

SLOW FOOD BIBLE STUDIES: Romans 9-11 (25 studies with summary)

9:1-5 Paul says he feels very strongly indeed about a particular problem connected with his fellow-Jews. What is that problem? *Exod 32:32; Isa 53:3; 1 Th 2:15-16.*

9:6-9 Why is Israel's line of descent through Isaac so important? *Gen 21:12; Jn 1:13; Heb 11:17-19.*

9:10-13 What does the story of Jacob and Esau tell us about why God chooses some people rather than others? *Gen 25:19-26; Mal 1:2-3; 2 Tim 2:19.*

9:14-18 How does Paul use two stories about Moses to illustrate the principle that God alone chooses who qualifies for his mercy? *Exod 32:32-33; 33:19; Exod 9:16; Mt 20:15*

9:19-21 Is human freewill an illusion? *Isa 29: 15-16; 45:9-12; Jer 18:4.*

9:22-24 Does God deliberately exclude some people from his mercy? *Isa 43:7; Ezek 33:11; 2 Pet 3:9.*

9:25-26 How do God's words through Hosea alter our view of God? *Hos 1:6-10; 2:23; Isa 49:6.*

9:27-29 What do Isaiah's words about the 'remnant' imply for the nation of Israel?
Gen 22:17; Isa 1:9; 10:21-23; Zeph 3:9-13.

9:30-33 Why have the Gentiles succeeded in finding God's righteousness whereas the Jews have missed it? *Isa 8:14; 28:16; Ps 118:22; Jn 5:39-40.*

10:1-4 What fundamental mistake have the Jews made? *Rom 1:16-17; Gal 3:7-14.*

10:5-8 How difficult is it to discover and obey God's will? *Deut 30:11-14; Mt 11:28-30; 1 Jn 5:3.*

10:9-10 What does anyone have to do to find salvation? *Jn 20:31; 1 Cor 15:1-4; Mt 10:32; Phil 2:5-11.*

10:11-13 But surely my religious background matters? *Jn 1:12-13; Acts 2:21, 39; Rev 7:9-10.*

10:14-15 Has preaching had its day? *Ps 68:11; Isa 6:8; Acts 8:4; 1 Cor 1:18-21.*

10:16-17 Why don't more people believe? Particularly Jews? *Isa 52:13-53:1; Lk 14:15-24; 15:25-32.*

10:18-21 Paul quotes four OT texts in quick succession. What do they show (1) about God (2) about his chosen people? *Deut 32:4-5; Mt 13:44; 2 Cor 3:14.*

11:1-5 Has God rejected his original people in order to replace them with a new people entirely (the Christian church)? *1 Sam 12:22; Jer 31:31-37; Zech 13:8-9.*

11:6 What is the fundamental principle on which God has always operated? How important is this to me? *Acts 11:17-18; 15:6-11; Rom 4:4-5.*

11:7-10 Could I be so fixated on my own system of faith that I become an enemy of God?
2 Sam 15:31; Mt 6:22-23; Gal 3:1-2

11:11-16 Has God completely rejected the Jews as his chosen people? *Mt 21:33-44; Acts 13:38-48.*

11:17-21 Are Christians now God's favourite people? *Jn 15:6-7; Rom 2:6-16; Rev 2:4-5.*

11:22-24 Does God give those who reject him a second chance?
Lk 22:61-62, 24:34; 1 Cor 1:26-31; Heb 3:12-14.

11:25-27 Is Israel going to find her Messiah?
Isa 59:20-21 and 27:9; Ezek 11:19-20; Hos 2:14-23; 2 Cor 3:14-18.

11:28-32 How does Paul deal with the problem of continuing Jewish unbelief and opposition?
Num 23:19; Deut 4:31; Isa 54:1-10; Zech 12:10, 13:1; Jn 11:49-52

11:33-36 Can we fully know God's plans? *Deut 29:29; Job 42:1-6; Isa 40:13-14.*

Summary of Paul's train of thought in Romans 9-11

9:1-5 Paul feels very strongly about the failure of his fellow-Jews to recognise their Messiah when he eventually turned up. So are they still his chosen people? Or have they blown it once too often? **9:6-9** Israel's line of descent through Isaac is important, because Isaac is a child of promise and therefore all who believe the promise are children of God. This means that 'Israel' is not a racial or genetic descriptor but a spiritual one. **9:10-13** The story of Jacob and Esau shows that in his choice of some people rather than others, God doesn't proceed according to human assumptions. He exercises his own sovereign prerogative, which may be surprising and even shocking. **9:14-18** The stories of the golden calf and Pharaoh demonstrate that if God acted according to strict justice, no-one would stand a chance. Therefore he has a perfect right to choose who he will pardon. **9:19-21** Human freewill is not an illusion, because God created us as responsible beings. Pottery jugs can't answer back, but we can. Yet we have all chosen to reject our Maker, so if he spares us it is according to his mercy, not according to our rights. **9:22-24** God deliberately excludes noone from his mercy – in fact he is far more patient than we have any right to expect, in the light of his declared sentence on human sin. We were heading for wrath, but we got mercy; isn't that good reason to praise him? **9:25-26** Hosea helps us to see that so far from God rejecting his own family, he widens it to include those who have previously not been part of it at all. **9:27-29** Isaiah's teachings about the 'remnant' imply that amid the general unfaithfulness of Israel, only a few will remain faithful. But they will be a 'seed' which contains the hope of the salvation of the future Israel. **9:30-33** The Gentiles have succeeded in finding God's righteousness; but the Jews have missed it, because they have tried to establish their own righteousness by works of the law, instead of coming to Christ by faith. Rather than recognising Jesus as the foundation-stone of the new Jerusalem, they have rejected him and fallen flat on their faces.

10:1-4 The fundamental mistake made by the Jews is that instead of asking God what is his way of salvation, they have singlemindedly pursued their own ideas of how to be acceptable to him, which is to fulfil the law – not realising that Christ alone has done this for them. **10:5-8** In fact it's not difficult to discover and obey God's will; but human nature makes out that it is, and tries to find excuses for not doing it. **10:9-10** As far as finding salvation is concerned, we don't have to do anything at all! Accepting Christ as Lord, believing the reality of his death and resurrection, confessing our new allegiance – the emphasis now is not on what we may have done or not done, but on what God has done in Christ. **10:11-13** Our religious background isn't taken into account, because the gospel isn't exclusive, it's inclusive; the words 'all', 'everyone', 'anyone', are insistently repeated. It's not our past, it's God's future that counts now. **10:14-15** Preaching is absolutely essential, otherwise how would people come to know about Christ? The good news has to be spread by word of mouth, and that usually involves Christians going places. Foot-and-mouth is infectious! **10:16-17** The tragedy is that while many, many come to faith through hearing about Christ, some people who are steeped in a religious tradition won't accept the scandal of a crucified Messiah. They can't believe that God would do it this way. **10:18-21** Paul quotes four OT texts in quick succession to prove that Israel's deliberate rejection of God has been going on ever since Moses. It's not that they haven't heard or understood; they have turned to other 'gods'. So God is going to do what any jealous lover might do: make them jealous by revealing himself to Gentile nations who haven't the knowledge of him that the Jews have.

11:1-5 It isn't a question of replacing the Jews with the Christian church. Paul repeats his theme of the 'faithful few' (9:27). Elijah had to be told that he wasn't the only one staying faithful to God. Paul himself is among the Jews who have accepted Jesus as their Messiah. God's plan has never envisaged the total abandonment of his original covenant people. **11:6** The fundamental principle on which God has always operated is that of 'grace': no-one can claim membership of his people as of right, but only because God's love has reached out to include those who are completely undeserving. **11:7-10** The danger for the religious person, Jew or whoever, is that our version of the faith may blind us to God's way of doing things, and our 'wisdom' turns to folly. **11:11-16** God has not rejected the Jews as his chosen people, because they were chosen to bless the world through being a holy people. If others produce the fruit they should have produced, maybe the Jews will become jealous and accept the salvation that was theirs all along! God's original plan will succeed after all, with the whole world sharing in the Jews' blessing. **11:17-21** Paul uses the olive tree analogy to abolish any idea that Christians are now God's favourite people. This analogy shows that branches, whether original to the tree or grafted in later, depend on the sap from the roots to flourish. This sap is the life of God operating through faith and obedience; if it ceases to flow, branches wither and die. This is cause for humility, not arrogance, because God has no favourites. **11:22-24** As far as a second chance is concerned, God is both harder and softer than you would ever believe. He has a total antipathy to sin and unbelief, and a limitless generosity to the undeserving. He can take dead branches and restore them to life again, especially if it was their natural tree originally. God's speciality is new life and a second chance – as long as we take it. **11:25-27** Indeed, Israel is going to find her Messiah. Scripture makes it clear that Israel's blindness is only partial and temporary. Yes, Gentiles are coming to Christ in great numbers; but then, Israel too as a whole will find her Redeemer; she will enter into the full blessings of the covenant; her sins will be forgiven. **11:28-32** Yes, it is true that the Jews are still fighting against God. But take the long view: God's covenant with Abraham & Co still stands. Because the Jews broke it, you Gentiles were allowed in – but all this is by the mercy of God, because neither side deserved anything but a long jail sentence. And one day the Jews too, as a nation, are going to discover God's faithfulness to his original intentions. As I say, Israel will find her Redeemer and Messiah. **11:33-36** We must not assume that we can second-guess God. His knowledge and wisdom are way ahead of ours, and he's not going to take advice from anyone. He decides everything in time and eternity. Praise him for his glory and grace!