

Romans Chapter 9- John Karmelich

1. The title for this lesson is, "What we can learn about God from Jewish History".
 - a) A subtitle for this lesson would be "What the bible teaches us about God and how we should respond to that knowledge.
 - b) If I had to pick the single most important point from the Old Testament, it would as follows: "God's unconditional promises are just that, unconditional". That's a key issue as it relates to this lesson.
2. The focal point of the next three chapters of Romans is on the Jewish people. First, let me review the Book of Romans to date as it ties into Chapter 9:
 - a) Chapters 1 through 7 can be considered "The Christian soldier boot camp". Through those lessons, Paul lays out reason after reason of the idea of, "without God, we can't". It shows how impossible it is to please God based on our efforts. It lays out how imperfect we are as humans whether we live moral or immoral lifestyles.
 - b) Chapter 8 then says in effect, "Despite our problems, God still loves us and wants to be with us forever. If we accept Jesus' payment for our sins, then "step one" is completed. From there, God works on us to mature us and prepare us for life with Him forever.
 - c) This leads us to Chapter 9. A natural question comes up here: It is, "What about God's "Chosen People", which is the Jewish nation? Didn't God pick them? They don't, as a whole believe in Jesus. If God's promises are unconditional, what about them?"
3. This leads me back to my opening point: God's promises are unconditional.
 - a) There are promises made to the Jewish nation that are also unconditional.
 - i) Those promises key on the fact God promised to make Abraham a great nation of people. That unconditional promise also includes the land of Israel.
 - b) Here's a key point for Christians: If we can't trust God's promises to the Jewish nation, can we ever trust God's promises to us through Jesus Christ?
 - i) Over the next three lessons, we'll get into the specifics of those promises.
 - ii) The key point for Christians is to understand the parallel thought that God makes unconditional promises to "them" and keeps them. God makes unconditional promises to "us" and God will keep them.
4. In some ways, Romans Chapters 9 through 11 is a "repeat" of layout-style of Chapters 1-8.
 - a) The focus of Chapters 1-8 is on mankind in general, and the only way to salvation is through Jesus Christ. Most of Chapters 1-8 deals with our depravity.
 - b) Chapters 9-11 deal specifically with the Jewish nation. Chapters 9-10 focus on their depravity and the mistaken assumptions made by the Jewish people.
 - i) Paul conducts an Old Testament bible study in Chapters 9-10 to make his points about the purpose of the Jewish nation and their final destiny.
 - c) Chapter 11 is another "high point" (like Chapter 8) where Paul discusses the ultimate salvation of the Jewish nation. It is not about their goodness, it is about God keeping His unconditional promises. The point is the Jewish nation will be saved. We'll discuss the implications of that, and how it applies to modern Israel when we get to Chapter 11.
 - d) The best way to understand the next three chapters of Romans is to remember this model:
 - i) Romans Chapter 9 focuses on Israel's past. This is prior to Jesus First Coming.
 - ii) Romans Chapter 10 focuses on Israel's present. This is from Jesus First Coming to His Second.
 - iii) Romans Chapter 11 focuses on Israel's future. The "future" refers to the time era after Jesus Second Coming.
5. With that said, we can now focus on "Israel's past, which is this lesson."
 - a) The application to the Christian today is to "learn from history". These chapters help us understand God a little better on how and about His unconditional promises.

6. Chapter 9, Verse 1: I speak the truth in Christ--I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit-- ² I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, ⁴ the people of Israel.
- a) Let me paraphrase what Paul is saying in these first few verses: "I swear to God that I am telling the truth of what I am about to say: I wish that I could spend eternity in hell in exchange for the Jewish nation "getting it" and understanding that Jesus died for their sins. I'm willing to be eternally condemned if that's what it takes to save them".
 - b) First of all, one cannot go to hell in order to save others. Salvation is strictly based on an individual decision. You can't go to either heaven or hell "based on your parents" or anyone else for that matter. If this were true, most parents would consider this option for the sake of their children. Younger adults could think, "I'm saved because my parents paid the price". The glory only goes to God and He won't share that glory with our parents or Paul or anyone else. In other words, Paul couldn't do this if he wants.
 - c) Paul understood he couldn't be condemned in exchange for another. Paul was trying to show his love for his fellow Jewish people. We tend to forget that Paul not only had a Jewish background, but was very religious and was a Pharisee. (See Philippians 3:4-5)
 - i) A Pharisee is a "denomination" of Judaism at that time which took the most literal interpretations of the Jewish laws as possible.
 - d) One positive thing to take from these verses is Paul's compassion for the unsaved.
 - i) By the time Paul wrote this letter, he spent much of his adult life as a missionary for Jesus. He was persecuted, attacked, stoned, and often it was by religious Jews who rejected Paul's message about Jesus.
 - ii) Paul wasn't making this statement so that people would stop persecuting him. Paul understood that was part of the price. Paul was very proud of his Jewish heritage. (See Romans 11:1) He understood they were "God's chosen people" and wanted them to be saved for eternity. Paul's love for the unsaved was greater than the pain he endured in preaching the Gospel message.
 - iii) The application for us is to have that same sort of heart for the "lost". We need to see people as needing Jesus. We are all called to be missionaries in that whoever we encounter, whenever we encounter people, we are to be witnesses for Jesus Christ in every aspect of our lives.
 - iv) The idea is that we can't give up our salvation for the sake of others, but like Paul we are to live our lives "as if we could". We need to have a heart for lost souls.
 - e) It might help at this point to understand why the Jewish nation rejected Jesus.
 - i) One of the key reasons the Jewish nation rejected Jesus 2,000 years ago is they wanted a ruling Messiah. They wanted someone to overthrow the Roman Empire. When the Jewish nation saw Jesus beaten up under Pontius Pilate, they realized this guy would never overthrow Rome. That is why the crowd turned on Jesus and wanted Pilate to crucify Him.
 - ii) The most common answer given by religious Jews today is that they believe the Messiah will be "just" a man, while Jesus claimed (rightly so) to be God. They believe the purpose of the Messiah is to rule the world one day from Jerusalem. They believe a man will come one day and be world emperor and start a 1,000 year period of peace and prosperity with the Jewish nation "at his side".
 - a) One has to understand there are other issues as well. Many Jewish people today are atheists or agnostic about their own religion. Further, many can't accept the idea of "giving up Judaism" for the sake of Jesus. They see Jesus as a form of idolatry and worshiping another God.
 - f) There have been Jewish people throughout history that have accepted Jesus as the Messiah. We'll discuss that more in Chapters 10-11.

7. Verse 4 (cont.): Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises.
 - a) Here is Paul giving the purpose of the Jewish nation in a few sentences.
 - b) It's time to review "God's game plan" to redeem mankind:
 - i) God started with Adam and Eve. That started the sin problem.
 - ii) God then said in effect, "Let's see if mankind can make it on their own without My help. After roughly 2,000 years, the human race became so corrupt that God had to flood the world and essentially start over with Noah and his family.
 - iii) The time era after the flood, man still failed to please God. This is because Noah and his family still had the "sin disease" within them.
 - iv) Next God said in effect, "Let me start a race of people to be My witnesses to the world." That is when God started the Jewish nation, i.e., "The Chosen People".
 - v) A first person was needed to start this race. That was Abraham. God said to him in effect, "Hey, you Abraham! Yes you, listen up! ☺ I'm starting a new race of people and you're the lead guy. Get away from your family to a land I'll show you. I'm going to bless you financially and bless your descendants. All you have to do is believe it. Your descendants will be a great nation." (This is my very loose paraphrase of Genesis Chapter 12).
 - vi) Abraham and his wife Sarah didn't have any children. He waited (and tried of course) to have a child. For years, no luck. Finally, Abraham produced a child through a maidservant named Hagar. God eventually told Abraham, "I'm going to give you a son start this nation. That son comes on My timing and not yours. Still, even though your child from Hagar doesn't count, he will still be blessed because I promised to bless you and your descendants regardless of your actions.
 - vii) Abraham finally had the "promised son" through his wife Sarah. That son, Isaac, when he grew up, had twin sons. Only one of those sons, Jacob, was the "father" of the Jewish nation, while the other son was cast out of the picture. All the descendants of Jacob were then part of the Jewish race.
 - c) Let's get back to Verses 4-5: Paul is stating the benefits of being part of the Jewish nation:
 - i) The first one is the key: they are "adopted as sons". This is about God choosing that nation, corporately to be His representatives. Does that mean they are "unadopted" for rejecting Jesus? No. The point is they are still "God's chosen people" and Paul will get to that in Chapter 11. This gets back to God's unconditional promises.
 - ii) It might help at this point to discuss the concept of "individual versus corporate" responsibility. There are things one is held accountable for as an individual and others as a group (corporate). If a group of children are held accountable to say, clean up a room, the point is whether or not the room gets cleaned and not how much effort each child makes.
 - a) It is important to grasp the idea that God judges individuals and God judges nations. He holds us individually accountable and collectively accountable. The Old Testament is full of stories of nations and cities that were judged and condemned.
 - b) For example, Jesus condemned specific towns in Israel because those towns had the privilege hearing Jesus speak first-hand. Jesus said those towns get a stricter judgment than say, other towns. (See Matthew 11:21-24).
 - c) Salvation is strictly an individual judgment. Blessings and curses in this lifetime are often group judgments. God cares about group efforts as He wants us to work as a group, and not as "solo acts".

- d) The next set of benefits (for being part of the Jewish race) as stated in Verse 4 are: “Divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises”.
 - i) The “divine glory” is the fact the Jewish race got to “see” God’s presence. There were great miracles performed in front of them. There were prophets with messages from God himself directly for the Jewish nation.
 - ii) God called the Jewish race to be his “librarians” of the Old Testament law.
 - iii) That is much more than making sure the words were copied correctly from one scroll to another. By the way, modern evidence shows that copyist errors were very minimal and insignificant to the concepts taught. The oldest scrolls we have (over 2,000 years old) are 99% accurate versus modern scrolls.
 - iv) God not only wanted the Jewish nation to be his keepers of the law, but to observe those laws. It required the building of a portable structure called the tabernacle. Later, a more permanent structure was built, roughly to the same dimensions as that tabernacle. That is the “temple worship” reference of Verse 4.
 - v) Finally, we have “the promises”. This is the idea of the unconditional promises made to the Jewish nation. The key facts are God promised Abraham that his decedents would be blessed and God would make his descendants a great nation. Those are unconditional promises. The Jewish people couldn’t stop those promises if they tried because it was God’s reputation on the line, not theirs.
 - e) Let’s take a quick break and ask, “How does all of this apply to us today?”
 - i) For starters, God makes an unconditional promise to Christians they will get resurrected based on their trust in Jesus’ payment for their sins. We can’t “mess that up” because it is God’s promise on the line, not ours. There are rewards in heaven based on our faithfulness, but salvation itself is up to God, not us. We can’t lose our salvation by “sinning too much”, just like the Jewish nation can’t lose their unconditional promises by “sinning too much”.
 - ii) This is about accountability. As Jesus once put it, “For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required.” (Luke 12:48a, NKJV). The idea is that if God reveals a lot about Himself to us, then we are accountable for that knowledge. If God works in our lives through great miracles, then God holds us to a higher standard than those who never had any miraculous intervention from God.
 - iii) Finally, beware of bigotry against Jews. Unfortunately, the Christian church has been horribly guilty of this for centuries. God is not through with the Jewish Nation and if no other reason, we need to respect Jewish people for that reason.
8. Verse 5: Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.
- a) Paul makes two final points about the purpose of the Jewish race:
 - i) The first is, from this Jewish race came the “Patriarch’s”. To put it simply, these are some of the “famous” Jewish people from the bible. They are part of the lineage from Abraham to Jesus. It is the names we recognize like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It includes King David as well. We as Christians as well as religious Jews study their lives. We have their life accounts as God inspired to learn life-lessons of what God wants us to do and not do.
 - ii) The second point is that God used the Jewish race to bring the Messiah, Jesus into the world. This is listed last on Paul’s list only because Paul is working in chronological order.
 - b) Why did God use this method? After all, Jesus could have died on the cross right after Adam and Eve’s sin. Instead, God used a long drawn out method to bring Jesus into this world. There were many prophets who lived during this time that predicted aspects of the Messiah’s life. God used this method to increase the amount of evidence in favor of Jesus being the Messiah.

- i) My point is God “maximized the evidence” for Jesus’ existence. Part of that methodology was to have a “Chosen People” bring the Messiah into the world.
 - ii) Again, there were many bible prophets predicting different aspects about Jesus’ birth, life and death. I’ll argue that every aspect of Jesus’ first coming was predicted somewhere in the Old Testament. Matthew’s Gospel emphasizes that point. The most common phrase used in Matthew is “as it was written”. Matthew points out the prophetic predictions about Jesus as it was fulfilled when it happen.
 - c) One last point about this verse. Notice whenever Paul mentions Jesus, his habit is to stop and break out in praise. If you study Paul’s letters, you will notice that every now and then. Personally, I think Paul spent so much of his life praising Jesus it was habitual for Paul to include a little praise reference when Jesus name is mentioned.
 - i) As best I figure, we’re going to be spending a lot of time in heaven praising Jesus. Might as well get used to it now and develop the habit! ☺ On a practical note, God wants us to live a life of gratitude. Praising Jesus for what he did gets our focus upon that gratitude.
9. Verse 6: It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.⁸ In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.⁹ For this was how the promise was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son."
- a) In Verse 6, we get start the specific discussion of “Did God fail to keep His promises to the Nation of Israel? After all, since they reject Jesus as Messiah, did God go back on His promises to them? Is God done with the Jewish nation? If we can’t trust God’s promises to Israel, how can we trust God’s promises to us through Jesus?”
 - i) With that in mind, look at Paul’s first sentence in Verse 6: “It is not as though God's word had failed.”
 - ii) Paul will spend the remainder of Chapter 9 giving an Old Testament bible study showing how God’s word has not failed.
 - b) To show how God is faithful to His promises, Paul first defines who “The Chosen People” are. Paul’s point is not all the descendants of Abraham are the Jewish Nation.
 - i) As I stated earlier, it stated with Abraham. God made a promise to Abraham and his wife they would have children that would start a great nation. After awhile, nothing happened. Abraham decided to speed up the process by having a child through another woman. That other child was named Ishmael. One day, when God retold of that promise, Abraham said in effect, “Here’s Ishmael Lord, work through him.” God responded in effect, “Nice try, but I said you would have a son through Sarah and I meant it.”
 - ii) The whole point is not all of the offspring of Abraham were part of the Jewish nation. Even after Isaac was born, he too had twin sons. It was only through one of the twin sons that became the nation of Israel.
 - c) Let me define what “Israel” means at this point:
 - i) The grandson of Abraham was Jacob. Jacob was the father of 12 sons. Those 12 sons became the 12 tribes of Israel. Jacob was renamed “Israel” by God himself.
 - ii) The word “Israel” means “governed by God”. It also means “struggles with God”. The idea is one who turns their lives over to be ruled by God, but at the same time still has their own sin nature. Thus, we constantly struggle between wanting God’s will for our life versus God’s will for our life.
 - iii) Understand that for this lesson, I’m using the terms “Jews, Jewish Nation, and the Nation of Israel” interchangeably. Technically, they each have different meanings. For the purpose of this lesson, we will just accept them as synonyms.

- d) Now let's get to Paul's reference of "For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel"
 - i) The first use of the word "Israel" above refers to Jacob himself.
 - ii) The second reference refers to the Nation of Israel.
 - iii) Again, the word "Israel" can mean "governed with God". That means those Jewish people who willfully choose to ignore God do not deserve the title "Israel".
 - iv) If you are confused now, it gets worse. ☺ The idea here is that in order to "earn" the title an Israelite, one has to be a religious Jew that wants God to rule over their life. An atheist of Jewish decent would not qualify here.
 - v) It's complicated because an Israelite (i.e., a "Jew") refers to one's national heritage as well as one's religion. One can be a Jew by heritage and choose not to observe the Jewish religion. That was true in Paul's day as well as today. In Romans Chapters 9-11, Paul uses the term "Israelite" to mean religious Jews at one place, and all-Jews (i.e., descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) in another place.
 - vi) Reading Verse 6 in context, Paul is only referring to religious Jews if Paul is saying, "Not all Israel are Israel".
10. Verse 10: Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac.¹¹ Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad--in order that God's purpose in election might stand:¹² not by works but by him who calls--she was told, "The older will serve the younger."¹³ Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."
- a) Paul is continuing to give his Old Testament bible study that not all the descendants of Abraham were part of the Jewish race. By the way, notice that Paul believes these are all literal people and actual historical events that happened!
 - b) Abraham's "chosen" son was Isaac. Isaac later had twin boys. Of those twins, only one was chosen to be part of the "Chosen People". That was Jacob, whose name was later changed to Israel.
 - c) OK, John, what's the point? ☺ Remember that God rejected Isaac's brother Ishmael as being part of the "chosen people". Some people could think, "Well, Ishmael was 13 years old when Isaac was born. God could have saw some fault in him and said, "Next!" ☺
 - i) Now let's go to the next generation: Isaac married Rebekah and had twin boys named Esau (born first) and Jacob (born second).
 - ii) Verse 12 is a quote from Genesis 25:23: "The older will serve the younger."
 - a) Rebekah the mom was told this before both boys were born.
 - b) The point is God sovereignty choose Jacob to be part of the Chosen People and not his twin brother Esau.
 - c) That's the point of Verse 12 that says, "Before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad". The point is God picked Jacob prior to birth.
 - iii) It might help to state the classic children's riddle, "Where does a 400-pound gorilla sleep? The answer is anywhere it wants to". God is like the 400-pound gorilla in that "He's in charge and we're not". If God says I'm picking Jacob and not Esau, it's a done deal.
 - d) Verse 13 says, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."
 - i) That is a quote of Malachi 1:2-3. Malachi was a prophet that lives roughly a thousand years after the time of Jacob and Esau.
 - ii) If you study the life of Jacob and Esau, Jacob never ruled over Esau. That prediction deals with the descendants of each brother. Jacob was the father of the 12 tribes of Israel. Esau was the father of the Edomites.
 - iii) Many centuries later, the Edomites were destroyed as a nation. That is the idea of Malachi's prediction. It is about their descendants, not the brothers themselves.
 - iv) Paul's point is that in God's sovereignty, He choose "Jacob" to be the leader of His Chosen people and not his brother Esau. The "hatred" has to do with the deeds of the Edomites, who at times in history persecuted the Jewish Nation.

- e) The point of all of this is to understand God's sovereign right in choosing who will spend eternity with Him. God "picked us" before we were born. The classic joke is "I'm glad He picked us then, because He might change His mind if He saw me today!"
 - f) Is that fair? That is what Verse 14 is all about.
11. Verse 14: What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! ¹⁵ For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."
- a) Verse 15 is a quote of Exodus 33:19. It is Paul saying in effect, "God is the 400 pound gorilla, and he'll sleep wherever he wants to. Deal with it." ☺
 - b) What is interesting is the context of the verse "Exodus 33:19". One time when Moses was alone with God, Moses asked God to "show me Your glory". Moses was asking God to reveal Himself (or aspects of Himself) to Moses. God responded to that request with the "I'll have mercy on whom I'll have mercy" line. God then granted Moses' request, but in an unusual way. Moses was inside a rock cleft while "God's back side" was revealed. My point here is that God said to Moses in effect, "It's up to me to decide who I reveal myself to, not you. With that said, I'll reveal myself to you."
 - c) Let's talk a little about the implications of a sovereign, all-knowing God:
 - i) Since God "picked us" before we were born, He can't "un-pick" us. One has to accept the idea that God doesn't lie (See Titus 1:2) and doesn't change His mind (See Numbers 23:19).
 - ii) If God knows all things, and knows everything that will happen in our life, there should be a sense of peace that comes with that knowledge.
 - iii) When we confess our sins, we should then let them go. God knew we were going to sin before it ever happened. God "picked us" before that sin ever happened.
 - iv) Suppose a loved one dies. We wonder if they are saved or not. One has to accept "It's God's problem and not mine". God knows who is saved and decided all of that before the world began. We still share the gospels with others because we don't know who is saved and Jesus commanded us to do so (See Matthew 28:19). We share the Gospel with others knowing it is up to God and not up to us. We don't get notches in our bible for every person saved through our preaching.
12. Verse 16: It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." ¹⁸ Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.
- a) Verse 16 is a great biblical example of God's sovereignty. Let me set the story:
 - i) Egypt was the great power of the Middle East for several thousand years. The word pharaoh is a title like a king. There were dozens of Pharaoh's through the millennia. The Pharaoh at Moses' time was probably Amenhotep II, who was arguably one of the greatest and most powerful Egyptian Pharaoh's. The Egyptians believed in many gods. They also believed their Pharaoh to be a god and inspired as a god in the decisions he had to make.
 - ii) With all of that in mind, picture Moses walking into the throne of the most powerful king on earth at that time. Moses said in effect, "Listen up dummy! ☺ There is only one God. He and He alone raised you up. The purpose God raised you up to be this powerful is so the true God can show off His power over you and is about to allow all sorts of plagues upon you and Egypt. Deal with it!" ☺
 - iii) Moses told the Pharaoh in effect that he was a pawn of God:
 - a) God raised the Pharaoh up in power.
 - b) God has mercy on who God decides to have mercy.
 - c) God "hardens" who God wants to harden. To "harden" is the idea that one rebels against God. God then "amplifies" that desire to turn against Him so you can't turn back if you want.

- b) Let me talk a little more about “hardening” from our perspective. Imagine a mental-dialogue between God and someone as follows: God says to that person, “Don’t do that”. The person does it anyway. God says again, “Don’t go down that path”. That person does it anyway. Finally God says, “OK, if that’s what you want, I’ll amplify that desire within you so it will be harder and harder for you to give up that desire.
 - i) This is the idea of a sin consuming a person. This is the idea of the formation of a bad addiction. We become “used to” whatever we do.
 - c) Let’s put these verses in context of Chapter 9:
 - i) Paul is saying in effect, “God chooses certain people to be with Him forever in heaven. If not everyone is saved, then some people go hell. If God is perfect and all-knowing, then He knew before the world began who would be saved and who would be condemned to hell. We have to accept that fact.”
 - ii) An expression I use occasionally is, “In life, people are the pawns and the prizes”.
 - a) We the “pawns” in that those people God chose to be with Him are being controlled “behind the scenes” to live a life pleasing to God.
 - b) We are “prizes” because we as people don’t know who God picked. Satan himself does not know who is picked. From a human perspective, there is an eternal struggle going on for the souls of people. God uses people to spread the Gospel message. He chooses us to get involved with the His program. There are spiritual forces that resist new people from becoming born-again. When people get saved, that new believer is a “prize” to God.
 - iii) The other issue is the Jewish race, i.e., “The Chosen People”. Many Jewish people believed they are automatically saved because they are Jewish. The same way many Christians think they’re going to heaven because they were baptized as a baby. Paul’s point is “There are chosen people, but it’s not all Jewish people, nor is it all people who “think” they are Christians. God decides who’s “in” and that’s that. The only way we can tell is by a person’s behavior. We can’t read minds, we can only watch behavior.
13. Verse 19: One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?" ²⁰ But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?' " ²¹ 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?
- a) In Verse 19, Paul asks the question, “Then why does God still blame us?”
 - i) In other words, if it is “all up to God”, why are we still accountable? If God knew before the world began who was saved and who was not saved, why are we still judged before God based on our behavior?
 - ii) The answer Paul does not give is in effect, “If you watch a person’s behavior long enough, you can tell whether or not they have a heart for God and whether or not they have committed their lives to following Christ. God may know the answers but we don’t. On judgment day, if we are in the audience watching this judgment take place, we can look at the evidence and say, “God made the right decision”.
 - iii) In a sense life is like a big “television rerun” to God in that He knows all things.
 - b) The answer Paul does give is the same answer in effect God gave to Job when he wanted to question God about his life. The answer to the question of, “Why does God blame us” is the issue of, “Who are we to question God?” We have to accept the fact God made us. If God made us, He’s in charge and we’re not. We have to accept that fact.
 - i) The reason God did it this way is to give us a sense of peace. If it were up to us to earn our way into heaven, we would mess it up. If it were up to us to tell people about God without the Holy Spirit, we would fail miserably. Accepting the idea of God’s sovereignty makes life a lot easier. It’s not up to us, it’s up to God.

- c) To finish these verses, Paul uses the illustration of a clay maker and a pile of clay. Imagine a pile of clay saying, "Hey I don't want to be shaped into a vase, I want to be a teacup. Start over and do it my way!" ☺ That's the idea of us trying to tell God how we should live our lives as opposed to letting God direct us. Sin is essentially rebelling against God's will for our lives at any given moment.
14. Verse 22: What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath--prepared for destruction?
- a) Let's suppose we're still arguing "it's not fair" that God has the right to decide who's "in" and who is not. Paul's next point, here in Verse 22 is, "Hey, suppose God decided to punish you now for the sins you have committed. Do you still want to be in charge of your eternal destiny with that in mind?"
 - i) In other words, instead of complaining we are not in charge of who gets into heaven, we ought to be grateful for God's mercy.
 - b) Paul's point in Verse 22 is that God could demonstrate His judgment at any moment and "zap us" for some sin we have committed. God chooses not to. In His mercy and in His love for us, He patiently waits for us to turn from that sin and ask for forgiveness. God allows us to "dig our own holes" and wait for us to turn to Him to fix our messes.
 - c) The good news is God' not "dragging us to jail" or sending us to painful punishment every time we commit a sin. Yes, sins have consequences. Yes, we may have to pay society back for those sins and we do harm ourselves and others around us for those sins. The point is God choose in His love for us to "have a way out". He gave us the ability to confess our sins so that they are forgiven. Again, we still have to live with the consequences of those sins, but we can also accept the idea we are eternally forgiven.
 - d) One also has to understand that fact that in a sense, God does not forgive any sin. God put the full brunt of our punishment upon Jesus on the cross. That includes the sins we are going to commit next week as well as past and present sins. That is what Paul meant by "bore with great patience the objects of his wrath".
15. Verse 24: What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory-- ²⁴ even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?
- a) It is time to get back to the idea I bring up now and then of, "The purpose of all history":
 - i) God is a god-of-perfect-love. God desires some "thing" to express that love upon. God created humans to show that love upon. Further, God decided to give humans free-will. That we, we can decide individually, to love God back. That way, those who choose God can spend eternity in a mutual love relationship.
 - ii) God is also perfect and knows all things by definition. Therefore, we as humans have to accept the idea that an all-knowing God knows in advance who picked Him. We don't have such knowledge, but God does.
 - iii) The purpose of human history is for God to "pick" people from history to spend eternity with Him. The other purpose of human history is for us to watch such events and say, "You know, God was right for picking this one and not that one. I can see from their lives why God made that decision". By watching human history, we can give the glory to God by saying, "God was right. His decisions were correct. Praise God for the decisions He made for human salvation"
 - b) The other point of Verse 24 is that it is not just a "Jewish thing".
 - i) Remember that a key point of Chapter 9 is that the just because God chose the Jewish nation to be the "Chosen People" is not an automatic ticket into heaven.
 - ii) There was the mistaken view some Jewish people had that if you are Jewish, that's a guarantee into heaven and a non-Jew is an automatic ticket into hell.

- iii) Non-Jewish Christians make the same mistake. Some think they get into heaven because they went through a baby baptism ritual or their parents were devout Christians. Paul's point is salvation is an individual issue.
 - iv) One also has to accept the idea that there will be non-Christians in heaven. God judges people fairly based on what information they do have. People who are naïve on the issue of Jesus will be judged on what information they do have.
- 16. Verse 25: As he says in Hosea: "I will call them 'my people' who are not my people; and I will call her 'my loved one' who is not my loved one," and, "It will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.' "
- a) Verses 25 and 26 quote the Old Testament Book of Hosea. (Ref.: Hosea: 2:23 and 1:10).
 - b) Hosea was a Jewish Old Testament prophet. He made predictions about the future.
 - c) The term "My people" in the Old Testament refers to the Jewish nation. The point of Verses 25 and 26 is Hosea is making a prediction that God will call to salvation people that are not "His People". That is, there will be Gentiles (i.e., non-Jews) that will be called into salvation.
 - d) The way many Jewish people interpret verses like this is as follows: "One day, the Messiah will come and rule the world from Jerusalem. After that day, many people will accept this world leader as the world leader. They will turn to the God of Israel and become Jewish, in effect. Only after that day will the multitudes of non-Jewish people become saved. In the meantime, for the most part, they're pretty much toast." ☺
 - e) Understand not all religious Jews hold this view. There is another view that if Gentiles are essentially good people, they get to go to heaven. The significant point is many Jewish people believed being a religious Jew was an automatic ticket to heaven.
 - f) The key point of Verses 25-26 is that Gentiles can be called "My people". The idea of a non-Jewish person being part of "God's Chosen People" was a radical thought to a religious Jew of that day.
 - g) What about the Jewish nation today? Is God done with them? The answer is no, and we'll get to that in Chapter 11. Remember Chapter 9 focuses on "Israel past". Chapter 10 is about Israel "present" and Chapter 11 deals with "Israel future".
 - h) The point Paul is getting at here is that God picks people to be with Him in heaven forever. Some come from Jewish decent and some do not.
- 17. Verse 27: Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved. ²⁸ For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality."
- a) Here we have a quote of Isaiah 10:22 and 23. The idea here, sad to say, is that only "x" percent of the Jewish nation is saved. We don't number that number. It is greater than zero and less than one hundred percent. ☺
 - b) There is a double-promise being fulfilled in this prediction:
 - i) Isaiah starts by saying, "Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea." That is a prediction of the existence of the Jewish nation will continue. The point of that prediction is the Jewish nation will not be wiped out.
 - ii) Here we are, 2,500-3,000 years after this prediction. The Jewish nation is alive today. Jewish people exist around the world. Think about all the other ancient nations you read about in the bible (e.g., Amorites, Philistines, etc.). Those are all gone as the bible predicted. The Jewish nation survived as God made that unconditional promise to Abraham over 3,000 years ago.
 - iii) The other part of the prediction is that only a "remnant" will be saved. I don't know that number, but I have to admit, the word "remnant" is not optimistic. ☺
 - iv) The word "remnant" also refers to a future date, when God will once again turn his "focus" upon the nation of Israel. That is the topic of Chapter 11.

18. Verse 29: It is just as Isaiah said previously: "Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah."
- a) If Verse 28 was pessimistic, Verse 29 is downright depressive. ☹
 - b) Verse 29 is another quote from Isaiah (Chapter 1, Verse 9). The prediction says in effect, "If it weren't for the fact that God made that unconditional promise to preserve the Nation of Israel, they would be long gone like Sodom and Gomorrah."
 - c) So what is Paul's point?
 - i) The Jewish people are not around today, due to their goodness, but due to God's unconditional promises to Abraham to preserve that nation.
 - ii) Many people debate whether or not modern Israel is part of God's redemptive plan. First of all, study the history of modern Israel, especially their wars. They have survived overwhelming odds against their survival. That alone should convince one that God's hand is involved. Second, modern Israel is further proof of God's unconditional promise that He would preserve a Jewish remnant.
 - d) Now let me give the silver lining of these verses:
 - i) God's unconditional promises are just that: unconditional. Yes the Jewish nation as collectively failed to recognize Jesus as the promised Messiah. That doesn't negate God's unconditional promises.
 - ii) The good news for the Christian is we can't lose our salvation by "over-sinning". The promises to us, through Jesus are equally as unconditional. As people we Christians are no better than the Jewish people when it comes to sin. The only difference is we accept God's free offer of forgiveness.
 - iii) The other good news is there is a "hope" for the Jewish Nation. One has to imagine how difficult it was for the first century Jewish-Christian. Imagine them thinking, "Wait a minute! I lived this strict lifestyle not only to get into heaven, but also because I trust in the promises of future blessings for our Jewish nation. Do all of those blessings and promises come to an end because of Jesus?" The answer is no. There is coming a day when Jesus will rule the world from Jerusalem. That is a literal, unconditional promise of a future day.
19. Verse 30: What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith;³¹ but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it.³² Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone."
- a) The religious Jewish person figured, "all I have to do is obey these set of laws and I'm in."
 - i) Some interpreted these laws loosely to make it easier to obey them.
 - ii) Some interpreted these laws very strictly and struggled to obey them.
 - iii) They then figured, "OK, we kill an animal on our behalf and it's a done deal". ☺
 - iv) Let me say I don't believe an Old Testament Jew fully comprehended God's eternal plan for the Cross. They too, were judged based on knowledge at hand.
 - b) Remember Romans 9 focuses on Israel "past". This is from Abraham (the first Jew), up to the time of Jesus. That is the 2,000-year (approx.) focal time frame of this chapter.
 - i) One of the purposes of a history of the Jewish nation to that point was the failure of them, collectively to obey God's laws.
 - ii) Yes there were good individual godly people, but as the bible records, they appear to be a small percentage. The majority dealt with idolatry as regular problem.
 - iii) It got so bad at one point that God said to them, "OK, I've had it with you. I'm shipping you all off to Babylon to go live. I'm emptying the Promised Land of all Jewish people for awhile as punishment for your collective disobedience". For seventy years, around 600 B.C., there were no Jewish people in that land. After the captivity was over, only a small percentage choose to come back.

- c) The sad reality is the history of Israel is a history of failure of obedience. The historical narratives of the Old Testament from the time the Jewish people entered the Promised Land (Book of Joshua) to the end of the Old Testament is a story of a failure of a people to keep God's promises and get God's blessings.
 - d) Our "job" is to learn from history. A reason Jesus waited so long in his First Coming was to show historically, how man cannot be in good standing with God even with a written set of laws in hand and even with prophets of God trying to encourage them.
 - e) The history of the Jews up to Jesus, sad to say, is a history of failure. That's Paul's point in these verses. They tried to be in good standing with God by trying to keep God's laws. The problem with God's laws is that we, on our own, don't have the power to obey those laws. The power of the Holy Spirit is required to obey God's laws. It cannot be done on willpower. That is a key point of Jewish history.
20. Verse 33: As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."
- a) Here are the final Old Testament quotes of the chapter (Isaiah 8:14; 28:16).
 - b) The point is the Jewish nation "stumbled over the rock" that is Jesus. They failed to recognize that God provided a free, permanent method for the forgiveness of sins.
 - c) Notice the last quote, "the one who trusts in him (Jesus) will never be put to shame."
 - i) What does that promise mean? It means when we get to heaven, God will not shame us and show us all of our sins. It also means there is no purgatory! The word "never" means "never". There is no future shame for the Christian.
 - d) There is a great quote by Jesus that is called, "The tragedy of all history". It is the day when Jesus publicly proclaimed himself to be the Messiah and the Jewish nation failed to honor Him as such. We call this "Palm Sunday". Notice this quote from Luke 19:41-44:
 - i) Jesus said, "If you (Jewish nation) had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation." (NKJV)
 - ii) Jesus was crucified in 33AD. In 70AD, Israel was destroyed as a nation by the Romans and millions died. Israel was not a country again until 1948. Jesus prediction became literally true and the Jewish nation was punished severely because of their collective failure to recognize Jesus.
 - iii) By the way, history is also proof Paul wrote Romans prior to 70AD. I'm positive Paul would have mentioned that historical event if it were written later. Paul died a few years prior to this 70AD event.
 - iv) The good news is the collective rejection of the Jewish nation is not permanent. Again, that is what Romans Chapter 11 is all about.
21. Let's tie this all together. I called this lesson, "What we can learn about God from the bible past".
- a) First we learn that God is sovereign. That is a fancy word that just means God is in charge and we are not. Once we accept that, it should give us a sense of peace that life is not up to us, but up to God. If we accept the fact that God has called us to salvation, we must equally accept the fact God is working on us to prepare us for eternity with Him.
 - b) Next, we learn that God's promises are unconditional despite our actions. God is preserving the Jewish nation despite its failure to recognize Jesus. That is because God made unconditional promises to the Jewish nation. If we can't trust God's unconditional promises to the Jewish nation, how can we trust God's unconditional promise of salvation to us through Jesus Christ?

- c) So, if it's up to God and not up to us, what are we supposed to do about it? Does that mean we just sit here and watch God work? No! The concept for Christians is to live our lives in step with what God desires for us. The challenge and "fun" (in my opinion) is to try to figure out what God desires for us and live our life accordingly.
 - i) The reason we pray daily is to ask for God's will to get done.
 - ii) The reason we read our bible is to discern what is God's will for our lives.
 - iii) The reason we spend time with other Christians is that God wants our lives to be a group effort. We are to help each other mature in our relationships with Jesus and help bring in new believers into God's kingdom.
 - iv) Just understand that all of these things, (e.g., prayer, bible reading, service, etc.) are not profitable without God's intercession. We need God to work through us to have the power to do anything for God. To paraphrase one of the verses from this lesson, "He is the potter, we are the clay". The clay can't do anything without the potter's help. The good news is that God wants to get the "clay" involved in the process. It is up to God alone, but He desires to work through us.
 - d) The great lesson of Jewish history is "Without God, we can't". We can't live to glorify God without the help of God in the first place. God's laws are the perfect set of rules on how to live a good life. The laws themselves don't provide the power to obey those laws. That is why obedience to God is necessary in order to obey those laws in the first place.
 - e) Last question, "What is the deal with the Jewish nation between Jesus' First Coming and Second Coming? That's the issue for Chapter 10. More on that next time.
22. Let's pray: Heavenly Father, First of all, we thank You for choosing us. We don't understand why, but we accept that You did. Help us to accept the fact that You are working in our life in accordance with Your will for us. Help us to discern what is that will for us and be willing to act accordingly. Help us to understand Your sovereignty in that You are in charge of our lives and we are not. Help us to accept Your will. That means accepting the "no" answer to prayer when it is Your will. That also means accepting Your timing as well. Guide us as we live to glorify You in all we do. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.