

Living Under God's Mercy

Lesson 11 – August 16, 2026

Bible Basis: Romans 9:6-18

Bible Truth: Trust in God and believe in what Jesus has done for all through God's mercy. For through God's mercy provides an unbounding love and opportunities for believers.

Memory Verse: "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will be hardeneth" (Romans 9:18)

Lesson Key Takeaways:

1. God chooses according to His purpose, not human merit.
2. God's mercy is undeserved and freely given.
3. God rules over history and hearts.

Historical Background:

- Date & Place: Written around A.D. 57 from Corinth, just before Paul traveled to Jerusalem ([Acts 20](#)).
- Audience: A mixed church of Jewish and Gentile believers in Rome, living under Emperor Nero's early reign.
- Purpose: To unify believers around the gospel and prepare them for Paul's planned visit ([Romans 1:11-12](#)). [Romans 8](#) stands as the letter's climactic assurance section.

Background Context:

Up to this point we've learned the following from Paul's writings in Romans:

- **Romans 1** — Humanity's Need for the Gospel - **Theme:** The world is guilty and needs salvation.
- **Romans 2** — God's Judgment Is Righteous and Impartial - **Theme:** No one is exempt; all stand accountable.
- **Romans 3** — All Have Sinned, Justification Is by Faith - **Theme:** We are justified freely by God's grace.
- **Romans 4** — Abraham as the Example of Faith - **Theme:** Faith, not law, is the basis of God's promise.
- **Romans 5** — Peace, Hope, and Life in Christ - **Theme:** Grace is stronger than sin.

- **Romans 6** — Dead to Sin, Alive to God - **Theme:** Salvation leads to a transformed life.
- **Romans 7** — The Struggle with Sin and the Law - **Theme:** The law reveals sin but cannot deliver us from it.
- **Romans 8** — Life in the Spirit and Unshakeable Assurance - **Theme:** The Spirit secures our victory and our identity.

Background Scriptures: James 5:7-12

How does James 5:7-12 correspond to Romans 9:6-29?

Romans 9 tells us **God is sovereign**, and James 5 tells us **how to live because God is sovereign** — with patience, endurance, humility, and trust.

The Lesson:

I- God's Mercy, Not Human Ethnicity (Romans 9:6-9)

6But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they *are* not all Israel who *are* of Israel, **7**nor *are they* all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, “In Isaac your seed shall be called.” **8**That is, those who *are* the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. **9**For this *is* the word of promise: “At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.”

What's Happening Here?

In Romans 9:6–9, Paul is explaining **why God's promises to Israel haven't failed**, even though many Israelites rejected Christ. He's drawing a crucial distinction between **physical descent** and **spiritual identity**.

◆ 1. God's Word Still Stands

Paul begins by saying, “*It is not that the word of God has taken no effect.*” In other words, Israel's unbelief doesn't mean God's promises failed. His covenant was never based merely on ethnicity—it was always rooted in faith and divine calling.

◆ 2. True Israel Is Spiritual, Not Just Physical

When Paul says, “*They are not all Israel who are of Israel,*” he means that being born into Abraham's family doesn't automatically make someone part of God's true people. The **true Israel** consists of those who believe and are chosen by God's promise.

◆ 3. The Example of Isaac

Paul uses Abraham's sons to illustrate this. Ishmael was Abraham's son "according to the flesh," but Isaac was the child of promise—born through God's miraculous intervention. This shows that **God's covenant line continues through His promise, not human effort.**

◆ 4. The Promise to Sarah

Finally, Paul quotes God's words: "*At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.*" (Genesis 18:14) This emphasizes that God's plan unfolds by His initiative and timing. Salvation and belonging to God's family depend on His promise, not human lineage.

In short, Paul is teaching that **God's people are defined by faith and divine calling, not ancestry.** The "children of promise" are those who trust in Christ—the fulfillment of that promise.

II- God's Mercy, Not Human Effort (vv.10-13)

10And not only *this*, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, *even* by our father Isaac **11**(for *the children* not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), **12**it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." **13**As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."

What's Happening Here?

In **Romans 9:10–13**, Paul continues his argument about God's sovereign choice—showing that His plan and promises depend on **His calling**, not human effort or merit.

◆ 1. Rebecca's Twins: Jacob and Esau

Paul moves from Abraham's sons (Ishmael and Isaac) to Isaac's sons (Jacob and Esau). Both boys share the same parents, so their difference can't be explained by lineage or circumstance—it's entirely about **God's purpose.**

◆ 2. God's Choice Was Made Before They Were Born

Paul emphasizes that before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad, God declared:

"The older shall serve the younger." (Genesis 25:23) – they were born in verse 24.

This means His choice wasn't based on their actions or worthiness. It was to show that **God's plan stands by His own will**, not by human works.

◆ 3. “Jacob I Loved, but Esau I Hated”

This quote (from Malachi 1:2–3) expresses **God's preference for Jacob's line**—not emotional hatred, but covenant rejection. “Loved” and “hated” here are Hebrew expressions meaning **chosen** and **not chosen**. Jacob's descendants (Israel) were chosen to carry the promise; Esau's (Edom) were not.

◆ 4. The Purpose of God According to Election

Paul's point: God's calling is **sovereign and gracious**. He chooses whom He will use to fulfill His redemptive plan. This doesn't mean God is unjust—it means His mercy and purpose operate beyond human logic.

💡 **In summary:** Romans 9:10–13 teaches that God's promises are fulfilled through His divine choice, not human effort. Jacob's selection over Esau shows that salvation and calling depend on **God's mercy and purpose**, not ancestry or deeds.

III- God's Mercy, Not Human Understanding (vv. 14-18)

14What 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.

What's Happening Here?

In **Romans 9:14–18**, Paul is answering the *big objection* that naturally rises after everything he just said about God choosing Isaac (not Ishmael) and Jacob (not Esau). The question is simple:

“If God chooses according to His own purpose... is God unfair?”

Paul's answer is strong and clear: **Absolutely not**. Then he explains *why*.

1. Paul anticipates the objection: “Is God unrighteous?”

After showing that God chooses according to His own purpose, not human merit, Paul knows people will struggle with this.

So he asks the question for them:

“Is there unrighteousness with God?” **Certainly not.**

Paul refuses the idea that God’s sovereignty makes Him unjust.

2. God’s mercy is His to give (v. 15)

Paul quotes God’s words to Moses:

“I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy.” **Exodus 33:19**

This is key.

Mercy is **not something God owes**. Mercy is **something God gives freely**.

If mercy were earned, it would be wages. But mercy is grace — undeserved, unearned, freely given.

3. Salvation does not depend on human effort (v. 16)

Paul says:

“It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.”

Meaning:

- It’s not about human desire (“him who wills”).
- It’s not about human effort (“him who runs”).
- It’s about **God who shows mercy**.

This is Paul’s central point: **God’s saving work is rooted in His mercy, not our performance.**

4. Pharaoh as an example (v. 17)

Paul quotes Exodus about Pharaoh:

“For this very purpose I have raised you up...” **Exodus 9:16**

God allowed Pharaoh’s hardness and rebellion to continue so that:

- God’s power would be displayed
- His name would be proclaimed throughout the earth

Pharaoh's resistance became the stage for God's glory.

This doesn't mean God made Pharaoh wicked. It means God used Pharaoh's already-hard heart to accomplish His purposes.

5. God shows mercy and hardens according to His purpose (v. 18)

Paul concludes:

"He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens."

This means:

- God gives mercy freely
- God allows hardness when it serves His plan
- God's sovereignty is purposeful, not unintentional
- God's actions always align with His justice and wisdom

Hardening is God **withholding softening grace**, not creating evil in the heart.

In Summary

Romans 9:14–18 teaches:

- God is not unjust in choosing whom He will use for His purposes.
- Mercy is God's gift, not a human achievement.
- Salvation depends on God's compassion, not human effort.
- Pharaoh's story shows that even human rebellion can serve God's larger plan.
- God's sovereignty is always righteous, purposeful, and consistent with His character.

Teaching Points

Concept	Explanation	Application
Election	God chooses according to His purpose, not human merit.	Trust God's wisdom even when you don't understand His choices.
Mercy	God's mercy is undeserved and freely given.	Be grateful—your salvation is a gift, not earned.
Sovereignty	God rules over history and hearts.	Rest in His control; He is never unfair or random.

Discussion Questions

1. How does Paul show that God's promises to Israel have not failed? – Isaac, not Ishmael and Jacob, not Esau. God's word continues through the children of promise, not merely the children of the flesh.
2. What do Jacob and Esau teach us about God's purpose? - Jacob and Esau show that God's purpose is established before human works, not because of them. Before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad, God had already spoken over their lives.
3. Why is mercy central to understanding salvation? - Mercy is central because salvation is not earned by human effort (him who wills or him who run)
4. How can we respond to God's sovereignty with humility and faith? – Trusting God's wisdom, Resting in His mercy, Walking in humility, Living with patience and endurance, Submitting our hearts.

Life Application

- **Trust God's plan:** Even when life feels unfair, remember His wisdom is perfect.
- **Celebrate grace:** You are chosen not because of what you've done, but because of who God is.
- **Reflect mercy:** Show compassion to others as God has shown mercy to you.

Closing Thought

Romans 9:6–18 reminds us that God’s sovereignty is not cold or distant—it’s filled with mercy and purpose. His choices reveal His character: **holy, just, and loving**. Our role is not to question His fairness but to worship His greatness.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we thank You for Your Word and for the clarity it brings to our hearts. Today we rest in the truth that Your mercy is not earned, but freely given. You are righteous in all Your ways, and Your purposes stand firm from generation to generation. Help us trust Your sovereignty even when we don’t understand Your timing. Teach us to walk humbly, to depend fully on Your grace, and to rejoice that we are Your children by promise. Strengthen our faith, steady our hearts, and let Your name be glorified through our lives. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Discussion Questions — Romans 9:6–18

1. What does Paul mean when he says, “They are not all Israel who are of Israel”? How does this redefine what it means to belong to God’s people?
2. How does the story of Isaac and Ishmael illustrate the difference between being a child of the flesh and a child of promise?
3. Why is it important that God’s choice of Jacob over Esau happened before they were born or had done anything good or bad?
4. How does God’s election reveal His purpose rather than human merit?
5. What does “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated” teach us about divine selection and covenant relationship?
6. When Paul asks, “Is there unrighteousness with God?” what concern is he addressing, and how does he answer it?
7. How does God’s statement to Moses — “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy” — define the nature of mercy?
8. What does Paul mean when he says salvation is “not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy”?

9. How does Pharaoh's story demonstrate God's power and purpose even through human resistance?
10. What does it mean that God "has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens"? How should this truth shape our view of God's justice and grace?