



**BALANCE!**  
Maintaining the Mystery of Romans 9 • Part 1  
Lesson 15

**The Crucial Question that Romans 9-11 Answers**

*Has God's Word—His saving promises to Israel—failed, in light of the fact that so many Jews have rejected Christ and are doomed to eternal punishment?*

**How Chapter 9 Begins to Reveal the Answer**

QUESTIONS Asked or Implied	ANSWER SUMMARIZED	OBJECTIONS Raised or Implied
Has God's Word <b>failed</b> ? (6)	<b>NO!</b> God's promise of salvation is <b>rooted</b> in God's sovereign, unconditional choice. (6-13)	<b>FAILURE</b>
Is God <b>unfair</b> in choosing unconditionally? (14)	<b>NO!</b> Unconditional election <b>reflects</b> the perfection of God's character in all of its fullness. (14-18)	<b>FAIRNESS</b>
Is God <b>unreasonable</b> to hold us accountable for our choices, if no one resists His will? (19)	<b>NO!</b> Who are we to question God's sovereign <b>right</b> to accomplish His own purposes as our Creator and Redeemer? Unconditional election <b>reveals</b> the riches of God's glorious mercy against the backdrop of His longsuffering wrath. (19-29)	<b>FATALISM</b>
Should we conclude that there is no need for faith? (30)	<b>NO!</b> Unconditional election <b>results</b> in God's saving promises being fulfilled to all peoples—Jew and Gentile—by grace through faith in Christ without eliminating human responsibility. (30-33)	<b>FREE WILL</b>

**REMEMBER**, the question is being answered from a **God-centered perspective** and not a man-centered one! God's sovereignty and human responsibility **are not equals**, because the Bible **clearly exalts** God's sovereignty over human responsibility, but does so in way that **does not eliminate** human responsibility!

*"Life should be lived on the edge! See every day as a true challenge, then you live your life on the tightrope."* ~Philippe Petit

On August 7th 1974, a young Frenchman named Philippe Petit stepped out on a wire illegally rigged between New York's twin towers, then the world's tallest buildings. After nearly an hour dancing on the wire, he was arrested, taken for psychological evaluation, and brought to jail before he was finally released.

*"Life is on the wire, the rest is just waiting!"* ~Karl "Papa" Wallenda

The Flying Wallendas were noted for their cycling on the high wire and the unequalled three-tier 7-Man Pyramid performed without a net. *The Great Wallendas*, a 1978 made-for-TV movie, depicts the act's comeback after a fatal accident involving several family members during a performance. The patriarch of the family, Karl "Papa" Wallenda, was killed in a high wire accident a mere 38 days after it was first broadcast.

**STAY BALANCED to MAINTAIN the MYSTERY in ROMANS 9**

Don't over-emphasize **HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY** to the extent we eliminate divine sovereignty from the chapter.



Don't over-emphasize **DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY** to the extent we eliminate human responsibility from the chapter.

**Three Suggestions for Walking the Tightrope of Romans 9**

**1. Allow Paul to FOCUS ON what the Holy Spirit led him to write in Romans 9.** 2 Peter 1:20-21; 2 Timothy

- **Romans 9:30-33** is a "pivot paragraph" that helps us move from God's sovereignty in unconditional election in Ch 9 to human responsibility in Ch 10.
- We should not try to make Paul say something chapter 9 that he is waiting to say in chapter 10!

## 2. Do not ELIMINATE God's unconditional election of individuals to salvation from Romans 9.

### Three Ways People Attempt to Do This

#1 They attempt to see **only CORPORATE** election in the passage and not the sovereign choice of individuals.

- They claim Paul's only concern is **groups of people** in the chapter and **not individuals**. But the text will not let us eliminate God's sovereign choice of **individuals** from the passage for these reasons...
  - (1) Paul repeatedly refers to **INDIVIDUALS** by name: *Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, (Ishmael by implication), Rebekah, Jacob, Esau, Moses, Pharaoh. and "even us whom he has called"*
  - (2) Paul uses **SINGULAR** words and not plural ones at key times in his argument. *(9:15, 16, 18, 10:8-13; 11:1-2, 7, 13-14)*
  - (3) While the unconditional choice of the nation of Israel is addressed in these chapters (9:4-5; 11:5, 7, 13, 25-26), Paul does not address groups of people **WITHOUT ALSO** considering them as individuals.

Notice the balance between **both** corporate **and** individual election in these key passages: *9:3-4; 9:24-25; 11:1, 5*

#2 They attempt to see **only** sovereign election to **SERVICE** in the passage and not the sovereign choice of individuals to salvation.

- People who want to champion human responsibility in Romans 9 will argue that Paul is not talking about eternal salvation (whether individuals or groups) but about special roles in fulfilling God's purpose of salvation. But the text will not let us do this for these reasons...
  - (1) Paul's **BURDEN** is salvation by God and not just service for God. *Romans 9:1-5*
  - (2) Paul's **LANGUAGE** means salvation by God and not just service for God. *Romans 9:6-11*  
*"children of Abraham" (9:7); "children of God" (9:8); "children of promise" (9:8); "God's purpose of election" (9:11); "him who calls" (9:11)*  
*Compare Romans 8:28-39 where Paul uses similar words all in the context of eternal salvation and security*
  - (3) Paul's **APPLICATION** of various OT passages relates to salvation by God and not just service for God, without violating their meaning in the OT.

#3 They attempt to ignore the fact that the basis of God's choice of individuals for salvation in Romans 9 is not based on His **foreknowledge** of people choosing Him for salvation, but based on His **foreordination** of Him choosing people for salvation.

- In other words, those who would like to champion human responsibility over divine sovereignty in Romans 9, have to try very hard to overlook the obvious in this passage.
  - (1) There are several times in Romans 9 that Paul could have very easily mentioned God's foreknowledge of who would choose to receive the offer of salvation and who would choose to reject it. *(9:11, 13, 14-15, 16, 18, 19-20, 24-26)*
  - (2) We know we are rightly understanding Paul's argument when the result of our teaching is to raise these very same objections, none of which are the result of thinking God that chooses us **because we first chose Him**, but are all a result of Paul's teaching that God chooses us **so we will choose Him!**

**NEXT WEEK ~ How Not to Fall Off the Tightrope in the Other Direction!**  
*Don't Eliminate Human Responsibility by the Extreme of Double Predestination*