

Study 11: Romans 9: 1-18

- **Activity:**

Election time is an interesting time for our country. It's the time when you see people argue the most and ultimately becomes more of a competition on which side will win rather than an election. In an election, the goal is that one is 'elected' to benefit all. Therefore, the result should be both sides win. Yet, our elections tend to mean separation and one side is now better than the other.

- ❖ Think back to the last election. What are ways that you saw the election more about one side being better than another?
- ❖ What ways have you seen election end up being about both sides winning?

- **Read 9:1-5**

- ❖ What does Paul recognize about his people, the Israelites, and the rich heritage they have as God's chosen?

- ❖ Why is Paul sad in these verses?

- ❖ How did the Israelites understand being "chosen" in light of the conversation you had about "election"?

- ❖ In what ways has the "Church" been this way today?

- ❖ Because Israel didn't get it right did that mean that God came up with a completely different plan-a plan B (the Church)?

- **Read 9:6-12**

- ❖ How does Paul correct the thinking about who Israel truly is? Who is Israel?

- ❖ What examples does Paul use to show this? What's his point?

- ❖ Verse 11 tells us that this happened in order for "God's purpose in election might stand". What is God's purpose in election?

- **Read 9:13-18**

- ❖ The statement, "Jacob I loved and Esau I hated" is very disturbing. Break it into 2 parts and ask yourself what is most disturbing: the fact that God loved Jacob or the fact that God hated Esau?

- ❖ For most, it is disturbing that God hated Esau. But in reading verse 15, what did both Jacob and Esau deserve? Why did they both not get what they deserved?

- ❖ God's purpose in election is described again in verse 16. What would your relationship with God be like if it was up to your desire and effort? In what ways do you still approach your relationship with God with the attitude that it IS up to your desire and effort?

- **Story**

I was on a Cub Scout trip with my son and 9 other boys. I and another leader took them fishing on the other leaders pontoon boat. It was a great day of fishing and every boy was happy as he could be. On our ride back, I watched the boys just enjoying the ride and loving the day-very content. Then, the captain of the boat pointed out one boy and said, "hey, do you want to drive?" You can

imagine how excited that boy was. And we all know exactly what every other boy on that boat thought immediately: "Wow, what a cool and kind captain to let someone drive. Boy he's nice." Yea, right. No, everyone of them thought exactly what we would probably think — "Well that's not fair!"

And then I wondered, well, why was that not fair? Every boy on the boat was getting what he was promised-what he deserved- and even more. They were all very satisfied. But, then one person gets more, and all of a sudden it's not fair. The boys loved the captain up until that point. Then all of a sudden they thought the captain was unfair because they didn't get chosen.

- ❖ Most of the time we lose sight of what we actually deserve. So, instead of looking at the mercy and grace of our "captain" and how he went over and beyond with compassion and mercy, we attack the captain and say he is not fair. Romans 9:15-16 should be verses that call us to worship God for his abundance of mercy and compassion yet we question if he is fair at all.
- ❖ This is the story of Adam and Eve and all humanity. God gave them the garden and way more than they could ever imagine and more than they ever needed. Yet, because they didn't give them one thing, they were tempted to believe that God didn't love them and he was not being fair.
- ❖ What are ways you have lost sight of how compassionate and merciful God truly is?
- ❖ Even after identifying these ways, there is still an unsettling in our heart as to why God would choose one and not another. Think again about the purpose of election-to bless all. In light of this, why would God elect Jacob to be loved? Why would God choose Pharaoh to harden? Are you thankful for this?
- ❖ What do these passages and the Genesis passages surrounding the story of Esau and Pharaoh tell us happened eternally to these guys?
- ❖ Close by spending time in prayer thanking God for all the ways you have seen him be merciful and compassionate to you and others around you.

Study 12: Romans 9: 19-33

- **Story:**

I love landscaping projects. When you take on a landscaping project, you have an overall plan and then you tackle each piece of that plan. I remember watching my neighbor, a landscaper; take these steps in his backyard. He didn't change the entire yard but his goal was to change one area knowing the steps he was going to take would affect the entire yard. By making this one area stand out, it would bring out the entire yard. So, he carved out an area, dug up the old plants in that area and got rid of them and even cut down a couple of trees. He then picked out new plants to put in that area and went to creating. All the pieces were coming together as he had imagined. It looked fantastic--for a few months anyway. And then we noticed a couple of the plants were dying and one had a fungus that was killing it. So, he dug those plants out and replaced them.

Just in reference to this story, answer the following questions:

- ❖ What was the ultimate goal of the landscaping project?
 - ❖ What steps did the landscaper take to accomplish that goal?
 - ❖ When the plants were diseased and died, did that mean the landscaper failed at his goal? What did the landscaper do?
 - ❖ In just reading this story, what would you say about the landscaper?
- **Read 9:19-24**
 - ❖ Paul takes up a reaction to the last section. What is the reaction and why is this the reaction?
 - ❖ What is the fault that Paul finds in this question?
 - ❖ Why do you think mankind believes it has the right to blame God or to question God?
 - ❖ In this section, Paul gives 2 images of how God could have created. What are those images?
 - ❖ When we think about these 2 images, it disturbs us because we think about the things created and what happens to them. Instead, how does our understanding of this change if we see that each was created and serves the purpose of bringing glory to the creator?
 - ❖ Thinking about the landscaper, did you define him as mean, cruel, and selfish because he destroyed some plants and kept others? Did you define him as unfair because he picked some plants and not others? Why or why not?
 - **Read 9:25-29**
 - ❖ In this section, Paul shows how the OT speaks to what is happening. What is the point he is bringing out in 25 and 26 by referencing the passages in Hosea?
 - ❖ What is the point he is making in 27-29 by referencing the passages in Isaiah?

- ❖ How does the illustration of the landscaper help you to understand this better?

- **Read 9:30-33**
 - ❖ Why did the Gentiles obtain righteousness and why did the Jews not obtain it?

 - ❖ What was it about Jesus that caused the Jews to stumble?

 - ❖ What are ways that you are tempted to believe that your righteousness is based off of what you do?

 - ❖ What are ways that you are tempted to live with the thinking that God is a good God IF good things happen to you and a bad God IF bad things happen to you? What changes in your attitude and behavior come when you better understand that you are here to bring glory to God regardless of what happens to you?

 - ❖ Spend time simply thanking God that He is merciful and ask that His mercy to you might bring Him glory.

Study 13: Romans 10:1-21

- **Activity:**

Imagine someone coming to your door one day and telling you that they have made it possible for you to go to Hawaii for 2 weeks. They let you know that will pay for your airfare, a room in the nicest hotel, any excursions you would like to take, and anything else you want to do. At the same time, they are going to give you the money you would lose for having to take these weeks away. In other words, you lose nothing. You only gain everything!

- ❖ Is there any reason you can think of for not going? Why would anyone NOT take this?
- ❖ If you did take this opportunity, what would you say about the person that gave this trip to you?

Last week Paul made it clear that the only reason any have life is because God is merciful. Our salvation depends on the character of God and the fact that he is gracious and merciful.

- **Read 10:1-4**

- ❖ Paul let's his heart be known about his people. What do we learn about the Israelites?
- ❖ Who are people that you know that would fit this description: zealous about God but the zeal is based in something other than faith in Christ? What is their zeal built around?
- ❖ What has Christ opened the door to?

- **Read 10:5-13**

- ❖ Paul uses various Scriptures to tell us Moses' description of righteousness coming by the law and then a description of living by faith. Put in your own words what Paul is saying about living by faith in 6-7.
- ❖ Verses 8-10 tell us what God has done and our part in salvation. How would you summarize these verses?
- ❖ Many times you hear the language, "Have you made Jesus your Lord?" What are all the ways verses 9-13 would say this statement is wrong? Why is this important?
- ❖ In this section, who does Paul say this good news is for?
- ❖ What does this section say about those that don't believe?

- **Read 10:14-15**

- ❖ When we think about salvation coming to people only by God's mercy and only to those that God elects, we are left with the question, "then why tell the good news at all if God is going to have mercy on who he wants?" Go back to the discussions we had about what it means to be "elected". Why were the Jews "chosen"? Why is anyone "elected"?
- ❖ In light of this, what is the call on those that do believe; the elect, the chosen, the remnant in verses 14-15?

- ❖ As a believer and follower of Christ, one that has confessed that He is Lord, how does this change your understanding of what it means to be “those that bring good news!”?

- **Read 10:16-21**
 - ❖ Just because we tell the good news doesn't mean that everyone will believe. But there are reasons beyond God's mercy as to why some won't believe. Paul dismisses 2 reasons some give for why some Israelites did NOT believe. What does he say?

 - ❖ What does Paul say the Israelites unbelief was rooted in?

 - ❖ We began this weeks study with an illustration about a trip to Hawaii and asked why someone wouldn't take this trip. The good news of Jesus is WAY greater than 2 weeks in Hawaii. If someone hears this good news and understands it, why wouldn't they accept it?

Many years ago, I lived in the understanding that I had to convince people that Jesus is good news. I had to defend Jesus. But my thinking began to change from this chapter. It began to change to an understanding that I don't have to defend Jesus. I'm called to be the image of God, not the lawyer of God. Also, I began to understand that the good news of Jesus truly is GREAT news. And if I tell people the good news, and make it clear to them, there is NO reason why they shouldn't believe, other than they are choosing disobedience and their own righteousness. So, I no longer defend God. I simply tell of his amazing mercy and grace and then ask, “why wouldn't you believe in a God that has loved you in this amazing way?”

It is out of our control if a person doesn't believe the good news of Jesus because they are choosing to be disobedient or follow their own paths. But we can control if they hear the good news and have a chance to understand it. If you have accepted Christ, then you are a part of the elect, the chosen-the ones called to tell others the good news of Jesus!

- ❖ Who are people around you in which you need to take this call “to tell” more seriously?

Study 14: Romans 11:1-36

- **Activity:**

Growing up I played a lot of basketball. My coaches always engrained in me; "When a good play happens, it happens because of the whole team. When a bad play happens, it happens because of the whole team." Good thought, but boy I didn't believe it. When games were over, I was sad if we loss, but I was fine with that loss if I played great. When we won, I was fine with the win, but I was angry if I didn't play well. In other words, I was more focused on me and my own play-not the team.

- ❖ Thinking about activities you were a part of growing up, where did you see the same type of thinking in your own life?
- ❖ Thinking about activities you are a part of today: sports, work, a team you serve on, the group you are doing this study in; how do you have this same thinking in these situations?

As we look at Chapter 11, we have to have a "team" mentality. Paul is addressing a people; "the Israelites" and not just individuals. But he is also addressing all of mankind, and not just individuals.

- **Read 11:1-10**

- ❖ Making the transition from chapter 10 to 11, who is it that rejected whom?
- ❖ Paul shares another illustration from the OT in the story of Elijah. Elijah believed he was the only person on earth that truly loved God. But he wasn't. Who else loved God and why did they love Him?
- ❖ What did Elijah and the 7000 deserve from God? What did they get instead? Why?
- ❖ There was a remnant that God extended grace to and we can see the purpose of his extending grace to them. Would you agree that this was a good thing or a bad thing and why?
- ❖ We also see that there were people that God harden the heart of. What was the point of hardening their hearts? Would you agree that this was a good thing or a bad thing and why?
- ❖ In verses 5 and 8, Paul talks about the present time. What does he say is true even at the time of his writing? Who is he talking about? Why is this important?

- **Read 11:11-21**

- ❖ In this section, Paul uses "team" thinking throughout. What do we know is true about the Israelites in this section?
- ❖ What do we learn about God's power to overcome sin from verses 11-12?
- ❖ Compare verse 12 to Romans 6:4-5. What is the hope in each verse?
- ❖ So far in Romans we have seen a lot of language surrounding the elect, the chosen, one party being loved and another being hated. Here again, we see a group of people that have been set apart. What is Paul telling the Gentiles to not forget?

- ❖ As Christians, it can be tempting to become arrogant because we are “saved”. We can be so arrogant to the point that we stop living by faith but in our own works. How have you seen Christians become arrogant? Yourself?

- **Read 11:22-24**
 - ❖ It's easy to read these verses' (and vs 21) and think that it is saying that we can lose our salvation. Why would you say that is what these verses are saying OR not saying?

 - ❖ In this section, it's easy to miss the main point of Paul's words: “consider the kindness and sternness of God”. What is the point of each?

 - ❖ As you reflect on the day ahead, or the day that has just happened—where do you see God's kindness? Where do you need to remember his sternness?

- **Read 11:25-32**
 - ❖ Verses 25-27 continues team thinking. How would you summarize all the ways that Paul has called his readers to think as a team in this chapter? How does this change your attitude toward those that don't believe?

 - ❖ What do we learn God's has done for all of mankind?

 - ❖ Answer each of these questions:
 - Why were the Gentiles saved?
 - Why are the Israelites saved?
 - Why was Paul saved?
 - Why are you saved?

We are now about to make a major turn in the letter. But to make this turn, you have to recognize that Paul's biggest point in the first 11 chapters is to make clear that NO ONE has done anything to earn salvation. The only reason ANYONE has salvation is because of the **mercy of God**. Paul has worked to paint a very clear picture to all of mankind the MERCY OF GOD.

So, to end these first 11 chapters, close in prayer by simply reading out loud **verses 33-36**. If you are doing this study as a group, have one member read these verses aloud for the group. Join Paul in his summary praise...

Study 15: Romans 12:1-21

- **Story:**

One of the hardest counseling sessions I've been a part of was sitting with a married couple when the husband told his wife he had had an affair. I had been in this situation before, but this one was different. As I watched the man tell his wife, his heart was cold, hard, and distant. He didn't care if it hurt her. That was how much his heart had shut down over the years of their marriage. In fact, he confessed that his purpose for having the affair was to make sure their marriage was done-over. He knew that this was the one thing she would not forgive him for and then he was free to be done with the marriage. They didn't have children and his thought was that he could just start all over. But then I watched over the next months the greatest illustration of God's mercy and love come to life.

I took a few weeks with them separately and simply walked with each: the husband's cold heart and the wife's broken heart. I watched her lay her broken heart before the Lord and trust him in amazing ways. He didn't heal her heart quickly. In fact, it got worse. But, one month after the confession, I sat with this couple again. This time she told her husband that she was not going to give up on their marriage. She told him that she was going to give God a shot at doing a miracle. She went on to tell him that she had no trust in him and frankly wanted nothing to do with him. But she also was choosing to stay dependant on a God that had extended her mercy. So, because of that, she was going to keep pursuing their marriage. I remember grinning at him because I knew that was the last thing he wanted to hear. He thought he was off the hook. He thought she was going to "set him free" by telling him the marriage was done. He could escape trying to bring healing to the damage. Little did he know that she was setting him free by choosing to show mercy and not letting him leave the relationship.

The next months brought forth a miracle of the power of God's love being extended through another. Everyday, she chose to love him in very difficult ways and trust God to heal her heart. Everyday, he had to respond to the mercy she was showing him. As the months went by, I watched her heart healed, I watched his heart soften, and I watched the Lord bring life out of death. A year later, this couple again sat in my office and said that this is the first time they have truly had a marriage. They now have a marriage that neither believed would be possible, even before the affair.

I knew why she stayed in the marriage-because of her trust in the mercy God showed her and a belief that if God could raise a man from the dead, he could raise their marriage from death. But I asked him why he stayed in the marriage. He said he didn't have a choice. If she was going to love him despite his unfaithfulness, he had no other choice than to respond to that amazing love. He didn't know how to respond most of the time. He just knew if she was going to forgive him, he couldn't leave the relationship. And over the months, because she loved him, he learned to love her in the way she deserved to be loved.

- ❖ Reflect on this story as a group. What emotions stir in you about this story?
- ❖ Has there ever been a time you've loved someone in this manner or been loved in this manner? What was it like?

- **Read 12:1-8**

- ❖ The first 11 chapters of Romans makes it clear that we have not earned God's love by what we do and don't do. That truth doesn't change in the last 4 chapters. But as we start these last chapters, what does Paul say to keep in clear view?
- ❖ The subtitle of this Romans study has been "obedience that comes through faith." In the next chapters, Paul will talk a lot about what we do and don't do. What does he say in 12:1 all these acts are?
- ❖ Most of the time we try to overcome bad behavior by simply stopping the act or doing something different. We then hope that our thinking about things will change. This is the pattern our world tells us to take. But what does Paul tell us is the route for true change in our life? What will be the outcome?
- ❖ What is the first thing Paul calls those in Rome to "do not" do but instead to "do"?

- ❖ Paul gives a list of various gifts that are all given by God's grace. Again, not focusing on what man is doing. List each gift he gives. These are not all the gifts of grace God gives. But looking at this list, has God given you any of these? How do you use them?

- **Read 12:9-21**

- ❖ Paul describes how to show sincere love. In the below area, list all the things that Paul says "to do" and the things he says to "not do":

Do

DO NOT

- ❖ As you can see, Paul has a strong focus on what we are "to do" as opposed to "not do". Looking at the list of things "to do", which of these is hardest for you and why?
- ❖ Which of these have you seen yourself grow in the past year?
- ❖ Looking at the list of "do not's", which of these do you struggle with and why?
- ❖ Which of these have you seen yourself grow in the past year?
- ❖ In view of God's mercy, which of these "do's" and "do not's" will you make your "spiritual act of worship" in the next 6 months?
- ❖ Verse 18 can be shortened and taken out of context. Many just cling to the second half of this verse: "live at peace with everyone". Why is the first part of this verse critical as well?
- ❖ Think about a relationship you may be in that you are trying to live in peace. What actions in the "do" and "do not" list are you encouraged to take in this relationship?
- ❖ Finish by spending time praying that God would remind you of his mercy to you and that he might bring life to this relationship as you love in the way Christ has loved you.

- ❖ Looking at Romans 12 and 13 together, you see that Paul began by focusing on the way the believers were to live among one another (12:3-21) and then focused on how they were to live among those outside the church (13:1-7). Lastly he adds behavior that is for those in and out of the church (13:8-14). Because Paul switches back and forth, what does it tell you about the life of the person following Christ in and out of the church?

- ❖ Romans 12:2 tells us to no longer conform to the pattern of this world. After reading Romans 12 and 13, what are ways you need to confess that you have given into the patterns of this world in dealing with people? How would you ask God to “renew your mind?”

Study 17: Romans 14:1-15:13

- **Activity:**

Pretend that you are a friend of the below two people.

Bill is a Christian and lives beside Jerry who is also a Christian in a neighborhood in which they are the only Christians.

Bill worships at Church A and his church is really focused on reaching the lost. His church encourages him to “get into their lives” and find opportunities to tell and show them the good news of Jesus. Bills greatest opportunity to do this has been hanging out with his neighbors that don't go to church. Instead, they love hanging out in the garage until the wee hours of Saturday night, drinking and playing poker. So, it's become a normal place for Bill to hang out as well. Bill never allows himself to even get close to being drunk, but does enjoy having 2 beers with the group.

Jerry, worships at Church B and his church is really focused on reaching the lost as well. But his church encourages him to “be in the world but not of the world”. He understands that his life being extremely different will be the way that people see the life of Christ is different from the world. So, Jerry never participates in the Saturday night gatherings in the neighborhood. Instead, just before the events happen, Jerry makes a point to go over and invite all his neighbors to church the next day. He then leaves.

Bill and Jerry are friends but they shake their head in disappointment at one another on how each is handling the situation. They often find themselves telling the other they are wrong and arguing. Bill walks away most of the time feeling guilty about hanging out with his neighbors and drinking beer. But he knows he is in their world and knows the long conversations they are having about “religion” and “God”. He also knows that the neighbors can't stand Jerry. So, Jerry also walks away always feeling bad that no one likes him. But he remembers that Scripture says the world would hate him and he sees this as part of serving Jesus.

- ❖ Neither believes the other is being effective for the kingdom of God and come to you because they are tired of arguing all the time. It's even to a point they are deciding to not be friends but know they are “brothers in Christ.” How would you counsel them?

- **Read Romans 14:1-12**

- ❖ What type of matters is Paul discussing here? What other type of matters do not apply in this counsel?
- ❖ Paul gives a couple of examples in these passages. Before we look at each example, list all the principles he lays out.
- ❖ Why would Paul call the person that only eats vegetables the one that is weak in their faith?

- **Read 14:13-23**

- ❖ Again, without getting into the examples, list principles to live by that Paul lays out in these verses:
- ❖ Paul says to not “not destroy the work of God for the sake of food.” What are the works of God?
- ❖ Is there a situation you are currently in that this counsel gives you better direction? What direction do you need to cling to and what steps do you need to take?

- **Read 15:1-13**

- ❖ How would you put in your own words what Paul is saying in verses 1-6?
- ❖ How is the counsel in 1-6 different from the “patterns of this world”?
- ❖ Paul is getting close to the end of his letter and is starting to stress what is most important. In looking at 7-13, what would you say is most important for Paul to see come out of this letter?
- ❖ Where have you allowed “the unimportant things” to keep you from the “work of God” with other believers?
- ❖ Has there been a time in which you were in a relationship with another believer and you did not see the same on a “disputable” matter and you both handled it really well. Tell about this.
- ❖ To close, using the counsel Paul has laid out, how would you now counsel the two people in the opening story?

Study 18: Romans 15:14-end

- **Activity:**

Part of our Christian journey is shaped by people God places in our lives. God works through people. Spend time telling one another about the people that have shaped your journey with Christ. What impact have these people had in shaping your image of God and your understanding of who He is? You can share ways this has been shaped in a good manner and/or a bad manner.

- **Read Romans 15:14-22**

- ❖ What do we learn about the church Paul is writing to? Is this the image you had of them all along as we went through this letter? Why or why not?

- ❖ What do we learn about Paul's mission and why he has not been able to visit the church here?

- **Read 15:23-33**

- ❖ What do we learn about Paul's recent journey and his next plans? What does this tell you about the body of Christ?

- ❖ What does Paul ask for prayer for? Read Acts 20-24 to see this story unfold and how God answered prayers and also about Paul's plans being delayed.

- **Read 16:1-16**

- ❖ List all the things that Paul says about the people there in Rome that he's been in contact with along the way.

- ❖ What does this list tell you about the church in Rome?

- ❖ The theme of this letter has been "obedience that comes through faith". Where do you see this type of obedience displayed in this list of those Paul greets?

- **Read 16:17-27**

- ❖ We have seen in this chapter how tight the body of Christ can be. In light of that, what is Paul's final warning to the Romans?

- ❖ Paul finishes by summarizing what he owns as his own: "my gospel". It's not the good news of Paul, but it is a good news that Paul claims and owns. To finish this letter to the Romans, take each of this summary statements and reflect on what you remember in his teaching about each through this letter:
 - Being established by the good news and proclamation of Jesus
 - The revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past
 - The revealing and making known of this mystery through prophetic writings
 - That all nations might believe and obey
 - God's Wisdom

- ❖ Close by simply reflecting in honest prayer things in this letter that God has engrained in your heart and mind. Ask Him to enable you to be obedient as your faith grows in Him.