

引言 INTRODUCTION

Rejection is a common experience in life. It can happen in college application, job interview or dating. I played quite a lot of basketball in school. We would have a game when we gathered enough people. We used a scientific way called paper, scissors and rock to separate people into two teams. Two leaders would take turn to pick one guy at a time. As you can imagine, they would choose the next best player available – in terms of height, speed and skills. What were left would be the dispensable boys that no one wanted. It did not quite matter with or without them. There was not much they could contribute anyway. They might stand around doing nothing or hold the ball for a few seconds. How will you feel if you are one of them? Worse still, what if you come late and cannot play because there are enough people in the court already? You feel being rejected. Jews could share that sentiment when they saw Gentiles getting saved. They wondered: “That’s not right! We Israelites are the true chosen people of God.” From Romans chapters 9 to 11, Paul addresses an important topic about God’s plan for Israel. Will some or all of them be saved? Paul was a Jew by birth. He starts off the chapter by pouring out his heart for his fellow Jews in **verses 1-3**: 1 I speak the truth in Christ – I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit – 2 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race. He calls on the Holy Spirit to be a witness for his declaration. He has a great concern that many Jews are spiritually lost. Paul loves his people so much that he would rather exchange his salvation for their condemnation. So far in the book, Paul explains that every human is a born-sinner and falls short of the glory of God. The Law and circumcision cannot save the Jews. The only way for God to justify any person is by accepting Christ. Paul tells us in this passage that God freely bestows sovereign grace to whom He had chosen to save. Therefore, this text is not only written to the Jews. It is for every person.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 賜以色列民的特權 Privileges to the Israelites

Paul then moves on to discussing the privileges God gave to the Israelites. Look at **verses 4-5**: 4 ...Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. 5 Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen. Israel as a race was adopted by God to be His people. God set them apart from all nations and shared His divine glory with them. He also made covenants with them. The plural form for “covenants” may denote the several covenants recorded in the Old Testament which God made through Noah, Abraham, Moses and David. From this special relationship comes the law, the ceremonial rituals and God’s promises if they continued to obey God. He blessed the Israelites with many generations, the most important descendant being Jesus Christ. Why did Israel still miss out God’s salvation grace despite all those privileges they enjoyed? A simple answer is their pride. They bragged about the law and circumcision. Paul repeatedly says those external signs cannot save a person. They also boasted that they were the descendants of Abraham. Paul states that it

does not matter if they did not follow Abraham's faith in God. Look at **4:12** – And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised. Then also in **4:16** – Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring – not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. Any person can only be saved by God's grace through faith just like Abraham did. The Israelites enjoyed various privileges from God. But yet not all of them will be saved. It is shocking to see that someone can be so close to God, but ended up lost. Jon Steingard, a lead singer of a well-known Christian band, announced in May that he was no longer a believer. Steingard is a pastor's kid. He grew up in a Christian home and sang Christian songs all his life. He explained that the loss of faith did not happen overnight. It was the result of questions about God, the Bible and his upbringing. Steingard described the process of doubt was like pulling on the threads of a sweater. One day he discovered that there was no more thread. Many children raised in Christian homes share the similar struggle. What can we learn from Steingard's experience? Our relationship with God is just like any human relationship. It takes a lot of effort to cultivate. But it is very easy for it to crumble. It is not a coincidence that discipleship and discipline have similar spellings. Being a disciple of Christ needs a lot of self-discipline. You know exactly how it feels when you try to build a habit of daily exercise. The busyness of life can easily disrupt your routine. It is hard to get up early if you worked late the previous night. The weather may not cooperate either. Most of us stay home during this period of time. We may feel too relaxed to read the Bible and pray every day. No one will check on you if you actually watch sermon videos. We lack the motivation to attend online gatherings on Friday. Often career, family and leisure activities are all fighting for our time. We need wisdom from God to set our priorities right. The experience of Steingard and the Israelites should also be a wake-up call for our parents. God entrusts us a very important task of bringing our kids to the Lord. If you do not see your personal relationship with the Lord as crucial, then do not expect your kids to grow up to become mature Christians naturally. You have to start young. Come to the church as a family since your kids are babies. Do not rely on the children ministry coworkers to do all the job for you. Spend time at home to read the Bible and pray with your children. Do not be so naïve that they will automatically choose to follow Jesus. Care about the things that are important to them. Share with them Biblical values. That would mean that you have to know what the Bible says first. If they do not see a godly example in you, they will think that going to church is an optional weekend activity.

2. 向亞伯拉罕的應許 Promises to Abraham

God did not only grant many privileges to the Israelites; He also gave His promises to Abraham. The Jewish race began from one person: Abraham. But Paul makes a shocking announcement in **verses 6-7**: **6** It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. **7** Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Not every Israelite is considered a true Israelite. The important part is not about one's family heritage. It is about receiving the full blessings God had promised to Abraham. What are those promises? Let me refer you to **Genesis 17:6-8** – **6** "I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. **7** I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God

of your descendants after you. 8 The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.” Many of those promises had been fulfilled. The descendants of Abraham are numerous. Not only the Israelites, even the Arabs consider Abraham to be their forefather. The Israelites had conquered Canaan. However, the Israelites breached the covenant God made with them over and over again. They disobeyed God and worshipped idols. Through Jesus Christ, God made a new covenant with all nations. By trusting Jesus as Savior and Lord, we will be God’s people, and He will become our God. Therefore, not all the biological descendants of Abraham are his spiritual heirs. Paul uses two examples to illustrate his point. The first one is about Isaac. When God made a covenant with Abraham, he did not have any son. Abraham asked God a legitimate question: “How can I be blessed if You give me no child?” Sarah tried to help God speed up His plan. She gave her maid Hagar to Abraham as a concubine. Thus, Ishmael was born. Abraham thought now he had a son to inherit God’s blessings. But God corrected Abraham in **Genesis 17:19** – “Then God said, “Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.” God made it clear that only Isaac, not Ishmael, would be included in the covenant. It is not a choice between two sons born of different mothers. The clear distinction was that Isaac was born out of God’s promise. The second example Paul quotes is about Jacob. Read **verses 11-12** of the Romans passage: 11 Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad – in order that God’s purpose in election might stand: 12 not by works but by him who calls – she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” The twin brothers were Esau and Jacob. In this instance, God chose to bless the younger brother, Jacob. In any culture, the first-born son should get more blessings. God’s choice proves that He is sovereign. He does not take into account of our background. Was Jacob a more noble person than his brother? Of course not! The name Jacob means “grab.” All his life, Jacob pursued after his own gain. He grabbed Esau’s heel when he was born. He stole the status and blessings of the first-born son from Esau. Later, Jacob accumulated his flock by deceiving his uncle Laban. Jacob even wrestled with God and would not let go unless God blessed him. It was in that incident that God changed Jacob’s name to Israel, meaning “struggle with God.” The sovereignty of God defies our human reasonings and norms. We should forever be thankful for God’s election. If God’s promises are only for the Jews, then Americans, Asians, Hispanics and other Gentiles are doomed. Someone put it this way: God’s election is not about race; it is about His grace. Also, God’s election is not based on how good we are. If we are honest about ourselves, we have to admit that we are wicked on the inside. We may not commit any horrific crime like murder or theft. However, we cannot deny the selfishness, pride, jealousy, greed and all other sins in our hearts. God chose to save us not because we are good. It is only because He is good.

3. 在上帝心中的目的 Purpose of God

The Israelites received many privileges. God foretold His promises to Abraham. God displayed His sovereignty by choosing some people to be His spiritual children. Next, Paul explains the purpose of God behind His masterplan. It is to show His mercy. The word is used four times from verse 14 to 18 in the Greek text. Mercy and grace are quite similar in nature. Both words describe bestowing of unmerited help to someone in need. Paul begins this section by asking a question in **verse 14**: What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! It is a common objection that we have. How can God be just if He only chose to save some, while rejecting others. It is a

more serious matter to Israel. How can some of His chosen people be lost? Paul answers these questions by focusing on God's mercy. He illustrates with two examples from Exodus. Read **verses 15-16**: 15 For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." 16 It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. The background for verse 15 is Exodus chapters 32 to 33. It is the aftermath of the golden calf incident. Moses went up mount Saini to receive the law from God. Aaron yielded to pressure from the people and carved an idol. The Israelites thus bowed down to the statue. God burst out in anger and told Moses that He would wipe out the Israelites. Moses asked God to blot his name out from His book if God would not forgive His people. God showed mercy and granted His pardon. However, God told Moses that He would not lead His people to Canaan, lest they might provoke Him and He would destroy them in His rage. Moses responded that they might as well not go there if God would not be leading them. Once again, God said yes to Moses's request. Moses then asked God to reveal His glory, possibly as an affirmation of God's promise. God thus hid Moses behind a rock, then showed Moses His back side after He passed through. No one in his sinful body can see God's glory. But God showed Moses special mercy. Besides Moses and the Israelites, God also showed mercy to Pharaoh. Let us read **verses 17-18** of the Romans passage: 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." 18 Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden. God demonstrated His sovereignty over Egypt. It was Jehovah who put Pharaoh on the throne. God showed His power to the king in the ten plagues and when the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. God intended to use Egypt to tell other nations about His mighty work. Therefore, God spared Pharaoh's life in those calamities. God could use a pagan nation like Egypt to accomplish His plan. God even hardened Pharaoh's heart. His refusal to let the Israelites leave became a cause for God to judge Egypt. This hardening of heart has caused debates among Bible scholars. Where did this condition of spiritual insensitivity toward God's nature and truth originate? Was it from Pharaoh or from God? Verse 18 clearly indicates that God was in full control. Just as God can freely bestow His mercy to some people, He can also freely harden certain people's hearts to fulfill His purpose. That is contrary to our human logic. We protest that it is unfair for God to deliberately harden some people's heart such that they will not be saved. However, we should not forget that every person deserves God's eternal judgment. If it is not because of God's mercy, no one can be saved. If God does not awaken our dead soul, no one will show interest in the gospel. Some people may think that deciding to accept Jesus over Buddha is like choosing to eat hamburger instead of rice for lunch. It is God who elects those He intends to save. We do not pick Him, but He graciously picks some to be His children. Ultimately, God receives all the glory. We as Christians should forever be thankful for God's mercy.

結論 CONCLUSION

God freely bestows sovereign grace to whom He had chosen to save. Grace is not something we deserve. It can never be earned, but it can only be received. The well-known apologist Josh McDowell taught his son Sean what grace is when he was 12-year-old. Sean played baseball with some kids. Before the season began, Josh gave a stack of ice-cream vouchers to the coach. He thought Josh wanted to reward the player for their first win. Josh corrected him: "No coach. I want you to take them for ice-cream after their first loss." Josh explained that he hoped that the

boys would understand that their self-worth did not depend on their ability to play sport. They were well-loved because they were created in God's image. Similarly, we are loved by God when we are chosen to receive salvation.

引言 INTRODUCTION

被拒絕是生活中的普遍經歷。可能是在申請大學時、工作面試或約會中發生。我在讀書時經常打籃球。每當我們聚集了足夠的人時，我們便會進行比賽。我們使用剪刀、石頭、布的科學方法將所有人分為兩隊。兩個帶頭人就輪流選一個人。你可以想像，他們會以高度、速度和球技來選擇最好的球員。剩下的就是沒有人要的可有可無的球員。有或沒有他們都沒關係。反正他們也不會有多少貢獻，他們可能是站著無所事事或持球幾秒鐘。如果你是他們其中一人，你會感覺如何？更糟糕的是，如果你晚來而球場上已經有足夠的人，那麼你就無法參與。你感到被拒絕。猶太人看到外邦人得救時，他們也許有同樣被拒絕的感受。他們會抱怨：「這不對！我們以色列人才是神的真正選民。」從羅馬書第 9 章到第 11 章，保羅討論一個重要的話題。他談到有關神對以色列的計劃。神會否拯救其中一部分或全部的人？保羅是個猶太人。他在第 1-3 節為猶太同胞大發熱心：**1 我在基督裡說真話，並不謊言，有我良心被聖靈感動，給我作見證；2 我是大有憂愁，心裡時常傷痛；3 為我弟兄，我骨肉之親，就是自己被咒詛，與基督分離，我也願意。**他邀請聖靈作他的見證人。他為著許多猶太人在靈裡的迷失擔憂。保羅非常熱愛他的同胞，他甚至寧願以自己的救恩來交換他們的定罪。到目前為止，保羅解釋說，每個人都是天生的罪人，虧缺了神的榮耀。律法和割禮都救不了猶太人。神使人稱義的唯一方法就是相信基督。在今天的經文中，保羅告訴我們神隨自己的旨意賜恩典予祂選擇拯救的人。因此，這段經文不只是寫給猶太人。它也是寫給所有人的。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 賜以色列民的特權 Privileges to the Israelites

保羅首先討論神賜以色列民的特權。看第 4-5 節：**4 …那兒子的名分、榮耀、諸約、律法、禮儀、應許都是他們的。5 列祖就是他們的祖宗，按肉體說，基督也是從他們出來的，他是在萬有之上，永遠可稱頌的神。阿們！**以色列作為一個種族是被神揀選，成為祂的子民。神把他們從萬民中分別出來，並與他們分享祂的榮耀。神還與他們立約。「諸約」可以表示舊約中記錄的幾個盟約，是神與挪亞、亞伯拉罕、摩西和大衛訂定的。從這種特殊的關係中建立了律法、敬拜的禮儀和神的應許。神賜以色列人無數的後代，最重要的後裔是耶穌基督。儘管以色列享有所有這些特權，但為什麼他們仍會錯過神的救贖恩典呢？一個簡單的答案就是他們的驕傲。他們以律法和割禮感到自豪。保羅一再表示，這些外在的形式無法拯救任何人。他們還吹噓自己是亞伯拉罕的後裔。保羅說，如果他們不效法亞伯拉罕對神的信心的話，這一切都毫無意義。看 4:12 - **(神)又作受割禮之人的父，就是那些不但受割禮，並且按我們的祖宗亞伯拉罕未受割禮而信之蹤跡去行的人。**然後看 4:16 - **所以人得為後嗣是本乎信，因此就屬乎恩，叫應許定然歸給一切後裔；不但歸給那屬乎律法的，也歸給那效法亞伯拉罕之信的。**就像亞伯拉罕一樣，任何人只能藉著以信心回應神的恩典而得救。以色列人享有神的各種特權。但是，並非他們所有人都會得救。他們離神那麼近，最終卻是沉淪，這是令人震驚的。一隊著名基督徒樂隊的首席歌手喬

恩·斯汀加德 (Jon Steingard) 在 5 月宣布，他不再是信徒。斯汀加德的父親是個牧師。他在基督徒家庭中長大，一直都在唱基督徒的歌曲。他解釋說，他不再相信並不是一朝一夕的事。他長久以來對於神、聖經及自己的成長都有一些疑問。斯汀加德說，懷疑的過程就像拉毛衣的線。有一天，所有的線都扯光了。許多在基督徒家庭中成長的孩子也會有類似的掙扎。我們可以從斯汀加德的經驗中學到什麼？我們與神的關係就像任何人際關係一樣。培養關係需要很大的努力。但是關係的瓦解卻是很容易的事。門徒訓練和紀律兩個英文字拼法相近絕非巧合。成為基督的門徒需要很多自律。當你嘗試養成每天鍛煉身體的習慣時，你就會有同感。生活繁忙時很容易打亂你的常規。你如果前一天晚上工作到很晚，第二天就很難早起。有時候天氣可能也不跟你配合。在這段日子裡，我們大多數人都待在家裡。我們可能太放鬆而沒有每天讀經和禱告。如果你某一週沒有觀看講道視頻，也不會有檢查你。我們有時候也缺乏參加星期五在線聚會的動力。我們的工作、家庭和休閒活動常常都在搶奪我們的時間。我們需要神加添智慧來幫助我們安排優先次序。斯汀加德和以色列人的經歷也應該使我們的父母警覺。神託付我們一個非常重要的任務，就是將孩子們帶到主的面前。如果你不認為自己與主的關係至關重要，那麼不要指望你的孩子長大後自然地成為成熟的基督徒。你必須讓孩子打好根基。趁他們還是嬰兒，全家一起來教會聚會。你不能依靠兒童事工的老師們完成你的責任。花時間在家裡與你的孩子一起讀經、禱告。你別天真，以為他們會自動選擇跟隨耶穌。你要關心他們所關心的事情。與他們分享聖經的價值觀。那意味著你必須首先了解聖經所說的話。如果他們看不到你的敬虔榜樣，他們會認為去教堂是個有選擇性的周末活動。

2. 向亞伯拉罕的應許 Promises to Abraham

神不僅賜以色列人許多特權，他也向亞伯拉罕啟示祂的應許。猶太民族是從亞伯拉罕一個人開始的。但是保羅在第 6-7 節中發表了一個令人震驚的聲明：**6 這不是說神的話落了空。因為從以色列生的不都是以色列人，7 也不因為是亞伯拉罕的後裔就都作他的兒女；惟獨「從以撒生的才要稱為你的後裔。」**並不是每個以色列人都是真正的以色列人。重點不是一個人的家族背景。乃是他最終會否得到神應許給亞伯拉罕的全部祝福。這包括什麼祝福？我們來看創世記 17:6-8 - **6 「我必使你的後裔極其繁多；國度從你而立，君王從你而出。7 我要與你並你世世代代的後裔堅立我的約，作永遠的約，是要作你和你後裔的神。8 我要將你現在寄居的地，就是迦南全地，賜給你和你的後裔永遠為業，我也必作他們的神。」**大部份這些應許都已經應驗了。亞伯拉罕的後裔眾多。不僅以色列人，甚至阿拉伯人也將亞伯拉罕視為他們的祖先。以色列人征服了迦南。但是，以色列人一次又一次違反了神與他們所立的約。他們不順服神，敬拜偶像。神藉著耶穌基督與萬民訂立了新約。通過相信耶穌是救主和生命的主，我們便成為神的子民，祂也成為我們的神。因此，並非所有亞伯拉罕肉身的後代都是他的屬靈代裔。保羅用兩個例子來說明他的論點。第一個是關於以撒的。當神與亞伯拉罕立約時，他沒有任何兒子。亞伯拉罕問神一個合理的問題：「如果你不給我孩子，我怎麼能蒙福？」撒拉試圖幫助神加快祂的計劃。她把婢女夏甲送給亞伯拉罕當小老婆。因此，以實瑪利出生了。亞伯拉罕以為現在他有了一個兒子來繼承神的祝福。但是神在創世記 17:19 中糾正了亞伯拉罕 - **神說：「不然，你妻子撒拉要給你生一個兒子，你要給他起名叫以撒。我要與他堅定所立的約，作他後裔永遠的約。」**神明確指出，只有以撒，而不是以實瑪利，才是被包括在約之中。這不是兩個由不同母親

所生的兒子之間的選擇。重點是，以撒是憑著神的應許而生的。保羅引用的第二個例子是關於雅各的。請讀羅馬書第 11 至 12 節：11（雙子還沒有生下來，善惡還沒有做出來，只因要顯明神揀選人的旨意，不在乎人的行為，乃在乎召人的主。）12 神就對利百加說：「將來大的要服事小的。」雙子是指以掃和雅各。在這個情形，神選擇祝福弟弟雅各。在任何文化中，長子應該得到更多的祝福。神的揀選證明祂的主權。祂沒有考慮到人的條件。雅各比他哥哥品格更高尚嗎？當然不是！雅各這個名字的意思是「抓」。雅各一生都在爭取自己的利益。他出生時抓住了以掃的腳跟。他偷了以掃長子的名份和祝福。後來，雅各欺騙他的舅舅拉班，從而積累自己的羊群。雅各甚至與神摔跤，除非神答應祝福他，否則他不會放手。正是在那次事件中，神將雅各的名字改成了以色列，意思是「與神較力」。神的主權超越我們人的推理和常規。我們應該永遠感謝神的揀選。如果神的應許只屬於猶太人，那麼美國人、亞洲人、西班牙裔和其他外邦人注定要沉淪。有人這樣說：神的揀選不是關乎種族；乃是在乎祂的恩典。同樣，神的揀選也不是基於我們有多好。如果我們對自己誠實，我們必須承認內心的邪惡。我們可能不會犯下謀殺或盜竊之類的嚴重罪行。但是，我們不能否認自己內心的自私、驕傲、嫉妒、貪婪和所有其他的罪。神選擇拯救我們不是因為我們有多好。只是因為神非常好。

3. 在上帝心中的目的 Purpose of God

以色列人享有許多特權。神向亞伯拉罕預告了祂的應許。神藉著揀選某些人成為祂的屬靈兒女來顯明祂的主權。接下來，保羅解釋神的計劃背後的目的。那是要顯出祂的憐憫。在希臘原文聖經的第 14 至 18 節，憐憫這個字出現了四次。憐憫與恩典在本質上是非常相似的。兩個用詞都描述無條件地幫助有需要的人。保羅在第 14 節中問了一個問題：這樣，我們可說什麼呢？難道神有什麼不公平嗎？斷乎沒有！這是我們常見的質疑。如果神只選擇拯救一些人而拒絕其他人，這樣做公平嗎？對以色列人來說，問題更加嚴重。神的選民怎可能不會得救？保羅以神的憐憫來回答這些問題。他列舉了出埃及記中的兩個例子。請讀第 15-16 節：15 因他對摩西說：我要憐憫誰就憐憫誰，要恩待誰就恩待誰。16 據此看來，這不在乎那定意的，也不在乎那奔跑的，只在乎發憐憫的神。第 15 節的背景是出埃及記 32 到 33 章。那是金牛犢事件的結果。摩西上西奈山去接受神的律法。亞倫屈服於群眾的壓力，雕刻了一只金牛犢。以色列人然後向神像下拜。於是神便發烈怒，並告訴摩西祂將要消滅所有以色列人。摩西向神懇求，若祂不肯赦免祂的子民，摩西寧願神把他的名字從神的名冊中塗抹掉。神施恩憐憫並赦免了他們。但是，神告訴摩西，祂不會帶領祂的子民進到迦南，免得他們下次犯罪時，神會在祂的憤怒中消滅他們。摩西回答說，如果神不帶領他們，他們也不要去那裡。神再次答應摩西的要求。然後摩西求神顯示祂的榮耀，這可能是摩西向神要求一個憑據。神便將摩西藏在一塊石頭後面，然後神在經過之後向摩西展示祂的背面。沒有人能在他帶罪的身體中，觀看神的榮耀。但是神向摩西顯示了額外的憐憫。除了摩西和以色列人之外，神還向法老施憐憫。讓我們讀羅馬書第 17-18 節的經文：17 因為經上有話向法老說：「我將你興起來，特要在你身上彰顯我的權能，並要使我的名傳遍天下。」18 如此看來，神要憐憫誰就憐憫誰，要叫誰剛硬就叫誰剛硬。神向埃及展示了祂的主權。耶和華將法老放在王位上。在十災和以色列人穿越紅海中，神向法老顯示祂的大能。神打算使用埃及向其他國家傳揚祂的奇妙作為。因此，神在這些災難中保存了法老的性命。神可以利用像埃及這樣的異教徒國家來完成祂的計劃。神甚至使

法老的心剛硬。法老拒絕讓以色列人離開成為神審判埃及的原因。聖經學者對於這種內心的剛硬有不同的見解。這種對神的本質和真理的麻木到底是從何而來？是來自法老還是來自神？第 18 節清楚地表明神完全掌控一切。就像神可以自由地賜憐憫給任何人，神也可以按祂的旨意使人的心剛硬來成就祂的目的。這違反了我們人的邏輯。神故意使一些人的心剛硬，使他們不會得救，我們認為這是不公平的。但是，我們不要忘記，每個人本來都應該得到神永恆的審判。如果不是出於神的憐憫，沒有人能得救。如果神不喚醒我們死去的靈魂，就沒有人會對福音產生興趣。有人可能會認為，決定信耶穌或是信佛祖就像選擇吃漢堡包或米飯作為午餐。是神揀選祂要拯救的人。不是我們選擇要神，而是祂施恩典揀選一些人做祂的兒女。最終，神得到所有的榮耀。我們作為基督徒應該永遠感謝神的憐憫。

結論 CONCLUSION

神隨自己的旨意賜恩典予祂選擇拯救的人。恩典是我們不配得到的禮物。我們永遠無法賺取恩典，我們只能白白地接受它。著名的護教學家麥道衛 (Josh McDowell) 有一次教導他 12 歲的兒子肖恩 (Sean) 恩典是甚麼。肖恩和一些孩子打棒球。在賽季開始之前，麥道衛給了教練一疊冰淇淋禮券。教練以為麥道衛想要獎勵球員的第一場勝利。麥道衛糾正他：「教練，不是那樣子。我是要你在他們第一次戰敗後帶他們去吃冰淇淋。」麥道衛解釋說，他希望孩子們明白他們的自我價值並非取決於他們打球的能力。他們之所以被愛，是因為他們是按照神的形象而創造的。同樣，當我們被揀選而得救時，我們是被神所愛的。