification of who are, or are not, children of Abraham, all of the posterity of Esau being cut off, despite the fact that they were not merely children of Abraham, but of Isaac as well; and their being cut off did not derive from some visible reason for it, such as a rebellion, or refusal to honor Isaac; they were totally excluded even before the birth of Jacob and Esau. The proposition Paul was establishing by presenting these facts is that it was not by natural descent alone that the Jews themselves were reckoned to be children of Abraham, because the group identified as Jews were far from being his only natural descendants. There was a separation in the immediate family of Abraham when Ishmael was cut off, and there was another separation in Isaac's immediate family when the Edomites (children of Esau) were cut off.

But a dramatic new factor was involved in the separation of Esau and his descendants from the recognized posterity of Abraham. The Jews could have justified the exclusion of the Ishmaelites,

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33

Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

etc., and the preference for Isaac; upon the premise that Isaac was the only legitimate son, the only son of his true wife, the only son of a free woman, or such; but, in the exclusion of part of Isaac's posterity, no such distinctions were visible, Esau being not merely the son of Isaac's lawful wife, but his firstborn at that! This shows that the choice of Jacob was altogether a sovereign act of God, not dependent upon anything that either Jacob or Esau had either done or left undone, the election coming before either of them was born.

Before discussing the doctrine of election, as it is called, which surfaces in these verses, it is important to note exactly what the Lord said with reference to the election of Jacob in preference to Esau.

And the Lord said unto her (Rebekah), Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger ([Genesis 25:23](#)).

There is no problem whatever regarding what God did. The problem lies in the reasons people suppose God had for doing it. God's sovereign act of choice between Rebekah's twins took place before their birth; but God's decision was absolutely not capricious. Paul had already pointed out that God "foreknew" all people; and that foreknowledge on the part of God is revealed in the above citation from Genesis to have been the reasonable and righteous basis of God's election of Jacob. God foreknew everything concerning the unborn twins, but he chose to tell Rebekah a part of what was foreknown. First, two DIFFERENT kinds of people were about to be launched into the stream of history, one weak, the other STRONGER. In the light of such knowledge, could God have chosen the weaker? And what is meant by "two manner of people"? Esau's life quickly followed the pattern God had foreseen. He was a profane person and a fornicator ([Hebrews 12:16](#)). Thus, Esau was rejected and Jacob chosen because of God's foreknowledge of what would take place in the lives of both of them.

When Isaac blessed his sons, the scriptures relate that he did so "by faith concerning things to come" ([Hebrews 11:20](#)); and it is arbitrary and contrary to reason for anyone to suppose that God made choice between those brothers without taking into account the "things to come." Nothing in the election of Jacob and the exclusion of his brother had any bearing at all upon the eternal destiny of either, each individual having still been left free to choose the direction of his life; but it was concerned primarily, if not indeed totally, with the building of the nation of the covenant people.

It appears impossible to view Paul's words here as teaching that God determines the destinies of people before they are born, as taught by some, For example, Murray stated:

We are compelled, therefore, to find in this word a declaration of the sovereign counsel of God as it is concerned with the ultimate destinies of men. ^{f9}

It should be remembered that Paul's entire argument here is to the effect that other factors besides fleshly descent had always been involved in determining the seed of Abraham. God's election was a factor in it; but that factor entered into the determination as a consequence of other factors. Esau was rejected because of what God knew he would become and of what Esau's character would produce in the lives of his posterity.

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

Not of works ...

means “not of fleshly descent,” as noted by Murray:

“Not of works” and “not of natural descent” are correlative and point to the same principle. Thus the apostle can adduce the one in an argument that is mainly concerned with the other without any sense of incongruity. [F10](#)

This expression is just another way of saying that God’s election of Jacob came without regard to deeds of the unborn twins, there having been none at the time of the election. It cannot mean that the election was decided without any regard to deeds they would perform in the future, which deeds were truly foreknown of God and plainly formed the righteous basis of the election. If the election was “not of works,” what was it of? It was of the sovereignty and foreknowledge of God. David Lipscomb has this further thought on the meaning of “not of works”:

It was not on account of works of their own that either might do, but Jacob would trust God and obey him. Those who do this God always selects as his beloved. [F11](#)

Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated ...

was not written of Isaac’s sons before they were born, but centuries afterward, this being a quotation, not from Genesis, but from Mal. 1:2f. God’s foreknowledge of what the Edomites would become was proved to be accurate by the sins and excesses of that people who came, in time, to deserve the denunciation recorded by Malachi.

Jacob and Esau, as individuals, were not the principal concern of the election, but the nations which they would produce. Despite that, the election had to begin with individuals. As Whiteside noted,

The selection of Jacob was the selection of a people rather than an individual. [F12](#)

This harmonizes with Gen. 25:23, where the “manner of people” looms as God’s great consideration. If Esau had been made the patriarch instead of Jacob, Israel would never have continued long enough to deliver the Messiah to mankind; but the overruling providence of the all-wise God interposed to prevent such a thing from taking place. God’s choice did not determine the eternal destiny of either twin, their subsequent lives determining that; but God’s choice did determine which would be the patriarch of Israel. The idea is here rejected that God ever chose any man to eternal life or death before he was born.

Verse 14

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

Paul’s great theme of God’s righteousness was never far from his thoughts; and his letter, in its entirety, has that theme constantly in focus. What he had just said of God’s election of Jacob might have raised some question of God’s rectitude; and, if the doctrine of election is what some affirm it to be, it would indeed indicate God’s lack of righteousness, thus making it necessary to reject all such views of that doctrine. But there was another phase of the rectitude of God that Paul had in mind here, and that is the fact that God has mercy upon some, and not upon others. Upon the uniformly wicked populations of earth, God has decided to show mercy

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33

Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

to those who have accepted through obedient faith the mercy which is freely offered to all; but the salvation of those thus receiving God's grace does no injustice to the wicked who never obey the truth and are therefore lost. Paul explained why in the next verse.

Verse 15

For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy upon whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.

This quotation is from Exo. 33:19, and it affirms the sovereign right of Almighty God to save whomsoever he will. No basis of any kind is there stated as an explanation of God's saving some and rejecting others; but any understanding whatever of God's dealings with his human children demands the assumption that there is a just and rational foundation for everything that God does. This quotation from Exodus simply does no of a totally blind man separating a box of black and white marbles in a cellar at midnight without any light! Some say, of course, that it does.

Thus, the choosing of Jacob was an act of grace and was not influenced by the moral character of Jacob or the immorality of Esau. On the other hand, Esau was discriminated against and made to serve his brother through no fault of his own. [E13](#)

That God chose Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not depend upon anything in them The choice depended solely on God's gracious will. [E14](#)

Such opinions as these clearly go far beyond anything the word of God says and should be rejected unless they can be proved. Furthermore, there is abundant proof in God's word that it was something "in men" that entered into God's election of them. For example, God elected Abraham, and why? If God is to be understood as either rational or just, there had to be a reason why. Human intelligence demands to know what it is; and the gracious and righteous God deigned to reveal to his human children just what the reason was, thus:

And the Lord said, For I know him (Abraham) that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him ([Genesis 18:19](#)).

In this epic passage of God's word, God stated his reasons for the choice of Abraham. God categorically stated, that he knew that Abraham would command his posterity after him, that they would keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment, "that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him," the latter clause being a dogmatic affirmation that without the qualities God foreknew in Abraham, the fulfillment of the promise would have been impossible. Thus they greatly err who fancy that it "was nothing in" Abraham that entered into God's election. That there was indeed something "in" Abraham that formed the basis of God's just and righteous act should have been assumed, even without the statement of what it was; but such is the perversity of human thought that it is even denied AFTER the statement of it!

Going a bit further, this example of why God chose Abraham is clearly applicable to the rejection of Esau. God saw in him a different "manner" of people from Abraham, making the fulfillment of the promise through Esau an utter impossibility; and that is something "in" Esau that resulted in

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

God's rejection of him. The insinuation that God "discriminated" against Esau capriciously is ridiculous.

And to carry this postulate even further, in every case of election, there has to be an element in the elected that distinguishes him from those not elected; and to deny this is to make election to be a totally immoral and capricious thing, unworthy even of people, much less of God. Nor can such a certainty as this bear the slightest resemblance to any theory of anyone's ever meriting salvation. Even when the election occurs, at least partially upon the basis of what is "in" the elected distinguishing them from the non-elected, the election is still without the merit of the elected and founded in God's love and grace, but not upon "grace alone," the proof of this being that God's grace has come alike upon the totality of mankind ([Titus 3:11](#)), which includes the non-elected. Factors others than grace are therefore involved in election. How could a so-called election, based on grace alone, discriminate between the elected and the non-elected, if no other factor was involved? The blind man in the cellar, maybe?

Verse 16

So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy.

Paul's words were still being directed at the Jews, primarily. Supposing that they were entitled to salvation, that God owed it to them, the nation as a whole, and the Pharisees as conspicuous examples of it, were wallowing in an arrogant self-righteousness that Paul struck down in the considerations brought forward here. No man merits salvation. In the last analysis, it is the gracious outflowing of God's loving grace and mercy that makes salvation possible for any person whomsoever. This is the conclusion Paul drew from the quotation from Exodus, and the only conclusion.

Godet understood this verse thus:

When God gives, it is not because a human will ("he that willeth") or a human work ("he that runneth") lays him under obligation, and forces him to give, in order not to be unjust by refusing. It is in himself that the initiative and the efficacy are ("him that calleth") - it is from him that the gift flows. [E15](#)

The quotation from Exo. 33:19 given in the preceding verse and made the basis of the conclusion stated here, relates to a request by Moses that God would show him his glory. God did so, not because he would have been unjust in refusing, but upon the basis stated in that verse of being free to show mercy upon whomsoever he would. Thus Moses received the glimpse of divine glory, not through merit, but from God's gracious compliance with his request. Note, however, that the scriptures do not say that God's compliance had nothing to do with Moses' request, or with his life and character, or with his service as the great lawgiver; nor can it be believed that "nothing in" Moses was considered by God in granting him a glimpse of the glory. Certainly, the REQUEST was considered, and that was something in Moses; and, therefore, all that is taught here is that Moses' great life and character, noble and outstanding as they were, could not have earned such a boon as that which God freely gave, nor could such admirable qualities in Moses have made it wrong for God to have denied his plea.

Verses 17, 18

For the scriptures saith unto Pharaoh, For this very purpose did I raise thee up, that I might

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

show in thee my power, and that my name might be published abroad in all the earth. So then he hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth.

The most careful attention should here be directed to what is not said by Paul in this appeal to Exo. 9:16. God did not say to Pharaoh that he had raised him up in order to destroy him, or to drown his army in the Red Sea, but that God had raised him up for the purpose of showing his power in Pharaoh and of having God's name published throughout the earth. Just HOW God's purpose would be fulfilled in Pharaoh, at the time God spoke, still remained within the circumference of Pharaoh's free will to choose, whether by his own submission to God commands or by his rebellion against them, would be realized God's purpose. If Pharaoh had submitted to God's will, God's name would have been magnified all over the world and his power would have been demonstrated in Pharaoh just as gloriously in that manner as it was in the manner of its actual occurrence. Pharaoh had the free choice of obeying or not obeying God; but God had purposed, either way, to use him as a demonstration of God's power and a means of publishing the divine name all over the world; but the choice of HOW this would come about remained with Pharaoh until he was HARDENED. See more on the latter under Rom. 11:7.

What happened to the king of Nineveh, following the preaching of Jonah, should be remembered in the connection here. Both Pharaoh and the ruler of Nineveh heard the word of God, the one by Moses, the other by Jonah. Nineveh received mercy; Egypt did not. God had a perfect right to spare one and punish the other; but it is a falsehood to allege that God's doing so was capricious and unrelated to what was in the two monarchs or to their response to God's word. It definitely was related to their response. Pharaoh repeatedly to Nineveh, on the other hand, called his whole nation to sackcloth and ashes, leading the way in penitence himself, with all of his royal court. A mere glance at the two monarchs reveals why one was spared, the other not. And note too that even in the case of Nineveh, it was even there a matter of God's grace; for God owed absolutely nothing to either monarch, either to the one who hardened his heart or to the one that repented - hence the propriety of Paul's remark that God had mercy upon whom he would, and whom he would he hardened.

But there was a dark and threatening shadow of doom for Israel in Paul's introduction of the case of Pharaoh whose repeated triflings with God's word had resulted, at last, in God's judicial hardening of the evil monarch's heart (after Pharaoh himself had hardened it ten times!). This was exactly what God had done to Israel, and the awful knowledge of it was almost breaking Paul's heart. The thrust of that terrible word "hardened" at the end of Rom. 9:18 was pointed squarely at Israel; and Paul would announce it formally in Rom. 11:25, but here it was only mentioned. Before the dreadful truth would be thundered in the oracle of the eleventh chapter, Paul would continue to build the logical foundations leading up to it; and it cannot be doubted that herein lies the purpose of bringing Pharaoh into these verses.

Verse 19

Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he still find fault? For who withstandeth his will?

Again the familiar diatribe raises a theoretical objection, described by Greathouse thus:

If God treats men as Paul has explained, they have no moral responsibility. God has no right to condemn a sinner whom he himself has hardened. [E16](#)

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

Paul might have replied to such a theoretical objection in a number of ways; but he apparently did not consider that such an objection was even worthy of any direct or detailed answer. That human beings are responsible for what they do appears plainly enough in Rom. 9:22 where Israel's responsibility for refusing God's call is sharply stated. As a response to the objection raised by means of the diatribe, Paul selected a surprisingly different reply, that being stated in the next verse.

Verse 20

Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why didst thou make me thus?

Man has no right to arraign God in his thoughts and to charge him with unrighteousness and dispute his decisions. Even if, by the feeble lamp of human knowledge, no adequate reason appears as to "why" God did certain things, the creature is in no sense a judge of the Creator. The most fundamental of all considerations relative to God is that God is altogether righteous, holy, and good; and that, whatever of his decisions may appear to people as otherwise, the fact of their righteousness and justice remains unimpaired. It was a part of the honor of Abraham that he had such a conviction of God's righteousness. In that patriarch's great intercessory prayer for Sodom, he prayed, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" ([Genesis 18:25](#)). Abraham's prayer was founded in the deepest of inner convictions that God is good and righteous.

Jesus himself expounded this same principle in the parable of the talents, wherein the one-talent man viewed God (his lord in the parable) as "a hard man" ([Matthew 25:24](#)). God's response to that accusation was the expulsion of the wicked and slothful servant. In the same manner here, Paul did not argue the point but cited the wickedness of the heart which will raise such a question, such a questioner being clearly one who interposes his own will as antithetical to that of God, vainly supposing that finite intelligence is capable of judging the actions of God. The evil judgment uttered by the one-talent man in the parable was the child of his own wicked heart and not due to any wrong doing on the part of his Lord. Paul taught here that any allegation to the effect that God would condemn a sinner that God had hardened himself can originate in none other than a wicked heart.

Verse 21

Or hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?

Paul taught here that man has no more right to question God than a pot has to criticize the potter; but here is exactly where the problem lies. Man is not a pot, and he does diligently strive to understand the workings of the divine government; and it is precisely because of such human strivings that works like Romans were provided by the Spirit of God. God's mercy is extended to man, even in this, that his desire to know is honored through the sacred revelations of God's will.

The bearing of this analogy on the Jewish question, still in the forefront of Paul's thought, was stated by Godet, thus:

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33

Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

The lump represents the whole of humanity Let not Israel therefore say to God, "Thou hast no right to make of me anything else than a vessel of honor; and thou hast no right to make of that other body, the Gentiles, anything else than a base vessel." It belongs to God himself to decide, according to his wisdom. [F17](#)

The figure of the two kinds of vessels, honorable and dishonorable, made from the same lump is most instructive and was extended by Paul in his letter to Timothy ([2 Timothy 2:20,21](#)). Paul's instruction from the same figure there reveals that caprice is not the determining factor in selecting which vessels are to be honorable; because Paul granted to those who will "purge themselves of wickedness" the precious promise that they should be made into vessels of honor, suitable for the Master's use.

The hardening of Israel and God's rejection of that nation from having any further place as a favored portion of humanity is the great announcement Paul was leading up to, as noted by Locke, thus:

By "the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction" (mentioned in [Romans 9:22](#)) he manifestly means the nation of the Jews, who were now grown ripe, and fit for the destruction he was bringing upon them. And by "vessels of mercy" he means the Christian church gathered out of a small collection of convert Jews, and the rest made up of Gentiles, who were together from thenceforward to be the people of God in the room of the Jewish nation, now cast off, as apparent in Rom. 9:24. [F18](#)

Thus, Paul's use of the analogy of honorable and dishonorable vessels from the same lump is a parallel argument and supplemental to the judgment of Pharaoh, both being applicable to the hardening of Israel, already a fact, and the subject throughout this whole section of Romans. Locke applied the example of Pharaoh to Israel, thus:

How darest thou, O man, to call God to account, and question his justice, in casting off his ancient people, the Jews? What if God, willing to punish that sinful people, and do it so as to have his power known and taken notice of, in the doing of it: (for why may not God raise them to that purpose, as well as he did Pharaoh and the Egyptians?) What, I say, if God bore with them a long time, as he did with Pharaoh, that his hand might be the more eminently visible in their destruction; and that also, at the same time, he might with the more glory, make known his goodness and mercy to the Gentiles. [F19](#)

Verses 22, 23

What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he afore prepared unto glory.

The sense of these words is clearly presented in Locke's paraphrase, above.

Much longsuffering ...

God's almost endless patience with the repeated rebellions and departures of the chosen people is the burden of the Old Testament and the theme of many a prophetic message. In a sense, God was trapped by the promise of the Messiah's revelation through the seed of Abraham, which holy intention necessitated the preservation of the covenant people (regardless

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33

Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

of what they did) until the Messiah should at last appear. The Jews had absolutely no doubt whatever of the validity of the promise of the Messiah; and their leaders were accustomed to stabilize the people and allay their fears and apprehensions in the presence of any threatened calamity by saying, "The Messiah has not come, so we are safe!" They also extended this confidence to a state of presumption in regard to their sins. God judicially hardened the ten northern tribes and cast four-fifths of the whole Jewish nation into the ash can of history; but not even that quelled the overconfidence and self-righteousness in which Israel continued stubbornly in a course of sin against God. But the Messiah had indeed come at last; and, upon Israel's rejection and murder of the Anointed One, no further reason existed for their perpetuation. God hardened them, as indeed they were already hardened for generations; and Paul was warning them in this letter that their doom was as certain as that of Pharaoh. In all revealed instances of God's hardening, as in the case of Pharaoh (and now Israel), total destruction was the immediate and summary result. True, Israel was to be destroyed also, even their capital razed and burned, but there was to be a startling difference. That difference is the great mystery announced in Rom. 11:25.

Fitted for destruction ...

Israel rejected Moses, their great deliverer, murmured against him, despised the manna, fainted in the wilderness, cried for a king like the nations around them, went a whoring after the gods of the Canaanites, slew God's prophets, despised his mercies, and at last slew the King himself when he came. Such a nation had long been ripe for destruction; but, as noted above, God was, in a sense, "stuck with them" until Jesus came. The extent of Israel's deserving God's rejection is implicit in the fact that the prophet Jeremiah categorically stated that they were worse than Sodom and worse than the ten northern tribes. Thus, there was absolutely nothing unjust on God's part in his rejection of Israel and the calling of all people (including Israel, of course) in Christ.

Verses 24, 25

Even us whom he also called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles? As he saith also in Hosea, I will call that my people, which was not my people; And her beloved that was not beloved.

Rom. 9:24 concludes the long question that began back in Rom. 9:22 with the words "What if ..." The import of this long interrogation is "Who should think it extraordinary, or something to wonder about, that God would at last reject that nation which had so long been rejecting him?" Paul at this point proceeded to show, by the quotation of a number of prophecies, that just these very things, the calling of the Gentiles and the rejection of Israel had been exactly foretold by God's prophets.

The verse quoted here is from Hosea 2:23 and can be understood in no other way except as a promise that Gentiles will finally become God's people.

Verse 26

And it shall be, in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, There shall they be called sons of the living God.

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

This prophecy is also from Hosea ([Hosea 1:10](#)) and is a clear promise of the coming of the Gentiles into the relationship with God as "sons." Hosea made this development to lie in the future, as it indeed was when he wrote; but under the preaching of the gospel this had already begun to be fulfilled, the letter to the Romans itself being proof that Gentiles were indeed called "sons of God," thus making them to share in the highest and holiest blessing life on earth has ever afforded. How incredible it seems that Israel's leaders did not heed these prophecies, nor even the fulfillment of them taking place at that moment before their eyes! But Paul was by no means finished; he would pile prophecy upon prophecy. And Isaiah crieth concerning Israel, If the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that shall be saved; for the Lord will execute his word upon the earth, finishing it and cutting it short. And, as Isaiah hath said before,

Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, We had become as Sodom, and had been made like unto Gomorrah.

The first two verses of this passage are from Isaiah 10:22,23, which in the KJV reads thus: For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness. For the Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of the land.

Paul's use of that scripture is interesting. He quoted it giving the sense, not the exact words. Paul used Isaiah's prophecy that only a remnant of Israel should return from captivity as an argument that only a small part of Israel would be saved. All of this fitted perfectly into Paul's reasoning that merely being a Jew was insufficient grounds for expecting salvation.

Paul next quoted Isaiah 1:9, thus:

Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

Paul's quotation in the English Revised Version (1885) has "Lord of Sabaoth" for "Lord of hosts," the meaning being the same. Hodge's comment on the actual meaning of this expression is interesting:

As the word "host" is used in reference to any multitude arranged in order, as of men in an army, of angels, of the stars, or of all the heavenly bodies, including the sun and moon, so the expression "Lord of hosts" may mean Lord of armies, Lord of angels, Lord of heaven, or of the universe as a marshaled host It is most probable, therefore, that God is called Lord of hosts being equivalent to the Lord of the universe. [E20](#)

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

Of particular significance, it seems, is the root meaning that clings to the expression "arranged in order." God is always to be understood as a God of order; and, as Paul said in another place, "God is not the author of confusion" ([1 Corinthians 14:13](#)). Moule explained Paul's use of Isaiah's words in this place, thus:

Here again is a first and second incidence of the prophecy. In every stage of the history of sin and redemption, the apostle, in the Spirit, sees an embryo of the Great Development. So in the woefully limited number of the exiles who returned from the old captivity, he sees an embodied prophecy of the fewness of the sons of Israel who shall return from the exile of incredulity to their true Messiah. ^{F21}

Verses 30, 31

What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness, attained to righteousness which is of faith: but Israel, following after a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law.

Concerning the meaning of "righteousness" as repeatedly used in this place, Hodge declared: The word "righteousness" as expressing the sum of the divine requisitions, that which fulfills the law, retains its meaning (throughout). ^{F22}

These two verses state the conclusion from previous argument, to the effect that the incredible has happened. The Gentiles whose history had been one long, miserable story of debauchery, godlessness, and shame, but whose debased condition was here rather mildly stated by Paul as following "not after righteousness" (!) - even the Gentiles, such Gentiles, had, by their belief of the gospel and their acceptance of it by means of obedient faith, "attained unto righteousness." Here is proof that the Gentiles had attained to an acceptable degree of righteous living; there had truly been a transformation in their lives. On the other hand, Israel, despite their possession of Moses' law and their pride in all the privileges and prerogatives of the covenant people, described here as "following after a law of righteousness," had nevertheless failed to attain any acceptable degree of godly living. They "did not arrive." The Gentiles did! The reason why Israel failed, Paul would explain in the next chapter; but the thing in view here is that, in the rejection of Christ and in their refusal to accept his proffered mercy through loving, obedient faith, they, as a nation, were cut off from being any longer God's people. Of course, any Israelite was still eligible, as were all people, to accept and obey the gospel of Christ, Paul himself being an outstanding example of the remnant that did so. Yet no Israelite, AS SUCH, was received into that kingdom of Christ, in which all such distinctions as Jew and Gentile, male and female, Greek and barbarian, bond and free, etc., were blotted out, and all people considered as "one" in Christ Jesus.

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

Verse 32

Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by works. They stumbled at the stone of stumbling.

For the true meaning of "as it were by works" see under Rom. 9:11, where it means "not of fleshly descent" just as it certainly does here. That is the very thing Paul had been writing of throughout this portion of Romans, the Jews thinking to have salvation through fleshly descent from Abraham. Any attempt to view "works" here as the efforts of the Jews at keeping the law of Moses is incorrect. The total unrighteousness of the vast majority of that nation, called in scripture "worse than Sodom," and worse than the northern tribes, makes any such interpretation of "works" here to be absolutely untenable. The law of God given through Moses is precisely what they did not keep. They relied solely upon fleshly descent, as taught by John the Baptist, Christ, and Paul.

They stumbled at the stone of stumbling ...

refers to their rejection of Christ; and for a full discussion of this subject, see below.

Verse 33

Even as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence: He that believeth on him shall not be put to shame.

This quotation is a fusion of two passages from Isaiah. They read thus in the Old Testament:

Therefore, thus saith the Lord, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste ([Isaiah 28:16](#)).

And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem ([Isaiah 8:14](#)).

Hodge commented on the manner of Paul's using these two quotations thus:

In both these passages, mention is made of a stone; but the predicates of this stone, as given in the latter passage, are transferred to the other, and those there are omitted. [F23](#)

To be sure, such was permissible and right for Paul to do, because the stone in both passages is the Lord Jesus Christ. The great significance of Paul's introduction of these quotations is the clear and emphatic prediction that Israel would stumble upon it. It was foretold in the most dramatic form that "both the houses of Israel would find this precious corner stone, not only a

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

rock of stumbling and offence, but a gin and a snare." Again, the blindness of the religious hierarchy to such stark and dreadful warnings must ever remain a mystery.

CHRIST, THE LIVING STONE

If ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious: unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Because it is contained in scripture, Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious; And he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame. For you therefore that believe is the preciousness: but for such as disbelieve, The stone which the builders rejected, The same was made the head of the corner; and A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence; for they stumble at the word, being disobedient ([1 Peter 2:3-8](#)).

With reference to this metaphor itself, a stone is among the most interesting things on earth; and every stone has a life story, the mystery of which encompasses the most fantastic dimensions of time and space. Compared to the life story of a stone, the lives of the most interesting men seem dull and commonplace. Take, as an example, the Star of Africa, which adorns the sceptre of England's queen. It is old by millenniums and eons of time, but seems as little affected by the receding centuries as the stars themselves. And yet, at one time, it was a lump of black carbon, folded and pressured by the undulating layers of prehistoric earth; and how it came to be a jewel in a monarch's regalia is a romance as exciting as the story of the earth itself.

Again, glance at the seared residue of Ahnighito (79,000-pound meteorite in Museum of Natural History, New York). Like the angels cast out of heaven, it has fallen from its first estate, having once coasted through measureless reaches of the universe at thousands of miles an hour for numberless thousands of years; it was snared, at last, by the tricky atmosphere of the earth and sank in flaming robes of fire upon a mountain side, from whence it journeyed to its place as a gazingstock in a museum.

And look at that great boulder, a mighty erratic, speaking of the ice age, the distinctive markings of its serrated surface witnessing to the power of the great glacier that plowed it up from the bed of a continent and floated it upon a sea of ice for a thousand miles to where it now rests in isolated splendor, a grey sentinel of yesterdays which preceded the race of people.

That chalk-like limestone with its arms full of seashells (the San Jacinto Monument) was once the bottom of the ocean floor and was formed by innumerable generations of marine life that

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

sank to the cold oblivion of its midnight depths, where it waited half an eternity for the buckling of the earth's crust to lift it upward to the light and to the interest of a being called man.

The same exciting story is everywhere a stone is found. That lump of lava that cooled only yesterday, as geologists count time, was boiling hot for five hundred centuries. Those flat pebbles on the beach were machined and polished by ocean waves and tides, not merely of centuries, but of millenniums. A grain of sand has a history that staggers the imagination. In the petrified forest of Arizona, one stands in amazement and awe. That stone forest was once a flourishing mantle of green growth; songbirds built their nests there; and God's myriad children of the out-of-doors dwelt there through ages and cycles of time. But NOW, those great trees are stone, hard as flint, with the dead weight of time upon them, incredible things, lying stark and still there in the desert sun, but with a message in their stone branches that brings a catch in the throat and unwilling mist in the eyes.

It is little wonder, therefore, that the sacred writers seized upon such a metaphor as that provided by the stone, in order to convey eternal truth concerning Jesus Christ: for Christ is many kinds of stone, as a glance at the scripture text just cited quickly reveals.

Christ is the "living stone"; and, in this, our Lord infinitely surpasses the metaphor without in any manner diminishing the effectiveness of it, because the Living Stone partakes of the likeness of many other types of stones. Like the meteorite, he is a visitor from another sphere. The Dayspring from on High came from above and beyond our poor earth to bring redemption and eternal life to people. Like the diamond, he is exceedingly precious and is "the same yesterday, today, yea and for ever" ([Hebrews 13:8](#)). Like the glacial boulder, he bears upon himself the record of the infinite past and the prophecy of something yet to be. Surely, it could have been none other than the Spirit of God who gave the sacred writers so apt a metaphor of the Son of God. He is truly the Living Stone.

This living stone is the foundation stone, as Isaiah said. He is the foundation of all that is good and desirable in human civilization. Especially of the church, he is the foundation.

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ ([1 Corinthians 3:11](#)).

What is built upon Christ will endure. As he himself revealed, to build upon the rock is to keep the sayings of the Master ([Matthew 7:24](#)). If people would only build upon the living stone, they would no longer be discouraged by the collapse of all that they build elsewhere.

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

This living stone is a tried stone, as stated in both Testaments. He was in all points tempted as people are ([Hebrews 4:5](#)). The fact of our Lord's being tried brings to the Christian supreme confidence in two important particulars, these being the infallibility of Christ and the perfect sympathy he has for his children. We know that he cannot fail, for he has already been tried and tested, and we know that he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

This living stone is a precious stone ([1 Peter 2:7](#)), precious by any standard of determination, precious because of his beauty (though his beauty is not of an earthly type, [Isaiah 53:2](#)), precious because of the love he showed to people, precious because of the hope he brings, and precious in every way. We shall see "the King in his beauty" ([Isaiah 33:17](#)). Whatever criteria people have ever used to determine value, or the quality of being precious, all of them are exhausted in Christ. He is unique, there being none other. He alone provides salvation. The ties of the heart's highest and best affection attain their ultimate strength in Christ.

This living stone is a corner stone ([Isaiah 28:16](#)), an appropriate designation indeed. In him law ended and grace began; in him God submitted to his deepest humiliation and humanity attained its greatest exaltation; in him time and eternity struck hands together; in him the Old Testament was fulfilled and the New Testament was established; in him the righteous shall be glorified and the wicked frustrated; he is a savor of life unto life in them that believe and a savor of death unto death in them that believe not; in him is the corner of all human destiny, those on the left departing from his presence forever, and those on the right entering into his joy forever!

This living stone is a growing stone. In the dream of the mighty king of Babylon, centuries before Christ was born, he saw a little stone cut out of a mountain without hands, which struck the kingdoms of this world upon their feet of clay, overcame them, ground them to powder, and grew until it filled the whole world. That growing stone is Christ, and the growth is still in progress, nor shall it ever cease until the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. Amen.

The living stone is a refuge, or sanctuary. As it is written:

And he shall be a sanctuary ([Isaiah 8:14](#)).

A man shall be a hiding place from the wind and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a mighty rock in a weary land ([Isaiah 32:2](#)).

Christ is our Rock and our Redeemer; blessed be the name of the Lord. In this concept of Christ as a sanctuary, or refuge, it is well to remember that none ever enjoyed a refuge in a sanctuary without being in it.

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

This living stone is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. It was this particular aspect of him that prompted Paul's introduction of this metaphor into this part of Romans. Christ's being foretold as "a rock of stumbling" by Isaiah was a prophecy of Israel's rejection of Christ. And how did they stumble on Christ? Peter explained it thus:

They stumbled at the word, being disobedient.

People stumbled upon Christ (and they still do), accounting his commandments as "hard sayings" ([John 6:60](#)); people stumble through pride which is offended at the lowliness of Jesus' birth, and draw back from following one born in a stable, laid in a manger, nursed under the palms of Egypt, schooled in a carpenter's shop, attended by fishermen, mocked by the soldiers in the common hall, crucified between two thieves, and buried in a borrowed grave. Christ has ever been, in such things as those, a stumbling stone to the proud. Paul said:

We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, the power of God and the wisdom of God" ([1 Corinthians 1:23,24](#)).

How strange that it should be thus with people in regard to spiritual things, but who nevertheless do not reject a diamond because God wrapped it in the mud of Africa, nor a lily because its roots take hold of the mire.

Oh, then to the Rock let me fly, To the Rock that is higher than I!

The living stone is also the rejected stone. This phase of this extensive metaphor is founded upon an historical incident, described by Dean Plumptre thus:

The illustration seems to have been drawn from one of the stones used in the building of the great temple in Jerusalem, quarried, hewn, and marked away from the site of the temple, which the builders, ignorant of the head architect's plans, had put to one side, as having no place in the building, but which was found afterwards to be that upon which the completeness of the structure depended, that on which, as the chief corner stone, the two walls met, and were bonded together. [F24](#)

In this analogy, the Jewish hierarchy in Jerusalem were the builders who rejected the Christ who is the head of the corner. May all people labor in all their lives, day and night, in prayers and

Bible Study Guide – Romans 9:1-33
Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring / Summer 2018

devotions, in patient waiting and loving service, that they might avoid, at whatever cost, the folly of rejecting the Lord.⁽²⁾

Footnotes for Romans 9

- 1: Moses E. Lard, Commentary on Paul's Letter to Romans (Cincinnati, Ohio: Christian Board of Publication, 1914), p. 291.
- 2: David Lipscomb, A Commentary on New Testament Epistles (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1967), p. 164.
- 3: Moses E. Lard, op. cit., p. 292.
- 4: Charles Hodge, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), p. 297.
- 5: Ibid., p. 296.
- 6: F. Godet, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p. 341.
- 7: C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1957), p. 179.
- 8: Charles Hodge, op. cit., p. 300.
- 9: John Murray, The Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), ii, p. 25.
- 10: Ibid., p. 14.
- 11: David Lipscomb, op. cit., p. 172.
- 12: R.L. Whiteside, A New Commentary on Paul's Epistles to Saints in Rome (Denton, Texas: Miss Inys Whiteside, 1945), p. 199.
- 13: Richard A. Batey, The Letter of Paul to the Romans (Austin, Texas: The R. B. Sweet Company, 1969), p. 125.
- 14: William M. Greathouse, Beacon Bible Commentary (Kansas City, Missouri: The Beacon Hill Press, 1968), p. 204.
- 15: F. Godet, op. cit., p. 352.
- 16: Wm. M. Greathouse, op. cit., p. 206.
- 17: F. Godet, op. cit., p. 353.
- 18: John Locke, Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul (Boston: 1832), p. 342.
- 19: Ibid.
- 20: Charles Hodge, op. cit., p. 328.
- 21: H. C. G. Moule, The Epistle to the Romans (London: Pickering and Inglis, Ltd.), p. 257.
- 22: Charles Hodge, op. cit., p. 329.
- 23: Ibid., p. 330.
- 24: Dean Plumtre, as quoted by R. Tuck, The Pulpit Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1961), Vol. 18 (i), p. 356.

² Coffman, James Burton. "Commentary on Romans 9". "Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament". <<http://www.studylight.org/com/bcc/view.cgi?book=ro&chapter=009>>. Abilene Christian University Press, Abilene, Texas, USA. 1983-1999.