

## Romans 9B

- Last week the beginning of chapter 9 introduced the question of what about Israel?
  - How can God be trusted to keep His promises to the believer today if the nation of Israel haven't seen their promises fulfilled at the coming of the Messiah
    - Maybe God will turn His back on us too
  - Paul began to address the question by explaining that God's word hadn't failed concerning Israel
    - He is keeping His promises to Israel
    - But if we are to recognize how that is true, we have to understand who God had in mind when He declared His promises to Israel
      - Because they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel
      - Paul showed that from the beginning, God has been electing some in the line from Abraham to receive His promises
        - While passing over others
    - That being true, we shouldn't be surprised to see God continuing to do the same thing in Paul's day – and today
      - God electing some to receive His promises while passing over others
      - Because God has mercy on whom He desires and hardens whom He desires
- But even though we can understand God's right to be selective in who receives His promises
  - Understanding that fact doesn't really satisfy does it?
    - We're still left asking why?
    - Why doesn't God simply extend His mercy to everyone?

- Why leave anyone out?
- Doesn't God have the power to save everyone rather than simply electing some?
  - For the Jew especially, the question is why didn't God cause the Jewish nation to embrace their Messiah when He came for them?
  - Surely, God has the power to bring about this outcome?

[Rom. 9:19](#) ¶ You will say to me then, " Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?"

- Paul knew exactly the question that would come to your mind
  - Perhaps this was Paul's first question too
  - Perhaps Paul knew this would be the logical seed of doubt that the enemy would choose to indict God's character in the minds of believers
    - I tend to think this is the enemy's favorite and most powerful weapon in causing believers to reject the plain truth of scripture concerning God's sovereignty over salvation
  - Paul says you will ask, why does God find fault?
    - Why does God convict any man of sin?
    - Why does God hold anyone's sin against them
      - If He has the power to bring them into faith and obedience to the gospel?
      - In other words, because God can, He should
      - And if He doesn't, He's wrong
- Paul does get to the heart of the question before the chapter ends, but first Paul admonishes any reader who carries this perspective in their heart

[Rom. 9:20](#) On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?

[Rom. 9:21](#) Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?

- On the contrary
  - We have no standing to even assume such a perspective
    - Of course we don't feel it's wrong to ask, do we
      - But then again, we didn't think it was wrong to talk back to our parents
      - And as parents, we can see how our children will take presumptuous attitude toward our authority, and see how wrong it is
  - So Paul reminds us that it is, in fact, wrong to judge God's character on this basis
    - Let's be clear on what Paul is saying
    - We may not choose to evaluate the believability of these Biblical truths on the basis of how they make us feel about God
      - Our feelings lie
      - Our feelings can't begin to serve as a logical basis for evaluating what it means to be God
    - We must accept the truth and understand it apart from whatever we may feel
      - Because in time, the Spirit will confirm it in our hearts and our understanding will grow
      - We will begin to see that were God to have been truly "fair," we would have all perished
        - The truly amazing part is that God set about to save any
        - Especially knowing that our salvation necessitating putting His own Son to death in our place
- Paul illustrates the ridiculousness of challenging God's motives in this way by comparing us to pottery and God to a potter
  - Imagine that it became possible for a lump of clay to speak to you

- And as it gained consciousness and was introduced to its maker for the first time
  - And one of the first things out of it's mouth was an indictment against you for the way you made it
  - Comments to the effect that you should feel ashamed for not making the pottery in a better way
- Wouldn't you feel insulted, to say the least
  - What arrogance for the clay to even suggest that it might know better what it's own creator should do
- This is the position we take vis-à-vis God when we assume these kinds of positions on the subject of God's sovereignty
  - He made every man and woman, and by definition He can decide their fate
  - Paul reminds us that the potter has the right to make one piece of pottery for honorable use and one for common use
    - In national terms, Paul is saying that God could chose a nation for Himself and honor it in certain ways
    - And He could create other nations, like Pharaoh and Egypt for dishonorable purposes
      - And both served His eternal purposes in the process
      - God raised up an Israel to honor Him
      - And He raised up Assyria to accomplish His bidding
    - Read Isa 10:5-26
  - Now, the same principle applies on an individual basis
    - God raises up certain people for certain purposes

[John 15:16](#) " You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

[John 6:68](#) Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.

[John 6:69](#) "We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."

[John 6:70](#) Jesus answered them, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?"

[John 6:71](#) Now He meant Judas *the son* of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him.

- God will appoint men to serve certain purposes as this is what it means to be God
- So now Paul is ready to reveal the full measure of God's mercy and grace in this matter of election

[Rom. 9:22](#) 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?

[Rom. 9:23](#) And *He did so* to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

[Rom. 9:24](#) *even us*, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

- Paul starts with what if...
  - Paul asks what would you say if I told you...
    - First, that God is certainly willing to demonstrate His wrath and make His power known
      - God is more than willing to be fair with everyone us
        - Fair in the sense that He is willing to give us all what we deserved
      - So, don't lose sight of what God could do
        - He could condemn everyone
        - It's not that God owed us salvation and therefore He's doing something wrong by failing to elect everyone to receive His mercy
    - I remind you of my previous analogy of the Governor with death row...

- So, God was more than willing to let all of humanity receive it's just punishment
  - And He endured the sin of men throughout the ages, even men that God knew He was never going to elect to faith
  - Vessels prepared for destruction, Paul calls them
    - Men and women who lived and who served themselves alone,
  - But in some way they also served a purpose for God (like Assyria)
    - Yet God never intended to extend them His mercy
    - He endured their sin, which is offensive to God
- So what would you say if Paul told you that God has been suffering and enduring the sin of millions of men and women over the centuries
  - So that He could make known the riches of His mercy to certain vessels which He prepared beforehand for glory
    - Specifically, us, whom God called
    - Not only among Jews but among Gentiles too
- Here' we see God's eternal purpose in mercy – in two ways
  - First, the simple reality that God had to endure unbelievers along the way to allow opportunity for you and I to be born
    - Paul turned our criticism and turned it on it's head (glass half full)
      - Instead of asking why God didn't save everyone
      - Paul says we should ponder why did God put up with sinful men for so long simply so I could come along and be saved on an appointed day
    - This is pictured most clearly in the torture and death of Jesus Himself
      - Who was Jesus thinking about when He took the nails and the beatings

- His sheep, those His Father will give Him
  - What would you say if you knew that God had endured vessels fit for destruction so that God could make known His mercy to some
    - It was a steep price to pay...what a merciful God we have
- But there's a second equally profound aspect to this truth
  - What options did God have in addressing the sin of mankind?
    - He could save none
    - He could save all
    - He could save some
  - None leaves God with no creation to praise His name and give Him glory
  - So it comes down to some or all
    - On what basis would you expect God to choose?
      - Which one brings Him greater glory?
  - Consider, what the world be like were God to save every person who ever lived
    - Every man who is born is taught that salvation is automatic
      - We can speak about the penalty of sin and the depths of God's mercy
      - But then again, we would never have known anyone who ever was truly in jeopardy of judgment
      - The very concept of judgment wouldn't be understandable
        - It would be like explaining the idea of a shadow in a land where there was no light
    - What if a company never fired anyone?
      - How hard would the employees work?

- Look at verse 23 closely again
  - God willingly tolerated vessels fit for destruction so that God could make known the riches of His mercy to those He would save
    - God wants His mercy to be fully understood and appreciated
      - This is a part of God's character and to be fully know and appreciate Who God is, we must know His mercy
    - Yet the concept of mercy isn't understandable without an understanding of judgment
      - If there was no such thing as jeopardy, there could be no way for God to receive our praise for his grace
  - God receive more glory and praise for His long suffering tolerance of sinful men prepared for wrath – a wrath of their own making
    - So that those God elects to rescue by His mercy might know and understand what grace meant
      - Can this awesome feeling of undeserved mercy ever sink in
        - Every time I read these verses I'm reminded of how inexplicable it is that I have been saved
        - We all hit the eternal lottery
    - Yet God is still at work bringing men and women into faith
      - And He clearly chooses to work through the faithfulness and obedience of you and I to reach the next believer
- Now before we forget Paul's larger point, remember Paul is addressing the fate of the nation of Israel primarily
  - He has chosen a nation to serve Him
    - But not every man and woman in the nation will receive God's mercy along the way
      - Some will, as will some Gentiles
  - Here's where Paul begins to transition from a review of Israel's past election, to an explanation of God's present purpose

- We might have assumed that God's plan to bless both Jews and Gentiles with salvation means that God is spreading that plan out evenly over time
  - No
- In the past, God extended His mercy to the nation of Israel while largely passing over Gentile nations in that time
  - But God's plan has the purpose of reversing this focus, at least for a time
  - Paul reminds them from their OT scripture of this plan

[Rom. 9:25](#) As He says also in Hosea,

" I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, 'MY PEOPLE,'  
AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, 'BELOVED.'"

[Rom. 9:26](#) " 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."

[Rom. 9:27](#) ¶ 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;

[Rom. 9:28](#) FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY."

[Rom. 9:29](#) And just as Isaiah foretold,

" UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOTH HAD LEFT TO US A POSTERITY, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE RESEMBLED GOMORRAH."

- Beginning with Hosea, Paul points out that God has long intended to see Israel shot out of mercy for a time
  - First, from Hosea 2 God foretold that a people who were not His people (i.e., Gentiles) would one day receives God's blessing and be called His people
    - And in verse 26, Paul quotes Hosea 1, where God foreshadows Israel's rejection followed by a later return to favor
  - Then in Isaiah 10, Paul illustrates that Israel may be a numerous people
    - But only a remnant (a small number) will be saved
    - Which is according to God's word

- Finally, Paul uses Isaiah's word in chapter 1 to reinforce that the nation had nothing to commend itself to God
  - If any were to be saved, it could only be by grace from the first to the last
    - And God's grace was directed to a remnant
- So summarizing Israel's past concerning God's promises
  - Did God go back on His word concerning Israel and His promises to that people?
    - No
      - God has elected a faithful remnant from the beginning and passed over the rest
        - And while at times past God passed over Gentiles for the sake of the Jew
        - There was to be a time when God would reverse that pattern and pass over the Jew in favor of the Gentiles

[Rom. 9:30](#) ¶ What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; [Rom. 9:31](#) but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at *that* law. [Rom. 9:32](#) Why? Because *they did not pursue it* by faith, but as though *it were* by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, [Rom. 9:33](#) 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.”

- What do conclude from all this?
  - The Gentiles, who were not pursuing righteousness, have now attained righteousness which is by faith
  - While Israel, which is deeply engaged in pursuing righteousness, did not arrive at the law
    - Meaning, they were busy pursuing a righteousness as defined by meeting the terms of the law
      - They never achieved what they sought

- Because they sought it in the wrong way – by works rather than by faith
- So though they were trying, they were trying according to the flesh
  - In the same way that men elsewhere fashioned gods they could serve in their own ways
  - Therefore, when the one who required their faith came, they stumbled over Him
    - Because what He offered was not what they were seeking
- So, the past of Israel was a past of election as a nation
  - But salvation was extended only to a remnant within that nation
    - And God has long been at work electing who would be a part of that remnant
  - And when the Messiah came, God determined that Israel would stumble over Christ
    - As they sought God through works of law
    - And stumbled over their own Messiah