

Romans 9 Sovereign Mercy Pt. 2

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, May 3, 2026
PASSAGES	Romans 9; Genesis 22; Isaiah 19; Hosea 2; Isaiah 10; Isaiah 1; Romans 10; James 1
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:18:27 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

The context for Romans 9 is not the Reformation — it is Romans 1 through 8, and a church tearing itself apart over whether Gentiles must become Jewish or Jews must stop being Jewish. Read there, chapter 9 is Paul insisting God has not failed. What it reveals is a tender-hearted God who has always wanted every family on earth, not a master who premeditates damnation along ethnic lines.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Romans 9–11 answers a live crisis, not a theology-class question: circumcise the baby or not, eat this or not, and what to do about the brother in the next pew who does the opposite.
- ◆ In Christ you are already at platinum status — not because of the cross alone but because of a whole life of perfect obedience credited to you. Security first, obedience out of it.
- ◆ Sarah and Hagar is not a story about heaven and hell. Hagar was not condemned for being Egyptian; she was simply not chosen to be Sarah, and God met her in the wilderness as the God who sees.
- ◆ Israel's chosenness was never a ticket. It was a job — priests to the planet — and it was fulfilled completely in Christ.
- ◆ Pharaoh said no first. God froze the choice he had already made and used it on the world stage. Nowhere does scripture show a soft heart forced hard.
- ◆ The vessels of mercy are prepared by God, active voice, with an agent named. The vessels of wrath are prepared with no agent named at all. Paul's grammar is not an accident.

- ◆ God is winning either way. The only open question is whether he uses you cooperating or kicking and screaming.

► 1:18:27

Matt came back to Romans 9 after four weeks away, and opened by repeating the one thing he wants the room to hold onto: the context for Romans 9 through 11 is not John Calvin, or the Reformation, or whatever we happen to bring with us. It is Romans 1 through 8 — the gospel Paul is so eager to write about he can barely sit still.

The crisis Paul was actually writing into

► 1:18:58

Underneath the letter is an identity crisis. Should Jewish believers shed their Jewishness to be next-level Christians? Should Gentile believers take on Jewish practice to complete the fit? This was not armchair theology. You have just had a son — do you circumcise him? The book you read when you gather says yes, and says keep the feasts, and says do not eat that. And the man beside you every week is not doing any of it.

So Paul has a to-do list. One item is retelling Abraham's story slowly and in order: yes, he obeyed — but first he believed, and that is when he was declared righteous. Another is the even-handed verdict of the opening chapters. Gentiles have a witness in what they do by nature; the objection comes back that they fail it; Paul's answer is that so do you.

Platinum status

► 1:21:37

"In Christ, you are already platinum status," Matt said — and someone in the room upgraded it to super platinum. Not because of the death only, but the whole life, manger to tomb, of perfect obedience to the Father, conveyed to you in a way most of us struggle to actually accept.

His picture for it was a Mario save file where Bowser has already been beaten and Peach is already rescued. You can go anywhere. You can fail at something and simply try again. The fear underneath most of our striving is that the giant finger of God is poised to flick us into destruction the moment we disobey — and that is not the posture. In Christ you are not looking in from outside but out from inside, seated in heavenly places, with a Father standing in the pool saying *come*. That is what his demands are. That is what his discipline is.

Nodding to Steve's message two weeks earlier: much of Old Testament sacrifice has nothing to do with sin at all. It has to do with honor. Secure like that, what could you do with a life? Give it to him for the love of the game. From the outside it might look identical to the sect Paul was arguing with — they loved Jesus, served him, read the scriptures, gathered, prayed — but making Jesus' manner of life into a new Torah to forge your righteousness on is the same old project under new management.

Paul's grief, and what Israel actually held

► 1:25:43

"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 ↗

Matt paused on that as a side note worth keeping. Whenever loving people fiercely gets called idolatry — *I mustn't love my husband too much* — remember this verse. Loving someone so hard you would take their curse is not idolatry. It is Pauline.

The grief is that Israel by and large rejected its own Messiah. But that says nothing against Jesus, and nothing against the promise to Abraham. If God could not finish his last project, why would you sign up for the next one?

► 1:26:51

"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 ↗

Two answers to "what advantage, then, is there in being Jewish?" Enormous advantage — look at that list. And, as far as being saved by ethnicity goes, none at all. Which throws the door wide open for anyone by faith. Not a new idea, either: "Through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed." Did they carry the glory, the covenants, the law, the worship, the promises? Did they produce the promised child? Yes, every time. God says he will do it and he does it. The sneak peek is in Isaiah 19:25

— “Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance.” It was always meant to go global.

Which requires one assumption to be swapped out: Israel is not the protagonist of the Old Testament. God is. He did not merely pick a tribe; he made one out of nothing, from a barren couple. And the substance of their chosenness is the list in verse 4 — they were destined to be priests to the planet. A priest, as Matt and Steve had been talking about, is not a buffer between God and people. A priest says: come here, let me help you do this right, you and him — I am here to serve that connection.

Sarah, Hagar, and what the metaphor is for

► 1:31:43

“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 ↗

Sarah was not chosen for salvation and Hagar for damnation. Sarah was chosen to produce a child of promise, a seed to be carried generation to generation until it produced the one destined to save every lineage. Hagar was not condemned for being Egyptian — she simply was not chosen to be Sarah, and could not insert herself into that promise by the flesh. There is a wink at the circumcision argument in the background of that: you cannot accomplish the promise of God by your flesh.

And if you want to know how God feels about Hagar, read her own story. She is the one who named him “the God who sees me”, and when she was in the wilderness terrified for her son, he came (Genesis 21:17–19). Ishmael was blessed into a great nation of his own.

► 1:34:57

Same point, different women, with Rebekah: before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad, the older was told to serve the younger — “not because of works but because of him who calls” (Romans 9:10–13). What is being chosen here is not your eternal destination but the line that carries the promise. And “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated” is a Hebrew idiom for choosing one over the other — the same construction as Jesus telling would-be followers to hate father, mother, and their own life (Luke 14:26). He had not quietly repealed “honor your father and mother.” Read it in an English mindset and you mangle it.

Pharaoh said no first

► 1:40:39

“I will have mercy on whom I have mercy” lands on modern ears as something creepy — *I can be awful to anyone I like*. It says the opposite: I can be merciful to whomever I want. Nothing dark has happened in this chapter yet.

Then Pharaoh, raised up so God’s name would be proclaimed in all the earth ([Romans 9:17–18](#)). Read Exodus carefully and the sequence is unmistakable: it did not open with Pharaoh eager to release his slaves and God overriding him. Pharaoh refused first. Then God froze that choice in time and used a man already at the center of world power to make his own name great — even among the Egyptians. God can win with cooperative teammates and he can win through opponents. He can play both sides of the board.

“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.”

JAMES 1:13 ↗

So the relevance is total. If most of Paul’s countrymen are rejecting Jesus, that is not evidence the plan is failing. It never depended on cooperation. And the door is still wide open — [Romans 11](#) will say they can be grafted straight back in.

The potter, and a grammar point

► 1:44:30

“Has the potter no right over the clay?” ([Romans 9:19–21](#)) is about *use* — honorable or dishonorable — and it is not yet obviously about heaven at all. God is going to accomplish the Great Commission. The question on the table is whether he uses you kicking and screaming or eager. A lump of clay gone hard is difficult to shape for noble use, but he will still make something of it. A paperweight. A doorstep.

“What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory — even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?”

ROMANS 9:22–24 ↗

Here Matt got, by his own description, nerdy — and the room has asked for more of that before. The vessels of mercy are prepared in the active voice with an agent named: God prepared them. The vessels of wrath are prepared in a form that is passive or middle — identically spelled in Greek — with no agent named at all. Passive would mean *they were prepared by another*. Middle would mean *they prepared themselves*. Paul leaves it ambiguous, and the ambiguity is the point. Nobody was ever going to claim they earned mercy; God is plainly to blame for that. But who hardened a hardened heart? “That’s at least a team effort.”

Augustine works the same ground at length in *The City of God*: nobody made the devil sin. What caused his rebellion? His rebellion. That is the end of the line. And this reading is not a novelty — John Chrysostom, whose native language was Greek, makes the same point about the clay and about Pharaoh in his sixteenth homily on Romans. If it is new it isn’t true, and if it is true it isn’t new.

The remnant, and whose watch this is

► 1:49:41

“Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’ And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called sons of the living God.”

ROMANS 9:25–26 ↗

Read corporately and historically, the wrath in this chapter is temporal judgment on a rebellious Israel and a public display of God’s justice — not a secret eternal decree issued for no reason. Individuals can move category by repentance through faith, and the Father of all prodigals is straining at the door.

Then Isaiah: though Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant will be saved (Romans 9:27–29) — and had the Lord of hosts not left offspring, they would have been Sodom and Gomorrah. Matt turned that around: however stubborn Israel got, God always preserved a believing remnant so the promise could travel one more generation. That is the proof he is steering. Israel earned the same wipeout as the nations around her and did not get it.

Which answers the anxious question about the American church — do we deserve revival, is it all going to crash and burn on our watch? “What do you mean, on our watch? This is his watch. It’s always been his watch. We don’t have a watch. We don’t know what we’re doing.”

How do you want to be used?

► 1:52:14

Matt's hope for the room was that a proper reading of Romans 9 shows a tender-hearted God who has wanted all the families of the earth from the beginning — not a random and terrifying master handing out arbitrary damnation because you failed to be born an Israelite. The news is good enough that Paul is nearly out of his body with it. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved ([Romans 10:13](#)) — everyone, including the most stubborn of God's critics.

And Paul is holding that invitation open to his own people, whom he loves to the point of wishing himself accursed. “Why would we ever be able to believe that God loves a group of people or a person less than one of us?” You cannot out-love God.

So the closing question was not *will God finish this*. It was how we intend to participate. You pray for God to use you in his great commission and the answer is yes — but as what? “He's winning no matter what. This train has no brakes, but our role might still be up in the air.” The service ended there, with prayer and silence, and heart ministry teams up front for anyone who wanted someone to pray with.

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- Romans 9:1–3
- Romans 9:4–5
- Genesis 22:18
- Isaiah 19:25
- Romans 9:6–8
- Genesis 16:13
- Genesis 21:17–19
- Romans 9:10–13
- Luke 14:26
- Romans 9:17–18
- James 1:13
- Romans 9:19–21
- Romans 9:22–24
- Romans 9:25–26
- Romans 9:27–29
- Romans 10:13

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Matt described a life lived from complete security in Christ — the save file where the victory is already won. Where does your own life still run on the fear of being flicked away for failing?
2. Israel's chosenness was a job, not a ticket. What changes if you read your own calling that way?
3. Hagar was not chosen to be Sarah, and God still met her in the wilderness. Where have you read God's "no" to one thing as a verdict on your worth?
4. Pharaoh refused first, and God used the refusal. Where do you notice your own heart hardening, and what would it take to keep it soft?
5. Honorable use or dishonorable use — cooperating or kicking and screaming. What is one place this week where you know which one you have been choosing, and what will you do differently?

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=Q8gxOMjsaEw&t=4707s>

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.