

**April 19, 2020**

**Speaker:** Eric Naus **Series:** This I Believe – The Book of Romans

**Passage:** Romans 9:1-29

Community Group Questions: “Unfailing God”

Read Romans 9:1-29 aloud as a group, and then work through the following questions:

1. In Romans 1-8, Paul has been systematically unpacking his gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ. But now, in Romans 9-11, the topic changes. Paul seeks to answer a question that burdened him and many of his readers. That question is this: what about Israel? Most Israelites in Paul’s day were rejecting the gospel message, while countless Gentiles were streaming into the church. Considering that juxtaposition, had God failed in his promises and purposes for Israel? Read again Paul’s opening words in 9:1-5. Why, according to these verses, was it so startling to realize that most Jews in Paul’s day had rejected Jesus? In your opinion, had God failed? Why or why not? Assuming that the God of the Bible never fails, what should we do in those seasons of our lives when it appears as though God has failed?
2. In verses 6-13, Paul makes it clear that God’s Word never fails. His promises to Israel were never ultimately based on nationality, but rather, they were based on God’s sovereign choice to save his elect, the true “spiritual” Israel within the nation of Israel. Paul illustrates this idea by showing that God chose Isaac, and not Ishmael, Jacob and not Esau. God’s Word of promise never failed, even if those promises were being fulfilled in surprising ways. How would we read and trust our Bibles differently if we really believed that the Word of God is unfailing? Meditate on Isaiah 55:10-11. How should this idea of God’s unfailing Word comfort us in our daily experiences with the Bible?
3. In verses 14-18, Paul insists that God’s justice never fails. Even though the doctrines of election might raise some difficult questions about man’s responsibility in the face of God’s sovereignty, we need to know that in showing mercy to some, and hardening others, God is unfailingly just. Why? Because all humanity stands condemned before God. So, God is just to show mercy to some in Christ (having given their just punishment to Christ), and God is just to harden other sinners in their willing rebellion against him. God was just in showing mercy to Israel when they worshiped the golden calf, and God was just in hardening Pharaoh in his willing rebellion. When you think about God in these terms, does it comfort you to know that God is unfailingly just? How does this doctrine magnify our need for Christ and spotlight the mercy of God? Sometimes people mistakenly believe that salvation from God is an entitlement, or something he owes us. How do these verses counter that idea?
4. In verses 19-29, Paul makes it clear that God’s purposes never fail. Though we might not fully understand how God’s sovereignty fits together with human responsibility, we must yield to the idea that God is our creator, and as such, he is the potter and we are the clay. Ultimately, God is free to purpose some people to be a display of his patience, and then his power and wrath for all eternity. And, God is free to purpose others to be a forever display of his mercy in Christ. Either way, the full spectrum of God’s character is manifest for all the world to see. Why do these doctrines sit so uncomfortably with us as we read them?

What should we do when we encounter doctrines in Scripture that rub against our natural intuitions, and yet we know them to be the true revelation of God? How should these verses stretch our view of God and our understanding of his greatness?

5. The main point of Romans 9:1-29 is that God is unfailing. His word, his justice, and his purposes never fail. Why is that idea terrifying for those who reject the gospel? Why is that idea so comforting for those of us who believe?

Prayer suggestion: Along with sharing prayer requests as a group, take time to simply worship God for his unfailing purposes, for his sovereignty, for his perfect character, for grace in salvation, and for his perfect Word.