

# God's Plan and Purpose for Humankind

## Romans 9

### *Paul grieves for his fellow countrymen (v.1-5)*

(Rom 9:1) I am a follower of Christ, and the Holy Spirit is a witness to my conscience. So I tell the truth and I am not lying when I say my heart is broken and I am in great sorrow. I would gladly be placed under God's curse and be separated from Christ for the good of my own people. They are the descendants of Israel, and they are also God's chosen people. God showed them his glory. He made agreements with them and gave them his Law. The temple is theirs and so are the promises that God made to them. They have those famous ancestors, who were also the ancestors of Jesus Christ. I pray that God, who rules over all, will be praised forever! Amen.

### *Israel includes all believers (v.6-9)*

(Rom 9:6) I don't mean that God failed to keep his promise to the Jewish people. But only some of the people of Israel are really God's people. And only some of Abraham's descendants are true children of Abraham. This is what God said to Abraham: "Your true descendants will be those who come through Isaac." This means that not all of Abraham's descendants are God's true children. Abraham's true children are those who become God's children because of the promise he made to Abraham.

### *Because Jesus is from the line of Jacob he was loved Esau (v.10-14)*

(Rom 9:10) Don't forget what happened to the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah. Even before they were born or had done anything good or bad, the Lord told Rebekah that her older son would serve the younger one. The Lord said this to show that he makes his own choices and that it wasn't because of anything either of them had done. That's why the Scriptures say that the Lord liked Jacob more than Esau. Are we saying that God is unfair? Certainly not! The Lord told Moses that he has pity and mercy on anyone he wants to. Everything then depends on God's mercy and not on what people want or do.

### *Even among the wicked people are elected for the furtherance of God's work (v.15-18)*

In the Scriptures the Lord says to Pharaoh of Egypt, "I let you become king, so that I could show you my power and be praised by all people on earth." Everything depends on what God decides to do, and he can either have pity on people or make them stubborn.

### *Jesus the Potter is patient with his vessels (people) (Rom 9:19-22)*

(Rom 9:19) Someone may ask, "How can God blame us, if he makes us behave in the way he wants us to?" But, my friend, I ask, "Who do you think you are to question God? Does the clay have the right to ask the potter why he shaped it the way he did? Doesn't a potter have the right to make a fancy bowl and a plain bowl out of the same lump of clay?" God wanted to show his anger and reveal his power against everyone who deserved to be destroyed. But instead, he patiently put up with them.

### *The patience of God is shown even to the wicked who are "vessels of wrath" (v.23-26)*

(Rom 9:23) He did this by showing how glorious he is when he has pity on the people he has chosen to share in his glory. Whether Jews or Gentiles, those who believe are those chosen ones, just as the Lord says in the book of Hosea, "Although they are not my people, I will make them my people. I will treat with love those nations that have never been loved. "Once they were told, 'You are not my people.' But in that very place they will be called children of the living God."

### *Only a remnant will be saved out of Israel who are a rebellious nation (v.27)*

And this is what the prophet Isaiah said about the people of Israel, "The people of Israel are as many as the grains of sand along the beach. But only a few who are left will be saved.

### *If God was not merciful he would have destroyed Israel already*

(Rom 9:28) The Lord will be quick and sure to do on earth what he has warned he will do." Isaiah also said, "If the Lord All-Powerful had not spared some of our descendants, we would have been destroyed like the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah."

## *Believing not in Jesus who is the 'cornerstone' of our faith is a stumbling-stone to Jews.*

Rom 9:30 What does all of this mean? It means that the Gentiles were not trying to be acceptable to God, but they found that he would accept them if they had faith. It also means that the people of Israel were not acceptable to God. And why not? It was because they were trying to be acceptable by obeying the Law instead of by having faith in God. The people of Israel fell over the stone that makes people stumble, just as God says in the Scriptures, "Look! I am placing in Zion a stone to make people stumble and fall. But those who have faith in that one (Jesus the corner stone) will never be disappointed."

## **Romans 10**

### *In their zeal Jews are pursuing righteous through the law instead of through Jesus*

(Rom 10:1) Dear friends, my greatest wish and my prayer to God is for the people of Israel to be saved. I know they love God, but they don't understand what makes people acceptable to him. So they refuse to trust God, and they try to be acceptable by obeying the Law. But Christ makes the Law no longer necessary for those who become acceptable to God by faith.

### *Those who confess Jesus is Lord shall be saved*

(Rom 10:5) Moses said that a person could become acceptable to God by obeying the Law. He did this when he wrote, "If you want to live, you must do all that the Law commands." But people whose faith makes them acceptable to God will never ask, "Who will go up to heaven to bring Christ down?" Neither will they ask, "Who will go down into the world of the dead to raise him to life?"

### *Whosoever believes in Jesus shall be saved*

(Rom 10:8) All who are acceptable because of their faith simply say, "The message is as near as your mouth or your heart." And this is the same message we preach about faith. So you will be saved, if you honestly say, "Jesus is Lord," and if you believe with all your heart that God raised him from death. God will accept you and save you, if you truly believe this and tell it to others. The Scriptures say that no one who has faith will be disappointed, no matter if that person is a Jew or a Gentile. There is only one Lord, and he is generous to everyone who asks for his help. All who call out to the Lord will be saved. How can people have faith in the Lord and ask him to save them, if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear, unless someone tells them? And how can anyone tell them without being sent by the Lord? The Scriptures say it is a beautiful sight to see even the feet of someone coming to preach the good news.

### *Judah knew the Gospel through Isaiah but nobody believed Is. 53.1; Is. 52.7*

Rom 10:16 Yet not everyone has believed the message. For example, the prophet Isaiah asked, "Lord, has anyone believed what we said?" No one can have faith without hearing the message about Christ. But am I saying that the people of Israel did not hear? No, I am not! The Scriptures say, "The message was told everywhere on earth. It was announced all over the world." Did the people of Israel understand or not? Moses answered this question when he told that the Lord had said, "I will make Israel jealous of people who are a nation of nobodies. I will make them angry at people who don't understand a thing." Isaiah was fearless enough to tell that the Lord had said, "I was found by people who were not looking for me. I appeared to the ones who were not asking about me." And Isaiah said about the people of Israel, "All day long the Lord has reached out to people who are stubborn and refuse to obey."

## **Romans 11**

### *A Remnant of Israel will be saved*

(Rom 11:1) Am I saying that God has turned his back on his people? Certainly not! I am one of the people of Israel, and I myself am a descendant of Abraham from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not turn his back on his chosen people. Don't you remember reading in the Scriptures how Elijah complained to God about the people of Israel? He said, "Lord, they killed your prophets and destroyed your altars. I am the only one left, and now they want to kill me." But the Lord told Elijah, "I still have seven thousand followers who have not worshipped Baal."

### *Salvation is not by works but by the Grace of God*

Rom 11:5 It is the same way now. God was kind to the people of Israel, and so a few of them are still his followers. This happened because of God's undeserved kindness and not because of anything they have done. It could not have happened except for God's kindness. This means that only a chosen few of the people of Israel found what all of them were searching for. And

the rest of them were stubborn, just as the Scriptures say, "God made them so stupid that their eyes are blind, and their ears are still deaf." Then David said, "Turn their meals into bait for a trap, so that they will stumble and be given what they deserve. Blindfold their eyes! Don't let them see. Bend their backs beneath a burden that will never be lifted." (Ps. 69.22, 23)

### *Gentile believers become the new Israel*

(Rom 11:11) Do I mean that the people of Israel fell, never to get up again? Certainly not! Their failure made it possible for the Gentiles to be saved, and this will make the people of Israel jealous. But if the rest of the world's people were helped so much by Israel's sin and loss, they will be helped even more by their full return. I am now speaking to you Gentiles, and as long as I am an apostle to you, I will take pride in my work. I hope in this way to make some of my own people jealous enough to be saved. When Israel rejected God, the rest of the people in the world were able to turn to him. So when God makes friends with Israel, it will be like bringing the dead back to life. If part of a batch of dough is made holy by being offered to God, then all of the dough is holy. If the roots of a tree are holy, the rest of the tree is holy too.

### *Parable of the Olive Tree*

(Rom 11:17) You Gentiles are like branches of a wild olive tree that were made to be part of a cultivated olive tree. You have taken the place of some branches that were cut away from it. And because of this, you enjoy the blessings that come from being part of that cultivated tree.

### *Gentiles warned against boasting*

But don't think you are better than the branches that were cut away. Just remember that you are not supporting the roots of that tree. Its roots are supporting you. Maybe you think those branches were cut away, so that you could be put in their place. That's true enough. But they were cut away because they did not have faith, and you are where you are because you do have faith. So don't be proud, but be afraid. If God cut away those natural branches, couldn't he do the same to you? Now you see both how kind and how hard God can be. He was hard on those who fell, but he was kind to you. And he will keep on being kind to you, if you keep on trusting in his kindness. Otherwise, you will be cut away too. If those other branches will start having faith, they will be made a part of that tree again. God has the power to put them back. After all, it wasn't natural for branches to be cut from a wild olive tree and to be made part of a cultivated olive tree. So it is much more likely that God will join the natural branches back to the cultivated olive tree.

### *Israel is restored after the Gentiles enter the fold*

(Rom 11:25) My friends, I don't want you Gentiles to be too proud of yourselves. So I will explain the mystery of what has happened to the people of Israel. Some of them have become stubborn, and they will stay like that until the complete number of you Gentiles has come in. In this way all of Israel will be saved, as the Scriptures say, "From Zion someone will come to rescue us. Then Jacob's descendants will stop being evil. This is what the Lord has promised to do when he forgives their sins."

### *God is faithful and merciful*

(Rom 11:28) The people of Israel are treated as God's enemies, so that the good news can come to you Gentiles. But they are still the chosen ones, and God loves them because of their famous ancestors. God doesn't take back the gifts he has given or forget about the people he has chosen. At one time you Gentiles rejected God. But now Israel has rejected God, and you have been shown mercy. And because of the mercy shown to you, they will also be shown mercy. All people have disobeyed God, and that's why he treats them as prisoners. But he does this, so that he can have mercy on all of them.

### *Praise to God*

(Rom 11:33) Who can measure the wealth and wisdom and knowledge of God? Who can understand his decisions or explain what he does? "Has anyone known the thoughts of the Lord or given him advice? Has anyone loaned something to the Lord that must be repaid?" Everything comes from the Lord. All things were made because of him and will return to him. Praise the Lord forever! Amen.