

## Romans 9:1-33

Certainly, there had been a great ingathering of precious Jewish souls on the day of Pentecost, and the Lord **"added to the church daily such as should be saved."**

However, for the most part, Israel remained steadfast in its rejection of God's Son.

At the temple, the sacrifices were still being offered, and the elaborate ritual of Judaism continued just as if the Messiah had never come.

Certainly, the Jewish Christians, living in Rome, would have questions.

What would be the future of God's ancient people, their brethren according to the flesh?

What about the Abrahamic Covenant, and all those other unconditional promises God had made?

For instance, what about Psalm 72:5, which says, **"They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations."**

Had God's plans been thrown into disarray by Israel's rejection?

Such questions needed to be answered, and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they were.

Beginning at Romans Chapter 9 and running right through to the end of Chapter 11, Paul addresses these searching questions.

However, his first task was to clarify his own position.

After all, the Jews had been his main  
opponents in the propagation of the  
Gospel.

Did he hate them as much as they hated him?

The answer is found in Romans 9:1-3: **"I say  
the truth in Christ, I lie not, my  
conscience also bearing me witness in  
the Holy Ghost,**

**<sup>2</sup> That I have great heaviness and  
continual sorrow in my heart.**

**<sup>3</sup> For I could wish that myself were  
accursed from Christ for my brethren,  
my kinsmen according to the flesh."**

Yes, Paul loved his people with an intensity  
only equalled by one other man in  
history.

In Exodus 32:31-32, we find Moses pleading  
for Israel --- **"Oh, this people have  
sinned a great sin, and have made them**

gods of gold.

**32: Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin ---; (and then he pauses, no doubt with tears streaming down his face) and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written."**

And so it was with Paul.

There was no animosity in his heart, only a  
**"great heaviness and continual sorrow."**

Who would have thought this privileged people would have squandered such unparalleled opportunities?

As V 4-5 tell us, they were the people "---  
**to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;**

<sup>5</sup> **Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came,**

**who is over all, God blessed for ever.  
Amen."**

What was Paul referring to when he said "**to whom pertaineth the adoption**"?

Had God actually claimed Israel as His son?  
Well, yes, He had.

And in His challenge to Pharaoh, He made  
that point very clear.

Exodus 4:22-23 "**--- Thus saith the LORD,  
Israel is my son, even my firstborn:  
23: And I say unto thee, Let my son go,  
that he may serve me.**"

And then Paul speaks of "**the glory,**" no  
doubt referring to the Shekinah glory  
seen in the pillar of cloud and of fire  
that led them.

Also, there were "**the covenants.**"

First of all, we have the Abrahamic Covenant  
concerning the nation and its land.

And then, of course, the Covenant of Law  
given to Moses.

Also, there is the Davidic Covenant,  
assuring King David of an everlasting  
throne.

And last, but certainly not least, there is  
a new covenant, found in Jeremiah  
31:33-37 that assures Israel of an  
endless existence and ultimate  
blessings.

And that's not to mention the most blessed  
promise of all.

Yes, the very Son of God would dwell among  
them.

He would be born of a Jewish maiden, raised  
in a Jewish home, and would minister  
specifically, and almost exclusively,  
to **"the lost sheep of the house of  
Israel."**

So in view of all these benefits, what about the tragic reception God's Son received at their hands?

Had God's eternal purposes and sovereign will been derailed?

No, God's sovereign will can never be derailed.

However, as we will soon discover, God's special promises were never meant to include all of Abraham's natural descendents, nor did they include the entire nation of Israel.

Christ made that point quite apparent when He told the Jews who were opposing Him, **"Ye are of your father the devil."**

And that same truth is brought out in the chapter before us.

Romans 9:6-8 **"Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are**

not all Israel, which are of Israel:

<sup>7</sup> Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

<sup>8</sup> That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."

No, "--- they are not all Israel, which are of Israel."

And what is true of the nation was also true of Abraham's immediate family.

Certainly Ishmael, who had been born of Sarah's hand maid, was a son of Abraham, but he was not the son of promise.

And after Sarah's death, Abraham's second wife gave him six more sons.



But none of them would inherit the Abrahamic Covenant.

No, Romans 9:9 is quite specific: "--- **this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.**"

Yes, "**Sarah shall have a son**" by the name of Isaac, and only he will inherit the Abrahamic Covenant.

And this would be true of the next generation.

Only one man would receive God's special blessing.

Romans 9:10-13 "**And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac;**

<sup>11</sup> **(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according**

to election might stand, not of works,  
but of him that calleth;)

<sup>12</sup> It was said unto her, The elder  
shall serve the younger.

<sup>13</sup> As it is written, Jacob have I  
loved, but Esau have I hated."

So then, it was God's sovereign will that

**"The elder shall serve the younger."**

And by the way, God's pronouncement went  
completely against the established  
custom of the day.

Yes, according to man's tradition, Esau  
should have inherited God's blessing,  
not Jacob.

Now, when you think about it, it would have  
been so easy for God's will to coincide  
with man's custom.

After all, both of the children were  
together in Rebecca's womb, and Jacob  
could have come out first.

But he didn't.

God made sure that Jacob was the younger,  
and then He overrode man's tradition.

And not only was God's decision not  
influenced by man's tradition, it was  
unaffected by man's performance.

As V 11 says, it had been settled long  
before the children had done any good  
or evil, **"that the purpose of God  
according to election might stand, not  
of works, but of him that calleth."**

So the bottom line is this.

God's actions are determined by His own  
counsels, and are unaffected by any  
outside influences.

And when you consider the fact that God is the Creator of all things, this shouldn't be a surprise.

But, what about V 13 which says, "**Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated**"?

Was Esau living under a cloud of God's hatred through no fault of his own?

Certainly not, and there's no real reason to make such an assumption.

First of all, how do we know V 13 falls into the same category as V 12?

And even if it did, there's always the matter of translation to be considered.

Actually, the English word hate has been used to translate several different words in the original text which express different levels of intensity.

In this case, the original word is a much milder form, and could be translated loved less.

Let me give you a couple of examples where this particular word has been translated hate.

Matthew 6:24 **"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (or money) ."**

So, must we hate money in order to serve God?

Certainly we shouldn't love money, or anything else for that matter, more than God.

However, money does have its uses if it is kept in its proper place.

And this same word is used in Luke 14:26 ---

**"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."**

Does Jesus require His followers to hate their family and be teetering on the verge of suicide in order to follow Him?

Of course not!

It's simply a case of loving their family and their lives less than the Master.

And ,in like manner, the moment God favoured Jacob by giving him the blessing, He loved Esau less.

However, materially speaking, and that's all Esau really cared about, God treated him just as well as his brother.

In fact, Genesis 36:7 says, "--- **their riches were more than that they might dwell together; and the land wherein they were strangers could not bear them because of their cattle.**"

But the fact still remains, there could only be one Chosen People, and God chose Jacob for that honour.

And isn't that the prerogative of a Creator? Paul says it is.

Romans 9:14-16 **"What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.**

<sup>15</sup> **For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.**

<sup>16</sup> **So then it is not of him that**

**willeth, nor of him that runneth, but  
of God that sheweth mercy."**

Clearly, the first question that must be  
answered is --- **"Is there  
unrighteousness with God?"**

And it is a very good question, isn't it?

After all, if God isn't righteous, who is?

And that's not to say, as some people

affirm, everything that God does is  
righteous, simply because He does it.

No, such a conclusion would destroy the very  
concept of righteousness.

Of course, man doesn't have the authority or  
the capacity to set such a standard,  
but God does, and God has.

And amazingly, God allowed Abraham to  
question Him on His righteousness.

Genesis 18:25 **"That be far from thee to do  
after this manner, to slay the**



**righteous with the wicked: and that the  
righteous should be as the wicked, that  
be far from thee: Shall not the Judge  
of all the earth do right?"**

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At this point I would like to discuss a  
subject that actually isn't covered in  
this chapter, but it does have a  
bearing on it.

It is the interaction between God's  
sovereign will and man's free will.

And more to the point, does God's sovereign  
will eliminate man's free will, and  
especially when it applies to his  
ability to accept or reject God's  
salvation?

Well, the answer is an emphatic no. God's  
sovereign will does not eliminate man's  
free will.

And that conclusion is based on the fact  
that both are upheld in scripture.  
For instance, the very chapter we are  
studying makes numerous references to  
God's sovereign will.

On the other hand, there is no lack of  
scripture to verify the fact that all  
men have been given free access to  
God's wonderful salvation.

For instance, in Matthew 11:28, Jesus  
extends His invitation to all men, not  
just a select few --- **"Come unto me,  
all ye that labour and are heavy laden,  
and I will give you rest."**

And we are assured, in 2 Peter 3:9 that the  
God **"is longsuffering to us-ward, not  
willing that any should perish, but  
that all should come to repentance."**

No, God hasn't programmed mankind like so many puppets, irrevocably locking them into eternal salvation or damnation.

We touched briefly on this subject in our last lesson, and in Romans 8:29, we discovered that God foreknew, or knew before hand, how each man or woman would choose.

And on that basis, He predestined believers to be "**conformed to the image of his Son**".

Yes, in spite of the path that might lie before him, the believer has been assured of his final condition.

He has been predestined to be like Christ. On the other hand, no one has been locked into his eternal destination.

Where he spends eternity is entirely his own choice.

Now someone might say, "If that's true, then  
God is only a spectator, taking His cue  
from man.

Doesn't that put man in the driver's seat,  
rather than God?

Well, yes, it would if man's free choice  
hadn't been God's idea.

But it was.

Even though He knew Adam and Eve would  
disobey Him and plunge the entire human  
race into sin, He gave them a free  
choice.

Yes, God gave them a free choice, even  
though He knew their decision would  
necessitate the sacrifice of His own  
dear Son.

He had created man in His own image, and  
that would be part of it.

No, God isn't interested in pre-programmed puppets.

There can be no heart of love if there is no heart all.

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And now we must get back to Romans Chapter 9.

V 15 **"For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."**

Or, in other words, God reserves the right to show mercy on the undeserving sinners.

Let me give you the context under which these words were spoken.

In Moses' absence, the children of Israel had completely forsaken the God who had delivered them from slavery.

And not only that, they had replaced Him  
with an idol.

Or to put it in their own words --- **"These  
be thy gods, O Israel, which brought  
thee up out of the land of Egypt."**

Now you can't get any worse than that.

Not surprisingly, God was ready to  
annihilate the entire nation, and  
replace them with Moses' descendants.

And that wouldn't have been a violation of  
the Abrahamic Covenant because Moses'  
descendants were sons of Abraham also.

But in the end, God showed mercy on an  
undeserving nation.

Certainly, 3000 men died as a result of  
their sin, but God didn't destroy the  
entire nation--simply because **"--- it  
is not of him that willeth, nor of him**

**that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Romans 9:16**

And then Paul points to another example in which God did not show mercy.

V 17-18 **"For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.**

**<sup>18</sup> Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."**

Now, I don't think anyone should have a problem with God's righteous judgment upon Egypt.

They got exactly what they deserved.

However, we might be having a problem with V 17 which says, **"Even for this same**

**purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth."**

Did God create Pharaoh for the express purpose of condemning him to hell? And for that matter, has God created anybody for the express purpose of eternal punishment?

Certainly not!

And you will look in vain to find the word created in V 17.

No, God didn't make Pharaoh a blasphemer and the challenger of His power --- that was his own idea.

However, God did raise him up to the position of ruler over Egypt.



In the providence of God, he could have been a herdsman or a merchant with little or no influence on the world around him.

But God raised him up to a position of prominence in order that his evil choices might highlight His power, and declare God's name **"throughout all the earth."**

And might I say, this confrontation became frontline news!

Listen to Rahab's words spoken 40 years after the event.

Joshua 2:9-10 **"--- I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you.**

**10: For we have heard how the LORD**

**dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt---."**

Yes, because of Pharaoh's actions and reactions, Israel would face a morally defeated enemy.

However, that still doesn't explain the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, does it? Did he really have no control over his responses?

Well, yes, and no.

If you read Exodus Chapter 5 to Chapter 12 quite carefully, you will discover that in the first five plagues, Pharaoh hardened his own heart.

One example of this is found in Exodus 8:32:

**"And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go."**

Yes, it was his choice.

And he hardened his heart in the face of  
insurmountable evidence.

And not only that, but every time God sent a  
plague, He gave Pharaoh a chance to  
repent.

It is only after Pharaoh's repeated  
hardening of his own heart that we read  
in Exodus 9:12, "**And the LORD hardened  
the heart of Pharaoh.**"

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So what is the point of these two  
illustrations that Paul sets before us?  
It's simply this.

God is not bound by man's performance.

He still reserves the right to have "**mercy  
on whom he will have mercy, and whom he  
will he hardeneth.**"

And this has been the case throughout  
history.

There had to be a traitor to identify Jesus in the garden, but it didn't have to be Judas.

He made his own choice, based on the love of money.

And we all know there had to be a governor to unjustly condemn the Son of God.

So then, was Pilate simply a puppet, created to do God's will and then be condemned for it?

Absolutely not!

With his eyes wide open, and knowing full well that **"the chief priests had delivered him for envy,"** he condemned an innocent man.

It was simply an expediency to protect his own political career.

And there will always be evil men who will willingly step up to the plate in order to further their own agenda.

And in doing so, they unwittingly further God's agenda.

**"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." Psalm 76:10**

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Romans 9:19 **"Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?"**

This is somewhat like the objection put forth in Romans 3:5 --- **"But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)."**

In that case, Paul gives a very logical answer to their objection --- **"God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?"**

However, in the case of Romans 9:19, he simply questions man's right to even ask such a question.

V 20-21 **Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?**

<sup>21</sup> **Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"**

No, the question is simply inappropriate.

Man, a mere creature, and for that matter a fallen creature, doesn't have the

capacity, the insight, or even the right to question God's sovereign will. It would be like the clay questioning the potter.

V 22-24 **"What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:**  
<sup>23</sup> **And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,**  
<sup>24</sup> **Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?"**

Faced with man's sin and rebellion, God's response is always governed by His own councils.

Sometimes He endures **"with much**

**longsuffering"** rather than judging an evil work immediately.

And there's more than one reason for this.

Sometimes, He is **"longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."**

On the other hand, such a delay could indicate a very different decision.

In a case where an individual will never turn from his evil ways--and don't forget, God can see the future--He may allow him to pursue his downward course unopposed.

And, **"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."** Ecclesiastes 8:11

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No doubt the Jews thought they had an exclusive right to God.

As far as they were concerned, their natural heritage had cornered the market on His blessing.

But they were wrong.

As Romans 2:28-29 says --- **"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:**

**29: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."**

So then, when Jesus visited His people, He encountered both godly and ungodly Jews.

Unfortunately, being influenced by their ungodly leaders, Israel rejected their Messiah.

However, out of their rejection, God brought blessing.

Their Messiah would become the Saviour of the world.

Quite a paradox, wasn't it?

Even their own prophets foretold this turn of events.

Romans 9:25-26 **"As he saith also in Osee, (or Hosea) I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.**

**26: And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living**

**God."** --- Of course, referring to the Gentiles.

Nevertheless, God isn't finished with the nation of Israel.

Romans 9:27-29 **"Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: 28: For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. 29: And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrhah."**

Have you ever met a resident of Sodom or Gomorrah?

No, you haven't, and you won't, but the nation of Israel will always exist. We'll talk about that in a moment, but first of all, we must consider God's plan for the Gentiles.

V 30-33 **"What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.**

<sup>31</sup> But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.

<sup>32</sup> Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;

<sup>33</sup> As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of

**offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."**

Yes, going about to establish their own righteousness, they stumbled over the very Son of God.

However, as V 27 tells us, "**a remnant shall be saved.**"

That's true of the individual, and that's true of the nation.

During this age of grace, individual Jews and individual Gentiles are being added to the bride of Christ.

But what's that part about "**Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrhah**"?

I believe God is talking about the nation of Israel here.

And, in spite of all the Adolph Hitlers in the world, God's Chosen People will always exist.

They have to, because God always keeps His promises.

Yes, after the bride of Christ has been taken home to be with her Lord, Jeremiah 31:33-37 will be fulfilled ---  
**"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:**

**32: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:**

**33: But this shall be the covenant that**

I will make with the house of Israel;  
After those days, saith the LORD, I  
will put my law in their inward parts,  
and write it in their hearts; and will  
be their God, and they shall be my  
people.

34: And they shall teach no more every  
man his neighbour, and every man his  
brother, saying, Know the LORD: for  
they shall all know me, from the least  
of them unto the greatest of them,  
saith the LORD; for I will forgive  
their iniquity, and I will remember  
their sin no more.

35: Thus saith the LORD, which giveth  
the sun for a light by day, and the  
ordinances of the moon and of the stars  
for a light by night, which divideth  
the sea when the waves thereof roar;

The LORD of hosts is his name:

36: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.

37: Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD."