

True Israel and the Sovereignty of God (Romans 9)

In the next three chapters, Paul is discussing the nation of Israel and how the Gentiles (us) fit into God's people. In chapter 9, Paul makes the argument that God alone chooses who "his people" are. If God decides He will include gentiles into His "true Israel," the natural descendents of Abraham have no right to question it. There is no end to the disputes and arguments this chapter produces, but the main point Paul presses is that God alone is the one who gives mercy and man has no right to demand it (even if he is born a natural descendent of Israel.) Those who trust in Jesus are the "true Israel" whether Jew or Gentile.

- I. National Israel's Rebellion does not Nullify God's Word (9:1-6a)
 - a. After the wonderful promises of the last chapter, Paul is faced with an important question. What about the promises God made to national Israel? Are they nullified now that Jesus is the way to God?
 - b. Paul longs for the salvation of national Israel (1-5)
 - i. Paul speaks Candidly and sorrowfully (1-2)
 - ii. Paul would give his salvation for his countrymen (3)
 - iii. Paul recounts God's blessings on them (4-5)
 - c. Paul yet assured that God's Promise has not failed (6a)
 - i. Because "Israel" is not simply the fleshly descendents of Abraham
- II. The Distinction between True Israel and National Israel (6b-33)
 - a. True Israel has always been by God's choice (6b-13)
 - i. True Israel is not a nationality (6b-7a)
 - ii. True Israel has never been by birth (7b-13)
 1. God Chose Isaac over Ishmael (7b-9)
 - a. Technically both were Sons of Abraham
 - b. God chose one to be the line of promise and not the other
 - c. The line of promise is the descendents through whom God would fulfill His promise to Abraham
 - d. Ishmael and Isaac were both sons but God chose Isaac to be "Israel" not Ishmael
 2. God Chose Jacob over Esau (10-13)
 - a. God chose Jacob before their birth (10-11)
 - b. God did not choose the first-born which was the custom of passing down blessing
 - c. God chose, not of works because the babies had not yet done anything at all. (11b-12)
 3. God's Purpose was fulfilled in the lives of Jacob and Esau (13)

- a. Hundreds of years after the lives and deaths of Jacob and Esau – God wrote “Jacob I loved and Esau I hated” (Malachi 1:2-3)
- b. You may be troubled by the fact that the text says that God “hated” Esau – How could God hate anyone?
- c. You should be troubled by the fact that the text says God “loved” Jacob
 - i. Jacob was no better a man than Esau
 - ii. Jacob was deceitful and sinful
 - iii. Jacob did much against God’s will
 - iv. Remember there is no one good – not even 1 (Rom. 3)

III. God’s Choice of Israel is Not Unjust or Unfair (14-24)

- a. God’s Purpose in all things is His Glory (14-18)
 - i. God is not Unjust (14-16)
 - 1. God alone chooses to give mercy (14-15)
 - a. God is under no obligation to give anyone mercy
 - b. Mercy cannot be demanded by any man (including national Israel)
 - 2. Mercy, by definition is not something owed (16)
 - a. If God owes it to anyone, it is not mercy, it is debt
 - ii. God’s Purpose is to Glorify Himself in Mercy or Judgment(17-18)
 - 1. God glorified himself through Pharaoh’s Judgment
 - a. notice it was God who raised Pharaoh to the level of Pharaoh.
 - b. For what reason? – (17)
 - c. God’s attributes are all glorified
 - i. God desires to glorify His love, mercy, etc.
 - ii. God also desires to glorify His justice, righteousness, and judgment
 - 2. God glorifies himself as he wills (18)
 - a. Notice: Pharaoh did nothing against his will. He did exactly what he wanted.
 - i. In the Exodus account Pharaoh’s heart is said to have been hardened 20 times. 10 times God hardened it and 10 times Pharaoh hardened it. God turned Pharaoh over to his own will.
 - b. Its not that God “forced” Pharaoh to do anything – God simply allowed Pharaoh to be what he wanted and used him to glorify himself
- b. The Clay is not the Potter’s ultimate Purpose (19-24)
 - i. That’s Not Fair!!!! (19) (you know you are thinking it.)

1. Paul answers you objection – He asks, “who do you think you are answering back to God?”
 - a. This is God’s universe – if you don’t like it, move out and start your own universe.
 - b. God is sovereign and beyond questioning
 - c. It is like an ant questioning a doctor about brain surgery
2. God owes Pharaoh nothing! – God graciously allowed Pharaoh to live a long time in rebellion.
3. The Potter Glorifies Himself in the Clay (20b-24)
 - a. The Potter is master over the clay (20b-21)
 - b. The Potter glorifies Himself in justice and mercy (22-23)
 - i. God owes Pharaoh nothing! – God graciously allowed Pharaoh to live a long time in rebellion.
 - ii. God “endured patiently” Pharaoh’s rebellion. He was a vessel of wrath and God would have been right to kill him the first moment he sinned. However, God did not bring judgment immediately. He let Pharaoh live even though he rebelled.
 - c. Paul’s argument regards Jew / Gentile (24)
 - i. What if God decides to save those who are NOT National Israelites like he chose Jacob over Esau
 - ii. Is God allowed to glorify Himself how he chooses
 - iii. Can God choose to include Gentiles in “Israel?”

IV. True Israel is Foretold in the Prophets (25-29)

- a. Hosea Foretold that God would Call the Gentiles into Israel (25-26)
 - i. Paul quotes Hosea 1:9-10 and 2:23 and applies these to Gentiles, but Hosea’s children were Jews.
 - ii. Isaiah Foretold the judgment of national Israel (27-28)
 1. Even then, the prophets knew that national Israel was not equated to God’s people (Isa. 10:22-23)
 2. Only part of national Israel was God’s people (the remnant)
 - iii. Isaiah Foretold the “remnant” of God’s people Out of National Israel (29) (Isa. 1:9)
 1. This remnant is believing Jews (early church was composed entirely of Jews) yet it spread to include Gentiles
- b. True Israel has Faith in Christ (30-33)
 - i. Gentiles have now attained righteousness by Faith (30)

- ii. Israel failed to attain righteousness by works (31-32a)
- iii. National Israel has (generally) rejected Christ (32b-33)

Today, there is much talk about God being for Israel. Of course He is. But “Israel” is all those who trust in Christ whether Jew or Gentile. Even in the Old Testament, non-Jews were sometimes included in Israel (i.e. Ruth and Rahab) and national Jews were excluded based on their lack of faith and obedience. The story of “God’s people” is your story. It is the story of all those who trust in Christ.