

Romans

Romans Chapter Nine

Romans 9:23-33

March 20, 2011

This is lesson number 82 in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

The Theme of the Letter

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ” Romans 1:16-17

Title: The Remnant Will Be Saved

Chapter 9 of Romans is a part of Scripture that many people wish God the Holy Spirit had not included in God’s Word. Many people who seriously read and think about what is written in Romans 9 still reject what it clearly says because of their prejudice against the absolute sovereignty of God.

Many people are so blinded by the false teaching of man’s so-called autonomous free-will that they try to explain away what the Bible says about election and predestination.

People who would deny God’s free and sovereign choice of who will be saved say that all election amounts to is that God **looked out into the future** and saw who would believe and so He “elected” to save those people.

Well you can’t read Romans 9 correctly and believe that error.

One of the silliest and even blasphemous explanations of election was given by a venerable Southern Baptist preacher who said all election amounted to was that God had a vote, the devil had a vote, and you cast the deciding vote.

Then there are those who say that the election of the nation of Israel is what election is all about. It is true that Israel was God’s elect nation, but Romans 9 will not allow you to limit election to nations because it clearly refers to individuals.

Very well then, election does mean individuals, but what it means, they say, is that Christ is the ‘elect’ [and it is true that He is the elect Son]; but then they go on to say that **when** you believe, **then** you become one of the elect.

Romans Nine and Ephesians One won’t allow that kind of shallow teaching.

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What we have seen in two previous lessons on Romans 9 is that God does indeed elect individuals. We have seen that God foreknew His children and He calls them into being that His purpose according to election might stand.

God's mercy and grace is the reason why His children believe the Gospel.

For a person to be stiff-necked over the doctrine of election they must reject many passages of Scripture in both the OT and the NT.

Without trying to exposit these texts, let me give you just a few references to election in the Bible. Note these passages and read them in context.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-15

But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth,¹⁴ to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 13:48

48 Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

Acts 18:9-11

9 Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent;¹⁰ for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."¹¹ And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

John 10:25-30

25 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me.²⁶ But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. ²⁷ My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.²⁸ And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.²⁹ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.³⁰ I and My Father are one."

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We must see that no one deserves to be saved and the goodness of God is that He is merciful to anyone at all. God said to Moses, “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.”

Paul began Chapter 9 with a cry of anguish over the hardness and unbelief of “his brethren according to the flesh.”

But Paul is **not surprised** by the fact that most of his fellow Jews are in unbelief. **Why is Paul not surprised?**

Paul is not surprised because Paul knew the OT Scriptures.

Paul began his letter to the Romans by saying that the Gospel of God was promised in the Holy Scriptures. All through this letter he makes a point and then he backs up his statement with the appropriate OT Scripture.

That is what he does in Chapter 9. The Jews believed that they were God’s children **because** they were Jews. What Paul does is to show from the OT Scriptures using Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau:

“For they are not all Israel who are of Israel.”

Paul points out that God used the wickedness of Pharaoh for His purpose. God did not create a sinful Pharaoh but He used a sinful Pharaoh.

He backs up that statement with the example of the potter who makes from the same lump makes one vessel for honor and another vessel for dishonor.

And there is no unrighteousness with God!

Now if that were not enough to quiet the pride of man, Paul continues in Chapter 9 to show that not only were most of the Jews left out as children of God, but that many Gentiles, those ‘dogs’ the Jews called them, were included as children of God.

This is a most important thing for you to understand: the makeup of the church [explain the invisible church is not the visible church] has always been Gentiles and Jews.

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There is not a way to be justified for the Jews and a different way to be justified for Gentiles. There is one God and one Gospel and all who are saved [justified] are saved in the same way:

By grace through faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The mystery of the ages before Christ came to actually propitiate the sin of His people is not merely the fact of the **institution** of the church; the mystery is the **constitution** of the church.

The mystery is not that there **would be** the church; the mystery is that the church is **made up of Gentiles and Jews**.

And the inclusion of Gentiles is not a NT revelation or a NT innovation; this is what the OT Scriptures had always taught but the Jews who had the great blessing of having the Scriptures were blinded.

This mystery was revealed to Peter in the most remarkable way.

Acts 15 is the record of a council in Jerusalem where the question of the salvation of Gentiles was settled by the apostles and elders. The question was, "Must Gentiles be circumcised in order to become Christians?" In other words, must a Gentile become a Jew before he could become a Christian?

Acts 15:1-11

And certain *men* came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." ² Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question. ³ So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. ⁴ And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them. ⁵ But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses."

⁶ Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. ⁷ And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: "Men and brethren,

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you know that a *good while ago* God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.⁸ So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, ⁹ and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.¹⁰ Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?¹¹ But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we {Jews} shall be saved in the same manner as they {Gentiles}."

Do you see the order that Peter states the conclusion?

11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we {Jews} shall be saved in the same manner as they {Gentiles}."

**It is not that Gentiles must be saved in the same way that Jews are saved!
NO! It is that Jews must be saved in the same way that Gentiles are saved!**

It gets even better. James, the leader of the Jerusalem church says that the inclusion of the Gentiles in the church is a fulfillment of the prophet Amos.

Acts 15:12-15

12 Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles. 13 And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me: 14 Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. 15 And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written:

[And then James quotes Amos 9:11-12]

Acts 15:16-18

**16'After! this I will return
And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down;
I will rebuild its ruins,
And I will set it up;
17 So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD,
Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name,
Says the LORD who does all these things.'
18 "Known to God from eternity are all His works.**

James is saying that the prophecy of Amos is fulfilled in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, and in the constitution of the church being made up of Gentiles and Jews.

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David's fallen tent [tabernacle of David is Jewry] had been rebuilt by Christ.

Another extremely important thing to see is that James says,
“**And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written:....**”

But James quotes only one OT prophet, viz. Amos, but by making prophets plural he is saying that all the prophets said the same thing!

This principle of interpretation, i.e., allowing the NT to interpret the OT is one of the main differences between Dispensational eschatology, as in “Left Behind”, Scofield Bible, Ryrie Study Bible, et al, and in what I believe, which is called inaugurated millennialism.

Now I am not trying to be argumentative but I cannot honestly explain this passage [Romans 9 –10 –11] without pointing out these differences in methods of interpretation.

Dispensationalism would say that the rebuilding of David's tent is yet to be fulfilled in a time yet future to our time. This OT prophecy, they say, must have a literal fulfillment. The inspired apostle says that this prophecy of Amos was fulfilled in the church made up of Gentiles and Jews in the same body! The NT interprets the OT.

Another major distinction between Dispensationalism and inaugurated millennialism is that Dispensationalism teaches that the Jews and the church are two separate bodies of people and they never come together even in eternity.

Dispensationalism would say that Abraham had two seeds. The natural seed is the Jews. The spiritual seed is the church. There are two entities, the Jews and the church, and they never come together.

Dispensationalism says that the church is not Israel.

So you can see that your method of interpretation based on your eschatology makes all the difference as to how you understand what the Bible teaches. The make-up of the church is both Gentile and Jew, and together they are the “Israel of God.” Cf. Galatians 6:16

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Peter and James and Paul have had their blindness removed and now they can see what the Scriptures have always said about Gentiles.

So with that rather long introduction let's read today's text:

Romans 9:23-33

23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, 24 even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of *the* Gentiles?

25 As He says also in Hosea:

"I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved." 26 "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, ' You are not My people, 'There they shall be called sons of the living God."

27 Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel:

"Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, The remnant will be saved. 28 For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, Because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth."

29 And as Isaiah said before:

"Unless the LORD of Sabaoth had left us a seed, We would have become like Sodom, And we would have been made like Gomorrah."

30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; 31 but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. 32 Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone.

33 As it is written:

"Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

That is a lot of text to cover in one lesson but all I want to do is to give you the basis for the case that the Apostle makes.

The case is that believing Gentiles are also the children of God and the vast majority of Jews are lost in unbelief.

We have established that:

They are not all Israel who are of Israel.
God calls His children into being according to election.

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No one deserves God's mercy.

One of the greatest failures of the Jews was their failure to share the knowledge of Jehovah God with the nations, the Gentiles. They had God's truth and instead of honoring it and preaching it to the nations they assumed that they were safe from God's wrath and that they could get away with looking down on and despising everyone else.

Gentiles have always been in the heart of God and the OT Scriptures establishes this truth. **"He who has ears to hear let him hear."**

25 As He says also in Hosea:

"I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved." 26 "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, ' You are not My people, 'There they shall be called sons of the living God."

There is an important principle of interpretation that you need to understand.

The OT prophecies generally had more than one application.

The first application was to the immediate situation of the Jews to whom the prophecy was written.

But prophecy generally has a broader and more remote application.

One of the best examples is where Moses told {prophesied} the Hebrew slaves in Egypt exactly how and when to prepare and kill the Passover lamb and to sprinkle the blood over the lintels and doorposts.

God said, "When I see the blood I will pass over you."

But we know from the NT that the second application of this prophecy is the type of salvation and substitution in the blood of Christ Jesus.

Jesus is the Passover Lamb.

Even today when the Jews celebrate Passover they are blinded to the real meaning of this OT event.

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Now that is what Paul is doing with the Hosea passage; remember that Paul is under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Paul is giving the second application of what Hosea prophesied.

The first application of the Hosea prophecy is to the ten tribes of Israel who rebelled and formed the northern kingdom of Israel. The tribes of Judah and Benjamin became known as the southern kingdom of Judah. The northern kingdom was cut off from the commonwealth of Israel.

But Hosea says that God can call even those who are ‘not my people’, those Jews who were cut off from Jerusalem. You don’t have to live in Palestine to be called a child of God. God calls His children into being wherever they may be found.

Paul now applies this Scripture to Gentiles; if those Jews who rebelled can be called, so can Gentiles be called. Can you see that Paul is taking an OT prophecy and applying it to Gentiles?

There is so much here and I am only skimming the surface, but I want you to get the overall picture of how Paul is applying the Scriptures to Gentiles.

Isaiah cries out! Talk about “shock and awe!”

27 Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel:

**"Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea,
The remnant will be saved."**

Imagine the amazement of Isaiah, who was a Jew, to have this revelation from God that only a remnant, a very small number, of the Jews would be saved.

“For they are not all Israel who are of Israel.”

One reason that Paul quotes Isaiah so much is because the Jews loved to quote favorable selections from this prophet. The reference to the sands of the sea will remind them of Abraham whom God promised that his seed would be as numberless as the sands of the sea. But the Jews thought that because Abraham was their father according to the flesh that they were safe.

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But Paul reminds them that Isaiah prophesied that only a **remnant** would be saved:
“For they are not all Israel who are of Israel.”

28 For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, Because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth.”

29 And as Isaiah said before:

“Unless the LORD of Sabaoth {hosts, armies} had left us a seed, We would have become like Sodom, And we would have been made like Gomorrah.”

Here again we have a two-fold fulfillment of an OT prophecy.

At the time of this prophecy, Isaiah who knows about the invasion and captivity of the northern kingdom by the Assyrians warns the southern kingdom what will happen to them under the attack of the Chaldeans, the destruction of Jerusalem and the captives being carried to Babylon.

Only a ‘remnant’ of the captives went home to Palestine.

But the ultimate fulfillment of this Isaiah prophecy is yet to be seen in A.D. 70. Remember Paul wrote the Book of Romans in about A.D. 59 and so what happened in A.D. 70 was future to Paul.

So destruction will come shortly and only a remnant will be saved.

Paul again takes an OT prophecy that has had at least one fulfillment in history, and applies that same prophecy to the future of the Jews.

That’s where Paul is going to prove in Chapter 11. Elect Gentiles and the elect remnant of the Jews together make up the “Israel of God.”

“And so all Israel will be saved.”

But **“...they are not all Israel who are of Israel.”**

30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; 31 but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness.

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All along we have seen that the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man are seen side by side in the Bible. If your concept of election means to you that man is not responsible then you are entirely wrong!

32 Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone.

33 As it is written:

"Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

God's word is sure. You can trust His promise in Christ to save you from your sin: but you must believe.

God's word is just as sure regarding judgment.

The Jews of Paul's day and many people in our day are in this situation.

Salvation, they insist, cannot be as simple as repenting of sin and by faith alone believing in Jesus Christ and trusting His righteousness. No, they say, I must do something so God will take notice of me! They think they must belong to a particular group or that they must perform some religious duty before God will save them. They reject sovereign grace. Someone said that's the only kind of grace there is, grace is grace and works are works.

Another thing that is clear in what Paul says in vs. 32-33 is that the teaching of Dispensationalism that Christ offered the kingdom to the Jews and they rejected the kingdom is simply wrong. In effect, Dispensationalism teaches that if the Jews had only accepted Christ He would not have had to die on the cross.

The Scripture says that Christ would be a stumbling stone that they would reject and be condemned. The Jews did not reject a kingdom; they rejected Jesus Christ as the only way to be saved!

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The Lord Jesus used this same OT prophecy and applied it to Himself:

Psalm 118:22-23

**22 The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone.
23 This was the LORD's doing;
It is marvelous in our eyes.**

“The Ignorance of the Architects,” by George Morrison.

Matthew 21:42

**42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures:
'The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone.
This was the LORD's doing,
And it is marvelous in our eyes'?"**

Acts 4:8-12

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: 9 If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, 10 let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.11 This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' 12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

The majority of religious people in our day have bought the lie of ‘pluralism’. Pluralism says that all religions are valid. The only religion that they will not tolerate in their ‘toleration’ is biblical Christianity. They say that it is ‘narrow-minded’ to claim that salvation is only in the person of Jesus Christ.

Well, those same people are going to hell over the same ‘stumbling stone’ that the Jews rejected.

God’s sovereign choice in election is what calls a person into being as a child of God. When a man is saved it is because God chose him in Christ before the

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foundation of the world. A man is condemned in Adam and is lost because he is a willful and deliberate sinner.

No one will be able to stand in the judgment and plead that they would have come to Jesus but they were not one of the elect.

Jesus said, **“You will not come to Me that you might have life.”**

There is ‘free-will’ for you! YOU WILL NOT!

Repent of your sins and trust Jesus Christ and make your calling and election sure. The Jews thought that they did not need to be saved because they had Abraham for their father. Jesus told them that their father was the devil.

There you have the doctrine of the absolute sovereignty of God.

Our merciful Father is calling His children into being: Gentiles and Jews.

Don’t stumble over the free offer of the Gospel.

Repent and believe the Gospel!