

Leader's Guide

LESSON 16

Dr. Jerry Nelson

In response to the sermon on January 6th.

Romans 9:1-29 **God's Sovereign Choice**

Key Points

The apostle Paul once again revisits the issue of salvation and divine election. It is a continuing theme in Paul's letters (Romans 8:29-33; 9:6-26; 11:5, 7, 28; 16:13; Colossians 3:12; 1Thessalonians 1:4; 2Thessalonians 2:13; Titus 1:1). In this passage we will discover:

- The Jews: children of the promise
- Election: God's sovereign choice
- God's mercy, wrath and restoration

As believers we often take great comfort in God's kindness, goodness, and mercy toward us, except when it seems exclusive--when it seems that it is only available to the chosen. Then we begin to question God's ways.

Paul wants to reveal something of the character of God that is vitally important to our understanding of him and our relationship with him. At times God's ways can seem hard, even unfair. We wrestle with the fact that God says "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion"¹, and "Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?"² How is it that some will experience the joy of an eternal relationship with God, and others eternal separation from him?

Truly God's ways are not our ways. Our understanding is limited. Divine election challenges our sense of justice, until we recognize that we all deserve death. None of us deserves mercy. The impact of our non-discriminatory culture and our sense of entitlement often tempt us to cast suspicion on God's character. Our challenge is to believe and trust in the great love and mercy of our perfect heavenly Father.

Personal Reflection

No doubt your group has had some rather lively and perhaps intense discussions on this topic of election. As stated above, it is a recurring theme throughout Paul's letters. It is difficult because it sets up a tension within us that is hard to reconcile. We know that God is always good. He is always fair and always just. He loves with perfect love. The doctrine of election seems to run counter to that. Who is God? What do we know to be true? How do we make sense of his justice and his mercy, of his desire for all to be saved, yet the truth that not all will be?

This week as you study the passage and prepare for this lesson, take time to list out all of the benefits you receive as a child of God. Take time to honor him and worship him for your salvation. Pray for your group, that the Spirit will grant them illumination and insight, and that they will experience acceptance and peace with the multifaceted character of God. May you enjoy a rich time of worship together as you complete your study.

¹ Romans 9:15

² Romans 9:21

Discussion Questions

1. How does Romans 9:1-8 (especially verse 6) tie into the resounding affirmation of Romans 8:37-39?
2. On what basis does God choose who will belong to him (see especially verses 11-12, 16)? In what way(s) is this good news and what security does it give us?
3. What hard questions does this truth raise? Why might someone suggest God is unjust (9:14)?
4. From verses 1-29, what do we learn about God's character?
5. In verses 22-25 the Bible says that God's wrath, power and glory are demonstrated in his wrath and in his mercy. How do you explain this?
6. To defame God's character is to cast disparaging motives on God's holiness. In what ways are we prone to cast suspicion on God's character as it relates to the doctrine of election?
7. What temptations do we face if we reject the doctrine of election?
8. What spiritual benefit do we derive from the belief in God's sovereign choice?
9. Again, how does the doctrine of election in Romans 9 confirm the promise of Romans 8:37-39?