

## O Jerusalem!

### Romans 9:14-10:4

Online Sermon:

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**“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.<sup>38</sup> Look, your house is left to you desolate”**

**Matthew 23:37-38**

## Paul’s Anguish

The anguish that Christ felt before His crucifixion because His own people would not repent and be saved, was one that Apostle Paul felt deeply! Paul said he had “great sorrow and unceasing anguish in his heart” to the point that he “wished himself to be cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of his people” (9:1-2)! Having “advanced in Judaism beyond many of his own age” (Galatians 1:14) Paul understood his countrymen’s fierce passion to retain their traditions of temple, Torah, and lineage as “God’s chosen people” (9:4). It was not that long ago that Paul shared their zeal to the extent that he “breathed out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples,” had them imprisoned (Acts 9:1-2) and even approved of the stoning of Stephen (Acts 8:1)! It was only when he heard the Good

Shepherd say, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me” (Acts 9:3) that his eyes, mind, and heart were opened to realize that Christ whom the prophets spoke, and angels pondered (1 Peter 1:10-



12) was none other than the Messiah (Romans 9:5)! God’s very own Son had emptied Himself (Philippians 2:6-11) and offered His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45)! This was Good News but how would Paul tell his own people that he loved so dearly that entrance into the kingdom of God was not based following the Law but by faith in a risen Savior (9:30-32)? How would Paul explain to them that

God had not failed in His promises made to Abraham, but through Christ fulfilled them? As a highly skilled ambassador of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20) Paul makes his appeal that Israel would accept the Gentile people and that they themselves might join him and have their own “Damascus experience,” repent and believe in the way, truth, and life (John 14:6)!

## God’s Chosen People

Knowing that his people would passionately object to his teaching concerning Israel’s alienation from God and the grafting in of the Gentiles, Paul switches to a “question-and answer” format in which he anticipates and answers Israel, his dialogue partner’s<sup>1</sup> objections. The first objection Paul anticipated they would make was: is not “Israel’s tragic

<sup>1</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 589.

alienation (9:1-3)”<sup>2</sup> mean that God’s promise to His chosen people somehow failed (9:6)? To this Paul says the promise to be God’s chosen people was “given sovereignly, not biologically!”<sup>3</sup> Earlier in chapter four of this letter Paul reminded Israel that before Abraham was circumcised, he was



credited as righteous based on his faith in God. Salvation was not based on being born into the nation of Israel<sup>4</sup> but by “having faith, so that it may be by

grace” that people become God’s children (4:16). If one truly believes that God’s promise was to the direct descendants of Isaac, Paul argues, then why did were not both Jacob and Esau equal recipients of His promise?

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*God’s choice of Jacob over Esau was not based on genealogy, for both had the same parents, or on one being better than the other, for the choice was made before they were born; but so that “God’s purpose in election might stand” (9:11).<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Craig S. Keener, [Romans](#), New Covenant Commentary Series (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 117.

<sup>3</sup> R. C. Sproul, [The Gospel of God: An Exposition of Romans](#) (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 164.

<sup>4</sup> R. C. Sproul, [The Gospel of God: An Exposition of Romans](#) (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 164.

<sup>5</sup> R. C. Sproul, [The Gospel of God: An Exposition of Romans](#) (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 165.

Justification through faith in the atoning sacrifice in Christ did not “contradict the Old Testament position that marks out the Jews as God’s chosen people”<sup>6</sup> because the family of God was never based on nationality but faith! “What then shall we say, Paul rhetorically asks, that the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness by faith; but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness, have not attained their goal (9:30-31)? Yes, that is exactly what Paul was saying, faith and not works has always been how one becomes part of God’s chosen people!

## Is God Just?

In response to his statement that before either were born God is said to have “loved Jacob, but Esau I hated,” Israel would likely have objected for Paul reasoning suggests “that God is unjust” (9:14) in His election of one over the other! This part of Paul’s argument is one of the most difficult ones given in the entire Bible!<sup>7</sup> To answer whether God is just Paul quotes Exodus 33:19. In response to the children of Israel worshipping the golden calf God had every right to destroy the Israelite nation and raise up a new one from Moses (32:9) and yet the stated reason for saving them was “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion” (33:19). This bestowal of God’s mercy was not dependent on “human willing” (9:16)<sup>8</sup> for He does not have any obligation to save anyone!<sup>9</sup> Since all have sinned and fallen short of His

<sup>6</sup> Leon Morris, [The Epistle to the Romans](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 358.

<sup>7</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [Romans: God and History](#), vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991–), 1059.

<sup>8</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [The Epistle to the Romans](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 593.

<sup>9</sup> Craig S. Keener, [Romans](#), New Covenant Commentary Series (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 118.

glory, God owes us nothing and should one only consider His justice then all would perish!<sup>10</sup> Not only is God free to show mercy to whomever He wants,



He is also free to “harden whomever He wants”<sup>11</sup> as well! For example, God repeatedly hardened Pharaoh’s heart so that His demonstration of might, power and mercy might be cleanly seen by both the Jewish and Egyptian people. God is not “capricious,”<sup>12</sup> irrational in His selection of some to blessings and others to damnation<sup>13</sup> but

merely makes His selection based on His sovereign right to rule and not based on the will of His loved but sinful creation!<sup>14</sup> God “hating” Esau in Malachi is similar expression used to describe Jacob loving Leah less than Rachel.<sup>15</sup> And when it comes to Pharaoh how could anyone suggest God was unjust to when Pharaoh worshipped Egyptians gods?

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*God in His sovereignty has every right Paul says to give one person a better and more significant role in His kingdom and He also has the right to assign a damnation role to anyone He chooses for He alone is sovereign!*

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## Is God Fair?

The next rhetorical question from Israel Paul wants to address is, “then why does God blame us? For who is able to resist His will”



(9:19)? Some scholars argue that God’s choice of Jacob over Esau and the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart is proof of what the Calvinists call “double predestination?”<sup>16</sup> While being chosen by God before one is born to either be saved or sent to eternal damnation<sup>17</sup> might seem unfair or unjust, for the Calvinists God’s free election is His right as Creator and leads to justice. Most Christians believe that in our natural

state of sinfulness one cannot come to know God without His offering of grace and mercy. “Salvation does not rest on human willing and

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<sup>10</sup> R. C. Sproul, [The Gospel of God: An Exposition of Romans](#) (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 166–167.

<sup>11</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [Romans](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 311.

<sup>12</sup> R. C. Sproul, [The Gospel of God: An Exposition of Romans](#) (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 166.

<sup>13</sup> R. C. Sproul, [The Gospel of God: An Exposition of Romans](#) (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 166.

<sup>14</sup> R. C. Sproul, [The Gospel of God: An Exposition of Romans](#) (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 166.

<sup>15</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [Romans: God and History](#), vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991–), 1061.

<sup>16</sup> R. C. Sproul, [The Gospel of God: An Exposition of Romans](#) (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 172–173.

<sup>17</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [Romans](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 316.

human striving”<sup>18</sup> but on a tender loving God mercifully reaching into one’s heart and soul to enable one to see the light and believe! God also has the right, according to Calvinists, to create humans to be damned to death not by God instilling evil in their hearts, which He could never do (James 1:13-15),<sup>19</sup> but instead choosing to leave them in the wages of the sinful life they have chosen which is death! While “no doctrine stimulates more negative reaction and consternation”<sup>20</sup> because it violates many Christian’s thoughts on free will and God’s justice, this is not what Paul is teaching in this passage! When Paul quotes Malachi 1:1-5, “Jacob I loved, Esau I hated,” this is not in reference to the persons but to the subsequent nations they birthed. Esau was not hated by God for upon his reconciliation with Jacob he is described as truly blessed which in the Old Testament was often a sign of God’s approval. “Esau” is a reference to the nation Edom who were wicked. Furthermore, when Paul stated that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart we must bear in mind that scripture states that Pharaoh hardened himself (Exod. 7:13, 14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 34, 35)!<sup>21</sup>

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*God did not harden Pharaoh’s heart but instead chose not to destroy him for his evil until His chosen purpose to free Israel and demonstrate His power had been accomplished.*<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 360.

<sup>19</sup> R. C. Sproul, *The Gospel of God: An Exposition of Romans* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 169.

<sup>20</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 599.

<sup>21</sup> Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 361.

The point Paul is making is that since God often raises and uproots nations,<sup>23</sup> Israel has been warned that their rejection of God’s only Son, Jesus means exclusion from His family and the grafting in of the Gentile nation for His honor and glory (Romans 11:7, 25; cf. 2 Cor 3:14).<sup>24</sup>

## The Potter’s Choice

Knowing that Israel would not like being compared to Pharaoh, i.e. as one who hardened his heart towards God, Paul reminds them that God as the Potter has the right not only to



form but to mold the clay any way He pleases (9:20-27). Paul asks Israel, “but who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, why did

you make me like this” (9:19)? Did not the prophets warn Israel that the judgement of God was going to fall on the nation<sup>25</sup> and yet despite being given every opportunity to repent they crucified very Son of God whom they worshipped? God who entered a covenant with Israel and gave them the task of being a

<sup>22</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Romans*, New Covenant Commentary Series (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 119.

<sup>23</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 315.

<sup>24</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Romans*, New Covenant Commentary Series (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 119–120.

<sup>25</sup> R. C. Sproul, *The Gospel of God: An Exposition of Romans* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 175–176.

light unto the nations had every right, especially in leu of their defiance, to make them “objects of His wrath prepared for destruction” (9:22) and fulfill the prophecy of Hosea which states, “I will call them my people who are not my people” (2:23).<sup>26</sup> Paul in this passage is not dealing with individual salvation but instead with “the failure of Israel as a whole to respond to the Messiah over against the fact that the church was largely Gentile.”<sup>27</sup> Just because the Jewish people could not see their adherence to following the Law, worshipping in the temple and being descendants of Abraham as being anything but a 100 percent guarantee of their salvation, this did not make it so!

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*Paul reminds them that it was not ethnic criterion by which Abram was saved<sup>28</sup> and any attempt on their part to be like Pharaoh and harden their own hearts towards God would in no way force the Potter to use either Israelite or Gentile clay in a manner inconsistent with His preordained purpose!<sup>29</sup>*

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It was always God’s plan to have representatives on earth called to be lights unto the nations. Paul finishes this section by asking Israel, if you who were rejected by God can become His people again, though you crucified His Son, then God in His mercy could graft in the Gentiles by faith to become part of Abraham’s descendants and His promise!<sup>30</sup>

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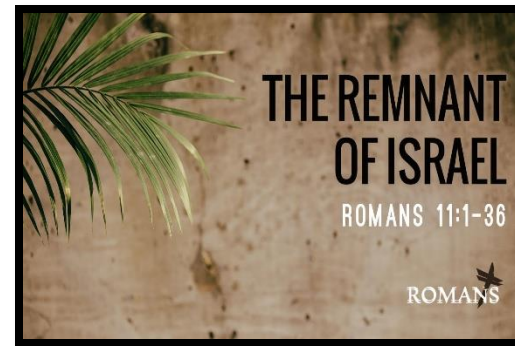
<sup>26</sup> R. C. Sproul, *The Gospel of God: An Exposition of Romans* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 175.

<sup>27</sup> Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 363.

<sup>28</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Romans*, New Covenant Commentary Series (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 121.

## Paul’s Plea

Paul finishes by pleading with Israel to have faith in Christ as their Messiah and become saved (10:1). Paul in this passage was not talking about double predestination in which those saved and those dammed are chosen before they are born. If this were true, then Paul’s plea that Israel might become saved would be futile and would not be congruent with other Scriptures on this topic. For example, earlier in his letter to Rome Paul states “Christ died once and for all” (6:10). With arms stretched



open and wide He died for even His enemies (Romans 5:10) so that everyone who believes in the way, truth, and life (John 14:6) might be born again (John 3:5-8) and adopted as God’s very own children (Romans 8:14-19). Those who believe they are beyond salvation only need to look at the Gospels and see that it was the tax collectors, prostitutes (Matthew 21:31-32), and even the occasional Pharisee (Acts 9:3-5) that through their faith in Christ entered God’s glorious kingdom. Paul’s letter to Rome is not about predestination but about God’s grace and mercy to always leave a way to be reconciled unto Him. With great joy Paul told Israel that “God had not rejected His people, who He foreknew” (10:2), but instead left the door of salvation open to them with

<sup>29</sup> Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 363–364.

<sup>30</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Romans*, New Covenant Commentary Series (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 121.

the glorious hope that a remnant would say “YES” and come to see “Christ as the culmination of the Law” (10:4) and their kinsmen. Paul concludes, “Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of Gentiles has come in, and in this way all Israel will be saved” (Romans 11:25). Like Pharaoh God hardening their hearts was not unjust for they chose to harden their own hearts! Since Christ longs to gather His children Israel together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings let us pray that Israel might no longer harden their hearts towards the Messiah but instead receive Christ as their Lord, Savior, and King!