

ROMANS 9-11 PT. 2

Sovereign Mercy

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, March 22, 2026
PASSAGES	Romans 9
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:06:48 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Romans 9 is not a dark secret tucked into an otherwise warm letter. Paul is grieving that his own people are refusing their own Messiah, and he is answering the question underneath that grief: has God failed? The answer is that God's promises have never once depended on human cooperation — which is precisely why mercy is still wide open to everybody.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ The context for Romans 9–11 is Romans 1–8 — not the modern state of Israel, not the Reformation, not our gut feelings. Read it with any other filter and you will hear something Paul never said.
- ◆ If Romans 9 leaves you afraid that God is secretly creepy, you have misread it. Read rightly, it should make you want to worship.
- ◆ There is one gospel for all the families of the earth. No alternative path for anyone, which is exactly why Paul is in anguish rather than bragging.
- ◆ Abraham had eight known sons and one promised son. The point is not that seven of them are damned; the point is that a promised child cannot be manufactured by human effort.
- ◆ “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated” is a Hebrew way of saying *chosen over against all other options* — the same idiom Jesus uses in Luke 14 about father and mother.

- ◆ Being excluded from the promised lineage says nothing about a person's standing with God. Scripture goes out of its way to show God's kindness to Hagar and Ishmael.
- ◆ What actually offended Paul's contemporaries was not stinginess. It was that God is so merciful the door has been thrown open to tax collectors, prostitutes and thieves.
- ◆ God can accomplish his purposes through weak people, faltering people, and even outright opponents. Pharaoh is the proof, and so is Paul.

► 1:07:39

Matt has an annual Good Friday tradition of arguing that God never relationally abandoned Jesus on the cross, and he set it aside this year for a simple reason: he introduced Romans 9–11 last Sunday, and picking it back up well after Easter made no sense to him. So we are knee-deep, and he intends to go slowly.

1. The filter you have to read it through

► 1:09:24

The hardest part of reading Romans 9, Matt said, is keeping careful watch on what Paul is *not* saying alongside what he is. One line unlocks the whole man:

"I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." Not usually — always.

So the context for these three chapters is Romans 1–8, and Matt wants that used as a strict set of filters, letting some things in and pushing others out. Jew and Gentile alike stand condemned under law. Jew and Gentile alike have one wide-open door of mercy, and the door is a person. "There's only one program of salvation because the program is actually a person." Those brought near in Christ are not merely admitted to the commonwealth of Israel as guests — they are children of Abraham and heirs of God. And here is the test he offered: "We will know we've read Romans 9 properly if it fills us with a desire to worship a wonderful, gracious God. If we're left with a fear of something secretly creepy and dark, we didn't read it right."

2. Paul is not making a point. He is grieving.

► 1:12:56

“I am speaking the truth in Christ — I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit — that 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.”

ROMANS 9:1-3 ↗

Gentile unbelief is a category we know what to do with: send missionaries, plant churches, keep praying. Israel refusing her own Messiah is harder to process, and Paul does not process it calmly. Matt used the grief itself as an argument. Some online take has it that grace through faith is for Gentiles while Jews remain under Torah — but Paul has already said no one is justified by works of the law. If there were a second path, Paul would be boasting, not in anguish. And God’s love here outstrips Paul’s: “Why would God’s love be outshone by some man’s love?”

3. Everything they were given

► 1:14:50

“They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.”

ROMANS 9:4-5 ↗

This is the “much in every way” Paul promised back in Romans 3:1-2. You would fit hand in glove with the long-awaited one you grew up hearing about. And note what Paul drops in passing: the Christ is God over all. Matt is firm that this is the right translation, and that it is one of the plainest hints of Jesus’ divinity in the New Testament.

4. “Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel”

► 1:17:54

“But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring... This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.”

ROMANS 9:6-8 ↗

► 1:20:08

Before anyone builds a system on the allegory, Matt insisted on the story it sits on. Abraham had children by three women: Hagar the Egyptian slave, then Sarah, then six more sons by Keturah after Sarah's death. Eight known sons; one miracle baby. Seven of the eight are not in the ancestry of Jesus, so the promise plainly is not genetic — and Abraham's own faltering did not stop it either. Paul names the promise himself, and it is not about anybody's afterlife: *about this time next year I will return and Sarah shall have a son.*

Which is what Abraham “discovered according to the flesh” in Romans 4:1. Matt put it plainly: you can have a baby with a woman. You cannot make the promised baby happen. That has to be an act of God.

5. Jacob and Esau — a role in history, not a destiny

► 1:23:43

“Though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad — in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls — she was told, ‘The older will serve the younger.’ As it is written, ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’”

ROMANS 9:10-13 ↗

► 1:24:54

Neither reward nor punishment, and not a verdict on two eternities — a question of which lineage raises up the savior of all lineages. On *hated*, Matt did the obvious work: Paul and Jesus were not speaking English. In Hebrew, to love one and hate the other can simply mean choosing one over against every other option. Jesus uses the identical idiom — whoever does not hate his own father and mother cannot be my disciple — while also commanding us to love our neighbors, our enemies, and to honor father and mother. And the line Paul quotes comes from Malachi 1:2-3, where it is about two nations, not two men.

6. Paul does this elsewhere, and nobody panics

► 1:26:49

In Galatians 4:21–26 Paul runs the same move: two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman, read allegorically as two covenants. Are these women actually covenants? No, they are women. Paul is using the story to picture something larger — and nobody reads that passage and concludes Hagar went to hell for being an Egyptian slave. Besides, the covenant Sarah stands for is grace, in which everyone who calls on the Lord is saved. The whole argument is aimed at one seed: the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his offspring — one person, who is Christ.

Matt drew the sharp edge: if being a blood ancestor of Jesus were how you got to heaven, you and I are up a creek. Nobody can become one now.

7. What the Bible actually does with Hagar

► 1:30:36

Handed over by her master, alone in the wilderness, she is found by the angel of the Lord, who addresses her by name and promises to multiply her descendants; she answers by naming God “the God who sees me.” Later, with her son dying of thirst, God hears the boy and promises to make him a great nation — and does. Ishmael lives to a full age and is buried with honor. God intervenes for this woman twice. Nowhere, cover to cover, is she said to be cut off from his kindness. She simply was not cast in the role of bearing the promised seed. The same holds for Ishmael and Esau. And the consistent teaching stands: God shows no partiality, but accepts from every nation the one who fears him.

8. “Is there injustice on God’s part?”

► 1:34:19

Read Romans 9:14–16 as the question it answers — God choosing which line carries the promise — and the charge of injustice loses its footing. Our fear is that “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy” secretly means *I will be stingy with whomever I please.*

► 1:35:23

It is the opposite. What grated on Paul’s contemporaries was that God is so merciful the whole thing has been broken wide open. “So what if I’m bringing all these scummy people that don’t deserve it? Deal with it.” Matt’s verdict on that attitude: “That’s the kind of attitude we want around here.” And the

it that depends not on human will or exertion is not a private eternal verdict; it is the grand purpose of God carried, protected and fulfilled across generations.

9. Pharaoh, and a God who wins from either side of the board

► 1:38:25

“For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”

ROMANS 9:17 ↗

► 1:39:31

People feel sorry for Pharaoh, so Matt told the story in order, the same slow way he told Abraham’s.

“Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.’ But Pharaoh said, ‘Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and moreover, I will not let Israel go.’”

EXODUS 5:1–2 ↗

► 1:40:58

Pharaoh was not aching to free his slaves until God stopped him. He refused first. Hardening, as Matt pictured it, is God freezing that frame and enlarging it: “His obstinance. Not my forced-upon-him refusal. I’m going to freeze frame it, press pause, and blow it up super big” — because God can make his name famous on the world stage even when the people who were supposed to help are not cooperating. Which is the whole point in context. The Jews of Paul’s day were the ones you would expect on the front lines of the gospel; many are refusing it; and God’s promises are not in jeopardy. “He never fails. Why would it depend now on human effort when it never has before?”

10. Why this is not an irrelevant chapter

► 1:43:18

There is opposition to the gospel in America and worldwide right now, and the people carrying the standard are weak and often incompetent — Matt put himself first in that line. Neither has ever caused God to fail. “Even if today you as an individual turn into a fierce opponent of the gospel, God can still use you to make a great name for himself.” His closing note was worship, not argument: the burden of

all this rests on God's shoulders, he is steadfastly committed to mercy even when that drives us nuts, and Romans 9 turns out to have nothing dark in it at all.

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [1 Corinthians 2:2](#)
- [Romans 1–8](#)
- [Romans 9:1–3](#)
- [Romans 3:20](#)
- [Romans 9:4–5](#)
- [Romans 3:1–2](#)
- [Romans 9:6–8](#)
- [Romans 4:1](#)
- [Romans 9:10–13](#)
- [Luke 14:26](#)
- [Malachi 1:2–3](#)
- [Galatians 4:21–26](#)
- [Galatians 3:16](#)
- [Genesis 16:13](#)
- [Genesis 21:17–18](#)
- [Acts 10:34–35](#)
- [Romans 9:14–16](#)
- [Romans 9:17](#)
- [Exodus 5:1–2](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Matt said a right reading of Romans 9 leaves you wanting to worship, and a wrong one leaves you afraid of something secretly dark. Which have you carried, and where did it come from?
2. Paul is in anguish rather than boasting because there is no second path. What does his grief tell you about how he saw the people who rejected the gospel?
3. Hagar was outside the promised lineage and still met the God who sees her. How does that change what “not chosen” can and cannot mean?
4. Where have you quietly assumed that God’s purposes need your competence or your cooperation to succeed?
5. Name one situation this week — a person, a conflict, a piece of news — where you are treating opposition as evidence that God is losing. What would it look like to act as though he is not?

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=_MTvnWzE4nw&t=4008s

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.