

Romans

SERMON SERIES

Romans



DID GOD'S
PLAN FAIL?

Romans



CHAPTERS 9-11





Paul's Big Point in Romans 9:

Israel doesn't always mean Israel...
But sometimes it does.

Context is King

This Week's Sermon:
Has God's Word Failed?
Romans 9:6-29









Romans 9:1-5

I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—² that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. ⁴ They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. ⁵ To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

Romans 9:6-29

⁶ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷ and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” ⁸ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. ⁹ For this is what the promise said: “About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.”

Romans 9:6-29

¹⁰ And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, ¹¹ though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad – in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls – ¹² she was told, "The older will serve the younger." ¹³ As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

Romans 9:6-29

¹⁴ What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! 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." ¹⁶ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." ¹⁸ So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

Romans 9:6-29

¹⁹ You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?” ²⁰ But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” ²¹ Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?

Romans 9:6-29

²² What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory — ²⁴ even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? ²⁵ As indeed he says in Hosea, “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’ ”

Romans 9:6-29

²⁶ “And in the very place where it was said to them,
‘You are not my people,’

there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’ ”

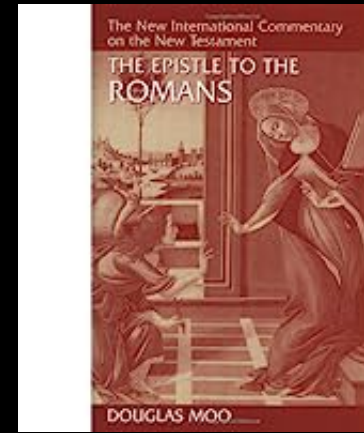
²⁷ And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, ²⁸ for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.” ²⁹ And as Isaiah predicted,

“If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring,
we would have been like Sodom
and become like Gomorrah.”

The first half of v. 6 is the transition between the introduction and the body of Paul's exposition in chaps. 9–11. Paul makes clear that the problem of Israel is at the same time the problem of God's word and, ultimately, of God himself. For God has adopted Israel, revealed himself to her, bound her to him with his covenants, and given her his law, the temple service, and his promises. Do these now mean nothing? Has God revoked these blessings and gone back on his word to Israel?

Many Christians, both Jewish and Gentile, in Rome and elsewhere, must have thought that this was the logical implication of Paul's radical critique of the Jewish assumption of guaranteed salvation (see, e.g., Rom. 2). And, if God had indeed reneged on his earlier word, the consequences were dire for more than Jews. For how could Christians trust such a God to fulfill his promises to them?

Moo, D. J. (2018). *The Letter to the Romans*. (N. B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, G. D. Fee, & J. B. Green, Eds.) (Second Edition, p. 592). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.



Has God's Word Failed?

Romans 9:6-29

⁶ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel,
⁷ and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” ⁸ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. ⁹ For this is what the promise said: “About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.”

Genesis 15:17-20

¹⁷ When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. ¹⁸ On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, ¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, ²⁰ the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, ²¹ the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites.”

Romans 9:6-29

⁶ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷ and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” ⁸ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. ⁹ For this is what the promise said: “About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.”

Romans 9:6-29

¹⁰ And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, ¹¹ though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad – in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls – ¹² she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” ¹³ As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

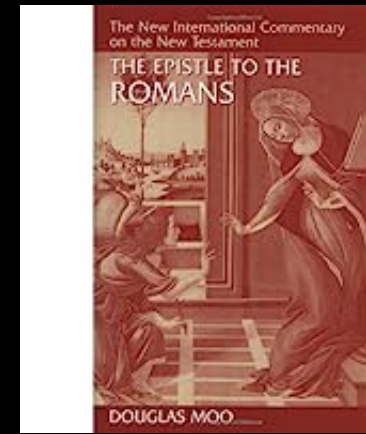
Romans 9:6-29

¹⁰ And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac,
¹¹ though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad – **in order that God's purpose of election might continue**, not because of works but because of him who calls – ¹² she was told, "The older will serve the younger." ¹³ As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

Romans 2:28-29

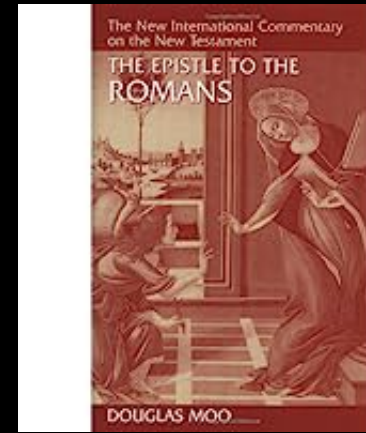
²⁸ For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹ But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

Paul's use of the word "election" to characterize this plan reflects his purpose in this part of Rom. 9: to demonstrate that God's plan has unfolded in the OT by a series of free choices that he has made.¹⁶⁰ Isaac was chosen; Ishmael was not. Jacob was chosen; Esau was not. By these choices God has seen to it that his plan to bring into existence a people who would be his "peculiar possession" would "remain."



If God's plan depended on the vagaries of sinful human beings for its continuance, then, indeed, God's "word" would have fallen to the ground long ago (see v. 6a). But God's purpose in history is fulfilled because he himself elects people to be part of that purpose.

Moo, D. J. (2018). *The Letter to the Romans*. (N. B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, G. D. Fee, & J. B. Green, Eds.) (Second Edition, p. 592). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

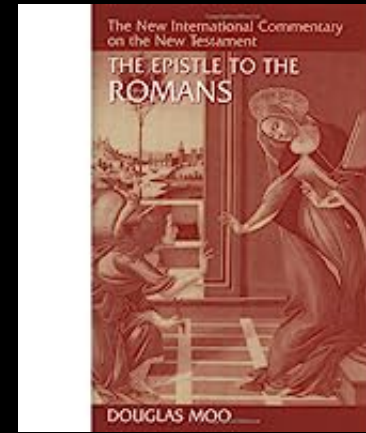


How is this fair?

Romans 9:6-29

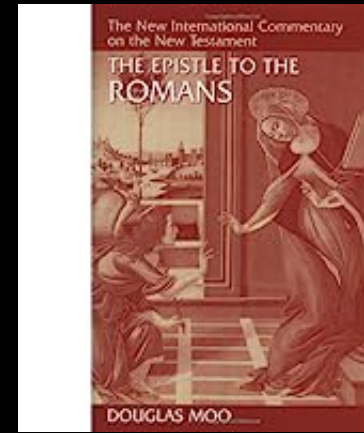
¹⁴ What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! ¹⁵ For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." ¹⁶ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." ¹⁸ So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

In other words, the standard by which God must be judged is nothing less and nothing more than God himself. Judged by this standard, Paul contends, God is indeed “just.” Paul does not provide a logically compelling resolution of the two strands of his teaching – God, by his own sovereign choice, elects human beings to salvation;



human beings, by a responsible choice of their will, must believe in order to be saved. But criticism of the apostle on this score is unfair. It is unfair, first, because Paul can accomplish his purpose – showing God to be just – without such a resolution.

Moo, D. J. (2018). *The Letter to the Romans*. (N. B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, G. D. Fee, & J. B. Green, Eds.) (Second Edition, p. 605). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

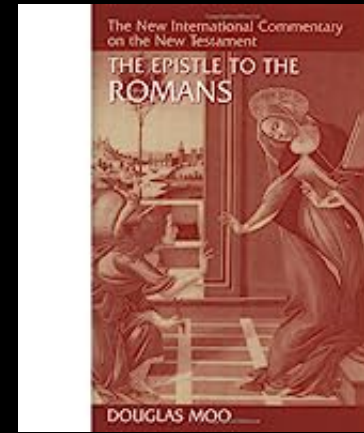


Romans 1:20-23

²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

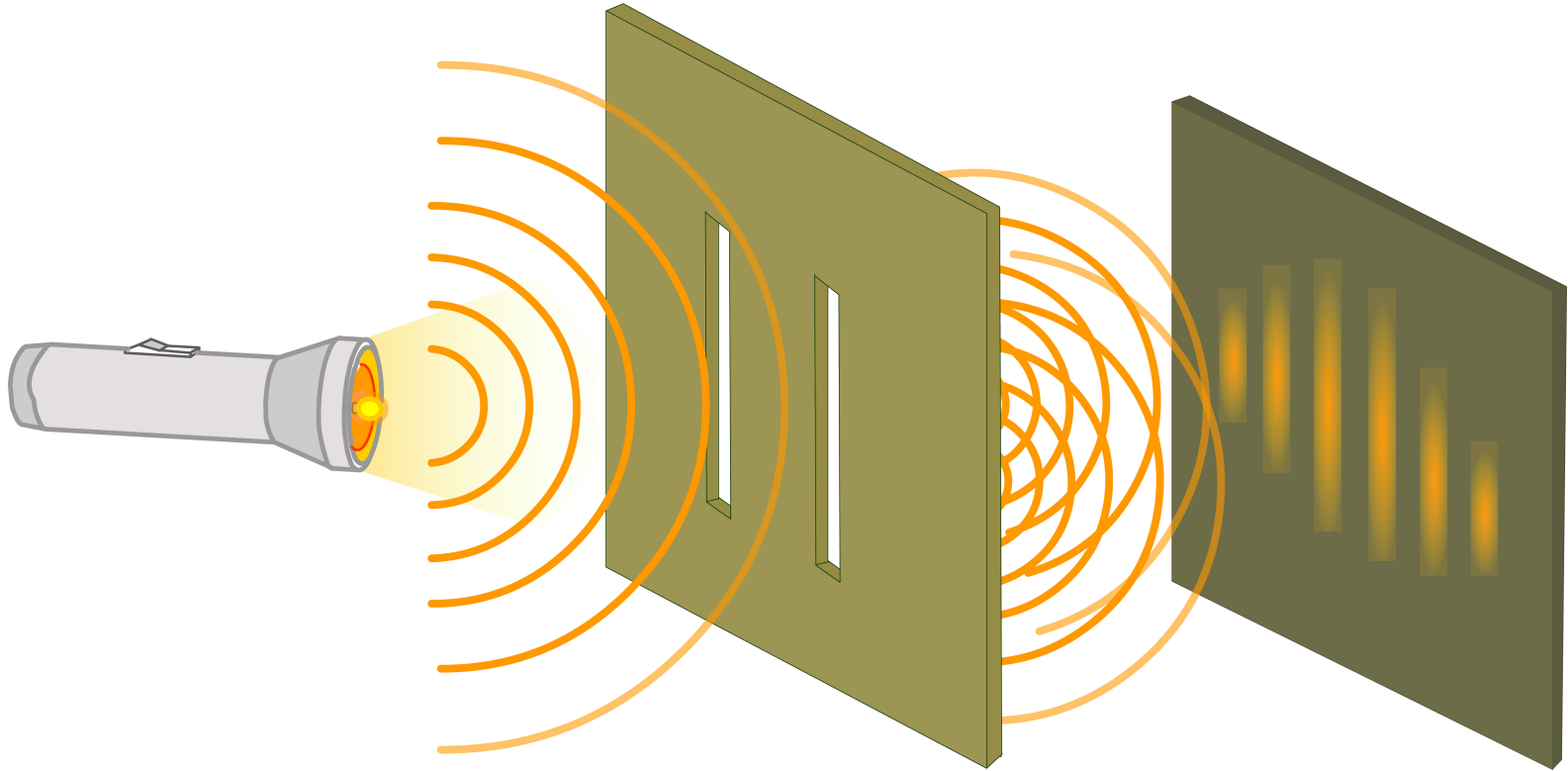
human beings, by a responsible choice of their will, must believe in order to be saved. But criticism of the apostle on this score is unfair. It is unfair, first, because Paul can accomplish his purpose – showing God to be just – without such a resolution. And it is unfair, second, because no resolution of this perennial paradox seems possible this side of heaven.

Moo, D. J. (2018). *The Letter to the Romans*. (N. B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, G. D. Fee, & J. B. Green, Eds.) (Second Edition, p. 605). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.



Diffraction Light

Double-slit experiment (Young wave theory)



How dose he find fault?

Romans 9:6-29

¹⁹ You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?” ²⁰ But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” ²¹ Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?

Romans 9:6-29

¹⁹ You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?” ²⁰ But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” ²¹ Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?

Romans 9:6-29

²² What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory — ²⁴ even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? ²⁵ As indeed he says in Hosea, “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’ ”

Embodied in these questions is the objection that God's sovereign act of hardening (v. 18b) jeopardizes the biblical teaching about the justice of God's judgment on people who resist him (see, in Romans itself, 1:19–23). For only if people are responsible for their own actions can God's judgment be truly just. Yet Paul's teaching about the sovereignty of God in hardening appears to remove such responsibility. Before analyzing what Paul does say in response to this objection, we do well to note what he does *not* say. He makes no reference to human works or human faith (whether foreseen or not) as the basis for God's act of hardening.

Nor does he defuse the issue by confining God's hardening only to matters of salvation history; quite the contrary, vv. 22–23 make more explicit than ever that Paul is dealing with questions of eternal destiny. In fact, Paul never offers – here or anywhere else – a logical solution to the tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility that he creates. That he affirms the latter is, of course, clear; and we must never forget that Paul will go on in 9:30–10:21 to attribute the Jews' condemnation to their own willful failure to believe. Paul is content to hold the truths of God's absolute sovereignty – in both election and in hardening – and of full human responsibility without reconciling them.

Moo, D. J. (2018). *The Letter to the Romans*. p. 620-21).

Romans 9:6-29

²² What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory — ²⁴ even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? ²⁵ As indeed he says in Hosea, “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’ ”

Romans 9:6-29

²⁶ “And in the very place where it was said to them,
‘You are not my people,’

there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’ ”

²⁷ And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, ²⁸ for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.” ²⁹ And as Isaiah predicted,

“If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring,
we would have been like Sodom
and become like Gomorrah.”



Problems with slowing down too much:

1: Determinism



A child wearing a blue helmet and a brown coat stands on a paved surface next to a white tricycle with green wheels. The child is looking down at the tricycle. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with grass and a fence.

Problems with slowing down too much:

1: Determinism

2: Over emphasis on Covenant Community

A child wearing a blue helmet and a brown coat stands on a sidewalk next to a fallen tricycle. The child appears to be looking down at the tricycle. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with grass and a fence.

Problems with slowing down too much:

1: Determinism

2: Over emphasis on Covenant Community

3: You miss the Grace of God in your Life!

Gospel Application

“The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.”

~Tim Keller