

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

God's Sovereign Choice

Romans 9:1-18

2000

Introduction

In chapters 1-8, Paul has established the Biblical principles of salvation. And in chapters 12-16 he will discuss the practical effect of salvation in the life of a believer. However, before he does, Paul addresses the problem of salvation in chapters 9-11.

What is the problem of salvation? It is the question of the spiritual welfare of the Jews and the nation of Israel.

I Paul's Description of Israel's Advantages

A. He highlights his great concern for Israel [Verse 1-2]

Although Paul took great delight in the fact that God had called him to minister to the Gentiles, he was deeply grieved that his own people, the Jewish nation, had failed to accept the salvation that was proclaimed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

1. He had great **sorrow** for the Jews

Great sorrow = Lupe = "Overwhelming sadness or heaviness of heart"

2. He had unceasing **anguish** for the Jews

Unceasing anguish = Odune = Continual grief"

3. He had a sacrificial heart for the Jews [Verse 3]

a. He wished himself **accursed** for their sake

Accursed = Anathema = "To ban or excommunicate"

b. He wished himself **cut off** for their sake

Paul has such a great love in his heart for his fellow Jews that he was willing to forfeit his own salvation and spend eternity in hell if somehow that could bring His fellow Jews to faith in Christ!

Illustration: Moses' prayer for his idol-worshipping fellow Jews

Exodus 32:32 "But now, please forgive their sin--but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written."

John 15:13-14 "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

Application:

How anguished and grieved am I about the condition of the lost?

Am I willing to forfeit my eternal salvation so that others might have life?

Am I at least willing to forfeit my comfort so that others might have life?

Part of what made Paul such a powerful evangelist is that he loved the people he spoke to. Evangelism has little effect if there is little love for the lost.

The question is, *How did Paul manage to have such a great love for the Jews?*

It was cultivated in prayer!

Romans 10:1 “Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.”

If you want to have a heart for the lost, begin praying for them.

If you want to love your spouse, begin praying for him/her.

If you want to love your enemy, begin praying for him.

Nothing produces greater love and concern for others than prayer!

B. He highlights God's great blessing of Israel [Verse 4-5]

From the time that God called Abraham, Israel was uniquely separated out from all the nations on earth to be God's representatives and witnesses to the rest of the world.

But it is important to note that their selection by God had nothing to do with them.

Deuteronomy 7:6-7 “The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples.”

Deut 9:4-6 “It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity ... for you are a stiff-necked people.”

Paul now presents eight magnificent privileges that God gave to the people of Israel:

1. Theirs is the adoption [Verse 4a]

The people of Israel are repeatedly referred to in the Old Testament as “sons” of God.

a. Individually “sons” of God

Exodus 4:22-23 “Then say to Pharaoh, ‘This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, “Let my son go, so he may worship me.” But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son.’”

Hosea 1:10 “Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’”

2. Theirs is the divine glory [Verse 4b]

The Shekinah glory of God was God's visible presence among His people in the OT.

a. Manifested in the cloud

1. During their desert wanderings - Ex 13:21

2. On Mount Sinai when God gave Moses the 10 Commandments - Ex 24:15-18

b. Manifested in the fire

1. During their desert wanderings – Ex 13:21
 2. It consumed the first sacrifice at the new Tabernacle - Lev 9:23-24
 - c. Manifested by his indwelling presence in the tabernacle and temple of God
 - Ex 40:34-35 “Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.”
3. Theirs is the **covenants** [Verse 4c]
- Ephesians 2:12 “... remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.”
1. God’s covenant with Abraham - Gen 15:18; 17:7-8
 2. God’s covenant with Israel during the time of Moses - Ex 24:8; 34:10; Deut 29:1-5
 3. God’s covenant with Joshua - Josh 8:30-35
 4. God’s covenant with David - 2 Sam 23:5; Ps 89:28
 5. God’s covenant with Israel - Gen 17:7-8

Jer 31:31-34 "The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”
4. Theirs is the Law [Verse 4d]
- The Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20:1-20, along with a countless number of other rules, regulations, statutes and principles.
- Romans 3:1-2 “What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? 2 Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God.”
5. Theirs is the temple worship - Leviticus [Verse 4e]
- The detailed and foreshadowing ministry of Jesus as seen in the Temple worship and various feasts and festivals. It was the means by which Israel worshipped God and dealt with its own sin before the Lord. It included the sacrifices, the offerings, the cleanings, and other prescribed activities that were related to the temple and communion with God.

6. Theirs are the **promises** [Verse 4f]

These promises are a reference to the coming Messiah - Rom 4:13-21

Acts 13:32 “We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus.”

7. Theirs are the patriarchs [Verse 5a]

A reference to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his twelve sons who were the primary recipients of the privileges and promises – Gen 50:24.

8. Theirs is the **human** ancestry of Christ [Verse 5b]

It was through these men that the fulfillment of God’s revelation would come.

Romans 1:3-4 [Christ Jesus], who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The irony, of course, is that the very nation who received so many divine blessings and was specially prepared by God to reveal the Messiah, should fail to recognize Jesus Christ, who was the fulfillment of all that God had done and promised.

The very blessings that God poured out on Israel for the purpose of revealing the coming Messiah became a barrier to their salvation in that they gave them a false sense of spiritual security.

II Paul’s Assessment Of Israel’s Problem

A. God’s **Word** did not fail to bring salvation [Verse 6a]

Did not fail = Ekpipto = “To be inefficient or ineffective”

In other words, “Did God’s promises fail?” NO! Neither God nor His word failed.

Num 23:19 “God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?”

B. The people of **Israel** failed to receive salvation

Why? Because they tenaciously clung to their belief that salvation was based on:

- Physical descent from Abraham
- Works of righteousness under the law

1. Not all descendents from Israel are Israel [Verse 6b]

In other words, not everyone who claims to be a Jew is a true Jew. In that same way that not everyone who claims to be a Christian is a true Christian.

Romans 2:28-29 “A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.”

Application: Raising children

It is vital to remember that our children are not automatically going to be believers just because we are. It is up to us as parents to train our children to know the Lord. There are two aspects of training which are essential if we are to properly fulfill our God-given responsibility in this area:

1. **Modeling** (who we are)

1 Cor 11:1 “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”

2. **Instructing** (what we teach)

Deut 6:5-8 “Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”

2. Not all descendents from Abraham are Abraham’s [Verse 7-8]
- a. It is through Isaac that God’s offspring were reckoned
 - b. It is not the natural children who are God’s children
 - c. It is the children of the promise who are Abraham’s offspring

Galatians 3:6-7 “Consider Abraham: “He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.”

Galatians 3:29 “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Throughout this section of scripture we are faced with the dilemma of the “Election” “Freewill” debate or the “Calvinistic” “Armenian” debate. Summarized briefly, John Calvin (1500’s) emphasized predestination (predestination of the saved and predestination of the damned), the sovereignty of God, and the irresistibility of grace. And Jacobus Armani’s (1500’s) taught that Christ died for all men, not only for the elect and that salvation was a result of man responding with his free will to the gift of God through faith.

Who is right? Well, the difficulty is that the Bible teaches both! The work of salvation, from beginning to end, is a sovereign work of God to which man must respond of his own free will by belief and faith in the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Illustration: The Picture of the Lady
Old Woman or Young Lady

III Paul’s Illustrations Of God’s Sovereign Choice

- A. God’s sovereignty displayed in **Isaac** - Gen 16:1-18:15 [Verse 9]
Abraham had two sons by two different women.

Ishmael was the product of human effort in that Sarah gave her slave, Hagar, to her husband so that she could bear children through Hagar. It is a classic example of trying to get God's work done through human ingenuity.

Isaac, on the other hand, was born of the promise of God.

1. God delivered at the appointed time
2. God delivered the appointed son

B. God's sovereignty displayed in **Jacob** - Gen 25:19-23 [Verse 10]

1. Two boys from the same father
2. Before the twins had done good or bad [Verse 11]
 - a. That God's purpose in election might stand

Election = Ekloge = "Divine selection"

Jacob became the heir of God because of God's sovereign choice. Some people have a great deal of difficulty accepting this. "How can God do that?" He can do it because He is sovereign. The real mystery is not that he rejected Esau, but that He chose Jacob.

3. Took place in spite of cultural traditions [Verse 12]
 - a. The older served the younger

Although we have no account of Esau directly serving Jacob, his descendents, the Edomites, spent long periods of time in bondage and slavery to the Jews.

4. He loved Jacob but hated Esau [Verse 13]

Loved = Agapao = "To love sacrificially"

Hated = Miso = "To detest or, as in this case, to love less"

Malachi 1:2-3 "I have loved you," says the LORD. "But you ask, 'How have you loved us?' "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" the LORD says. "Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his mountains into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals."

It does not mean that God literally "hated" Esau, but rather, that he loved him less when compared with Jacob. We find this same use of "hate" in Luke 14:26 when Jesus says, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters-yes, even his own life-he cannot be my disciple." Jesus clearly is not advocating hatred of one's parents or loved ones. What He is saying is that our love for even family members subservient to our devotion to God.

Application:

The natural human response is to assert that God was unjustly arbitrary in choosing one over the other long before they would have opportunity to trust or reject Him or to be obedient or disobedient. But in doing so, we call into question the very justice of God. God and that He needs no justification for anything he does – including calling some men to salvation and not calling others.

C. God's sovereignty displayed in **Pharaoh**

1. He has mercy and compassion on whom He wishes [Verse 14-15]

Mercy = Eleeo = "To be compassionate, take pity on"

Mercy is the heart of lovingkindness

Compassion = Oikteiro = "To exercise pity"

Compassion is the act of lovingkindness

This quote is taken from Exodus 33:19 at the time when God was answering Moses' request to see the glory of God shortly after the sin of Israel in worshipping the golden calf. And the LORD said, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

"Because all men are sinful and deserve God's condemnation, no person is wronged or treated unjustly if God chooses to condemn him. That is justice. His mercy toward any person is purely by His grace."

Titus 3:5 "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy."

a. It does not depend on:

1. Man's **desire** [Verse 16a]

Desire = Thelo = "Choice, preference or wish"

It is not man's initiative that brings about salvation. Rather it is God's.

However, the Bible also makes it clear that God's choosing must be confirmed by man's faith.

Hebrews 11:20-21 "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future. By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff."

2. Man's **effort** [Verse 16b]

Effort = Trecho = "To run or walk hastily"

Election is not something we run for or earn, but is the sovereign work of God.

Eph 2:8-9 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-not by works, so that no one can boast."

b. It depends on God's **mercy** [Verse 16c]

Paul now turns to another example of God's sovereign choice by referencing the Pharaoh of Egypt during the Exodus of Israel.

2. Pharaoh was raised up by God:

Pharaoh deserved death, but God not only allowed him to live, but actually raised him up into power. Why? Why would God allow such a brutal, cruel, heartless, ungodly, totalitarian dictator to live?

a. To display His **power** - Exodus 9:16 [Verse 17a]

The resistance and disobedience of Pharaoh became the stage from which God displayed some of the most remarkable miracles recorded in the Bible.

Despite the uplifted hand of Pharaoh's rebellion against God, he was handed defeat after defeat by power of God, demonstrating that His miraculous power was far greater than the Satan-empowered miracles of Pharaoh's magicians.

b. To proclaim His **name** [Verse 17b]

Exodus 15:14-15 "The nations will hear and tremble; anguish will grip the people of Philistia. The chiefs of Edom will be terrified, the leaders of Moab will be seized with trembling, the people of Canaan will melt away."

Joshua 2:9-11 "and said to them, "I know that the LORD has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below."

Application:

Pharaoh's example is worth remembering at times when God's justice seems to be delayed in a world that is full of leaders who are following in the godless footsteps of Pharaoh.

3. The conclusion of the matter [Verse 18]

God delivered Israel to exhibit His sovereign mercy on those whom He desires, and He raised up and destroyed Pharaoh to exhibit the corollary truth that He hardens those whom He desires.

a. God has **mercy** on whom He desires

b. God **hardens** whom He desires

Harden = Skleruno = "To render stubborn or obstinate"

The origin of our English term, "arterial sclerosis" or hardening of the arteries.

This particular text only mentions that "God hardens who he desires." But in

Exodus we have the full account indicating that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Ex 8:32; 9:34). God gave Pharaoh numerous opportunities to repent and believe, but as a result of Pharaoh's persistent, unrepentant rebellion

against God, God affirm and confirmed the hardness of Pharaohs' heart by hardening it Himself (Ex 4:21; 7:3, 13).

Rom 1:24-28 “Therefore **God gave them over** in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator-who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, **God gave them over** to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, **he gave them over** to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.”

Application: The choice to display God's glory

Ultimately, every man, woman and child is a stage from which God displays His sovereign glory:

1. It can be displayed through us as a result of a hardened and rebellious heart – like Pharaoh.
2. Or it can be displayed through us as a result of yielded obedient heart – like Moses.

The temporal and eternal outcomes are shockingly different. God in His sovereignty predestines and elects us, but the choice is ours.