



# A grace worth saving: Romans 9-11

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Lecture 4

# Summary from last message

When we honor the context we see:

- The story of Israel
- Corporate dimensions of election to service

# Homework

Read Ephesians 1

Read John 6

## Romans 9:14-24 (NKJV)

14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! 15 For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." 16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. 17 For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." 18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" 20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" 21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

22 What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, 24 even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

# Is there unrighteousness with God?

14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!

Matthew 3:7-10

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, 9 and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. 10 And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

"Paul used their own Scripture to prove that a descendent of Abraham, or even Isaac: (1) might not be chosen for the noble purpose of bringing the Word of God, and (2) might be cursed if he stands in opposition to those who had been chosen to carry His Word." (Leighton Flowers)

# Romans 9:15 – the context

15 For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.”

Next we move from the story of the patriarchs to the story of the Exodus. In context, this quotation is about God’s decision to not destroy all the Israelites, but to allow them to go on to the Promised Land.

This story is one of the best stories in the OT about Israel’s unfaithfulness, yet God has mercy on them for a greater purpose.

“Paul was drawing upon the history of Israel to prove God’s faithfulness to carry out His promise through them despite their unfaithfulness. In other words, Paul demonstrates how God continued to show mercy to Israel even when they were unfaithful and God did so in order to fulfill His original promise.” (Leighton Flowers)

# Romans 9:16

Romans 9:16 So then **it** is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

What is the “it”?

It's not unconditional election to save or damn—God arbitrarily choosing from a group of people whom He will save. Instead the “it” is “the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of Him who works but of Him who calls” (Rom 9:11).

# Romans 9:17

Romans 9:17 For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth."

Right before the seventh plague of hail, God says to Pharaoh:

"For by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth. 16 But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth." (Exodus 9:15-16)

# Romans 9:18

Romans 9:18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

So God allowed Israel to live after the golden calf episode. He allowed Pharaoh to live, although hardened to accomplish a greater purpose. That of bringing the oracles of God, the word of God, and the Messiah to the world!

# Romans 9:19-21

19 You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?”  
20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?” 21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

Who is the objector here? It's the same objector in Romans 3!

Romans 3:1-5

What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? 2 Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God. 3 For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? 4 Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: “That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You are judged.” 5 But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say?

# Back to judicial hardening

This is a major theme of Romans.

But this judicial hardening is for a purpose, the salvation of the Gentiles, and ultimately the Jews again.

The objector is not a generic sinner who from birth has been elected to damnation. (How Calvinists universally take this passage. Let's honor the context and read it as a Jew who is opposed to the gospel.)

# The Old Testament reference

Jeremiah 18:1-11 The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying: 2 “Arise and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause you to hear My words.” 3 Then I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was, making something at the wheel. 4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make.

5 Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: 6 “O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?” says the Lord. “Look, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel! 7 The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, 8 if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. 9 And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, 10 if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it.

11 “Now therefore, speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Behold, I am fashioning a disaster and devising a plan against you. Return now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.” ’”

# Another reference that Calvinists dislike

2 Tim 2:20-22 (NKJV) 20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. 21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. 22 Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

It's the same in the ESV:

20 Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. 21 Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work. 22 So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

## Romans 9:22-24

22 What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, 24 even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? 25 As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved." 26 "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God."

"Notice that this is still a part of the apostle's response to the question first raised in Romans 9:1-6. If God has entrusted His Word to the Israelites (vv. 4-5) and the Israelites are standing in opposition to His Word (vv. 2-3), then has God's Word failed (vs. 6)? Not only has God not failed to fulfill His Word, but He has fulfilled it through both the active hardening and "mercying" of Israelites to the benefit of all the nations of the earth, as was the original promise made to Abraham." (Leighton Flowers)

# The hardening is not final (Romans 11)

7 What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. 8 Just as it is written:

“God has given them a spirit of stupor,  
Eyes that they should not see  
And ears that they should not hear,  
To this very day...”

11 I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. 12 Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!

13 For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, 14 if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them. 15 For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

# Romans 11

16 For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. 17 And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, 18 do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." 20 Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. 22 Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. 23 And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. 24 For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

# Romans 11

25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

“The Deliverer will come out of Zion,  
And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;  
27 For this is My covenant with them,  
When I take away their sins.”

28 Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. 29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. 30 For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, 31 even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. 32 For God has shut them them all up to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.

# Let's consider the big picture

“Right now stop and re-read Romans 9 through 11 all the way through from start to finish with this merciful motive in mind. See if you find a divine Father shamefully cutting off children before they are even born, or see if you find a Father mercifully seeking and even longing for the reconciliation of all. See if you find a Father you want to brag on from the rooftops or one who has some characteristics you would rather keep buried in a closet. See if you find a Father who has cut humanity off from birth in order to show off His wrath, or rather One willing to cut Himself off in order to show off His mercy.” (Leighton Flowers)

# Romans 11

32 For God has shut them all up to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.

33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

34 "For who has known the mind of the Lord?  
Or who has become His counselor?"

35 "Or who has first given to Him  
And it shall be repaid to him?"

36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever.  
Amen.