
“Those Who Were Not My People”

ROMANS 9:24-29

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PASTOR BRIAN SMITH

WILDWOOD CHURCH

EAST MOLINE, ILLINOIS

AT A GLANCE

By His mercy, God has called people who were far from Him to be His beloved children. Those who were “not my people” will be called “sons of the living God.” It is not merely by being associated with God’s people that we are called into His family, but through faith in Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION

I must admit that when we first began this series in July of 2022, I was a little intimidated to preach through this section, Romans 9 – 11. Now that we’re five weeks into Romans 9, I am grateful to the Lord for His grace in helping me understand and exegete this scripture. My confidence when we began is my confidence now: with the Lord’s help and with humility of heart, we can study all of God’s Word and rightly understand it and apply it. By His grace, that is what I pray I am doing through these chapters. It is not my aim to defend a particular school of theology, or a name, or a brand so to speak. I’m not trying to defend Calvinism or refute Arminianism. I simply want to open the Word and let it speak to us. We believe God’s Word!

In Romans 9 – 11 Paul emphatically makes the case for God’s sovereignty. He is free to have mercy on any He chooses. That He stays His hand of grace from others is no injustice. He owes judgment to all and has mercy on whom He has mercy, Jew and Gentile alike, as Paul asserts in today’s passage.

ROMANS 9:24-29

²⁴ even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? ²⁵ As indeed he says in Hosea, “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’” ²⁶ “And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’”

²⁷ And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, ²⁸ for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.” ²⁹ And as Isaiah predicted, “If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah.”

CALLED TO LIFE

²⁴ even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? This is a continuation of the sentence began in verse 22, “What if God...” Specifically, it is an explanation of the phrase “vessels of mercy, which He has prepared beforehand for glory...” This is why I said last week that verses 22 – 24 is a protasis without an apodosis, a condition without a conclusion.

We are left to form our own conclusion which must have been self-evident in Paul’s mind. Instead of offering a conclusion, Paul simply quoted several prophecies that fulfill the warning God gave His people through Moses.

Before we move on, I want to point out that Paul used the Greek work *kalein*. This is no mere invitation of God, but an effectual calling out of darkness into light; like when Jesus called Lazarus to come out of the tomb. This brings us back to *Romans 8:28*, that beloved promise, “*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*” Few people quibble over *Romans 8:28*.

We love that God is sovereignly working in our lives for our good. However, *Romans 9* is built upon this promise which is intimately continued in verses 29 and 30. “*For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*” *Romans 8:29-30* You can’t have it both ways. You can’t claim that God works all things for the good of those He called while denying the effectual call of God.

NOT MY PEOPLE

The call of God is no small matter for Paul. He’s going to repeat the idea of God’s calling three times in **verses 25 and 26**. **As indeed he says in Hosea, “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’”** (*Hosea 2:23*)

Remember that Paul is answering the question of why some, or even most, Jews failed to accept the gospel and how it was that this offer of grace which originated in the covenant between God and Abraham could be offered to Gentiles.

Perhaps we’ve taken for granted that Gentiles were at one point, “Not my people” to God; that it was an act of grace that allows us to be called “sons of the living God” as Paul says in **verse 26**. **“And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’”** (*Hosea 1:10*)

What is striking is that both verses in Hosea were originally written to the people of the Northern tribes of Israel, yet Paul applies them to the church. We who were not God’s people have now been called **sons of the living God**. Paul has already made it clear that not all who are born of Abraham are his offspring (*Romans 9:7*) and in *Romans 2:28-29* we read that a true Jew is one inwardly with a circumcised heart. True Jews are those who have been born again and believe that Jesus is the Christ.

JESUS IS THE TRUE ISRAEL OF GOD

Jesus is, after all, the true Israel of God. In *Matthew 2* the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph warning him to flee to Egypt with Jesus because Herod was seeking to destroy him. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, *Matthew* records, “*This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, ‘Out of Egypt I called my son.’”* *Matthew 2:15* which is recorded in *Hosea 11*, “*When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.*” *Hosea 11:1* Jesus is the renewed Israel, the son God said He would call out of Egypt.

The book of Hosea captures the story of God agonizing over the wayward Israel yet resolute to not destroy them forever. This story came at great personal cost to the prophet Hosea who was commanded to marry Gomer, a prostitute openly living in immorality. By her Hosea had one son, whom he named Jezreel. But his wife had two more children whom Hosea did not receive as his own.

The Lord had him name them prophetically *Lo-ruhama*, “No mercy,” and *Lo-ammi*, “Not my people.” These names revealed God’s heart toward the adulterous people of Israel. Yet, in the same letter God promised that the broken relationship would not remain forever. There would come a time in which those who were not His people would become His people.

He would cause a renewed Israel to come; an Israel that would love Him and obey Him. Jesus is that Israel. He is the fulfilment of the Law, the fulfilment of prophecy, and He is the One by whom all the nations of the world are blessed in fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham as Paul says in Galatians 3, *"Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, 'And to offsprings,' referring to many, but referring to one, 'And to your offspring,' who is Christ."* Galatians 3:16

Thus, it is those who by faith are united to Christ who are part of the true Israel of God. *"for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."* Galatians 3:26-29

HAS GOTTEN FORGOTTEN ETHNIC ISRAEL?

Has God forgotten the people of Israel, though?! Has He forsaken them? Has God's word failed? By no means! First, Paul says it was both Jews and Gentiles whom God **called**.

Paul was a Jew. The first 3000 converts were Jews. The Church first began to grow among the Jews. Not only that, but Paul will go on to tell us in chapter 11 that God still has a plan for the Jews. When the full number of Gentiles comes in, the partial hardening of the Jews will be lifted and the Jews who are alive at that time will all be saved.

I don't know how the Lord is going to do that, but I imagine it will be like Paul's conversion in which in an instant, scales will fall from their eyes, and they will see Jesus for who He is. However, it happens, in the end Jews will join the redeemed and Christ's Church will be complete.

This is not some modern interpretation, nor even a reformed interpretation, of the Hosea prophecies. Not only did Paul interpret Hosea in light of the church, but Peter did as well, *"Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."* 1 Peter 2:10

Paul saw in the prophesy of Hosea, as well as the original covenant promise to Abraham, the future inclusion of Gentiles into the people of God. We who were not God's people have been called "sons of the living God." We who had previously been shown no mercy, Jews and Gentiles alike, in Christ have been shown mercy. Where is there cause for boasting? There is none! We were simply shown mercy and adopted into the family of God.

ONLY A REMNANT

Continuing in **verses 27 and 28**, Paul says, **And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, ²⁸ for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay."** (Isaiah 10:22-23)

The context of this scripture is the pronouncement that God was going to use Assyria to bring judgment upon Israel, a "godless nation" and "the people of my wrath." (Isaiah 10:6) In 722BC Assyria took the northern ten tribes of Israel captive; only a remnant remained.

Paul includes this prophecy of Isaiah to remind the reader that not only was the inclusion of Gentiles into the people of God prophesied long ago, but so too was the limited response of ethnic Israel to the gospel of salvation. None of this contradicts the word of God as some were claiming. Instead, it fulfills it. It is no surprise to Paul that most of his fellow Jews rejected the gospel and rejected their Messiah. Nevertheless, Paul saw the remnant of Israel that believed the gospel as evidence that God is not finished with Israel. He has preserved, and is preserving, a remnant of Israel for salvation.

Verse 29 says **And as Isaiah predicted, “If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah.”** (Isaiah 1:9)

The Lord warned His people all the way back in the days of Moses after their forty years in the wilderness; renewing the covenant with them on the brink of their entrance into the promised land under Joshua. He warned them to be careful to walk in this covenant and not turn to other gods. If they did not, He would bring upon them the curses found in the rest of the book, saying...

“And the next generation, your children who rise up after you, and the foreigner who comes from a far land, will say, when they see the afflictions of that land and the sicknesses with which the LORD has made it sick—the whole land burned out with brimstone and salt, nothing sown and nothing growing, where no plant can sprout, an overthrow like that of Sodom and Gomorrah...” Deuteronomy 29:22-23

BILLBOARDS OF DESTRUCTION

Sodom and Gomorrah serve as a billboard of sorts of God’s judgment upon nations. It stands for complete and utter destruction. The fact that God saved a remnant of the Jews is an act of sheer grace and mercy. Just as Israel in Isaiah’s day was worthy of being destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah, so it was in Paul’s day. They crucified the Son of God!

The failure of the Jews to believe the Gospel is no failure of the word of God. God has not broken His word to His people. They have, but He has not. The apostasy of Israel was long foretold, as was the inclusion of the Gentile world into the family of God. That you and I can call God our Father ought to elicit incredible awe, humility, and joyful gratitude from deep within our hearts. I fear many in the church today take this for granted. It is lost on them that they are only a child of God because He has chosen to show them mercy. How wonderful to be called a child of God!

ASSOCIATION DOES NOT GUARANTEE INCLUSION

That most of Israel, the people of God, were not saved either in Isaiah’s day, in Paul’s day, or in ours, should cause us to pause and reflect upon the fact that merely being associated with the people of God does not guarantee inclusion therein.

No one should take consolation that their family has always been in the church, that their name has been in the member directory for decades. Most people in the world will not be saved. Most people in the world will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.” Matthew 7:13-14

“Well, that’s speaking of the world at large, Pastor Brian. I’m church-folk. I’m good, right?” Remember that Paul said a Jew is not merely one outwardly, but inwardly; and true circumcision is of the heart, not the flesh? Likewise, real Christians are ones inwardly and baptism is of the Spirit, not merely of the water.

It should come as no surprise to you that there will be many people even in the church who will not be saved. Jesus predicted this in Matthew 13 when He told the parable of the weeds that grow up among and the wheat.

I NEVER KNEW YOU

Even within the church there will be unbelievers who rise up next to believers, convinced they are saved, honoring God with their lips while their hearts are far from Him. These are the ones who will hear Jesus’ fateful words on judgment day, *“...I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.”* Matthew 7:23

They will say to Him, “But I was a member of the church. I was baptized, I was catechized, I was in AWANA, I served in kids ministry, I taught Sunday school, I was a pastor, or a deacon, or an elder, or an evangelist, I took my kids to church, I wore the church’s t-shirts, I shared their Facebook content, I hosted a Connect Group, I went on mission trips and packed Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes, I sang in the worship team, served food at the pot lucks, and stay late to clean up afterwards, Lord, did I not do many things in your name?!”

But it will be to no avail. “Depart from me” will ring in their ears for all of eternity. In the words of The late R.C. Sproul, “The state of our soul is invisible to man, but it is manifestly visible to God.” If ethnic Israel could not rely upon external factors for salvation, why do you think you can?

MY HOPE IS BUILT ON...

We sing these lyrics, “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.” Do you mean them?

Brother and sister, let the truths of Romans 9 through 11, of the wrath and mercy of God, of your inclusion in the family of God as beloved children evoke in you sincere worship and earnest faith. Wrestle with the truth of the gospel and your calling from “not my people” to “my people.” Grapple with the Lord to ensure that you know that you know Jesus and that He knows you.

And then praise Him for His mercy, so undeserved. Finally, rest in His effectual call. For those whom He called, He also justified, and those whom He justified, He also glorified. You will one day see Jesus face to face and you will hear, “Well done good and faithful servant.”

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