

# God's Severe Mercy

by Dana Congdon

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*Dana Congdon's sermon explores the concept of God's severe mercy and the eternal purpose for Christians as revealed in Romans, emphasizing spiritual growth and community service.*

**Duration:** 1:18:37

**Scripture:** Romans 9:1-5, Romans 11:29, Romans 11:33, Romans 12:1-2, Romans 14:1-4, Romans 14:10-13

**Topics:** "Mercy"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on Psalm 107 and Romans chapters 14 and 15. The Psalm emphasizes the importance of giving thanks to the Lord for His enduring mercy. The speaker highlights four types of foolish people who cried out to the Lord and received His mercy. In Romans, the speaker emphasizes the need to refrain from judging others and to focus on glorifying the Lord. The sermon also emphasizes the importance of presenting oneself as a living sacrifice to God and pursuing a deeper understanding of His ways.

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## Transcript

Well, we've had quite a week this week. We've had the electricity out last night, great storm. We've been through the car wash, been down the Amazon River, been in Miss Williamson's house, quite a week.

I'm sharing on the eternal purpose for the individual Christian. And, of course, Lance was sharing about the eternal purpose of as seen in Christ. And, of course, that's the object, that's what we see.

But as I have been dealing in the book of Romans, we've been looking sort of at the process, not just that the Christ we see, but at the process of seeing that develops in our Christian life as we yield to the Lord, obey his call, are faithful to him. So our vision increases. We begin to understand our purpose.

The center of this whole matter of the eternal purpose in the epistle to the Romans is found in chapter 8. And so we want to look at those few verses again, verses 28 through 30. Let's turn to Romans 8 and just read those few verses, and then we want to read from another passage. And we know that God causes all things to work together for good, to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose.

There's the purpose. There is a purpose. It is his purpose.

For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to become conformed to the image of his son so that he would be the firstborn among many brethren. And these whom he predestined, he also called, and these whom he called, he also justified, and these whom he justified, he also glorified. And then let's turn to chapter 12 and we'll read some verses there.

Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. For through the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to have sound judgment as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members one of another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly, if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith, if service in his serving or he who teaches in his teaching or he who exhorts in his exhortation, he who gives with liberality, he who leads with diligence, he who shows mercy with cheerfulness. Let love be without hypocrisy.

Abhor what is evil and cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Give preference to one another in honor, not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

We'll just end there. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this grace that you have given us during this week, continually expanding us, continuing to give us light.

Now, even by faith, we want to stand tonight, believing that the Holy Spirit can yet teach us more, show us more, lead us further. We thank you for the portion that we have for tonight to speak and to hear, that you give us voice and you give us an ear of the heart to hear what you are speaking to us in this day. Now we just say, Lord, speak, Lord, lead, Lord, teach.

In Jesus name we pray, Amen. Of course, the Christian life grows and develops. The first time I shared, I shared that when we are called by the gospel of salvation, we sense the love of God.

It's the first touch of heaven that we really receive. We hear of God's love, that Jesus died on the cross for us. And even though that sounded like a tale far removed, there is the day that the Holy Spirit opens our eyes and we realize, indeed, Jesus died for us.

And by faith, we receive Jesus as our Savior. And we're called to salvation. Paul was called, he says, by the grace of God, but at the time Paul was called to salvation, he only had begun to realize by the heavenly vision he saw on the road to Damascus, how far this calling would take him.

Indeed, once he experienced this calling of salvation, it was immediately a call to service and it was a call to fellowship and it was a call to holiness and it was a heavenly calling and it was an upward calling. It was so much more than just the calling to salvation. And he discovered that by responding to the Lord, who began to respond to him and in fellowship with the Lord, listening for his voice and obeying, he went ever deeper, deeper, deeper into his calling.

We talked about the first stage, this matter of salvation and the realization of God's love and the living by responding to him with first love. But we also said that as the Lord continues to call us and he begins to lead us higher, we go through a process, a process where we decrease and he increases, a process where we learn to live by his spirit and not by our own flesh, a process that involves the working of the cross, a process that involves daily correction, a process that the Bible calls abiding in him, a process that is called pruning. We go through this process and all during this process, the consolation is we come to see our Lord more clearly all the time.

We come to know him. We come to see him. And at a certain time, perhaps early on, perhaps later on, it's unique for everybody.

One day we realize not only were we called to salvation for me, April Fool's Day, 1964, I was called to salvation. I saw God's love. I responded.

But at that time, I didn't realize that I had been chosen before the foundation of the world. It's just too much to take in. I had no idea.

Paul says he was set apart from his mother's womb and then called by God's grace there on the road to Damascus. And it's also interesting that Ananias, the Christian man who went and prayed for Paul, for his blindness and for him to be filled with the Holy Spirit, was told by God that Paul was already a chosen vessel of mine. Paul just thought he was a sinner saved by grace.

But God had big plans for Paul. He's a chosen vessel of mine to go and be a witness for me. And when you and I were saved, we probably little realized just what it was God was after.

But you find out you are a chosen vessel. Second, Peter, chapter one, verse 10, says, Therefore, giving all diligence to make your calling and your election or choosing sure you are both called and chosen, you are called. That's that calling from God that you respond to.

You were chosen. That is something he decided to do before you even knew it. And we discover that we were chosen as the Lord begins to take us through a specially designed, as I said, car wash for every individual.

You find the Lord pulling you by the Holy Spirit through tribulations and processes of failures and victories and all kinds of lessons learned, body life, serving him, wearing the yoke. You go through a process of sanctifying, a process where indeed you decrease and you see more of the Lord in your life. Paul talks about this in chapters six, seven and eight.

And you come out on the other side. I mean, this process goes on the rest of our lives. But we come out full of the Holy Spirit, abiding in the Holy Spirit, led as sons of God by the Holy Spirit.

With this spirit of adoption within us, we come to a certain point where we realize that we have been chosen, that he chose us before the foundation of the world. And we find ourselves loving this God who chose us. We're captured by this God who says, I love you.

I will not let you go. We say, Lord, don't let me go. And now we're captured and now we're chosen.

And when we come to this place, there's still a long way to go. But there are certain things that become established in us. Thank God.

As an example, losing our salvation is no longer an issue. I remember in early days when I was first saved, there were some moments where I wondered, am I saved? I'm not sure. It comes at a place where that's not an issue anymore.

And also another thing is no longer an issue. There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. The enemy can no longer condemn you.

Now, you know, as a young Christian, often the enemy can come and make you feel condemned, make you feel maybe even, you know, you've forsaken the Lord completely. There's no forgiveness for you now. You've finally gone and done it.

But you find out, no, there's no condemnation because you can never be separated from the love of God, which is in Christ. And these things become a knowing in you. These things are established.

You don't have to run around the bush every time the enemy tries to send some condemnation your way. These things are settled in your life and you come into a certain maturity. You begin to understand a little bit God's will and you begin to understand the Lord in his ways a little bit.

This chosen vessel that you have become, the more God deals, the more these things come clear and the more these things come clear, the more we come to a place of usefulness for the Lord. Now, this term adoption as sons, which we find in Romans chapter eight or the placing of sons has to do with the fact that we develop spiritually to the place where the Lord can use us. We are usable.

We are fit vessels. The Lord can use us to do his work. The Lord's always looking for sons who are mature enough that he can trust us with his work.

This is the goal of our development. We are chosen as sons. He wants us to mature, not always to be just always hand in mouth on spiritual welfare, but to the place where abiding in him and knowing his life, we know what to do.

The Lord is leading us. The Lord is telling us this spiritual maturity. Many people never seem to come to.

They never quite know what their calling is and never quite know what God is saying, but this should not be. Not if his life is abiding in you and you are abiding with him and you're walking daily with him and he's taking you through this process. No, we should come into this kind of sonship where we become useful.

As a fit vessel for the Lord to use when we come to this stage, we also come to a dangerous place. Because with this knowing there's a certain freedom. And sometimes this matter of being a chosen vessel can be misunderstood.

The first danger, obviously, is that a chosen vessel is somebody. I have now arrived. Now, you know, of course, from my analogy last time, we all know you never end.

The car wash doesn't end till you see Jesus. But strange to say, we come to a certain place where we say, I have arrived, I am a chosen one, God's special vessel. He really loves me and I'm far beyond most Christians that I know.

It's a very dangerous pride, you can imagine. But, you know, there are people who hold to such a doctrine of chosenness that there's pride that goes with it. It's a very dangerous thing.

Also, along with that, it can possibly come the danger of independence from the body of Christ. You know, I'm so spiritually fit now and I know so much about the Lord, I don't need the body of Christ really that much anymore. I mean, I enjoy being among the folks.

I enjoy singing with them, praying with them, but, you know, it's not like I really need them. I have my own life with the Lord now and this independence is heading us toward trouble. The Lord never said you're too mature for the body of Christ, but there's sometimes that attitude, a sort of condescension, you know, toward the brothers and the sisters.

Well, one day you'll understand where I'm at. And also, strangely to say, we can come to such a place where we feel the Lord pulling us through this car wash. We feel all things working together.

And it's strange how at this point of coming into sonship, we sometimes can settle back into a very dangerous spiritual passivity where we're no longer pursuing the Lord. We're just kind of reacting to circumstances saying, oh, it's all the Lord. But there isn't the seeking, there isn't the asking, the knocking, the finding, the pursuing that is so much a part of the spiritual life.

These kinds of dangers can be upon us. But how about if we understand our chosenness aright? Do you know that you're a chosen vessel? What does that mean to you? Well, let's turn to that verse I mentioned a moment ago in 2 Peter, chapter one. And you all probably remember this chapter where Peter takes the Christians through a list of developing spiritual capacities and characters.

And he comes to verse 10 and simply says, therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about his calling and choosing you. For as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble. For in this way, the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be abundantly supplied to you.

Now, here's somebody who's really abiding in Christ. Here's somebody who really knows the working of the Holy Spirit. Here's somebody who's really seen something of the Lord.

Do you know what they're doing? They're diligently pursuing. They're making sure that their calling is fulfilled, that their choosing reaches its purpose. Why did you choose me, God? I'm going to pursue that purpose with diligence.

Now, there's somebody who understands their chosen place. And of course, going right along with that, if we might turn to Philippians, chapter three, we find Paul's own testimony so wonderfully given to us that when somebody comes to a place where they realize they've been captured by the Lord, they've been chosen by the Lord, there comes that maturity in the Christian life where. The person who has been captured sets themselves to capture the one who captured them.

Do you know the Lord loves that game? He arrested Paul on the road to Damascus, Paul, you're under arrest, no longer your life, what I want, Paul said, OK, Lord. He was arrested. One day, Paul said, you know something, I love the Lord, whatever I've seen of Jesus, I want to see more of him.

And so I'm going to chase after him and try to arrest him. I'll grab him by the leg. I'll grab him by the hand.

I say, Lord, I want to see you more. Lord, I want to know your will more. And Paul, even in jail, as he wrote the book of Philippians, was on a pilgrimage chasing after the Lord.

In chapter three, verse 14, you all know these things. I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. I leave behind the things I've done before.

I'm pressing on toward Jesus. You know what somebody who knows they're chosen is doing? They're running after Jesus. Are you doing that? Is that a passion in your life, whatever circumstances I'm in, whatever ministry I'm given, whatever obstacles, whatever tribulation, I'm going to find the Lord in this.

Now, there's somebody who's on the on the way, they understand what this whole life is about. The end of everything we do should be a greater understanding of the Lord in his ways and the glory to him. And of course, back to Romans chapter 12, the third thing, being diligent about your calling and election, chasing after the Lord or pursuing the one who has laid hold of you.

Now you're trying to lay hold of him. That's number two, number three in Romans chapter 12, this verse we all know. I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

Now, here is the moment in a Christian's life where they finally have something of value in them. Now, you know, there were several times when I rededicated my life as a young Christian and I brought to Jesus all my junk. Lord, I lay down my sins at your feet.

Oh, he loves sins. I lay down my failures down at your feet. You know, many times I rededicated myself, laid things down and gave it myself just as I am, you know, just a messed up kid.

I give myself to you. But here's what the Lord prizes. Somebody who is allowing the spirit to control their lives, somebody who is learning the Lord, his ways and his purpose, somebody whose life expresses a righteousness that has come about by the change wrought in him by the Holy Spirit.

Now, this person is a valuable sacrifice and such a person comes to the Lord and says, I present myself a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto thee. Now, this is a good sacrifice. This is reasonable service.

Now, you know, there's several translations there in Romans 12, but I always like that one the best. You present your body, the living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. You know, a son gives reasonable service to the Lord.

And what is reasonable? Only everything. To him who gave us everything, what is our reasonable service? Here I am, Lord, my members of my body, my life, my heart. You've been working in my heart.

You've been cleaning my mind, renewing my mind. I give you my mind. Lord, I want to be a fit vessel useful for you.

You know, some people are being fitted, but they're not laying their lives down for the Lord to use. But this is our reasonable service. How much the Lord wants reasonable Christians.

Now, see, that's the problem with brand new Christians. They love the Lord with all their heart, but they're crazy. If you asked them, if you said, do this for the Lord, they would do it out of their own understanding.

But they haven't been trained by the Lord. But now imagine somebody who's been trained by the Lord. And of course, nobody's perfect on this.

But what I'm saying is you come to the point where you should understand a little bit what to do. You trust the Lord, you pray before you just jump into something. In the early days, you just jumped into something.

If you got in trouble, then you prayed. Oh, I forgot to pray. Now, you know better.

You see, you're being taught by the Lord. Now you're such a valuable vessel for the Lord to use your reasonable service, everything to the Lord. Why? Because he gave everything to you.

He says, I'm completely at your disposal. You say, then, Lord, I'm completely at your disposal. Now, that's a good transaction.

And then as we see in this chapter 12, and you could read not only this chapter, but we'll look at some other things, too, in here. But you see that once you lay down this whole burnt offering before the Lord, he indeed takes you and uses you. He takes that mind and renews it, and you begin to prove the perfect will of God.

What is the will of God? Walk it out. By obedience to the Holy Spirit, you prove what the will of God is, what should be done, what I am to do in my life. You prove that perfect will of God by obedience in your life.

And then, of course, you see, now some people would like the idea of, you know what a real son does if you're really mature? You chase after the Lord, you and Jesus, you know, it's just you and Jesus. Forget the body of Christ, just run after Jesus. But what have we discovered already? We have discovered what? So much of what you discover about the Lord you find in the body of Christ.

And so here in chapter 12, the immediate application to this living sacrifice is now in the body of Christ, you serve according to your measure. You understand who you are. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a Christian who actually has sound judgment as to who they are? They don't think too highly of themselves.

I'm in verse three. Paul says, I urge you not to think too highly of yourself. Now, of course, there may be one or two of us with that problem.

And on the other hand, there are some who think too lowly of themselves. They don't think they have any gift, any ability. The Lord doesn't give them anything.

They don't know what they're calling it. They don't know what God's will is. They just completely, I don't know.

I'm nothing. I'm no good. No, no, no.

Don't call on me. I can't do anything. I'm no good.

That's no good. That's not reasonable. But here he says in verse three, but so as to have sound judgment, that's got to be worth a million dollars in the body of Christ.

What do you think? Somebody with sound judgment? Doesn't include everybody here. Sound judgment. Well, you've begun to learn what your gifts, what you're calling, what your measure is.

You notice how he says that verse three, but to think as to have sound judgment as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. Isn't it wonderful when somebody understands what their measure is? And then

he goes on in verse six and talks about the grace, the gifts that have been given to us by the grace of God. And here is the point.

Whatever the measure, whether you have five gifts or one gift, whatever the proportion of faith here is the key. Exercise what you have. There is a useful vessel.

Now, don't think that a chosen vessel is somebody who has five gifts. Person with one gift to exercise according to their measure and faith receives the same reward as somebody who has five gifts. They're just as valuable a vessel.

But the object here is with all that the Lord has placed in you, his life, the power of his spirit, certain gifts and the measure of faith. These are to be exercised in the body of Christ. In any assembly that's represented here tonight, if everybody in the assembly who was born again just exercised what they had, we would experience tremendous fullness, wouldn't we? I mean, there'd be such fullness.

We'd have to say, I'm sorry, it's three o'clock in the afternoon. We have to cut this morning meeting off. But of course, these are things our brother already has shared upon in regard to body life, this important matter of exercising each person, exercising your gift.

If it's prophecy, if it's serving, if it's compassion, whatever it is, do it diligently to the Lord. Brothers and sisters, do you want to be valuable to the Lord? Then don't wait till you fancy you have five gifts or some great measure of faith. Just take what you have and be faithful in the body of Christ now.

Do you know what happens when you do that? Well, the Lord is glorified, people see the Lord, there's fullness in the assembly, and you probably receive more measure as a result of this faithfulness. How wonderful it is to see sons in the body of Christ sharing what they have with one another. And then I just want to point out in this passage in Romans in chapter 14 and chapter 15, there's two chapters filled with many exhortations.

But Paul keeps coming back to one single thought. Let's look at a few verses here. In chapter 14, verses one and four, now, except the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinion, verse four, who are you to judge the servant of another to his own master? He stands or falls and he will stand for the Lord is able to make him stand.

Let's look at chapter 14, verse 10 and 13, verse 10. But you, why do you judge your brother or you again? Why do you regard your brother with contempt? We'll all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Verse 13.

Therefore, let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this, not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. Verse 17. For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food.

All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense. Chapter 15, verse one. Now, we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just to please ourselves.

You see, there's a theme in here. There are several topics taken up, but there's a basic theme. And what is that? If you have gone on with the Lord a little bit.

And there are some younger ones in the Lord behind you. They're weaker in their faith, perhaps because of this or that. Or they're doing some things.

You know, here's the opportunity. We who understand this high calling have the privilege of bringing other sons to glory. Of helping other brothers and sisters grow up in Christ by encouraging them, not whacking them down.

Not by judging them, not by having contempt upon them, not by stumbling them for the sake of our freedom. But you know what? Here's a wonderful thought. The Lord's coming back for the bride.

And let's just say, let's make it very small. The bride is made up of two people, me and my wife. My wife is quite advanced spiritually.

I'm kind of a relatively new believer. And here's the deal. The Lord says, I'm coming back for you when both of you are mature.

Now, if my wife spends all of her time knocking me down, she's just delaying the wedding. But if she says, come on, let's go. Let's pray.

Come on. Oh, that's OK. God will forgive you.

Let's go. Let's pray. Forgive.

Let's go. If she encourages me and gets me ready, well, then we're both ready. And so that's the truth for you and me too, isn't it? The younger ones in the Lord, you have a measure of knowledge that they don't have.

A measure of faith, perhaps they don't have. You've been through some things, you know, have had some experience with the Holy Spirit. You know some things that they don't know yet.

Now, here's the deal. The Lord's not coming until they're ready. Now, what do we want to do? Stumble them? Make them go backwards? Cut them off? That's all right.

We're too young and the Lord, we're charging ahead. Of course not. You know, why do we have older sons in the family? You know, I like to visit different Christian homes because sometimes it's amazing.

Some of the older kids are actually almost the mom and the dad of the little ones. They really know how to take care of their younger brothers and sisters. It's an amazing thing to see when it's well done.

And in the body of Christ, are we not the same way? So the Lord takes some young Christian and as you begin to mature as a Christian, now here comes somebody else. They're just saved. Now, you don't tell them, now you should immediately be like me.

You begin to help them, help them grow, bring them along. And Paul mentions many other things here in Romans regarding praying, being faithful in many different ways here in the body of Christ. It's interesting what he says here at the end of chapter 16.

If you just look here, many exhortations regarding body life, which was Stephen's responsibility, but he never got to these passages. So you'll just have to read them for yourself. But chapter 16, verse 19 and 20, just as an example.

For the report of your obedience has reached to all. Therefore, I'm rejoicing over you. But I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil.

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. It's a very interesting verse intimating of growth and sonship, of innocence, of wisdom. This is maturity.

This is that kind of sonship that's responsible. I do thank the Lord for brothers and sisters in the body of Christ who act responsibly, who act with a heart that doesn't belittle people, but edifies and builds up, that realizes we're all in it together. We all need to learn.

It takes infinite patience, long suffering, and all of the things we find in that passage our brother shared this morning in 1 Corinthians 13. Now, I haven't gone into the detail on it because there are many details, the body life and all of this sort of thing, which we need to come into a spiritual maturity to be able to rightly do. But there is something that as I was studying and reading the Book of Romans, something really lit up to me that I want to share with you.

Not only do we have these many exhortations as to the service, the reasonable service, the responsible sonship here in Romans 12, 13, 14, 15, 16. But actually, even more wonderfully, for a chosen vessel, we get a chance to see, to peek into Paul's heart, the heart of a chosen vessel in this passage in chapters 9 through 11. Here in these chapters, we see the heart of a chosen vessel.

Because, you know, if somebody is a chosen vessel and is a mature son, even perhaps more than ministry, you can see a heart. We are vessels and Paul was a chosen vessel. Paul said of himself, I'm an earthen vessel.

We are earthen vessels. That the glory of God may be seen in us, not we ourselves. But a chosen vessel, when you see his heart, you begin to see the heart that understands sonship.

So I want us to go back, if we could, into this section here in chapters 9 through 11. Actually, it begins just a little bit before that. If you go back here in chapter 8 and verse 33, we see Paul talking about the wonder of sonship.

We cannot be separated from the love of God. We are under no condemnation because he has justified us. And in verse 33, he says, who will bring a charge against God's elect? I think it was probably at that point that this burden began to well up in Paul, which he expresses in chapter 9, verse 1. And you will almost think he must have stopped writing, ate something that didn't agree with him and came back in a very morose, you know, sort of after this victorious passage here about the victory in Christ.

We overwhelmingly conquer and nothing can separate you. And I tell you, brethren, I wish I could die for the sake of Israel. It almost sounds as if a week has passed or, you know, some cloud has come over him.

What has happened here? It's the heart, the heart, the heart with a burden. A chosen vessel, a son, isn't free because they love. And because they love, they carry burdens.

Paul had this burden for Israel because they were his kinsmen. And added to this burden was the fact that it was not his sphere or ministry to minister to the Jews per se. He was an apostle to the Gentiles, although he said in my ministry to the Gentiles, I try to make my brethren, the Jews jealous.

But he has a burden for Israel and there's a groaning in his heart. He says in chapter 10, verse 1, just to make it clear, brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. As a people, my people, I have a burden for their salvation.

So there's a burden, there's a real burden in his heart for Israel. And in the midst of his sonship and all of his description of the beauty of this predestined plan, when he thinks of God's election, Israel comes to mind and this burden comes before him. Even as he shared in chapter 8, you know, this groaning in all creation, as creation waits for the freedom of the children of God.

And then we groan ourselves waiting for this freedom that is the redemption of our bodies. What is all that about? We are groaning because we're hoping. We are hoping because we're looking for Jesus to come back.

Because when Jesus comes back is when our bodies are changed. And when our bodies are changed, that's when creation is set free. You see, it's the coming of the Son of God that revealed that was the burden and the hope that caused all that groaning in Romans chapter 8. But now in chapter 9, it's as if he's groaning again because he understands something.

And what is that? For God to gain all the glory, Israel's got to be set right again. Israel has become an issue that even questions the righteousness of God. You see it here when he just presents some questions here in chapter 9 and verse 6. But it is not as though the word of God has failed.

I should go back. Let's read the first verses here in chapter 9. I'm telling you the truth in Christ. I'm not lying.

My conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit. I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. Don't take this lightly now.

I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brother and my kinsmen, according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons. You hear that? And the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers and from whom is the Christ, according to the flesh, who is overall God, blessed forever. Amen.

These are God's chosen people. This is God's elect. But their present condition is bringing into question whether God's righteousness, whether God has been able to do things right by this.

Has the word of God failed? He says in verse 6. In other words, did God choose Israel and then he wasn't able to do it? No, he says the word of God hasn't failed. There's been a misunderstanding. Some people think that everybody who's physically Jewish is a child of promise.

But Paul says, no, not everybody who's physically of Israel is a child of promise. And then he tells the story of Abraham. And you know this kind of story.

OK, so he's trying to correct some of the things. But there's a bigger issue here also regarding this whole matter of election. Israel, he says, stumbled over the stone, the Messiah.

We all know that. Jesus came as the Messiah and the Jews as a whole, as a nation, rejected the Messiah. We look here in chapter 9 and verse 32.

Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, just as it is written. Behold, I lay in Zion, a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.

And he who believes in him will not be disappointed. But Israel as a whole stumbled over that stone. Paul even goes on later on and says in chapter 11 and verse 28.

That from the standpoint of the gospel, they are actually enemies for your sake. When the gospel is preached that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of God, because of their stubbornness and their unbelief, they are even enemies of the gospel. You know, Paul was pursued all his days as he preached the gospel by Jews who stood against this gospel.

They are enemies for your sake, according to the gospel. And the point is this. Israel, having stumbled and rejected the Messiah, has God forsaken his chosen ones? Has God cut them off? Has God replaced them? With the church? Well, we might think he certainly has grounds to, but he chose them.

They are his elect. Now, has he thrown them away? This is really the issue. Again, let's look at some verses so you can see.

In chapter 11, verses 1 and 2. I say, then, God has not rejected his people, has he? May it never be. For I, too, am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham of the tribe of Benjamin. So the first thing that Paul goes on to say is, no, God hasn't rejected, first of all, the whole nation, because there's a remnant in Israel that has believed and are saved by grace, including himself.

So no, God hasn't rejected. And then in verse 11, he goes on to say, And I say, then, did they? They did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be. So here is the question.

If they are the elect of God, have they been cut off? And if they've not been cut off, then God hasn't made things right yet. There's something that needs to be done. And Paul is burdened about this whole thing.

Now, in the answers, you know, I don't want to go into Israel. That's not my main point. You know, it's not.

But I see in this answer that Paul gives in chapters 9, 10 and 11, two things that for us as Christians are of major importance to understand regarding election. Let's be clear about this. We are chosen, elect.

Israel is chosen, elect. There's something we can learn from Israel, just even for ourselves. And it has to do with this whole matter of election itself.

All right. Now, I just want to share these two main points because to me, they just go to something of the heart of a chosen vessel, the heart of a son in his burden. OK, now in chapter 9, let's read some verses 10 through 13.

And let's see if we can find some light as to the nature of election itself. Chapter 9, verse 10 through 13. And not only this, but there was Rebecca also.

And when she conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac, for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad so that God's purpose, there's purpose again, according to his choosing or election might stand not because of works, but because of him who calls. It was said to her, the older will serve the younger, just as it is written, Jacob, I loved, but Esau, I hated. Now, the first point that we see here regarding election is this.

God's election is sovereign. He says, I call who I call. It has nothing to do with what Esau did, nothing to do with what Jacob did.

I call who I call. Before they ever did anything, I call who I call. It's a very sovereign thing.

And of course, it makes it very hard to understand. People say, you know, that's not fair. It's not fair to say, Jacob, I love Esau, I hate it.

God says, I call whom I call. Now, let's read the chapter 9, verses 14 through 16. Now, what shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be.

For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy. I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

Now, here is the first insight to me for us to learn from Israel. Choosing is an act of love from God. Choosing is God's mercy.

God chooses by mercy. He sovereignly chooses, but he chooses as an act of mercy. Let me make that clear.

See, men look at choosing or election and they say, that's not fair. How can you choose this one, not choose that one? Here is the truth of the matter. No man deserves God's mercy.

Every man deserves wrath and judgment. For God to choose anybody is mercy. And God does choose by his love.

And it's because of mercy. Notice in chapter 11, as he's summing up both his mercy to the Gentiles and his mercy to the Jews. We read these verses in chapter 11, verse 30 through 32.

For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience. Now he's talking to the Gentiles. Just as once your disobedience to God, sorry.

For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, meaning the Jews. So these also now have been disobedient that because of the mercy shown to you, they also may now be shown mercy. Verse 32, for God has shut up all in disobedience so that he may show mercy to all.

There is none worthy. Let me ask you a question. Why did God choose Israel? According to the Bible, Deuteronomy chapter 7, we all know that.

God says, I chose you because you were the strongest tribe and you were already very righteous. Is that what he says? No, I chose you, but you were a small tribe. You were nobody.

And you weren't any better than anybody else. But I set my eye on you and I chose you because I choose you. Because I choose you.

Because I have mercy. That's why they were chosen. Now, what do you think Israel forgot along the way? They began to think, ah, we've been chosen because we're special people.

We're better than everybody else. And they're now suffering the discipline for that. Now, how about the Gentiles? We Gentiles? Well, look at the chapter 9 and verse 22.

As Paul is making the argument here, we see how good we Gentiles are. What if God, although willing to demonstrate his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? We are vessels of wrath, a whole bunch of us. Every one of us.

The best thing that could happen to us is for God to nuke us because it would reveal his righteousness. You have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. The wages of sin is death.

Boom! And everybody would say, God is righteous. That's what should be done. But what if God, with these vessels of wrath before him, decides to show mercy? Verse 23.

He did so to make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he prepared beforehand for glory. Even us, whom he also called, not from among the Jews only, but also from among the Gentiles. Now, God has decided to be merciful to some Gentiles and to some people from among the Jews.

He's decided to because he's decided to. Now, we'll never get beyond that mystery. But all we know is when God has done this, he's done it out of mercy.

Nobody deserves it. The Gentiles didn't deserve this mercy. The Israelites didn't deserve this mercy.

But he showed this mercy for the same reason. To glorify the son. He showed mercy to the Gentiles because the son was glorified.

He shows mercy to Israel because the son is glorified. Now, if you remember Lance, when he shared in the darkness last night and made the state in which he made the night before, that you cannot have the church without Christ. Also, you cannot have Israel without Christ.

There's no reason to call Israel except for Christ. He's lifted up as Messiah in the middle. And he is the one who gets the glory.

And God chose Israel to bring forth the seed that was Christ. Now, the church glorifies Christ. And so, mercy has been shown to us.

But you see, the first point is God acts sovereignly, but his choosing is out of mercy because he loved the son. And he wanted many sons to come to glory with the son. OK, that's the first point.

The second point is this. Now, since we know that God chooses by his mercy, the second point is the heart is humbled by the kindness and severity of this mercy. Now, I think you know where I'm reading from.

But let's look at the chapter 11 and verse 22. He's talking about this whole question of Israel and everything. And he makes this, of course, this outstanding verse in verse 22.

Behold, then, the kindness and severity of God to those who fell severity. But to you, God's kindness, if you continue in his kindness, otherwise you also will be cut off. Now here, I'm sure that Paul has in his mind something that the Jews knew from the old covenant.

And it's this. God's loving kindness, his mercies endure forever. Now, that is both good news and bad news.

His mercies endure forever. His hesed, loving kindness is everlasting. And what this means is once God gets a holier, he doesn't let you go.

It's his promise, it will endure forever. So there's many Psalms that point this out. But I like if you'll turn to Psalm 107 for just a minute.

Again, I think you'll see the point if you just hang in here a little bit longer. In Psalm 107, which is a whole Psalm whose theme is give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his mercies endure forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, his mercies endure forever.

And then he picks four people, four foolish people, four types of people who all did foolishly, all act sinfully. And then they cried out to the Lord and the Lord showed them his mercy, which endures forever. Let them give thanks to the Lord.

Now, the very end, the last verse of this Psalm says, who is wise, let him give heed to these things and consider the mercies of the Lord. After telling the story of these four different groups of people and their disobediences and they're crying out for mercy and God's mercy to them. Paul, I'm sorry, the writer makes this point.

He says, do you know what God's loving kindness is like? It will turn you upside down. It will make wet places dry and dry places wet. It will bring down those who are hardy and lift up those who are needy.

This loving kindness of God is not some weak stuff. This love of God is strong and it endures and it conquers. So you see here in Psalm 107, just as an example, verse 33, he changes rivers into a wilderness and springs of water into thirsty ground because of the wickedness of those who dwell in it.

Vice versa, in verse 35, he changes a wilderness into a pool of water and dry land into springs of water for those who are humble and don't have a home. And it goes on to say that he casts down princes, but lifts up the needy. This is what we need to be wise about and consider the loving kindness of the Lord.

Now, so when we look at this loving kindness, this love, this mercy of the Lord, we need to understand that it has both kindness and severity. He speaks about the hardness that has come to Israel. He speaks about the hardness that came to Pharaoh.

And he says that God chose Israel and Pharaoh into hardness in order to show mercy to somebody else. God makes your heart hard to show mercy to somebody else. So he hardened Pharaoh's heart, showed mercy to Israel.

God has hardened partially some of the Jews' heart, and he's showing mercy to the Gentiles. See, God's mercy is always there, but it can also be hardness. There's hardness, there's mercy, there's the mystery of hardness, as he says here in chapter 11 and verse 25.

I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, so that you'll not be wise in your own estimation that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved. There's a mystery of the hardness of Israel.

He says it's a mystery. But what's happening is now the Gentiles are getting saved by God's mercy, while there's a hardness in Israel. And it's that same love of God acting both ways.

In the mystery of this love, there's not only the mystery of hardness, but there's the mystery of mercy. And what is the mystery of mercy? God, in his election, has to have a remnant. Think of this.

He's chosen Israel to be his sons, but they're disobedient. He has chosen to have sons, and he will have obedient sons. So he calls himself a remnant to stand in the position of obedience.

Now, it's not like the remnant are super people, but they have been taken by God and set by his choosing as a remnant to stand faithful in a time of disobedience of Israel. The mystery of the remnant is seen even in this love of God. He said we would have become a Sodom and Gomorrah if God hadn't left himself a remnant in Israel, a seed, somebody faithful.

How can you have people who are called my sons and there's nobody faithful? It cannot be. So God says, you, you, you, you're my chosen vessels. And he always, on the face of the earth, from the time of Abraham on, had some vessel of faithfulness.

No matter how unfaithful Israel was as a whole. Now, the point of this whole thing is that the Lord will never let go of Israel until he's brought them back into their chosenness, into their calling, into their destiny. We read it in chapter 11, again, verses 23 through 26.

And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, speaking about Israel, will be grafted in for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree? I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery so that you'll not be wise in your own estimation that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved.

When God has done his work by his loving kindness that endures forever, he will turn and restore and graft in Israel and get his glory out of them. Because he has chosen and he chooses who he's chosen and whom he calls. He chooses until the calling and the choosing come together as one.

Then you see that God's righteous. No matter what he has to do, he will never quit. He'll never stop.

He'll never forsake. He'll never throw him away. But he will deal severely, severely, severely, severely until they turn.

That's love. Now, OK, now that's that's enough of that. I realize I don't want to scare you anymore.

But now I want to ask the question, why Paul shares this? Did he suddenly get distracted and off on the side? Is this something is a personal bone he has? I'm not trying to preach anything about Israel tonight, really. But why does Paul have such a heart? Why didn't he just skip ahead into chapter 12 immediately? Why does he stop here with this deep burden? It needs explanation, explanation. Well, well.

Chapter 11, verse 33. Let's let's just start there. Just a couple of simple reasons.

I'm almost through a couple of simple reasons here. Chapter 11, verse 33. Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

How unsearchable are his judgments and unfathomable his ways. Who has known the mind of the Lord or who became his counselor? Or who has first been given to him that it might be paid back to him again? For from him and through him and to him are all things to him be the glory forever. Amen.

The first thing that election should do to all of us is humble us. We're way beyond our depth. You know something, brothers and sisters, God's doing something with Israel.

Whether we can understand it or not, we need to respect it. You know, it's an amazing thing to be a chosen person. You see, here's one of the problems that I didn't get to in Romans.

I left it out for the sake of Gentiles. But the Gentiles were having a problem. And what is it? They were thinking we've been chosen because we're something special.

And Paul says, you know, you just don't get it. You're chosen because of mercy. And you're involved in something bigger than you.

Now you're chosen by God. But do you know Israel's chosen by God? Do you know that God is doing something big, even bigger than you, even bigger than what you understand? At least you need the humility to just worship the unsearchable riches of God and not try to tell them what to do. That's the first stage.

At least let's acknowledge that God is doing something and we're out of our depth. You know, this is a precious thing about the heart of a son, the heart of a chosen vessel. He's burdened about something because it has something to do with God's purpose.

He's burdened about Israel because it has something to do with God's purpose. Thank God for the many assemblies who, for some reason, have found that burden and are praying for Israel. There's something that God's doing there.

But now beyond praying for Israel, there is a lesson, a big, big lesson for the church itself. And what is that? The same love with which the Lord is dealing with Israel, he will deal with us. We find that clearly stated in chapter 11, verses 20, as he's talking about that olive tree.

Everett, let's take verses 19, 20 and 21. Verse 19, you will say branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in quite right. He says they were broken off of their unbelief, but you stand by your faith.

Do not be conceited, but fear for if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. Behold, the kindness and the severity of God. Now, do you see what he's saying? Let me put it to you like this.

Sometimes, you know, we're praying for Israel back home where I live. We pray for Israel. Sometimes we pray, say, Lord, why don't they open their eyes? Why don't they see they're not? They're not doing what they're supposed to be doing to your chosen people.

They don't see the Messiah. And everything that's happening in Israel now, at least. Is a parable of what's happening in the church.

Just listen for another minute. Everyone in Christ has been chosen before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. Every Christian has been a chosen vessel called to be holy and blameless before him in love.

Now, that's every Christian. Now, how many of them are pursuing that calling? How many of them understand that they're this chosen vessel? How many of them are growing into sonship? What do we have here when we think of how many are actually even have any idea of what's going on? There's many, many, many, many people saved. But how many hearts are hard? How many don't even understand what God's calling is on their lives? Their destiny that God for as God's people, what that entails? How many are growing up even in the sonship? The Lord raises up a remnant because the faithfulness of the church speaks against the righteousness of God.

The unfaithfulness of the church as a whole says God can't do it. He's chosen a people. They don't want him.

He's chosen a people. They won't grow up. He's chosen a people.

They can't become sons. They're not interested. They won't do it.

And so God says, no, no, I've got some. Who will be faithful? Will you? Who has an ear? Who has a heart in the midst of this day? Who is willing to be dealt with by God's mercy? And let me approach it just in one other way. This is something that I feel very deeply in me.

You've heard about my trips out to Russia and things. You know what? 95% of my time, I fellowship in little groups of people who really see something of God's purpose and want to be all God wants them to be. That's where I spend most of my time.

Once in a while, I go out to someplace like Russia and just go a little crazy. Now, I have a burden for the whole church. I just can't cut off and just have a burden for our little group of 35 people where I live.

Do we have a burden for the whole chosen vessel? Paul had such a burden for his people. Do we have such a burden for our people? Do you know what I'm saying? Every born again believer is our brother and sister. Do we have such a burden that we're willing to lay down our lives if they could just come into seeing what it is to be a son? If they could just understand, see God's purpose, move toward it? Do we have such a heart? You see, you know what I'm saying? I mean, I have to confess my heart is so provincial.

It's so colloquial. I'm concerned what I, me, mine and a few friends. But I think that part of the maturity of sonship is to realize that there's a tremendous thing that God has to do.

I also believe that what God calls, He chooses. What God chooses, He glorifies. It says it in Romans chapter 8. I believe it.

He foreknew, He called, He justified, and He will glorify. Do you believe that? Now, what should we do? They say, well, praise God, the church is in terrible shape, and we only know 300 people really interested, but somehow in the twinkling of an eye, God's going to do the whole thing. We'll just leave it up to Him.

Or do we, like Daniel, realizing what God is going to do, give ourselves to prayer and really take part? And we may not have this ministry of going out to all of these various groups, as it were, but at least we can start and pray for them. Our waiting may be involved with them somehow. On the other side of the coin,

it's interesting, isn't it? When you go out in your daily life, for probably most of you, you meet some people who are really born again Christians.

They love the Lord. They're involved in some group here or there that has a different amount of light or understanding. Isn't it amazing how God has Him a remnant everywhere? There's some people out there in Russia, in the Russian Orthodox Church, which as a whole is a very dark situation.

And there are overcomers and those with a hearing heart and those who are loving God with all their heart, mind, soul and strength, and those who are living to the amount of light that they have. Praise God for that. I mean, God has something tremendous that He's doing, but we should be praying for that.

And in our own life, you know, so we have a friend. Well, we have a friend here. He's a good friend at work and he's a Christian.

We ought to pray for him and help him, help him to understand his calling, his sonship, help him get there, whatever group he's part of. I just feel that there's something bigger involved than just us. And that's part of sonship maturity to realize there's something so big God wants to do.

Let me change it. There is something big that God will do when God is through with what He's going to do through the stages of severity and kindness. And believe me, if you and I, even as individuals are stuck and unwilling to grow, He will turn us upside down, shake the change out of our pockets, give us a tough time, do anything that He needs to do, because His love will not let us go.

He has chosen us and He's going to bring us through the glory. That's a fearful thing. That's a fearful thing.

I mean, I don't know if you understand that or agree with me, but to me, this is the highest love, not just the first love that says, praise Jesus, I've saved, you know, and then not just the captured love. Jesus, you love me even in the midst of my weakness and you just love me. Lord, I'm captured by your love.

But now a motivating love, a love, a loving kindness, a mercy that where you hear God say, I love you and I won't let you go. You're mine. I've called you by my name and I will bring you to myself.

That is a fearful love. Not a love that fears losing salvation. But a love that fears disappointing the one we love.

If we understand that, or at least if you understand what I was saying here now, I think just for a moment, we look at Romans chapter 12 and we understand what he means when Paul says, now I beseech you by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice. What are those mercies of God? The kindness, the severity, the love that won't let us go. How do we know that that's true? And we know that that's our portion.

Now, what is our response to be a whole burnt offering to the Lord? We come before him, we want to please him in everything. We want to find his perfect will for our lives. By the mercies of God, we present our bodies a living sacrifice.

He's looking for such sons who come as a free will offering, realizing his mercies. And of course, have you experienced his mercies? How about the kindness? Have you experienced the kindness of his mercy? Would you say the kindness of his mercy triumphs over the severity? I think so. We've all known the kindness of his mercy, and maybe some of us know the severity of his mercy.

But this is a mercy that will never leave us. So what do we do about it? We give ourselves afresh to the Lord, a living sacrifice, holy, a son that the Lord can use in these days. And then in his process, in his way, grabbing people here and there and doing things that we can't possibly engineer, even in our minds, when he's done and his son comes back, we will be like him.

How is that possible? By the working of his mercies. It'll be. And those who are called and those who are the chosen are going to be the same.

In the end, we're called, we're chosen, we're glorified, and the son is glorified. God has this purpose in his heart. My son's going to be glorified.

I'm going to bring many sons to glory. I am going to have me a wife for my... These are his purposes and his love that has been set and endures forever. And ours is to respond in the fear and the love of God to serve in these last days.

May the Lord help us. Let's just pray for a moment. Lord, I'm very aware that something like this could be a fearful thing.

And yet I'm also aware that you really mean business. Oh, Lord, we thank you for those many people who love you, who have laid down their lives, who offer you reasonable service, who realize that your mercies endure forever. You will not let us go.

And so in all sobriety, with a real understanding of cost, they have laid down to serve you. We thank you for our brother Paul, for this chosen vessel with a broken heart. Who not only laid down his own life, but also had a burden to pray for all of his kinsmen.

Oh, Lord, give us such a burden to really pray for all of our brethren. Lord, they're saved. Some of them don't even know the way into sonship.

Some of them don't even know there's an eternal purpose for them. Oh, Lord, we pray. We pray for the whole church.

We know you're waiting for something much larger than what we see or understand. We know you're able to do it. We stand in the fact that what you begin, you're able to finish.

But Lord, we want to pray like Daniel faithfully for this matter. We believe this is a big, big issue. We also pray for Israel.

We realize there's another issue. Lord, we don't want to stand around with little provincial hearts, thinking that our little group is all you're dealing with in this day. Oh, Lord, not when we've seen the depth of your mercies.

Not when we've seen how you can turn oceans into dry ground when it serves your end. Lord, we believe you're a merciful God and your mercies endure forever. And Lord, we pray, have mercy on us.

Lord, we want to go on with you. We want to be real sons that can be counted on, trustworthy, responsible, that are abiding in you and hearing your voice and obeying you, who allow the cross to deal with us in all of these things. Oh, Lord, you have such a plan, such a glorious plan, such a tremendous future.

Oh, Lord, we want to live in the kindness of your mercy that results from obedience. Lord, we come, we lay ourselves before you. Take us as a living sacrifice.

Lord, we want to be fit vessels chosen for you. We thank you, Lord, as we've been observing recently the young people. And they have a heart for you.

Oh, Lord, lead them on from glory to glory. And through your discipline and plan into true sons who can bear responsibility and who will have sound judgment and who serve in the body of Christ with all of their heart, mind, soul and strength. Lord, we're all in your hands by the mercy of God.

And there's no letting go of us. You cannot let us go. You have called us by name and you will have us glorified.

So do your will in us, we pray in Jesus name. Amen.

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