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## Introduction

Well, I couldn't have said it better than R.C. Sproul who said, "Most Christians salute the sovereignty of God, but believe in the sovereignty of man." In fact, even when I was running in the charismatic circles this was true. Very true, we would declare that God is sovereign. Of course, they would say that God is sovereign, but every doctrine that was taught was all about man. It was man's choice. It was man's actions, it was man's decision, and it was all about man, and what man can do. And so it was true that we would salute the sovereignty of God, but we believed in the sovereignty of man.

And it's now in Romans chapter 9 that we come to this topic of the sovereignty of God. Why would Paul begin to address the sovereignty of God at this point? Well, what has he just told us back in chapter 8? If we think back to chapter 8 in verse 15, he talked about adoption. In verse 18, he talked about glory. In verse 29 he talked about the purpose of God in foreknowledge and election. In verse 30, he talked about God's calling. And then in verse 39, he talked about eternal security, and how nothing can separate us from the love of God.

So then, the question would naturally arise, well, if adoption and election and God's calling and eternal security are all true, why does it seem that that is not true for Israel? What about Israel? Listen to what God said in Exodus 19:6, He said "[And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.](#)" ([Ex 19:6](#)) He says that to the nation of Israel. You will be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. But then listen to Matthew 27, in verse 1.

["Now when morning came, all the chief priests and the elders"](#) (who were Jews of the nation of Israel)  
["The chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus to put Him to death;](#)  
[\(Matt 27:1\)](#)

Their Messiah, the One who came to save Israel from their sins. They put Him to death.

And so one might ask, well, what happened? Did God's promises to Israel fail? Did God's Word fail? Is God really sovereign over all? Well, Paul is going to show that God's Word has not failed. But that God is sovereign over all, and that Israel's falling away is a part of God's sovereign plan of redemption.

It's all working together as a part of God's sovereign plan. And so, we're going to break this section of Romans 9 down into two points here tonight.

1. First, we're going to see Paul's sorrow in his heart, Paul's sorrow in his heart, in verses 1-5
2. And then second, we'll see God's sovereignty in His plan. God's sovereignty in His plan, verses 6-13.

### **1. Paul's Sorrow in his heart**

Now, just to help us understand Paul's heart, we need to understand what Jews think about the Messiah, and about Christianity. Some Jews believe that the State of Israel, the actual State of Israel, is the Messiah in a figurative sense. So, they believe that the nation would regain power over a world who would be persecuting them. Has Israel gone through a lot of persecution? You bet they have.

We know that Christ will rule and reign with power over the world. But some see the nation of Israel as fulfilling the promises that are related to Christ. Some Jews see the Messiah as coming at a future time to deliver them from, get this, human oppression, not from sin, but from human oppression. Overall, Jews do not accept Christianity. Many appreciate the support that Christians give them. But it's because they're grateful for the support to help them achieve economic and political power. Because that's what they're after. That's what they want. But overall, Jews see themselves as God's chosen race and that Christianity is nothing more than a perversion of the true religion of Judaism. Because they look at us as viewing the New Covenant as something that supersedes the old covenant with Moses. They don't like that. They don't like the fact that we believe that gentiles can come to God without going through the religious rituals of Judaism.

Because it's through what? Faith in Christ alone, that someone has access to God. As Christians, we believe that gentiles can come to God apart from Judaism, by God's grace, through faith in Christ alone. But Jews don't accept this. And so, they see Christianity as a heretical movement that attempts to nullify God's covenant that He made with Abraham, to the Jewish people. And so many of them hate the gospel, and they hate Christians for doing this.

In fact, Paul was a part of that hateful group of Christians who despised Christianity. Listen to Acts 8:3, *"But Saul" that is Paul," began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison. (Acts 8:3)*

That was the apostle Paul, before he got saved. But one chapter later in Acts, chapter 9, Christ met Paul. Paul didn't meet Christ, Christ met Paul, Christ found him on the road to Damascus. And Paul was saved then as God came and transformed his heart. And then after learning the true gospel, his

heart became broken over the Jews, because he knew that most of Israel had not been believing. They had not come to believe in the true gospel. And so, his heart was broken for them, which is what we see in our passage here in verses 1-5.

And our first point, which is Paul's sorrow in his heart, look at verse 1 there, he says, "I'm telling the truth in Christ. I'm not lying. My conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart." What's interesting here is there's this major shift that Paul has in his letter here to the Romans. It's a major shift. He's just told us about this glorious truth of not being separated from God's love at the end of chapter 8. Remember that? A couple of weeks ago, we talked about that. And now it is, it's as if he begins to mourn.

He goes from this glorious truth, from glory to grief. And he begins to mourn here because he anticipates the pushback from the Jews who would say, Look, I know you just told us that nothing can separate us from the love of God. But what about Israel? Hasn't God rejected Israel? And as a Jew, he wants to answer this, and he will ultimately answer it by saying that all of this is a part of God's sovereign plan.

Now, if there was ever a devout Jew, it was Paul, the apostle Paul was the Jew of Jews. In fact, he even describes himself in Philippians 3:5 "[circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee;](#)" (Phil 3:5) This guy was a Jew, to the "t". So, Paul knew exactly what the Jews believed. He knew their heart; he knew exactly how the Jews view themselves in comparisons to in comparison to the gentiles. He knew that the Jews did not view gentiles as being savable unless they converted to Judaism.

They view themselves as the elite religion. We are Jews, God's chosen people, they still do. They're the elite religion, the only religion that has access to God. And it all went back to what God had done through a man named Abraham, how God had called Abraham, and how God had chosen Abraham, and how God had made a covenant promise with Abraham. And so, for them, as long as they were in the line of Abraham, and upheld the law that was given to Abraham's descendants in the Mosaic law, they were good to go. That was their whole religious system.

But Paul now knows the true gospel. He knows how one can be saved. He knows that Christ is the Messiah who came to die to save sinners, both Jews and gentiles. And this is what he's just talked about in the first eight chapters of Romans, right? That's what he's been preaching. It's just eight chapters of gospel gospel gospel gospel, coming to God, through Christ through faith in Him alone. He's just told them that a person is justified by faith alone. And remember, back in chapter 4, he had even used who, as an example? Abraham. Abraham was an example for them, of a man who was saved by faith alone. Which means that salvation has never been by upholding the law but has always been by faith in Christ alone.

And so, any Jew reading what Paul has just written, written here, would think that not only has God written off the Jews, but even Paul has written off the Jews. He doesn't care about them anymore. He's discovered something new; he's discovered this new mystery. And he's just completely written off all of these people that he used to be with. They could easily think that Paul had become anti-semitic, that

he's anti-Judaism, and that he doesn't care about his fellow Jews. And if you really think about it, what is Paul just done in the first eight chapters of Romans? He has essentially just dismantled their entire religion, right? Because they're thinking it's works, works, works, works, works. And he just comes in and dismantles the whole thing and says, No, it's not by works, but **by faith alone**.

But Paul wants to them to know that he still has a heart for them. He has a heart for the Jews. And so he says, "I'm telling the truth in Christ. I'm not lying. My conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit." (Rom 9:1) Paul wanted them to know that he was telling them the truth, that he truly cared for these Jews. And because His conscience was surrendered and controlled by the Holy Spirit, He could even call his own conscience to testify as a witness about how much he cared for his fellow Jews. Which is why He says in verse two, "I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart." (Rom 9:2) He grieved over the fact that Israel had rejected God by rejecting their Messiah. They rejected God the Father because they rejected Christ, His son.

And he then gives the shocking testimony to show how much he desired for them to come to Christ. Look at what he says in verse 3, "For, I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." (Rom 9:3) Paul says, Look, I will give up my salvation, and be anathema. Damned eternally to hell. Devoted to destruction in eternal hell, if it means that his fellow Jews would come to Christ and be saved.

Now Paul knew that this was not possible, right? Obviously, he knows this. He knew that he could not lose his salvation, because it was given to him by Christ. You can't lose something that's given to you by God. Because He upholds it. He's the one who's given it to you. And so he knows Look, I can't lose my salvation. But that's his passion and his desire for the Jews to come to know Christ as their Savior. He wanted them to know these truths that he's just proclaimed to them in these past eight chapters. Paul knew what God had done for Israel, which is what he describes in verses 4 and 5. Look what he says there. "who are Israelites" (my fellow kinsmen who are Israelites), "to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, 5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen." (Rom 9:4-5)

His fellow kinsmen, the Jews were Israelites because God had chosen a man named Abraham, and then Isaac and then Jacob. And then God changed Jacob's name to what? Israel, so they were Israelites and they received the special blessing as being adopted as sons. Now, this is not talking specifically about every single Jew. It's not what it's talking about here. It's not talking about that it's as if they were saved simply because they were a Jew. But he's talking nationally, here, nationally as a nation, God chose them. And He loved them, and protected them and made covenants with them, and gave them the law through which God told them how to worship Him in the temple service. God blessed them. And He poured out His grace and His mercy upon this nation that He chose. He also gave them fathers, that is the patriarchs, men like Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and blessing would come through these men who had faith in God.

God made promises with them. And what was the greatest promise that God gave to Israel? The promise of the Messiah, yes, of Christ, who would come through Israel, who would be a Jew himself,

and would bless not only Israel, but he would bless all of the nations. Just because God chose them as a nation doesn't automatically mean individual salvation, as Paul has already argued, because salvation for each individual is only through what? Through faith, through faith in Christ alone.

But they've rejected Christ, and therefore, they have rejected the promise, and that broke Paul's heart. And he mourned for them. He grieved for them. Why? Well think of all the things that God had done for them as a nation, and yet they've rejected God, because they rejected the Messiah, who was sent by God to save them. And so one might ask, Well, what about Israel? I thought he chose them and gave them promises. But now, they don't know Him and they've rejected him. Doesn't this mean that God has failed? Hasn't God failed somehow? Doesn't this mean that God's promises are not secure? As you just told us back in chapter 8, Paul? How do we know that God's Word won't fail us? What is Paul's answer? Because God is sovereign. And all of this is a part of His sovereign plan. It's all a part of His plan. In fact, he will go on and later in chapter 9 to show that God will fulfill His promises with Israel, because He is not done with them yet. But for now, this is all a part of God's sovereign plan.

## 2. God's Sovereignty in His plan

Which leads to our second point, God's Sovereignty in His plan. Now, Paul has just told us that Israel has rejected God because they've rejected Christ. So some might say, well, then God has failed and His plan has been thwarted. Which is why Paul says at the beginning of verse 6, "but it is not as though The Word of God has failed." (Rom 9:6)

He knows what the response is going to be. And he says, Look, no, no, no, no. God's Word has not failed. After stating this fact that God's Word hasn't failed, but that God's sovereign plan is being accomplished. He then gives two illustrations to show how God is sovereign over all, and how His plan will always be accomplished.

Two illustrations, the first illustration he gives is with Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac. And then the second illustration is with Isaac, Rebecca, and Jacob. Since the beginning of time, God has been working out His sovereign plan, His sovereign plan of redemption. And many people don't like this because they want to be in charge. I want to be in charge. They have a high view of a man and a low view of God. That's why we preach a high view of God here, and a low view of man. Because that's what the Bible teaches. God is sovereign, and God can do whatever He pleases. And He will always do whatever He pleases, because He's sovereign overall.

We see God's sovereign plan, and specifically his sovereign election in these two illustrations. And so Paul starts off with this fact in the second half of verse 6. Look at what he says there, "for they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel." (Rom 9:6) That is, it doesn't depend on someone's nationality to be a child of God. And it never has. But it depends upon God's sovereign choice. God's choice, did you hear that church? God's choice, not your choice, not man's choice. It's all about God's choice, and what God desires to do.

You see, many Jews, still today believe that they're going to heaven because they're Jewish, simply because they're born as a Jew. But as Paul has already pointed out, in the first eight chapters, it has nothing to do with nationality, but with God's sovereign choice. In modern language, we could say it like this:

- Just because someone claims to be a Christian doesn't mean they are truly a Christian.
- Calling yourself a Christian doesn't make you a true Christian.
- Being born into a Christian family, doesn't make you a true Christian.
- Being baptized in a Christian church, doesn't make you a true Christian.
- Going to church or being confirmed in a church doesn't make you a true Christian.
- Even reading your Bible doesn't make you a true Christian.

For a Jew, being born in the Jewish lineage doesn't make someone automatically a child of God. That's not how it works. And to illustrate that point, Paul tells us about Abraham. Look what he says in verse 7, "[nor are they all children, because they are Abraham's descendants, but through Isaac your descendants will be named.](#)" (Rom 9:7)

Now, what's interesting here, if you remember, back in Genesis 15, God called Abraham and God made a covenant with him. Remember that? Genesis 15. And then in chapter 17, God said that He would fulfill this everlasting covenant, through Isaac, through Isaac, whom God would give to Abraham. Now, was Isaac Abraham's only son? No, he wasn't. Abraham had Ishmael with Hagar. Remember that? Before Isaac. And Abraham even had six other sons with Keturah, after Sarah had died. But just because these men were born from Abraham, they were not the ones that God chose to make His promise through. They were not the fulfillment of His promise.

Who was the son that God chose to fulfill His covenant promise through? Isaac. It was through Isaac. Why? Why was it through Isaac? You want to know why? Because God chose Isaac.

That's why. Simply because God sovereignly chose Isaac. It was all based upon God's sovereign plan. It was God's sovereign election of Isaac, which is what he says in verse 8, look at what he says there. "[That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. For this is the word of promise: "AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON."](#)" (Rom 9:8-9)

Just as the children of the flesh did not receive the promise...(which would be Ishmael and Abraham's other sons with Keturah.) It was God's sovereign choice that the promise would go through Isaac.

And here's the point. Here's the point of this. It's not because someone is born into a certain lineage or heritage, that they become a child of God. But it's all dependent upon ...Listen, church ... **God's grace**. It's all by God's grace. Isn't that what we've been saying as we've been going through Romans? It's all about God's grace. It's all by God's grace.

The Puritan John Flavel said this, "if Abraham's faith be not in your hearts, it will be no advantage that Abraham's blood is in your veins."



It's not dependent upon someone's lineage, but it all depends upon God's sovereign election of them. One commentator says it this way, "It is not the children of Christian parents who are Christians. It is those who have personally embraced Christ as Savior and Lord who are Christians." And it's the elect who come to faith in Christ. Those in whom God has sovereignly chosen to be His.

And so Paul uses the illustration of Abraham to show that it's all a part of God's sovereign plan. But some might argue and say, Well, God chose Isaac because he was the son of the rightful wife --or the full wife -- or the true wife of Abraham, whereas Hagar was Sarah's maid servant. And so that's why God chose Isaac. So, Paul goes on and gives another illustration. You want to argue that? Well, let me give you another illustration to show that that's not true. He goes on and gives the illustration of Isaac, Rebecca and Jacob. Look at verse 10.

And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived *twins* by one man, our father Isaac; 11 for though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to *His* choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, 12 it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER." 13 Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED." (Rom 9:10-13)

People really don't like these verses. They don't like these verses. Why? Because it shows God's complete sovereign election of Jacob over Esau. And why did God choose Jacob over Esau? Was it because Jacob had done some good works? Nope. Was it because of anything that Jacob had done? Nope. Was it because of some evil that Esau had done? Nope. It was simply because of God's choice. God's choice. In fact, some of your translations even say there in verse 11, "God's election." That's the Greek word that's even used there...It means a special choice or a selection, God's special choice.

You see God, before the twins were even born said, I choose Jacob. Why? Why did you do that? So that God's purpose would stand -- so that God's purpose would be fulfilled so that His sovereign plan would be fulfilled? Because it's all about Him and it's all about His plan.

Now, in these two boys, there were two nations, you had two nations, you had the Jews, Israel, or Jacob and you had the Edomites, who were from the line of Esau, the Edomites were. Now notice in verse 13, that some of you have that there in all caps in your Bible. This means that it's a quote from the Old Testament, and Paul here is quoting Malachi chapter 1, verses 2-3. The Edomites, who came from Esau 's line became an idolatrous nation. They were idolaters, whom God hated because of their idolatry. And so it wasn't that God hated the baby Esau before he was born, but that his descendants after him would be an idolatrous nation and an idolatrous people whom God would hate for their idolatry.

Church, does God hate? Yes, He does. And God can perfectly hate and perfectly love at the same time. God hates. And He said, Jacob I loved, Esau I hated. But listen, the shocker in this statement, "Jacob I loved BUT ESAU I hated" (Rom 9:13) is not the fact that God hated Esau. You know what the most shocking thing in this statement is? That Jacob I loved. That's the most shocking thing in this statement here. That He would choose to love a sinful man. That God loved Jacob, who was a sinner just like you and me. And He loved him.

And that should shock us that God would choose to love sinners, like you and like me. That's the most shocking thing in this verse. Why does God choose to love sinners like us and elect us to be His children? We don't know. We don't know. But we do know that it's all by His grace, right? And it's all for His glory, all for His glory.

Now, what is Paul's whole point and using these two illustrations here, he's showing that just because Israel has rejected God now does not mean that He has failed. That's all a part of His sovereign plan of redemption in the world. God's sovereign election of people is all a part of His plan of redemption in this world.

Now, I know that the sovereignty of God and election can be a hard truth to swallow. Why is it so hard? Because we live in a self-centered world where we like to make all of the decisions ourselves, right? We like to be in control. We want to be in control of our lives. We like to be in charge. We want to be the ones who make all the decisions. But the truth is, God is God. And God will do whatever God pleases. That means He will save whomever He wants. And He will look over whomever He wants, and send them to hell. Because God is God.

Listen, church, don't try and play God and put your reasoning above Him. Don't do it. Don't try and play God. It won't work. One commentator said, "God is beyond us. If anyone completely understands His ways, the Trinity will have to make room for another member." There are no other members in the Trinity. It's Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and God will do exactly what God pleases whenever God wants. We must believe in God's sovereignty, we must trust in God's sovereignty and rest in God's sovereignty, that He is accomplishing all things for our good and ultimately, for what? For His glory.

There are many Christians today who fight against God's sovereignty, because they don't think it's fair. And Paul knew that people would respond this way. And so he continues writing in chapter 9 to address God's justice, and God's sovereignty. And then he goes into even Israel's future, which is what we'll talk about next time.

Let's pray. Father, thank You for being a sovereign God who has elected us to be Your children. It shocks us, Lord, that You would choose to love sinners like us. We thank You for Your grace. Lord, we don't deserve the gift of salvation. We have done nothing to earn it. All we deserve is hell, eternal damnation -- because we've sinned against You. God, we thank You for being a sovereign and an electing God -- who has chosen sinners like us to redeem us and to save us so that we would live for Your glory, and Your glory alone. Help us to do that. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.