

Welcome to Home Groups. There are two parts to these notes, “Your time” and “Group time.” The first is an opportunity for you to learn from God’s Word as you read, listen, and learn. The second part is for when you meet for a time to share and encourage each other.

YOUR TIME OF LISTENING IN GOD’S WORD

Here is a brief summary of what the author, Paul, has written thus far in this letter to Jewish and Gentile believers in Rome.

All people have sinned and are facing the wrath of God because they cannot fulfill God’s requirement of being righteous. (Ch. 1-3) God loves us and sent Jesus the Messiah /Christ to and satisfy the requirements of God (5:9) through faith in (3:22). We need no longer to be ruled by sin for we have been set free by Christ Jesus. (Ch. 6-7) We are no longer condemned and have the Holy Spirit living within us. We live in real hope and our present suffering is incomparable to future glory with Jesus. (8)

Read through chapter nine, noticing God’s character and master plan, and the author’s tensions and answers. This can be a challenging chapter for many of us since we weren’t raised in the Jewish culture or the tensions in the early church.

A summary of chapter nine. The early church was composed of both Jews and non-Jews (gentiles). They wrestled with the following tensions that Paul addresses in chapters 9-11.

- **First**, Paul is deeply sorrowful because most of his fellow Jews rejected Jesus the Messiah and are “cut off from Christ.” (1-3) But, God promised salvation to Israel. So, what happened? Did God’s word fail? (6)
- **Second**, God was originally working in and through the Jewish people. He called them, made a covenant with them, gave them the law, temple worship, and promised Israel salvation. And then, the Messiah eventually came through their ancestry (“seed”). Aren’t all Jews Abraham’s children and therefore saved from God’s wrath? (6-13)
- **Third**, sometimes God chose to show unearned mercy to Israel and sometimes he hardened the hard-hearted. How can He still find fault in people? (14-23)
- **Fourth**, why were gentiles included as God’s “people” when they weren’t the ones who “pursued righteousness?” Is it just (fair) that the Gentiles, who were not God’s original “people,” have obtained righteousness, while the Jews who were given the Law did not attain righteousness? (24-33)

God’s answers:

First, God did promise to save Israel, but who is Israel? “But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel” (v.6). (Paul will follow this theme.) Notice that: “the children of the promise are counted as offspring,” (8) and “Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved” (27). So, yes, God did promise to save Israel, but this is referring to those who are faithful and believe His promised salvation through the Messiah.

Second, God did choose to reveal Himself to the Jewish people and to sovereignly work through them to reveal Himself (power and character) to “all the earth.” And, yes, He did sovereignly choose through whom the seed of Christ would come. Was this unjust (wrong)? No, this was a He didn’t condemn the others who weren’t in the line (e.g. the other seven brothers of Abraham or Esau). All can believe and be saved.

Third, God is sovereign to do what He needs to bring the Messiah and good news to all the earth. He has been patient with Israel and others in order to make known His glory (23).

Fourth, Yes, it is just. Righteousness was never achieved through works (following the Law) but by faith (cf. Abraham in chapter four). Most of the Jews rejected Christ and pursued righteousness by ritual and works while the gentiles (sinners) pursued righteousness by faith in Christ.

Some of the questions from this chapter imply that people feel like God failed with the Jews. Did God's word fail with the Jews? Why or why not?

Paul taught that pursuing law as the way of righteousness will fail (Chapter 3 and 9:31). Then what does God desire?

Do you ever wrestle with how God has worked in your own life? What has been difficult to accept?

What have you learned from Scripture that helps you trust in God's ways?

GROUP TIME: DISCUSSION OF APPLICATION FROM GOD'S WORD

Do you sometimes feel tensions similar to what Paul expresses in this chapter? Are there times when God seems unfair or unjust?

How would you answer someone who asks you, 'What does God want for all people?'

Have you ever thought that the children of a "Christian" family or those who attend a "Christian" church are all included in heaven? What do we learn from this chapter?

How can we tell when we are still trying to earn God's favor? What are the signs?

According to 1 Peter 2:9, "You [disciples] are a chosen people." What might this mean about our character, lifestyle, and purpose? (See also Romans 9:17)

Prayer Thoughts

- Let's give thanksgiving to God for His mercy and righteousness by faith.
- Let's pray for people in our lives for whom we have "anguish in your heart" because they are outside of Christ
- Let's ask God to empower us to make His name known in our worlds