

INTRODUCTION - ROMANS 9:1-29

From the heights of Romans 8, Paul recognizes the glorious display of God's grace through Jesus, and that no one can condemn and nothing can separate believers from God's love. Following this grand view, however, is the sobering thought that Paul (and by extension, the Jewish) had it wrong. God's grace is available not only to Jews, but to everyone. Despite a change in tone, the fact remains: God accomplishes God's purposes on God's terms.

Keep up: complete N.T. Wright, *Romans: 18 Studies for Individuals and Groups*, p. 55-60.

It is God's business to do as God has purposed to do
...and God has purposed to make salvation available to all

Romans 9:1-5 → God's purpose remains intact.

God's purpose withstands misunderstanding. Paul's contemplative, sorrowful tone models a good approach for people who claim to have it right at the exclusion of other people. This is especially so when God's word has been misunderstood and misapplied.

- When confronted by truth--i.e., the truth about Jesus--contrition follows.
- The weight of salvation's truth creates a burden for those who do not believe.
- The promise of adoption is what made the people of Israel who they were.

Romans 9:6-18 → God's purpose is accomplished by God's elect.

Reorienting our understanding of faith toward the truth of God's word does not reflect poorly on God's word--it was true from the beginning and remains so. God determined through whom God's purpose would be accomplished; they are chosen and revealed by their faith.

- God chose a people who identify with God's promise by faith, not family relationship.
- There is a distinction between "a people by the flesh" and "a people according to faith."
- God's purpose is realized by the faith of the elect, not the effort (i.e., work) of the flesh.
- God's purpose is not unjust, because God's purpose is a matter of God's merciful will.
- *Note the illustrative example of 9:17 and the explanation of 9:18.*

Romans 9:19-29 → God's purpose is recognizable through God's mercy and wrath.

Paul anticipates a response to God's right to choose to whom mercy will be granted, so he writes that another way to view this is to recognize what God's mercy both prevents and permits. In other words, be glad that the choice was God's to make!

- God, the Creator, determines how to engage with humanity, the created.
- God has exclusive authority to determine the means and measure of wrath and mercy.
- God's decision for mercy is at times best appreciated when we consider the alternative.