

Israel's Past Election

Romans Chapter 9

August 10, 2015

DAY 1: God's Faithfulness (9:1-13)

It seems strange that Paul would interrupt his discussion of salvation and devote a long section of three chapters to the nation of Israel. Why didn't he move from the doctrinal teaching of chapter 8, to the practical duties given in 12-15? As we look at it, we will see that this section is not an interruption at all; it is a necessary part of Paul's argument for justification by faith!

1. Paul opens chapter 9 by sharing the deep “sorrow” and “grief” in his heart.
 - a. Read verses 1-3. How far was Paul willing to go to see people come to the Lord?
 - b. Do we have that same level of conviction to win others to the Lord?
2. Read verse 4-5 and list all of the advantages Paul discusses for being an Israelite, the blessing of their election.
3. The nation of Israel failed, in failing to recognize the Messiah. If God's chosen people failed, does that mean God “failed” too?
 - a. Read 2 Tim. 2:13. Does this change your answer?
4. Re-read verse 6 and read verses 7-10. According to these verses, was the basis for Israel’s election their physical descent from Abraham?
5. Continue reading verses 11-13 and ask yourself if Israel’s election came from their human “goodness” or good works.

God chose Jacob *before* he was even born, so Israel’s election could not have related to his character or conduct. Verse 13 refers to a passage in Malachi 1:2-3 that speaks to a national election, not a personal one.

DAY 2: God's Righteousness (9:14-18)

1. The idea that God may chose one and not the other, *seems* unrighteous to us. Read verse 14 and see how Paul anticipates our reaction.
 - a. Is God capable of unrighteous actions?
 - b. What implication does this have as we consider the doctrine of election?
2. Continue reading verses 15-16. What does God's mercy depend on?
 - a. What is God's mercy not dependent upon?
 - b. Why should this be a great relief to us?

In point of fact, everyone is deserving of condemnation. Election is always a matter of grace; of God choosing whom He will show compassion and mercy.

3. In verse 17, Paul goes back to the story of Pharaoh and Moses. Both men were deeply flawed, having both committed murders. Both had been blessed to see God's wonders and signs.
 - a. Look for two purposes God gave for raising up Pharaoh.

These help us see that it is not a capricious choice that God makes, but choices in line with His sovereign plans.

In verse 18, note the phrase, "He *hardens* whom He desires. That word, hardens, appears repeatedly in Exodus throughout the exchanges between God and Moses and Pharaoh. (for further study, Ex. 7-10) Sometimes it was Pharaoh who hardened his heart (as in 8:15, 19, 32), sometimes the Bible says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (9:12, 10:1, 20, 27)

4. What conclusion can we draw from this?
 - a. Did God *want* Pharaoh heart to be hard?
5. Have you ever tried to blame God for trouble that you got yourself into?

DAY 3: God's Justice (9:19-24)

The issue of God's sovereignty can be a challenge for us. "If God is sovereign, then who can resist Him? And if one does resist Him, what right does He have to judge? It is the age-old question of the justice of God as He works in human history.

Again in verse 19, Paul anticipates our questions, based on our idea that God doesn't always *seem to us* to be just. Paul actually gives three responses to this issue, that we will look at over the next two days.

1. Read verse 20. How does Paul answer the first question?

Look at the second question in verse 20 and continue to verse 21.

- a. Read Isaiah 45:9. What does this say about our relationship with the potter?

 - b. Now read Jeremiah 18:1-6. What context does this provide, as we consider the rights that the potter has over the clay?

 - c. We hear much in society about people who were "self-made" men. Does there seem to you to be a logical problem with this? What are the implications?
2. Paul's second response to the question of God's justice is that God has purposes. Read verse 22. What are two purposes God has for the "vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?"
3. Read verses 23-24. What are purposes for the "vessels of mercy?"

God revealed the wealth of His mercy in Moses and Israel. God revealed the wealth of His power and wrath through Pharaoh and Egypt. *Since neither deserved any mercy, God cannot be charged with injustice.*

DAY 4: God's Justice (9:25-29)

Yesterday we looked at two responses Paul gave to the charge that God sometimes *seems* unjust to our way of thinking. The first is simply, "Who are we to talk back to God?" The second is, "God has purposes for what He does."

1. In today's passage we will see Paul's third response, that specifically address Israel's complaint that God was not just. "God had prophesied these very things."
2. Read verses 25-29. The prophesy here is from Hosea 2:23 and points to Gentiles becoming His people as well as Israel.
 - a. Is it unfair to the Israel for God to speak this way?
 - b. Why is "fairness" a huge concern for us?
 - c. What are some common complaints we hear about the "unfairness" of God?
3. Look at verses 27-28. This prophecy is from Isaiah 10:22-23 and states that only a remnant of Israel would be saved.
 - a. How can we interpret this today?
4. The third prophecy, from Isaiah 1:9, points to the *grace* of God in sparing the remnant.
 - a. Would God be just if He failed to fulfill His prophecies?

In fact, God's justice in His election, purpose and prophecy made possible the salvation of significant numbers of "objects of wrath," like you and I!!

DAY 5: God's Grace (9:30-33)

Paul concludes the chapter by returning, *not* to the idea of “elect” and “non-elect,” but by going back to the human responsibility in this equation and emphasizing *faith*.

1. Read verse 30. How did the Gentiles attain righteousness?
 - a. How does this compare with Eph. 2:8-9?

2. How did the nation of Israel miss the mark, in verses 31-32?
 - a. Can you think of other religions or cults who try to satisfy righteousness by works?

 - b. According to verses 30 and 31, what is the fatal flaw, in trying to do so?

3. Read verse 33. Now take a look at the verses on which this statement is based, Isaiah 28:16 and 8:14. Based on these verses, compare the idea of a “foundation-” or “corner-stone” with the idea of a “stumbling stone.”

No one will deny that there are many mysteries connected with divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Nowhere does God ask us to choose between these two truths, because they both come from God and are part of God's plan. They do not compete...they cooperate. The fact that we cannot fully understand how they work together, does not deny the fact that they do.