

Salvation¹ for Jew and Gentile (Non-Jew)



SABBATH—AUGUST 28

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Romans 9.

MEMORY VERSE: “So God does what he wants to do. He shows mercy² to one person and makes another stubborn” (Romans 9:18, NlrV).

“IT IS WRITTEN, ‘I CHOSE JACOB INSTEAD OF ESAU.’ . . . He said to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy. I will show love to those I love’ ” (Romans 9:13, 15, NlrV).

What is Paul talking about? What about our free will³ and the freedom to choose? Without them very little of what we believe makes sense. Are we not free to choose or reject God? Or are these verses teaching that certain people are elected (chosen) to be saved and others to be lost, no matter what their own personal choices are?

The answer is found by studying more deeply what Paul is saying. Paul is following a line of argument. In this argument he tries to show God's right to pick those whom He will use as His “elected” ones. After all, God is the One who carries the full responsibility (task; work) of evangelizing⁴ the world. Should He not get to choose whomever He wants as His agents (workers)? He is not cutting anyone off from the opportunity (chance) for salvation. So, His actions do not disagree with the principles (rules) of free will. And more important, it does not disagree with the great truth that Christ died for all humans (men, women, and children). He desires that everyone should be saved.

We need to remember that Romans 9 is not dealing with the personal salvation of those named there whom God called to do a certain work. Understanding this will help us better understand the chapter.

1. salvation—God's plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death; the gift of eternal life; being saved from sin or evil.

2. mercy—kind or forgiving treatment of someone who could be treated harshly.

3. free will—the freedom we have to make our own choices, especially the freedom we have to choose God. God does not force us to love Him. He wants us to love Him because we choose to love Him.

4. evangelizing—spreading the gospel (the good news that Jesus saves us from our sins) to the world.

SUNDAY—AUGUST 29**PAUL'S BURDEN⁵ (Exodus 19:6)**

God needed a missionary⁶ people to evangelize a world full of paganism,⁷ darkness, and idol (false god) worship. He chose the Israelites and showed Himself to them. He planned for them to become an example to other nations. He also wanted them to attract others to the true God.

What point is Paul making in Romans 9:1–12 about the faithfulness of God among human⁸ failures?



The Jews were meant to be a light that drew the world to Christ.

Paul is building his argument piece by piece. Later he will argue that the promise made to Israel did not completely fail. There remains a remnant (small group) of faithful people whom God still uses to do His work.

To establish the argument about this small, faithful group, Paul goes back into Israelite history. He shows that God always chooses carefully: (1) God did not choose all the seed (children) of Abraham to be His people, only the line of Isaac. (2) He did not choose all of the descendants (future children) of Isaac, only those of Jacob.

It also is important to understand that belonging to a chosen line of people does not mean you will be saved. You can be of the right blood, the right family, even the right church and still be lost or outside the promise. It is faith, a faith that works by love, that shows those who are “children of the promise” (Romans 9:8, KJV).

Read the sentence in Romans 9:6, “Not everyone in the family line of Israel really belongs to Israel” (NIV). What important message can this verse have for us as Seventh-day Adventists?

MONDAY—AUGUST 30**ELECTED (CHOSEN)
(Romans 9:12, 13)**

The Sabbath study for this week says that it is not possible for us to understand Romans 9 properly until we first understand something very important. We need to know first that Paul is not saying certain people

5. burden—desire to help others.

6. missionary—having to do with the special duty or work that a church sends a person or a group out to do.

7. paganism—the beliefs and practices of people who are not Christians, Muslims, or Jews. In the world of ancient (old-time) Greece and Rome, paganism often included sun worship and a belief in many gods.

8. human—having to do with men, women, and children.

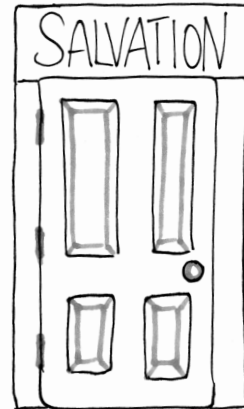
are not saved. Paul is talking about special positions God was asking special people to hold in His work. God wanted Jacob to be the father of the people who would be His special group responsible for evangelizing the world. But there is nothing in these verses that says Esau could not be saved. God wanted Esau to be saved as much as He wants all men to be saved.

How do we understand Romans 9:14, 15 in comparison⁹ with what we have been reading?

Paul is not saying that certain people will not be saved. This is because when it comes to salvation God gives mercy to all. “He [God] wants everyone to be saved” (1 Timothy 2:4, NIV). “God’s saving grace¹⁰ has appeared to all people” (Titus 2:11, NIV). But God can choose nations to play a part. They may refuse to play that part, but they cannot prevent (stop) God’s choice. No matter how hard Esau may have wanted it, he could not have become the father of the Messiah (chosen One) or of the chosen people.

In the end, it was not God’s choice for Esau to be shut out from salvation. The gifts of God’s grace through Christ are free to all. We have all been elected to be saved, not lost (Ephesians 1:4, 5; 2 Peter 1:10). It is our own choices, not God’s, that keep us from the promise of eternal (forever; without end) life in Christ. Jesus died for every person.

But God has listed in the Bible rules for choosing eternal life. One of the rules is faith in Christ, which leads the forgiven sinner to obey God.



It was not God’s choice for Esau to be shut out from salvation.

You were chosen in Christ to have salvation, even before the beginning of the world. This is your calling, your election, all given to you by God through Jesus. What an honor, what a hope! Why does everything else become nothing next to this great promise? Why would it be the greatest of all terrible events to let sin, self, and the flesh take away from you all that has been promised you in Jesus?

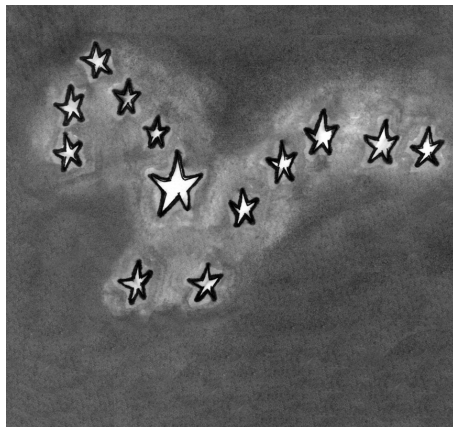
TUESDAY—AUGUST 31

MYSTERIES (Isaiah 55:8, 9)

Based on what we have read so far, how do we understand Paul’s point in Romans 9:17–24?

9. comparison—the act of showing how two or more things are the same or different.

10. grace—God’s gift of forgiveness and mercy (kindness that is not deserved) that He freely gives us to take away our sins.



As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are God's ways higher than our ways.

God was dealing with Egypt at the time of the Exodus.¹¹ And He was working to save all people for all time. God revealed (showed) Himself in the plagues of Egypt. He showed Himself by letting His people go free from slavery. These events were examples to the Egyptians that the God of Israel was the true God. It was also His way of asking the people of other nations to leave their gods and to come and worship Him.

Clearly, Pharaoh had already made his choice against God. So, in hardening Pharaoh's heart, God was not cutting him off from the opportunity (chance) of being saved. Pharaoh's heart was hardening against letting Israel go. His heart was not hardening against God's asking him to accept personal salvation. Christ died for Pharaoh, just as much as for Moses, Aaron, and the rest of the children of Israel.

The important point in all this is that

as sinful humans, we have a very limited understanding of the world, of God, and of how He works in the world. How can we expect to understand all of God's ways when the natural world holds mysteries (secret things) we cannot understand?

Sure, we do not always understand God's ways, but Jesus came to show us what God is like (John 14:9). Why, then, is it so important for us to always think about the character¹² of Christ and what He has shown to us about God and His love for us? How can knowing about God's character help us stay faithful through troubles that seem so unfair?

WEDNESDAY—SEPTEMBER 1

AMMI:¹³ "MY PEOPLE" (Romans 9:25–29)

In Romans 9:25, Paul quotes Hosea 2:23. In verse 26 he quotes Hosea 1:10. The background is that God instructed Hosea to get "married to a woman who will commit adultery" (Hosea 1:2, NIV) as an example of God's relationship with Israel. This is because the nation had worshiped false gods. The children born to this marriage were given names meaning God's punishment¹⁴ of idol-worshiping Israel. The third child was named Loammi (Hosea 1:9), which means "not my people."

11. Exodus—Israel's deliverance (freedom) from Egypt.

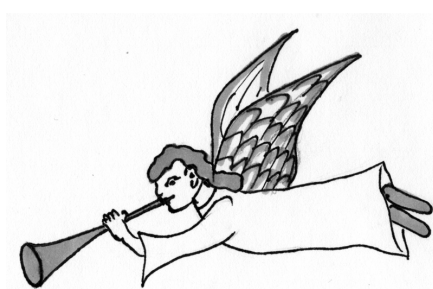
12. character (of Christ)—who Jesus is; having and understanding the character of Jesus is the same as being kind, loving, gentle, honest, patient, and so on. God's law (Ten Commandments) shows us Jesus' character.

13. *ammi*—my people.

14. punishment—a penalty (price to be paid) for, or the result of, doing something wrong; when someone must suffer loss or pain for doing something bad, wrong, or against the law.

But Hosea foretold the day would come when, after punishing¹⁵ His people, God would accept them back. And He would take away their false gods and make a new covenant (promise) with them. (Read Hosea 2:11–19.) At this point those who were *Loammi*, “not my people,” would become *Ammi*, “my people.”

In Paul’s day, the *Ammi* were “even us . . . not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles” (Romans 9:24, KJV). What a clear and powerful example of the gospel!¹⁶ This is the gospel that was planned from the start for the whole world. It is no surprise that we as Seventh-day Adventists accept our responsibility (work) from Revelation 14:6. Today, as in Paul’s day, and as in the days of Israel in Bible times, the good news of salvation is to be spread to the whole world.



Today, as in Paul’s day, the good news about Jesus is to be spread to all the world.

Read Romans 9:25–29. (Notice how much Paul quotes the Old Testament in Romans 9:25–29. He does this to make his point about the things that were happening in his day.) **What is the basic mes-**

sage found in these verses? What hope is being offered here to his readers?

The fact that some of Paul’s friends and neighbors refused to accept the gospel made him very sad. (Read Romans 9:2.) But there was a small, faithful group. God’s promises do not fail, even when we do. We can have the hope that God’s promises will be fulfilled over time. If we claim those promises for ourselves, then they will be fulfilled in us too.

How often have people failed you? How often have you failed yourself and failed others? Probably more times than you can count, right? What lessons can you learn from these failures about where your full trust must lie?

THURSDAY—SEPTEMBER 2

STUMBLING (FALLING DOWN) (Romans 9:30–32)

What is the message of Romans 9:30–32? More important, how can we take this message, written in a certain time and place, and use the principles (rules) for ourselves today? How can we avoid making the same mistakes that some Israelites made?

In very clear words, Paul explains to his neighbors why they are missing out on something God wishes them

15. punishing—making someone pay for doing wrong.

16. gospel—the good news that Jesus saves us from our sins; the good news about salvation.

to have. Paul also says that they are missing out on something they were chasing after but were not getting.

Interestingly, the Gentiles (non-Jews) whom God had accepted were not even working for such acceptance. They were going after their own interests and goals when the gospel message came to them. Understanding the value of this message, the Gentiles accepted it. God declared them righteous (holy) because they accepted Jesus Christ as their Substitute.¹⁷ Their acceptance was an act of faith.

The problem with the Israelites was that they fell over the stumbling stone (read Romans 9:33). Some, not all (read Acts 2:41), refused to accept Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah sent by God. The Israelites felt that Jesus did not meet their expectations (wishes) of who the Messiah should be. So, when Jesus came, they turned their backs on Him.

Before this chapter ends, Paul quotes another Old Testament verse: "It is written, 'Look! In Zion I am laying [putting] a stone that causes people to trip [stumble]. It is a rock that makes them fall. The one who trusts in him [God] will never be put to shame' " (Romans 9:33, NIV). In these words Paul shows, once again, just how important true faith is in the plan of salvation¹⁸ (read also 1 Peter 2:6–8). A rock that makes people fall? And yet, whoever believes in Him shall not

be ashamed? Yes, for many, Jesus is a stumbling block. But for those who know Him and love Him, He is another kind of rock, "the rock of my salvation" (Psalm 89:26, KJV).

Have you ever found Jesus to be a "stumbling block" or a "rock of offense"? If so, how? What were you doing that brought you into that situation? How did you get out? And what did you learn so that you never find yourself in rebellion (war) with Jesus again?

FRIDAY—SEPTEMBER 3

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, "Later English Reformers,"¹⁹ pages 261, 262, in *The Great Controversy [War Between Christ and Satan]*; "Faith and Works," pages 530, 531, in *The SDA Encyclopedia*;²⁰ Ellen G. White Comments, pages 1099, 1100, in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 1.

"Man is elected to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. He is elected to put on the armor, to fight the good fight of faith. He is elected to use the way God has put in his reach to war against every unholy lust, while Satan is playing the game of life for his soul. He is elected to watch unto prayer. He is to study the Holy Bible. He is to avoid entering

17. substitute—someone or something that takes the place of another person or thing. Jesus is our Substitute because He died for our sins.

18. plan of salvation—what God has done and is doing to save us from sin.

19. Reformers—people who disagreed with the Roman Catholic Church and started teaching from the Bible. They established (started) Protestant churches.

20. encyclopedia—a reference work (such as a book, series of books, Web site, or CD-ROM) that contains information about many different subjects or a lot of information about one subject.

into temptation.²¹ He is elected to have faith all the time. He is elected to obey every word that comes out of the mouth of God. He is to do so that he may be not only a hearer, but also a doer of the word. This is the Bible kind of election.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*²² to Ministers [Workers] and Gospel Workers, pages 453, 454.

“No human mind can fully understand the character or the works of God. We cannot by searching find out God. To the strongest and most highly educated minds, and to the weakest and most uneducated minds, God must remain clothed in mystery. ‘Clouds and thick darkness surround Him [God]. But His rule is built on what is right and fair.’ Psalm 97:2, [NIRV]. We can go only so far in understanding how God deals with us. We can never fully understand His mercy, which is united [joined] to unlimited power. We can understand as much of His purposes as we are capable of understanding. Beyond this we may still trust the hand that is all-powerful, the heart that is full of love.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Education*, page 169.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① Certain Christians teach that, even before we were born, God chose some to be saved and some to be lost. Suppose you happened to have been one of those whom God decided would be lost, no matter what choices you made. In this line of thinking, you would be doomed to be destroyed, which means burning in hell for eternity.²³ This would mean that through no choice of our own, but only through God’s choice, some are chosen before birth to live without a saving relationship with Jesus in this life. They would spend the next life burning forever in the fires of hell. What is wrong with that picture? How are these examples different from our understanding of the same issues?

② How is the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its responsibility to the world today almost the same as the responsibility of Israel in its day? What are the things that are almost the same? And what are the things that are different? In what ways are we doing better? Or are we doing worse? Explain your answer.

21. temptation—anything that can turn us away from God and that tries to get us to do, think, feel, or say what is wrong.

22. testimonies—the many good things we tell to others about what God has done for us.

23. eternity—forever; for all time; life without end.