

Election, Israel's Past – Part 2

Romans 9:14-33

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By way of reminder, Romans 9, 10, and 11 is a very important unit. Some think that it's a parenthetical section of the book of Romans, but it really isn't. In the first eight chapters of Romans, Paul taught we're saved by grace through Jesus Christ, that we're saved by the sovereign grace of God. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." That passage I just quoted is from Ephesians 2:8-9, but it's really what Paul was teaching in Romans chapters 1-8 where we saw Condemnation, then Justification, and now Vindication. Paul is vindicating the very nature and character of God. So, the divisions of Romans are: Condemnation, Justification and Vindication.

Why does Paul need to vindicate God in Romans 9-11? Because He's anticipating an argument against what he has taught in chapters 1-8. The argument is that God's not fair. It's not right that God can just pick who He wants to be saved by His sovereign grace, and it's not right that the Jews would be cast off and He would start saving Gentiles. Chapters 9-11 really deal with the nation of Israel. I've often outlined them like this: Chapter 9-Israel's Past Election, Chapter 10-Israel's Present Rejection, and Chapter 11-Israel's Future Restoration. It's dealing with what some might call the Jewish question. What about Israel? Has God cast away His people that He first chose and made these promises to? Is Paul a hater of the Jewish people gone now to the Gentiles with this new message of God's grace? Is there no longer a purpose, plan, or program for the nation of Israel? Paul is answering that question in chapters 9-11. The overall focus in Romans 9 is the sovereign elective purposes of God in salvation.

There are four questions that Paul anticipates in Romans 9. We looked at the first one two weeks ago. It was on the faithfulness of God, Romans 9:1-13. Is God unfair? Is God unrighteous? They were attacking God's faithfulness. Tonight we're going to look at three more questions to conclude this chapter dealing with the righteousness of God, the justice of God, and the grace of God—Is God righteous? Is God just? What about God's grace? I want you to notice them. We'll take them one at a time beginning with the first question in verses 14-18. "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God?" Paul answers the question immediately, "God forbid. 15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. 17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh..." he's quoting from Exodus 9:16, "Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." God said this to Pharaoh, and he's drawing from the passage in Exodus. I want you to notice verse 18. "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." God's promises have not failed, verses 6-13, but is not God's purpose according to election unjust? This is the response of the natural man, of the unregenerated mind, the unbeliever.

All over today, people accuse God of doing things that aren't fair, aren't right or of being unjust. "That's not fair for God to do this," or "That's not right for God to do this," or "How can God do this?" For me, it's really quite simple, and I believe it was for Paul as well. The argument seems very deep and complex, but it's really quite simple. I start with the very nature and character of God. It is impossible for God to be unjust, so in my mind it's not even an issue. I think that Paul felt pretty much the same way because I want you to notice in verse 14 when he asks this anticipated argument, "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God?" Is God unrighteous? Is God unfair? Is God unjust? What does Paul say? "God forbid." He could have stopped right there. I don't know why he didn't. I just would've stopped right there. The words "God forbid" we've already discovered in the book of Romans. It means, perish the thought. I looked this up in the Greek and it actually means, "No way, Jose!" I'm kidding. Take it over from Spanish into Greek it means "No way, Jose!" It just means, perish the thought. Don't even let that thought pass through your mind or even try to contemplate this idea that God would be unfair or unrighteous or that God would do something. God never can violate His own nature. God can never violate or do anything contrary to His own nature. J.B. Phillips translates this, "Do we conclude that God is monstrously unfair?" Paul says, "No, perish the thought." I love what J.Vernon McGee said. I quoted it two weeks ago. He said these words, "If you do not like what God does, perhaps you should move out of His universe, start one of your own, so you can make your own rules." I like that. If you don't like what God's doing then move out of His universe, create your own, and make your own rules. That's classic. When we think of God the creator of all things, and we're going to see in this passage puny little man shaking his fist at God saying, "That's not right that God would choose some and not others, that He would take some to heaven and others send to hell. That's just not fair! That's just not right."

I want you to notice that for Paul life's great questions are answered in the Scripture. Did you ever notice that? Paul raises an argument and guess how he answers it? From the Bible. Lesson—so should we. When you are facing a difficult situation or you have a question, turn to God's Word for answers. Am I right? You don't turn to the world for answers; you turn to God's Word for answers. That's exactly what Paul does, notice verse 17. He says, "For the scripture saith...", I've circled and highlighted that. It's just music to my ears when I read that. "For the scripture saith...", and if the Scripture says, that's the final court of appeal. Amen? When God speaks, we believe it and that settles it.

I want you to notice the first answer here, verses 15-16. What God said to Moses in Exodus 33:19 also taken from Exodus 9:16, He says, "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." In verse 15, He spoke to Moses, Exodus 33:19, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." The conclusion, "...then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." This reference, taken from Exodus 33:19, was when Moses was interceding for the people of Israel when God was going to wipe them all out. He said, "God, if You're going to wipe them all out, take me out of Your book of remembrance." God answered Moses saying, "Look, I'm going to have mercy on whom I'm going to have mercy, and I'm going to have compassion on who I'm going to have compassion on. So, I'll show mercy and compassion to whomever I want." He was dismissing Moses' intercessory prayer. He makes it

clear in God calling and saving Moses, showing mercy and having compassion on him, that it is not a matter of him that wills. The words "him that willeth" means that it is not a matter of man's own desire or effort, which means runneth. So, it's not a man's own will, that is, his own desire, and it's not a matter of man's own effort. In context, I believe that those two references, man's will and man's effort, are saying that it's not man's work, effort or energy that can save him. You don't do good things to earn, merit or deserve the mercy and compassion of God. It's not saying that we shouldn't want God to save us. It's not saying that we shouldn't seek the Lord while He may be found. It's saying that we can't work for, earn, deserve, or merit salvation.

This is exactly what people think today. They think that God shows mercy and compassion on people who are worthy, right? They're good, they pray, they go to church, they have a Christian haircut, they get baptized, they're religious and go to the right church, they're nice—that's the person that God shows mercy and compassion to. It doesn't mean that those things aren't good, but it means that they don't merit or earn the mercy and compassion of God. How do we get God's mercy and compassion? From God, who is merciful and compassionate. The moment we begin to think that there's anything in us that has merited, earned, or deserve the mercy or compassion of God, we are in big trouble. "God really chose me because I'm so charismatic." "God really chose me because I'm so gifted." "God really chose me because I have such a great intellect." No. I hate to pop your balloon. The Bible says God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. There you go. Weak things, base things, despised things, things which are not to bring to not the things that are, why? So that no flesh will glory in His presence. "I have no understanding or knowledge as to why God would show me mercy. I didn't deserve it." John Miller should be in hell right now. You should be in hell if you're looking at me in agreement. You should be in hell right now. Don't ever pray that God would give you what you deserve. You pray, "God, have mercy." Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve. It's all out of the free love and grace of God. We can't fathom or understand why God would do that. Moses says, "...it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

Paul then quotes another scripture in verse 17 from Exodus 9:16. This is a fascinating quote, "Even for this same purpose..." he moves from the example of Moses and God showing mercy and compassion, to Pharaoh, "...have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth," referring to Pharaoh. This is the one that's really hard for us to understand, "...he hardeneth."

For Paul, life's great questions are answered in the Scriptures, what God said to Moses and Pharaoh. I want you to notice what God said to Pharaoh in verse 17. He raised him up, "...that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." God spoke to Pharaoh, and it's interesting that Paul says in verse 17, this is just a footnote, but I want you to see the implication there that the Scripture saith because when you go back to Exodus, it's God speaking to Pharaoh. God speaks to Pharaoh, but Paul doesn't say God said to Pharaoh, Paul says the Scripture says. Why is that? I believe that Paul understood that when the Scriptures speak, God speaks. That's why when I pray before I teach I say, "Lord,

speak through what You've spoken." All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. God spoke it into existence. As we study the Word, the Holy Spirit speaks through what God has spoken to our own hearts. When you say the phrase, "the Scripture saith" you can also say "thus saith the Lord." When you quote Scripture to someone, you can actually say, "Thus saith the Lord" because God speaks through what He has spoken, and I think that's a marvelous, marvelous, marvelous truth.

The thing that really bothers people is, and it goes back to this question that God is unfair, unjust, that "Yeah, I can understand God shows mercy and compassion on Moses, but that's not really fair that God would harden Pharaoh." In the Old Testament, they read "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart" and they come unglued. They just freak out. "That's not fair! That's not right! How is it that God could harden Pharaoh's heart?" Don't forget what Paul said in verse 14. Is God unjust? God forbid—perish the thought. We know that God is not unrighteous. How do we explain the idea that God would raise up Pharaoh to harden him and use him as a vessel of wrath and the display of God's judgment upon him. How do we explain that? We explain that in the book of Exodus, and I believe that it's also here in the book of Romans, that Pharaoh first hardened his heart. Pharaoh rejected God's Word. Pharaoh was an obstinate, hard, wicked, evil man. He was getting God's message and Word through Moses, but he kept rejecting and rejecting it. In a judicial sense, God allowed him to do that. In that sense, God hardened Pharaoh's heart. When the Scripture says that Pharaoh hardened his heart, indeed Pharaoh hardened his heart. When the Scripture says the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, I believe the understanding of that is that God allowed Pharaoh to make his choice and allowed his heart to be hardened in a sense that God judicially took his hands off of Pharaoh.

One of the greatest judgments that God could allow in anyone's life is to let them have their own way. Aren't you glad that God didn't let you go your own stubborn way? That God showed mercy and compassion to you and turned you around and brought you to repentance? Yes. Thank God for that or we would've got what we deserved; that is, we'd be in hell. If God who is sovereign and sits upon the throne and is God...I think it's a good idea to let God be God, don't you? I think I'll just let God be who He is, let God be God. God can do what He pleases. If Pharaoh wants to harden his heart (and I believe that man has the ability to resist God's grace, to say no to God, to rebel against God), God respects that decision and takes His hands off of man. Then, in a secondary sense, judicially He's hardening Pharaoh's heart in that He allows them to have their decision and to go their own way. The idea too, in the Hebrew, is that He strengthened Pharaoh's heart. Pharaoh hardened his own heart and then God strengthened it in that position. He allowed him to be hardened in his heart.

If you're here tonight and, (I'm speaking especially to those of you that may not be a Christian, you're not born again) you reject Jesus Christ, and you harden your heart, God will allow you to do that. You can choose to go to hell. God won't send you there; you make a choice. If you say no to Jesus Christ and you harden your heart toward Him, you reject and won't believe in Him, you won't submit to Him as your Savior, then God will allow you to do that. He's not going to violate your free will and in a sense He's hardening your heart. That's what I believe it means.

John R.W. Stott says, "God's hardening of Pharaoh was a judicial act abandoning him to his own stubbornness." It's like the very homely simply stated statement that I made before—the same sun that melts wax, hardens clay. It's not the sun's fault that the clay becomes hardened. It's because of its very nature. So, it's not God's fault if when you hear the gospel you harden your heart and the gospel hardens you and makes you stiff-necked and reject Jesus Christ, and over here there's another person who hears the same gospel and softens their heart, responding in faith and obedience, and receives Christ. This is a mystery. This is what makes it so hard to understand and comprehend. All we can do, and I've shared this before, is accept both as Biblical truth and that they reconcile in a higher unity. We're finite; God is infinite. We're limited; God is unlimited. I don't understand how you can reconcile these two, yet they are both equally taught in the Bible. If we reject one for the other then we have something that's unbiblical and unbalanced. All I know is that I've been saved, and it wasn't my will, my running, my goodness, or my performance, it was the mercy and compassion of God, and for that I'm eternally grateful. I don't know why God saved a wretch like me. I once was blind, but now I see. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. That's the response that we should have as believers. "I can't believe that God would show me mercy and that God would show me compassion!"

Paul sees God's words both to Moses and Pharaoh as complimentary and sums them up in verse 18, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." God is not unjust. All have sinned. No one deserves to be saved. It's a wonder and a mystery of God's mercy that some are saved. If we are lost, God is not to blame. If we are saved, it is God's great mercy and God's great justice, but God is not unfair.

Let's look at the second question in verses 19-29. I want you to see it. Why does God blame us if we reject Him? How can God blame anyone if God is sovereign and sits on the throne and does what He will? I want you to notice the question in verse 19. "Thou wilt say then..." this is Paul's anticipated argument, "...unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?" That's really one question. Why does he find fault with me when who can resist God's will? Paul's anticipating in verse 19 this argument once again. He says, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that replies against God?" I want you to notice that Paul answers his question with questions, and there will be three of them. This is classical argumenting. He raises an argument and answers them with three more questions that really explain them. It's kind of cool. There are three answers to this charge. First, he says in verses 20-21, who are we to argue with God? I love that! It's kind of like, "Put this in your pipe and smoke it." Who do you think you are? He says, verse 20, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that replies against God?" Puny little man! "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why has thou made me thus? 21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" Amazing! Paul answers the question with two more questions.

Paul pictures God as a potter and sinful man as clay. This is often used in the Bible. "Thou art the Potter, we are the clay." I remember so well when I was in high school I had an arts and crafts class. One of our projects was to throw a pot—I couldn't for the life of me. I have never

been able to throw a pot. I can draw. I can paint. I have some artistic ability, but I could not throw a pot. I would take the clay, center it. We would use electric wheels. I'd step on the wheel and it would start to move. Everything was good until I touched the clay. The moment I touched the clay, it would kind of go vroom vroom vroom and fly off the wheel. One time I got it spinning so fast it flew off and hit the wall, so I just put two grooves in it and made an ashtray. I brought it home to my mom, and she didn't even smoke. "Here, Mom, have an ashtray." I just couldn't throw a pot, but I'd look over and other kids were at this big beautiful pot. It's a beautiful thing to see a potter working with his clay making a vessel unto honor.

The imagery though is trying to convey the idea of the disparity between God and man. You don't want to take the image too far to say that we're just lumps of clay and we have no free will. That's not what Paul is trying to say. He's just trying to say that God is sovereign and we're comparable to clay. When a potter comes in a pottery shop and sees clay, he can take that clay and put it on the wheel. He makes the decision on what kind of pot he wants to make. When he starts to fashion the clay, the clay is not going to say, "Hey, wait a minute! I don't want to be a flower vase. Hey! I don't want to be a spittoon. I don't want to be an ashtray, get John Miller out of here!" Can you imagine clay with little lips on it talking to the potter? "What are you doing? What are you making?" The truth is, the potter would just smash it and say, "I'm going to make you what I want you to be." The idea is that God is sovereign. He is in control. We're the clay, He's the potter, and He can mold, fashion and shape us into whatever He wants us to be. God doesn't create sinful beings in order that He might punish them, but He does have the right to deal with sinful beings according to His good pleasure, either to pardon them or to punish them.

I want you to notice the second question that Paul brings up to answer that main question, verses 22-23, saying that God does have a purpose. He says, "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering..." notice that he's clear that God has longsuffering. "...the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction," those are the unbelievers, "And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory." Two vessels—a vessel of wrath and a vessel of mercy. God bears with great patience, verse 22, the object of His wrath. Think of how patient God was with Pharaoh—over and over and over the messages He sent to him through Moses. He beared patiently with him, but he became a vessel of wrath who was fitted to destruction. In verse 22, the Greek means fitted themselves—fitted themselves to be vessels of wrath. I don't believe the Bible teaches double predestination or that God chooses these that are going to heaven and those to hell. I believe in a whosoever gospel. I want you to notice the contrast, verse 23, the vessel of mercy. So, a vessel of wrath in verse 22 and the vessel of mercy in verse 23, "...he had afore prepared unto glory."

I love what Charles Erdman said, and I want you to listen to this quote. He says, "God's sovereignty is never exercised in condemning men who ought to be saved but rather it has resulted in the salvation of men who ought to be lost." That's an amazing statement. Let me put it in John Miller lingo, "God doesn't take men to hell who should be in heaven, though God does take men to heaven who should be in hell." You don't look out and say, "God, they should

be in heaven, and they should be in heaven. You should've picked them," and "Why aren't they going to heaven? That's not fair." The truth is all have sinned. All have fallen short of the glory of God. No one is righteous, no not one. I emphasize that because if anyone goes to heaven, it's a miracle of God's grace. Did not we learn in the first half of the book of Romans that all the world is condemned? Every mouth has been stopped, and all the world became guilty before God? No one deserves to go to heaven. We all deserve to go to hell. God's not saying, "Oh, you deserve to go to heaven, but I picked you...oh, no, no, no you can't go to heaven. You have to go to hell." God is choosing some and yes, they will go to heaven, but others reject Him and, as a choice that they make, they will go to hell. I'll explain that in conclusion tonight.

I want you to notice the third question in verses 24-29. God foretold these things in Scripture. Paul says God actually explained what we're talking about from the Scripture. Follow with me, verse 24, "Even us, whom he hath called," he's referring to us, the believers. Paul, in context, is talking about the faith that he has in Jesus Christ, "...not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?" It doesn't matter if they were Jewish or Gentile, God called them by His grace. Verse 25, "As he saith also in Osee," in the King James translation it's Osee which is the Greek rendering of the Old Testament Hosea. He's quoting from Hosea 2:23 and Hosea 1:10. There's a series of Old Testament references here that, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul applies to this doctrine of election, that God can choose who He wants whether it be a Jew or a Gentile. It doesn't matter. Hosea had said, "I will call them my people, which are not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved." In the Old Testament, it was a reference to Israel. They had gone into captivity and God was going to bring them out, and once again they would be God's people. Now, Paul changes the very meaning of that Old Testament passage and applies it to God's elect. You say, "Well, what right does Paul have to do that?" He wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and, in doing that, could reinterpret the verses as the Spirit of God so pleased.

Notice verse 26, "And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God." Paul is making that an application to the Gentiles, gives another scripture from Isaiah 10:22-23, and then goes back to Isaiah 1:9. First of all, in Isaiah 10:22-23, he says, "Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved." You have all these Jews in Israel, but only a small segment of them were saved. Not all Israel are Israel—not all Israel is saved. It's just showing that God always saves by His choice and by His elected few, and those that are saved are the minority. Then notice verse 28, "For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. 29 And as Esaias said before," this is Isaiah 1:9, "...Except the Lord of Sabaoth..." or Jehovah of Hosts, that is, the Lord of angels, "...had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha." We would've been just wiped out. Verse 30, "What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith."

God foretold these things in the Old Testament. As I pointed out, Paul gives us a series of references where even in the Old Testament, Hosea and Isaiah, God spoke about choosing just

a small few, even out of all the remnant of Israel, and I would call My people who are not My people, referring to the Gentiles not just the Jews. God's way of dealing with Jews and Gentiles was another illustration of His purpose in election clearly foretold in the Old Testament. Again, if it's new, it's not true. If it's true, it's not new. God's program for salvation has never changed. It has always been the same. He saves by His sovereign grace.

I read one verse further than I intended to because in closing, verses 30-33 is the third question. It's really the summary of this whole ninth chapter, and it introduces the subject in chapter 10. Here's the question. What shall we say? It's kind of a, "So what? What's the conclusion?" Notice verse 30, "What shall we say then? That the Gentiles," the article was actually inserted there, "...which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. 31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. 32 Wherefore?" Here's the conclusion, "Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone," referring to Jesus and His death by crucifixion, "As it is written," another passage, Isaiah 28:16, "Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed," or shall not be disappointed. This is an amazing and very powerful conclusion. Paul says, "Okay. What's the conclusion of the matter? Here's the conclusion of the matter. The conclusion in verse 30 is that the Gentiles who followed not after righteousness, they have attained righteousness. They have attained it by faith. Isn't that amazing? They didn't have the law or the promises. They're pagan, they're ungodly, wicked. They don't have Christian haircuts. They don't have phylacteries. They don't have the laws and the rites. They are not religious, but they got saved.

In kind of a microcosm mini example, there are people like that here tonight. Some of you were raised full-on pagans. All the way up into your adult life, you didn't know anything about God, Christianity, the Bible. You didn't learn any Bible stories. You didn't sing any hymns. You didn't go to Sunday school. You were just full-on pagans, but tonight you're saved. Amen? Then you have those who are born in church, raised in church, baptized when they were babies, confirmed, christened, sprinkled, dunked, go to Christian school, wear Christian clothes, have a Christian haircut. They try real hard to live a good life. They're religious, but they are not saved. They're lost. They're religious, but they're lost. In context here, he's using Jews and Gentiles. The Gentiles, they received the righteousness of God. Why? Because they didn't try to get it on their own. They didn't try to deserve or merit it, and they didn't try to get it by the law or by being good. They just got it by faith in Jesus Christ! They just trusted in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross!

You know, there are some unregenerate, religious people that get really ticked off when they see a truly saved Christian that came out of a hard-core worldly, ungodly, drug-addict background and now God's blessing and using them. They say, "That isn't fair! That's not right. I go to Sunday school. I've been a good person. I give tithes of all that I possess. I've been a good person. That's not fair! You know, they shot drugs in their eyeball their whole life. They were wicked, vile, wretched, sexually active, all these things, and I've been a good person. That's just not right." The way that we find righteousness is by faith not by being good.

I'm not encouraging you to go out to be a big sinner tonight, okay? "Wow, I need a testimony." No. That's just flat out stupid. I am encouraging you, if you are a person that's raised in a religious background, that can't save you. Only Jesus can save you. When Paul comes to the end of this chapter, he says the Jews sought it by works. They tried to get into heaven by being good. They said, "We're Jews." They thought it was their race. They thought it was their righteousness. They missed out. They missed the boat altogether.

Paul discovered this. He said, "If anyone can get to heaven by being good it was me. (I was a Hebrew of Hebrews. I was a Pharisee. Keeping the law, I was blameless. I was circumcised at eight days old. I was persecuting the church. I was an example of zealot and religious perfection, but all those things that were gain to me, my religious pedigree, I counted to be just a pile of manure." That's what he said. "Just a pile of dung. That I might be found in Christ, not having my own righteousness, which is by the law, but that which is to the faith of Jesus Christ." You see, the religious Jews stumbled. Jesus became, as Isaiah prophesied, a scandalon, stumblingstone, a rock of offense. Whenever people are confronted with the cross of Jesus Christ, it flies in the face of their pride, ego, and self esteem. "I'm not a sinner. I don't need to repent. I don't need Jesus to die for me. I can do it quite well myself, thank you. I can get to heaven on my own merits." If you have that mentality, you'll miss out. If you come as a wretched, poor, naked, blind sinner, and you reach out by faith and just accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, you'll find the righteousness of God. You'll find that God will be merciful and show compassion on you.

Paul comes to this conclusion that must have blown the Jewish minds, that the Jews who had all these privileges, sought by their own works, missed the righteousness of God. Why? Because they sought it by the law. They sought it by their own good deeds. The Gentiles sought it by faith and received it. That doesn't mean there aren't any saved Jews. Do you know that even right now hundreds and thousands of Jews are being saved, are coming to Christ, are finding Yeshua as their Messiah? What an awesome thing that is! How that thrills my heart! The Jews are coming to realize that Jesus is their Savior. Just get a Jew to read the New Testament, which he has been told not to read, that Jesus was a heretic and Paul was a crazy man, and Christianity is against Judaism. When they finally read the New Testament, and it opens up in the book of Matthew, the son of Abraham whose the son of David, they realize that Messiah was Jewish, and it's all about the Jews, and salvation is of the Jews, it really just blows their mind. Some of them are coming to God's grace, but it's a work of God's mercy and God's salvation.

In conclusion, we need to understand as Paul ends with this Biblical confirmation from Isaiah 8 and 28. First, people are saved because of the sovereign election of God's grace. There is no way around that. If you are saved here tonight, you're saved by God's sovereign, elective grace. He also shows, as he introduces in verses 30-33 and in all of chapter 10, us why people are lost. They are lost, the explanation is, because of their own hardened hearts, and it's their own responsibility. You say, "John, I don't understand that." Welcome to the club, neither do I.

Listen carefully. In closing, I will give you an illustration from the book of Acts. In Acts 28, Paul

the apostle was on a ship on his way to Rome as a prisoner. There was a big storm. The waves were beating on the ship, and the ship was about to sink. An angel came to Paul and gave him a promise. Do you know what the promise was? He actually says it in the book of Acts. He says, "No one on this ship is going to die. We're only going to lose the ship." Thank you for those encouraging words. Can you imagine being on a ship out in the sea, and Paul stands up and says, "We're going to lose the ship, but no one is going to die." "Great. At least I know I'm not going to die, but I don't know how to swim." Paul made that affirmation. "God showed me, no one is going to die, but we're only going to lose the ship." Then, a verse or two later some guys try to escape off the ship. They lowered a little dingy boat and were going to jump into the little boat making their way to shore. Do you know what Paul told them? He said, "Unless you stay in this boat, you cannot be saved." He said, "If you don't stay in this boat, you cannot be saved. If you get into that little boat and take off, then the promise doesn't apply to you." You say, "Well wait, Paul. You just said that no one on the boat is going to be lost. Didn't you just say that no one on the boat's going to be lost?" Yes, and he also said, "If you want to be saved, you have to stay on the boat." You say, "Well, I don't get it. I don't understand it." Neither do I, but I believe that's what's taught in the Scriptures.

This is how I want to end tonight. I want to end by saying if you're here tonight and you haven't trusted in Jesus Christ...If you are here tonight and you do not know beyond any doubt or question in your mind that you are forgiven, that you are born again, that you are saved and that if you died you'd go to heaven, that you're a child of God...If you have any doubts, I'm going to give you an opportunity right now to trust in Jesus Christ. You say, "Well, what if I'm not elected of God?" Then, repent, trust Him, believe in Him, and you'll find out, God chose you. Amen? Because the Bible says whoever believes on Him shall never perish but have everlasting life. Jesus said, "Whoever comes to me, I will in no wise cast out." Amen? Tonight, if the Holy Spirit is knocking on the door of your heart saying, "You need to get right with God. You need to turn from your sin. You need to trust in Jesus Christ." Jesus died on the cross to pay for your sins, and you have to receive Him tonight. You must open the door of your heart. If you reject Him and you die in your sins, you will spend eternity in hell separated from God. If you receive Him, your choice, now is the acceptance time; today is the day of salvation. If you trust in Jesus Christ you will be forgiven of all your sins, and He will make you His child. He will give you eternal life as a free gift, and you will know that you are His child and you have the hope of heaven. You can begin to live the Christian life with the hope of heaven, but it's your decision. Jesus said, "You're either for Me or against Me." You either believe in Him or you reject Him. There is no neutrality. By not believing in Jesus Christ, by not trusting Him, by not receiving Him right now as you're given this opportunity, you're saying no to Jesus Christ. You're rejecting the Son of God, and if you harden your heart, God will allow you to go that way, but you will reap the consequences of your own sin.