

ROMANS 9:21-33

Quick Review:

1. Last week, we learned that not all Israelites are true Israelites. Paul showed examples from Israel's past history: (Ishmael-Isaac), (Esau-Jacob). There are the natural unbelieving Jews (children of the flesh), and then there are the true physical spiritual Jews (children of the promise).
2. Paul also taught that God can show mercy to whomever He determines, wants, or chooses to. There is no unrighteousness with God.
3. Paul is addressing his own kinsmen, by sharing their past history in order to show what God has in store for them in the future (concerning the nation of Israel-God's elective purpose).

*Paul now shows how foolish it is for man to set himself up against the Creator. Paul gives us an illustration in verses 21-24, referring to the potter and the clay.

1. The Potter (God) is the decision maker over the clay. The vessel is Israel - the nation.

Romans 9:21 - Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

*As the potter must be granted absolute sovereignty over the clay (unbelieving Israel), so God must be granted absolute sovereignty over men.

2. We have the one same lump that has two different outcomes: One vessel becomes the true Israel, while the other vessel becomes a nation of dishonor.

*What we see here is a remarkable change in the form of describing those destined for destruction and those destined for glory.

2 Timothy 2:19-21 - Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. 2Tim. 2:20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. 2Tim. 2:21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, *and* prepared unto every good work.

Isaiah 45:9 - Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! *Let* the potsherd *strive* with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?

1. God does not create people in order to damn them. But, when people behave like Pharaoh did, then God deals with them when their wickedness reveals itself. Then they become fit objects for His punishment.

Romans 9:22-23 - *What* if God, willing to shew *his* wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: Rom. 9:23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

2. God wishes to show His wrath and exhibit His power on the unbelieving Jew - the vessel of dishonor. On the other hand, God desires to be patient, with longsuffering to the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction.

3. The Bible teaches that God endures and tolerates the vessels of wrath with much longsuffering. God is always reluctant to punish, but judgment day will come upon the guilty.

Exodus 34:6-7 - And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Exo. 34:7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear *the guilty*; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

4. If God wishes to make known the riches of His glory to people to whom He desires to show mercy, we find whom He had selected before the foundation of the world began.

1. Paul concludes the whole argument by stressing the fact that the Gentiles are as much an object of God's

Romans 9:24 - Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

mercy as are the Jews!

Romans 3:29 - *Is he* the God of the Jews only? *is he* not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:

2. Paul identifies the vessels of mercy were mainly the Jews, with a few Gentiles. This laid the foundation for what was to follow - the setting aside of the nation Israel, having no favored status.
3. Paul is still dealing with the Jews here, but in these verses 21-24, they constitute the meaning of the "dispensation of grace" which was beginning to form.

*Even though Israel was God's favored nation, God always had the provision for Gentiles to be saved - through Israel's God.

1. Paul is dealing with verses here that Israel would be familiar with, quoting from the book of Hosea. These are the words spoken by the broken-hearted prophet, Hosea, to the adulterous nation of Israel. Paul uses

Romans 9:25-26 - As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. Rom. 9:26 And it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, *Ye are* not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God.

it to prove a point.

Hosea 2:23 - And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to *them which were* not my people, Thou *art* my people; and they shall say, *Thou art* my God.

*This is a reference to kingdom Israel believers going into the kingdom. Paul is confirming that if Israel could go from a favored status to an unfavored status under wrath and then later be restored in the future, then the same principle could hold true for the Gentiles.

2. God is going to fulfill His promise to call back His people (Israel).

Hosea 1:10 - Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, *Ye are* not my people, *there* it shall be said unto them, *Ye are* the sons of the living God.

3. These two verses do not mean that the Body of Christ today is the fulfillment of these predictions. Paul is talking totally to the people of Israel and how they went from a vessel of honor to a vessel of dishonor. One day they will become a vessel of honor again - at the 2nd coming of Christ.

*Israel's judgment was not permanent and God is not done with them yet. This is a reference to the kingdom Israel of believers going into the kingdom at Mid-Trib.

4. Paul will apply to God's acknowledgement of the Gentiles as His sons in Romans 10:12 later.

Romans 10:12 - For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

1. Isaiah predicted that only a small remnant of the children of Israel would be saved, even though the nation

Romans 9:27-29 - Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: Rom. 9:28 For he will finish the work, and cut *it* short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. Rom. 9:29 And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.

itself might grow into tremendous numbers.

Isaiah 10:20-22 - And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. Isa. 10:21 The remnant shall return, *even* the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. Isa. 10:22 For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, *yet* a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness.

*This is true Israel.

2. It is because of God's mercy that a small remnant of Israel will get the promise. Most of Israel will remain lost and will perish.

*Isaiah predicted that only a small remnant of the children of Israel will be saved in verse 27.

3. Paul uses all these O.T. scriptures to point out God's longsuffering patience, without bringing judgment until He acts. Some examples of these would be: the flood, the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah, the cutting off of the rebels in the wilderness, and the Babylonian and Assyrian invasion of the northern and southern tribes of Israel-sending them into captivity.

- a. In Isaiah 10:23, he is referring to the Babylonian invasion of Israel's exile (verse 28).

- b. Paul quotes Isaiah again - that if it was not for God's mercy, Israel would be like Sodom and Gomorrah.

Isaiah 1:9 - Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, *and* we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

4. Paul was saying that God acts in accordance with His spoken word and in judgment remembers mercy, always remembering His faithful remnant - true Israel (the Little Flock).

*Paul now gives us the basic reason for Israel's failure in the last verses of Chapter 9.

Romans 9:30-33 - What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. Rom. 9:31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Rom. 9:32 Wherefore? Because *they sought it* not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; Rom. 9:33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

1. Israel (the Jews) knew the path to salvation, but they refused to go that way. Whereas, hearing Paul's new revelation of the gospel, some responded by faith and a few Gentiles did.
 - a. Romans 9:30 - What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.

Paul says some of the Gentiles, who were not chasing after God's righteousness, took the very righteousness of God by faith. Whereas, Israel always sought it by the means of the Law and they did not get it! The Jews sought it by "works" and human religious effort.
 - b. We have to remember that Paul has been making the contrast between true Israel (the believers in Christ) and the non-natural unbelievers, which were the majority of Israel.
2. Only a few Gentiles were seeing the righteousness of God when they heard Paul's salvation gospel. Gentile cities were centers for superstitions and idolatry, but more of them turned to God from idols to serve the living true God.

I Thessalonians 1:9 - For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;
3. Paul answers the Jewish people before they object to his Gentile principle.
 - a. Paul knew the Jews' objection would be - "What's up with that?", in verse 31.

Romans 9:31 - But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.
 - b. Israel sought justification on the basis of keeping the Law, but never found a law by which they might obtain righteousness.

Romans 10:3-4 - For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. Rom. 10:4 For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.
 - c. They did not seek it by faith only, but by their self-works.

*This then brings us to Israel stumbling. What was the stumbling stone in verses 32 and 33?
4. Romans 9:32-33 - Wherefore? Because *they sought it* not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; Rom. 9:33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.
 - a. We see here that Israel stumbled over the stumbling stone - Christ Jesus the Lord. Israel, except for the Little Flock, stumbled over not recognizing and believing Jesus was the Messiah.
 - b. This was what the Lord God foretold through Isaiah - the Messiah is coming to Jerusalem and having a two-fold effect.

Isaiah 8:14 - And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Isaiah 28:16 - Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner *stone*, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

- c. So, we see not all Jews are true Israelites. The majority are not, and God will take the kingdom promises from them and give them to the believing remnant.

John 1:11-12 - He came unto his own, and his own received him not. John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name:

Closing Remarks:

Most Israelites believed that possessing and keeping the Law of Moses was all that was required for salvation, as long as they tried to live up to it. Of course, it was an unattainable goal to accomplish.

And to add to the tragedy of Israel's rejection when the Messiah Christ came, the One of whom the Law and O.T. Prophets all spoke about coming - the Jews stumbled over Him.

The key to God's "past" dealings with Israel was His sovereignty. In Romans 10, we will see the key to God's "present" dealings with Israel - His salvation for Israel now - a new salvation message.