

The Bible (Unmuted) Transcript
Episode 34
Romans, Part 15 (Rom 9:1-13)
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Episode Summary:

In this episode, Matt continues to discuss Paul's concept of election. He tackles a range of questions, such as: What do Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have in common with respect to their election? And what does that have to do with the Gentiles? Moreover, what does Paul intend to communicate in Romans 9:13, when he says that God has "loved Jacob, but... hated Esau" (quoting Malachi 1:2)? Is this proof that God elects some to eternal salvation and others to eternal damnation? Listen to find out!

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Transcript:

0:00 Hey friends, welcome back to The Bible Unmuted. This is Part 15 of our series through Romans, and today we find ourselves in Romans 9. We will look at verses 1-13 today and save the rest for next time. If you've made it all the way through this series, well done! That's quite the feat. This series has been long but hopefully it's been worth it. Last week, goodness, it was a long episode. So, congrats to everyone who made it through that one! We are definitely in the weeds here, neck deep into the question of "election." It's a controversial topic, to be sure. And I want to remind everyone to educate yourself on this topic. The way you do that is by reading all sorts of different opinion, all sorts of different views. So, if you're a Calvinist, familiarize yourself with non-Calvinist interpretations of Romans 8-11. If you are a non-Calvinist, you need to read the Calvinists. That's education. That's what it means to educate yourself. It means to read different opinions. If you just pigeonhole yourself into your favorite tradition, then all you have in the end is an echo chamber. Those are never healthy. So, read widely. We are going to continue in today's episode many of the same questions that were posed last week. Last week's episode might have been long, but I wanted one episode where a general overview/introduction could be located for ease of future reference. I wanted everything in one spot. And then in the subsequent episodes (starting today), we will circle back around to some of those same issues we discussed in that introduction episode. Then you will be able to revisit some of those same discussions. In the end, hopefully, you'll have a well-rounded discussion for reference and thinking through this important topic. I don't have the final word on this topic, obviously, but hopefully the perspective I'm arguing for will help sharpen your own views in some way. At the very least, my hope is to simply offer up some thoughts from a fellow pilgrim who is still on his own journey to learn about the God who loves. Alright, without further adieu, let's dive into Romans 9.

2:17 Let's begin by reading verses 1-5

Romans 9 (NRSV)

1 I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience confirms it by the Holy Spirit— 2 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my

heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh. 4 They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; 5 to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

Paul says here that he “could wish” that he were separated from Christ so that his fellow Jews could be in covenant. Now, a lot of commentators have made observations about this, about this idea of Paul how he could wish. He doesn’t seem to think it’s possible that he could actually do this, that he could be cut off from Christ and almost be like a substitute, or, a way for his fellow Jews to come into the faith. He doesn’t seem to think it’s possible. And so why he’s saying this here is because he wants to show the depth of his own anguish. He doesn’t like the situation that his fellow Jews are in. Why? Well, as we’ll get into more this a little bit, but because he says, it’s because the Jews were the ones who were recipients of the covenant. To them belong the patriarchs, they were given the law. They were given the promises and so forth. And so it’s just hard for Paul to swallow the fact that many of his own brothers and sisters are not believing in the Messiah. So he could wish that, if it were possible, because he loves his people so much that he would be willing to do this. Now I think the other reason why Paul is talking like this is because he wants to harken back to something Moses did in Exodus. When you read Exodus 32:30-33, Moses is saying something along similar lines here.

Exodus 32:30–33 (NRSV):

“30 On the next day Moses said to the people, “You have sinned a great sin. But now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.” 31 So Moses returned to the LORD and said, “Alas, this people has sinned a great sin; they have made for themselves gods of gold. 32 But now, if you will only forgive their sin—but if not, blot me out of the book that you have written.” 33 But the LORD said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book.”

I think what is going on here is that Paul wants to show that he is aligned with Moses’ own heart. That his own ministry is in align with the lawgiver, Moses himself. Why does he want to do that? Why does he feel the need to echo back to this prayer of Moses? It’s because he has a lot of Jewish and Jewish-Christian critics, who sometimes fault him for swerving away from Torah. This is something that Richard Longenecker talks about in his *Romans Commentary*. If you have that commentary you can find it on page 782. He makes that point.

So the thing I want to bring out here is that I think Paul is cognizant of the fact that he is the subject of much criticism. His ministry is the subject of much criticism, because some are twisting his words to make it sound as if Paul is teaching people to abandon the Torah, to abandon Moses. And of course, we know that wasn’t true. That’s not a fair way to capture Paul’s theology. Not at all. But he, by evoking this prayer here in Romans 9, he’s showing that his theology is such that it’s in anguish, right? He doesn’t like how the Jews, many Jews, have not come to believe in Christ and he’s also acknowledging that it was to them that the law was given. So I think one way to help see this perhaps is to visit Acts 21:17 – 21. I’ll go ahead and read this so that you can kind of get the full context here.

Acts 21:17–21 (NRSV):

“17 When we arrived in Jerusalem, the brothers welcomed us warmly. 18 The next day Paul went with us to visit James; and all the elders were present. 19 After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. 20 When they heard it, they praised

God. Then they said to him, “You see, brother, how many thousands of believers there are among the Jews, and they are all zealous for the law. 21 They have been told about you that you teach all the Jews living among the Gentiles to forsake [ἀποστασία] Moses, and that you tell them not to circumcise their children or observe the customs.”

7:46 Now, this criticism and accusation against Paul wasn't true. Paul was not teaching people to abandon Torah. To say Paul was teaching that is a gross misrepresentation of Paul's thought process, I think. In Romans 3:31, for example, Paul writes: **“Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law” (NRSV)**. Likewise, in Romans 10:4, he says Christ is the **culmination (telos) of the Torah**. I simply don't get the impression that Paul ever—not before he wrote Romans or after, or when he was writing Romans—I don't think he ever believed he was abandoning Torah.

So, Paul definitely wants people to know that he has deep feelings and strong love for his people, Israel. **“I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience confirms it by the Holy Spirit” (v. 1)**

Paul is adamant to the point of appealing to the Spirit of God himself: He is truly in deep anguish over Jewish unbelief and he wants people to know that he is operating with the same heart and the same mindset as even Moses himself.

9:10 This brings us to verses 6 and 7. Here's what Paul says,

6 It is not as though the word of God had failed. For not all Israelites truly belong to Israel, 7 and not all of Abraham's children are his true descendants; but “It is through Isaac that descendants shall be named for you.”

When he says that the word of God has not failed, he is appealing back to the Genesis 11-12 narrative, I think. You recall that, in Genesis 12, God made a promise to Abraham that *his* family (Abraham's family) would be a blessing to the nations. Why did the nations need to be blessed? Because in Genesis chapters 3-11, the entire world fell into sin and rebellion, the epitome of which is recounted in Genesis 11 at the Tower of Babel. But God did not leave the nations to themselves. He started a plan to get them back *by electing* Abraham's family (i.e., Israel) to be the rescue plan for the world (we've talked a ton about this in the past and I won't rehash all that here). The thing is, though, that Israel has not been faithful to follow through with that plan. And Paul says that even though that is true (that Israel has not been faithful), God's word of has not failed – meaning, his plan is working quite well. The Messiah, Jesus, has come as the true Israelite, and he is bringing the Abrahamic covenant/plan to fruition. But where does that leave Israel?

This is why Paul says **“For not all Israelites truly belong to Israel.”** He doesn't tell us just yet what he means by that. I mean, he has in places like Romans 2, where he discussed how even uncircumcised Gentiles can be counted as circumcised and, hence, part of the Jewish covenant. We've talked about that there, so you might want to go back and listen to the Romans 2 episode again. (By the way, I said this last week, and I'll say it again this week: Don't attempt to read Romans 9 without understanding the argument in Romans 2! I think that is super important to remember). Here in Romans 9, Paul is coming back to that original line of thought once again. Here in v. 6, he simply states what he said earlier, though in different form: Not every Israelite is part of Israel. What he will say later is that the decisive factor that makes a person truly part of Israel—and hence part of the covenant promises—is christology. This is the big point: For Paul, election is christological. Why? Well, like I said last week, Christ is the elect one. (Go back and listen to last week's episode for a bit more clarity on that.) But before he gets to the christological

elements, Paul needs to go back to the Jewish story to show how election actually works. So verse 7 says this, **“and not all of Abraham’s children are his true descendants; but “It is through Isaac that descendants shall be named [=called, kaleō; cf. Rom 8:30] for you” (quotation from Gen 21:21)** What does this mean? Well, Paul tells us exactly what this means. He says in verse 8 and 9, **“This means that it is not the children of the flesh [sarx] who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as descendants. For this is what the promise said, “About this time I will return and Sarah shall have a son.”** (that’s a quotation from Genesis 8:10, 14).

Here’s the point. Paul is saying there’s an entire story embedded within the events surrounding Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, and Ishmael. You know that story. To bring about the covenant promises, Abraham and Sarah devise a plan to have a child through her servant Hagar. The result is Ishmael. But it would not be Ishmael who would carry the covenant promises. Everything in God’s economy is built around faith and God’s works. God promises that it will actually be Sarah—even in her old age—who would have a child, who would be the recipient of the covenant. The story, in its original context, is laughable—quit literally, Sarah laughs! But God got the last laugh. He always gets the last laugh. Sarah did get pregnant, and Isaac was born.

13:40 None of this suggests, though, that God is picking Isaac over Ishmael for salvation. Or that God is casting aside Ishmael’s line into reprobation or whatever. No, we need to stop thinking like that. When we make election all about individual election, we are thinking more like western Christians who prize individualism as a society. To the contrary, this is about something bigger. God is picking Isaac to bring about a community of people, “the elect.” Moreover, these elect people will not be elected for just their own sake. Remember, God elected Abraham’s family to be a blessing to the nations—that is, to be a blessing to the non-elect, which of course would include nations like Ishmael’s descendants.

The reason Paul tells this story the way he does is because he wants to make a point: It’s all about the promise and grace. It’s not the working of human flesh. God’s election doesn’t work through Abraham and Hagar, but Abraham and Sarah. God likes to set aside human effort in this regard and go for those who trust the promise. Paul is explicit on this point: verse 8, **“This means that it is not the children of the flesh [sarx = the Greek word for flesh] who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as descendants.”** In other words, those who rely on *sarx*, on the flesh, are not going to be counted as children of God. But those who rely on the promise will be counted as children of God. This has double meaning for Paul: It refers to the story of Abraham and Hagar and Sarah, but as we will see later on, it also refers to the Jesus people. Those who rely on the promise of the Messiah Jesus will be counted as descendants, descendants of Abraham. But those who rely on works of Torah (i.e., the works of the flesh) will not be counted as such. Why? Well, because God’s election rests on Christology. Christ, we recall, is the elect one.

So, on the one hand, Paul is talking like a good Jew. Every Jew believed that God’s election came through Abraham and Isaac, not Abraham and Ishmael. This isn’t going to get Paul in a fight or anything. It’s just standard Jewish theology of election. But... think of where this is heading for Paul. He’s *really* saying that God’s election is a *christological* passage here. What a person does with Jesus will determine if he/she is in the covenant of God. If you believe in Christ, you’re in. And if you believe in Christ *alone*, then you are in. This means even uncircumcised Gentiles can be in by faith alone. Now *that* is controversial. But again, Paul is saying nothing novel here. He said all this earlier in Romans 2. And moreover, it is Paul who is staying true to the Abrahamic covenant. Why? Because *in Christ* the nations are being restored and blessed. In Christ, all the nations of the earth are being blessed. Why in Christ? Because Christ is the true son of Abraham, he is the true elect one.

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18:15 But Paul has much more to say. He says this in verses 10-13

10 Nor is that all; something similar happened to Rebecca when she had conceived children by one husband, our ancestor Isaac. 11 Even before they had been born or had done anything good or bad (so that God's purpose of election might continue, 12 not by works but by his call) she was told, "The elder shall serve the younger." 13 As it is written, "I have loved Jacob, but I have hated Esau."

Lots to unpack here. So let's get to it.

First, Paul narrows the election story down further. It's not just Isaac's descendants in general who will be considered "elect." It's just one of his descendants who will carry that vocation, namely, Jacob. You know that story. You know Jacob's story quite well I'm sure. Esau is actually the firstborn, so he should be the one who inherits all the promises given to Isaac. But sadly, he doesn't. And you know why. He despises his birthright and gives it to Jacob. Though, Jacob isn't exactly virtuous in that whole story either. He's a rather cunning, deceitful fellow. I'll leave it to you to go back and re-read those interesting stories. The point is that first, Jacob is not firstborn; and secondly both Esau and Jacob have issues. I think that's fair to say. None of them are good people. None of them gets the virtuous hero of the year award. Jacob gets most of our attention because he ends up with the birthright. He ends up being the one through whom the election continues. But does he deserve it? Again, no. He's got issues. He doesn't deserve it at all. Plus, he's the second born! He should never have gotten it in the first place. And yet, Jacob does receive the status of elect. Here's what the Scripture says once again: ***11 Even before they had been born or had done anything good or bad (so that God's purpose of election might continue, 12 not by works but by his call) she was told, "The elder shall serve the younger."***

20:40 A few points to make:

Election for Paul is not based on works. I think Paul's point here is to bring the story into dialogue with his present purpose by referring to works of Torah specifically – things like circumcision, etc. He's saying, look, election isn't based on any of that stuff. It's based, rather, on the divine calling: **"not by works but by his call [*kaleō*]."** Here's the word "call" once again. And that word "call" is very important. It is in contrast to the works. And again, When Paul says works here, I think he's referring back to the works of Torah, specifically those works like circumcision. Again, we need to let Romans help guide this discussion. Romans 2 is all about how uncircumcised Gentiles, those who do not have or do works of Torah, can still be part of the Covenant family of God. Or in other words, be justified. So that conversation, that line of thought, is continuing here. I think that's the best way to understand this. So here Paul is contrasting works at Torah, (circumcision and stuff) with the divine call ***kaleō***. And that word is very important. For Paul, this is the calling to faith in Christ. It's fundamentally christological. Election, in other words, is based on union with Christ, not obedience to Torah. Again, Romans 2 shows how there are people who are not performing works of Torah. Who are uncircumcised and who are yet counted as among the righteous. I think that is what is fundamentally going on here as well. In other words, the community of people who are *in Christ*, these are the elect. Again, this is christological election. This is the stuff of last week. And, because of that, I think there is an important corporate/communal election theme going on here. (go and read the Brian Abasciano article I mentioned in the last episode; he talks about this idea of corporate election. I think it's helpful). This, again, means that even non-circumcised Gentiles can be counted as "elect" or in other words, "part of the covenant." Another word would be they could be counted as "righteous."

The point here, I think, in bringing up the Jacob and Esau story is to show that, yes, even the runts of the family can be counted as elect. Jacob was a runt. He was not at all *supposed* to be

the inheritor of the covenant promises; he's second born, after all. And yet, God likes to choose runts for the calling, the jobs, the ministries, he has for them to do. In Paul's era, in the 1st century, the era in which Paul is writing and going about his ministry, who were the runts then? The gentiles, of course. And, lest we miss this again, we need to say it once more: The question of the gentiles' and their status is what Paul has been concerned with throughout the letter of Romans. I can't emphasize Romans 2 enough. It's so important and it's all there, and if we fail to see in Romans 9 that the big question is about Gentile incorporation into the covenant/elect family of God, then we miss the entire point of Romans. Paul's concern here is about people groups and communities of different people. And for Paul, the Gospel is for all—whether Jew or Gentile. It's a common refrain that runs throughout Romans as well. And so, here Paul raises the question of Jacob and Esau's election *not* because he wants to enter into philosophical debates about fate or predestination of individuals to heaven or hell. But rather because he wants to show how the Genesis 11-12 narrative works. He wants to show that Israel has, indeed, been chosen to bless the nations. And, in fact, Israel herself cannot boast against her younger brother the Gentiles because, according to her own history, her own election story as God's people was based on grace. If Gentiles are the runts of God's family in Paul's day, then Jacob was the runt of God's family in ancient times. Or maybe we should say that *visa versa*. The children of Jacob—the children of Israel—have no basis for boasting about their elect status. Originally, after all, they were once second born, too. So, in reality, the entire story of Israel's election from Abraham to Jacob is all about grace. Abraham was a pagan, Isaac was a miracle child, and Jacob was a second-born liar. None of them had reason to boast in the flesh. The story of Israel's election is all about grace. It's all about how the pagans, the weak, and the runts can be part of the elect family. And what Paul is really getting at, I think, is that the story of Israel is a perfect picture and example of how Gentiles can get in. In other words, the nations really can be blessed by, and through, the family of Israel... just like God promised Abraham in Genesis 12. Truly, then, Paul is correct: the word of God has not failed.

26:05 Let's dive deeper into verses 11 through 13 and I'll read it again for reference.

11 Even before they had been born or had done anything good or bad (so that God's purpose of election might continue, 12 not by works but by his call) she was told, "The elder shall serve the younger." [that's a quotation of Genesis 25:23, now let me read verse 13] **13 As it is written, "I have loved Jacob, but I have hated Esau."** [Now that's a quotation of Malachi 1:2]

How do we know that this text is not about individual election per se but, rather, about something more communal, something christological? Well, we know because of the texts Paul has chosen to quote. When he says, "**The elder shall serve the younger**" this is a reference to Jacob and Esau and is a quotation from Genesis 25:23. The part Paul quotes is only a part of the verse though, and he expects his readers to assume the rest of the context. Here's the whole verse (LES):

23 And the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your belly, and two peoples will be separated from your womb, and a people will be better than [lit., surpass] a people, and the greater will serve the younger."

This text is clearly communal in orientation. It's not about individuals. It's about nations. This shouldn't be controversial. When you have the Abrahamic covenant as a working narrative in mind, it makes better sense than if you have a narrative in mind that demands individual election. It just makes better sense of the data we are encountering here. In other words, it doesn't seem to fit easily into some modern systems about "election" or "predestination." I think Paul's point is the same: Jacob, as the head of the covenant people (the Jews – as the head of the Jews), it is the Jews as a whole who are elected. But Paul is taking it further... Jesus, as the head of the covenant people, allows everyone who is in union with him to be partakers of his elect status. There is a strong christological and, from there, corporate element in this discussion. Paul takes

the Jewish concept of election and christologizes it. That's what's different. Paul doesn't individualize it (only westerners would think that). Instead, he operates within the framework of a Jewish worldview and employs Jewish Messianism to understand election.

28:45 But what do we do with Romans 9:13? That's a good question I think. Let's read verse 13 again. It says,

13 As it is written, "I have loved Jacob, but I have hated Esau." [quotation of Mal 1:2] Does this mean that God hates the person Esau but elects Jacob to salvation? Is this an example for how God has the power to choose individuals who will be saved and an example of how he can choose individuals for eternal damnation? It is interesting how some think this. Does this mean that God simply doesn't love everyone? The short answer is no, it doesn't mean that at all. For starters, we need to pay close attention to the fact that this is a quotation of Malachi 1:2. As we will see when you read the passage in context, Malachi does not mean individuals. So, let's read this passage. I am reading from the Lexham English Septuagint.

Malachi 1:2-4 (LES)

2 "I loved you," says the Lord. But you said, "In what way have you loved us?" "Was not Esau the brother of Jacob?" said the Lord. "And I loved Jacob, 3 but I hated Esau, and I stationed his boundaries for destruction and his inheritance into gifts of desolation." 4 Wherefore Edom [Ἰδουμαία] will say, "It has been overthrown, but we will return and rebuild the desolate places." This is what the Lord Almighty says: "They will build it up, but I will ruin it, and it will be called for them borders of wickedness, and a people against whom the Lord has set himself against forever.

A couple of things here. First, this cannot be a reference to the historical Jacob and Esau. Why? Because they are long dead by the time Malachi was written. Second, and I think more importantly, the context simply won't allow it. The issue here is how Israel is asking God, "In what way have you loved us?" Notice the plural - "us." This is talking about Israel as a nation. God responds by reminding Israel how he chose Jacob over Esau. This is to remind Israel *how* he loved them. He loved them by selecting their nation from among all the nations. That's how much God loved *them*. You have to notice, too, that this text equates Esau with the word "Edom." This is another clue that what's going on here is not about the historical Esau but the Edom of Malachi's time.

But does this mean that God simply elects groups to heaven and hell? If you think about it, all I've done here is say that this is not individual election. What's going on here is another clue that it's not about the historical Esau, but rather about the Edom of this era. Does this mean that God elects groups to heaven and hell? If you think about it, all I've done here is say this is not individual election, its corporate election. So that just kicks the can down the road further. Maybe God elects whole groups to eternal damnation and whole groups to heaven. Is that what is going on here? Does this passage simply mean that God elects groups to heaven and hell? After all, think of the words that are chosen here. Doesn't this text use words like "love" and "hate"? Doesn't the fact that God says he *hates* Esau/Edom prove that God elects his people Israel and damns Edom to hell? No, not at all. Here are some reasons why I say that.

First, remember from the last episode my analogy of marriage. I have a specific covenant love for my wife that I don't have for any other woman. It's covenant love. Tosha and I chose each other. Our choosing each other is an example of *how* we love each other. The same thing here between God and Israel is going on. It doesn't follow from this, however, to say that because God chose Israel/Jacob that he wants all the other ones he didn't choose to go to hell. That's no more true than me wanting all other women to go to hell just because I didn't choose them to be my spouse (and vice versa: my wife doesn't want all other men to go to hell just because she decided to set

her covenant love upon me). To say otherwise is to go well beyond reason and well beyond what the passage allows.

Second, the word “hate” should not be taken literally. I think there’s a better way to understand this word. But before I get to that, let’s just play the game here. Let’s just see what happens when we do take it literally. I think it leads to weird conundrums: We’ve already shown that this is a communal text, in other words, that it’s not about Esau as an individual. It’s about Edom. So, if God literally hates anyone in this text, he is literally hating an entire race of people, namely, the Edomites. Do we really want to say that God hates an entire race of people? Such an idea is gross, and it shouldn’t be part of anyone’s catalog of options. Besides, it leads to awful conundrums, too. Like, how long would such ethnic hatred/damnation last? For a generation? For 100 years? Do all Edomite children suffer eternal damnation and reprobation for 200 years, 300 years, 400 years? Does it go on perpetually? This creates not only a conceptual problem such as this, but also Scriptural problems and textual problems, I should say. For example, the word in the Greek Old Testament for “Edom” is *Idumea*, Ἰδουμαία. What’s interesting is that these people are mentioned again in the New Testament. In fact, they are among the people groups Jesus ministers to. Notice for example:

Mark 3:7–11 (NRSV) - 7 Jesus departed with his disciples to the sea, and a great multitude from Galilee followed him; 8 hearing all that he was doing, they came to him in great numbers from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea [Ἰδουμαία], beyond the Jordan, and the region around Tyre and Sidon. 9 He told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, so that they would not crush him; 10 for he had cured many, so that all who had diseases pressed upon him to touch him. 11 Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and shouted, “You are the Son of God!”

So here’s the thing. If this Malachi text really is about eternal damnation and being eternally reprobate, then why are they among the ones that Jesus is ministering to? Why is Jesus ministering to them? Why is he showing them grace, the grace of God, accepting them into his teaching ministry? In the New Testament, specifically, in the great commission itself, Jesus’ gospel is meant for all nations, all communities, and hence, for all the individuals that make up those communities. It’s meant for the Edomites, it’s meant for all nations, going to all nations. That’s the point. All to say, God doesn’t eternally hate the individual Esau (for the reasons I gave earlier). I think that’s clear. This is not an individualistic election text. And he also does not eternally hate the nation of Edom (I mean Jesus is sent to them. The gospel is for them. He’s ministering to them!). I think that is the conclusions that we have to reach. But, we still have to address the question, though. Why the word “hate” then? Why does Malachi and Paul both use the word “hate” to refer to Esau? Well, because we’ve exhausted the other options—you know the literal interpretation options, all of which led to absurdities; moral and Scriptural absurdities, etc.— and because of that we need to find the answer elsewhere. The best way to understand “hate” in this context is to look at how Jesus uses it in a similar context—namely, in a context of being a disciple, a follower, a member of the Jesus community. So for example, let’s look at Luke 14:26. I’ll read from the New Revised Standard Version. Jesus says, “*Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple.*”

We know that this does not literally mean *hate*. How do we know that? Why do we know that? Because Jesus tells us elsewhere to love everyone. That’s the clear testimony of Scripture as a whole. The word here in Luke 14:26 is used as hyperbole. It’s purposeful exaggeration to make a point. A hyperbole, by definition, must not be taken literally. This is the simplest option. And plus, it doesn’t lead to any conundrums. When you apply this hyperbole thesis to Malachi 1, when you apply it to Romans 9 where Paul quotes Malachi, it makes sense. And when you see what

Paul's doing here is hyperbolic, and when you understand that what he's referring to is vocational election or the election of vocation. So in other words, he's saying, "I have set my covenant love upon Jacob." But when he says, "I hate it", it just means he's rejected Edom (the people group Esau). He's rejected them from being the bearers of the covenant promises. It cannot mean, again, that God literally hates them and wants nothing to do with them (for all the reasons I said before). I mean, the gospel goes to all nations. I can't emphasize that enough. And so in light of all that, I think the hyperbole option is the best option. We have an example in Luke where hate is used hyperbolically. And because we had to reject all the literal interpretations of Malachi about hate, the best interpretation then is a non-literal one - a hyperbolic interpretation. That's the simplest option. And again, it doesn't lead to the conundrums or any of the weird conclusions that the literal option resulted in.

39:15 I want to stop here because it's a good place to pause and digest what we've covered. In the next episode, we'll pick back up at Romans 9:14. So, be sure to tune back in so that we can continue our tour of Paul's letter to the Romans.

39:30 That's the end of today's episode. And thanks again for listening to The Bible Unmuted. If you like this podcast, consider rating it on your podcast platform, subscribing to it, and sharing with your friends. You can also support the podcast by becoming a patreon member. Go to: <https://www.patreon.com/TheBibleUnmuted> - or simply find the link in the description of this episode. Thanks for listening. Until next time, friends.