

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **Is Israel's Unbelief Inconsistent with God's Plan? Part 4**

Scripture: Romans 9:25-33

Code: 45-74

Let's open our Bibles tonight to Romans chapter 9...Romans chapter 9, this great great chapter, Romans chapter 9. And for tonight we were going to be examining...we are going to be examining verses 25 to 33, the closing portion of this great chapter. We're really talking about a general theme in this chapter is Israel's unbelief inconsistent with God's plan. And it presents to us the sovereignty of God, even in the unbelief of Israel.

Now to begin with, let me ask you a question. And you can kind of think about this question as we move through the passage. What is the greatest obstacle to salvation? That's the question. What is the greatest obstacle to salvation? What is the severest, to put it another way, what is the severest bondage which can capture people and hold them in a rejection of the truth? Some might say indifference. Some might say religion. Some might say immorality or wickedness or vice or sin. But I want you to think about it. What is the greatest obstacle to salvation? We're going to see in our text a little later the answer to the question.

Now let me remind you that in this section of Romans, chapters 9 through 11, the Holy Spirit is giving us insight into the place of Israel in God's plan. The nation Israel has a unique place in God's plan. The Old Testament tells us that God set apart the nation Israel as His unique people, gave them covenants and promises, poured out blessing upon them. And now in the presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, Israel has rejected. They rejected their Messiah and they reject now the proclamation of the gospel by the Apostles.

Now as Paul presents the gospel, the question is posed to him, how can it be true if God's chosen people the Jews don't believe it? How can it be genuinely from God if the people of God reject it? That's the issue. If this new truth is really of God, then why don't God's people receive it? Paul must answer that and that is the reason he writes chapters 9 through 11. And it's essentially tied to his doctrine of justification by grace through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. He wants people to believe that salvation comes through Jesus Christ. The Jews say no it doesn't. How can it be true when the Jews, God's people, reject it? That's the question.

And so, listen very carefully to what I say now, this is very important. Romans 9 to 11 becomes in a sense an apologetic of the gospel. I mean by that a defense of the gospel. If we are to believe the gospel, if any Jew or Gentile for that matter is to believe that this is really the message from God, then he's got to understand how it is that Israel could disbelieve it if they are God's people. And how it

is that God could set them aside. So, you see, he can't just end with the presentation of the gospel, he has to defend its validity by dealing with Israel and showing how they fit in to the plan.

Now remember that throughout the ninth chapter he's really saying four things. Israel's unbelief does not violate God's promise, does not violate God's person, does not violate God's plan...that's probably a better word than prophets, we've used that, but probably the word plan is better, and does not violate God's prerequisite.

Now let me briefly remind you where we've been and very briefly. First of all we saw in the first part of the chapter the first couple of verses that Israel is in unbelief. There's no question about that. In the first three verses Paul says I just want you to know my heart, I want you to know how I really feel and I have continual heaviness, sorrow, I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh. In other words, he affirms their lostness and wishes that he could do something to bring them to Christ. So first of all, he affirms that the lostness of Israel is indeed a fact. And secondly, he affirms that they indeed are the people of God, verses 4 and 5. They have the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service, the promises, the fathers. And as whom concerning the flesh Christ came who is over all God blessed forever. So he affirms two things. Yes they are the people of God. Yes they are in unbelief.

And that is exactly what a questioner is going to ask. How can this be true when the people of God who are the people of God, who have received all of these things from God don't believe it? He says yes they are the people of God, yes they don't believe it. But their unbelief does not violate God's promise, God's person, God's plan or God's prerequisite. And that's the flow of this chapter. And I think frankly for years and years this has been hard to understand for some reason, or misunderstood. And I think that perspective helps us realize that 9 to 11 is not an incidental parenthesis dropped in the middle of a discussion of salvation, it is a defense of the believability of it by dealing with a very significant issue.

Now first of all, in verses 6 to 13 Paul pointed out that the unbelief of Israel does not violate God's promise. And the way he does that is by showing that God's promise was only partial anyway. And he uses Isaac and Jacob as illustrations. And by the way, he uses two Scriptures to make his point. And that's very important because all theological truth takes us back to the Word of God, doesn't it? And he proves his point by the Scripture.

The second section, verses 14 to 24, which we completed last time, demonstrates that the unbelief of Israel does not violate God's person. In other words, it doesn't mean God doesn't keep His promises, God doesn't keep His Word, and secondly, that God doesn't violate His holy character, that God hasn't changed His love affair with Israel in midstream, that God is guilty of defection or something...or that God is unfair, or that God is unjust, or God is unequitable...inequitable. And he answers that in verses 14 to 24, showing that God is not unfair, God is not unjust, God is not wrong in

being selective in choosing people for salvation because that's the way He's revealed Himself to be. He's a God of selection. And he uses two Scriptures again, Exodus 33:19 about Moses and Exodus 9:16 about Pharaoh. And his point again is taken from the Scripture.

So the Scriptures tell us that God in no way violates His promise because His promise was always limited. God in no way violates His person by choosing some to salvation because He's always been revealed as a God who is selective. So He has not changed. And you remember from last time, verse 22, what if...what if God chose to do that? He's God and He chose some to salvation and some were destined to judgment but in both cases He reveals His glory, doesn't He? For His glory is made manifest in salvation and His glory is made manifest in judgment. If there were none to judge, then there would be no way for God to reveal the glory of His judgment or the glory of His wrath or the glory of His holy hatred of sin. So He has the right to display both gracious mercy and holy justice. He has the right to show His grace, He has the right to show His wrath. And again, you remember, he used Scripture to prove that...two of them, Isaiah 45:9 and Jeremiah chapter 18 he alludes to with the potter and the vessel.

And Paul's point in all of this, and I want you to just kind of get this in your mind, his point is this, God always was selective even when He gave His promise to Israel, it was never intended that all Israel racially, everybody out of the loins of Abraham would automatically be saved, He was selective. And that doesn't violate His person, He's revealed as a selective God. In the case of Moses He says I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. And in the case of Pharaoh He said, whom I will harden I will harden. And so God is in no way violating His promise or His person. And God cannot be accused of being unjust because justice would send us all to hell, right? It is only mercy that saves us. We have no right to ask for salvation, we have no deserving of it. It is all the grace of God.

But it's still hard for us to handle. It's a hard doctrine for us to handle the selective elective sovereignty of God. But let me see if I can give you a perspective. It becomes particularly difficult to handle when we understand its ramifications. For example, Roy McAtee was telling me tonight that he was talking with a Jewish lady who said, "If I believe in the Messiah, if I accept Jesus Christ, that means that I affirm that all of my family before me is in hell. I can't handle that. I can't handle that because if this is the truth then that is not the truth and they're lost." And I suppose we all ask that question when it comes right down to where we live, how can a loving God condemn my parents? Or how can a loving God condemn my relatives or my friends? And so we question God about the equity of that.

But perhaps an illustration will help us from the life of Samuel. Samuel loved Saul. He loved Saul. In fact when Saul sinned, 1 Samuel 15:11 says Samuel cried all night. He cried all night. Finally God came to him in chapter 16 verse 1 and said, "How long will you grieve over Saul?" He was so grieved over this man's plight, so grieved over this man's sinfulness, so grieved over the inevitability of consequence to his sin that God had to say, "How long you going to carry this on?"

Later Samuel died and entered God's presence. And at that particular point we find an interesting event in the life of Samuel. Samuel enters God's presence and then in 1 Samuel 28 you remember he was called back from the dead. You remember Saul went to the witch of Endor and I think the witch thought she'd conjure up her medium spirit only Samuel came...because the text says, "Samuel...Samuel...Samuel...Samuel...Samuel," not "Demon...demon...demon...demon." So Samuel came back.

And you know what Samuel did? When Samuel came back he confronted Saul with his sin. He pronounced judgment on Saul. You can read it, 1 Samuel 28 about verse 15 to 20, he pronounced judgment on him, he condemned him. Now what is interesting about that is this, when Samuel died and went into God's presence, he didn't lose any love...mark this...for Saul but he gained such an utterly perfect love for God that it overrode any human emotion. You understand that? And the nearer we draw to God the more intimate we become with Him, the more perfect He demonstrates His person to be, the less we are swayed away from His holiness by emotional attachments in this world. It doesn't mean we are utterly callous. It doesn't mean we don't love men. What it does mean is we so supremely love God that the affront that sin is to His holiness is a much greater concern to us than the lostness of a person. You understand that? The nearer we draw to God the more we love and adore Him, the less we will be able to tolerate those who don't do that.

So the unbelief of Israel does not violate God's promise, does not violate God's person at all. And the nearer we draw to Him the better we'll understand that. Let's go to the third point. This, too, just a marvelous insight. The unbelief of the Jews does not violate God's plan...God's plan. Some are going to say, "Well now wait a minute, I mean, God had a plan for Israel, God an everlasting plan for Israel, God promised them that they would be as the sand of the sea and they would enter into blessing and prosperity, God promised them a Kingdom, God promised them life. I mean, now all of a sudden they're in unbelief, this violates God's plan." I mean, the Jew is going to say, "You can't preach this new gospel, it just violates God's plan. I mean, it means that all the Old Testament prophets were wrong when they promised things to Israel, when they predicted a Kingdom."

Is that so? Well let's look at verses 25 to 29 and find out. And by the way, folks, in a very very systematic way Paul proves his point again and again he uses two Old Testament prophets. In each of the first two points he had two Old Testament quotations, and here he uses two Old Testament prophets quoting each of them twice. And in the next point he uses two quotes again from an Old Testament prophet. So it's as if he makes his point, uses two Old Testament supports in every one of these four points. And that's one of the things that leads me to believe the chapter breaks down in this fashion. Now the two prophets that he quotes, and again I mark out for you the very important understanding that when Paul wanted to make a point, he went directly to...what?...to Scripture. And the first one that he quotes is Hosea...Hosea. And the second one that he quotes is Isaiah.

Now notice verse 25. "As He saith also in Hosea, I will call them My people who were not My people and her beloved who was not beloved." Now I want you to turn in your Bible to Hosea chapter 2 and you will see it in verse 23. In the middle of the verse, "I will say to them who were not My people, Thou art My people; and they shall say, Thou art my God." Now that's essentially what Paul refers to. It is a paraphrase. It is not a direct quote, it's a paraphrase. He alludes to this particular text. But I want you to see the meaning of it by going back to chapter 1. Hosea was a prophet, a very wonderful man, a very loving man, a very forgiving man, a very gracious man. Verse 2 says, "The Lord said to Hosea, Go take unto thee a wife of harlotry, children of harlotry for the land hath committed great harlotry departing from the Lord."

Now we don't know whether she was a harlot when he married her but she became one. And Hosea sort of lived out a parable as his wife was a harlot to him, so Israel was a harlot to her husband, God. And his life is a living parable of the relation between God and Israel. "So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, conceived, bore him a son, called his name Jezreel." You know what Jezreel means? Scattered, means scattered. She had another child, verse 6, call her name Lo-ruhamah, means no pitied, I have no pity for that child. Had another child, verse 9, boy, Lo-ammi, not my people, for you are not My people and I will not be your God.

So here is Hosea, he marries a woman, she becomes a prostitute. She gives him three kids, one named "scattered," the other named "not pitied," and the other named "not My people." Now what do those names have reference to? God's attitude toward adulterous Israel. The children of adulterous Israel are scattered and not pitied and not the people of God. That's what it's saying. They are not any longer My people. They're not My people. So Israel was not God's people. The relationship was severed...even in the time of Hosea. And Hosea 2:23 just simply points that out. They're not My people, not My beloved.

But listen to me. In Hosea 2 God is going to bring them back. There's a beautiful picture beginning in verse 14, "I will allure her, I will bring her into the wilderness, I will speak tenderly unto her," and so forth and so forth, and verse 19, "I will betroth thee unto me forever, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, justice, loving kindness and mercy. I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, thou shalt know the Lord," and so forth and so forth and so forth.

So listen to what it says. Hosea says this, Israel is going to become not the people of God but some day brought back to being the people of God. That's what it's saying. Now listen very carefully. Obviously was...the prophet was referring to the rejection by Israel of God. And then the judgment that came on them and the restoration. And he really lived to see that. He lived to see that northern kingdom conquered by the Assyrians, devastated by the Assyrians. The people of Israel became, in a very real sense, not the people of God. What does that mean? God took His hands off and they were scattered, weren't they? And there was no more pity for them. And they were not His people.

And yet after all of the devastation of the conquering of the northern kingdom, all the devastation of the conquering of the southern kingdom, God brought them back, didn't He? God brought them back to the land. God gave them back their land, gave them back their temple, gave them back their nation, gave them back their identity. And so historically then what you have here is a prophecy related to Israel being scattered, not any longer pitied or cared for by God, and no longer having a relationship with Him and yet some day being brought back from that and becoming a people who were once not a people.

Now when you read in verse 25 of Romans 9 "I will call them My people who were not My people and call her beloved who was not beloved," you know what he's talking about, don't you? He's talking about Israel. There's no other way to explain it. He has to be talking about Israel because that's who Hosea is talking about.

You say, "Why is this important?" Listen carefully. It's important because what it means is that the prophets of old saw that Israel would enter in to unbelief. So listen, when Hosea wrote, that had an immediate historical fulfillment, didn't it? As the people were severed from God, and carried off into captivity from which eventually God brought back the southern kingdom and a remnant of the northern kingdom. So the prophecy was historically fulfilled and the restoration after the Babylonian captivity. But that was only the first and historical fulfillment. There was yet a future prophetic perspective. And Paul here identifies it with the unbelief of the Jews during the time of Christ. He says, "Look, we are not surprised now when we see Jewish unbelief and we see them separating themselves from God and we see them denying the gospel, we are not surprised now when they enter into unbelief and sever themselves from God. Because Hosea said that that's the kind of people they were. And Hosea saw it in the immediate sense and the Spirit of God saw in the very words He gave to Hosea the future sense."

So the Holy Spirit applies through Paul what Hosea saw historically to the time of Christ. And the Israel of Christ is also a prostitute, also a harlot who has abandoned God and forsaken God. And the truth was in 70 A.D. what happened to them? Scattered, not pitied and not My people...the whole historical scene took place again...at the devastation of Jerusalem when the Jews were scattered. And have they suffered? Have they suffered? It's as if God does not pity them, isn't it? They're not His people for this period of time.

And so when we read the passage in Hosea then, we say yes, God anticipated the unbelief of Israel both in Hosea's time and here the Holy Spirit tells us even in the time of the Apostle Paul, the time of Christ. So the unbelief of Israel doesn't violate God's plan, it does...what?...it fits it. It's a tremendous thing. It fits God's plan. Israel is not now the people of God. They are a not pitied people. They are a scattered people.

You say, "Is this permanent?" No it's not permanent, look back at verse 25 again and see what it says. "I will call them My people who were not My people and her beloved who was not beloved." It even refers to the time of restoration, doesn't it? It even refers to the time when they'll be called back. Israel is not now the people of God but they will be. Look at chapter 11 verse 1. "I say then, Hath God cast away His people?" I mean, is this permanent? "God forbid." Verse 2, "God hath not cast away His people." Look at verse 26 in the same chapter. "And so all Israel shall be...what?...saved." And verse 27 says, "For this is My covenant unto them when I shall take away their sins."

In other words, those who are not now a people will become a people. Those who are not now beloved will become beloved. But the point of the text is just to show you that for the time we are not surprised at the unbelief of Israel. We saw it historically. And that historical unbelief became prophetic of the unbelief that exists since the time of Christ until their belief comes during the time of the Tribulation prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. So we're in the time when Israel fulfills the prophecy of Hosea. They are a scattered, not pitied, not My people.

Now Peter refers to this same idea, this same concept in 1 Peter 2:10. He refers to it indirectly and identifies it with the church. And that's kind of an interesting thing. I don't think he directly quotes Hosea, in my opinion. I think he alludes to the same concept only in this case it's the church. Now listen to what I say. Because we also were a scattered unpitied people who were not the people of God when we were saved, right? That's right. So Peter applies the same principle to us for Gentiles outside the covenant are a scattered unpitied people without a relationship to God.

So, Hosea directly applies the prophecy historically in his time. Paul directly applies the prophecy in his time. And Peter indirectly associates the concept with the identification of the church as a no people become the people of God.

You say, "Well now wait a minute, how can Peter take something clearly referring to Israel and apply it to the church?" Very simple, are you ready for this? When Israel becomes scattered, unpitied and has no relationship to God, they're just like the Gentiles, right? They're just like the Gentiles...no difference. Jew and Gentile in unbelief are equally not God's people, are equally not pitied by God in a special covenantal way, are equally scattered and unsaved. And so Peter sees the general truth of the state of Israel as a general truth also true of the Gentiles.

Now just notice in verse 25 that there's a beautiful set of terminologies, "My people, My people, My beloved," and the end of verse 26, "sons of the living God." Beautiful terms. The Lord's going to bring those people back. Now Paul while he's in Hosea comes to another verse and quotes it in verse 26, "It shall come to pass that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not My people, there shall they be called the sons of the living God." Now he got that out of chapter 1 verse 9 of Hosea where it says, "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea which cannot be measured nor numbered, it will come to pass in the place where it was said to them, You

are not My people, it shall be said to them, You are the sons of the living God."

It's kind of interesting because he simply paraphrases Hosea 2:23 but he does a direct quote of Hosea 1:9. It's almost verbatim quote. And again this text affirms the same thing. Look at verse 26 of Romans 9, we don't need to go back to Hosea for the time, but look what it says in verse 26. "It will come to pass that in the place where it was said unto them, You are not My people." Where was that place? Where was it said to them, "You're not My people?" Everyplace, they were scattered. "In that place it will be said to them, You are the sons of the living God." In other words, you who were scattered will be regathered, Hosea 1:9 says. And that's happened...that happened historically. After the captivities God gathered His people back from the lands of the Gentiles. They were regathered to be called again the sons of the living God. And that, by the way, is a title that stands in opposition to sons of idols, sons of dead gods, sons of no gods, sons of dumb gods that can't talk and deaf gods that can't hear and blind gods that can't see. We are sons of the living God. It's such a great phrase, isn't it? Not some dumb idol.

So please note that the use of Hosea's prophecies is not particularly to emphasize Israel's restoration, though that appears in the prophecies that He'll call them back to be His people, His beloved sons of the living God. The particular point in using the prophecies is to show that a future restoration of Israel demands a falling of Israel, right? You don't have to restore what hasn't been lost. And the point is that Paul is saying we're not shocked by Israel's unbelief, quite the contrary. We expected it because God promised their restoration from that unbelief. So when you look at the gospel being presented and you ask yourself the question as I have been asked by Jewish people, if your gospel is true, why didn't the Jews believe it? I say it was planned in the prophecy in the plan of God that the Jews would have to be restored from unbelief so we're not surprised they've entered into unbelief from which they'll be restored.

And may I encourage you with this, my friends, have the Jews gone into that unbelief? Have they gone into that unbelief and become a scattered, not pitied people without a relationship to God except for a few? Is that true? Then if we've seen that come to pass, what else must we see come to pass? Their restoration. And I fear that many Bible students are willing to see Israel enter into the prophesied unbelief but refuse to let Israel be restored. And you can't pick prophecy apart like that.

Then Paul chooses another prophet, Isaiah, verse 27. And the similarity between Hosea 1:9 and 10 where his mind has been and this particular quote out of Isaiah no doubt link together, probably he was thinking, meditating on the Hosea passage and it triggered his thought directed by the Spirit to Isaiah. So in verse 27 he quotes Isaiah 10:22 and 23, right in that section. "Isaiah also cried out...very strong word, krazo, to cry out, even sometimes to scream...concerning Israel, though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea," now that's exactly what it said also in Hosea 1:9 so that's why I think in his mind he linked those two. It says, "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea a...what?...a remnant shall be saved," right? A remnant.



What's a remnant. You ever buy a remnant? It's not the whole thing, is it? It's a piece, it's a small piece. Isaiah prophesied in Judah under Azziah, began about 760 B.C., prophesied for about 48 years and he cried out to the people, he cried out to them that though you number as the sands of the sea, though there are many Jews, only a small piece will be saved, only a small group will be saved, only a remnant will be saved.

So, you see, Isaiah saw the unbelief of Israel, too. He saw that not all Jews were going to be saved. Now I think Isaiah again, like Hosea, historically was looking at a very near fulfillment. Isaiah was looking at the near conquest, looking at the captivity, looking at the enemy who was going to come historically and haul the people away. He was looking at something that was imminent on the historical calendar. But what the Holy Spirit had in mind was not only that but something future as well. For out of all of the Jews in the time of Christ, only a few believed. And out of all the Jews since the time of Christ, only a few believe...just as it was in the time of Isaiah.

So the events of Jewish history monitored by Hosea and monitored by Isaiah are pictures, prophetic pictures of the events about the time of Jesus Christ and the presenting of the gospel and the age in which we live when the Jews have also rejected God and been severed from Him, scattered. There were only a few, by the way, who were saved out of the Assyrian conquest, just a few. And they sort of typify the few who are saved in this age.

Now verse 28 goes from Isaiah 10:22 to 23, the same passage, and it's a very strange verse to interpret. I'm going to read you the New American Standard because I think it has the best translation. "For the Lord will execute His Word upon the earth thoroughly and quickly." Now what does that mean? Well God's going to judge Israel and it's going to be thorough judgment and it's going to be a fast judgment, I mean fast...complete. Isaiah promised that a fast judgment was coming on Israel, a thorough judgment was coming on Israel and very few would escape that judgment, very few.

Amos has a most fascinating picture of this kind of thing. Let me just take a moment, Amos 3:11. "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, an adversary there shall be even round about the land and he shall bring down thy strength from thee and thy palaces shall be spoiled, thus says the Lord, As the shepherd takes out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed and in Damascus on a couch."

Most vivid. You know, when a shepherd is out with his sheep, if he...if a lion came and got a sheep, the shepherd would run and try to get the lion to release whatever was in his mouth because he had to give it to the man that owned the sheep for whom he worked so the man would know he hadn't been stealing the sheep. If he comes back in and says, "Hey, I lost two sheep," and the guy says, "How did you lose them?" "A lion ate them." He says, "Prove it." And the guy reaches in his little bag and pulls out a leg, he's going to say you proved it, and shows the teeth marks. And the

demonstration of what Amos is saying is that Israel is in the mouth of a lion and when God reaches He's going to get just a little bit that's left, snatching it out of the jaws of destruction. Small number of Jews were to escape the great Assyrian conquest, and that's exactly what happened. The rest entered into the judgment of their unbelief and their rejection of God. And so it will be prophetically in the time of Christ that only a small group will be rescued while the vast number of Jews will enter into the judgment of God on them that reject Him.

Now you see the point Paul's making? His point is that Israel's rejection of the gospel is no violation of God's plan. It was predicted. It was predicted by Hosea, predicted by Isaiah and even dramatized historically. So is the plan interrupted? No. The plan is...what?...fulfilled, just on schedule. Marvelous. So we can defend ourselves at that point.

Now he's not done with Isaiah, he wants to quote Isaiah one more time in verse 29, this is where this section wraps up, follow it. "And as Isaiah said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom and been made like unto Gomorrah." Isaiah said that. That's right. Isaiah said only a remnant. He changes remnant to seed, means the same thing...a remnant, a small group...seed, a small thing, just a little bit, enough to get started again, just a little. The objective of this reference, like the former reference from Isaiah, is to demonstrate that God planned it all. And He planned that not all Israel would be saved, not all Israel would be exempt from judgment. The Jews of antiquity face tremendous judgment. And the Jews at the time of Christ face tremendous judgment because the Jews of antiquity rejected God, the Jews of the time of Christ rejected God, the parallels are obvious. And the only reason any of us is saved, the only reason any of us is saved, look at verse 29, is because the Lord of Sabaoth left us a remnant...the Lord of Sabaoth left us a small seed.

Why is He called the Lord of Sabaoth? That means hosts, marvelous contrast. Isaiah 1:9, Lord of hosts means Lord of everything. The hosts are the angels, the stars, the heavenly bodies, the planets, Lord of...Lord of the much, Lord of the many. And he says by contrast, "The Lord of the much and the Lord of the many and the Lord of the hosts has chosen a seed." God is very selective and that's the way the plan was from the very start. And if it hadn't been that, all of us would have ended up like what? Sodom and Gomorrah. How did they end up? In judgment, judgment so severe that to this day we can't find out where those cities even were. We don't have any idea where they were. They were literally buried in utter devastation, never to be recovered or discovered, utterly destroyed. They became a byword for complete destruction. We would all be destroyed if it weren't that God, the God of everything, had chosen a small seed.

So he draws from Hosea and he draws from Isaiah Old Testament proof that God in the plan planned that not all Israel would be saved. The Jews would enter into a time of great unbelief, be scattered, not pitied, and not the people of God. And out of it there would be a small remnant. And so, when you look at the time of Christ and you say, "Well, if this is the true gospel, why did all the Jews

reject?" You can say because that's the way the prophets said it was to be, that was the plan. And the only reason any believe is because the Lord of Sabaoth chose to leave a seed. And again would you please note? Paul makes his point using what? Scripture.

Now the last point. And if this doesn't thrill your heart, nothing would. This has been heavy stuff, folks. The sovereignty of God is a heavy doctrine, this is not an easy passage. I hope I got it across clear. It's very difficult. But I want you to see something that ought to refresh your spirit. You can kind of rest on this one.

The unbelief of Israel does not violate the prerequisite of God...the prerequisite of God. And what is the prerequisite of God for a relationship to Him? What does God require from us to be related to Him? What's the one word? What is it? Faith...faith. And you're going to find, as I did, that this section is a welcome balance to the heavy dose of sovereignty we've been exposed to because this section talks about our responsibility...human responsibility, faith...faith. It puts us back in the divine tension where we're more comfortable, right? We get too heavy on the end of sovereignty and we really get confused, we really start bearing some heavy loads. And we need another side of that tension, that human responsibility, that faith. We need that apparent paradox, we need that balance again.

Now these are mutually exclusive things...the absolute and utter sovereignty of God planned before the world began, all worked out according to His plan, and our faith and our responsibility. They're mutually exclusive. They appear to us to be contradictory and opposite, they are in truth, however, not. It's just that our minds are too limited, we can't perceive it. In God's mind they have perfect harmony.

Now Paul's been saying the Jews have no claim on salvation. The only reason any Jews at all are saved is because God in His sovereignty chose them, only a remnant was supposed to be saved. So we're not surprised at that. It's no change in God's promise. It's no violation of His person and it's no alteration of His plan. And now he says what we've been waiting to hear, it was also their own fault. That's right, it was also their own fault. And if you can't figure how those two go together, just be happy that you're like every other person who ever faced this doctrine. We can't figure it out either. We just believe it.

He shows that unbelief was their responsibility and due to their own unbelief and their own rejection, they were guilty and they were judged on the basis of their own guilt. Look at verse 30, "What shall we say then?" What's the conclusion of all this discussion? What is it? Listen to this, "That the Gentiles who followed not after righteousness have attained to righteousness." Now wait a minute. It's shocking. I mean, we would have imagined that the Jews attained righteousness, they were the ones who chased it. There's no article here, that Gentiles who followed not after righteousness, who didn't pursue it, dioko, to run swiftly after something, to run earnestly endeavoring to acquire it. That

the people who never even chased it, who never even pursued it got it.

You say, "What does he mean by that?" Just this, Gentiles are without God, without hope, without the Word of God, empty, abandon to their sinful life. Read Romans 1, given over to lust, given over to evil, given over to reprobate mind. You think that the Gentiles, you think the mass of people in the world are pursuing the true God and His righteousness? Hardly...hardly. I mean, let's face it. How to be right with God is not the main pursuit of the world, is it? The world is not madly trying to get right with the true God. And here is the world, all these Gentiles, who weren't pursuing it and when the gospel came, far more of them believed it than the Jews did. And so, Paul says isn't that shocking that the Gentiles who never even pursued righteousness as a way of life attained it. Galling to the Jew to hear him say this, by the way. But when the gospel came, that's exactly what happened.

Why? Here's the answer to the question I gave you at the beginning. Because the greatest obstacle to salvation is self-righteousness. You understand that? Because you can't get saved if you don't know you need it, right? And that's what hung up the Jews. They thought they were already righteous. You see, they had spend their whole life pursuing a right relationship with God through their own efforts. So when the gospel came and condemned their sin, it did not compute because they thought themselves righteous. So the Jews rejected, except for a small remnant...small remnant.

You say, "Well, now wait a minute. The Gentiles who followed not after righteousness have attained to righteousness, how? How did the Gentiles get saved? How did the Gentiles come to righteousness?" Sovereign election. God chose them before the foundation of the world...that's not what it says. It says, they attained to righteousness...watch this in verse 30, the end of the verse...even the righteousness which is by election. Is that what it says? No. Which is...what?...faith. Aren't you happy to see that? Doesn't that relieve some of the pressure? Now you're back in balance again, aren't you?

You see, it takes me so long to preach through a chapter, Paul just said it once and everybody understood. I don't know what it is. He just said this thing one time, they got the end and the beginning and there was tension there all the time. With us we have to go on one side and then two weeks later we get on the other side. But eventually we survive, I hope.

He says this, "Even the righteousness should be which is by faith." Did they get it by works? No. Does he talk about sovereign election? He's now turned a corner and he's talking about human responsibility. He says, "Hey, the Gentile who never even as a way of life pursued a right relationship with God got one by faith." Believing...that's the heart of the gospel, beloved. That's the heart of the gospel. I wish I had time to take you back through Romans, chapter 1 verse 17, chapter 3 verse 21, verse 22, verse 28, verse 30, chapter 4 verse 3, verse 9, verse 10, verse 11, verse 12, verse 16, 17, 18, 19, all the way to 25, chapter 5 verse 1, chapter 10 verses 3, 6, and 10, on Philippians 3:9, and oh

how many places can you talk in the Bible...can you read in the Bible where the writer talks about salvation by faith? Myriads of them. It's the heart of the gospel. We are justified by faith. And there's the human response. The Gentile got it not because he was elect, but because he believed. That's the balance of human responsibility.

Verse 31, "But Israel who followed after the law of righteousness." Stop there. Did they do that? O man, did they ever. I mean, they pursued...the word "law" means principle, or standard. They pursued the principle of righteousness. I mean, it was a way of life, we must be righteous, we must be righteous, we've got to do this and not do that and do this and not do that. And they had all this myriad of prescriptions pursuing the principle of righteousness, pursuing the standard of righteousness incessantly as a way of life they did that. And they did it all by what? By works. Proud-hearted legalists pursuing self-righteously a right relationship to God and it says they went after the law of righteousness and they did not attain it. They didn't get it.

You say, "They weren't elect...weren't chosen." It's not what it says. You say, "Why didn't they get it?" Verse 32, that's what Paul says, why? Why didn't they get it? "Because they sought it not by...what?...by faith." That simple. There is salvation by seeking, beloved, but seeking with faith...not pursuing by works. I'm going to get better, I'm going to do better, I'm going to act better, I'm going to think better, I'm going to talk better and God will like me better and then I'll be okay with Him. No, it's saying...kind of goes like this, the only thing that you can do to be saved is to believe that you can do nothing to be saved and cast yourself on the mercy of God. Did you get that? The only thing you can do to be saved is to believe you can do nothing to be saved and cast yourself on the mercy of God.

Some of the Gentiles did that. Great numbers of them. A few Jews did. But Israel, who all their life had pursued a standard of righteousness never got it because they sought it not by faith...but it says, as it were, "By the works of the law." They tried to get it by law keeping, by their own abilities. In fact, a gracious merciful salvation given as a free gift was an offense to a self-righteous Jew because it said none of your works matter, none of your works count and he couldn't handle that. That's why they rejected Jesus with such anger, such bitterness, such hatred because they were so offended that all their life long of all these righteous deeds added up to..what? Zero. Whew...and now when they looked at the cross and they were told this man is dying for your sins, the cross was to them...what? First Corinthians 1...foolishness...foolishness, it offended them...it offended them.

Paul says, "Well, they didn't get it because they didn't believe. And the Gentiles got it because they believed. And that's how you get it, by believing." And that's the perfect balance to the sovereignty of God.

Now Paul wants to sort of affirm his point so he does what he's done through the whole chapter, he quotes Old Testament prophetic texts. One prophet, two texts. He quotes from Isaiah 8:14 and Isaiah 28:16...verse 32, the end of the verse, "For they stumbled at that stumbling stone." That's

drawn from Isaiah 8:14. Isaiah predicted that they would stumble on a stumbling stone. That's right. He predicted it. So we're not shocked. We're not surprised that the Jew didn't believe because Isaiah said they stumbled at the stone. And that's what they did. Jesus came and said He was the cornerstone, didn't He? The chief cornerstone...but for some He was a stone of...what?...stumbling, a stone of stumbling.

By the way, the Isaiah 8:14 passage directly refers to God. God is the stone in Isaiah 8:14. In the New Testament Christ is the stone. What does that tell you about Christ? He's God. Another affirmation of His deity. For 1 Peter 2:8 affirms that Christ is that stone over which the Jews stumbled.

And then in verse 33 Paul closes out the chapter with a reference to one other text in Isaiah, Isaiah 28:16 and he combines it with his Isaiah 8:14, 15 passage. He just puts them together. "As it is written from Isaiah 28:16 and 8:14 to 15, Behold I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and a rock of offense and whosoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed." He puts those together. Jesus Christ for some is a stumbling stone and a rock of offense. He offends. He causes people to fall over. And the stumbling stone can have, I think, the primary imagery of they trip over Him. They don't notice His significance. That's one element of it.

The other one is that He gets in the way of their pursuit. He's bothersome. He's an irritant. The rock of offense, He offends them. Christ came and He caused them to stumble in their self-righteous pursuit. Boy, did He ever, He confronted them and they tripped all over the place and He offended them. But whoever believed on Him shall not be ashamed.

Shall not be ashamed? What does that mean? Well, a better way to translate that comparing it with Isaiah 28:16 would be "shall not be fearful." I like that. Shall not be fearful. Whoever believes...whosoever believes...how did this get in Romans 9? Whosoever believes...did Paul convert to methodism at the end of the chapter? Did he get Arminian? Whosoever? That's the balance, see. Whosoever believes has no reason to fear. He'll cause some people to stumble. He'll cause some people to be offended. And He will be a crushing and a smitting stone in judgment. But for those who believe on Him, whosoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed. Great truth.

The issue then is faith. Do you believe or don't you believe? That's the issue. You must decide about Christ. You're going to run along saying, "I'm okay, I'm okay, I'm okay the way I am, I'm okay." And Christ is going to get in the middle of your road and going to say, "No you're not. You're a vile wretched sinner and all your righteousness adds up to is filthy rags and you can't get to God by your own works." And He's going to make you stumble in the path. And He's going to offend you. And you can just be offended and call it all foolishness and try to get around it and pursue it and then He's going to be a smitting stone, the Bible says, in judgment. Or, you can say, "Hey, I believe it." And if you believe it you have nothing to...what?...to fear...no judgment to fear.

So justification by grace through faith is true. And the unbelief of Israel doesn't in one sense violate God's promise, His person, His plan or His prerequisite. His prerequisite has always been the same, we're saved by..what?..faith...faith. There is a remnant because God chose a remnant. There is a remnant because it is only a few who believe. And that's the way God knew it would be and that's the way He planned it to be and that's the way it works out, so it doesn't obviate the truth of the gospel. Let's bow in prayer.

While your heads are bowed and for just a closing moment. I commend you, folks. It's such a thrill, you can't know what a thrill it is to teach the Word in this place. Messages like this in some churches, half the people would be gone before I got to the end. That's the truth. These are the deep things. These are the hard to be understood things of which Peter said Paul was good at writing. And you hear them and I trust, I pray, God, that they find root in your heart. The gospel of Jesus Christ is true. And what has happened in the unbelief of Israel is a confirmation that it is indeed true because it all fits the plan.

The message to you in closing tonight is--do you believe? Christ stops you in your tracks of your self-righteous pursuit seeking you can attain to God on your own and says you can't do it, you're sinful, you need a Savior, that offends you. Do you call it foolishness or do you believe? I pray that you believe.

Father, we pray that in a few moments You'll bring to the prayer room those that You desire to come and all of us, Lord, offer You our thanks. These incredible mysteries are unfolded to us with such wonder and delicacy in the pages of Scripture. Thank You for letting us see as much as is humanly possible to see and for leaving enough mystery to remind us that You are greater than we are and in that we rejoice. Save those, Lord, who do not know You. We'll thank You in Christ's name. Amen.

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