One of the things that is spoken more of and the core of this chapter 9 of Romans is about God's election and His will. Here we find as well the story of Jacob and Esau being mentioned.

“And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaak (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, “The older shall serve the younger.” As it is written, “Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.“ “ Romans 9:11-13

We see the election of God shown in some of the verses of Romans 9. We see as well the situation of Pharaoh in v17 and v18.

“For the scripture says to the Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show my power in you, and that my name may be declared in all the earth.” Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills hardens.” Romans 9:17,18

We need to see as well what kind of persons were Esau and Pharaoh. We have to admit anyway that there will be always some mystery about the election of God, but we know that if He hardens the heart of someone or softens it, it is always with a purpose. It says that “He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills hardens.” The phrase “He wills” has to be for a reason. When someone wants or wills something is with a reason, it is for some purpose. God doesn’t do it just blindly.

Because “to believe” or to have a softened heart is always His work. In the same way, to have a hard heart, it is because, He didn’t soften it, and He can harden it even more in certain cases. The work of faith in someone’s heart is His gift. We have still to be very careful when we give an answer to someone of type “If you don’t believe it is because God hasn’t softened your heart and He has to chose you first. (In the same way, we need to be careful when saying to someone that He needs to do something in order to believe or be chosen)

The sense of this type of answer is that the person needs to come aware that only God can help him, that it depends on Him. That He gives something to someone when He wants, the way He wants and as much as He wants. The persons need to know that God is sovereign, that He is above all. It doesn’t depend on me, but on Him. It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but we can rather say, “teach me Lord how to run, because I don’t know the right way.” This is the way and the purpose with which we need to give an answer, if someone is inquiring about the topic.

We also need to see to whom is that God has hardened the heart. We speak about Pharaoh that has already started in the wrong way, not taking heed to Moses since the beginning. Then at the end God has hardened His heart. (I believe that from the sixth plague and on, it starts saying that God has hardened his heart) The fact is that he already had his chances, but didn’t accept them.

We see also that Esau despised his birth right by selling it. (Genesis 25:29-34) We see that He never gave the right value to what was given to him by God. Jacob instead received the blessing from his father Isaac through deceit. (Genesis 27:1-40) Who lost from this deceit was no other, but Esau who wasn’t appreciating this blessing in the right way. After this moment, there was another situation in which Jacob had to fight with God the whole night to obtain His blessing. (Genesis 32:22-30) Why did he do it, if his father has blessed him already? I guess because by the way he achieved it before, he wasn’t sure about it and also because he wasn’t satisfied, he wasn’t conformed with what he had already. He wanted more. He was desiring it. This is the way in which he was giving value to what comes from God.

This now is a mystery. Isn’t it that God already knew their hearts and the attitude they were going to have beforehand?

We don’t know clearly, but one thing is certain – those two persons were not the same. We can see somehow that there is also an attitude in the heart that probably stays behind the hardening of someone. We can also notice that sometimes the most hardened persons are those who after being given more opportunities, have rejected them. It is also the persons that have been listening the gospel for all their life without accepting it. That obviously mustn’t discourage us of still giving them the good news.

Many times we think to receive, because we ask or do a lot, but how are we going to receive if we keep on asking or doing something in **our own** **way**. “You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it in your pleasures.” James 4:3

If I know for example that I don’t have any money to buy a bread and I go to the baker and I know that is entirely up to Him to give it to me, meaning that it is not my right to have it, then wouldn’t I ask Him with a profound respect, fear and supplication? Just imagine that you haven’t been eating for a while you know that is up to Him to give it to you and you don’t have any money to buy it. How would you ask then? It is according to His way. We need to be under His will.

“So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy” Romans 9:16

There is nothing wrong in willing or running, but as we said before, we must see the purpose and the intention with which we ask or will something. The Bible also tells us to be continuously asking. Jesus told His disciples about the parable of the persisting widow as well. Sometimes we keep on asking, but we don’t find an answer. Nevertheless we still need to carry on. It is a process and in this process God moulds our hearts. Sometimes the silence of God changes our hearts. In this silence we learn that something is not right in us and we need a change. Our heart finds its way to God. It starts asking with more faith and more earnestly.

Another example that we see here in chapter 9 and one of the reasons for which it was written is the nation of Israel.

“What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at the stumbling stone. As it is written: “Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offence, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.”“

Romans 9:30-32

We see that they were not looking the righteousness in the right way, with faith, with humility, but they were looking their own righteousness taking them to pride that is unbearable in the eyes of the Lord. He can not accept just anything. It is against His nature and His being. He can not accept someone’s pride. The work of faith is humble, it is made by Him who came as a man to suffer and die for us. What greater example than this we can have?

“For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, **and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.“**  Romani 10:2,3

Here we see that the matter is not only about the zeal, the desire, but how is this desire as well, which is our attitude. We need to be aware of something. In the word is written that He will not despise a **broken and a contrite heart**. Many times this needs to be our condition so that we can receive something. The fact is that most of men do not allow this to happen to them. We do not allow God to accomplish His work in us and to bring us into that condition. We prefer to feel strong and we do not allow His light to show us our true condition. Only when He works in us, our heart can be broken and it can be accepted by Him. He uses His Holy Spirit to work in us for this purpose.

What the nation of Israel was doing, was to establish their own righteousness. They believed that was the way, because that was also exalting their own capabilities. What they didn’t do was to submit themselves to God’s righteousness. In this chapter of Romans we see as well us compared to a clay and Him being the potter. (Romans 9:21)

If He is the potter then we need to leave ourselves to be moulded by Him. That is the only way. “Ask me for anything Lord, but not for this one.“ Many times this is the answer of our attitude when He wants to mould us. How hard is sometimes for us to leave us in His hands, that we leave our own strength, understanding or ego aside. Everything that we are as persons, everything that sometimes disturbs. Only in this way, with a broken heart, we can enter and be accepted by Him. This explains why certain people need to come to their limits, so that they can surrender in the arms of the Lord and open their hearts to Him.

By all of this we perceive that is His way that counts, His will to work in our life. If I for example want to prepare something according to certain recipe and there is written down a certain ingredient or way to prepare something, but I still insist that I know better and I do it as I think it for better, then obviously in the most of the times it’s not going to come out as it is supposed, right?

This is only an example that of course we can not compare with God, but we can make an idea out of it.

Once, at the question of someone saying: “How can I seek for God, so that He can answer me?” I told him: “Seek for God, but know that **He gives.”** Only He can give, and this is not because we have looked for Him and that’s it. We have to know however that is important to seek Him, because the word says so, but we need to know that He gives in the time and in the way He wants. And we mustn’t think that is only for the fact that we looked for Him. What is also important is that until we haven’t found or received something we mustn’t behave as we already have.