

ROMANS 9 - 11 PT. 1

The Approach

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, March 15, 2026
PASSAGES	Romans 9–11; Romans 1–8; Galatians 2–5; Romans 3; Romans 7–8; Romans 2; Ephesians 2
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:02:23 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Before Hope Chapel opens Romans 9–11, Matt wanted to fix the lens. The context for these chapters is not modern politics, not John Calvin, not our gut feelings — it is Romans 1 through 8. Paul has one gospel, and it holds all the way through: there is one program of salvation, and the program is a person.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Paul does not preach the main gospel in some chapters and a side gospel in others. “The Holy Spirit doesn’t inspire inconsistencies.” Everything in Romans 1–8 is a filter for what comes next.
- ◆ The Roman church was a mixed room with a live identity crisis — Jewish believers returning after Claudius’ expulsion, Gentile believers who had never been circumcised, and a nursery full of babies about to force the question.
- ◆ Freedom from Torah is not the same thing as being anti-Torah, and Gentile inclusion is not the same thing as Jewish abandonment. Those ideas are, in Matt’s word, orthogonal.
- ◆ Every time Paul says *all* in Romans, hear the categories as well as the crowd: both Jew and Gentile.
- ◆ Israel’s advantage is real and it is a dignity — entrusted with the oracles of God — but a dignity is not a salvation. Better diagnostic equipment is not a cure.
- ◆ The unity of Jew and Gentile is not a monoculture met in the middle. It is one person, Jesus, who makes one new man out of two.

- ◆ There is no rejection running from God toward any ethnic group in these chapters. The only rejection on offer is people stumbling over Christ.
- ◆ Any reading of Romans 9–11 that hangs enormous weight on being ethnically one thing or another is a wrong approach by default.

► 1:02:25

Matt opened by naming the two reactions Romans 9–11 reliably produces — total boredom and total obsession — and then made an announcement that turned out to be part of the sermon. An Orthodox Jewish congregation in Austin approached Hope Chapel several years ago wanting friendship with evangelical Christians, and the two have done events together since. Jews in this city, he said, still feel isolated and unfriended. He signed up for Shalom Austin's emails and prays for his Jewish neighbors every time one arrives. "Some of us, some of the time we'll hang out with some of them, and that's enough, because we're friends — and if there's ever a crisis, we're one phone call away."

1. The context is Romans 1–8

► 1:04:42

Hence the title. "The context for Romans 9 through 11 is not modern politics or John Calvin, our gut feelings or assumptions," Matt said. "The context for Romans 9 through 11 is, like, so much Romans 1 through 8." Paul is not capable of preaching the gospel, taking a hard turn into a diatribe that is not the gospel, and then circling back once he has got it out of his system. He was hired by Jesus to plant churches among different peoples, and in every city he preached the same thing — Christ, and Christ crucified. Matt's working description of Romans: a really long book of Galatians.

2. Who was actually in the room

► 1:06:11

The emperor Claudius expelled Jews from Rome. Five or six years pass, the Spirit is fruitful, and every convert in the city is a Gentile, because the Jewish population is gone. Then Claudius dies, the edict lapses, and Jewish believers come home to a church whose leadership and culture have shifted underneath them. Now picture several hundred people — Roman citizens and non-citizens, Jewish-background and Gentile-background believers — and a couple expecting a son. Do they circumcise him? It is what has always been done. And the Gentile family across the aisle is asking the reverse

question: we never used to do that, but it is right there in the Bible, so should we start? “A crisis of conscience,” Matt called it. “Good theology is pastoral.”

3. What Paul had already been saying

► 1:08:04

Galatians was almost certainly written first, and it is the noise Romans is answering. A person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:16) — and by *works of the law* Paul means the hot topics: circumcision, kosher restrictions, Torah generally.

“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.”

GALATIANS 3:27–29 ↗

Matt was careful here. This is not the erasure of who you are — you are still male or female, you still have your Greek language and your grandmother’s cooking. What is gone is the edge. No one has an advantage over anyone. And being a child of Abraham really is special — which is exactly why it lands on Jesus, the promised seed. You are included because you are hidden in him.

► 1:11:24

“For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”

GALATIANS 5:13 ↗

Freedom is not a bug in the system, Matt said; it is the feature and the goal. If you have ever wondered whether the end of Romans 7 was Paul’s picture of the ideal Christian life — sin in one corner, the law in the other — this is the correction. The normal Christian endeavor is not law compliance versus sin. It is free people serving one another in love.

4. Paul on a tightrope

► 1:12:19

Preaching like that generates a firestorm. Some hear glory; others hear insult. Are you saying the Torah is bad? Are you saying it is bad that I am Jewish? So Paul writes a long letter with a long to-do list, and Matt laid out the distinctions it has to hold at once. Freedom from Torah is not hostility toward Torah. Gentiles not needing to become Jewish is not a dislike of Israel. Jewish believers do not need to become Gentiles either. God has not picked a side in an ethnic dispute — he picked a particular seed of Abraham.

► 1:13:37

“Proof of God’s great and abounding love for Israel is Jesus, her Messiah.”

The same care shows up in how Paul retells Abraham. In Paul’s day the story was commonly told as: Abraham did what God said, and that is why he was righteous. Paul slows it down — he believed, and it was counted to him as righteousness. The obedience is real, and it comes out of the faith. Scandalous retelling; technically correct.

► 1:15:34

“For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

ROMANS 8:3–4 ↗

Legalism always tries to sneak back in, this time in spiritual clothing — as if the righteous requirement gets fulfilled in the few, the proud, the top-shelf Christians who walk by the Spirit. Read on to Romans 8:14: those who walk by the Spirit are the children of God, are those in Christ. The terms are co-referential. It is all of them.

► 1:17:10

He paused on a word that causes trouble. *Holy* does not mean moral purity; it means belonging to God, marked by his presence. You may own tongs identical to the ones in the temple, but those are the Lord’s. A flawless, gloriously fluffy sheep on a hillside is not holy — it is profane until it is given to God. So: how much of God’s presence is borne by Christ, God in flesh? “A billion out of ten. So in Christ, you’re smack dab in the middle of the Holy of Holies.”

5. All means both

► 1:19:26

Because we use Romans as an evangelistic tool, we hear *all* and picture everyone at the mall. True — but think in categories too. Matt suggested a reading practice: every time Paul says all, hear *both Jew and Gentile*.

“The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

ROMANS 3:22–24 ↗

Paul earns that in Romans 1–2: he starts with offenses that carried a death penalty under the Old Testament, and then turns on the Gentiles, who never heard Torah but do by nature what it says and are therefore a law to themselves — and are breaking that too. Everyone is under judgment. And no human being is justified by works of the law; through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

6. A dignity is not a cure

► 1:21:32

So was any of it pointless? Watch Paul refuse the easy answer.

“Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.”

ROMANS 3:1–2 ↗

Not “nothing.” Not “rubbish.” Much, in every way. The prophecies, the law, Sinai, the cloud, the thunder — an extraordinary dignity. And when Paul asks whether some were unfaithful, his answer is that human unfaithfulness cannot cancel God’s: “Nothing could stop this Messiah train. It’s got no brakes.” Yet three verses on he asks whether Jews are any better off — and answers no, not at all.

► 1:24:53

Matt’s illustration, which he apologized for in advance: a rudimentary clinic overseas tells you it looks like cancer. You fly home to the best hospital in the country, gold instruments, lasers, and they tell you the same thing — and you feel relief, because now the diagnosis is perfect. The doctor has to clarify. Our equipment is better than theirs. That is not the same as curing you.

► 1:26:24

“The power of sin is the law,” he said, reaching for [1 Corinthians 15:56](#). Torah showed sin with flawless clarity. Clarity is a gift. It is not a remedy. Which is why the two ideas people keep welding together are unrelated: Jesus fulfilling the righteous requirements does not imply God rejected Israel or reversed himself on his own Torah. “These ideas are as distinct as diagnosis is from remedy.”

7. One new man, not a monoculture

► [1:28:39](#)

God has never wanted to be a tribal deity for one tribe — from [the promise to Abraham](#) onward it was always all the families of the earth, which is where Paul begins the letter ([Romans 1:5](#)). But the unity that results is not a negotiated middle where Gentiles learn to pray with shawls and Jews learn to eat bacon.

“For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility... that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace.”

[EPHESIANS 2:14-15](#) ↗

“He doesn’t show that there can be peace and here’s how and here’s twelve steps,” Matt said. “He *is* our peace.” One, not two, and not neither.

8. The only rejection in the room

► [1:29:46](#)

Here is where the tension in Romans 9 actually sits.

“Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone.”

[ROMANS 9:30-32](#) ↗

► [1:31:49](#)

Read carefully and the direction reverses:

[“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling... and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”](#)

That is not God rejecting people. That is people rejecting God — and Jesus, their Messiah, is the giant open door of love and mercy, still open. Matt flagged the vocabulary problem honestly: *the Jews* in the Gospels sometimes means the authorities, and Paul himself uses the word warmly elsewhere. You have to track with him. “But it’s not any harder than reading Harry Potter.”

► 1:34:57

So Jews are not replaced by Gentiles — all the families means all the families, not most of them. And Colossians 3:11 stands: not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all and in all. Which yields Matt’s sharpest rule of thumb. If the hot take you are hearing — from a blog, from a video, from your uncle — is not Christ and Christ crucified, it is a wrong turn, and any approach that leans hard on being ethnically one way or another is wrong by default. Our fleshly minds fixate on the outside;
a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.

9. Why Paul is in anguish

► 1:36:00

He closed where chapter 9 begins.

“I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.”

ROMANS 9:1–4 ↗

► 1:37:12

The anguish is the argument. If there were a second path — Torah compliance for one group, or a quiet universalism for them, grace and faith for everybody else — Paul would be fine. No tears. He is in pain precisely because there is one door, and some of his own family are standing outside it. “So if you reject that, it’s not God saying no to you. It’s you saying no to God. Of course Jesus is the only way to God — he is God.” Matt paused over verse 5 the way Paul does, ending in a doxology: “Even Paul sometimes has to stop and be like, amen. That was good.”

► 1:38:52

And then the turn outward, because these chapters end in mission. This is not gobbledygook from a long time ago written to fill some time. God is establishing the body of Christ in every single family on earth, there are still families to pray for and speak to, and the people in that room are part of it — some

of them going out, others welcoming the world that comes to Austin. “But what we want is Christ and Christ crucified to be the message. That’s the only message.”

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [1 Corinthians 2:2](#)
- [Galatians 2:16](#)
- [Galatians 3:27–29](#)
- [Galatians 5:13](#)
- [Romans 7:21–25](#)
- [Romans 4:3](#)
- [Romans 8:3–4](#)
- [Romans 8:14](#)
- [Romans 3:22–24](#)
- [Romans 1:18–2:16](#)
- [Romans 3:20](#)
- [Romans 3:1–2](#)
- [Romans 3:9](#)
- [1 Corinthians 15:56](#)
- [Genesis 12:3](#)
- [Romans 1:5](#)
- [Ephesians 2:14–15](#)
- [Romans 9:30–32](#)
- [Romans 9:33](#)
- [Colossians 3:11](#)
- [Romans 2:28–29](#)
- [Romans 9:1–4](#)
- [Romans 9:5](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Where did your own reading of Romans 9–11 come from — a teacher, a podcast, a relative, a political moment? What has been filtering it for you?
2. The Roman church argued over circumcision and food because identity was genuinely at stake. What is the equivalent argument in our church, where conscience and belonging are tangled together?
3. Matt distinguished a dignity from a salvation, and diagnosis from cure. What in your life do you treat as a cure when it is only clarity about the problem?
4. If freedom is the goal and not the loophole, what does Galatians 5:13 — freedom used to serve one another in love — actually cost you?
5. Paul's anguish comes from believing there is one door. Who is on your heart because of that, and what will you do about it this week?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63_fW2QOGn4&t=3743s

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.