



Romans 9-16

The Greatest News

Sample Lesson #1
and
Leader's Guide Answers

1: Potter and the Clay

Read – Romans 9; other references as given.

The first Lamplighters study on Romans (chapters 1–8) guided you through the first three major sections of the book: sin (Romans 1–3), salvation (Romans 4–5), and sanctification (Romans 6–8). You learned that all men are unrighteous in God's sight and justly under condemnation. You also learned that God declares man righteous when he trusts Jesus Christ alone for eternal life (Romans 3:21–5:21). Finally, you learned God's master plan for spiritual growth (identification, appropriation, presentation) in Romans 6–8.

As Paul's letter was being read to the Roman Christians, someone must have been thinking, "So what about the Jews? As God's chosen people, do they get a free pass? And since man is saved by faith apart from the law, does their election as God's privileged nation exclude them from the need for personal salvation?"

No explanation of the gospel is complete without answering the question of Israel's privileged relationship with God. The fourth major section of Romans (chapters 9–11) focuses on the doctrine of God's sovereignty and His divine election of national Israel.

Now ask God to bless your study of His Word and transform you into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ.

1. Paul often rejoiced during his severe personal trials (Acts 16:23–25; Philippians 1:12–18), but he also experienced times of great anguish and sorrow (1 Corinthians 2:1–3; Philippians 2:19).
 - a. What was the specific cause of Paul's great sorrow and unceasing grief in Romans 9:1–4?
 - b. What was Paul willing to do (although he was not able; the Greek imperfect tense indicates incomplete action) to save his fellow Jews?
 - c. If you are a Christian, does the eternal destiny of those without Christ also cause you great sorrow and constant grief? Why?
2. One of the distinguishing characteristics of a mature Christian is the ability to trust God and have joy during times of testing.
 - a. How could Paul instruct the Philippians to **rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice** (Philippians 4:4) if he wasn't able to fulfill this biblical command himself? In other words, wasn't he being hypocritical by instructing others to rejoice when he didn't do it himself at all times? Explain your answer.
 - b. What *do you think* Paul's example teaches you about the relationship between communicating God's command and human weakness?
 - c. Have you ever felt that you had to be perfect before you could share God's truth with others? What is wrong with this perspective?
3. What were some of the divine privileges God gave to the nation of Israel (Romans 9:4–5)?

4. The word **adoption** is used almost exclusively in the New Testament to refer to the believer's new relationship with God as a result of salvation (Romans 8:15, 23; Galatians 4:4–7). *Do you think* the phrase **to whom pertain the adoption** (Romans 9:4) means Israel had previously experienced a

national or corporate salvation because of God's divine election but now had lost their adoption/salvation due to unbelief?

If not, what *do you think* their adoption refers to?

5. The Old Testament promises God would send a messiah who would redeem Israel and be their king (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6–7; Micah 5:2–5). Even though Israel failed to recognize Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the Word of God did not fail (Romans 9:6).
 - a. What does the illustration of Isaac teach us about God's divine plan (Romans (9:6–9)?
 - b. What important truth does the selection of Jacob over Esau teach about God's sovereignty (Romans 9:10–13)?
6. To some the doctrine of divine election is difficult to accept because it seems unfair and unjust. But when we realize that all men deserve God's wrath, He isn't being unjust to not save some. God is being merciful to save any.
 - a. What is God's answer to those who accuse Him of being unjust (Romans 9:14–18)?
 - b. What answer is given to the one who believes God is wrong to find fault with man because no one can resist His will (Romans 9:19–21)?
7. The biblical account of Pharaoh in Egypt often strikes fear into the hearts of God's people because the Scriptures say God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Romans 9:16; Exodus 9:12; 10:27). What happened prior to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart that calms the Christian's fear about being a victim of God's pernicious and selective judgment (Exodus 8:32)?
8. Why does God patiently endure ungodly people (**vessels of wrath**, Romans 9:22) by temporarily withholding His wrath from them (Romans 9:23)?
9. God said He would call them **My people, who were not My people** (Romans 9:25). Whom is He referring to (1 Peter 2:9–10)?
10. Some might be tempted to view Israel's inability to recognize the Messiah as a failure of God's sovereignty (Romans 9:6). What attributes of God (love, omniscience, omnipotence, mercy, faithful, righteous, just, holy, etc.) are demonstrated in His preservation of a remnant of Israel (Romans 9:27–29)?
11.
 - a. Who or what is the **stumbling stone and rock of offense** (Romans 9:33)?
 - b. In what ways, if any, do you stumble or resist God's will for your life?
 - c. If you are a Christian, how is Jesus' lordship over your life demonstrated in everyday life?

1: Potter and the Clay

1.
 - a. A great majority of the nation of Israel was not saved.
 - b. He was willing to be accursed or separated from Christ (presumably for all eternity).
 - c. Answers will vary, but all Christians should be greatly concerned about the eternal destiny of those without Jesus Christ. While Paul experienced great sorrow and unceasing grief, it doesn't mean that he was always downcast or somber (Philippians 2:17–18; 4:10). The eternal destiny of his fellow Israelites, however, was a constant burden on his heart. The Old Testament prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, et al.) were often distraught over the spiritual apathy of Israel. Christ Himself was greatly moved when He reflected on the spiritual condition of Jerusalem (Luke 13:34), and believers ought to be burdened for their families, fellow workers, and others without Christ. This concern should motivate Christians to witness and to live holy lives.

2.
 - a. Paul was speaking the truth under the guidance and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The fact that he could not always rejoice made him human, not a hypocrite. Human weakness is always part of being human even if we are saved. This doesn't give believers an excuse for sinning, but it does explain the gap between what we believe and what we experience in life.
 - b. Believers are perfect (positionally sanctified) in Christ, but they are not perfected (progressive sanctification). Paul wrote to the Philippians these words: **Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected: but I press on** (Philippians 3:12), and the apostle John said, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1:8). Believers should endeavor to live righteous lives, but they will never be sinless. They must comprehend this reality and accept it as a fact and press on to proclaim God's Word even if they are accused of hypocrisy.
 - c. Answers will vary. No Christian is perfect. The unsaved may expect it of Christians, but God doesn't, and neither should we. All believers should strive to live wholeheartedly for God in the power of the Holy Spirit.

3.
 1. God selected the Israelites to be His chosen people.
 2. God had unconditionally adopted them. They would always be His people.
 3. God manifested His glory to the nation. This means He chose them to manifest Himself to the world.
 4. God had given them specific covenants (Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, New).
 5. God had given them the law. This is a reference to the law God gave to the people through Moses on Mount Sinai.
 6. God gave them the temple service. He taught them the prescribed form of true worship so that they could approach Him with confidence and find forgiveness for their sins.
 7. God gave them specific promises separate from the covenants. This included protection, provision, and various other blessings, as well promises related to judgment and restoration.

4. No. Israel's adoption refers to God's active choice of selecting national Israel to be the recipient of His sovereign grace so He might manifest His glory through them. God chose the nation of Israel to bear witness to the world (Deuteronomy 7:7). If Israel experienced a corporate or national salvation, this would be in complete violation of Scripture (John 1:12; Romans 10:9–10, 13). The reference to Israel receiving the adoption as sons reflects upon the original call of Moses to lead the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt. God refers to the people of Israel as His son (Exodus 4:22) and this is a reference to their youth, weakness, and need for protection and guidance from Jehovah. Physical descent from Abraham didn't qualify an individual to be a child of God (Romans 9:8). The Jews considered their corporate adoption—their physical descent from Abraham—to be sufficient for salvation. Paul's example of Ishmael (son of Abraham and Sarai's handmaid Hagar) proves that physical descent is insufficient for salvation, either individually or corporately. God chooses according to His own sovereign will totally apart from any human merit or superiority.

5.
 - a. God's choice of Isaac over Ishmael demonstrates that His sovereignty is specific even to the point of choosing individual lives to fulfill His will and be the recipients of His grace. It also indicates that not all the physical descendants of Abraham are the true, spiritual seed of Abraham (believers), but it is the children of promise (in this case, Isaac) who are accepted. It is a matter of God's sovereign choice, not an individual's physical birth, that makes someone acceptable to Him.
 - b. It demonstrates that there are multiple ways that God expresses His sovereignty. In the choice of Abraham, God chose him to be the father of a great nation (Abrahamic covenant). In the choice of Isaac, God exercised His sovereignty by choosing Isaac over Ishmael while the two children were still in the womb. Note: The Bible is using a familiar Hebrew way of comparison in Romans 9:13. In Hebrew, since there is no comparative as we have in English (good, better, best), the Bible often uses the "love/hate" comparative to show distinction (Luke 14:26). Although the New Testament was originally written in Greek, many of the writers were Jewish. Hebrew thoughts were conveyed by the writers

without violating the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. That being said, God did not hate Esau as we would normally understand it. Paul is merely saying that God chose Isaac and extended His love toward him more than he did to Esau in this situation.

6.
 - a. God is sovereign and He can demonstrate mercy or compassion to whomever He desires without being unjust.
 - b. God's selection of individuals for salvation is solely based upon His grace and mercy and is independent of their works. The clay (**the thing formed**) does not have the right to determine what kind of vessel the potter decides to make.
7. Before God hardened Pharaoh's heart, Pharaoh rejected the word of God through Moses. Pharaoh hardened his own heart, and then God hardened Pharaoh's heart. The account of Pharaoh's life parallels Romans 1:24–26.
8. God does this to make known the riches of His glory to those who have been saved (Romans 9:23).
9. Believing Gentiles.
10. Answers will vary, but should include the following:
 1. His faithfulness is demonstrated by His willingness to be faithful to His promises in the face of Israel's rejection of the Messiah.
 2. His holiness is demonstrated by His unwillingness to compromise the standards of righteousness and include more Israelites.
 3. His justice is seen as He executed justice on His chosen people.
 4. His love is seen as He preserved a remnant (Romans 9:7, 29) according to His promise.
Other answers could apply.
11.
 - a. Jesus Christ.
 - b. Answers will vary.
 - c. Answers will vary.