

Romans 9:14-19 by Wayne Barber

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Romans 9:14-19 God is a God of Purpose Dr. Wayne A. Barber

We continue to enter the deep waters of what God is saying through the Apostle Paul, particularly to the nation of Israel, but also to all of us concerning our salvation. I want to look this time at the fact that God is a purposeful God. He decides what He is going to do and He does it. We need to understand that. The integrity of God is impeccable. He is a purposeful God.

Before we even get into it, I want to take you back a little bit in Romans. Over and over again we say that the three rules of studying scripture are **observation**, what does it say; **interpretation**, what does it mean; and **application**, how does that apply to my life? (See The Key: Inductive Bible Study)

If you will carefully look at the study of the book of Romans up until chapter 9, the Apostle Paul is laying out a pattern that I don't think you can miss. Paul describes man's ruined condition before God, both Jew and Gentile, in the first part of Romans. In Ro 1:19-32 he shows you the rebellious Gentile. Of course, most of us came out of the Gentile peoples of the world, so here is your heritage right here: rebellious Gentiles. Then in Ro 2:1-3:8, we have the religious Jew. But both of them are in a terrible state before God because of Adam's sin. Both Jews and Gentiles are desperate for the Lord Jesus Christ. They cannot save themselves. They are lost in their sin. Both groups are guilty before God.

Ro 3:23 says, "For all [Jew and Gentile] have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." Back in 3:10 he says, "As it is written,

"there is none righteousness, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one." Romans 5:6 says, "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly." We were helpless; we were ungodly. Verse 8 says, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Verse 10 goes on, "For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Helpless; ungodly sinners and enemies of God; none righteous, no, not one. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Paul meticulously lays this out.

Then he begins to bring us out of that. In Ro 3:21 he says, "But now apart from the Law [in other words, man cannot work his way up. Man cannot be righteous on his own] the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction." Jew or Gentile. Anyone who wants to believe or does believe can be saved. Justified by faith alone in Christ alone. He goes on to say that it is by faith according to grace. So Paul begins to work it out. There is no hope for man in the first part, but then there is hope for man. Jesus came. He died for us. Took our sins upon Himself. Justification is by faith alone in Christ alone.

Then you come to Ro 6 and Ro 7 and you begin to understand now what it means to be a child and a product of grace, what it means to be up under grace instead of up under law. You are a brand new person and you have a brand new power. But this also brings up a new problem. We have some choices to make in order to live in that power that God has now given to us.

You come to Ro 8:1 and it says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." Until you get to chapter 8 there is no mention whatsoever of the words "foreknowledge" or "predestination." Not one time does Paul even bring it up.

Why does Paul wait until chapter 8 to bring it up? I'll tell you why he waited. Because we need to understand something: man was depraved and could have stayed that way had God not intervened and sent His Son into this world to die for our sins. Once we are birthed by faith according to grace into the family of God, then and only then can we begin to understand what it means to be a part of the family of God. So he brings it up in chapter 8. It is at this time that we begin to realize how grateful we ought to be for our salvation. Do you realize that? You see, you don't become one of these people who assume anything. You don't become one of these people who demand anything.

God foreknew me before I was ever born. Predestined me. He predetermined that I would be conformed into the image of His Son. He had to call me—I didn't look for Him. He had to justify me—I couldn't justify myself. And one day He is going to glorify me. This is a process and a purpose that God had before the foundation of this world. It ought to put every one of us on our face. But what you have in modern times are a lot of people who studied Romans 1-7 and never seem to look into chapters 8-11. This salvation is God's business. You don't join it like you join a church. Many people have joined the church and missed God. You have to be born into the family of God. Born again. It is by faith alone in Christ alone. It was all planned before the foundation of this world.

Well, I tell you, that is what I think Paul is trying to get across as he brings this up in [chapters 8](#) and [9](#). Now comes the confusing part. You know, Jesus died for all, not for some. Some of the theologians say, "No, He did not. He died for some, and He didn't die for such and such." Wait a minute now. His death on the cross is not a substitute for everyone, only those who put their faith in Christ Jesus. Do you understand the terminology used there? He died for everyone, will reject no one who comes to Him. But His death is not a substitute for everyone. You see, in [Ro 6](#) it says when He died I died. Who is He talking about? The believer. When I put my faith into Jesus Christ, then I am somehow transferred back to the cross. Then His death becomes a substitute for me, but only then. Any other teaching would teach universal salvation. Yes, He died for all: Whosoever will may come. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the whole world that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever believes in Him** should not perish but have everlasting life." Acts 13:38 says, "Therefore let it be known unto you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you and through Him **everyone who believes** is freed from all things from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses." But a person who hears and rejects is a person who is not condemned by God necessarily, but is a person who has now condemned himself.

Do we understand that? You see, God has so designed heaven that when we get to heaven one day, we can't pat ourselves on the back and say, "I have found Jesus, and I lived for Him while I was on earth." No, we will walk into heaven and for eternity we will say, "God, I didn't deserve this! Thank you, God, that I didn't find You, You found me and You planned this for me long before I ever knew You."

But He also designed hell in such a way that when you get to hell, you will never shake your fist in God's face and say, "God, you sent me here." God will say, "No, you sent yourself there." You don't believe that? Titus 3:10 speaks of a man who is a very lost man: "Reject a factious man [somebody who is always causing division, somebody always causing contention] after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, **being self-condemned.**"

"Do you mean if I hear and do not respond, I have condemned myself?" Yes, and when you are in hell someday, don't you ever

shake your fist in God's face and say, "God, you sent me here." No, you sent yourself there. But if you get to heaven and you have put your faith in Christ, you will understand. We will know as we are known, but we will be overwhelmed by the fact that we had nothing to do with it. God had everything to do with it.

Well, that is where we are in [Romans 8](#) and [9](#). The Apostle Paul has laid the groundwork. Now with this information, you can see the dilemma he is in. He is a converted Jew, and he knows he didn't go after God. He was on the Damascus Road going after the Christians, and the Christ of Christianity stopped him in the middle of the road and he got saved. Now he is a totally different man. The Spirit has come to live in Him. He is a child of grace. But he is still physically kin to the Jews. He is an Israelite. He knows that the nation of Israel has rejected Jesus as their Messiah. The only way that a man can be saved is through Jesus Christ. Paul is faced with a huge dilemma.

He says in [9:6](#), "But it is not as though the word of God has failed." He talks about all the privileges that Israel has had. But then he is going to show them that does not guarantee them anything. God, just by His grace, gave them those privileges. They still have to put their faith into Jesus Christ. He said, "It is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel."

From verse [6](#) all the way down to the end of the chapter, he gives five examples out of Israel's history to prove the fact that God's word has not failed. It is not God who is the problem here. It is Israel that is the problem, in their understanding of what God has been doing. God's purpose is that He is the one that makes the choices, He is the one who chooses what salvation will be; He chooses the way of salvation. It will be by faith. Verse 11 said that it is so that His purpose might stand. And it will. He is a purposeful God. No man, whether Israel or not, is going to change the purpose which God has for salvation.

The first illustration he gives is Ishmael and Isaac. He says in [Verse 7](#), "Neither are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: 'through Isaac your descendants will be named.'" There were two children of Abraham. The oldest child that he had was Ishmael. However, he was by Hagar, the handmaiden of Sarah. They tried to have a child for ten years after God had spoken to Abraham and said, "Out of you a seed will come." And they couldn't have children, so Sarah recommended that he go to Hagar and he did and she had a child. And the child's name was Ishmael, the oldest son.

God came back in [chapter 17](#) and said, "Now, listen. It is not going to be through Ishmael." Abraham protested. He tried to twist God's arm to get it to be through Ishmael. God said, "No. My choice will stand. It will be through Isaac." And Isaac was the child by faith. That is what God had intended all along. You don't come to know God except by faith. "By faith Abraham believed and it was accounted to him as righteousness." That is the whole basis of how we are saved today.

So it is going to be through Isaac, it is not going to be through Ishmael. Has God's word failed? Ishmael was a descendant of Abraham, but he is not in the line of Isaac. Paul is trying to show Israel, "Why are you depending upon your physical descent? Why are you depending on who you are because of Abraham?"

Then he takes us to Esau and Jacob. Now you know the story of Esau and Jacob. Rebekah was going to have a child, but there were two of them, twins. Inside her womb, they began to struggle. She went before the Lord and said, "Lord, what does this mean?" And God said, "Well, the struggle is going to be there, not for just now, but it is going to continue to be there. The younger one will rule over the older one." Of course, you know Esau was the first one born and right behind him, Jacob had hold of his heel. The struggle had already started. Jacob was the one with the birthright. He got it the wrong way, but he got it. He was going to be the one through whom the seed would be passed.

It's the same principle here. The older is supposed to be the one who actually is the priest of the family. He is the one who is supposed to have the authority. But God said, "Because of My choice [and remember, when God chooses, He acts out of all His attributes, one of them being His omniscience], it will not be through Esau, it will be through Jacob." Did Jacob deserve it? No. Neither one of the boys had done good or bad. But He knew something about Jacob and He also knew something about Esau. Esau cared less about his birthright. As a matter of fact, he wanted a bowl of lentils instead of his birthright. God knew that.

Listen, a birthright wasn't a piece of paper. That was everything in the culture of that day. Esau cared nothing about it. God knew that. He was the older brother, but God said, "I know he is the older, but by My choice that My purpose might stand, it will not be through the older, it will be through the younger that the seed is passed."

Was Jacob any better? Not a whole lot. He was a deceiver, conniver. God had to deal with him, wrestle with him. As a matter of fact, in one particular spot, God says, "You are called Israel because you have striven with God." When God came to him, he held on to Him and would not turn loose of Him until God blessed him. God touched him, crippled him and changed his name. He became Israel. God made His choice based on the purpose for which He had established: that salvation is by faith, not by human descent, not by works.

Well, the third example is Israel and Pharaoh. Paul goes back into the history of Israel to show them what they evidently had not

seen, that God does as He has purposed to do. It would be through Abraham. It would be through Isaac. It would be through Jacob. And God is the one who chooses and God is the one who purposes in salvation.

[Romans 9:14](#) says, "What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!" The word "injustice," *adikia*, is the word that means the inability to treat one righteously. Was God treating Israel in an unfair way because He chose Isaac instead of Ishmael and He chose Jacob instead of Esau? Is God treating Israel in an unrighteous way? Paul says, "May it never be." I like the way the King James says it, "God forbid." God cannot be unjust because He is inherently just and can never in any way contradict who He is. That is what Paul is saying. "May it never be."

Then Paul explains in [verse 15](#) that God had determined to pardon Israel in their history and had determined to punish Pharaoh. This is significant. You need to see in their own history how God acts faithfully to His purposes. "For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.'" There are two ideas here that are framed around two words. It is significant that we understand these two words. First of all is the word "mercy." What does it mean to have mercy? It is the word *eleeo*. It refers not only to the feeling that you have for those who are bearing the consequences of something they have done, their choice. But it is the active desire and the willingness to do something to help relieve the pain. That is mercy.

Do you realize in scripture that we are never told to show grace? We can't. God shows grace. Grace deals with the sin. Mercy deals with the consequences of that sin. When you see somebody undergoing something, whatever it is, the mercy in you says, "Help them, do something for them." That is the word "mercy." It not only involves the feeling and the love there, but it also involves doing something about it.

But the second word is the word "compassion," *oiketeiro*. It means pity. You have to understand the difference between pity and mercy. This refers to the very same feeling that you have when you have mercy towards someone, but the difference is, you don't move to do anything about it. There is a restriction there somewhere. In other words, maybe this person doesn't want it or whatever, but there is a reason that you don't extend that compassion. It is the same basic feeling: one hurries to do something to relief the pressure, but the other one just simply continues with the compassion and the pity within them.

Paul uses this word in [Romans 12](#). He is writing from Corinth. He tells them, "Listen, I beseech you with the mercies of God." Now what is he saying? He is saying, "I can't run over there and do it for you. I can't make your choices for you. I have feelings for you, but I can't do anything about it. You are going to have to present your own bodies as a living sacrifice before God." It's the word "pity" as opposed to the word "mercy."

God shows mercy on whom He will show mercy and He shows pity on whom He will show pity. Paul is setting a framework here for you. That verse, by the way, comes out of [Exodus 33:19](#). Go back and read Exodus [chapter 32](#) and see what Israel did. God got so upset with Israel, but Moses came before Him and said, "God, remember Your covenant." Now do you think God had forgotten it? This isn't for God's benefit, this was for Moses' benefit. He said, "Remember your covenant to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. If you are going to do that, then blot my name out of the book that they might be saved."

It is almost exactly what Paul said in Romans 9:1-3. What did Moses say about Israel? He made another statement. He said they are the most stiff-necked, rebellious, stubborn people on the face of this earth. You move into [chapter 33](#) and Moses said, "O God, show me your glory." But God said, "I will show you a bit of it by showing you My goodness." I think that is a picture of Christ there.

Then He says in that same verse, "I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. You just remember this, Moses. And I will show pity on whom I will show pity." Now we are beginning to see a framework develop here of a sovereign God who is a loving God, but an all-knowing God, who says, "I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy, I will show pity on whom I will show pity."

Well, that takes us into [verse 16](#): "So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy." The word for "will" there is *thelo* again. It means the man who determines. You can have the greatest desires in your heart. That does not impress God. Or you can put forth the greatest effort. The word "run" not only means to actually run but the strenuous effort that you put into running. The greatest desire and the greatest effort is not what saves a person. It is not what evokes the mercy of God. God shows mercy on whom He will show mercy and God shows pity on whom He will show pity. No man deserves anything.

Do you understand where we are coming from? Who are we to make any statement about God regarding anything that God does? God is God and we are not Him.

[Verse 17](#) reads, "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I raised you up.'" You see, He had decided to pardon Israel in this whole situation, but He decided to punish Pharaoh "to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth." Now he continues to work this thing out. Just as God chose to show mercy to Israel, He chose to raise up and destroy Pharaoh. "For this very purpose I raised you up." In other words, God brought Pharaoh into the world. There is no life unless God creates it. God gave him power. God made him famous, then turned right around and put all the plagues

upon him and his people. He had to suffer them, too. He hardened his heart. Now why did He do that? Why did God do that to Pharaoh? Who is he bothering, people would ask. He said, "To demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth." That is the last part of verse 17. God would serve the honor of His name. He had chosen to preserve Israel; therefore, He chose to harden Pharaoh in order to demonstrate His power and to honor His own name.

Pharaoh desecrated anything that God stood for. You have to understand the Egyptian culture and you have to understand where he was. Here is a pagan man who could give absolutely no respect to God whatsoever. God raised him up, gave him power, made him famous and turned right around and put the plagues on him and destroyed him. He did so in order that He might bring about His purposes in Israel.

Now, don't jump ahead of me. I know what you are thinking, "Well, that is just not fair." Now hang on. Don't say that too quickly. We are working that way. His word has not failed, however, and this is why Paul is sharing this. [Ro 9:18](#) says, "So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires." Now the word "harden" caught my attention. It is the word *skleruno*. We get a word from that, "arteriosclerosis", hardening of the arteries.

Now I want you to think with me. Does this mean that God instantly hardened Pharaoh? That is what everybody says. Do you mean God is some tyrant and because He said He is going to do this to Israel, He just raises up a guy who is innocent, doesn't bother anybody and He just hardens him? No, no, no. If you know anybody who has arteriosclerosis, you know it didn't happen overnight. It is a very sad thing and it is nothing in the world to ever want. It is one of the most difficult things for a family when somebody has hardening of the arteries and they begin to lose their memory. It gets a little worse and a little worse and a little worse. I know people today who go in to see their Mama or their Daddy who have that disease and they will look at them and say, "Who are you?" Because the arteries have hardened, it is killing the memory.

Did God harden him? Or did God just seal off the process that had already started in his life? I want to assert to you, Pharaoh had already hardened himself. Look at [Exodus 8:15](#). You think Pharaoh hadn't hardened himself? You have to understand something here. It is kind of like it is in [Acts 2:28](#) when it says that God predetermined to put Jesus on the cross. He did so through the foolish men, the godless men whom He chose to do it through. They were already godless. He just simply used the godless to accomplish that which He had predetermined to do. They were already godless. He didn't make them that way. Sin made them that way.

[Exodus 8:15](#) says, "But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, **he hardened his heart** and did not listen to them, as the Lord had said." God simply solidified the process.

I love to deer hunt. I don't know why because I never shoot anything. Let's just say that you are sitting up in a tree stand, you realize the sun is coming out. You are looking across a clay bank that has 6" of ice on top of it. You watch the heat and the rays of that sun begin to come out and start shining right down on that bank. You have two things, clay and ice. The rays of that sun melt the ice, but harden the clay.

There is something in that illustration that doesn't go quite far enough. But I want you to think about that. When God puts His love on somebody you will have some people who will get adamantly mad and walk out the door. As clay, they are hardened. You will have others who will melt in the very presence of God. Pharaoh was clay in this illustration. Israel, I suppose, in God's eye was the ice. They haven't become ice yet, have they? But one day, they will. Zechariah says that there is going to come a day when one-third of Israel finally melts in the presence of the Light that has been shown upon them through all the centuries. But only God knows this, folks. Only God knows this.

Do you know what I think He is doing here? Look at [verse 18](#): "You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?'" If you only see that Pharaoh was hardened by God and not understand that Pharaoh had already hardened his own heart, you think we are all puppets and we can't do anything anyway. You think God makes a man evil and then uses him to accomplish His purpose. No, sir. Sin made that man evil. But God, being omnipotent, knows that and God will take the evil man to accomplish His own purposes. You say, "I don't understand that." I know. Because we are not God. But He never violates who He is or what He says. That is what you have to keep in your mind. We really haven't covered it yet.

Each time I am leaving you with a question and we will try to answer it the next time because this is a tremendous chapter, folks. But remember what He is doing. What is His context? The context is, "Israel, don't you think I am telling you something that hasn't been told to you already. It has been shown to you out of the very examples of your own history. But you missed it, as I missed it for years." He is telling them, "Finally, one day God had to find me and turn me around. Now I can understand but you still have that veil over your face. God has shown you over and over again His purpose will stand. His choices are His choices and He will do it His way." That is what he is telling Israel. God is in control of our salvation.

Ro 9:20 says, "On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded [or the clay] will not say to the molder [the potter], 'Why did you make me like this,' will it?" Even in that question there is a lot of misunderstanding because God didn't make the clay hard, sin made the clay hard. God is the one who took the hard clay and began to knead it.

Remember Jeremiah at the potter's house? He took that which was hard and he made it into that which could be good again in his sight. So, what we have here is an overwhelming call to believers to become much more humble about their salvation and not so proud. I tell you, there is a lot of pride in Christianity these days, folks. Look at yourself in the mirror in the morning and understand how wicked your flesh is. Our flesh is wicked. You look in that mirror and begin to understand how this past week you have talked about people. You did things out of flesh desires.

God is the one who orchestrated your salvation. I tell you what it would make me do. Isaiah saw the Lord in Isaiah 6 and you know what he did? He fell on his face and said, "Woe is me, I am a man of unclean lips." How many Christians do you see doing anything like that anymore?

If you don't believe there is pride, turn on the television and start watching what people are doing in the name of Jesus Christ. When you go to the Word of God and find out the humility that we ought to have before a Holy God who designed our salvation, you are going to get on your face before a Holy God and say, "O God, God, God. Why would you ever for a second give me another thought?"

I think that is what Paul is doing. He is addressing Israel, but he is taking chapters 1-8 and putting them in perspective. You had nothing to do with it. Praise God that He did