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## The Gospel Story: Vessels of Mercy

Romans 9:1-29

Pastor Bryan Clark

As people made in the image of God, I would suggest that we have a tendency to recreate God in our own image. What I mean by that is: we cultivate a view of God that we're comfortable with, a God that makes sense to us, a God that's predictable, a God that we can explain. But the fact is God isn't like that. God is big. God is unpredictable. God is beyond our explanations and understandings and sometimes God reveals Himself in such a way that it's disturbing, sometimes even upsetting. I have no doubt many of you, as a result of our study this morning in Romans, Chapter 9, will have that feeling: this is disturbing; this is even somewhat upsetting. But this is the key: if you don't have Romans chapter 9, then you don't have Romans chapter 8. So with that in mind I invite you to turn to Romans, Chapter 9.

Last week we looked at chapter 8, which is really the magnificent climax of the first eight chapters. It's one of the great chapters in all of the Bible. God promised that before you were ever born I knew you; I predestined you; I called you; I justified you. And I promise I will glorify you and, no matter what happens, there's no thing, there's no one who can ever separate you from the love of God and, because you are in Christ, you are a champion! Magnificent theology! But a first century reader would hear that and would say this, "That all sounds well and good, but it seems to me You made a similar promise to the nation of Israel and You didn't keep that promise. And if You didn't keep the promise to them, what reason do we have to believe You will keep Your promise to us?"

That's what launches chapters 9, 10 and 11. Now I would tell you: chapters 9, 10 and 11 are really hard and I invite you to stay with us, hang in there. Once you get to chapter 12 it becomes very practical. Okay now, what do we do with the theology of Romans? How do we live this out? We pick it up then in chapter 9, verse 1:

**I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen (\* NASB, Romans 9:1-5)**

That kind of sets the tone for this chapter. Paul is Jewish. He has a passionate, compassionate heart for his own people and it breaks his heart that his own people—the people of Israel—have forsaken the Christ. As a matter of fact, verse 3 is very helpful to remind us that just because you're Jewish doesn't mean you're in, doesn't mean you're saved. He actually says they're "*accursed and they're separated from the Christ.*" That's the whole point; that's what grieves him. He says he would give up his own relationship with Christ if the nation would come to know Him.

He goes through in verse 4 and reminds us that they were the people that had so much exposure to God. Basically it's just a reviewing of the Old Testament. They had the temple; they had the covenant; they had the promises; they had the presence of God; they had so much exposure yet, at the end of the day, they have rejected the Christ—even with the reminder that the Christ is Jewish.

Sometimes when the Bible uses the word **flesh** it's just simply referring to flesh and blood. That's what he's talking about—a Jew in the flesh that has a human descendant—and Jesus' ethnicity was Jewish. It's good for us to remember that. Sometimes when you look at classic portraits of Jesus, He's a blue-eyed European. Other times, several years ago, I saw a portrait of Jesus, and He was Afro-American. Now I appreciate the fact that Jesus is for all people of all races, but He was Jewish. He wasn't all races; he was Jewish. That was the promise—that Jesus the Christ would come through the Jewish nation. That's a fulfillment of that promise. The real issue, then, starts in verse 6:

**But it is not as though the word of God has failed.** (Vs.6a)

Now it's very important to underscore that because that really defines the discussion now in chapters 9, 10, and 11. This is the question: Did God or did He not keep His promise to Israel? Because, if He didn't, we have no reason to believe He will keep His promise to us. So that's what the discussion is about.

**For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED." That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. For this is the word of promise: "AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON."** (Vs. 6b-9)

Basically what he says in the second half of verse 6 is: just because you're Israel doesn't mean you are *true Israel*. Now we already had this discussion early in Romans: just because you're circumcised doesn't mean you're really circumcised. There's a circumcision of the flesh and there's a circumcision of the heart. God never said that every person who is Jewish will be saved. As a matter of fact, what He made clear from the beginning is there would always be a remnant within the Jewish people that would be His children, that would be the children of promise, that would be the fulfillment of His promise. And that was evidenced right from the beginning through Abraham's two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. They were not both sons of the promise. One was chosen; one was not. If you remember the story: God made a promise to Abraham and Sarah about a son, but Abraham and Sarah were getting pretty old, and so they decided, "Let's go with Plan B." And Plan B was that Sarah would bring in her hand-maiden and she would have relations with Abraham. She would bear a son and we'll call that the *Son of Promise*. So that's exactly what they did, but then God shows up on the scene and says, "Whoa, that's not the Son of Promise. That's not the way I wanted it done." As a matter of fact, the quote there in verse 9 comes right at that moment, because God says Ishmael is *not* the Son of Promise. Even though he's a descendant of Abraham, he's not the Son of Promise. And Abraham says, "You know, he's here; let's count him." And God says, "I'm not going to count him. As a matter of fact he needs to go away. But I'm going to miraculously give Sarah a child in her old age and that will be the Son of Promise." One was born naturally; one was born supernaturally. It's not about race; it's about grace. There is a separation right from the beginning. So the promise doesn't go through both boys; it goes through Isaac. So we figure this out. We say, "Okay, I get it though. You had two moms, one dad; one wasn't really the wife, so I get it. That's why Ishmael was out and that's why Isaac's in." No, not exactly. Verse 10:

**And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; for though the *twins* were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to *His* choice would stand, not**

**because of works, but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER." Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED."** (Vs. 10-13)

About the time we think we have it figured out, Paul says, "Let's use another illustration." Isaac married Rebekah. Isaac had relations with Rebekah. Rebekah had two sons. So now we have one mom, one wife—two sons—but not only two sons; they were twins. The idea is one conception produced both sons, and yet one was chosen and one was not.

Now some would say that God's election has to do with God looking down through time, seeing which ones would have faith and, on the basis of that, choosing that one. But the text just ruled that out. The text said, "*Before either of them had done anything good or bad.*" As a matter of fact, it's very clear. It has nothing to do with that. It doesn't have to do with any works. It has to do with the God **who calls**. As a matter of fact, that word **calls** is not a word that means an invitation; it's a summons. God calls; you respond. That's the way it works. You say then, "Why did He do that?" Answer: in order to fulfill His sovereign purpose. We talked about this last week. The word *predestined* means predestined for a purpose. Chapter 9 reminds us of that, **so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand**. At the end of the day God has a plan and purpose that will be perfectly fulfilled.

Did God keep His promise to Abraham? Absolutely—one hundred percent! But the only way that's possible is for God to be sovereign and, no matter what choices people make, God somehow—sovereignly—superintends to see His promise to fulfillment. At the end of that discussion, verse 13, says something rather disturbing: **Jacob I loved, Esau I hated**. Now what does that mean? That's a really good question. Thanks for coming this morning. We'll see you next week! (Laughter)

In both the Greek and the Hebrew these were words of *contrast*. These were not meant to be terms of *emotion*. There's a contrast between: Jacob was chosen; Esau was not. Doesn't God love the world? Didn't Jesus say, "The greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself?" You mean to tell me God doesn't follow His own commandments? Of course He does! That's *not* what it means. Even in the Gospels, didn't Jesus say, "If you are going to follow Me, you have to hate your family?" Answer is, "Yes, He did." That's exactly what He said. Did Jesus mean emotionally you hate your family? Of course not! That would be contrary to God's own value system. But what He was saying is: this is a contrast. You're allegiance to me is so great that every other relationship, including the one closest to you, has to come in second. It's a literary technique. It's the same thing he's saying here. But there is a reality to this. God did choose Jacob. He did not choose Esau. It had nothing to do with them or anything they had done. It's because God chose according to His sovereign plan. God never promised that just because you are Jewish, you are in. There was always a remnant within the Hebrew people that would experience the fulfillment of the promise. That raises a question for us in verse 14:

**What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!**

Paul moves into a familiar style called the diatribe. He's imagining the question his readers are going to ask and he puts that question out there—and it's probably the question we would all ask. "That doesn't seem right; it doesn't seem fair; it doesn't seem like God is just." And so Paul is going to respond to that, but basically what he says is, "That's the wrong question. Of course He's just!" The question is about God's grace and mercy, His mercy and compassion. The best way to think about this is to go back to Romans chapters 1 and 2. At one point we were all in Romans 1

and 2. We all sinned in Adam. We were all on a path of rebellion; we were going our way. We had made ourselves our own god. We were destined for judgment and that was justice. There's no innocent victim that isn't getting chosen here. We all made our choices; we are all in rebellion. But if God chooses to fulfill His purpose by reaching out and extending compassion and mercy to some, isn't that His right? Justice is perfectly in alignment with the character of God. Mercy and compassion are perfectly in alignment with the character of God. So what's the objection? So Paul goes on to that discussion.

**For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION." So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.** (Vs. 15-16)

We love to celebrate the story of God delivering the Hebrew people from bondage, but you have to remember part of the story is God showed compassion and mercy to the Hebrews but justice to the Egyptians. There are both sides to the story. And it talks about God hardening the heart of Pharaoh. As a matter of fact, if you go back and read the Old Testament story, that phrase is used twenty times in the story! It's not exactly like a passing comment. Twenty times it either says, "Pharaoh hardened his own heart," or, "God hardened his heart". It says both. So there's a lot of discussion: What does that mean? I would suggest to you what it means is that God revealed Himself to Pharaoh. Again, Pharaoh is not an innocent victim who just simply wasn't chosen. Pharaoh sinned in Adam. Pharaoh is in Romans chapter 1. Pharaoh lived in rebellion. He turned his back against God. He had become his own god. Literally, in his case, he declared himself to be god, and he was at war with the one true God. He's not some innocent victim. But **God raised him up** the text says. In other words, God orchestrated events that Pharaoh would become ruler. Why? So God **could demonstrate His power**. If you think you're God, let's go one-on-one. Let's see who wins—in order that He might demonstrate His power and His glory to the world. Every time God exposed Himself as God to Pharaoh through one of the plagues, at that moment Pharaoh had to do one of two things. Either Pharaoh had to say, "Whoa, I was mistaken. You're God and I'm not." Or he has to deny what he just obviously saw and hold to his belief that he is god. But every time he did that his heart got harder. It's like when you tell a lie. Each time you tell it, it gets harder to admit the truth. Pretty soon you start believing your lie. So Pharaoh, each time his heart got harder and harder and harder. He just wouldn't acknowledge what was so obvious in front of him—that God was God and he's not. So, in essence, God hardened his heart, which gets us to verse 19, another question:

**You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?"**

In other words the question is: if God's choosing and this whole thing is orchestrated, then who can be held accountable? Who's responsible? Not my fault! Seems to me God's not fair! Interestingly, Paul doesn't really try to answer that question, but moves a little bit different direction.

**On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God?** (Vs. 20a)

In other words, he shifts the discussion and says, "Whoa, wait a minute now." The phrase **O man** is not a phrase of affection. It doesn't mean, "Listen here, good buddy." It's actually a phrase of derision. It's saying, "Whoa, Mr. Big Talker, who do you think you are? Who do you think you are as fallen, sinful, selfish, prideful man—that somehow you have a better grip on what's just and right and holy than God has?" No, I don't think the text is saying at all that it's wrong to wrestle with

hard questions. As a matter of fact, we've all done that. When you read through the Psalms, I'd say the Psalms even invite that. That's really different than a heart of rebellion, a heart of pride, a heart that's pointing a finger at God and saying, "God, You're wrong." Because, in essence, what we're saying is, "*I'm* the new standard of justice, not God."

Think about it this way: When you say, "That doesn't seem fair; that doesn't seem just; that doesn't seem right," I would ask you the question, "Really, how are you defining those terms?" In other words, what's the standard? Isn't God the standard? Isn't God the standard of what's fair? Isn't God the standard of what's righteous? Isn't God the standard of what's good? So if God's the standard, I think He knows. But when I'm saying that to God, I'm saying, "God, *I'm* now the standard," and from my emotions and from my perspective I'm saying, "You're not fair—this isn't right." People have a real emotional reaction to this text and I'll tell you the first time I came across it, I did too. It's somewhat disturbing. But you still have to deal with the information in the text. And I'll just tell you, right now, at the end of the day, there's no way to explain this in such a way that you'll say, "Ohhhh, I get it!"

You know one of the keys is to dramatically lower expectations. You're not going out the door with a lot of clarity. There's just no way to get it. God is big. He's mysterious. He's beyond us. And there's part of this that just doesn't really make sense in our little, puny, finite minds.

**On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? (Vs. 20-21)**

A very common imagery—a potter and a piece of clay—but using a kind of ridiculous imagery to say, "Does the clay say to the potter, 'This is what I want you to do'?" Is the clay in charge? And of course the clay is not in charge. It is up to the potter and, if the potter wants to make one spectacular vessel and one vessel for common use, isn't that the potter's choice? And the obvious answer is, "Of course it is."

**What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for His glory, (Vs. 22-23)**

The text says that there are **vessels of wrath** and there are **vessels of mercy**. God delayed pouring out His wrath until the end of the day. Basically it says: God *could* pour out His wrath on sin at any time. He chooses to wait until the end. Why is that? One answer would be because God is long-suffering. He gives people every opportunity possible to change their mind. You say, "Now wait a minute—change their mind? Are you saying there's human responsibility that goes along with God's divine election?" Answer: "Yes!" That's next week—stay tuned. But just to lower expectations further—there's no way to make it make sense. But you can't deny one or the other. But I think the text also says God delays His judgment because you will never really understand the glory of mercy until you see it up against a backdrop of justice. And so God is saving it until the last day when you see God's justice. Probably for the first time in our lives we will understand the glory of God's compassion and mercy and what it means to be a vessel of His mercy.

But the text is very interesting in the way it words this. Some would embrace a theology called *double predestination* which means God not only predestined those who would be chosen, but

predestined those to wrath. I don't agree with that, and this is the helpful part of the text to sort that out.

You notice in verse 23, when he talks about **and He did so to make know the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy which He prepared beforehand**. Okay, so the text is very clear that those who are vessels of mercy are those who are elect, those who are chosen, those whom God picked. Those He called, He predestined, according to His purpose. We were all living in Romans 1 and 2. We were all destined for justice but, for reasons only God understands, He chooses some out for compassion and mercy. No question: *He chose those*. But when it talks about those prepared for wrath, He says **...endured with much patience vessels of wrath, prepared for destruction**. It does not say, "*He prepared for destruction*." The language is intentionally different. As a matter of fact, the word, **prepared** is in a voice in the Greek language called the *middle voice*. We don't have it in English, but the middle voice means: I did the action, but I did it to myself. And so it's saying: we, by virtue of who we are in Romans 1 and 2, by who we are as those who sinned in Adam, we prepare ourselves for wrath. We make those choices. We rebel. We're held accountable. How exactly it all works, I don't know, but I think you have to somehow balance both.

The real question is: why did God choose you to be a vessel of His mercy, to be His child, to receive His riches, to spend forever with Him? Answer: I don't know! You weren't smarter; you weren't more clever; you didn't do something that deserved it; it's just part of God's eternal purpose. So, starting in verse 24, he includes us:

***even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among the Gentiles. As He says also in Hosea, "I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, 'MY PEOPLE,' AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, 'BELOVED.'" AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, 'YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,' THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD."*** Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, ***"THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED; FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY."*** And just as Isaiah foretold, ***"UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOOTH HAD LEFT TO US A POSTERITY, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE RESEMBLED GOMORRAH."*** (Vs. 24-29)

What he's saying is that the Old Testament was very clear: that just because you're Jewish doesn't mean you are children of God, doesn't mean *you are saved* in our language. As a matter of fact, what the Old Testament said is that Gentiles will be included and, as a matter of fact, the Gentiles will come en masse; the Jews will not. It will end up being a remnant. But he goes so far as to say: even in the Old Testament it was very clear that *if God wasn't sovereign, and by His sovereignty saved a remnant, the Hebrew people would have been like Sodom and Gomorrah, wiped out and no one would have made it in*.

This is very important to understand. If you don't have Romans chapter 9, you can't have Romans chapter 8. You cannot make the promises that God makes in Romans chapter 8 if He isn't sovereign, if He isn't superintending the process, if He isn't somehow engaged in fulfilling His purpose for all eternity. Everything in chapter 8 hangs on God's sovereignty—or the promise isn't legitimate. Did God make a promise to Israel? Yes—and the promise was kept perfectly. But for that to happen, God had to choose; God had to superintend; God had to make it happen; and Isaiah

said if He didn't, none of them would have made it. It's very important to understand: if there is no sovereignty, there is no security. There's no other way to see it.

So think of it like this: this afternoon is the Super Bowl. Let's imagine that I promise you that one team is going to win. Do you think that promise has integrity? The answer would be: absolutely not! I have no say in the outcome of the game. I'm going to be on the couch, eating something. That's my contribution. So that promise is bogus. So let's imagine one of the coaches or one of the players promises a win. Does that promise have integrity? Answer: absolutely not! While that coach and that player are engaged in the game, there are a hundred things that are going to happen completely out of their control that will determine the outcome of the game. It's nothing more than wishful thinking. That promise has no integrity. The only way a promise like that could have any integrity would be if someone could sovereignly superintend the game, so no matter the fumbles, no matter the interceptions, no matter the missed assignments, no matter the preparation—somehow, some way—he superintends the details of the game to guarantee a win. It's the only way that promise could be legit.

That's exactly what Romans chapter 9 is. If you believe that God provided salvation, set it out there as a gift, and stood back to watch as a spectator, Romans 8 goes away. There's no way those promises are legit if it's now merely a human transaction. The only way those promises are legit is if it's God's plan, if it's God's purpose, if God's sovereign, if God's choosing, if God's reigning. God's making it happen so, no matter what happens, at the end of the day, His plan and purpose is perfectly fulfilled. How exactly does that work? I have no idea. How does it sort out with human responsibility? I can't tell you. There's a mystery to this that's beyond our ability to explain. You might have walked through these doors this morning thinking: I have it figured out. If you say to me, "I have it figured out," I'll say back to you, "You don't get it." Nobody has figured it out in two thousand years. The fact of the matter is: it's just way beyond us.

Romans chapter 9 is not meant to be a complete discussion on the doctrine of election, to such a degree that we come away saying, "Ohhh." It's dealing with one specific issue: did God keep His promise to Israel? And if He did that, how did He do that? Answer: by being sovereign, by superintending, by making it happen, because, in the midst of human responsibility and human choices, God still ultimately has to superintend or the promises can't be kept. And if God did that perfectly to ancient Israel, you have every reason to believe: in His sovereignty He will keep the promises of Romans chapter 8.

You can't have security without sovereignty, even though we can't understand it or explain it. But rather than being upset and disturbed and all worked into a lather, this is what I would suggest you focus on: The reality is that at one time you were dead in Adam. At one time you were in Romans chapters 1 and 2. You were destined for wrath—and that's justice. You had it coming. But, for reasons none of us can understand—we can't explain; we don't really get how this works—but the truth of the matter is: for some reason God, in His sovereignty, chose you to become a vessel of His mercy, that He would pour out the riches of His grace upon you, the riches of His glory forever.

And the question is: why did He do that? Why did He choose you? The answer is: I don't know. It has nothing to do with you and what you did, and how good you were, and how smart you are. It's about God's compassion and His grace and His mercy. And when we understand that, rather than reacting emotionally, we ought to be on our face before God in gratefulness and in humility, and in brokenness and in submission, and say, "God, I would just want to give you back my life. I don't know why You chose me, but You did and, in return, I give you my life." That seems like the most appropriate response to the reality of the sovereignty of God's choice to spend forever with you.

*Our Father, we're thankful that in Your grace and mercy and compassion, You chose us to be vessels of mercy. Lord, we quickly acknowledge we don't get this; we don't understand it; we don't really comprehend how all this works. What we do know is that, at a point in time, You took off the blinders; You opened our eyes; You chose us to become vessels of Your grace and mercy, that we would be Your children, destined to receive the family fortune for eternity. Lord, help us to respond rightly in gratefulness and brokenness and humility, Lord, to willingly give up our lives to celebrate this magnificent truth.  
In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

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## **The Gospel Story: Vessels of Mercy**

### *A Study of Romans*

Romans 9:1-29

Pastor Bryan Clark

### **Opening Discussion**

1. People tend to fashion God in their own image to create a god we're comfortable with or a god we can understand or explain. What might be some examples today?
2. Would you rather have a god who is explainable and predictable or a god who is mysterious and at times unpredictable? Why?
3. What is the basis of your security as a believer? Can you have security without Sovereignty?

### **Bible Study**

1. Review Romans 8. How secure is the believer according to that text? Do the verses in Romans 8:29-30 describe a purely human transaction or the acts of a Sovereign God?
2. Read Romans 9:1-5. What did the Jewish people have because God has chosen them to be His people? How could they have all that and not believe?
3. Read Romans 9:6-13. What is the question at hand according to 9:6a? If nothing can separate us from the love of God what happened to Israel? What is the answer to this question according to the text?
4. Why did God choose Jacob and not Esau? How does this line up with 8:29? Was your salvation simply your idea or part of God's predetermined plan and purpose?
5. Compare Jesus' words in Luke 14:26. Did Jesus literally mean we should hate our family? Are these primarily terms of emotion or contrast? What did Jesus say about His choosing in John 13:18, 15:16, 17:6?
6. Read Romans 9:14-23. Is God unfair? Are people simply innocent bystanders that are chosen or rejected or are they as described in Romans 1,2? Is either God's justice or His mercy contrary to His character? Why or why not?
7. What would be the standard of fair or unfair other than God Himself? If God doesn't violate His own character what is there to object to? Do we really think as selfish, confused strugglers that we have a better idea of what is fair than a Holy God has?

8. According to 9:22,23 God prepared some as vessels of mercy and others prepared themselves as vessels of wrath. Even though there is a mystery to how all this works this we know, if we've trusted Christ as Savior you were chosen to be a vessel of mercy to experience the riches of His glory. What should be a proper response to this truth?
  
9. Compare I Timothy 2:1-7. Even though we cannot understand all the mysteries of how all this works, do you think God would act contrary to His own desires? Does God's election have to mean others have no chance of salvation? How would that line up with God's desire in Timothy?
  
10. Read Romans 9:24-29. Who is included in the promise of salvation? Did God promise all the Jews would be saved or just a remnant? Has God kept His promise?

## **Application**

1. Can we maintain a view of the security of the believer without a strong theology of God's Sovereignty in salvation? What is the basis of our security if it isn't God's divine purpose?
  
2. Do we have to be able to explain all the complexities and mysteries of God to believe and trust in Him?
  
3. If God sent His Son to die for the sins of the world, can't we trust His mercy and compassion in the midst of truths that seems confusing to us?
  
4. Would you rather have salvation be purely a human transaction with no security or the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose filled with mysteries we can't understand?
  
5. What are some practical things you can do to remember these great truths through the ups and downs of daily life?