TEACHER GUIDE | LESSON 17

Romans Part 3

Mercy for Jews and Gentiles

BIG IDEA God's sovereign mercy humbles both Jews and Gentiles and preserves hope for Israel within his saving purpose.

Purpose and outcome

By the end of the lesson, the class should be able to:

- state why Israel's widespread unbelief raises a question about God's faithfulness;
- trace Paul's argument from sovereign mercy to universal gospel proclamation;
- explain the remnant and olive tree without boasting over Israel; and
- describe the main readings of 'all Israel' while preserving Paul's hope and humility.

Lesson at a glance

TIME	MOVEMENT
0:00-5:00	Opening question and prayer
5:00-12:00	Paul's anguish and the question - 9:1-8
12:00-22:00	God's freedom to show mercy - 9:9-29
22:00-30:00	Israel's responsibility and the gospel for all - 9:30-10:21
30:00-40:00	God has not rejected Israel - 11:1-24
40:00-45:00	The mystery of mercy and 'all Israel' - 11:25-36
45:00-48:00	Choose one or two discussion questions
48:00-50:00	Synthesis, homework, and prayer

Before class

Write on the board: Has God's word failed because many Israelites have not believed in Jesus?

Opening question: What should Christians feel—not merely think—when people reject the gospel?

Mark Romans 9:1-8; 10:9-15; 11:1-6; 11:17-24; and 11:25-32. Read these selections aloud and summarize the intervening argument.

PROTECT THE SPINE Required: God's word has not failed; salvation rests on mercy; the gospel is offered to everyone who calls on Christ; Gentile believers must not boast; God has not rejected Israel. Summarize: Jacob and Esau, Pharaoh, and the potter and clay. Safely omit: a full Calvinism-Arminianism debate, a political discussion of the modern state of Israel, and an end-times timetable.

The whole lesson in one claim

God's word has not failed. His saving purpose has always advanced by mercy rather than ancestry or achievement; the same gospel saves Jews and Gentiles, and God's story with Israel is not finished.

CENTRAL LINE Mercy leaves no room for entitlement, despair, or boasting—only faith, mission, hope, and worship.

1. CORE Paul's grief and God's freedom

Romans 9 begins with anguish, not a theology lecture. Paul grieves for fellow Israelites who possess the covenants, law, worship, promises, patriarchs, and the Messiah according to the flesh, yet many have rejected Jesus. The question is unavoidable: if Israel received God's promises, has God's word failed?

Paul answers no. 'Not all who are descended from Israel are Israel' does not erase ethnic Israel. It recalls the Old Testament pattern in which physical descent never guaranteed saving participation in the promise. God freely carried the promise through Isaac rather than Ishmael and Jacob rather than Esau. No one can treat grace as an inherited entitlement.

ROMANS 9 EMPHASIZES	ROMANS 10 EMPHASIZES
God's purpose and freedom in election	The summons to believe and confess Jesus as Lord
Mercy does not depend on human willing or effort	Israel stumbled by pursuing righteousness apart from faith
God can use even resistance within his saving purpose	People must hear the gospel through those who are sent

Do not make the chapters compete. Paul holds together divine sovereignty and human responsibility without explaining their full mechanics. Romans 9 removes entitlement; Romans 10 removes fatalism.

Election and hardening The leading readings

READING	WHAT IT STRESSES
Individual election to salvation	God mercifully chooses particular people, not because of foreseen works or merit.
Corporate or vocational election	God chooses peoples and representatives for roles in salvation history; individuals share the chosen people's destiny through faith.
Both corporate and individual	Paul discusses Israel and the Gentiles as peoples while also addressing the salvation of persons within them.

Teaching posture: acknowledge the readings, then state what all must face in the text. God is free and just in mercy; neither ancestry nor works creates a claim on him; and Paul's argument concerns the salvation of real Jews and Gentiles, not merely historical assignments.

ABOUT PHARAOH Exodus says both that Pharaoh hardened his heart and that God hardened him. Paul uses Pharaoh to show that human resistance cannot defeat God's purpose and may come under judicial hardening. Do not portray God as discovering an innocent, neutral Pharaoh and forcing him to become evil.

2. CORE The gospel is near and offered to all

Romans 9:30-10:21 turns from God's freedom to Israel's responsibility. Israel had zeal, but zeal without knowledge pursued righteousness as an achievement and stumbled over Christ. Christ is the culmination and goal of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes (10:4). The law is not declared evil; its story and purpose reach their climax in the Messiah.

Romans 10:9-13 is not a magical verbal formula. Confessing Jesus as Lord and believing God raised him from the dead describe public allegiance and trusting faith. The word is near, and 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' Verses 14-15 then make proclamation necessary: people must be sent, preach, hear, and believe.

3. CORE God has not rejected Israel

Paul answers the question directly in 11:1: 'By no means!' Paul himself is evidence. As in Elijah's day, God preserves a remnant chosen by grace. Israel's present unbelief is serious, but it is neither total nor final.

THE OLIVE TREE	PAUL'S WARNING
The root is God's covenant promise associated with the patriarchs	Gentile believers do not support the root; the root supports them
Some natural branches were broken off through unbelief	Ethnic privilege does not replace faith
Wild Gentile branches were grafted in through faith	Grace gives Gentiles no grounds for superiority
Natural branches can be grafted in again	God is able, and the church should retain hope for Jewish faith in Christ

Paul gives no support to antisemitism or casual claims that God simply discarded the Jewish people. There is one covenant people pictured as one tree, and every branch depends on God's kindness. The proper Gentile posture is gratitude, holy fear, prayer, and witness—not arrogance.

What does 'all Israel will be saved' mean?

LEADING VIEW	MEANING
A future, broad turning of ethnic Israel	After the fullness of the Gentiles, Israel as a people—not necessarily every individual—turns to Christ.
The believing Jewish remnant across history	'All Israel' is the complete number of Jewish people saved throughout the present age.
The whole people of God	'Israel' includes the complete elect community of believing Jews and Gentiles.

The immediate contrast between Israel and the Gentiles makes ethnic Israel the most natural referent; many interpreters therefore expect a broad future turning to Christ. Others understand the verse as the completed Jewish remnant or the whole people of God. Do not claim more than Paul does: there is no separate way of salvation, not every ethnic Israelite is automatically saved, and God has not finished with Israel.

MERCY ON ALL 11:32 Paul is not teaching automatic universal salvation. 'All' gathers the groups in his argument: disobedient Gentiles receive mercy, and disobedient Israel remains within the reach of mercy. God's saving plan makes every group a debtor to grace.

Discussion choose one or two

1. Why does Paul begin this difficult teaching with grief and prayer rather than detached argument?
2. How does the olive tree confront both antisemitism and ordinary Christian pride?
3. How do Romans 9 and 10 prevent both entitlement and fatalism?
4. Why is worship, rather than a solved theological system, Paul's conclusion in 11:33-36?

Substitute-teacher guardrails

If debate begins, say: 'Faithful Christians differ on how individual and corporate election fit together and on the timing of Israel's salvation. Paul's clear pastoral conclusions are that salvation depends on mercy, everyone must hear and believe the gospel, Gentiles may not boast, and God's promises have not failed.' Then return to the text.

Leader preparation

Sources used: Donny Ray Mathis, 'Romans,' The Gospel Coalition Bible Commentary, Romans 9-11; BibleProject, Guide to Romans, section 'Romans 9-11: The Gospel Fulfills God's Promise to Israel'; Keith Mathison, 'The Church and Israel in the New Testament'; Thomas Schreiner and Brian Abasciano, contrasting JETS essays on individual and corporate election in Romans 9. ECO connections: III.A, God's grace in Christ; III.B, Election for salvation and service. Before Lesson 18: Read Romans 12-16. Mark every 'therefore,' command, reference to the body or gifts, love, governing authorities, weak and strong believers, and welcoming one another.