

Small Group Notes

Romans 9:1–18 — *God’s Electing Purpose*



Warm Up

Purpose of the Lesson

To help the group see that God’s Word has not failed, God remains faithful to Israel, and God is sovereignly advancing His saving plan through mercy—while maintaining human responsibility to respond to God’s revelation.

Big Idea

God’s electing purpose is His sovereign right to accomplish salvation history through His chosen covenant plan, fulfilled in Christ, and extended to all who believe.

As you read Romans 9:1–18, listen, to what Paul says about Israel, God’s promise, and God’s mercy.”



Know It

God’s Faithfulness to Israel (Romans 9:1–5)

- Paul is not detached—he is **heartbroken**.
- Israel had real privileges: adoption, covenants, law, worship, promises.
- Most importantly: **Christ came through Israel**.
- Paul is preparing to answer:
Has God failed if Israel is rejecting the Messiah?

Paul’s grief proves this isn’t fatalism. Paul believes people can genuinely reject God and must be pursued with compassion.

Discuss

1. What do verses 1–3 reveal about Paul’s heart for lost people?
2. What privileges of Israel in verses 4–5 stand out to you most? Why?
3. How does this challenge the way we think about evangelism and prayer?

Takeaway: God’s sovereignty should never cool our love for the lost.

The Promise (Romans 9:6–9)

Key verse: “It is not as though the word of God has failed...” (v.6)

Paul clarifies:

- God’s promise was never meant to apply to **every ethnic descendant automatically**.
- God has always worked through **promise** not merely **bloodline**.
- Isaac was the “child of promise,” showing God’s covenant plan is purposeful.
- Paul is redefining who belongs to God’s covenant family:
True covenant membership is connected to God’s promise, fulfilled in Christ.
- This is not teaching that God arbitrarily saves some individuals and rejects others; it is about God’s right to define His people.

Discuss

1. What does Paul mean: “Not all who are descended from Israel are Israel”?
2. What are modern ways people assume they are “in” with God (heritage, morality, church attendance)?
3. How does this passage support salvation by grace through faith?

God’s Purpose in History (Romans 9:10–13)

Paul’s Jacob/Esau example shows:

- God’s purpose stands **before works**
- God chose the line through which the covenant promise would continue
- This election highlights God’s freedom to shape salvation history
- This is primarily about **roles and redemptive history** (who carries forward the covenant line), not an unconditional decree of individual eternal destiny.
- The OT language (“loved/hated”) often refers to **covenant preference** (chosen for purpose), not emotional hatred.

Discuss

1. What is the main point Paul is making by choosing Jacob over Esau?
2. Why does Paul stress “before they had done anything good or bad”?
3. How does this protect grace and remove boasting?

God’s Provision of Divine Mercy (Romans 9:14–18)

Paul anticipates the objection: “That’s unfair!”

He answers: **God is not unjust.**

Key truths:

- Mercy is never owed (v.15–16).
- Salvation is not earned by effort but comes by God's mercy.
- Pharaoh is an example of God using human rebellion to display His power.
- Pharaoh repeatedly hardened his own heart (Exodus).
- God's hardening is **judicial**—confirming someone in their chosen rebellion.
- God can use even hardened resistance to accomplish His purpose without being the author of sin.

Discuss

1. What is the difference between justice and mercy?
2. Why is verse 16 good news for sinners?
3. What warning does Pharaoh give us about resisting God?
4. How can God remain good while hardening occurs?



Live It

Application Question (pick one)

- Who is one person you need to pray for with Paul-like burden this week?
- Where do you need to trust God's faithfulness even when you don't understand outcomes?



Prayer

Prayer Focus:

- Pray for lost people by name
- Pray for softened hearts
- Pray for gratitude for mercy
- Pray for bold witness
