

# An Examination of Calvinism - Romans 9

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## An Overview of Romans 9

Romans 9 can be a difficult passage to understand, and is often at the center of the debate about Calvinism. There are some verses in this chapter that Calvinists use to support Calvinistic doctrines. However, once we examine these in light of the overall context of the chapter, as well as the context of the Book of Romans; and some O.T. references, we will see the Calvinistic ideas do not hold up.

### **Background**

Remember Claudius expelled the Jews [Acts 18:2] from Rome in the late 40's. After his death in AD 54 the Jews began to come back. Christian Jews had to now adjust to a church that had become largely a Gentile-led and focused church. It would have been easy for Gentiles to think, "God is done with the Jews - they rejected Messiah"...or for the Jews to think "Who are these Gentiles taking over the things of the kingdom, they are not the chosen ones". It is into this state of mind that Paul is writing.

### **Paul's Grief Over Israel's Rejection of Messiah**

Rom 9:1-4(a) NIV I speak the truth in Christ--I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit-- 2 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of *my people*, those of *my own race*, 4 the *people of Israel*.

- He is speaking of natural Israel
- He recognizes they are without Christ
- He has great sorrow and unceasing anguish - wishing he could be cut off for their sake

### **Paul Outlines the Advantages Israel has Received**

Rom 9:4(b)-5 There is the **adoption** to sonship; theirs the divine **glory**, the **covenants**, the receiving of the **law**, the **temple worship** and the **promises**. There are the **patriarchs**, and from them is traced the human **ancestry of the Messiah, who is God** over all, forever praised! Amen.

This begs the question: If they have received so much, how is it that the majority of them have rejected their Messiah? Paul next addresses some potential questions that could be raised such as: "Has God's Word failed?" or "Have His promises failed to come to pass?" "If His promises have failed the Jews, then maybe His promises to me, a Gentile aren't all that sure either"

### **God's Word Has NOT Failed**

Paul now begins to explain why God's word has not failed even though the majority of Israelites have rejected Messiah.

Rom 9:6-9 ***It is not as though God's word had failed.*** For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. 7 Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." 8 In other words, it is not the children by physical descent who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. 9 ***For this was how the promise was stated:*** "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son."

## Not all who are descended from Israel ARE Israel

Paul stated earlier in Romans that Israel is not those who are natural descendants...but those who have received circumcision of the heart

- Rom 2:28-29 KJV For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: 29 But ***he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit***, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

## **The children of God are not those born of man - but those born of God**

- Joh 1:11-13 ESV He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

## **Being a descendant of Abraham is no guarantee**

- Luk 3:8 ESV 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.
- Galatians 3:7 ESV Know then that ***it is those of faith*** who are the sons of Abraham.
- Galatians 3:27-29 ESV 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.***

## God chose or elected those who would be the human ancestry of Messiah

It started with God's **choosing of Abraham** out of Terah's 3 son

- Gen 11:26 KJV And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran.
- The Lord states the purpose in calling Abraham
  - Gen 12:1-3 NIV The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. 2 ***"I will make you into a great nation***, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and ***all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.***"

Next **God chose Isaac** from Abraham's 8 children (these 6 in Gen 25 plus Ishmael)

- Gen 25:1-2 KJV Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah. 2 And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah.
- Rom 9:7 **"It is through Isaac** that your offspring will be reckoned."
- Rom 9:9 For this was how the **promise** was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and **Sarah will have a son.**"

If simply being Abraham's seed is what was required to inherit the promises, then the people of Israel would have to acknowledge that Ishmael and the sons of Keturah were of the same status as the Jew since they were also the descendants of Abraham. However, the LORD made it clear that ***Isaac was the child of the promise*** and the lineage through whom Messiah would come.

### **Next we see his choice of Jacob**

Up to now as we have followed the context along, we see that this section of Romans 9 is talking about God choosing the human ancestry for Messiah. The same context continues into the next section with the choosing of Jacob.

Rom 9:10-12 **Not only that**, but Rebekah's children were conceived at the same time by our father Isaac. 11 Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad--in order that God's purpose in election might stand: 12 not by works but by him who calls--she was told, "The older will serve the younger." 13 Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

### **God's choice of Jacob was not for salvation but that God's purpose in election might stand - not by works ***BUT BY HIM THAT CALLS*****

Some of the Jews may have said, well Isaac was the one chosen because Ishmael was the son of a handmaiden...but in the case of Jacob and Esau, they had the same father, the same mother, and God still chose one [*not for salvation, but as a human ancestor of Messiah*] even before they were born to show that his choice was based upon His call alone - and not because of any good or bad that either had done.

### **God's purpose in election has always been based on His call**

- Heb 9:15 KJV And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, ***they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.***
- Heb 11:8 KJV By faith ***Abraham, when he was called*** to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.
- Heb 11:17-18 KJV By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 Of whom it was said, That ***in Isaac shall thy seed be called:***

### **This choice by call is still the way we come to be the children of God**

- 2Th 2:14 KJV Whereunto ***he called you by our gospel***, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### How the Calvinist views this

#### **Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated**

Calvinists use this scripture as a proof text for ***unconditional election***...i.e. that God in His Sovereignty chooses to love one and hate another...and that He chooses a person for salvation BEFORE he is born, and BEFORE he has a chance to do anything good or bad.

#### **The Calvinist errs by not taking the context into consideration.**

It is easy to see how they do this if they look at it as a stand alone verse and not within the context. The problem is the context is not talking about personal salvation. The context of this section of Scripture is the choosing of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob for the human ancestry of Messiah not for individual salvation. Paul is also laying the groundwork for the main point of Chapters 9 - 11 i.e. that extending mercy to all people including the Gentiles has ALWAYS been His plan.

**The Calvinist errs by not consideration the context of the O.T scriptures Paul is quoting.** Paul was quoting Malachi 1 when he wrote “Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated”. The context of Malachi 1 is the Jews were questioning God’s love...“How have you loved us?” they ask. He is saying - don’t forget I LOVED JACOB - He reminded them that He chose Jacob over Esau - That He has had a purpose for them - That He has not forgotten them.

- Mal 1:1-4 NIV A prophecy: The word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi. 2 "I have loved you," says the LORD. "But you ask, 'How have you loved us?' "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the LORD. **"Yet I have loved Jacob, 3 but Esau I have hated,** and I have turned his hill country into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals." 4 **Edom** may say, "Though we have been crushed, we will rebuild the ruins." But this is what the LORD Almighty says: "They may build, but I will demolish. They will be called the Wicked Land, a people always under the wrath of the LORD.

### **The prophecy took place 1600 years after their birth**

This comment “**Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated**” was prophesied roughly 1600 years after they were born. The nations of Israel [corresponding to Jacob] and of Edom [corresponding to Esau] had multiplied and had a history by this time. The Lord is reminding Israel in Malachi that Jacob was chosen (not for salvation but for the lineage of Messiah).

### **Two nations are in your womb**

These comments about Jacob and Esau are about two nations and their destinies, not two individuals.

- Gen 25:22-24 NIV The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. 23 The LORD said to her, "***Two nations are in your womb***, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger." 24 When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb.

### **Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated - an idiom - not an unconditional election**

This is a Hebrew Idiom (*An idiom is a group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words (e.g., rain cats and dogs)*)

- **For Example:** Luk 14:26 KJV If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.
- **When we are told to** Mat 19:19 KJV Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

### **Another example**

Gen 29:30-31 KJV And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years. 31 And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren.

- Rachel was loved MORE than Leah = Leah was hated

### **Summary of this section**

God’s word, or promise has NOT failed. God’s choice of his children has always been based on the call, not upon lineage or ancestry, not upon good works or bad works. His call goes out through the preaching of the gospel and we (whether we be Jew or Gentile) respond in belief or we reject...and to “as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:” John 1:12

## Is God Unjust?

14 **What then shall we say? Is God unjust?** Not at all! 15 For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." 16 It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy. 17 For Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." 18 Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

Paul anticipates that the Jews will ask, "Is God unjust?". How could the Gentiles who have not pursued righteousness attain it, and the Jews who have pursued it fallen short?

- Rom 9:30-31 KJV What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. 31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.

To a Calvinist, the comment about "**I will have mercy on whom I have mercy**" is about unconditional election or limited atonement. However within the context of this chapter and the explanation as to why God is showing mercy on the Gentiles...it is simply a statement about God having the prerogative to have mercy on anyone He wants to have mercy on. The Jews may not think the Gentiles are deserving of it, [they have not pursued it, they did not keep the law, they are uncircumcised] but that is not their call. God can show mercy on whomever He desires.

## The Golden Calf & Mercy

He reminds them that in the past God gave mercy to THEM when they didn't deserve it when he said, "**For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."**

- In Exodus 32 - the children of Israel built the golden calf to worship
- The Lord was going to destroy them -
  - Exo 32:9-10 KJV And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: 10 Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.
- But Moses interceded and the Lord relented
  - Exo 32:14 KJV And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.
- Moses asked the Lord to show him His glory
  - Exo 33:18-19 KJV And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. 19 And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and **will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.**

Paul is reminding the Jews that in the same way God is showing mercy to the Gentiles who do not deserve it, he has in the past shown mercy to them as well. As a matter of fact they would not even have been around as a people if the judgement of God were carried out as originally intended. They would be known as the children of Moses. [remember he said "I will make of thee a great nation"]

**It does not depend on human desire or effort but God's mercy.** The Jews missed this...to them it was all about human desire and effort. They stumbled at the stumbling stone.

## Israel is like Pharaoh

### **Hardened so the nations may come to know God**

Paul now gives another history lesson to teach the Jews about God's mercy and to lay further groundwork for the climax of this section of Romans [end of Chap 11].

### **God raised up a man that would fulfill His purpose**

- Isa 46:10-11 NIV I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.' 11 From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that I will bring about; what I have planned, that I will do.

### **His purpose was that His name would be declared throughout the earth**

- Exo 9:16 KJV And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.

### **This purpose was accomplished by Pharaoh's hardness of heart**

#### Pharaoh hardened his own heart

- Ex 8:15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart.
- Ex 8:32 And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go.
- Ex 9:34 And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants.
- 1 Sam 6:6 Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts?

### **The hardness was due to his unwillingness to listen and obey**

- Exo 7:13-14 NIV Yet Pharaoh's heart became hard and he would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said. 14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is unyielding; he refuses to let the people go.

### **Did God Harden Pharaoh's heart?**

Scriptures also state the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, but He only hardened Pharaoh's heart in the direction Pharaoh had already chosen for himself. Exodus 4:21

- Exodus 7:3-4; Exodus 10:1; Exodus 10:20, 27; Exodus 14:8

*According to Adam Clarke's commentary, the Hebrew word translated harden "literally signifies to strengthen, confirm, make bold or courageous." An illustration commonly heard is that of a sponge squeezed (made hard) in the hand. Anything that comes forth from the squeezed sponge was already there. When God "hardened" Pharaoh's heart, He simply forced out what was already there, strengthening Pharaoh's own convictions.*

### **A similar idea is conveyed here**

Psalms 81:11-12 ESV "But my people did not listen to my voice; Israel would not submit to me. (12) **So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts,** to follow their own counsels.

(**Note:** the "He hardens whom He wants to harden" is not referring to individual salvation as a Calvinist might say [unconditional election], it was in not responding to Moses' demands)

## Mercy and Hardening

Contrary to what a Calvinist might say about these verses related to mercy and hardening and how this supports the ideas of unconditional election and sovereignty...we see that in the greater context of the chapter and the book of Romans as a whole, Paul is showing why God is NOT unjust in showing mercy to the Gentiles...and these messages about mercy and hardening are supporting those concepts.

### **Israel was hardened - just like Pharaoh - so the nations might come in**

- Rom 10:21 NIV But concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."
- Rom 11:25 NIV I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: ***Israel has experienced a hardening*** in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in,

### **Here is the similarity Paul is driving at**

God showed mercy to Israel when they didn't deserve it [golden calf]	God shows mercy to the Gentiles when they don't deserve it - Mercy is not a matter of human will or desire, but of God who shows mercy
Pharaoh was hardened	Israel was hardened in part
Pharaoh's rebellion was prolonged until God's glory could be seen in His deliverance	The Lord endured Israel's rebellion to bring forth Messiah who would deliver all mankind
That God's name is declared in the earth	Until the full number of Gentiles comes in

### **Summary of this section**

God is not unjust in showing mercy to the Gentiles. He did the same thing with the Jews after the Golden Calf incident was unjust. He will show mercy on whom He wants to show mercy. And just as God used the hardness of Pharaoh to declare His name in all the earth, he has used the hardness of Israel to open the door to the entire Gentile world. [This reaching all nations by the way was His original intent in calling the Patriarch's starting with Abraham when he said "**and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.**" **Gen 12:3**]

A Calvinist would say that these scriptures show God has mercy on some and hardens others for no other reason than His good pleasure. However this is the very thing Paul was arguing against. To Paul this is a message of the expansion of God's mercy [to all nations], whereas the Calvinist sees it as a restriction of mercy [only to the elect]. Paul sums up this section Rom 9-11 this way. "**For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all**" (11:32).

## Why does God still blame us?

Rom 9: 19-24 One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?" 20 But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" 21 <b>Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?</b> 22 What if God, although choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his
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wrath--prepared for destruction? 23 What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory-- 24 even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?

So the question Paul is anticipating is basically, "If God had a plan of using Israel's hardness to extend mercy to the Jews then "Why does God still blame us?" and "Who can resist His will?"

### Paul references the Potter and the Clay story from Jeremiah

The Calvinist sees the potter and the clay as themes of Unconditional Election and Limited Atonement --- i.e. the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction are the reprobate and unelect, and the objects of mercy prepared in advance are the elect. Let's review this section in the context of the letter and see what we come up with.

#### **The Potter's House**

Jer 18:1-10 NIV This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 2 "Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message." 3 So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. 4 ***But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.*** 5 Then the word of the LORD came to me. 6 He said, "***Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?***" declares the LORD. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel. 7 ***If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom*** is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, 8 and ***if that nation I warned repents*** of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. And if at another time I announce that ***a nation or kingdom*** is to be built up and planted, 10 and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it.

#### **Points from the Potter story**

- The potter was shaping the clay for a purpose - working at the wheel
  - Israel was formed to be a blessing to all nations (calling of Abraham)
- It was marred in his hands
  - Israel failed to fulfill its purpose
- He forms it into another pot shaping it as seemed best to him
  - God is now using its disobedience and hardness to extend mercy to the Gentiles - Just as he used the hardness of Pharaoh as we discussed above
  - In the end God's purpose still gets accomplished even with disobedient Israel - this is a true picture of God's Sovereignty - that he can still accomplish His purpose even with the freewill of man intact

**The story of the potter is about NATIONS - not individuals** chosen to be either a vessel of wrath or an object of mercy as the Calvinist would say. God shapes nations as it suits him - this is not talking about individuals. Look at the Scriptures again and note:

- "Can I not do with you ***ISRAEL*** as this potter does?"
- If a ***NATION*** or ***KINGDOM*** is to be uprooted...
- If that ***NATION*** repents...

#### **vs 21 Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?**

- God as the potter has the right to make out of the clay any kind of pottery he wants
- He made Israel into a pot with a special purpose - to bring God's blessing to all nations



**vs 22 What if God, although choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath--prepared for destruction?**

Israel walked in disobedience yet the Lord bore with great patience these objects of wrath [ripe] for destruction. He had great patience, awaiting the birth of Messiah, so that all nations may be blessed. He did it when Moses interceded, and He did it through history. Always leaving a remnant, always preserving a people, always making a way for the coming of Messiah.

- 2Ki 17:13-20 NIV ***The LORD warned Israel and Judah*** through all his prophets and seers: "Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your ancestors to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets." 14 But they would not listen and were as stiff-necked as their ancestors, who did not trust in the LORD their God. 15 They rejected his decrees and the covenant he had made with their ancestors and the statutes he had warned them to keep. They followed worthless idols and themselves became worthless. They imitated the nations around them although the LORD had ordered them, "Do not do as they do." 16 They forsook all the commands of the LORD their God and made for themselves two idols cast in the shape of calves, and an Asherah pole. They bowed down to all the starry hosts, and they worshiped Baal. 17 They sacrificed their sons and daughters in the fire. They practiced divination and sought omens and sold themselves to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, arousing his anger. 18 So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from his presence. Only the tribe of Judah was left, 19 and even Judah did not keep the commands of the LORD their God. They followed the practices Israel had introduced. 20 Therefore the LORD rejected all the people of Israel; he afflicted them and gave them into the hands of plunderers, until he thrust them from his presence.
- Jer 30:11 NIV I am with you and will save you,' declares the LORD. 'Though I completely destroy all the nations among which I scatter you, ***I will not completely destroy you.*** I will discipline you but only in due measure; I will not let you go entirely unpunished.'

**The Lord continually had patience with Israel, even unto the coming of Messiah whom they ended up rejecting**

- Rom 15:8-12 NIV For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed 9 and, moreover, that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing the praises of your name." 10 Again, it says, "Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people." 11 And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles; let all the peoples extol him." 12 And again, Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; in him the Gentiles will hope."
- Joh 1:11 NIV He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

**This is for our sake**

- Rom 11:28 NIV ***As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for your sake;*** but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs

**vs 23 What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory-- 24 even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?**

**Because of their disobedience we have received mercy**

Rom 11:30-32 NIV Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, 31 so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. 32 For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

**Eph 3:1-21 - Not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles**

- By revelation he made known unto me the mystery
- The Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel
- According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord
- That he would grant you, ***according to the riches of his glory***
  - To be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man
  - That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith
  - That ye, being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height
  - And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge
  - That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God

God's plan doesn't depend on Israel's obedience - "not of him who wills or runs" - but it depends on His Mercy. Even as Israel failed again and again, the Lord's purpose still endured.

**Summary of this section**

God as the potter has the right to make a vessel of His choosing. Israel failed in its original calling as a nation which was to be a blessing to all nations. So the Lord made them a different kind of vessel, a vessel of wrath - and he was patient with the vessel of wrath in order to make the riches of his glory known to the vessels of mercy...

**The expansion of mercy...not the restriction of it**

Rom 9:23-29 What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory-- 24 **even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?** As he says in Hosea: "I will call them 'my people' who are not my people; and I will call her 'my loved one' who is not my loved one," 26 and, "In the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'children of the living God.'" 27 Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved. 28 For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality." 29 It is just as Isaiah said previously: "Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah."

**To the Gentile he says (there were the objects of mercy)**

- I will call them "my people" who are not my people
- I will call her "my loved one" who is not my loved one
- To those of whom it was said, "You are not my people" they will be called "children of the living God"

**To Israel he says (these were the objects ripe for wrath that he was patient with them and left a remnant so his promise would be fulfilled)**

- A remnant will be saved
- He will carry out his sentence with speed and finality (Isa 10:23-24 - the Assyrian captivity)
- Unless the Lord left descendants we would have become like Sodom and Gomorrah

## Conclusion - That Mercy Might Be Extended to All

Rom 9:30-33 What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; 31 but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness, have not attained their goal. 32 Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. 33 As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame."

### **Righteousness has always been by faith - from Abraham to the present - that Righteousness comes through faith in Jesus Christ for Jew or Gentile**

- Rom 10:9-13 ESV because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. 11 For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, **bestowing his riches on all who call on him.** 13 For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

### **The Jews pursued righteousness by works and it is impossible to accomplish**

- Rom 10:5 ESV For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them.

## The Great Mystery

Rom 11:25-34 ESV Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; 27 "and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins." 28 As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. 29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. 30 For just as you [*Gentiles*] were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, 31 so they [*Israel*] too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. 32 **For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.** 33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! 34 "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?"

God extended His mercy to the Gentiles, saving any who would believe. They were not circumcised, they were not of the natural descent of Abraham, Isaac or Jacob, they did not live by the Law, they were not saved by works. Yet they have attained the righteousness the Jews so passionately pursue. They have received the riches of His glory. Paul states that by saving Gentiles God's hope is to move Israel to jealousy that they might be motivated to receive His free salvation.

God's Great Mystery is that mercy is extended to ALL  
Calvinism's Great Tragedy is that mercy is restricted to the ELECT

