

ROMANS 9-11:

The Beautiful Mystery of Your Salvation

Is There Hope for Your Loved Ones?

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Hello, men, and welcome to another episode of the Man in the Mirror Bible Study. I'm Pat Morley. Today, the subject is: **Is there hope for your loved ones?** Please turn in your Bibles to Romans Chapter 9, Verse 1. I realized that the topic we're going to talk about today may be the most sensitive ever topic for some of you. You may have a family member, it could be a parent, it could be a sibling, it could be a child, an aunt, an uncle, it could be almost anyone in your extended family, or someone who you're very close to. And you love them very deeply. And they are not walking with God, or maybe they used to walk with God and now they're not walking with God, and you're deeply concerned about them. And you want to know is there hope for your loved one? That's what we're going to talk about today.

But before we get started, let me go ahead and confess. My greatest comfort is the sovereignty of God, which is what we're going to talk about today. The sovereignty of God in salvation. If God is not sovereign, I think I'm just going to sleep in tomorrow morning. I have an absolute conviction that there's not a blade of grass growing randomly anywhere on the planet that is not under the supervision of the sovereign creator of all things, our God.

THE SORROW IN OUR HEARTS

First thing I want us to talk about this morning is the sorrow in our hearts. And Paul felt a deep sorrow in his own heart. And the last message from Khayree on Romans Chapter 8, there was this great peroration from Paul at the end, where he's talking about the height and the depth of love. And there is such a joy.

And then he comes right back and says this in the first verse of Chapter 9. Let's read it together. "I speak the truth in Christ. I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy spirit. I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart." The sorrow in our hearts, that's what we're talking about. He goes on in Verse 3, "For I could wish that I myself were cursed cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, the people of Israel." This is his family that he's talking about. The people that he loved. Now, this is hyperbole. He's trying to drive home the point, he's overstating the case to make the point that he would be cursed cut off from Christ so that his loved ones might be able to know God. But that's just an expression of the deep pain that's deep within his heart.

And you have that same pain in your heart, that same sorrow, even though you might be walking around, enjoy, you nevertheless always have that burden that you bear. The Big Idea today, which we were going to unpack in the rest of this chapter, and you may want to go ahead and jot this down; **No one is beyond God's mercy and compassion, so never give up.** No one is beyond God's mercy and compassion, so never give up. Now, this passage, I think what we're going to do is we're going to do a fly by on this and I'm going to zero in on two or three verses. This is one of the most dense chapters in the Bible, one of the most discussed by scholars and theologians, but it gets right to this idea that our salvation is the sovereign choice of God. And I'm going to show you why that is very good news.

NO ONE IS BEYOND HOPE, SO NEVER GIVE UP

So the next thing then to talk about is no one is beyond hope, so never give up. I'm going to say that there's no subject that I've looked into more of the last decade than this exact subject, the sovereignty of God, the role of free will, the promises of God for salvation, the assurance of salvation, eternal security, the efficacy of God's word, the will of God to save. No subject have I looked into more than this, and this particular passage gives us a great insight into it. But it's opaque, but we're going to unpack it anyway so that you can understand it. Mark Twain, Craig Rodriguez, one of our leaders, just reminded me of a quote from Mark Twain. Mark Twain said, "It ain't the parts of the Bible that I don't understand that bother me, it's the parts that I do." And so this is one of those texts.

Romans Chapter 9, Verses 6-13 talk about the fact that the true Israelites are not those who are born into that particular race of people, but rather those who believe the promise that God gave to Abraham. So it's not physical to set that makes someone a true Israelite. Then in Verse 14, when the Lord has said something that's very difficult to understand, that he, before Jacob or Esau, either one of them had done anything right or wrong, it says, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." And then in Verse 14, we read this. "What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all. For he says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.'" This text, R. C. Sproul great theologian of the last century and the early part of this century, I heard him say in a seminary class, "What's remarkable is not that some are saved, but that any are saved."

And that's true. It is remarkable but because all have sinned. And so if God didn't step in with mercy and compassion, then none would be saved. But I would like to also say that it's precisely because God is sovereign that no one is beyond the reach of God's mercy and compassion. In other words, because God can sovereignly change, sent his Holy Spirit, prompt someone to turn to or back to God, because God has that power, you can have a great deal of hope. And I'm going to give you some practical steps as we go on for how you can actually act on that hope. In the next verse that I want us to read, Verse 16, "It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy."

Once again, this is very good news that salvation or God's mercy and compassion, it doesn't depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy, because of if it were to depend on your desire, your effort or the desire or the effort of the person that you love, nothing would ever come of it. But because God is sovereign and he is merciful, that's part of his character, then we can have a tremendous hope. Then in the next verses, he talks a little bit about the exhibition of God's power through Pharaoh. And in Verse 18, "Therefore, God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden." Because God is sovereign, there's hope for everyone. There is hope for everyone. In this text, there's no reason to think that God is describing a static situation, one that will never change.

In other words, the one that God has hardened their heart or their heart is hardened for whatever reason, there's no reason throughout... If you read the scriptures from the beginning to end, there's no reason to think that this is a static situation. It's dynamic. People change. People can change. And people are saved when the Holy Spirit comes and prompts them to repent and believe in Jesus. Jesus said, "No man comes to me unless the father who sent me draws him." So let's take a look at a little bit of the nature and the extent of God's mercy and compassion. This is the ethos of God. He's not willing that any would perish, but that all will come to repentance. God, our savior, wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

He takes no delight in the death of the wicked. He takes no delight in the death of anyone, for God so loved the world that he set his only begotten son that whosoever would believe in him would not perish, but have everlasting life. It's a universal offer. A bruised reed he will not crush, a smoldering wick he will not break off. The shepherd left the 99 sheep and went and looked for the one that was lost. And in Matthew 18, Verse 14, "In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish." So this is the heart of God. So the text that we just read, Verse 18, "Therefore, God

has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden," the Big Idea for today, **no one is beyond God's mercy and compassion. So never give up.**

INVOKING THE COMPASSION AND MERCY OF GOD

Now, I want to turn to some ideas how you can invoke God's compassion and mercy with the people that you love. I had a counselor tell us that she had worked with the parents of hundreds of prodigals, children who had walked away from their faith. And she said some of them come back, and some of them don't. That's a very startling statement. And of course, that doesn't mean that they will never come back, but at least at that point in time, some had come back and some had not come back. And so that drives me to ask the question, what were the families of those children who did return, who did come back, doing differently than the families of those children who did not come back? And I think we find four cornerstones or four pillars. The first one is faith. I'm sure that all of the parents of those prodigals who walked away in the beginning had faith that their child would return.

But then the months began to go by and then those months turned into years. And because some of those parents may have not had a strong faith themselves, they lose hope, they lose faith and they no longer believe that their child is going to come back. They give up. Remember the Big Idea for the day, **no one is beyond God's mercy and compassion, so never give up.** But some do and then lose their faith. So let the first thing that you do to invoke God's mercy and compassion is to keep the faith that God is able to restore, because he is sovereign, he can do something about it. If he wasn't sovereign, he wouldn't be able to do anything about it. But because he is, he can do something about it and you and I can invoke him to do something about it by keeping faith that God is able. The second pillar or cornerstone of invoking God's mercy and compassion is trust. It's trust that God's word is true.

My word which goes out from my mouth will not return empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. So when the word says, "A bruised reed, he will not crush," or when the word says, "He who began a good work and you will carry it onto completion," is to trust that God's word is true. Faith that God is able, trust that his word is true. And then the third pillar, the third cornerstone, I guess I should make up my mind whether they're pillars or cornerstones, is unconditional love. It's to have the love like the father in the parable of the prodigal son. When the father saw the son coming over the brow of the hill, it says that the father ran to meet the son, threw his arms around him, slobbered on his neck with a sloppy kiss. And that was before the son had ever said a single word.

In other words, the father's love for the son who was coming back was not conditional upon whether the son was sorry, or whether he was wanting to come back and be reunited. Obviously, if the son had been all huffy, the father would have had to go one way, but because the son in this particular case had come to his senses and was coming home, there was a great feast, a great reunion. There is hope for our loved ones. And one of the greatest ways that we can invoke God's mercy and compassion is to treat our loved ones with unconditional love. I've heard in the past a couple of occasions where... One man I'm thinking of in particular, his daughter came out as being a lesbian. And so he and his wife cut all ties based on a difference of beliefs.

Now, if a child is doing something illegal in the home or is creating a physical danger in the home, then that's a different story and it might need a different way of treating that situation. But men, do not ever cut off anyone you love because you don't agree on some kind of a belief. It doesn't make any difference. What the belief is, that's not a basis for withdrawing your love. Footnote to the story about the couple that turned their backs on their lesbian daughter, because they thought tough love would work, they eventually did soften and reached out to her and they were restorative. And as a matter of fact, she left that lesbian lifestyle. It was only an experimental period of her life. And she's now happily married and has beautiful children. And those grandchildren to this couple, there's a great relationship because of them restoring unconditional love.

So faith that God is able, trust that God's word will not return empty, unconditional love. And then the fourth, let's call them pillars, the fourth pillar of how you can invoke God's mercy and compassion, it is prayer. I have no doubt, although I can't prove this, but I have no doubt that those parents of prodigals who have not come back, I have no doubt that the parents of those prodigals prayed and prayed in faith, but at some point, they just lost hope and they gave up hope and they stopped praying. They stopped asking God. I'm here to tell you never give up. God is sovereign and because for the very reason that he is sovereign, that means that he can do something about your loved one. So you can invoke him to release his mercy and his compassion, you complete with him in prayer to do that.

There are four pillars here to invoke God's great mercy and compassion. Faith that he's able, trust in his word, unconditional love and prayer. When Winston Churchill went back to the Harrow School, the boarding school where he had grown up, he gave a speech not long after the bombing had ended the Blitz, the German Blitz of London in which 40,000 civilians had died. And in that speech, he said something, and I would like to paraphrase it for our purposes. He said, "Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never. In nothing great or small, never give in." The Big Idea for today, **no one is beyond God's mercy and compassion, so never give up.** Never, ever, ever give up. Have faith, have trust, have unconditional love and pray. And trust that because God is sovereign, he will do something about it. Thank you, men.