

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series two teachers will do Bible study from ROMANS 9.

In Romans 1:16-17 Paul stated that the gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: *first for the Jew*, then for the Gentile. However, the fact that the Jews had a position of priority (Mt 10:5-6) does not seem to be justified by the subsequent history. Instead of the justification by faith of a large number of people in Israel, there was rather *large-scale unbelief and apostasy on the part of Israel*.

Therefore, in Romans chapters 9-11, Paul describes the worldwide design of God in reference to Jews and Gentiles. He shows how God's diverse dealings with the Jews and the Gentiles react upon each other and interact with one another for the promotion of God's plan of salvation for both.

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read Romans 9:1-33 together. When you are two or more people, take turns to read one verse each until you have completed the reading. Due to shortage of time, please read Romans 9:1-33 for yourself.

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in Romans 9. "Which truth in this passage is important for you?" or "Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?" Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S) An important truth for me is in Romans 9:1-5. A description of Israel's privileges. The privileges of the natural nation of Israel were the following. God had set them apart to know him, to serve him and to make him known. The term 'covenants' refer to God's one covenant of grace, which he made with Abraham, and thereafter reaffirmed again and again during the Old Testament period. Israel's 'patriarchs' Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were the beginning of God's covenant people on earth. The term 'the adoption of sons' refers to Israel as God's firstborn son, which means that Israel was the beginning of God's people on earth and not the only people of God on earth. God had shown to Israel his 'divine glory' or presence in the pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. Israel had received 'the law' of Moses. Israel's 'temple-worship' set it apart from the worship of idols on every hill and under every tree. God had given many 'promises' to Israel, such as Israel becoming an uncountable large nation and possessing the land. Finally, Israel existed to bring forth 'the Christ according to his human nature'. With respect to his divine nature, Christ does not belong to the natural nation of Israel.

All these promises were only fulfilled within the natural nation of Israel.

(T) An important truth for me is from Romans 9:6-9. People do not become children of God by birth or natural descent, but only through God's sovereign covenant promise. *The Jews thought that they were God's chosen people, because they were the natural descendants of Abraham. But the Bible teaches that people only become God's spiritual children through God's sovereign promise*. "God's word" is God's covenant promise to Abraham. The unbelief of the natural nation of Israel and their consequent rejection by God does not mean that God's covenant promise had failed!

First. God did not make his covenant promise with the natural nation of Israel, but with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and they all believed. God's promise concerned the individuals in whom his promise is also realised. For example, God made a promise to Abraham and Sarah and it concerned their son Isaac. God did not make a promise with Abraham and Hagar and so it did not concern their son Ishmael. God reckons the children of his sovereign covenant promise as his children.

Second. During the Old Testament period God did not regard all Israelites as his chosen people. On the one hand, God called all the people of Israel who worshipped idols "Not my people". On the other hand, God called all Gentiles who believed "My people". For example, Rahab was a Canaanite and believed. Ruth was a Moabite and believed. During the exile there were Babylonians and Persians who believed and joined God's people (Isa 56:1-8). The prophets regarded the true Israel as *the seven thousand whose knees have not bowed down to Baal* (1 K 19:18).

That is why in Romans 2:28-29, Paul clearly distinguished between the physical nation of Israel, who were only circumcised in their flesh, and *spiritual nation of Israel*, who were circumcised in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. And that is why Romans 9:6 says that not all who are descended from natural Israel are spiritual Israel!

(S) **STEP 3. QUESTION**

Let us try to understand all the truths in Romans 9:1-33 and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. "Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask to the group?" Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

**1<sup>st</sup> Question.** (9:10-13). Do people become children of God by their religious works or good works?

(T) No. *The Jews thought that they were God's chosen people, because they did the religious works and good works of the law, which God required. But the Bible teaches that people only become God's spiritual children through God's sovereign election, call and grace.* Before the twins of Isaac and Rebecca could do any religious works or good works, even before they were born God 'loved' Jacob and 'hated' Esau. God 'loved' The tense of the verbs *to love* and *to hate* (aorist active) point to once for all actions towards the individuals Jacob and Esau and not to continuous or repeated actions in history towards the nations of Israel and Edom.

Jacob means that God preferred Jacob and therefore chose him. And the word 'hatred' means that God did not prefer Esau and therefore did not choose him. God did this to show to people that they are God's children because God chose them and not because they chose God. Moreover, although God chose individuals like Isaac and Jacob, he rejected many of their descendents, who did not believe. And although God did not choose an individual like Esau, many of his descendents were chosen and saved, because they believed. Thus, God's covenant promise is realised in all those people, who believe (Gal 3:6-14).

**2<sup>nd</sup> Question.** (9:14-18). What does the Bible teach about the vindication of God's justice?

(S) **First. God is sovereignly free to give grace to whomever he wants** (9:14-16). *We can only speak of "justice" when someone can make a just claim.* Paul defends God's justice (when he saves whomever he wants) with the argument that no one can make a legitimate claim or demand with God that God should save him. For example. If God regarded all people on earth as born in complete innocence, they would stand on the zero line between good and evil at the beginning of their lives. Then they would be able to determine themselves whether they move in the direction of good (salvation) or whether they move in the direction of evil (condemnation). Then God would be completely arbitrary and unjust if he chose some of the people on earth for salvation and not the others! Then people would have a just claim against God!

However, because all people stand far below the zero line between good and evil, no one has the ability to determine whether they move in the direction of salvation or whether they move in the direction of condemnation. No one can make a just claim! All people have already been born with a sinful nature (cf. 5:12; Job 14:4). All people have sinned and fall short of God's divine requirements (3:23). God regards all natural people as sinners, ungodly and enemies (5:6,8,10). All people have already fallen together with the whole human race (5:17-19). All people are already lost, condemned and subject to God's wrath (Jn 3:16,18,36). Therefore, if God would condemn all the people on earth and not save one person, he would still be completely (100%) just! The fact that God nevertheless saves an uncountable great number of unrighteous people on earth is because God's love goes far beyond God's justice (Js 2:13)!

*We can only speak of "grace" when someone cannot make a just claim.* Grace or mercy is God's free gift, which no one deserves! God says that he will have mercy and compassion on whomever he has mercy or compassion. The fact that God has mercy and shows grace to an uncountable great number of people is the shear wonder of his love! Conclusion. *People do not become the children of God by their own desire or effort. They become the children of God only through God's sovereign grace and mercy!*

**Second. God is sovereignly free to harden whomever he wants** (9:17-18).

**One. Human guilt and hardening.** The hardening of which the Bible speaks is a judicial concept. The person who is hardened always deserves that punishment! For example. God gave the Gentiles over to a life of sexual immorality, a depraved mind, and every kind of wickedness (1:24,26,28), because they *deliberately* suppressed and twisted the truth, which God revealed (1:18,25). They have *continually* hardened their hearts against God, so that finally God gave them over to a hardened heart. They finally reaped what they had sown in their lives (Gal 6:7-8). The Pharaoh during the time of Moses continually hardened his heart against God's warnings, so that God finally hardened his heart. Nevertheless, God used this Pharaoh to spread his name over the whole earth. We may never define hardening apart from human guilt!

**Two. Divine will and hardening.** From a judicial point of view, because all people have sinned, all people deserve to be hardened. The fact that God nevertheless does not harden an uncountable great number of people, but has mercy on them is because he sovereignly determines this. Certain people do not become children of God for two reasons: on God's judicial level, they have sinned and deserve hardening; and on God's sovereign level, God has withheld his grace from them. Conclusion. *People do not become the children of God by their own will or decision. They become the children of God only through God's sovereign and all-determining will to show grace!*

**3<sup>rd</sup> Question.** (9:19-26). What does the Bible teach about the vindication of God's sovereignty?

(T) God's sovereign will and determination does not relieve people of their personal responsibility and blame.

First. God's sovereign will is an ultimate thing (9:19). An ultimate thing has limits far beyond man, are unchangeable and man can have no influence on it at all. Man must submit himself to these ultimate things, like for example: God's work in creation determines who we are, when we live in history and where we live on this earth (Act 17:24-27). God's reign over heaven and earth works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will (Eph 1:7-12). God's sovereign judgement of the world will justly judge people's unrighteousness (Rom 3:6).

God's will or God's purpose according to election sovereignly determines to whom he shows mercy and from whom he withholds his mercy (Rom 8:28-30; 9:6-26). We should be content with how we are created, with our circumstances in life and we should be amazed that he has shown his grace to us. We should have a deep respect for his majesty and submit ourselves to his sovereign plan and not question his sovereign decisions.

Second. God's sovereign will deals with the real world of fallen man (9:20-23). The Bible speaks about God's sovereign rule *over sinners* and not over perfect people! The clay has already fallen and is already depraved. The Potter has the right to make anything out of that clay. While we can say that "the objects of God's wrath" are the cause of their own destruction (9:22), we cannot say that "the objects of God's mercy" are the cause of their own salvation! No one deserves mercy and no one can earn grace. Even before the creation God has sovereignly planned the future of his people and in the course of history he has revealed that plan to them (9:23). There is continuity between the present and future life of the objects of God's wrath. There is an exact correspondence between what they are in this present life and the perdition to which they are consigned. There is no release from their human responsibility or their personal guilt. The wages of their guilt is perdition (6:23a). There is also continuity between the present and future life of the objects of God's mercy. There is a correspondence between the process of grace that operates in this present life and the glory that is ultimately achieved in the life to come (8:29-30)!

Conclusion. *All people on earth are vessels for either the display of God's judgement (9:17,22) or the exhibition of God's mercy (9:23)!*

Third. God's sovereign will determines his call of the non-Jews (9:24-26). *God calls people from both the Jews and the non-Jews.* God has been faithful to his covenant promise. This is first manifested in the objects of his mercy among the Jews (9:24a; cf. 9:6). This is secondly manifested in the objects of his mercy among the non-Jews (Gentiles)(9:24b; cf. 8:33; 2 Thes 2:13-14; 2 Tim 1:9). It is very important that God's covenant promise and grace reaches much further than the Jews. God's covenant promise and grace reaches *every tribe and language and people and nation* (Rev 5:9; 1 Pet 2:9-10)! God's covenant promise finds its fulfilment in Jesus Christ, in whom *all the families on earth* are blessed (Gen 12:3)!

*God's call to the non-Jews in the Old Testament.* In the Old Testament, Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 refer to the Jews, who were *no longer the people of God* during the period of the godless and wicked kings of Israel. Nevertheless, God promised that Jews would in the future again be *the people of God*. This was fulfilled at the return of the Jews from exile from Babylon and at the later outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Jews in Jerusalem during Pentecost. In the letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul applies this principle to the non-Jewish people (Gentiles). The initial rejection and later restoration of the nation of Israel has its parallel in the initial exclusion of the non-Jewish nations from the privileges of Israel and their later inclusion into being God's people on equal terms with the believers among the Jews (Eph 2:1-22; 3:1-6)! All people from among the Jews and the non-Jews, who believe in Jesus Christ, form together *the true or spiritual Israel* (9:6; cf. Gal 6:14-16; 2 Cor 6:16; 1 Pet 2:9-10). The emphasis is on God's sovereign call to people to share in his grace. It is pure grace that people, who were previously *not God's people*, may become *God's people* (9:25-26)!

**4<sup>th</sup> Question.** (9:27-33). Who are the remnant of Israel?

(S) First. The prophecies of the Old Testament clearly speak of a "remnant" of Israel (9:27-29). Already during the Old Testament period, the number of Israelites was *uncountable* (1 Ki 3:8), *as the dust of the earth* (Gen 13:16), *as the stars in the sky* (Gen 15:5), and *as the sand on the seashore* (Gen 22:17). Although Israel was that numerous, *only the remnant* of Israel would be saved (Isa 10:22-23)! This sovereign differentiation between the natural people of Israel and the spiritual *remnant* of the people of Israel ensures that God is always faithful to his covenant promise to Israel. Although many Jews rejected the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and thereby fell away from God's covenant promise, there were still many Jews who believed in Jesus Christ and were saved. They are the *remnant* (Jn 1:11-13). Likewise, God has his chosen people among every natural nation in the world (8:29-30,33). His plan of election has been there from the beginning (9:11). In every generation, there will be *a remnant chosen by grace* (11:5). The significance of this remnant should never be underestimated, because without this remnant the natural nation of Israel would have perished like Sodom and Gomorrah (Isa 1:9)(9:27-29)!

Second. The prophecies of the Old Testament clearly warn against "stumbling" (9:30-33).

One. Righteousness can be obtained by grace, but cannot be earned by keeping the law. The righteousness of God, which Jesus Christ earned, can only be obtained by God's grace and through faith. This righteousness means that God

credited the righteousness of Jesus Christ to the account of the believer. Thereby God declares the believer completely (100%) righteous in his eyes and from that time onwards regards and treats the believer as completely (100%) righteous. Righteousness can never be obtained by keeping the law. The Jews and many other religions try to obtain righteousness by keeping the law, for example by praying three times a day, by fasting twice a week, by giving one tenth of their income and by making three pilgrims journeys to Jerusalem every year of their life. They hope that God would declare them righteous on the basis of their own religious merits and accomplishments.

Already the Old Testament gave a warning and a promise. People, who tried to pursue their own righteousness and rejected God's righteousness in Jesus Christ, would stumble and fall over the Rock, Jesus Christ (Isa 8:14). But people, who put their trust in God and accepted God's righteousness in Jesus Christ, would never be put to shame (Isa 28:16).

Two. *The relationship between God's will and man's will.* The sovereign and determined will of God does not exclude the responsibility of man to believe, to obey and to live a holy life! The sovereign will of God does not replace or override the will and actions of man. But the so-called *free will* of man does not determine the sovereign will of God (cf. 8:5-8)!

Conclusion. The sovereign will of God includes the will of man, his responsibility to believe, obey and live holy, and guarantees that God's will on earth will certainly be done (Eph 1:4-14; 2 Tim 1:9; Phil 2:12-14).

(T)     **STEP 4 and 5. APPLY and PRAY**

After brainstorming with one another and recording a list of *possible applications*, consider which possible application God wants you to turn into a *personal application*. Then take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught you in Romans 9:1-33.

(S)     **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. Use "the five steps" Bible study method to prepare Romans 10.

Second. workbooks "Go and preach God's Kingdom" and Internet on [www.dota.net](http://www.dota.net)

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".