

*Redemption for Jew and*  
**Gentile**

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*“God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens  
whom he wants to harden” (Rom. 9:18, NIV).*



Introduction  
*A New Member  
of the Family*

Rom. 9:25;  
2 Pet. 3:9

My wife has a real heart for animals. She's especially partial to dogs. She hates to see them mistreated or neglected. About a month ago, she called me at work and said, "Don't get upset with me, but . . ." She had found a puppy wandering on the road near our house. She didn't want it to get hit by a car, so she picked it up. She checked with the surrounding houses, but none of the neighbors claimed it. In fact, one of the neighbors said that the puppy had been in that area all day. So my wife took it home and fed it, as it obviously hadn't eaten for a while. The next day, she took it to the vet, who gave it a clean bill of health.

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**We tried to find the puppy a good home.**

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We tried to find the puppy a good home. I took it to the Humane Society so it could be adopted, but they turned it down because we lived outside the city limits. My wife tried to give the puppy away, and at one point thought she had found a good home for it. But the people weren't very responsible, and a mutual decision was made that they just weren't ready for a dog, especially a puppy. By then, my wife had named the puppy Lily. And so now we have three dogs instead of just two.

At first, I wasn't all that excited about having a new dog, but she is cute. And I can tell that my wife thinks she's special. Lily appears to be a border collie mix, and we hope she will be a medium-sized dog, similar to the ones we already have. But even though my wife loves dogs, she wouldn't have taken just any puppy home. There are certain breeds that, while she would have gone to great lengths to save, would not have ended up at our house as a permanent family member. Tiny dogs or big, aggressive dogs would not have received that special adoption.

From the very beginning, God wanted to save everyone (2 Pet. 3:9). But He had the right to choose a select group for His special purpose. For about fifteen hundred years, the Hebrews were that group. Unfortunately, they hardened their hearts and chose not to remain true to the calling He had for them. So God chose the Gentiles to fill this role.

God's redemption is for all—Jews and Gentiles alike—but His special calling is for but a few. This week, let us study Romans 9 with an open mind and an open heart.

Rom. 9:6–8

## Evidence “Jewishness” and “Gentileness”

Many countries have experienced traumatic times caused by wars. African countries, especially, appear to be prone to violence fanned by ethnic differences, as was the case in Rwanda (1994) and Kenya (2008). Many people were killed, maimed, raped, and otherwise humiliated. Property was destroyed on a massive scale. All because of being born in one ethnic group and not the other.

Ethnic identity is not a choice somebody makes. We acquire membership into ethnic communities by birth. Unfortunately, this membership comes with

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baggage—prejudices, stereotypes, and other partisan interests that antagonize other groups and threaten the integrity and well-being of society. These evils are so deeply rooted that not even education, political programs, or superficial religious practices can remedy them. They therefore defy any natural means of eradication. What is needed is a divine birth. John 1:12, 13 distinguishes between being born naturally and being born of the Spirit. Redemption for Jew and Gentile has to do with this divine birth.

This divine birth is accomplished by God Himself the moment one accepts Jesus as Savior and Lord. This birth defines membership in God’s family and marks a permanent shift from earthly interests and entitlements to divine concerns and duties. When one is born of God, she or he sees people as God sees them. Divine citizenship and its attendant privileges and obligations override earthly citizenship and its rights and duties. Redemption for Jew and Gentile through divine birth redefines “Jewishness” and “Gentileness.” For instance, people from different cultural backgrounds who are not born again may regard themselves as different from and even opposed to one another, yet spiritually, they are all the same. They are all under the curse of sin. Similarly, those who are born again are one in the Lord despite their diverse cultural backgrounds. What counts is the new creation (Gal. 6:15).

The new birth is accomplished by God as a gift received. It is retained by active faith in Christ. It must make a difference in our present life even in the midst of crisis. It must prevail over the first birth. Finally, it commits us to focus on making all people God’s children.

### REACT

1. What determines your way of life—your earthly or divine birth?
2. How do the two births play out in your life in times of crises?
3. How can your divine birth triumph over the earthly one?

### **Paramnesia (Rom. 9:1–5)**

When He made His covenant with Israel, God gave them everything they would need to fulfill His plan. Continuous reminders of His glorious presence were visible to them in the wilderness and in the temple. They were given God's handwritten "first edition" of the Ten Commandments. The sanctuary services were designed to help them learn the principles of righteousness by faith. There was no shortage of prophets sent to warn and guide them. Repeatedly God sent them promises of a coming Redeemer and a wonderful future if they remained faithful. Ultimately, the very Son of God shared their ethnicity. Yet despite every advantage, the vast majority of them broke their covenant with Him and rejected His Son.

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### **Whether or not to accept salvation is an individual's choice.**

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In the mid 1800s, God had a special work to be accomplished for the world at the end of time. He chose a handful of faithful believers, including Methodists and Baptists, and equipped them with special blessings for their mission. He guided them to form a new denomination whose tenets combined a clear understanding of the investigative judgment with the doctrines of righteousness by faith, the Sabbath, and the second coming of Christ. He gave them a true prophet to help them better understand how to avoid Satan's deceptions; and He blessed them with a worldwide ministry so they could faithfully accomplish the gospel commission. During the last century and a half, He has given them a steady supply of faithful leaders to keep them focused on their task. But just like the Jews in the time of Paul, many members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church have begun to define their beliefs and mission in light of what *they* think is relevant. In so doing, they have begun to separate themselves from God.

### **Earth's Genetics Versus Heaven's Promise (Rom. 9:6–13)**

God had kept His promise to Israel—He sent His Son to die the second death of eternal separation from God—the death we die if we are not saved. When redemption was thus provided, there was no need to continue the traditional sanctuary service, and it was time to get rid of the traditional view of God's chosen people. Everyone needed to understand who His people really were—and always had been.

The Jews were especially proud of their forefathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As the original recipient of God's promise, Abraham was truly a giant of faith (Heb. 11:8–12). But only a subset of his descendents were identified as God's children. Ishmael's birth was Abraham's choice; Isaac's birth was God's choice. Regardless of

the choices made by man, God's plan moves forward, and He will be victorious.

Jacob was born grasping his brother's heel. When Jacob was older and wiser, tired and injured from a long night of struggle, he once again grasped Someone. This time he wouldn't let go. God changed Jacob's name to Israel that morning, and this is the "Israel" that represents God's children.

Assuming that being a third-, fourth-, or even fifth-generation Adventist or the child of the head elder or a relative of the conference president makes us well-equipped to be saved, many of us have slumbered and let our lamps run out of oil. Many mistakenly believe that if they are a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, are able to recite the 28 fundamental beliefs, faithfully deposit money in the offering plate, and murmur "Amen" at the right time during the sermon, their redemption is "locked-in." However, the Bible makes it clear that only those who grasp hold of Christ and refuse to let go will be "chosen" by God.

### ***A Fair Deal? (Rom. 9:14–24; John 12:44–50)***

Although the Ishmaelites and the Edomites (sons of Esau) were not called to act as guardians of God's truth, they certainly were not excluded from salvation. Pharaoh was given ten opportunities to admit God's sovereignty and yield to His will before his fate was sealed. God does not choose who will be saved and who will be lost. Whether or not to accept salvation is an individual's choice.

"Every soul is elected who will work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. He is elected who will put on the armor and fight the good fight of faith. He is elected who will watch unto prayer, who will search the Scriptures, and who will flee from temptation. He is elected who will have faith continually, and who will be obedient to every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. The *provisions* of redemption are free to all; the *results* of redemption will be enjoyed by those who have complied with the conditions."\*

### ***By Faith Alone (Rom. 9:25–33)***

Some might have a little trouble with Paul's reference to Christ as a "stumbling block." But Paul knew from experience that encountering Christ's love and mercy would result in one of two actions: (1) believing in and accepting Christ as your Savior; (2) rejecting Christ in favor of your own plan of salvation. Frequently quoting from Scripture, Paul made it clear that God's plan of redemption always had been open to everyone. Failure resulted from thinking one could work out his or her own salvation. Success could only come from surrendering one's will and believing that righteousness was attained only by faith in God's grace.

### ***REACT***

1. What do you need to change in your life to avoid repeating the mistakes of the Jews in regard to salvation?
2. If denominational affiliation is not required for salvation, why be a Seventh-day Adventist?

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\* *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 208.

## Testimony *Saved by Royal Ancestry?*

Rom 9:8

Paul clearly states that he was set aside by God to be the apostle to the Gentiles. He nevertheless had a great burden for the Jews. This is clearly revealed in verse 3 when he says, “I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh” (NRSV).

### “The great Teacher rolls back the curtain.”

Paul is burdened because, although the people of Israel had great privileges as a nation, they did not fulfill God’s singular purpose for them. “Had Israel been true to God, He could have accomplished His purpose through their honor and exaltation. If they had walked in the ways of obedience, He would have made them ‘high above all nations which He hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honor.’ ‘All people of the earth,’ said Moses, ‘shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee.’ ‘The nations which shall hear all these statutes’ shall say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ Deut. 26:19; 28:10; 4:6. But because of their unfaithfulness, God’s purpose could be wrought out only through continued adversity and humiliation.”<sup>1</sup>

“In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the great Teacher rolls back the curtain, showing that God is the foundation of all faith, all goodness, all mercy. . . .

“The Jews claimed to have descended from Abraham, but by failing to do the works of Abraham, they proved that they were not true children of his. Only those who are spiritually in harmony with him are reckoned as true descent. Christ recognized the beggar [Lazarus] as one whom Abraham will take into the very heart of friendship, although he belonged to a class looked upon by men as inferior.”<sup>2</sup>

Obedience to God’s will is what made Abraham God’s friend, and nothing less is required of modern day sons and daughters of Abraham. “Abraham’s unquestioning obedience was one of the most striking instances of faith and reliance upon God to be found in the Sacred Record. . . . Just such faith and confidence as Abraham had the messengers of God need today.”<sup>3</sup>

### **REACT**

Like literal Israel, has God given us any special privileges and responsibility as the Seventh-day Adventist Church? If yes, what are they?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 28.

2. *This Day With God*, p. 183.

3. *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 133.

Rom. 9:30–33

## How-to God's Plan Versus Choice

When God created Eden for Adam and Eve, He wanted them to enjoy eternal bliss. Unfortunately, Adam and Eve chose to allow sin into their home by disregarding God's command. Read Genesis 6:5, 6.

### The choices we make daily determine our destiny.

Although God was saddened by people's choices and even allowed the Flood to destroy the earth, He did not completely cast off humankind. He appropriated a certain number of them to Himself. Through Abraham, He chose the Jews. He chose them because He loved them, not because they were the greatest in number (Deut. 7:7). He chose Israel because of the covenant He made with their ancestor Abraham, the father of faith. Through faith and obedience, Israel was to be the source of blessing to the whole world. Read Acts 13:47. God's choosing did not guarantee salvation, and neither did it exclude the Gentiles (read "everybody else"). His choice is accompanied by a personal choice. Perhaps no chapter in the Bible makes this reality of salvation plainer than Romans 9. Especially note verses 30–33. Even today, God is inviting young and old alike to be "His own special people" (1 Pet. 2:9, NRSV). The choices we make daily determine our destiny. So how can we make choices that will enable us to accept God's invitation? Following are six questions that can help us:\*

1. How will my choice help me to witness for Christ? (1 Cor. 9:19–22).
2. Which choice will help me to do my best? (1 Cor. 9:25).
3. Which of the choices I face go against God's commands or principles? (1 Cor. 10:12).
4. Which choices show loving concern for others? Which are selfish? (1 Cor. 10:28–31).
5. Which choice will glorify God? (1 Cor. 10:31).
6. Will my choice cause someone else to sin? (1 Cor. 10:32).

God's power of knowing the future and fashioning His purposes accordingly may leave us feeling we have no personal choices to make. Nothing could be further from the truth. Well before they were born (Rom. 9:11), God knew that Esau would sell his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of soup. Esau took his blessings for granted and refused to wrestle with God's way for his life. They both had choices in the matter that informed the outcome of their lives. God's salvation is for all; but accepting His salvation is a personal choice, which only you can make.

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\* *Life Application Study Bible*, NIV (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1991), p. 2079.

Opinion  
*The Puppet King*

Rom. 9:18;  
Exodus 7–12

I think Pharaoh got the short end of the stick. Romans 9:18 makes me think he was an unsuspecting pawn held fast in the clutches of God, forced like a marionette to play his role in continuing to enslave the children of Israel no matter what plagues the Lord brought to his land. Pharaoh didn't really have a choice. Or did he?

Read Exodus 9:13, 17. God knew that Pharaoh's heart was hard. Before the plagues even began, He told Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is unyielding" (Exod. 7:14, NIV). God chose to use Pharaoh's unrepentant spirit to allow His glory and power to be known throughout Egypt. Pharaoh had the choice to use his powerful position for good, but he refused. God used him in spite of this, but not in a way Pharaoh liked.

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### Pharaoh didn't really have a choice. Or did he?

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God is infinitely wise and powerful. He uses this power and wisdom to convey His glory in order that all might be saved. The Bible reminds us that God "is not slow in keeping his promise. . . . He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9, NIV). He gives all of us the opportunity to come to Him for salvation. "In the past we also were foolish. We did not obey, we were wrong, and we were slaves to many things our bodies wanted and enjoyed. We spent our lives doing evil and being jealous. People hated us, and we hated each other. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior was shown, he saved us because of his mercy. It was not because of good deeds we did to be right with him. He saved us through the washing that made us new people through the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:3–5, NCV).

Like Pharaoh, some of us harden our hearts and decide to go our own way. God loves us and desires all to be saved, but He will not force us to give our hearts to Him. Once we truly decide that His way is best, He will "break" the hardness of our hearts (Ezek. 11:19; 36:25–27; Ps. 51:17) and fill us with His spirit, so that we can obtain His gift of salvation.

### **REACT**

1. What does it mean for God to have sovereign power?
2. How has your viewpoint of Romans 9 changed from the beginning of the week to now?
3. Explain how we really have a choice in our destiny.

Romans 9

## Exploration *Salvation and Identity*

### CONCLUDE

*Salvation. Redemption.* There's nothing we can do to earn them; and there's nothing about any one of us that entitles us to them. Indeed, salvation is only possible because our Creator loved us and chose us, despite our brokenness. If we ever think that our relationship with God makes us better than another struggling sinner, we run the risk of God someday telling us, "Sorry, I never knew you." God's love should ever humble us and make us eager to share the truth and love we have found in Him.

### CONSIDER

- Writing a letter to God expressing your gratitude for what He's done for you and your commitment to serve Him according to your gifts.
- Creating a "spiritual genealogy" by tracing how your ancestor's spiritual lives and the spiritual lives of others who've impacted you have shaped your own life.
- Playing the hymn "Redeemed!" on your favorite musical instrument.
- Meditating on the cost Jesus paid for our redemption and on why He'd focus His attention on such unsatisfactory subjects.
- Throwing a party to celebrate what God has done in your life.
- Painting a picture of the story of the woman who anointed Jesus' feet (Luke 7:36–50).
- Listing some of the misconceptions about salvation.
- Meditating on what has made Jesus a "stumbling stone" (Rom. 9:30–33) to so many people.

### CONNECT

George Knight, *Walking With Paul Through the Book of Romans* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 2002); Woodrow Whidden, *Ellen White on Salvation* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 1995); Jacques Doukhan, *The Mystery of Israel* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 2004).