

“Israel” (Part 2) – “The Mystery of God’s Mercy” (Romans 9:1-18)(10.22.23)

Romans 9:1-18 Amplified Bible **Concern for Israel**

9 I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me [enlightened and prompted] by the Holy Spirit, ² that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ For [if it were possible] I would wish that I myself were accursed, [separated, banished] from Christ for the sake [of the salvation] of my brothers, my natural kinsmen, ⁴ who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, the glory ([a]Shekinah), the [special] covenants [with Abraham, Moses, and David], the giving of the Law, the [system of temple] worship, and the [original] promises. ⁵ To them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to His natural descent, *came* the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed), He who is exalted *and* supreme over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

⁶ However, it is not as though God’s word has failed [coming to nothing]. For not all who are descended from Israel (Jacob) are [the true] Israel; ⁷ and they are not all the children of Abraham because they are his descendants [by blood], but [the promise was]: “Your descendants

will be named through Isaac" [though Abraham had other sons]. ⁸ That is, it is not the children of the body [Abraham's natural descendants] who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are counted as [Abraham's true] descendants. ⁹ For this is what the promise said: "About this time [next year] I will come, and Sarah shall have a son." ¹⁰ And not only that, but this too: Rebekah conceived *twin sons* by one man [under the same circumstances], by our father Isaac; ¹¹ and though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything *either* good or bad, so that God's purpose [His choice, His election] would stand, not because of works [done by either child], but because of [the plan of] Him who calls them, ¹² it was said to her, "The [b]older (Esau) will serve the [c]younger (Jacob)." ¹³ As it is written *and* forever remains written, "[d]Jacob I loved (chose, protected, blessed), but [e]Esau I hated (held in disregard compared to Jacob)."

¹⁴ What shall we say then? Is there injustice with God? Certainly not! ¹⁵ For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I have compassion." ¹⁶ So then God's choice is not dependent on human will, nor on human effort [the totality of human striving], but on God who shows mercy [to whomever He chooses—it is His

sovereign gift]. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "I raised you up for this very purpose, to display My power in [dealing with] you, and so that My name would be proclaimed in all the earth." ¹⁸ So then, He has mercy on whom He wills (chooses), and He hardens [the heart of] whom He wills.

The word of God for the people of God.

LET US PRAY.

Title: **"Israel" (Part 2) – "The Mystery of God's Mercy"**

INTRODUCTION:

I am sorry...I am NOT the Apostle Paul. Yes, I too grieve for the bulk of humanity who are on the broad way to destruction. It truly breaks my heart that though so many have heard the truth, they rather believe lies. I cannot fathom giving up my salvation so that others may be saved.

I should be more understanding because I came to faith so late in life, 45 years of age. But I have been continuously pouring out my soul for many years proclaiming the truth of the gospel. I have read the books on church growth and the continuous onslaught of articles. And where are we

now in this nation? Where are we in the Church of America?

But, compared to Paul, I have had a cakewalk in ministry. *Paul Boasts About His Sufferings* in 2 Corinthians 11:22–33 (NIV84)

²² Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I. ²³ Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. ²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, ²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. ²⁷ I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. ²⁸ Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. ²⁹ Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?

³⁰ If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.³¹ The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is to be praised forever, knows that I am not lying.³² In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me.³³ But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.

I shared all of that because this is the same person here in Romans 9. Even considering ALL of that sacrificial service for the kingdom of God, Paul says he will forgo his salvation so that others may be saved. How is this possible?

On the other hand, Paul's ministry had produced plentiful fruit and growth. I confess that I have frustration because the Bible teachings are so clear to me; and yet, the urgency of the situation, the bumper to bumper traffic on the broad way, continues each day on its tragic course. My voice seems lost – a faint echo off the canyon walls of the abyss of hell.

God has been merciful to me, a sinner. Why me? I have no answer. Who can know the mind of God? Exodus 33:19 (NIV84) And the Lord said [to Moses], "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom

I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

BODY:

The mystery of God’s mercy is purely a divine prerogative! But more is going on here than meets the eye. We have individual salvation intertwined with corporate salvation. As the community affects an individual, an individual (like Paul) can have a dramatic impact on the community. God’s mercy flows over individual lives. God’s mercy flows over people groups. Through both, we see God’s mercy directing the course of human history.

Paul has proclaimed his heart for the lost Israelite souls. I declared my parallel feelings, though not to Paul’s extent. But wait a second, doesn’t Paul teach in this same passage that God is in control and it is HIS prerogative to save whom He chooses? Well, if that is so, why should Paul and I...or you, worry about bringing others to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, we shall see.

Romans chapter 8 is more familiar to most of us.

Romans 8:1 (NIV84) Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,
Romans 8:16 (NIV84) The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Romans 8:18 (NIV84) I consider that our present sufferings

are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. Romans 8:28 (NIV84) And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Romans 8:37 (NIV84) No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Then Paul goes on to explain that nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. From this great climax we find ourselves in chapter 9 with Paul lamenting the state of his ethnic brothers. He lists several ways the Chosen People have been blessed and how they are the People of Promise. BUT, they rejected the Messiah; so have they forfeited their place in God's heart and plan of salvation? Has God's word, as recorded in the Law and the Prophets, failed?

NO. Jews considered Abraham their father in a similar sense that we are all descendants of Adam. God called Abram – which means exalted father, and named him Abraham – which means father of a multitude. Here, Paul argues that physical DNA is not what is critical. Most important is spiritual DNA. He said it a little differently in Romans 2:28–29 (NIV84)²⁸ A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical.²⁹ No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by

the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.

Genesis tells the miraculous story of Abram and Sarai, who was barren. AND, they were both well past childbearing years. Although God had promised them a son, they thought that God was slow in responding and decided to solve the dilemma with an alternate solution. Sara sent Abraham into her maidservant, Hagar. She bore a son named Ishmael. But, God had not chosen Ishmael. Isaac would be in the line as the father of the Chosen People. As a sidenote – notice that Sarah must have been chosen by God too. Her son, Isaac, and not her maidservant's son, Ishmael, was chosen by God.

Then Paul gives another example of this historical truth of God's sovereign will. Isaac married Rebekah and they had twins, Esau who was born first, and Jacob, who was born seconds later, grasping at Esau's heel. You could not have asked for a more parallel or equal situation: same father, same mother, born seconds apart. Normally, the eldest holds a position of preference; but, God chose Jacob. Why? Neither had earned favor of God – but by divine prerogative, Jacob was chosen in the line of The Chosen People of God.

What about Esau? The Apostle Paul is referencing Malachi 1:2–3 (NIV84)

²“I have loved you,” says the Lord.

“But you ask, ‘How have you loved us?’

“Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” the Lord says.

“Yet I have loved Jacob,³ but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his mountains into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals.”

Esau was the father of the Edomites who lived in Edom. In fact, in Genesis 36, Esau is called Edom four times. Paul is talking about two people groups not individuals. The Old Testament records many conflicts between Israel (the offspring of Jacob) and Edom. God chose Israel but rejected the Edomites. Notice that God is involved in the workings and conflicts of the nations.

We must address this word hated. This biblical usage is not to be confused with our modern perceptions. Jesus says in Luke 14:26 (NIV84) **“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.”**

It would be an absurdity to apply our modern perceptions to Jesus’ statement. The fifth

commandment tells us to honor our mother and father. And, Jesus demonstrated His love for His mother even while He was dying on the cross. John 19:26–27 (NIV84)

²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved [John] standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Dear woman, here is your son,”²⁷ and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

The usage of love and hate are indeed strong words. In Romans 9, Paul is connecting them, as did the Old Testament scriptures, with the Divine Prerogative: “I will have mercy upon whom I will. I will choose who I will. I will have compassion upon whom I will.”

Pharaoh was raised up by the Almighty to display God’s power and to make Himself known throughout human history. This “raising up” is a reference to God’s sovereign choice and activity in history to put Pharaoh as king over the Egyptian Empire.

As you know, The Chosen People were enslaved in Egypt. The LORD heard the cry of the people and sent Moses to Pharaoh to “Set My People free.” Pharaoh resisted God’s will through ten plagues. The Exodus account shows that several times that

Pharaoh hardened His heart. At other times, it says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart.

This is a serious warning to all people. When Billy Graham would issue the invitation to come forward during his evangelistic crusades, he often warned people. Decide right now to receive Jesus because you may not get another chance. This had two aspects. One, you may get hit by a bus on your way home. Two, if you harden your heart, you may never be able to hear the gospel call again.

There are so many scriptures that address God's election, but for time's sake, I will only give you two. First, Jesus speaking in John 15:16 (NIV84) "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name."

Now, let us hear from Paul in Ephesians 1:3–12 (NIV84)

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴ **For he chose us in him before the creation of the world** to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—⁶ to the praise of his glorious

grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace⁸ that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.⁹ And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

¹¹ In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,¹² in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

{show slide} Briefly, let us look at Psalm 136. This exercise is to enlarge our understanding of God's mercy. Several years ago, I split the congregation into four groups. Each group represented a different modern translation. The King James uses the word MERCY. The NIV uses LOVE. The ESV uses STEADFAST LOVE. The NASB uses LOVINGKINDNESS.

Psalm 136 (KJV 1900)

¹ O give thanks unto the Lord; for *he is good*:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

² O give thanks unto the God of gods:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

³ O give thanks to the Lord of lords:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

⁴ To him who alone doeth great wonders:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

⁵ To him that by wisdom made the heavens:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

⁶ To him that stretched out the earth above the waters:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

⁷ To him that made great lights:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever:

⁸ The sun to rule by day:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever:

⁹ The moon and stars to rule by night:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

10 To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever:

11 And brought out Israel from among them:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever:

12 With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

13 To him which divided the Red sea into parts:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever:

14 And made Israel to pass through the midst of it:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever:

15 But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

16 To him which led his people through the wilderness:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

17 To him which smote great kings:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever:

18 And slew famous kings:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever:

19 Sihon king of the Amorites:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever:

20 And Og the king of Bashan:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever:

21 And gave their land for an heritage:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever:

22 *Even* an heritage unto Israel his servant:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

23 Who remembered us in our low estate:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever:

24 And hath redeemed us from our enemies:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

25 Who giveth food to all flesh:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

26 O give thanks unto the God of heaven:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

CONCLUSION:

Let me share this story with you that illustrates this tension between God's will and human will, although in a very simplified version. My family did not have very much money when I was young. It was a very rare thing for us to go out for ice cream.

One time we were having some kind of celebration, I don't remember why. I was about five years old. There were a few people visiting us. It was decided that we would go to the local ice cream stand for a special treat.

When we got there, I saw a picture of an ice cream sundae. My parents asked me what kind of ice cream cone did I want. I told them, "I don't want an ice cream cone. I want an ice cream sundae." My parents explained that everyone was getting cones. "No, I want a sundae."

My parents told me that I could not have a sundae, but I could get an ice cream cone. I insisted. They responded that I could have a cone or I could go without. I decided, "If I can't have an ice cream sundae, I don't want anything." My parents asked me again. I stood my ground. Everyone else got their cones and started eating them. My parents asked me again if I was sure I didn't want one. I was adamant.

My friends, that was 62 years ago and I still remember it. That may have been the first time I heard the expression, don't cut off your nose off to spite your face. Eternity is a lot longer than 62 years. Many people reject what God Almighty has offered them. They have set their minds, their hearts, on something else.

My brothers and sisters, our world is in a crisis. The Russian Ukraine War has gone on over 1.5 years. The conflict in the Middle East is escalating. Even at this level, its effects are rippling around the world. There is fear of expanding escalation and even nuclear war.

Jesus may come at any moment. The time is now for people to repent and turn to Jesus. Let them forsake the damning desires all along the broad way of destruction. May God soften their hearts, so they may respond to the calling of the Holy Spirit who beckons us to the Lord Jesus.

Revelation 22:17 (NIV84) The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

Charles Spurgeon resolves the tension between God's will and human response. "If you will it, that is the sign that God wills it."

Come to Jesus, the ONLY WAY to the Father.

Amen and amen. Let us pray.