**Romans 8-11**

**Review:**

**In chapters 1-4,** Paul introduces himself then explains to a diverse Roman congregation how each of them are on the same plane. **Romans 3:22-24**  For there is no distinction, 23 since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; 24 they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Paul then uses Abraham as an example of how God makes people (“reckons” = adds up and accounts them) righteous through faith.

**In chapters 5-8,** Paul assures his congregation that this same righteousness has been given unto them. Paul then questions why they would go on living as if Sin were still their master. Paul explains that in Baptism we are so united with Christ that his death is our death and his resurrection is our resurrection. Through chapter 7, Paul seeks to illustrate this unification with an example from marriage even acknowledging his own sinfulness and need of a savior. Chapter 8 illuminates the role of the Spirit and expresses how all of creation is waiting for fulfilling work of the savior, concluding with an exposition on the greatness of God’s love for us.

**Summary: Romans 9-11**
Israel's continuing unbelief is a cause of deep sorrow for Paul. That unbelief is due neither to a failure of God's word nor to Israel's ability to hear the gospel, but to a temporary "hardening" in Israel so that the gospel can overflow to the Gentiles. In the end "all Israel will be saved" by the grace and mercy of God.

**Read Romans 8:1-11 in the Message Translation**

**Romans 8:1**  There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

How do you hear this passage differently?

**Read Romans 8:12-30 to yourself – discuss with 2-3 others.**

What does the Spirit do for us according to this passage?

What does it mean to you that creation is “waiting” and “groaning in labor pains”?

**Read Romans 8:31-39**

What do you find hopeful in this passage?

Is there really such a thing as Grace? Can you really get something for nothing?

**Chapters 9-11**

“Two questions dominate these three chapters: the question of unbelieving Israel, and the question of God’s faithfulness.” (NT Wright, NIB Volume 10, pg 621)

Issue 1: We have shown that people are saved by faith in Jesus Christ. Issue 2: Jews have the promise of God but have rejected Jesus as Messiah?

**Read Romans 9:1-18 in the Message Translation**

What do you understand in a new way?

**Romans 9:16**  16 So it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who shows mercy.

What role does your “free will” play? How are you free? How are you bound?

**Summary Romans 9:19-10:4**

Paul again lifts up the sovereignty of God using the analogy of a potter and clay. What right does the clay have to tell the potter what to do? Paul then uses passages out of Hosea and Isaiah to demonstrate that God can save whoever God wants. How does this relate to Israel’s unbelief? Paul is saddened that his fellow Jews have rejected Jesus as the Savior. It almost seems inconceivable to him that God could choose the gentiles and yet the ones who have loved God can refuse to believe but instead keep up their attempts at fulfilling the law.

**Read Romans 10:5-21**

How is God saving people? Through faith. How do people get faith?

**Summary Romans 11:1-24**

Does this mean, then, that God is so fed up with Israel that he’ll have nothing more to do with them? Hardly. Paul explains that he is a Jew and that throughout Israel’s history there have been several times where people felt like God abandoned the Israelite people – it was never the case then and isn’t the case now.

Paul next uses the analogy of a gardener pruning a tree (this image is also used by Jesus in John 15). Paul says that the Jews were branches that did not produce fruit so they were pruned and God grafted in a wild olive branch (gentiles). So if God can graft in something that doesn’t belong how much more easily can God graft in the old branch?

**Read Romans 11:25-36 in the Message Translation**

How mysterious is this God of ours?

Consider the Cross of Christ – was Jesus considered loved by God or “rejected” by God when he was on the Cross?

Romans 8- The Message (MSG)

The Solution Is Life on God’s Terms

**8 1-2**With the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah, that fateful dilemma is resolved. Those who enter into Christ’s being-here-for-us no longer have to live under a continuous, low-lying black cloud. A new power is in operation. The Spirit of life in Christ, like a strong wind, has magnificently cleared the air, freeing you from a fated lifetime of brutal tyranny at the hands of sin and death.

**3-4**God went for the jugular when he sent his own Son. He didn’t deal with the problem as something remote and unimportant. In his Son, Jesus, he personally took on the human condition, entered the disordered mess of struggling humanity in order to set it right once and for all. The law code, weakened as it always was by fractured human nature, could never have done that.

The law always ended up being used as a Band-Aid on sin instead of a deep healing of it. And now what the law code asked for but we couldn’t deliver is accomplished as we, instead of redoubling our own efforts, simply embrace what the Spirit is doing in us.

**5-8**Those who think they can do it on their own end up obsessed with measuring their own moral muscle but never get around to exercising it in real life. Those who trust God’s action in them find that God’s Spirit is in them—living and breathing God! Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; attention to God leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life. Focusing on the self is the opposite of focusing on God. Anyone completely absorbed in self ignores God, ends up thinking more about self than God. That person ignores who God is and what he is doing. And God isn’t pleased at being ignored.

**9-11**But if God himself has taken up residence in your life, you can hardly be thinking more of yourself than of him. Anyone, of course, who has not welcomed this invisible but clearly present God, the Spirit of Christ, won’t know what we’re talking about. But for you who welcome him, in whom he dwells—even though you still experience all the limitations of sin—you yourself experience life on God’s terms. It stands to reason, doesn’t it, that if the alive-and-present God who raised Jesus from the dead moves into your life, he’ll do the same thing in you that he did in Jesus, bringing you alive to himself? When God lives and breathes in you (and he does, as surely as he did in Jesus), you are delivered from that dead life. With his Spirit living in you, your body will be as alive as Christ’s!

**12-14**So don’t you see that we don’t owe this old do-it-yourself life one red cent. There’s nothing in it for us, nothing at all. The best thing to do is give it a decent burial and get on with your new life. God’s Spirit beckons. There are things to do and places to go!

**15-17**This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It’s adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike “What’s next, Papa?” God’s Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children. And we know we are going to get what’s coming to us—an unbelievable inheritance! We go through exactly what Christ goes through. If we go through the hard times with him, then we’re certainly going to go through the good times with him!

**18-21**That’s why I don’t think there’s any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times. The created world itself can hardly wait for what’s coming next. Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead. Meanwhile, the joyful anticipation deepens.

**22-25**All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it’s not only around us; it’s *within* us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within. We’re also feeling the birth pangs. These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don’t see what is enlarging us. But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy.

**26-28**Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God’s Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don’t know how or what to pray, it doesn’t matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. He knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows our pregnant condition, and keeps us present before God. That’s why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good.

**29-30**God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him. After God made that decision of what his children should be like, he followed it up by calling people by name. After he called them by name, he set them on a solid basis with himself. And then, after getting them established, he stayed with them to the end, gloriously completing what he had begun.

**31-39**So, what do you think? With God on our side like this, how can we lose? If God didn’t hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing himself to the worst by sending his own Son, is there anything else he wouldn’t gladly and freely do for us? And who would dare tangle with God by messing with one of God’s chosen? Who would dare even to point a finger? The One who died for us—who was raised to life for us!—is in the presence of God at this very moment sticking up for us. Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ’s love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture:

They kill us in cold blood because they hate you.
We’re sitting ducks; they pick us off one by one.

None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. I’m absolutely convinced that nothing—nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable—absolutely *nothing* can get between us and God’s love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us.

# Romans 9 - The Message (MSG) God Is Calling His People

**9 1-5**At the same time, you need to know that I carry with me at all times a huge sorrow. It’s an enormous pain deep within me, and I’m never free of it. I’m not exaggerating—Christ and the Holy Spirit are my witnesses. It’s the Israelites . . . If there were any way I could be cursed by the Messiah so they could be blessed by him, I’d do it in a minute. They’re my family. I grew up with them. They had everything going for them—family, glory, covenants, revelation, worship, promises, to say nothing of being the race that produced the Messiah, the Christ, who is God over everything, always. Oh, yes!

**6-9**Don’t suppose for a moment, though, that God’s Word has malfunctioned in some way or other. The problem goes back a long way. From the outset, not all Israelites of the flesh were Israelites of the spirit. It wasn’t Abraham’s sperm that gave identity here, but God’s *promise.* Remember how it was put: “Your family will be defined by Isaac”? That means that Israelite identity was never racially determined by sexual transmission, but it was *God*-determined by promise. Remember that promise, “When I come back next year at this time, Sarah will have a son”?

**10-13**And that’s not the only time. To Rebecca, also, a promise was made that took priority over genetics. When she became pregnant by our one-of-a-kind ancestor, Isaac, and her babies were still innocent in the womb—incapable of good or bad—she received a special assurance from God. What God did in this case made it perfectly plain that his purpose is not a hit-or-miss thing dependent on what we do or don’t do, but a sure thing determined by his decision, flowing steadily from his initiative. God told Rebecca, “The firstborn of your twins will take second place.” Later that was turned into a stark epigram: “I loved Jacob; I hated Esau.”

**14-18**Is that grounds for complaining that God is unfair? Not so fast, please. God told Moses, “*I’m* in charge of mercy. *I’m* in charge of compassion.” Compassion doesn’t originate in our bleeding hearts or moral sweat, but in God’s mercy. The same point was made when God said to Pharaoh, “I picked you as a bit player in this drama of my salvation power.” All we’re saying is that God has the first word, initiating the action in which we play our part for good or ill.

# Romans 11The Message (MSG)

### The Loyal Minority

**11 1-2**Does this mean, then, that God is so fed up with Israel that he’ll have nothing more to do with them? Hardly. Remember that I, the one writing these things, am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham out of the tribe of Benjamin. You can’t get much more Semitic than that! So we’re not talking about repudiation. God has been too long involved with Israel, has too much invested, to simply wash his hands of them.

**2-6**Do you remember that time Elijah was agonizing over this same Israel and cried out in prayer?

God, they murdered your prophets,
They trashed your altars;
I’m the only one left and now they’re after me!

And do you remember God’s answer?

I still have seven thousand who haven’t quit,
Seven thousand who are loyal to the finish.

It’s the same today. There’s a fiercely loyal minority still—not many, perhaps, but probably more than you think. They’re holding on, not because of what they think they’re going to get out of it, but because they’re convinced of God’s grace and purpose in choosing them. If they were only thinking of their own immediate self-interest, they would have left long ago.

**7-10**And then what happened? Well, when Israel tried to be right with God on her own, pursuing her own self-interest, she didn’t succeed. The chosen ones of God were those who let God pursue his interest in them, and as a result received his stamp of legitimacy. The “self-interest Israel” became thick-skinned toward God. Moses and Isaiah both commented on this:

Fed up with their quarrelsome, self-centered ways,
     God blurred their eyes and dulled their ears,
Shut them in on themselves in a hall of mirrors,
    and they’re there to this day.

David was upset about the same thing:

I hope they get sick eating self-serving meals,
    break a leg walking their self-serving ways.
I hope they go blind staring in their mirrors,
    get ulcers from playing at god.

### Pruning and Grafting Branches

**11-12**The next question is, “Are they down for the count? Are they out of this for good?” And the answer is a clear-cut *No*. Ironically when they walked out, they left the door open and the outsiders walked in. But the next thing you know, the Jews were starting to wonder if perhaps they had walked out on a good thing. Now, if their leaving triggered this worldwide coming of non-Jewish outsiders to God’s kingdom, just imagine the effect of their coming back! What a homecoming!

**13-15**But I don’t want to go on about them. It’s you, the outsiders, that I’m concerned with now. Because my personal assignment is focused on the so-called outsiders, I make as much of this as I can when I’m among my Israelite kin, the so-called *insiders*, hoping they’ll realize what they’re missing and want to get in on what God is doing. If their falling out initiated this worldwide coming together, their recovery is going to set off something even better: mass homecoming! If the first thing the Jews did, even though it was wrong for them, turned out for your good, just think what’s going to happen when they get it right!

**16-18**Behind and underneath all this there is a holy, God-planted, God-tended root. If the primary root of the tree is holy, there’s bound to be some holy fruit. Some of the tree’s branches were pruned and you wild olive shoots were grafted in. Yet the fact that you are now fed by that rich and holy root gives you no cause to crow over the pruned branches. Remember, you aren’t feeding the root; the root is feeding you.

**19-20**It’s certainly possible to say, “Other branches were pruned so that *I* could be grafted in!” Well and good. But they were pruned because they were deadwood, no longer connected by belief and commitment to the root. The only reason you’re on the tree is because your graft “took” when you believed, and because you’re connected to that belief-nurturing root. So don’t get cocky and strut your branch. Be humbly mindful of the root that keeps you lithe and green.

**21-22**If God didn’t think twice about taking pruning shears to the natural branches, why would he hesitate over you? He wouldn’t give it a second thought. Make sure you stay alert to these qualities of gentle kindness and ruthless severity that exist side by side in God—ruthless with the deadwood, gentle with the grafted shoot. But don’t presume on this gentleness. The moment you become deadwood, you’re out of there.

**23-24**And don’t get to feeling superior to those pruned branches down on the ground. If they don’t persist in remaining deadwood, they could very well get grafted back in. God can do that. He can perform miracle grafts. Why, if he could graft *you*—branches cut from a tree out in the wild—into an orchard tree, he certainly isn’t going to have any trouble grafting branches back into the tree they grew from in the first place. Just be glad you’re in the tree, and hope for the best for the others.

### A Complete Israel

**25-29**I want to lay all this out on the table as clearly as I can, friends. This is complicated. It would be easy to misinterpret what’s going on and arrogantly assume that you’re royalty and they’re just rabble, out on their ears for good. But that’s not it at all. This hardness on the part of insider Israel toward God is temporary. Its effect is to open things up to all the outsiders so that we end up with a full house. Before it’s all over, there will be a complete Israel. As it is written,

A champion will stride down from the mountain of Zion;
    he’ll clean house in Jacob.
And this is my commitment to my people:
    removal of their sins.

From your point of view as you hear and embrace the good news of the Message, it looks like the Jews are God’s enemies. But looked at from the long-range perspective of God’s overall purpose, they remain God’s oldest friends. God’s gifts and God’s call are under full warranty—never canceled, never rescinded.

**30-32**There was a time not so long ago when you were on the outs with God. But then the Jews slammed the door on him and things opened up for you. Now *they* are on the outs. But with the door held wide open for you, they have a way back in. In one way or another, God makes sure that we all experience what it means to be outside so that he can personally open the door and welcome us back in.

**33-36**Have you ever come on anything quite like this extravagant generosity of God, this deep, deep wisdom? It’s way over our heads. We’ll never figure it out.

Is there anyone around who can explain God?
Anyone smart enough to tell him what to do?
Anyone who has done him such a huge favor
    that God has to ask his advice?
Everything comes from him;
Everything happens through him;
Everything ends up in him.
Always glory! Always praise!
    Yes. Yes. Yes.