

Romans 9... 10... 11

Paul was systematically proving to the Jews that God's setting their nation aside to take the Gospel to the Gentiles was consistent with their own Scriptures.

In other words, God was not being unfaithful to the nation of Israel. He was not breaking any promises He had made to them. They remained His chosen people but, on account of their rejection of their Messiah, God would discipline them for a time. In the mean time both Jews and Gentiles would be saved and form the church.

Paul had taken them to Scriptures that discussed the patriarchs, haraoh, and the potter. Now he focuses their attention on the prophets.

Romans 9:25 As He says also in Hosea: "I WILL CALL THEM MY PEOPLE, WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, AND HER BELOVED, WHO WAS NOT BELOVED."

Romans 9:26 "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."

- being changed to bring change -

If you go to Hosea chapter two you'll find that this is quoted loosely. And the words originally applied to Israel, not Gentiles. It's all OK because Paul was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and thus giving God's commentary on what Hosea said as it related to the situation in the first century.

Paul used the Hosea passage to show that God was justified in reaching out to people who did not know Him. Why should it be so strange that Gentiles would be saved?

The Jews were God's chosen people they were also charged with spreading the knowledge of God to the surrounding nations. It was always His will that none should perish. He has always been a whosoever will believe God of salvation. It should therefore come as no shock to the Jews of the first century that God was saving Gentiles.

Then, too, there was no promise that everyone born a Jew was automatically saved. Salvation was not by race but by righteousness. It was not inconsistent to reject Jews who refused to believe.

The saving of Gentiles was one thing. But how could that possibly line-up with the corresponding disciplining of Jews?

Paul next quoted from Isaiah.

Romans 9:27 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.

You recognize "the sand of the sea" as God's promise to Abraham regarding his descendants. A "remnant" is what is left. Here Isaiah anticipated that though there would be multitudes of Jews, only "the remnant" would be saved in the end.

In its original context Isaiah was referring to the Jews in the Babylonian captivity. Paul was applying it to their present and prophetic history. We recognize this "remnant" as those Israelites who remain at the end of the Great Tribulation. They "shall be saved" in the sense that they will be supernaturally preserved through that time of intense global persecution.

Romans 9:28 FOR HE WILL FINISH THE WORK AND CUT IT SHORT IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, BECAUSE THE LORD WILL MAKE A SHORT WORK UPON THE EARTH."

We have the benefit of reading this from the perspective of a completed Bible. We interpret it through the words of Jesus who said that a time of great trouble was coming upon the earth to test the Jews and that God would shorten those days to save a remnant. We see this unfolding as John is given the Revelation.

Romans 9:29 And as Isaiah said before: "UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOOTH HAD LEFT US A SEED, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WE WOULD HAVE BEEN MADE LIKE GOMORRAH."

“Sabaoth” means *hosts* or *armies*. It is a reminder that God controls the affairs of men on the earth. He has vast supernatural resources by which He accomplishes His will on earth as it is in Heaven. Though earthly armies and enemies may for a time persecute the Jews, they cannot prevail against the forces of the Lord.

So, too, in our lives the enemy of our souls can go so far and no farther. God sets the boundaries. I may think He sets them too far because of my sorrowing and suffering, but He never allows more to happen than His grace can overcome.

Isaiah here mentions a “seed.” This is even smaller than a remnant. Remember that Paul’s point in quoting these texts is to show that God is being consistent in His first century dealings with Israel. If only a seed from the remnant was saved, it was consistent with what God had promised them.

The mention of Sodom and Gomorrah is never one to put a smile on your face. I remember being asked a few years ago to write a letter to the board of a Christian school regarding their decision to cancel a particular missions program. I reminded them of this passage in Ezekiel 16:46-50,

Ezekiel 16:46 "Your elder sister is Samaria, who dwells with her daughters to the north of you; and your younger sister, who dwells to the south of you, is Sodom and her daughters.

Ezekiel 16:47 You did not walk in their ways nor act according to their abominations; but, as if that were too little, you became more corrupt than they in all your ways.

Ezekiel 16:48 "As I live," says the Lord God, "neither your sister Sodom nor her daughters have done as you and your daughters have done.

Ezekiel 16:49 Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

Ezekiel 16:50 And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit.

In retrospect it didn't help our cause to compare the school board to Sodom! I received an irate phone call and the mission was still scrubbed.

What Paul was telling the Jews by quoting Isaiah was that they had become so wicked that God must discipline them. But in the midst of His discipline He would save a few righteous, a small remnant. He would do it by bringing Jews into the church. He will do it after the church is removed by preserving a small remnant of Jews through the Great Tribulation.

Behind all this is a fundamental understanding that everything must have a solid biblical basis. Paul couldn't just say, "Hey, like it or not, this is what God is doing." Even as an apostle he was obliged to substantiate his explanation from Scripture.

It should never be seen as a problem to justify beliefs or behaviors from the Bible. It doesn't quench the Holy Spirit for us to have a healthy skepticism and to want to diligently seek out whether something is true or not.

I want to have a biblical basis for everything I do. It doesn't mean there is never any room to disagree agreeably. It doesn't mean there will never be an argument as to what to emphasize.

But it does mean that we are all submitted to understanding what God has really said about something. It does mean we want to stay within God's boundaries because it is there we will enjoy Him the most.