

ROMANS 9:24-33 "Only The Remnant Will Be Saved"

The Sovereignty of God is a teaching of the bible which, from Genesis to Revelation, conveys to the finite thinking of man the infinite purpose and power of our Creator who does all things perfectly, justly, in love and holiness according to His good pleasure for His honor and glory.

This is why Paul could say in Rom 9:21-23 "Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? 22 What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath--prepared for destruction? 23 What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory--"

The natural man looks at the world and sees that there is injustice, cruelty, hatred and atrocities of all sorts. And often the conclusion is that God is like a helpless by-stander who gets caught up in something like an English soccer brawl with the angry fans rushing the field.

All is confusion, all is out of control. But that is not what God Himself tells us of His nature. He recognizes the condition of the world and tells us that we are suffering the rages and curse of sin which, in our lost condition, we all embrace with a passion.

It's not as though God couldn't stop all of the madness in a moment. He actually did once, and the result was a world-wide flood. His judgement will take place again, but this time no flood, but a fiery judgment. And the apostle Peter reminds us of both judgments.

2 Peter 3:3-6 ³ Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, ⁴ and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." ⁵ For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water, ⁶ through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.

2 Peter 3:9-10 ⁹ The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to

perish but for all to come to repentance. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

Of course, the good news for the believer is that this final fiery judgement will be immediately followed by our great God and Savior refashioning the entire universe destroyed by fire back into its original pristine state without the curse.

2 Peter 3:11-13 ¹¹ Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! ¹³ But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

And so, back to our text, the reason God does not destroy the world at this moment is as Paul said in Rom 9:22 "What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath--prepared for destruction?"

God has chosen a people for Himself and He will bring each one to Himself in time and when the last one has been brought then it is only a matter of time before the patience of God will be brought to an end and then there will be what is called the "Day of God", or the "Last Day" in which God's righteous judgment will take place.

In the meantime, the objects of wrath, the unbeliever, continue to experience this life in a way that allows him to taste the grace and mercy of God in a general way. The unbeliever is allowed to be a part of God's glorious creation, albeit tainted by the curse of sin. They are allowed to experience many of the blessings that the remnant experience: relationships with other people, laughter, joy, beauty and the truth of gospel.

But this is as close to heaven as the unbeliever will ever get to experience. Wrath is the only thing that awaits them because of their rebellion against God.

But the wrath of God is not simply to be enacted on the last day. The wrath of God is presently being enacted even as we speak as God's judgment is seen all over the world to some degree. And this was the point Paul was making very early on in this letter.

Romans 1:18-19,23-24 ¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them..... ²³ and [they] exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

Part of God's wrath can be seen in God giving rebels over to their own sensual desires which places man on the throne as they attempt to dethrone God. It will never happen, but it doesn't change the fact that God is presently displaying His wrath in this world.

But it's not as though God hasn't given sinful man a way out of the madness today and the subsequent wrath of God. The sanity we look for, the justice and mercy we seek in this world, is not like a trail of smoke we just can't seem to get our hands on. It's found in a person we can know and embrace.

It's found in Jesus Christ who is the answer to the sinful condition on man. Perfect justice is found in Him who bore the legal debt we owe to the Father. Perfect mercy and love is found in Him who loved us even to the point of giving His life on the cross for ours. This is the Sovereign God of the scriptures who has all things in control and gives us the key to life as we submit to God and His sovereign plan of salvation.

The natural man or unbelieving person thinks the key to life is to live it with all the gusto he can according to his own wisdom and philosophy. The person illumined by the Spirit of God to his sinful condition sees that receiving life comes through dying.

Jesus says in Mat 10:39 "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

Dying to self and its passions of rebellion, and embracing the One who died for the penalty of our sin and then who rose from the dead, is this world's only hope.

Jesus says, 'Come unto Me, For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.' (Joh 6:40)

As Paul explains this he conveys that God is the One who gives this life. It was not meant just for a select race of people who belonged to Israel but it was meant for all the world. And so in verse 24 he says of this salvation: "even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?"

All men are called to repent of their sin and embrace the Savior. In fact, Paul quotes the prophet Hosea in Rom 9:25-26 "As he says in Hosea: "I will call them 'my people' who are not my people; and I will call her 'my loved one' who is not my loved one," [Hosea 2:23] 26 and, "It will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.'" [Hosea 1:10]

Israel was always known as "My People." They were referred to as the "sons of the living God" and yet here in Hosea, which was written around 760 years before Christ, the promise to these people, who are "not My people", is that they will be "My people."

Though this verse was directed to Israel, God also meant it for those Gentiles who were known as "Not My people." What's interesting about this quote from Hosea is that Hosea was used by God to be an object lesson to show the strained relationship of Israel with God.

Hos 1:1-3 "The word of the LORD that came to Hosea son of Beeri during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel: 2 When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, "Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the LORD." 3 So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son."

Gomer was the equivalent of the adulteress Israel. God comes to this adulteress nation and extends mercy. In return, the nation plays the harlot with false gods.

F.F. Bruce notes this observation. "When [Hosea] married Gomer she in due time gave birth to a son; he acknowledged the child as his and named him Jezreel (God will sow). But, her second and third children, he was convinced, were not his, and the names he gave them expressed his disillusionment - Lo-ruhamah ('one for whom no natural affection is felt') and Lo-ammi ('no kin of mine')."

This is part of what Paul meant when he said in Rom.9:6... "But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel." In other words God's says, though they bear the family name they are no kin of Mine.

Bruce goes on to say, "These names betokened God's attitude to His people Israel, who had broken their covenant-loyalty to Him. But, for old times sake, God will not allow this broken relationship to remain so for ever; He looks forward to a day when those who at present time are not His people will once more be His people."

All who rebel against God fall into this category of "Not My People." But the extended mercy of God will once again call them His people as He gives them life and a heart to seek after God and love Him above all.

Paul goes on in Rom 9:27-28 "Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved. 28 For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality." [Isaiah 10:22,23]

Paul now turns to the prophet Isaiah to continue his thought on how God sovereignly intervenes in the lives of a rebellious people. Israel had essentially forsaken God and yet in His mercy the Lord says, they will not all fall, I will bring some of them back.

That's what He means by "only the remnant will be saved." To help us see the significance of this a little history of Israel is important. It gets very confusing so this will be a broad overview.

King Solomon was the successor to his father David. For many years Solomon was a man who sought to rule under God's authority. But there came a time, shortly after Solomon's death, that Israel was split into two sections known as Judah which was the southern section and Israel proper which was the northern region. Each region had their own king.

Those in the north felt they were being slighted and mistreated with high taxes and such. Mix into this equation that Solomon had introduced some pagan worship into Israel because of the foreign wives he had.

After years of political power plays and more taxes from the hands of Solomon's son and successor, Rehoboam in the south, those in the north come to the conclusion that enough is enough. The northern region chooses to secede from the south, kind of like what

the southern states wanted to do in this country back in mid the 1800's.

The north chooses their own leader by the name of Jeroboam and the split officially takes place in 922 B.C. The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible says that "After this break, the two kingdoms continued a separate but interrelated existence for 200 years till the fall of Syria in 722 B.C.

All of this confusion and separation was the result of sinful selfish men wanting to do things their own way instead of seeking to submit to God, while all the time claiming the God of the Bible as an ally, though they were worshipping false gods.

The Lord had had enough and started a campaign of bringing judgment on Israel. When you read through the prophets of the bible you find that there were those prophets before the fall of Syria and then after the fall of Syria. But they all brought essentially the same message: 'Repent and return to God or God will sweep you away in exile.'

Well Israel continued on the path of their own choosing and sure enough God was faithful to His word and there came about two major captivities at the hands of the Assyrians and then the Babylonians.

But there was always the promise that God would gather His people back again; not all of them, but a remnant who would truly love and serve Him. And this is what the prophet Isaiah was conveying and what Paul was quoting.

Isa 10:20-22 "In that day the remnant of Israel, the survivors of the house of Jacob, will no longer rely on him who struck them down but will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel. 21 A remnant will return, a remnant of Jacob will return to the Mighty God. 22 Though your people, O Israel, be like the sand by the sea, only a remnant will return. Destruction has been decreed, overwhelming and righteous."

F.F. Bruce says that "this recurring theme of Isaiah's prophecy was given as a name to his elder son Shear-jashub ('Remnant will return'), who was thus a living sign to the people of the truth of God's message given through his father."

God will always have a faithful people to represent Him and have fellowship with Him forever. This is the sovereign grace of God extended to a rebellious people like you and me and Israel. He

calls us to Himself and gives us life and hope and the ability to be His representatives and witnesses.

The point Paul makes is that many people claim to know God but they are in captivity to their sinful rebellious nature. Sin has swept them away. But God says, 'I will bring a remnant back.' This is the remnant that Paul has described earlier in this letter as the elect.

Romans 8:33-34 ³³ Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; ³⁴ who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

And later in this letter Paul will continue to drive home his point that God alone chooses a people, called the remnant, out of the world.

Romans 11:5-6 ⁵ In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to *God's* gracious choice. ⁶ But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

It is God's grace alone that allows Him to choose ungodly people out of the world who are "Not My People" and then declare them, "My People," in Christ, both Jew and Gentile.

But then then Paul goes on in our text this morning to show that all of us would continue to go our own way unless God intervenes. It was true of Israel and it's true of us.

Rom 9:29 "It is just as Isaiah said previously: "Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah." [Isaiah 1:9]

We know what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah. Because of their unrepentant attitude toward God there was total and final destruction. Paul is saying that that is our fate, but because God has chosen to have a remnant there will be those who will carry on His name.

You and I have been personally chosen by God to represent Him as that remnant, those descendants who would carry on the message of hope and life in Christ to a dying world. Not unlike the prophets of old we have a message for the world. That message is 'you don't have to die in your sins, but if you continue to reject God's Messiah you will face God's justice which cannot look away from sin, but must punish it.'

Paul's reminder of what God said, and promised through Hosea and Isaiah, were meant to show how God's remnant would not only include Jews but Gentiles as well. And the irony is that the Jews who were considered God's people, had actually missed the boat when it came to the means of their salvation.

Rom 9:30-31 "What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; 31 but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it."

In other words, Paul says, 'So what do we make of all this? All of the rebellion and subsequent punishments on Israel and also the promises that God would save a remnant? What is the significance of God's workings?'

He's say's, 'here it is.' 'Men who try to attain a relationship with Me outside of My will cannot attain it. This is what Israel tried to do when they got away from My will many years ago and the Kingdom split is testimony of their ways.'

'On the other hand those people who knew little or nothing of My ways have attained that illusive peace with Me which Israel rejected. These Gentiles, these pagans, these people who have only known idolatry are part of My plan to share in the remnant who will declare My greatness and mercy.'

But notice the contrast. Israel tried to attain righteousness through the law and missed the boat. The Gentiles who weren't even looking for righteousness before God were given that righteousness, but it didn't come through the law, but through faith in Christ.

Paul then asks the question, which implies that if Israel had special revelation from God which directed them to their Savior, why didn't they stay on the path and rejoice in their salvation? Notice what it says.

Rom 9:32-33 Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone. 33 As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

"They stumbled over the "stumbling stone?" What does that mean? Well, to Israel it was meant as a comfort, but they didn't

take it that way. This passage of scripture is taken from Isaiah 8:14; 28:16.

F.F. Bruce gives us the gist of what God was conveying to Israel. "In Isaiah 8:13-15 the prophet foretells how the Assyrian invasion will sweep over the land of Israel like the waters of a great flood. But there will be one place of refuge from the overwhelming water. God Himself will prove a sanctuary to all who put their trust in Him, a rock on which they stand secure.....

..... Those however, who do not entrust themselves to Him but put their confidence in other powers or resources will be swept by the flood against this rock and come to grief upon it; to them, far from being a place of refuge, it will prove a dangerous obstacle- a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling."

God placed this stone directly in their path to the extent that if they would look for it they would find refuge and safety and comfort. However, that same path with that same rock could be hazardous if they chose to look somewhere else.

That Rock of Refuge was none other than Immanuel, God with us. The apostle Peter puts it this way.

1Pe 2:6-8 "For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." [Isaiah 28:16] 7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone, [Or cornerstone]" 8 and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." [Isaiah 8:14] They stumble because they disobey the message--which is also what they were destined for."

Jesus told the unbelieving Jews of His day, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone [Or cornerstone]; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes"? Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit." (Mat 21:42-43)

He was referring to the Gentiles; you and me. But He was also referring to the remnant as a whole which includes all nations and races and peoples in the world.

Joh 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

You and I have been given the privilege to set our feet upon the Rock who makes us stand firm and secure in our salvation who is Jesus Christ. There will always be those who stumble over the Rock. We share Jesus Christ with people, but like the Jews whose path was placed right in front of the Rock, many will be looking everywhere for salvation and security except to the One who has been placed in their path.

Our prayer needs to be, as God places people in the path of Jesus Christ as He uses us to bring that truth, that He would open their eyes to see the Rock of their salvation and not stumble over it. You and I can't make people see. So don't put so much pressure on yourselves when being that witness for Christ. We're planters of seeds. God is the One who brings life to those seeds.

But, as a remnant, called out to plant seeds, we must take that privilege and responsibility seriously and with loving hearts reach out to the lost, keeping this in mind that "... no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1Co 3:11)

We don't have to be ashamed of our Savior or think that there is another foundation which may be more secure. Your salvation in Christ doesn't get any more secure. And when we live by faith on that foundation, that Rock, that Mighty Fortress which no one can move, we can stand boldly for Christ and take on all the flaming arrows which the enemy may send against us.

Listen to what Paul told the Ephesians.

Eph 2:19-22 "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."

God has called us to Himself and He desires for us to be a holy people for His own possession. Stand on the Rock and do not be moved nor intimidated by the world which boasts of a foundation

of their own, but is only sinking sand. Don't be tempted to go that route. There is no fruit in it.

God alone is the One who sustains and the One who gives us His word as comfort. Let me end with His word given to David after his victory over Saul.

Psa 18:1-2,31-35,46 "I love you, O LORD, my strength. 2 The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the strength of my salvation, my stronghold. 31 For who is God besides the LORD? And who is the Rock except our God? 32 It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect. 33 He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he enables me to stand on the heights. 34 He trains my hands for battle; my arms can bend a bow of bronze. 35 You give me your shield of victory, and your right hand sustains me; you stoop down to make me great. 36 You broaden the path beneath me, so that my ankles do not turn. 46 The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock! Exalted be God my Savior!"