

**Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes**  
**Fourth Quarter 2017: *Salvation by Faith Alone: The Book of Romans***  
**Lesson 10 “Children of the Promise”**

**Read for this week’s study**

Romans 9.

**Memory Text**

“Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth” (Romans 9:18).

**Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide**

- I. Introduction
- II. Paul’s Burden
- III. Elected
- IV. Mysteries
- V. *Ammi*: “My People”
- VI. Stumbling
- VII. Further Study

**Questions and Notes for Consideration**

**Facilitator: Daniel Duda**

1. “As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. ... For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy ..., and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion” (Romans 9:13, 15). (Sabbath afternoon)
2. “What is Paul talking about here? What about human free will and the freedom to choose, without which very little of what we believe makes sense? Are we not free to choose or reject God? Or are these verses teaching that certain people are elected to be saved and others to be lost, regardless of their own personal choices?” (Sabbath afternoon)
3. “As long as we remember that Romans 9 is not dealing with the personal salvation of those it names, but that it is dealing with their call to do a certain work, the chapter presents no difficulties.” (Sabbath afternoon)
4. The reality is that well-meaning Christians misunderstood Romans 9-11 throughout the centuries; for many centuries anti-Semitism flourished across large areas of Christianity and the church not only did nothing to prevent it, but often added fuel to the fire.

5. In 9:1-5 Paul wants to affirm two things: 1) that God really did choose the Jews to be his people; 2) that Jesus of Nazareth really was and is God's Messiah. All the privileges Paul mentions in 9:4, 5 are things he has already mentioned in the first eight chapters. Thus chapters 9-11 are not tackling a different subject but show the way God is fulfilling his ancient promises in and through Jesus.
6. In 9:6-13 Paul retells the story of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – and of Ishmael and Esau as well – in order to explain that God not only chose one family from the whole human race, but continued the practice within that family as well (and beyond Jacob on into the subsequent history of Israel). The promises God made to Abraham and Sarah and then to Isaac and Rebekah always envisaged this process of selection. The term 'seed of Abraham' never intended the inclusion of every single physical child of the first patriarch.
7. Secondly, Paul shows that by choosing to carry forward his plan by some rather than others, God did it without regard for the moral character of the people involved. This of course, ran against a popular Jewish understanding that God chose Abraham because he was a man of outstanding moral and spiritual ability, thus Israel as God's chosen people were morally and spiritually superior to the rest of human race. But Paul spent quite a bit of time earlier in the letter disproving that (without suggesting that Israel's special status didn't matter).
8. This brings us to 9:13 – "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," which is a quote from Malachi commenting on history 1500 years later. God had done remarkable things for Israel, Jacob's family; while Edom, Esau's family, had collapsed into insignificance. It is easy to read it and accuse God of flagrant favoritism and injustice. But Malachi uses it to highlight the increased responsibility and culpability of Israel. God's call is not to arrogant superiority, but to honor him and carry out his purposes.
9. Verses 14-24 are some of the most controversial statements in the Bible, often misunderstood and twisted. The image of the potter and clay are not designed to speak in general terms about human beings as lifeless lumps of clay in God's hands. They are based on Isaiah 29:16; 45:9; 64:8 and Jeremiah 18:1-6 in the context of God's call to Israel and their failure to respond.
10. The point is that God has not arrived at the moment the clay has already been fired and is solid (the only option then is to smash it to pieces), but when it is still being molded (fortunately for Israel). Verses 9:15.17 are a quotation from Exodus 33 that shows God will proceed with his plan, even though the people were unfaithful (as early as the time of Exodus). The Exile is another continuation of the shaping and remolding of Israel, in spite of their unfaithfulness and rebellion. God also shapes and molds Israel by calling Gentiles to share as full and equal members of the promise. (Remember Abraham was to inherit the whole world [4:13]!) Paul emphasized it over and over in chapters 2, 3 and 4.
11. Verses 25-29 introduce the idea of remnant. Paul continues to tell the story of Israel which began with Abraham, continued through Exodus and now reaches the period of the prophets (quoting Hosea). Paul shows that after the exile God will accept

them ('my people'; 'my loved one'; 'sons of the living God'), which is the [future] remnant. Paul shows (as in chapter 3) that God will go forward even if Israel proves unfaithful. God's faithfulness is shown by the fact that he sent the Messiah and there is a remnant which accepts him, but for the Messiah to fulfill his role, he must be 'cast away'.

12. In 9:30-10:4, Paul uses the metaphor of the stone from Isaiah 28, which can be either a stumbling stone, or 'anyone who believes will not be put to shame'. Thus the failure of many Jews to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, either during his public ministry or now during the time of missionary work, does not represent thwarting of God's plan or promises. Many Gentiles responded to the promises and are now part of God's covenant family. However, many of Abraham's physical family turned their backs to the Messiah, because they used counter-productive ways of consolidating their membership. (Just as Paul already showed in 7:1-8:11 that the law became a trap for those who used it as a badge of covenant membership.)
13. God has been continually faithful to the covenant, in spite of the fact that so many misunderstood it. The problem of unbelief is not because God failed to keep his word, but because people did not hear what the word really said, misunderstanding the true covenant purpose. "The Messiah is the goal of the law." (10:4) That's where God's purposes had been heading all along.

### Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

**Recommended Listening:** The entire series by Graham Maxwell on the book of Romans is available at <http://pkp.cc/MMROMANS66>

And if I turn the truth down, well, this is how God hardened Pharaoh's heart. He brought a revelation of himself to Pharaoh. Pharaoh could have said yes, and been softened by the truth, and maybe gone with them to Canaan! My, that would have been an interesting scene; towing Pharaoh in his chariot across the wilderness into Canaan. But he could, if he had responded. Just as Judas could have been touched. But Judas turned this down. Pharaoh turned it down. And if you keep resisting the truth, it does something to your mind, and eventually the power to think and to do is destroyed; the image of God within us. And then there's nothing more that God can do. And it's not arbitrary at all. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Acts, recorded April, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/59MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/60MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

But what was the God of Israel like? For in the middle of the discussion of the plagues it keeps saying that God was hardening Pharaoh's heart so that he wouldn't give in. Now, doesn't that bring up very specifically the picture of God? And even whether it's worth studying any further, for if he's hardened our hearts, and we have no choice in the matter, why go any further? Look at Exodus 9:24, how it reads:

But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet again, and hardened his heart, he and his servants. So the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people of Israel go; as the LORD had spoken through Moses. Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart."

We touched on this last time. Does it still make sense, that apparently there's a way in which all three are the same. Pharaoh hardened his own heart; God hardened his heart; Pharaoh's heart was hardened. Moses wrote this, and within a few lines he wouldn't forget what he'd written before! When we come to Romans 9; you see the same words. "God hardened Pharaoh's heart." What we'll need to do as we go along is look at other places where it says God did something. One of the most dramatic we'll come to is the suicide of Saul, where Saul fell on his sword, and obviously committed suicide, and then it says: "Therefore the LORD slew Saul." And yet Saul committed suicide. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – Exodus*, recorded October, 1981, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

\*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/3MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/4MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

It was their objection to Romans 1 through 8 that led to Romans 9. So one has to put Romans very carefully in context. It doesn't help us too much perhaps, in understanding the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Except, what do you think of Ellen White's words: "To no other ancient monarch did God reveal himself more clearly than to Pharaoh." And Pharaoh said "no," and if you say "no" long enough you become hardened in saying "no." If you reject light and truth given in appropriate manner at your time, then it becomes a habit to say "no" to the truth; and that's how hearts are hardened. Well, when we take the truth to people, isn't there a risk they will say "no"? Then aren't we contributing to the hardening of some people's hearts? We don't harden their hearts, but if we take a choice to people and they vote no, and they persist in voting no, hopefully they won't say no because we are doing such a bad job, but that they're really saying no to the truth if they must. Isn't that the meaning of the "keys of the kingdom?" Now some have the feeling we have two keys: one marked "Heaven" and the other "Hell." And when we go into a home, we look around and think, "Well, I don't think I'd want to live next door to these people anyway; I'll take out my key to hell." And you open it, and you assign them to that other place. Then you move into another home. You think, these are lovely people; just

need a little work, perhaps. I'll take the key to Heaven. We don't unlock those doors; we hand them the key, like handing them the Bible. We hand them the truth: we hand them the gospel. It happens to be a master key. The same key that opens heaven opens hell, and people take it, and they use it.

We know that Pharaoh hadn't forgotten how to say "Yes", had he? Because when he was scared enough, he said yes, they can go. But he quickly got over it. But it shows he still could say yes. But his heart was hard, and he resisted all the way through. Would you see light in this? I think we should watch for it as we go along. There is the hazard, when you take the truth to someone and do a magnificent job, and the Spirit brings conviction and clarification and understanding, that person may still say no, but you've got to harden your heart to resist the gracious truth, and the gracious Spirit of truth. And if one says no long enough, one becomes scarred and hard, and then one even loses the desire and the capacity for truth, even spoken in love, and then there is nothing more that can be done. Is that your understanding of the hardening of the heart? Let's watch for it as we go along. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Exodus, recorded October, 1981, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

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Does predestination bother anybody? That was our Sabbath School lesson this week. Was it cleared up thoroughly, there? Shall we look, just in passing, very quickly? Romans 8:29:

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son [we're predestined then], And those whom he predestined [verse 30], he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Well, if you're predestined, then why stay any longer tonight? How about chapter 9, about the potter and the clay? He can take out of one lump; he can take some clay and make vessels made for destruction; take out the same lump and make vessels for salvation. Does that cancel all out? Could I suggest this very quickly? In Romans 8:29, "those whom he foreknew [how many does he foreknow? Everybody] he predestined." So how many are predestined? All. And all who are predestined, he calls. How many does he call? All. And those whom he calls, he justifies. How many? And those whom he justifies, he glorifies. How many does he glorify? Well, we have no need to worry! He's going to justify and glorify everybody! Everybody! Saints and sinners alike? Then no one will be lost? It doesn't work. So we start back through. How many does he glorify? Only those that he justifies. How many does he justify? Only those whom he calls. But he calls everybody. Then there's something wrong. Because if you start in from both

ends, you don't meet in the middle. So there must be some word misunderstood in there; and I wouldn't have chosen this so late, except that it fits in with all the purpose of our study. Those whom he foreknew. What does it mean in the Bible to know?

"Thee only have I known." I thought he knew everybody. "Depart from me. I never knew you." I thought he knew everybody. In the Bible, to know means to know as a friend. It even means to know with love and intimacy. Hence, "Adam knew Eve his wife" and they had a baby. It isn't that babies come from being introduced. And you remember in Kings, when David had that extraordinary hot water bottle, and it says that he never knew her, (1 Kings 1:4) it doesn't mean that he never learned her name. So we're very familiar with this in the Bible. To know means to know in a special way. And to foreknow means to know in a special way. Those whom God foreknew would be his friends. Then all the rest follows. Does God know who will be his friends and who will not? Read Romans 9. Jacob and Esau, and the others. He knows this.

Do you mind that God foreknows the future? Would you trust anybody else with that kind of knowledge? Would God abuse such infinite power and knowledge? Not the kind of God we worship. So I don't mind how much he knows. So then, it makes sense. We're not predestined. "Choose you this day." We're free. "Whosoever will" is made plain all through Scripture.

But in chapter 9 it does talk about some difficult things. We shouldn't take time for it tonight, but I would understand them in the same light. Why does he talk so severely in chapter 9, and even say to the Jews, "Who are you to answer back to God?" Is it not because, in chapter 1 through 8 he's said these magnificent things about God, and that God will save all who trust him, whether Jew or Gentile, Greek or Barbarian—it makes no difference. God will save all who trust him.

And the Jews said, "That's not fair! We have served all day long, and you're going to save laborers at the last minute on the same basis?" Remember that parable? "You can't do this!" And Paul says, "Are you going to tell God how to run his universe? He's going to run it any way he wants. Are you going to tell the potter how to run his pottery?" And people take it all out of context and say he runs the universe like a pottery! No, he says, "Are you going to tell the potter how to run his pottery?" Then he says, "Are you going to tell God how to run his universe?"

P.S. How does God run his universe? Read chapter 1 through 8. The way God runs his universe is to save all who trust him. All he asks of us is trust. And everyone is free to make that choice.

So don't misunderstand Romans 9 as putting God in a bad light. The people who were misbehaving were in the audience. They were telling God, "You can't save these people on that basis. You can't run your universe that way." And God says, "I *will* run my universe precisely as I wish." And we say, "Please do, because we like the way you run your universe." You see. So again one has to put it in its right setting and context. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio

series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Romans, recorded April, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

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### Further Study with Ellen White

God desired to make of His people Israel a praise and a glory. Every spiritual advantage was given them. God withheld from them nothing favorable to the formation of character that would make them representatives of Himself. {COL 288.2}

From a race of slaves the Israelites had been exalted above all peoples to be the peculiar treasure of the King of kings. God had separated them from the world, that He might commit to them a sacred trust. He had made them the depositaries of His law, and He purposed, through them, to preserve among men the knowledge of Himself. Thus the light of heaven was to shine out to a world enshrouded in darkness, and a voice was to be heard appealing to all peoples to turn from their idolatry to serve the living God. If the Israelites would be true to their trust, they would become a power in the world. God would be their defense, and He would exalt them above all other nations. His light and truth would be revealed through them, and they would stand forth under His wise and holy rule as an example of the superiority of His worship over every form of idolatry. {PP 314.2}

All who consecrate soul, body, and spirit to God will be constantly receiving a new endowment of physical and mental power. The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command. Christ gives them the breath of His own spirit, the life of His own life. The Holy Spirit puts forth its highest energies to work in heart and mind. The grace of God enlarges and multiplies their faculties, and every perfection of the divine nature comes to their assistance in the work of saving souls. Through co-operation with Christ they are complete in Him, and in their human weakness they are enabled to do the deeds of Omnipotence. {DA 827.3}

The entrance of sin into the world, the incarnation of Christ, regeneration, the resurrection, and many other subjects presented in the Bible, are mysteries too deep for the human mind to explain or even to fully comprehend. But God has given us in the Scriptures sufficient evidence of their divine character, and we are not to doubt His word because we cannot understand all the mysteries of His providence. {5T 699.3}

The creative energy that called the worlds into existence is in the word of God. This word imparts power; it begets life. Every command is a promise; accepted by the will, received into the soul, it brings with it the life of the Infinite One. It transforms the nature and re-creates the soul in the image of God. {Ed 126.4}

Though He was a Jew, Christ mingled with the Samaritans, setting at naught the Pharisaic customs of His nation. In face of their prejudices, He accepted the hospitality of this despised people. He slept under their roofs, ate with them at their tables, partaking of the food prepared and served by their hands—and taught in their streets, and treated them with the utmost kindness and courtesy. {3SM 238.2}

Jesus sat as an honored guest at the table of the publicans, by His sympathy and social kindliness showing that He recognized the dignity of humanity; and men longed to become worthy of His confidence. Upon their thirsty souls His words fell with blessed, life-giving power. New impulses were awakened, and the possibility of a new life opened to these outcasts of society. {3SM 238.3}

Christ has made every provision for us to be strong. He has given us His Holy Spirit, whose office is to bring to our remembrance all the promises that Christ has made, that we may have peace and a sweet sense of forgiveness. If we will but keep our eyes fixed on the Saviour and trust in His power, we shall be filled with a sense of security; for the righteousness of Christ will become our righteousness. {ML 45.5}

Christ came to this earth with a message of mercy and forgiveness. He laid the foundation for a religion by which Jew and Gentile, black and white, free and bond, are linked together in one common brotherhood, recognized as equal in the sight of God. The Saviour has a boundless love for every human being. In each one He sees capacity for improvement. With divine energy and hope He greets those for whom He has given His life. In His strength they can live a life rich in good works, filled with the power of the Spirit. {7T 225.4}