

Romans 9 • The Sovereign God of Israel

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · August 15, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Romans chapter 9. Open your Bibles please to Romans chapter 9 as we get into this part of the study. We're going to start with prayer please. Father God as we open our hearts to the ministry of your Holy Spirit tonight we just really pray for your hand to move and for your your voice to speak to each and every heart. I thank you my father that you know everyone here you know what's going on in their lives in their hearts you know what's happening and you know how best to speak to them from these verses and I just really pray that you would do that.

It is our heart and our desire to tune into your voice tonight Lord for you are the the teacher here tonight and we want to give way to the ministry of your Holy Spirit to teach us to instruct us to fill our hearts with grace and understanding and we ask that you would do all of these things and the authority granted us through the name of your son Jesus Christ our Lord amen amen all right as we approach Romans chapter 9 I don't know how many of you guys read ahead and are familiar with this but it's important to see that this chapter along with chapter 10 and 11 make up a kind of trilogy of thought for the Apostle Paul as it relates to his understanding and his heart for the nation of Israel and I want to show you how each chapter begins with a reference to Israel up on the screen here in chapter 9 in just a moment we're going to read these words I could wish Paul writes that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers my kinsmen according to the flesh and of course by that he means the Jewish people and then in chapter 10 he's going to essentially start that chapter by saying brothers my heart's desire and prayer to God for them and that is referring as we'll see to Israel is that they may be saved and then in chapter 11 he says I ask then has God rejected his people once again referring to the Jews he says by no means for I myself am an Israelite a descendant of Abraham and so we see that these three chapters are kind of a departure if you will from everything that the Apostle Paul has been saying up to this point and he takes these three chapters to focus on the nation of Israel as it relates to salvation and their response to their own Messiah and essentially their rejection and unbelief of him related to him so let's keep let's start reading verse 1 we're going to read down through verse 5 Paul writes I'm speaking the truth in Christ I'm 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 they are Israelites and to them belonged 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 Messiah the Christ who is God over all blessed forever amen I'm gonna have you stop there for a moment as we continue on because you'll notice here that this is where Paul kind of gets personal he begins to kind of bear his heart concerning the grief and the sorrow that he has concerning his people the Jews and the reason that Paul has this grief is because he sees them essentially as cut off he sees them because of their unbelief as now separated you know from God in a very real way and it even drives him to say as he did in these verses I could wish that I myself were cut off for their sake and what he means by that is if somehow me relinquishing my own promise and and life in Christ if that could somehow have an effect on them I could wish myself you know cut off that they might be brought in and I obviously it's it's a good heart you know it's it's a nice statement it's a it's a nice sentiment of course it's not possible but it is essentially the same sentiment that Moses expressed at one time for the nation of Israel you might remember in the book of Exodus up on the screen we can read it together from chapter 32 it says so Moses returned to the Lord and said alas this people has sinned a great sin they've made for themselves gods of gold but now he says if you will forgive their sin but if not please blot me out of your book that you have written in that fascinating essentially kind of the same the same heart for the people of Israel and you'll notice that we as Paul talks about the blessings that belong exclusively to Israel that he named several things that are theirs and there's uniquely at that point he talks about you'll notice the adoption the adoption as sons the glory the covenants and by the way there are many covenants that God made with Israel the giving of the law the worship the promises the patriarchs and of course ultimately the Messiah and then I want to also make note of the fact that at the end of verse 5 you'll notice that Paul gives one of the clearest declarations of the deity of Jesus Christ look at look at verse 5 again look how he ends that he talks about Christ who is God over all blessed forever amen and you know that that's that's pretty clear who is God over all blessed forever verse 6 goes on he says 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 but through Isaac shall your offspring be named 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 and what Paul is doing in these three verses is he is anticipating someone making an accusation essentially that well you know God went to all this trouble for the nation of Israel and he's already talking about all the things that God did for Israel and claimed for them and look at them they're essentially an unbelief and you know it's it's it's fascinating how it's essentially the same today it's largely the same today and somebody might say well wow I'd say God's promises took a nosedive wouldn't you it sounds like things kind of failed on God's part as it relates to the

nation of Israel to do all that he did and have them now living in this state of essentially unbelief and so Paul is anticipating this and he's beginning to respond to this sort of a situation and the first thing that he mentions is he says that not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel now that's an important statement and he's he's what he's what he means in that statement is something that we say as Christians you know once in a while you'll hear a Christian say and rightly so not everybody who claims to be a Christian is actually a born-again believer right because there's a lot of people who will claim to be Christians and they will claim it for all kinds of different reasons one person once told me that they knew they were Christian because they've been raised in a Christian home and that has nothing to do with anything it is one's personal acceptance reception of Jesus Christ as Savior that makes someone a child of God and we know that and Paul is expressing the same thing here about Israel and he's saying here not all who are descended from Israel after the flesh are in fact Israel and what he means by that is children of the promise now the reason I emphasize this section of scriptures because there's a very common argument that I'm hearing today and I got a note in the last couple of weeks about this and what somebody wanted to know what I thought about the fact that people are claiming today that that people who are in Israel aren't true Israelites and they and they I forget how they worded the question exactly but it was something along those lines you know what do you think about the the Jews living in Israel who aren't really Jude and I'm thinking to myself when has Israel ever become anything other than Israel You know, it's like, who cares? You know, Paul is talking ... he's not talking about Israel after the flesh. He's made that point here. I'm not talking about Israel after the flesh.

I'm talking about Israel after the promise. That's what he's most concerned about. What people are saying today is, well, you know, all of these things that the Bible purports to say about these promises related to Israel, well, these people living in Israel aren't even Israelites anymore. You know, and I'm like, give me a break. You know, that has ...

it's a dumb argument, frankly, and it's unimportant, ultimately, because as Paul argues here, what matters to God is not the flesh. It's whether or not someone has embraced the promise, and that's what he's saying, and that's why he says in verse 9, if you go on and read with me there, for this is what the promise said. Now he's going to start to talk about the promises made. He says about this next ... this time next year, I will return and Sarah shall have a son.

And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born, and that's important, we'll talk about that in a minute, 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, and that means the firstborn, because she had twins,

remember, the older will serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated. Now, I want you to stay with me here, because we need to unpack these verses. What the Apostle Paul is doing here in these verses is highlighting the examples of God's Word coming to his people, and he cites two specific promises made to Abraham and Sarah, and made to Isaac and Rebekah. And there are two things about these promises that we want to be very careful not to miss.

The first is that it is a promise that God will show mercy, okay? In both cases, this is a promise related to the mercy of God, okay? He's going to have mercy upon Abraham and Sarah, and they're going to bear a child in their old age. He's going to have mercy in the offspring of Isaac and Rebekah, in that he's going to continue his covenant promise through one of the boys, even though he doesn't deserve it. And we're talking about Jacob now.

God's mercy is going to win out. Now, we'll talk more about mercy in just a bit, and how this kind of plays out in this chapter. But the second thing that we need to understand about these promises that Paul cites concerning Abraham and Isaac is that they are the basis of understanding what it means to be a child of God. You know, when I was a kid, I remember my parents attended a very liberal church where, and I've told you guys before, I went to church all of my childhood, never once heard the gospel. Didn't hear it until I was out of, you know, I wasn't out of high school.

I guess I was around 15 or so years old, but it wasn't a church. I didn't, you know, I went to church every Sunday, never heard the gospel. But one of the things that we were told all the time in church is that we're all God's children, you know? Everybody, and that's why we love everybody, because we're all God's children. Well, the Bible doesn't say that.

The Bible talks about us being made God's children by receiving his promises, and specifically the promise that is given to us through Jesus. Let me show you, you guys know this, from John's gospel. Up on the screen, John writes, to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. And then he describes what he means by children of God. We're not talking about kids who were born of blood, or the will of the flesh, or even the will of man.

This is a birth of God. God gives this birth, right? Well, what is it all predicated on? Receiving the promise. Again, the promise to you and me is Jesus.

In the Old Testament, and specifically to Abraham, and Sarah, and Isaac, and Rebecca, the promise was what God promised them. But they believed God, and that is the basis of what it means to be a child of God. And we're going to talk more about this as we get into this. But I want to also address the other

elephant in the room, and that is the concept that Paul introduces in these verses of election. And this is a concept that refers to, at least biblically speaking, it refers to God's sovereign choice in a matter.

And that's, God elects, he elects, he chooses, and so forth. And this whole idea of election has been emphasized, and debated, and argued, and taught, you know, ad nauseum. And honestly, it is a concept that many people find very difficult to grasp. But it essentially speaks of God's sovereignty, and it speaks of his sovereign right and ability to choose according to his wisdom, grace, and understanding. And yet, you know, people struggle with this whole idea of election, because it just seems to paint or illustrate God in ways that sometimes we're not comfortable with.

Particularly when we read language such as we find here in verse 13. If you look again in verse 13, it says, as it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated. And I can't tell you how many times people have asked me about that verse, which by the way is a quotation from the book of Malachi. And the reason people want to know about it, and they ask about it, is because it sounds like God is being cruel. It sounds like he's being even a little unreasonable.

Well, first of all, let's take a look at this in its context from Malachi chapter 1. Up on the screen, the verses go like this. I have loved you, says the Lord, but you say, how have you loved us? Is not Esau Jacob's brother, declares the Lord, yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated. I've laid waste his hill country, and left his heritage to jackals of the desert.

So here's the original context that Paul is quoting now here in Romans chapter 9. And the Apostle Paul explains in his writing that this statement that is recorded for us now here in Malachi, which is after the fact, is spoken in such a way as to precede the birth of the boys. Okay? Well, you and I might refer to people we hate and love, but that's because we've watched them. We've heard them.

We've seen what they do, you know. And we'll say, yeah, well that guy, you know, I hate him. Or that guy over there, I love him. And it's based on what we've observed. But what happened?

You know, have you ever said I hate somebody before they were born? Of course not. There's nothing to base that hatred on. Or you wouldn't say that you love someone. So this creates all kinds of questions in people's hearts and minds.

How can God do this? How can He establish this sense of hatred and love even before they're born? They had no choice. And so it sounds very much like God is anti-choice as it relates to the free will of mankind, and He just kind of dictates ahead of time what somebody's going to be like. Yeah, I'm going to make this guy named Esau, and he's going to be kind of a jerk.

And I'm not going to like him. In fact, I don't know, he's not even born yet, and I already don't like him. You know, kind of sounds like he's a grumpy old man, you know. But Jacob, I'm going to make him a good guy. And I'm going to like him.

Here we go. Poof, you know. It sounds all kind of crazy to our sensibilities. But one of the biggest mistakes that we make when we see verses like this, and we think about the decisions and the choices that God makes, is the mistake that God is making decisions or choices randomly, or even for cold-hearted reasons, that He goes on to refuse to explain, you know. I'm going to do this, and I'm not going to tell you why.

Well, I mean, I have to say it is true. God rarely explains Himself. His sovereignty, you know, doesn't require Him necessarily to do that. But that doesn't mean that what He does do, and the choices He makes, makes. It doesn't mean those things are cold-hearted or random in any way.

You know, when people ask me about verses like this, often what they're saying to me without asking the question is, can I trust this God? Because I just read this verse that he declared hatred for someone before they were even born, and that disturbs me. And so I'm writing you, Pastor, because I want to know, I want you to explain this, and I want you to help me to feel better about God. Because right now I'm wondering if I can trust him, you know. And one of the things that I come back and share with people are verses about God's character.

And I'll just, I'll talk to them, and I'll even quote him a verse that will say something along the lines of, you know, his justice is perfect, his ways are without flaw, something like that. And then I come back and I say, do you believe that? Because, see, that's at the root of the question. That's what's really going on. Are God's ways perfect?

Well, the Bible says so. Okay? The Bible actually even goes on to tell us that his ways are higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts. In fact, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts. So that's a very, very polite and poetic way of saying, you know, you're just not going to get it.

The question is, are you going to trust him? Even when you run into things like this in the Bible, like, I have loved Jacob, but Esau, I have hated. Well, here's the big problem with reading this verse in your Bible and doing your best to interpret it. What we're doing is we interpret it through our modern usage of language, and that's frankly where we get in trouble. But what is happening here in this verse is there is a... how do I want to call this?

It's a term. It's an ancient Hebrew usage of language to show extreme opposites. In case you're interested, it's called a comparative idiom, right? And this is something that the ancient Hebrews understood. They knew that it was going to express a polar opposite in hyperbolic language, right?

It's going to use hyperbole to make a point, and so that's what's going on here. The words love and hate are not meant to express God's malice or an anger against Esau and in favor of Jacob. Instead, it is simply meant to highlight what should be rather just a clear choice or an expression of priority, okay? Now, I know this doesn't really work for a modern audience. We read love and hate, and we're kind of like, wow, whoa, sure is nice to be sovereign God.

You can say whatever you want, and nobody can come against you. No, He's making a point. And here's the interesting thing. Sometimes we think about God in the Old Testament and say, you know, He was kind of mad. That's why I don't really like studying the Old Testament, because God always seems mad.

I like studying the New Testament, because Jesus was a lot nicer. Did you know Jesus used the same comparative idiom and in pretty stark language? Let me show you this on the screen from the book of Luke, and you guys know this. If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Have you ever read that verse and been troubled by it?

Oh, God's telling me to hate my family. That's what it means to be a Christian, I guess. And to walk every—I gotta hate my family. Well, I guess I better go out and tell them. I hate you guys.

No, this is not a command to hate one's family. This, again, is this comparative idiom. Jesus is employing the same Hebrew usage of language to describe the fact that our love for God should be paramount. It should be what supersedes all other human affections. That's all he's saying, right?

I mean, if he was telling us to hate our family, that would be pretty weird when then we get to Ephesians chapter 5 and we hear that, you know, husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church. It's like, wait a minute, that's a contradiction. You're telling me to love my wife? Jesus told me to hate my wife. Again, don't misunderstand the usage of this Hebrew idiom.

So, in the case of Jacob and Esau, the statement, I have loved Jacob, but Esau I've hated, essentially means that even before the boys came onto the scene, God had established a priority of favor toward Jacob as the son that would carry on the Abrahamic promise, right? That's essentially what it means when he uses those strong words. But, you know, even in Paul's day, those kind of things can be misunderstood and

misconstrued, and so Paul goes on to write, look in verse 14 in your Bible, follow along with me. Paul says, what shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part?

By no means. For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. And this is where we get back to the topic of mercy. And it's important to remember the definition of mercy. Do you guys remember what it means?

It means not getting what you do deserve, okay? It's different from grace. So mercy is not getting what you do deserve, okay? God is never unfair. But within the context of his own sovereignty, he chooses those to whom he will pour out extra blessing.

And that's what is being said here. That God chose in the context of Jacob and Esau, as we saw a moment ago, that he was going to pour out this special mercy upon Jacob. I think it was somebody came to C.H. Spurgeon once and said something to him like, you know, pastor, I'm just really struggling with this idea that God hated Esau. And Spurgeon came back and said, well, I'm struggling with the idea that he loved Jacob.

And see, that's the idea behind mercy. None of us should be receiving favor or love from God. We don't deserve it. None of us deserves it. And yet we get it.

We get it because God sovereignly expresses his mercy, you know, in our lives. Now, Paul goes even deeper into this mystery of God's sovereign choice in verse 16. Look with me there. He says, so then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who has mercy. And this means, and again, remember here, the context is mercy.

Okay? Don't miss the context. It means God's mercy is not given to us simply because we want it. It is certainly not given to us because we deserve it, nor is it given to us because of good works. God shows mercy out of his sovereign choice to show mercy.

That's all Paul is saying, okay? It's important that you see that. Now, he's going to go on. He's going to get even a little more challenging. In verse 17 he says, for the Scripture says to Pharaoh, for this very purpose I've raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.

So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. Now we're looking at the other side of things. With Jacob we looked at, you know, God's mercy, and well, you know, we saw in Esau the opposite of that, and now we're seeing the opposite once again as it is expressed in the life of

Pharaoh. But I got to tell you, you got to be careful with these verses. Paul is not saying that God picked this random soft-hearted king of Egypt who was a good guy and really, you know, loved people and made him a hard-hearted monster.

That's not what Paul is saying here when he speaks of what the Lord did in Pharaoh's life. In fact, that's simply not consistent with what we see even in the book of Exodus and elsewhere in the Bible. What, you know, if you read through that passage in Exodus, and I just recently went through the book of Exodus myself, what you see when the plagues are sequentially brought upon the nation and the people of Egypt, it says, and Pharaoh hardened his heart, and Pharaoh hardened his heart, and Pharaoh hardened his heart, and Pharaoh hardened his heart, and then you get to the end and it's then, and then God hardened Pharaoh's heart. In other words, he literally gave him over to the condition of his hardness that he had been showing, and God finally allows Pharaoh to just kind of follow the natural path of his heart without any further attempt on his part to reach him, and it is a frightening concept, frankly, that God would give someone over, but this is something that Paul already addressed in Romans chapter one. As he's addressing the wrath of God being poured out upon mankind, he talks about the fact that there is a point in a person's life where they just they refuse every attempt on God's part to reach their heart, and eventually they are just given over to the condition of their heart, and it's irrevocable, and that's what God did in Pharaoh's life.

But again, Paul anticipates objections to this whole idea. Look at verse 19. He says, "...you will say to me, well then why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will? But who are you, O man, to answer back to God?" We would say, who are you to smart off to God?

Will what is molded say to its molder, why have you made me like this? 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? 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 is prepared beforehand for glory? Even us, whom he has called not from Jews only, but also from the Gentiles, as indeed he says in Hosea, those who are 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.

And once again, this is a grouping of verses that must be correctly understood. There are some who read these verses and they believe that Paul is essentially teaching here that God creates some people simply to judge them to hell and to pour out his wrath upon them. And that's the only reason that they

were created, was just simply to be vessels of wrath. But that is not what Paul is saying. Paul is answering a hypothetical question of really his own making.

And in verse 22, the question is, what if? What if God, desiring to show his wrath and make known his power, endured the patience of vessels of wrath and prepared for destruction and all that? Again, he's not saying that God does this. He's saying, what if God were to do that? The whole point is not to teach that God prepares some people for hell, or creates people for hell.

That's not the point. The point is to say, God is sovereign and who are you to argue with him? What if he did that? You still can't. It's not going to make any difference if you go, God, I object.

That just doesn't sound right to me, you know? Who are you? Who are you to talk to God and say, I don't think that's a very good thing to do? You know, the reason that we know that God doesn't simply create people to condemn them to hell is because if that were true, it would contradict other statements in the Bible. And God doesn't contradict himself.

Again, Paul is using an argument here, a hypothetical argument, to make the point about sovereignty. He's not teaching radical Calvinism. He's just not. And we know from other passages in the Bible what God's heart is related to people. Let me show you 2 Peter 3.9 on the screen.

Look at this. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you. Look at this next statement. Not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. Here's the heart of God, guys.

You just heard it. That's the heart of the Lord. He's not willing that any should be lost, but that all would come to repentance. I like that. This expresses a heart that I can get behind.

This whole idea that God creates people to send them to hell just to pour out his wrath. I'm sorry. You're interpreting Scripture incorrectly. That's a hypothetical argument made to make a different point. And verse 25 and 26 are another example of God's sovereign right, you know, to show mercy to those who don't deserve it.

Verse 27, let's go on. 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, for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay. And as Isaiah predicted, if the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah. And what Paul is saying here is that even though Israel has largely responded to God over the years with a heart of unbelief, and unfortunately that is still

true, although I will say there is a growing, in Israel, there's a growing group of people that at least are pressing in on God. Unfortunately, it's still through the law.

But anyway, he's saying that God's mercy is seen in the fact that he will preserve a remnant. In fact, God has always had a remnant, and that's something we learn in the Bible. And so Paul uses two quotations, and they're both from the book of Isaiah here, to highlight the fact that Israel doesn't deserve God's mercy. In fact, had he not expressed his mercy toward Israel, Israel wouldn't be a nation today. They would have been like Sodom and Gomorrah.

Have you ever met anybody who's from Sodom and Gomorrah? I haven't. You know why? They don't exist. They were wiped off the map.

And Paul is saying here, had God not shown mercy, that would have been us, just like Sodom and Gomorrah. But God has maintained a remnant, which means this, God's mercy prevailed. That's what that means. The fact that you and I see a physical nation of Israel today, which is there to fulfill prophecy, means that God's mercy has prevailed, and a remnant will be saved. You know, it's interesting, you know, we live in a time after Israel was once again regathered as a nation, 1948.

Can you imagine how the Christians felt about all the prophecies in the Bible? They talked about Israel in the last days, and there wasn't an Israel. Can you imagine what that felt like? Have you read any books by George Mueller? Fantastic.

There's a book called The Autobiography of George Mueller. I couldn't think of his last name there. He wrote at a time in the 1800s when Israel wasn't a nation. There was no Israel. It was gone.

And nobody knew for sure, you know, when it was going to come back. But George Mueller, in his books, particularly The Autobiography of George Mueller, talks about Israel as if, well, you know, this is going to happen someday. Israel is going to come back and be a nation. And I am sure there were plenty of people that were like, right, yeah, yeah, that'll never happen. They're gone.

Israel has become vapor. They've been assimilated into the other cultures of the world. And all these promises that you Christians are hanging on as it relates to the last days that say that when Jesus comes, He's going to fight on behalf of Israel, and all the nations of the world are going to gather in a war against Israel. There is no Israel. Get a life, you people.

Woo! 1948, Israel becomes a nation once again. Oh, okay. Yeah, I guess we have a nation of Israel again. Wow, isn't that interesting?

What does it show? It shows that God's mercy has prevailed, right? The mercy of God. Oh, His mercies are new every morning. Verse 30, read with me there.

What shall we say then? The Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith, but Israel who pursued a law, meaning the Mosaic law, that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law because, of course, they would have had to be perfect. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as it were, based on works. They've stumbled over the stumbling stone, as it is written, Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and that's Jesus, and a rock of offense, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.

Is that interesting? The stone of stumbling is given a personal pronoun, a personal masculine pronoun, and this is so incredibly insightful and powerful, and when you step back and look at the situation between Israel and the Gentiles from Paul's perspective, it all kind of becomes clear. He's saying the Jews stumbled over their desire to be righteous before God because they sought that righteousness through the law. They thought they could be good enough. They thought they could keep the law perfectly and therefore be righteous before God.

The Gentiles, who never ever sought righteousness before God, they weren't even looking for it. They found it because they heard the gospel and embraced it by faith, and therefore now stand righteous before God simply because of their faith. And so amidst all of the talk in this chapter about God's sovereignty, and believe me, God's sovereignty is a big deal to me. I see it in the Bible, I teach God's sovereignty, but amidst all the statements that are made in this chapter about the sovereignty of God, you'll notice these final statements all come back to the simple idea surrounding the importance of faith, and faith, my friends, is a choice. It's a choice.

And so for the people who read Romans chapter 9 and they say, well this is all about sovereignty, and this basically teaches us that it's all God's sovereign will as to whether we're saved or not saved. And I've actually had people ask me, how do I know I've been chosen? And I come back and I say, well you'll know that you're chosen if you choose Him. Then you'll know. But they're like, no, no, no, God chose ahead of time.

Listen, the Bible tells us very clearly that according to God's foreknowledge, and that means He knew what you would choose, you have therefore then been predestined according to that foreknowledge, not according to a random decision. You're in, you're in, you're out, you are all out, you know, and this and that. No. God has given you and me this precious, precious gift of the freedom to choose, but the freedom

to choose based on a rational and reasonable decision. You know, anybody who ever refers to the faith that you have as a believer as blind faith doesn't understand anything about the Bible.

Because one of the things God says through the prophet Isaiah to the nation of Israel is, come, let us reason together. Let's talk this through. Let's think this thing through, and let's come to a reasonable, rational conclusion based on the facts, right? And the reason God lays it out like that is He wants us to come to Him of our own volition. He wants us to come to Him because, you know, we want to come to Him.

I had a guy write to me this last week. He's like, Pastor Paul, if God's kingdom is so important, why doesn't He make it mandatory for us to learn about it? You know, and I thought, well because, you know, nothing that God has really done is mandatory. Think about it. The gospel's not mandatory.

He lays it out to you and me as a wonderful free gift. And He says, choose life, you know. Here before you is life and death. Choose life. And He wants it to be your choice.

Not a choice that someone made for you. God doesn't want automatons. He wants thinking, rational people who recognize, you know what? The offer that He has made to me through His Son, Jesus Christ, for eternal life, forgiveness of sins, and all that goes with it, it's the best offer I'll ever receive in my entire life. And I'm going to make sure I lay hold of that one.

Of all the decisions I make in my life, this is the most important one. And you know, Jesus made an interesting statement that's recorded for us in the book of Luke, and it's a haunting statement, and yet it's a powerful statement at the same time. Let me show you on the screen. Luke 18 8, it simply says, and this is Jesus talking, He says, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth? Isn't that a, isn't that a, I mean, just think about that for a while.

Is He going to find faith? What is He going to find? What's He going to find in your life? Because, you know, this whole chapter, we've been talking about the promises that He gives and how these people embrace those promises by faith. Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, and how because of the, and predicated upon the receiving of those promises, they become children of promise.

And that's what every believer is, a child of promise. Will He find faith in your life when He comes? Amen? Let's pray. Father, I want to, I want to thank you for this chapter.

It's a, it's a challenging one, to be sure. And we are challenged to understand something that, frankly, is beyond our comprehension, which is truly the sovereign choices that you make, and how you choose to

pour out mercy here or there. And yet, we see that it is your heart, and we long to know that heart better. Your Word tells us that your mercies are new every morning, and we want to lay hold of that in every way. And we pray that you would just continue to fill us with grace and understanding as we press in to know the Lord, to know your heart, to know your desire, that all men might come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Thank you for your mercy. Thank you for your sovereignty. Thank you for the freedom to choose. We praise you and look to you in all of these things, and we ask them in the authority of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. And all God's people said together, Amen.