



Relentless Grace: How the Gospel Changes Everything

Paul's Letter to the Romans

Session 11 – The Grief of Unbelief | Romans Chapter 9

Chapter 8 finished on such a high note. *If God is for us, who can be against us? What can separate us from the love of God?* Every obstacle Paul could imagine—and he had experienced them all—evaporated in the light of God's unwavering love. He will never let go of you!

But Paul knew, all too well, that the gospel wasn't *good news* to everyone's way of thinking. This chapter begins on a sad note for Paul. He expresses grief and navigates the questions. Why were God's chosen people, the Jewish nation, estranged from God? Was God replacing them? For the next three chapters, Paul explains that God has not abandoned His people.

Icebreaker

On a serious note, when you think of friends and loved ones who resist the gospel, which is more difficult for you?

Speaking the truth in love Persistently praying Believing they will ever come to faith

Goals for this Session:

- Discover why Paul wept for his own people.
- Consider the connection between God's sovereign purpose and longsuffering patience.
- Pray for resolve to speak the truth in love and live out the gospel in daily life.

When Wills Collide

Romans 9:1–18

Paul expresses personal anguish over Israel's rejection of Jesus.

1. **Privilege and Potential** (verses 1–5). Paul was considered an enemy by his own people for preaching the gospel. How did he feel about them?

- a. Paul thinks of the advantages and privileges that God gave to Israel from the beginning. All these blessings culminated in Jesus Himself (see Luke 4:18–21) but they rejected Him. Considering Paul's own upbringing and testimony, what kept him from being complacent or judgmental toward unbelieving Jews?

Acts 26:15–18

1 Corinthians 15:9

1 Timothy 1:12–15

- b. Can you relate with Paul? Why or why not? How would you explain your own emotions toward those who are callous or indifferent to the gospel?

2. **God's Children** (verses 6–18). Paul does a flyover of Israel's history to show salvation isn't a natural born right (verses 6–9); no one is chosen based on merit (verses 10–13); and salvation is *and always will be* an act of God's grace and mercy (verses 14–18).

- a. How does Romans 2:28–29 help you understand why Paul took time to explain that being a descendant of Abraham is not the same as inheriting God's promise to Abraham?

#wordstoknow

Greek words/terms at a glance.

mercy (eleos) A freely chosen deed of grace, motivated by love. God's grace is shown in His willingness to extend mercy instead of wrath.

harden (skleruno) Same word for *sclerosis* which describes hardening of tissue that inhibits the body from its normal function. In the NT, the result of persisting in sin and unbelief which leads to death if one doesn't repent.

- b. How does Isaiah 55:8–11 help you understand why God chose Jacob over Esau before they were even born?

Good to Know

Did God hate Esau?

While hate can express intense displeasure, in ancient culture it also was a figure of speech to indicate giving priority for one thing over another. God's actions are filled with emotion but He is not ruled or run by it. Choosing one over the other ("hating") was a righteous act of God's sovereign will.

- c. How does Titus 3:5 help you understand that salvation is an act of God's grace and mercy?

Memory Verse

As you memorize this verse, let it sink in and make it part of your prayers. Ask the Holy Spirit to examine your heart and increase your understanding.

"Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense,
and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

Romans 9:33 NKJV

Think About It . . .

Answer any, or all, of the prompts below.

Look up. What does this verse teach you about God?

Look around. What does this indicate about the world and people in general?

Look within. What does this show you about yourself?

Look ahead. Does this verse give you a reason to hope? In what way?

Look alive! Given the opportunity, how would you express the truth of this verse to someone who needs to hear it?

Vessels of Wrath and Mercy

Romans 9:19–33

Earlier, Paul anticipated critics would blame God for unfairly judging sinners (Romans 3:5). This same complaint comes back with a twist. Now Paul answers those who would blame God for unfairly extending mercy to some but not others.

1. Paul knew he would get pushback for concluding that God decides when to give or withhold mercy. Describe how he sets up this part of the discussion and answers his own question (verses 19–21).
 - a. Did Paul mean that believers should never question something they don't understand? What made questioning God inappropriate in this instance? Explain your answer.

2. In verses 22–29, Paul prompts us to make the connection between God's sovereign purpose and His longsuffering patience. There is a lot to absorb here, but see if you can distill a few simple takeaway lessons. Consider them for yourself and write your response.

Verses 22–26

Verses 27–29

3. *How the gospel changes everything.* Who are we to argue with God? The Lord’s mercies are over *all* His work (Psalm 145:9). When we remember that the Lord doesn’t want anyone to perish, but for all to repent (2 Peter 3:9) the power of the gospel is good news all over again.

a. **The gospel is incentive to pray for salvation for others.** Paul lived with grief for his Jewish kinsmen’s unbelief. He was mystified how people with all the spiritual advantages can reject Jesus—while others, blindly following their own nose, can hear the gospel and see that Jesus is who they’ve been looking for all their life. Who needs mercy? All of us. Who deserves mercy? No one. No not one.*

We have every reason to be confident in Christ (see Romans 8:31–39), but confidence without gratitude breeds complacency. Gratitude is the oxygen that fuels prayer and passion for others to know Jesus. Use this section to breathe in grace and exhale gratitude to God for your salvation.

Who are you praying for? Take time in group to pray in unity (names only, no details) for unsaved or prodigal loved ones. Acts 26:18

“It wasn’t so long ago that you were mired in that old stagnant life of sin. You let the world, which doesn’t know the first thing about living, tell you how to live. You filled your lungs with polluted unbelief, and then exhaled disobedience. We all did it, all of us doing what we felt like doing, when we felt like doing it, all of us in the same boat. It’s a wonder God didn’t lose His temper and do away with the whole lot of us. Instead, immense in mercy and with incredible love, He embraced us. He took our sin-dead lives and made us alive in Christ. He did this on His own, with no help from us! Then He picked us up and set us down in highest heaven in company with Jesus our Messiah. Now God has us where He wants us, with all the time in this world and the next to shower grace and kindness upon us in Christ Jesus.”

- Ephesians 2:1-7 (The Message)

b. **The gospel is incentive to live a surrendered life.** Pharaoh’s hard heart is what we know and remember most about him. God gave him time to repent, but Pharaoh repeatedly resisted until finally, God hardened his heart. Pharaoh stubbornly asserted his will and God’s response was *if that’s your will, more power to you.***

Consider this. If God strengthened Pharaoh’s rebellious will, won’t He also strengthen our surrendered will? When we surrender our will, God strengthens our resolve. In what way?

Matthew 26:39

Philippians 2:5–8, 12–13

James 4:6–7

“When God receives our will in honest surrender, He puts His will into it and makes it stronger than ever for Him. Having yielded to His choice and placed ourselves under His direction, He puts into us all the strength and intensity of His own great will and makes us positive, forceful, victorious and unmovable.”

A.B. Simpson
Days of Heaven on Earth

* Romans 3:10-11, 23 **Recall Paul’s description of unrepentant sinners in chapter 1, that God *gave them over* to their sin.



Gospel at a Glance: The Sovereignty of God and Evangelism | Did God choose us or did we choose God?

I'm talking about predestination and divine election. Know this: Before the world was made, before sin came in, God chose you in Christ to be with Him through all eternity. Jesus said, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you" (John 15:16). The great evangelist D.L. Moody said, "The 'whosoever will' are the elect. The 'whosoever won't' are the non-elect." I do not believe that God predestines certain people to be saved, and others to be damned. Scripture teaches, "He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). It's been said, "God wants every man to be saved. The devil wants every man to be damned. Man has the casting vote."

It is clear in Scripture we are commanded to preach the gospel. I am the first to acknowledge that salvation is the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (John 6:44). We have nothing whatsoever to do with that. But as in most things, there is God's part and there is our part. Our part is to appeal to people. "We proclaim Christ, warning everyone we meet and teaching everyone we can, all that we know about Him ..." (Colossians 1:28).

So instead of trying to figure out how God chose us, let's rejoice that He did. And let's let other people know, without hesitation, that God loves them! Again, to quote D.L. Moody, "Lord, save the elect—and then elect some more!" – Greg Laurie¹

Adoration **C**onfession **T**hankfulness **S**upplication

"Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people." Ephesians 6:18 NIV

In each session, we will pray—for ourselves, for others, for our church, and for our nation. As a focus for prayer, use the memory verse, another scripture, or what the Lord has impressed on you from the chapter. No need to be profound or elaborate, just authentic.

Write a simple prayer, including each element here.

A _____

C _____

T _____

S _____

¹ Greg Laurie, *Why God Chose You*, (Greg's Blog, January 27, 2015)

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