

Romans Session 144

Israel's Unbelief Is Consistent With God's Prophetic Revelation 2

Israel's Unbelief Is Consistent With God's Prerequisite Of Faith 1

Romans 9:22-29 (NASB)

²² *What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?*

²³ *And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,*

²⁴ *even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.*

²⁵ *As He says also in Hosea, "I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, 'MY PEOPLE,' AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, 'BELOVED.'"*

²⁶ *"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."*

²⁷ *Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED;*

²⁸ *FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY."*

²⁹ *And just as Isaiah foretold, "UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOOTH HAD LEFT TO US A POSTERITY, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE RESEMBLED GOMORRAH."*

Last time we were together we saw Paul using the Prophet Hosea to show how the unbelief of Israel was consistent with the prophecies concerning her by Hosea and now he moves on to show the same thing using the Prophet Isaiah who was a contemporary of Hosea.

Romans 9:27 (NASB)

²⁷ *Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED;*

Isaiah 10:22 (NASB)

²² *For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea, Only a remnant within them will return; A destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness.*

The Greek term *krazo* (**cries out**) behind Paul's quotation of Isaiah carries the sense of crying out with great emotions, as from fear or pain, and was often used of a scream of despair and agony.

The truth he was divinely called to proclaim tore at the prophet's heart. When he uttered that sorrowful truth, he doubtless wept for his brethren.

Of the vast number of human descendants of Abraham through Isaac, a **number as great as the sand of the sea only the remnant**, a very small remnant at that, **will be saved**.

Beginning at about 760 b.c. Isaiah prophesied to the southern kingdom of Judah for some forty-eight years.

Like Hosea, he was given the divine revelations that God's people in Judah, just as those in Israel would be conquered, scattered, and temporarily forsaken by God because of their unbelief.

It is likely that Isaiah, as Hosea, personally understood that truth as relating to a judgment that would come in his own age, when Judah's rejection of God would lead to her conquest and exile by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.

Paul is saying that as important and tragic as those two scattering were, they were only previews of Israel's immeasurably greater and more tragic rejection of the Messiah, and the subsequent conquest, slaughter, and scattering of Jews that has followed.

Quoting from the following verse in Isaiah 10, Paul declares,

Isaiah 10:23 (NASB)

²³ *For a complete destruction, one that is decreed, the Lord GOD of hosts will execute in the midst of the whole land.*

When God uses the Babylonians to judge Israel for her unbelief and unfaithfulness, His justice was thorough and fast, and only a few, the remnant of true believers, escaped.

So also, was it in the destruction of Jerusalem and devastation of Palestine in A.D. 70

The Prophet Amos, who prophesied in Judah shortly before Isaiah, declared,

Amos 3:11-12 (NASB)

¹¹ *Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, "An enemy, even one surrounding the land, Will pull down your strength from you And your citadels will be looted."*

¹² *Thus says the LORD, "Just as the shepherd snatches from the lion's mouth a couple of legs or a piece of an ear, So will the sons of Israel dwelling in Samaria be snatched away— With the corner of a bed and the cover of a couch!"*

If a shepherd could not rescue a sheep from a predator, he would make every effort to snatch at least part of the carcass to take back to the owner as proof that the sheep was indeed attacked and devoured by a wild animal, rather than stolen or sold by the shepherd.

Just as the shepherd snatches a small part of a sheep from a lion's mouth, God will snatch for Himself, as it were, only a small part of Israel from Unbelief and condemnation.

To further press home the truth he is declaring, Paul quotes again from **Isaiah**, who **foretold**,

Isaiah 1:9 (NASB)

⁹ *Unless the LORD of hosts Had left us a few survivors, We would be like Sodom, We would be like Gomorrah.*

The Jews of Isaiah's day and, even more so the Jews of Christ's day, faced terrible judgment for their unbelief. They not only killed many of God's ancient prophets but even killed God's very Son, their Messiah and Savior. And since that day, all Jews who reject Christ continue to face the same terrible judgment.

Paul is saying, that the Lord of Hosts graciously left to us a posterity, a remnant, apart from which no one would be saved but every human being, Jew and Gentile alike, would have become as Sodom, and would have resembled Gomorrah, divinely judged and destroyed.

The Lord's destruction of those two morally perverted cities became a byword for total annihilation, without a trace remaining. Only God's grace has prevented such ultimate and total destructions of the entire world.

The swift and sudden destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Abraham's time, and of Israel and Judah in a.d. 70, illustrates how the Lord will execute His word of judgment upon the earth, thoroughly and quickly, when the time has come. Only God's sovereign mercy spares the remnant.

Israel's unbelief, therefore, is not inconsistent with God's revelation through His prophets. They predicted it, stretching all the way from their own day to the day of Messiah.

Romans 9:30-33 (NASB)

³⁰ *What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith;*

³¹ *but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law.*

³² *Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone,*

³³ *just as it is written, "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."*

Paul's fourth and final point in this section is that God's prerequisite of faith for salvations does not conflict with or violate His divine plan of redemption but has always been an inseparable requirement of that plan.

God's demand for faith on the part of men is in no way inconsistent with His sovereignty. By His own sovereign decree, His gracious offer of salvations becomes effective only when it is willingly received by faith.

In regard, to salvation, the other side of divine sovereignty is human responsibility.

From the human standpoint there is a tension, even a seeming contradiction, between those two realities.

By human reasoning, they seem mutually exclusive. But both are clearly taught in God's Word, and when one is emphasized to the exclusion of the other, the gospel is invariably perverted.

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 by faith.

So, Paul goes on to say:

Romans 9:30 (NASB)

³⁰ *What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith;*

Paul is not implying that Gentiles are saved on a different basis than Jews. He is simply stating the human requirement for salvations that has always been the only means of attaining the **righteousness** that is necessary for salvation, **the righteousness which is by faith.**

The word pursue, is from *dioko*, which means to run swiftly after something, and was therefore frequently used of hunting.

It was also used metaphorically of earnestly seeking a desired goal or objective.

The implication for Jews was that they did not pursue the righteousness, which is by faith, but instead relied on their birthright as Jews or on their supposed good works in obedience to God's Law.

But no person has ever been saved, at any time, under any dispensation or covenant, on any other basis than **faith** exercised in response to God's gracious call.

It is that truth that the writer of Hebrews makes so clear. From Abel through the prophet's men gained [God's] approval through their faith. Heb 11.

Paul is not saying, of course, that the pagan Gentiles naturally sought God's righteousness through faith. Whether Jew or Gentile, the natural man never seeks God by his own independent choice.

Romans 4:4-11 (NASB)

⁴ *Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due.*

⁵ *But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,*

⁶ *just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:*

⁷ **"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED.**

⁸ **"BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT."**

⁹ *Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, "FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."*

¹⁰ *How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised;*

¹¹ *and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them,*

Romans 8:7-8 (NASB)

⁷ *because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,*

⁸ *and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

It is interesting to know that when the Gospel came through Christ, far more Gentiles than Jews believed.

The greatest obstacle to salvation is self-righteousness. The person who thinks he is already righteous and pleases God will see no need for salvations.

Because most Jews thought they had satisfied God by their Jewishness or their works righteousness, they felt no need for the gospel of grace through faith.

Consequently, Israel pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. What a tragic commentary of a wasted effort. God's righteousness cannot be achieved by man's works, because they are always sin-tainted and fall short of God's perfect and holy standard.

By his own effort, no person can **arrive at that law.**

Why did self-righteous Jews fail? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works.

They stumbled over the stumbling stone.

The only thing that any person, Jew or Gentile, can do to be saved is to believe that he can do nothing to merit salvation and to cast himself at God's feet for His mercy for the sake of Christ.

Jews were incensed at the gospel of grace made effective by **faith** because it nullified all the good **works** by which they thought they could please God.

Several years before he wrote the epistle to Rome, Paul had reminded the church at Corinth that;

1 Corinthians 1:22-23 (NASB)

²² *For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom;*

²³ *but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,*

Again, quoting from Isaiah, Paul explains;

Isaiah 28:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ *Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, A costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed.*

Isaiah 8:14 (NASB)

¹⁴ *"Then He shall become a sanctuary; But to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over, And a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.*

1 Peter 2:7-8 (NASB)

⁷ *This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone,"*

⁸ *and, "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.*

Long before the Messiah came, the Lord had predicted in many ways and through many prophets that Israel would reject Him.

Far from being inconsistent with God's word Israel's unbelief verified that Word. Just as Isaiah declared, she tripped over the **stone of stumbling**, refusing to receive her Savior and Lord, because He did not fit their understanding of the Messiah and because as a rock of offense, He declared their works to be worthless.

Daniel completes the picture by adding that the One who was the stone over which the Jews stumbled and the rock that offended them will, in the future, be the stone that will break in pieces all the kingdoms of the world (Dan. 2:45)

But the good news of the gospel is that, unlike those who reject Him, He who believes in Him, the one who has faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the divine stumbling stone and rock of offense will not be disappointed.

The issue on the human side is faith, which alone can bring the salvation that God's grace provides. Man is justified by grace through faith, but Israel's unbelief, and her lack of faith, did not surprise the Lord or nullify His plan.

God's prerequisite of faith has always been the same, and His choosing a remnant in Israel for salvation was in perfect harmony with His omniscient awareness that only a few would believe in His Son and be saved.

That is the way God knew it would be and planned it to be, and that, of course, is the way it turned out to be.