

Abide in Me

John 15:4

*Bible studies for disciples
who make disciples*



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A Mysterious Mercy, Still

God is Faithful, Still

Romans 9:1-33

What is God's plan for the world? How does the current conflict in the Middle East affect our understanding of God's purpose in history? Romans 9-11 gives us a unique look behind the scenes from God's perspective. These three chapters are a profoundly relevant section of Scripture, very dense, tightly reasoned, and not without a little controversy! The aim of this study is not to spark debate, but to understand God's purpose in the world for Israel, the Church, and you.

OBSERVATION (*What does the passage say?*)

Before meeting with your Growth Group, read through the passage at least twice and perform the following prompts:

- Circle each privilege enjoyed by the Jewish people in verses 4-5.
- Bracket every verse number that contains a question.
- Double underline the answer to each question.

¹ I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—² that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ 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. ⁴ They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. ⁵ To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

⁶ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷ and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." ⁸ 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. ⁹ For this is what the promise said: "About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son." ¹⁰ And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, ¹¹ 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—¹² she was told, "The older will serve the younger." ¹³ As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

¹⁴ What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! ¹⁵ For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

¹⁶ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "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." ¹⁸ So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

¹⁹ You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" ²⁰ But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me

like this?”²¹ Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?²² 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,²³ in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—²⁴ even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?²⁵ As indeed he says in Hosea,

“Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’
and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’”

²⁶ “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.’”

²⁷ And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved,²⁸ for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.”²⁹ And as Isaiah predicted,

“If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring,
we would have been like Sodom
and become like Gomorrah.”

³⁰ What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith;³¹ but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law.³² Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone,³³ as it is written,

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense;
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

INTERPRETATION (*What does the passage mean?*)

Read verses 1-5

1. What is the essential question Paul is resolving in Romans 9-11? (see also Romans 3:1-6).
2. Restate in your own words what the exact issue is.
3. Why does Paul repeat multiple times that he is speaking the truth? What prompts this necessary repetition?

Read verses 6-13

4. How does Paul answer the problem regarding Israel's unbelief? What are the two senses in which the term *Israel* is used?

5. How do the sons of Abraham (Ishmael and Isaac) and the sons of Isaac (Esau and Jacob) illustrate the point that *not all Israel is Israel*?

Read verses 14-21

6. What is the accusation against God in verse 14 and how does Paul answer it in the rest of this section?

7. What do you make of the issue that salvation does not rest upon the human will but God's mercy?

Read verses 22-33

8. What is the relationship between Israel (i.e. Jewish people and not the nation) and the Church? How do the OT prophecies of Hosea and Isaiah bring clarity to the relationship?

9. What is the stone of stumbling that currently keeps the majority of Jews from believing that Jesus is the Messiah?

APPLICATION (*How does the passage apply to our lives?*)

1. To what degree is your commitment to share the gospel with others motivated by the reality of eternal condemnation? Should it be?

