



**God Is Sovereign
He Holds All of Us Accountable for our Own Decisions
Romans 9:17-33**

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Romans 9:17–33

“For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “FOR THIS VERY REASON I RAISED YOU UP, IN ORDER TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE EARTH.” So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. **You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?” On the contrary, who are you, you foolish person, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it? Or does the potter not have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one object for honorable use, and another for common use?**



What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with great patience objects of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon objects of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, namely us, whom He also called, not only from among Jews, but also from among Gentiles, as He also says in Hosea: "I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, 'MY PEOPLE,' AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, 'BELOVED.'" "AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, 'YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,' THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD." Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL MAY BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, ONLY THE REMNANT WILL BE SAVED; FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY." And just as Isaiah foretold: "IF THE LORD OF ARMIES HAD NOT LEFT US DESCENDANTS, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE BEEN LIKE GOMORRAH." **What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, but the righteousness that is by faith; however, Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though they could by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, just as it is written: "BEHOLD, I AM LAYING IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND THE ONE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE PUT TO SHAME."" (NASB 2020)**

We have been discussing the topic of the omniscience of God, predestination, election and all the things we have visited since the beginning of Romans 8. Overlay on top of that, God's own people have rejected Him, and He knew that was going to happen too. This brings some to the table who are looking for their own reasons to reject Jesus Christ. If God is the one who is sovereign and He has already selected who will and will not be saved, then there is no human responsibility, and I can do whatever I want. Right? Hold that thought.

We are about to continue discussing the rejection of Israel as a nation and Gentiles now being saved.

So, in true Pauline writing style, Paul continues his discussion with his unseen questioner. This leads in from his point about Pharaoh. Roy Gingrich summarizes the question. "If God has mercy upon whom He will have mercy and whom He wills He hardens, then why does God find fault with sinners for their unbelief and rebellion? They are only the product of God's will, are they not? How can sinners be blamed if their destiny is in the hands of God? No one is able to resist His will. If God hardens some men, how can He justly blame them for being hard?" (Gingrich 2002, 62)

The real problem is not God's sovereignty or any of those things that we have looked at. The real problem is our sin nature and how that has perverted our image and view of God; distorting who He is because we are trying to assess who He is through our own intellect and understanding. Jesus said, in John 14:9b, "The one who has seen Me has seen the Father, how can you say, 'Show us the Father,'" (NASB2020).

Our understanding of who God is and what His mind is, which only the Holy Spirit can even come close to helping us with as we look at His word, is warped by our sin nature and the centuries of embedded wrong thinking, bad behavior and incorrect answers to any of the questions that have been proposed for God.

All of us, as followers of Jesus Christ, are in the process of becoming more like Jesus and that comes only through the His word and the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through us. Only then can we begin to understand, a little, of what God is teaching here.

And yes, this does indeed touch on the topic again of theodicy. This term comes from the Greek words θεός and δικέ, translating to "divine justice." it is the attempt to define or defend God's omnipotence and goodness in the face of the problem of evil in the world.



Romans 9:17–19

“For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “FOR THIS VERY REASON I RAISED YOU UP, IN ORDER TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE EARTH.” So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. **You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?”**” (NASB 2020)

That proposed statement ignores the reality of creation. Based on what we see in Genesis 1-3 and Revelation 12, Satan, in fact all the created Heavenly Host, as well as Adam and Eve, were all created with free will. All had the freedom to either obey God or disobey God.

And here is the big problem that has led us to where we are today. Adam and Eve decided to disobey as did Satan and, over time, fully 1/3 of the Divine Beings have done the same (Revelation 12:3-4).

God had nothing to do with those decisions.

Some of the questioning that Paul anticipates here comes from the discussion of Pharaoh earlier in this book. First of all, God set up a cursing and blessing standard in Genesis 12:3. Edward Meadors tells us that “Pharaoh is culpable for his curse as a persecutor of God’s people. A descendant of the Egyptian king who mass murdered the firstborn sons of Israel (Exod 1:16), Pharaoh emerges as a “chip off the old block”—an unfair, oppressive sovereign, who enslaves God’s people and forces them into hard labor. He defies Yahweh directly.” (Meadors 2009, 192) See Exodus 5:1-2.

Did God cause Pharaoh to be this way? Not at all. He no more caused Pharaoh to reject and reject to the point God gave him what he wanted than we are.

Where we read in the scriptures that “God hardened” the heart of Pharaoh, that was not God starting the action. Pharaoh had rejected to the point that God provided him what he wanted. God is completely just and the blame lies with Pharaoh, 100% of the blame. He did that to himself. We really want to walk away from accountability and the truth that we reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7). The reality, totally applicable to what Paul is discussing here, we have already looked at.

Romans 1:18

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,” (NASB 2020)

Because we are fallen, we like to grasp at straws and that is what Paul is outlining here, one of those straws. Meadors again relates and I agree with his comments here, “The Bible is very clear that sin entered the world through humankind: “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Rom 5:12). Categorically, this sin is opposite the obedience of Christ: “For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one the many will be made righteous” (Rom 5:19). The lucid confession of David in Ps 51 is that God is indeed just in judging because it was David himself who was responsible for and guilty of his sin: “Against you, you only, I have sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified when you speak, and blameless when you judge.” (Meadors 2009, 208)

We are all guilty for our own sin. When I worked in law enforcement, there were numerous times, more than I care to remember, where we would apprehend a teenager in the Base Exchange trying to obtain a five-finger discount. Shop lifting.



There were cameras everywhere and we always had video of the act as well as the individual walking right by the cashier and out the door, where they were then snagged by store security. Parents would come to collect their kids, but not once did we ever charge the parent, the child, absolutely, they were held accountable for their own actions and entered into the juvenile justice system, but not the parent. There were a few parents that we really wanted to charge as well, but being obnoxious is not a crime.

The Lord made it clear in the giving of the law that we are all accountable for our own sin.

Deuteronomy 24:16

“Fathers shall not be put to death for their sons, nor shall sons be put to death for their fathers; everyone shall be put to death for his own sin alone.” (NASB 2020)

Just as we do not hold the Father accountable for the crimes of their children, or at least that is still the law in most of the states of our nation, God is not accountable for our sin which we, before we came to Jesus, did almost continually. I like how Meadors puts it.

“God as creator is our first cause, but he is not in any respect the primary agent of our acts of disobedience against him. He created us but he did not force our sins. To the contrary, God is a good shepherd who leads “in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.” To be sure, God is a refiner’s fire to be feared, and he is indeed the exclusive final word in judgment, but it cannot be said validly on the basis of Scripture that he is the primary agent of evil. That ignominious distinction belongs to Satan and to us.” (Meadors 2009, 214)

Romans 9:19–20

“You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?” On the contrary, who are you, you foolish person, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it?” (NASB 2020)

Let’s be really clear about this. God created everything and when He did, He set into place certain moral and psychological laws, you could also call it our conscience, that is there to help govern how we live here on this planet. This is part of His general revelation and falls into the category of what we discussed earlier in Romans 1. Here is the thing, Pharaoh, as many others have also done over the centuries, refused to recognize their existence. Blaiklock continues.

One of those laws is that, when a mind sets itself with determination to do evil, the very choice makes it more easy to do evil. When, in rebellious self-will, someone places themselves in opposition to God, each moment’s persistence promotes the death of conscience, and makes the road to retreat and to penitence longer and more difficult. Hebrew thought does not distinguish the intermediate steps. God created the laws of the mind. Therefore, said the Jew, God “hardened Pharaoh’s heart.” (Blaiklock 2018, 543)

So, yes, you can indeed so damage and sear your conscience that what would be considered evil and wicked by most is just another day at work for you. Many times, there is also an invitation to and a resulting overlay of demonic possession, but the individual is the one who kicked this all off in the first place. But the arrival point, identifying as a psychopath, is indeed an endpoint we see in the Bible many times. Jesus does save from this though, look at Paul, Nebuchadnezzar and others.

Do not go searching the Bible for the term psychopath or sociopath as it is not in the Bible. What this is is the severest of all endpoints that sin can lead to.

In today’s criminal and psychological literature, a sociopath or psychopath is identified as one who is characterized by extreme self-centeredness and immaturity, shallow emotions (including reduced fear, a lack of empathy and remorse, low tolerance for stress, and little response to positive motivations), cold-



heartedness, superficial charm, irresponsibility, impulsivity, criminality, a parasitic lifestyle and a desire to manipulate others. A psychopath is one who compulsively performs criminally selfish acts with no apparent conscience or concern about the welfare of his victims. (Got Questions Ministries 2002-2013)

And yes, one of the signs of a psychopath is a lack of accountability and always blaming others for what they did. There are no morals, no conscience anymore and no true sense of right and wrong. What happened in the flood is what happens when this becomes the overriding manner that the culture conducts itself.

Genesis 6:4–8

“The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown. The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that **every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually**. And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.” But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.” (ESV)

And yes, since we are now in the days of Noah, this means that the current culture of the age is becoming more and more a culture of psychopaths. This is exhibited in the lawlessness that Jesus said would be rampant at the end of the age.

But praise the Lord, Jesus saves. In his letter to a church that had many former sociopaths and psychopaths in it, Paul said this.

1 Corinthians 6:9–11

“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. **And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.**” (ESV)

Jesus saves totally and completely. He makes us new.

Colossians 3:1–17

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. **For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him**, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. **Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your**



hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” (NKJV)

We are God’s creation, but when we are born, none of us are born without a sin nature which means we are all born as rebels. We want to call our own shots all the time, and it is the job of parents to put down that rebel in all of us.

The idea proposed by Paul is one of us foolishly talking back to God, as many do today, and blaming Him for what they have made themselves to be. They go as far as saying the problem is in the genes. I was born this way, that is why I have a desire for relationships that are not within the Biblical standard for normal. If you mean sin, yes, you were born that way, but no, the creator did not make you that way. You got the sin nature from you own parents. You were not born gay, a thief, a liar and so on. Sin took you there.

Remember, a psychopath denies accountability and blames others.

God did not make the Irish argumentative, Germans stubborn, or anything else we have a tendency to remove personal responsibility from ourselves in favor of being made this way. This is a serious fallacious argument and here is the headline, it isn’t a new argument.

Romans 9:20–21

“On the contrary, **who are you, you foolish person, who answers back to God?** The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it? Or does the potter not have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one object for honorable use, and another for common use?” (NASB 2020)

We still are repeating the lie of Genesis 3 to ourselves and believe that God has held something back from us. We want to be like God and call all of our own shots even if it kills us. And it will. We believe we should be autonomous beings who have no accountability at all to the one who created us.

This is what makes transhumanism so attractive to so many. It is initially based on the false premise that we evolved and then piles onto that that we can now, thanks to technology, control our own evolution and make ourselves into what we want to be. Ray Kurzweil stated as much as a goal for becoming more than human.

“Biological life is suboptimal because evolution is a collection of random processes optimized by natural selection. Thus, as evolution has “explored” the range of possible genetic traits, it has depended heavily on chance and the influence of particular environmental factors. Also, the fact that this process is gradual means that evolution can achieve a design only if all the intermediate steps toward a given feature also lead creatures to be successful in their environments. So there are surely some potential traits that would be very useful but that are inaccessible because the incremental steps needed to build them would be evolutionarily unfit. By contrast, applying intelligence (human or artificial) to biology will allow us to systematically explore the full range of genetic possibilities in search of those traits that are optimal—that is, most beneficial. This includes those inaccessible to normal evolution.” (Kurzweil 2024, 189)

As much as you may not want it to be the case, God is your creator and you and I are indeed accountable to Him for how we live. For those of us who have come to Jesus as our savior and Lord, we can’t wait, but if you don’t know Jesus, you also have an appointment. The writer of Hebrews describes it for us.



Hebrews 9:27–28

“And just as it is destined for people to die once, and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.” (NASB 2020)

What about honorable use versus common use thing? God is sovereign over the universe, over this planet, and over us as His creation. That is the point being made here. As the creator, the potter, He has complete freedom to make whatever He wants for whatever purpose He desires. If we think we have the right to question God, we don't.

As, Leon Morris says, this is not to “imply that the creature is in a position to call God to account and to judge him by human standards and by the limited insight humans can bring to a complex problem. They overlook the fact that the sinner is out of his league when he takes on God (to use very human language). Again, they ignore the fact that the Creator constantly does things which the creature does not and cannot understand. And they overlook the main point that Paul is making, that God, like the potter, is alone responsible for the final purpose. We may agree that it would not be right for God to create sinners simply in order to punish them. But that is not what Paul is saying. He is saying that God created people, that people became sinners, and that God then dealt with them as sinners. (Morris 1988, 365-266)

Romans 9:22–26

“What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with great patience objects of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon objects of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, namely us, whom He also called, not only from among Jews, but also from among Gentiles, as He also says in Hosea: ‘I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, ‘MY PEOPLE,’ AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, ‘BELOVED.’ ” “AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, ‘YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,’ THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD.’ ” (NASB 2020)

The text begins with so what if God does this? What if God. God is sovereign and as such, He is also free to judge or have patience with those who would be judged. He is sovereign or as Zane Hodges tells us, “What God has done with regard to the vessels Paul now speaks of, was done simply because that is what God wanted to do. The reasons are not within man's knowledge and, even if they were, they are not open to man's challenge.” (Hodges 2013, 276) Where do we get off on telling God how to be God?

Again, let's talk about Pharaoh since he has already been brought up by Paul. God wanted to take His people from Egypt and have them go to Canaan. That was God's plan and Pharaoh stood up and denied God His right to do with Israel as He chose to do. He acted unrighteously to deny God's purposes for Israel and to suppress the truth of who they are. His attitude is seen in the following.

Exodus 5:2

“But Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and moreover, I will not let Israel go.”” (ESV)

Pharaoh had a choice, let them go and acknowledge God or deny God. “Accordingly, God chose to deal with Pharaoh, as He has also with mankind as a whole (Rom 1:18), in a way that displayed His righteous wrath and at the same time manifested His divine power. Pharaoh clearly belonged among the vessels of wrath fitted for ruin. But Paul uses the plural vessels here. Pharaoh is now simply a case in point.” And here is the clear news from this, Pharaoh made decisions that placed himself into that category. He had free will and using that, he made some poor decisions listening to those who were advising him, Satan and his fallen ones. (Hodges 2013, 276)



The lesson for us, we also have free will. What have we done with it lately? Many of us were making the same really classy decisions that Pharaoh made, but something else was going on as well and the text tells us that here. God did not choose to zap us but instead He exercised great patience with us turning us from objects of His wrath to objects of His mercy.

When the Holy Spirit began to show us our need for Jesus Christ and that He was the only one who could resolve our sin problem for us, we eventually heard Him and said yes. At that point, we were no longer objects of wrath. He made known to us, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the riches of His glory and His mercy.

The bad news, based on what Paul says, the objects of wrath included Jews and Gentiles, not just exclusively Gentiles. And the really great news, the riches of His glory upon the objects of His mercy, and that would also be believing Jews and Gentiles. The realization is mind boggling, as David Seccombe tells us, "God wishes (not chooses as in some translations) to judge the wicked and eradicate all evil from the world. His very goodness requires it. But he restrains himself because of his will to save those upon whom he has determined to have mercy." (Seccombe 2013, 172) Believing Jews and Gentiles.

2 Peter 3:8–10

"Now, dear friends, do not let this one thing escape your notice, that a single day is like a thousand years with the Lord and a thousand years are like a single day. **The Lord is not slow concerning his promise, as some regard slowness, but is being patient toward you, because he does not wish for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief;** when it comes, the heavens will disappear with a horrific noise, and the celestial bodies will melt away in a blaze, and the earth and every deed done on it will be laid bare." (NET 2nd ed.)

Again, yes, He knows in advance who will and who will not come to Christ. We do not know though.

He has chosen to work through us to reach the world for Himself. The creator of the universe, God, wants to partner with you and me to complete His plan of telling the world about what His Son Jesus Christ achieved on the cross for all of us. Thus, the mercy.

We do not know who will say yes and who will say no. We are called simply to "make disciples." To tell our story of what Jesus Christ has done for us. That does not require a degree in theology or even the memorization of vast amounts of the Bible. It helps, but it is not required. What is required is obedience and a willing heart to serve Him who has given everything to us. Paul quotes Hosea about the impact.

Romans 9:25–26

"as He also says in Hosea: **'I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, 'MY PEOPLE,' AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, 'BELOVED.'** " **"AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, 'YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,' THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD.'**" (NASB 2020)

When Hosea gave this prophecy, he was talking to the Northern Kingdom of Israel just before the Assyrian Empire took them away into exile. Hosea was instructed to marry a prostitute as a practical example of how the Northern Kingdom had prostituted themselves with false Gods. Hosea called them "not my people" and "not beloved."

The passages quoted by Paul speak to the regathering and restoration of Israel but here, Paul applies them to the nations, the Gentiles. Why would he do that?

Could it be that the manner and way God will restore Israel is also a type of what will take place for the Gentiles? Possible. Or is it possible that this is now being fulfilled with the church which consists of Jews



and Gentiles who are now combined and called the people of God. Sam Storms says that “according to this view, the OT prophetic promise of Israel’s regathering in covenant faith to Yahweh is being progressively fulfilled in the salvation of believing Jews and Gentiles in this present age, that is to say, in the Church.” (Storms 2016, Ro 9:25-26)

I find this makes a lot of sense especially in light of the sermon given by Peter on Pentecost in Jerusalem where he also said the giving of the Holy Spirit to the church with all the signs as well, was the beginning of the fulfillment of what was prophesied in Joel. We are talking about the new covenant being given to His people, already but not yet to all of Israel but for the church and those of Israel who come to Christ, it is already and right now.

And yes, this does not negate there being a future restoration to come for Israel, that Paul will talk about here in Romans.

What we do see is the grace of God taking both Jews and Gentiles who at one time were subject to the wrath of God, instead be the recipients of God’s grace and mercy and now, because of Jesus, those who were not His people, are not only His people but are also referred to as sons of the Living God.

Romans 9:27–29

“Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, “THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL MAY BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, ONLY THE REMNANT WILL BE SAVED; FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY.” And just as Isaiah foretold: “IF THE LORD OF ARMIES HAD NOT LEFT US DESCENDANTS, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE BEEN LIKE GOMORRAH.”” (NASB 2020)

Continuing on with his discussion, Paul now turns to the prophet Isaiah quoting from Isaiah 10:22-23. Let’s take a look at Isaiah.

Isaiah 10:22–23

“For though your people, Israel, may be like the sand of the sea, Only a remnant within them will return; A destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness. For a complete destruction, one that is determined, the Lord GOD of armies will execute in the midst of the whole land.” (NASB 2020)

The word translated destruction is *הַמָּוֶלֶת* (killaywon). The word destruction is an understatement as it means “annihilation.” (Koehler, et al. 1994-2000, 479)

The “extermination” is the judgment which reduces the teeming population of Israel to a mere remnant; this will be an overwhelming manifestation of Jehovah’s judicial righteousness (see on ch. 1:27). (Skinner 1897, 90)

This is still in the prophetic future for Israel. What Paul is quoting is a verse that is prophesying the people of the Northern Kingdom would be overthrown and scattered. God is calling from those who will be overthrown, ones whom He will show mercy to, who will seek Him. It is also prophetic of the remnant at the end of the age.

Why would Paul add this, Dr. Moo points out “to establish the truth of God’s selectivity from within Israel, Paul cites texts from Isaiah that describe the important OT concept of the remnant. Characteristic especially of the prophets, the remnant doctrine contains both a word of judgment and a word of hope.³¹³ The judgment consists in the fact that, though “the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea,” only “a remnant will be saved.”” (Moo 2018, 634)



Recall back in verse 6 that we learned that not all of Israel is Israel. In other words, not everyone in Israel is a believer. Many in name, but not in reality. This is why the reference to Isaiah 10:22-23. He also quotes from Isaiah 1:9. Let's pick up from verse 7m this is again a passage dealing with judgment on the nation.

Isaiah 1:7-9

"Your land is desolate, Your cities are burned with fire; As for your fields, strangers are devouring them in front of you; It is desolation, as overthrown by strangers. The daughter of Zion is left like a shelter in a vineyard, Like a watchman's hut in a cucumber field, like a city under watch. If the LORD of armies Had not left us a few survivors, We would be like Sodom, We would be like Gomorrah." (NASB 2020)

This comes from the initial indictment issue by God for both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. Judgment was all but assured now. The indictment is thorough and reflects not much, if anything, is left.

Paul left out verse 8 which was there to hold out some hope for the Southern Kingdom that perhaps a small hut would survive. But the reference to Sodom and Gomorrah as a reference to Israel of his time is shocking. Without the intervention of God, there would have been nothing left of the Jews, it would have been like Sodom and Gomorrah, yet God tempered His judgment. There will indeed be a remnant at the end of the age who will pray for their Messiah to save them and as one all Israel will be saved.

God is sovereign and He will save whom He will save and for Israel, that will be a remnant, by the way, that also holds for the Gentiles.

Matthew 7:13

"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it." (NASB 2020)

Why so few of the Jews coming to Christ? Paul asks that questions himself.

Romans 9:30-33

"What shall we say then? That **Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, but the righteousness that is by faith; however, Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though they could by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone**, just as it is written: "BEHOLD, I AM LAYING IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND THE ONE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE PUT TO SHAME."" (NASB 2020)

Why is it then that Gentiles are now being saved in growing numbers while much of the Jewish people are in a state of rejection?

When Paul asks "what shall we say?" He is pointing back to the the previous discussion and now he is trying some of the pieces together. Why are the Gentiles becoming believers, and those who you would expect to be believing, rejecting instead.

First of all, God's gracious offer of salvation cannot be worked for, earned, purchased or inherited. His free gift is available to all who believe and receive it by faith. The offer requires a response and thus enters in human responsibility. But for most of the Jewish people, as we have already discussed, they thought they had an in just because of their heritage, as outstanding as it is. But no, that is not the case, salvation is God's grace gift to all of us.

John MacArthur talks about this tension here. "By His own determination, God will not save a person who does not believe in His Son, and a person cannot save himself simply by the act of his own will, no matter



how sincere and heartfelt. In God's sovereign order, both His gracious provision and the exercise of man's will are required for salvation. Like many other revelations in Scripture, those two truths cannot be fully harmonized by reason, only accepted by faith." (MacArthur Jr. 1991, 49)

God is sovereign and He already knows who will say yes to the offer of salvation. But that does not remove the requirement for you and me to listen to what the Holy Spirit tells us about Jesus and saying yes. We still must exercise our free will to come to Christ by faith and believe.

In Genesis 11, God divorced the nations and then focused on Abraham to build a people for His name. A people who would represent Him to the nations drawing all those divorced nations back to the Lord. They failed. God though continued on with His plan and using someone from that nation, who was born of a virgin and perfect in every way, fully God and fully man, success was achieved at the cross and mankind was redeemed, purchased out of the slave market of sin. But there still is the free will part.

So, now those who had been busy doing their own thing and living for themselves, worshipping other gods, now they can be made righteous through the blood of Jesus Christ. And the standard also holds for the Jewish people as well; they too must take advantage of the same gift offered to the Gentiles. Contrary to what they had thought was the truth for them, they do not inherit salvation. Accountability is still individual per person.

By the way, righteousness has always been by faith and not by the law. They missed completely what the Gentiles were now seeing because they had the blinders of the law over their eyes. Their idea of salvation was all performance based, but God made it clear it never was performance based, it was always by grace. Even David reflected that to the people.

Psalm 51:16–17

"For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." (ESV)

Genesis 15:5–6

"And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." **And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.**" (ESV)

Even the one they believed they inherited salvation from since they were related, believed through faith. No performance there at all.

What Paul is telling the Jewish people is this, you relied on your ancestry, your heritage for your salvation rather than a changed heart and life. Most did not believe but simply went through the motions.

That is what religion does. It lies to you and makes you think all is well with God when meanwhile, all is not well with God at all. Religion is man's way of coming to God, it is performance based and has nothing to do with the true God of the Universe. Religion serves up a quid pro quo kind of a God who is waiting to zap you unless you perform the right acts at the right time and give the right amount of money and show up to tell someone who has nothing to do with true repentance or forgiveness, all your sin so they can make you feel good by telling you that you need to do something and then you are forgiven. That is the ditch the Jewish people were in as well.

Here is the big basic problem for the Jewish nation, they stumbled over Jesus Christ. You see, they even had developed their own "theology" of who Messiah would be and how He would act. They saw and still do see two Messiahs. One who is a military leader and one a political leader.



Jesus did not meet the format even though there were those who did things try and get Him to perform to their expectations. Judas Iscariot was looking for the one who would overthrow the Romans and maybe thought that by handing Jesus over, it would start the revolution, and Jesus would take out the Romans who showed up to take Him.

Peter wasn't much better. He went for Matthias head and got an ear instead. But he too wanted the revolution against Rome to get moving. Even prior to the ascension, the disciples had still not let that idea go.

Acts 1:6–8

"So when they had come together, they asked him, **"Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"** He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (ESV)

Most of the Jewish people stumbled over Jesus. In fact, He continues to be a stone that many stumble over today. If the Holy Spirit has been talking to you today, telling you that you need to also take advantage of the offer of salvation we talked about, the time to decide is right now. Stop stumbling over Jesus.

Romans 3:21–24

"But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins." (NLT)

Romans 10:9–13

"If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced." Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For "Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved." (NLT)

ABC's of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.



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