

Text

9:1-13. I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh: 4 who are Israelites; whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God and the promises; 5 whose are the fathers, and of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

6 But it is not as though the word of God hath come to nought. For they are not all Israel, that are of Israel: 7 neither, because they are Abraham's seed, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. 8 That is, it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed. 9 For this is a word of promise, According to this season will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. 10 And not only so; but Rebecca also having conceived by one, even by our father Isaac—11 for the children being not yet born, neither having done anything good or bad, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, 12 it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. 13 Even as it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.

REALIZING ROMANS, 9: 1-13

391. We enter a new section here. Check carefully to see what it is.
392. Why is Paul so emphatic? Who needs convincing?
393. Why does Paul repeat himself? If he were telling the truth he would not be lying.
394. There is in vs. 1 a most wonderful truth concerning the work of the Holy Spirit and the human conscience. There is an inter-relationship. Explain what it is.
395. Paul had a true "burden for souls," a burden like our Savior's. Mark carefully the two characteristics as seen in vs. 2.
396. Do you know the meaning of the word "anathema"? To what does it here refer?
397. Would you be willing to make the same sacrifice for the salvation of sinners? Be careful: "Lie not."
398. Paul is now to describe the Jews as he did once before, (3:1-9a) this time for a somewhat different reason. What is it?
399. You will refer to the history of the Hebrews to know the meaning of some of these expressions. Give the meaning of the name "Israel."

400. When was the nation of Israel "adopted"?
401. Does "the glory" refer to any one time or place? If so, what?
402. Name three covenants given to the Jews.
403. Here seems to be an indication that the law was only given to Israel. Is this a fair conclusion?
404. What "service" is meant in vs. 4b?
405. Name three promises of God to Israel.
406. Paul wanted to lead his kinsman to Christ. This he did in his description of them. Why does Paul relate Christ to "the fathers"?
407. Who is here called "God blessed forever"? Is this a reference to God or Christ?
408. In what sense could some of the Jews say that "the word of God has come to nought"?
409. Verse 6b does appear contradictory. If being "of Israel" or a descendant of Jacob does not make one an Israelite, what would?
410. Did Abraham have other children besides those from Isaac? Who? What is the point?
411. There is a principle being developed here that is made to apply to the rejection of the Jews. What is it?
412. Was it arbitrary on God's part to choose Jacob instead of Esau before they were born? Explain. How can this be applied to accepting Christ?
413. In verse 11 the word "election" is troublesome only because we either make it say more than it should, or less. By God's grace and wisdom, (Jas. 1:5) cause it to say only what it should.
414. Could God "hate" a man before he was born? In what sense?

Paraphrase

9:1-13. I speak the truth in the presence of Christ, and do not lie, my conscience bearing me witness in the presence of the Holy Ghost, when I assure you,

2 That I have great grief and unceasing anguish in my heart, because the Jews are to be cast off, the temple is to be destroyed, and the nation to be driven out of Canaan.

3 For I myself could wish to be cut off from the church [people of God] instead of my brethren, my kinsmen by descent from Abraham; and therefore, in what I am going to write, I am not influenced by ill-will towards my nation.

4 They are the ancient people of God: theirs is the high title of God's sons, and the visible symbol of God's presence, and the two covenants, and the giving of the law, which, though a political law,

was dictated by God himself, and the tabernacle worship, formed according to a pattern showed to Moses, and the promises concerning the Christ.

5 Theirs are the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, persons eminent for piety, and high in favor with God; and from them the Christ descended according to his flesh, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. The Jews, therefore, by their extraction and privileges, are a noble and highly favored people.

6 Now, it is not possible that the promise of God hath fallen to the ground; nor will it fall, though the Jews be cast off. For all who are descended of Israel, these are not Israel; they do not constitute the whole of the people of God.

7 Neither, because persons are of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, are they all the children to whom the promises belong; otherwise Ishmael would not have been excluded from the covenant, (Gen. xvii. 20, 21) But God said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called:

8 That is, the children of Abraham by natural descent, these are not all the children of God, and heirs of Canaan of whom God spoke to Pharaoh, Exod. iv. 22: But only the children given to him by the promise are counted to him for seed.

9 Now, the word of promise was this: I will return to thee according to the time of life, and lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. Wherefore, Isaac is the only seed whom God acknowledged for his son and heir.

10 And not only was there that limitation of the seed to the promised son, but to prevent the Jews from thinking Ishmael was excluded on account of his character, when Rebecca also had conceived twins by the one son of Abraham, even by Isaac our father,

11 And these twins verily not being yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, in making the one twin the root of his visible church rather than the other, might stand by an election, made, not on account of works, but from the mere pleasure of him who called Isaac the seed preferably to Ishmael, (see ver. 7.).

12 It was said to Rebecca, 'Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people, and the elder shall serve the younger.'

13 This election proceeded from God's own pleasure, as it is written, (Mal. i. 2,3.), I loved Jacob and I hated Esau, 'and laid his mountain waste.'

Summary

The Apostle solemnly declares that he speaks the truth in what he is going to say of his countrymen, his conscience being his witness. He has great grief and sorrow on their account, preferring that he himself be cut off from Christ rather than his kinsmen according to the flesh. Enumerating the things that distinguished them, the chief is that from them Christ came as to his flesh. But although the great body of Israel is cut off, God's word of promise respecting them has not failed. Some of them will be saved. His word of promise related to the true Israel only, and all are not true that are descended from Jacob. God counts only the children of promise as his. Accordingly, Isaac and his offspring were chosen, while Ishmael and his were rejected. This was also true in the case of Jacob and Esau. In these choices God was governed by reasons within himself, not by the acts of the persons chosen.

Comment

Proposition Reconciled with the Rejection of Israel. 9:1-11:36

1. Paul's interest in his own nation. 9:1-5

The introduction to this section is very beautiful in its approach to the subject. Lest some Jewish friend should judge Paul's motives in a wrong manner, the apostle introduces the subject in this way. He says in essence: "Perhaps you think that I take a certain delight in the lost estate of the Jewish nation; that when I realize that I am in Christ and thus saved, and you are out of Christ, and thus lost, that I glory a little in my position and gloat over your blindness. God forbid, this thought has never entered my mind. Such a motive is utterly false." He makes a strange assertion concerning his intense love for his "kinsmen according to the flesh." He declares: "As I am in Christ and thus bound to tell the truth, I lie not" (both a positive and negative assertion). My conscience is a witness to what I say. This conscience of mine which is educated by God and prompted by the Holy Spirit (cf. 2:15) commends what I say. I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart for lost Israel. This concern of mine goes beyond mere feeling. I could wish and even pray that I myself were cut off from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh. If it were possible for me

216. What reason can we ascribe to the apostle for the way in which he has introduced the rejection of Israel?

217. What is strong about the assertion made in 9:1?

218. What type of sacrifice does Paul suggest he would willingly make for the salvation of Israel?

to take their place, and they mine, I would most gladly give myself for them."

When we understand this to be the exact expression of the apostle's heart, we are moved to realize that he, above all, would be loath to accept the conclusion from the gospel that Israel was rejected; but accept it he must, for God has declared it to be so.

As to Paul's estimation of Israel, though he had already spoken before (2:17-20), he again describes the glorious heritage of God's former children. Notice the list: (1) "Israelites," so called for Israel, whose name means "a prince who prevailed with God." They would be "princes who prevailed with God"—a proud name. (2) ". . . whose is the adoption." That is, they were in times past the children of God by adoption. (3) ". . . and the glory"—the "Shekinah" or glory of God's presence with them at the ark of the covenant. (4) ". . . and the covenants." They had the benefits of all the agreements that Jehovah had made with his children from Noah to Christ. (5) ". . . the giving of the law"—the magnificence of God's presence at the giving of the law, and their possession of the law. (6) ". . . the service of God." All the beauties and meaning of the Levitical worship service was their peculiar right. (7) ". . . and the promises." Those promises relating to Christ and the gospel. (8) ". . . whose are the fathers"—that is, all of those great men of God: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, yes, and crowning the whole list, the Christ himself, for it was through the tribe of Judah that the Messiah came. The greatness of this one can break upon our understanding when we realize that he is "over all, God blessed forever. Amen." 9:1-5

2. Why God was Just in Rejecting Israel. 9:6-29

The Jew would naturally object to the idea of Israel being rejected, so the Holy Spirit, through Paul, presents and answers all such possible objections.

a. The first objection stated and answered. 9:6-13

(1) Objection stated. 9:6a "Why, Paul," some Jew is heard to say, "what you have just said regarding our position is exactly true, for it is thus found within the pages of God's holy Word. And yet, in view of all you have attributed to us, you have the audacity to say that we are rejected of God, that we are accursed. If then you are right, then the Word of God in which he describes the glories of Israel has come to nought. If Israel is rejected, then all that was said of them was said for nought." 6a

219. State from memory five of the eight attributes of Israel given in 9:4-5.

Explain each in your own words.

220. Give the first objection of the Jew to his rejection.

(2) "Not at all," says the inspired writer, "for you have in your haste and pride forgotten one thing, one all-important truth: that 'they are not all Israel, that are of Israel.'" Paul here takes the construction that God places upon the word "Israel" and shows the Jew that outside of Christ he could not possibly be included in it. What did the Jew believe about Israel? Simply that all who were born from Israel were to be saved because they bore the name "Israelite". Now God had made certain promises to those of Israel just as he had to those of Abraham. But did he mean all those who were of the *flesh* of Israel or, of the *spirit* of Israel? To any thinking Jew it would immediately be apparent that it would necessitate more than mere fleshly descendancy to inherit in the Israel God spoke of in his promise. If then faith was the requirement for the promises made to Israel, then truly it could be said, "they are not all Israel that are of Israel" (i.e., of Jacob or his descendants). Who then is the Israel of God? It is not answered here (cf. Ga. 6:16); it is only inferred that the true Israel to obtain the promises of salvation were those in Christ. 9:6b

But this is not enough. There is further proof that God's word has not come to nought. In the Word we have the statement that the children of Abraham would be considered children of God. What did this mean? Did it mean that simply because you happened to be of the lineage of Abraham that you were thereby a child of God? Well, every Jew knew better than that, for they could remember Jehovah had said that only those who were in Isaac could enter the covenant of promise. Abraham had many children who were of his seed, but they were children of Ishmael. There was no one among the nation of Israel who did not know "It is not the children of the flesh (i.e., children of Abraham through Ishmael) that are children of God, but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed." But how does this apply to the thought of salvation in Christ? The Jews would very easily see the apparent application, but perhaps we, who do not have their background, will need a few words of explanation. The hidden application of what has been said is found in the method of determining God's children. How was it accomplished in the experience of Abraham? We know simply by divine determination, ". . . in Isaac shall thy seed be called." Why did God make this selection? It is not revealed, nor indeed is there a

221. How does the statement, "For they are not all Israel that are of Israel," answer the first objection?
222. How did the fact that only those of Isaac's seed were to be called children of God demonstrate that the word of God had not come to nought?

need for revealing. It was his choice; his choices are always good and never to be called in question by man. What he did then could he not also do now? Yes, he has, for he now as then demands more than mere fleshly descendancy. He demands that we be in the great son of Isaac—in Christ. Further describing this eternal decision, Paul says, "For this is a word of promise, 'According to this season will I come, and Sarah shall have a son'." To emphasize the divine choice, we might say that at almost the same time Isaac was born Ishmael was cast forth. We do not mean to suggest that God determined the eternal destiny of either Ishmael or Isaac. All that is said in Genesis relates only to the choice or selection of God. The lives of Isaac and Ishmael were determined by their own volition. 9:7-9

Not only in the case of Isaac do we see God's sovereign will being exercised, but it is equally manifested in the circumstances of the birth of Jacob and Esau. Shortly after Rebecca conceived by Isaac, the Lord said to her, "The elder shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25:23). This was done before the children were born, before either one of them did anything either good or bad. Why did God thus deal with this case? There can be only one answer, which is this: He did it so that man might understand that the reasons for making certain choices are wholly bound up in the mind of Jehovah and are not to be contested nor questioned by man. And that is the very point under discussion. The Jew felt the word of God had failed because God had spoken too highly of them, and yet he would not grant them salvation upon the basis of their high standing, but rather demanded that they accept Christ to be saved. Why did he do this? Paul answers, "He did it for the same reason he chose Jacob instead of Esau. The reason is in the eternal purpose of God. But are you, the Jews, going to reject it because you cannot understand it? If you are, why didn't you reject the decisions of Jehovah in respect to these other two cases?" Looking back upon the history of Jacob and Esau, we could sum it up in the words of the prophet (Mal. 1-2), "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." "The extent to which God loved Jacob was shown in preferring him to his brother; and the extent to which he hated Esau, in rejecting him from being one of the heads of his chosen people. The words used may have had different connotations then than what they have now. 'Hatred', especially, we may assume to be used in the bold, exaggerating sense so common with the prophets." Lard, pp. 302-303. 9:10-13

223. What does the case of Jacob and Esau emphasize in this section?

224. Explain in your own words in a short paragraph why the word of God did not fail in the case of Israel.

Rethinking in Outline Form

Proposition Reconciled with Rejection of Israel. 9:1-11:36

1. Paul's interest in his own nation. 9:1-5
 - a. His love goes so far as to wish that he could be anathema from Christ if in being cut off they could be saved. vs. 1-3
 - b. Paul is proud of the heritage of the Israelites, the most glorious portion of their heritage being the Messiah. vs. 4-5
2. Why God was just in rejecting Israel. 9:6-29

Objection Stated: "If God has rejected Israel, then the word of God has failed." vs. 6a

Objection Answered: 6b-13

 - a. Not all are the Israel to which God promised eternal life that are of the nation of Israel. You have failed to understand God's word; it has not failed. 6b
 - b. Neither will being Abraham's seed save you, for God promised that only in Isaac were the seed to be called children of God. Likewise, he has now determined that only those "in Christ," those of his seed, shall be called children of God. vs. 7-9
 - c. Also God made choice in the case of Jacob and Esau. He thus manifested his sovereign power of choice. Just so he has determined of his own will that man shall be saved through his son, Jesus Christ vs. 10-13

Conclusion: The word of God has not failed, for the action of God in this case is perfectly consistent with his past actions, as we have illustrated.

Text

9:14-18. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid, 15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. 16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy. 17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, For this very purpose did I raise thee up, that I might show in thee my power, and that my name might be published abroad in all the earth. 18 So then he hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth.

REALIZING ROMANS, 9:14-18

415. To accuse God of arbitrariness is not new. The Jews did it long ago. See vs. 14. Just what type of arbitrariness was meant?
416. Look up the reference in Numbers in which God spoke to Moses. It will help you to understand the point of Paul.
417. Please remember the point in this section. What is it?

418. In what matters does the sovereignty of God operate? In all matters?
419. Man's will or efforts have nothing to do with God's decisions. Is this the teaching of vs. 16?
420. God raised up Pharaoh for a purpose. What was it? What was the point of this illustration as it applied to the saints in Rome?
421. Explain God's responsibility in the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Explain Pharaoh's responsibility.

Paraphrase

9:14-18. What shall we say, then, concerning the election of Isaac preferably to Ishmael, and of Jacob preferably to Esau, to be the seed to whom the temporal promises were made? Is not injustice with God? By no means.

15 For, to show that God may bestow his favors on whom he pleases, he saith to Moses, I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. In conferring favors on nations, and in pardoning those who deserve destruction, I act according to my own pleasure.

16 So then, the election did not depend on Isaac, who willed to bless Esau, nor on Esau, who ran for venison, that his father might eat and bless him; but it depended on God, who may bestow his favors as he pleaseth.

17 Besides, the punishment of nations is sometimes deferred, to show more conspicuously the divine justice and power in their after punishment; for the scripture saith to Pharaoh, even for this same purpose I have raised thee and thy people to great celebrity, and have upheld you during the former plagues, that, in punishing you, I might show my power, and that my name, as the righteous Governor of the world, might be published through all the earth.

18 Well, then, from the election of Jacob, it appears that God bestows his favors on what nation he will; and from the destruction of Pharaoh and the Egyptians it appears, that whom he will he hardeneth, by enduring their wickedness with much long-suffering. ver. 22.

Summary

Is it not unjust in God to choose one and reject another, as in the case of Jacob and Esau? Not at all, for in doing so, he acts according to his own avowed principles of conduct, which must be assumed to be right. Accordingly, he said to Moses, "I will make my own sense of right my rule in showing mercy." It was on this principle that he set up Pharaoh to be king. But all these choices create mere worldly distinctions. They are not choices relating to eternal life.

Comment

b. The second objection stated and answered. 9:14-18

(1) Objection stated: 9:14a. We come now to a new thought. It is connected with what has been said, but it is yet another thought. Paul has answered the question found in verse 6 concerning the word of God coming to nought. His reply was based upon the sovereign will of God, and although it would in itself answer the objection about to be raised, the apostle nevertheless raises this question: "Is there unrighteousness with God?" From what has been said, could we not imagine that God was a little too arbitrary, and would not his actions injure our sense of justice? 9:14a

(2) Objection answered. 9:14b-18. "God forbid." Then follow the principle and illustration which most completely answer this objection. First we have the principle stated. God stated it to Moses when Moses desired to see Jehovah (Ex. 33). He let Moses know that it would make no difference as far as his decision was concerned that Moses wanted to see him since Moses had done nothing that would merit a viewing of God. But because of God's own choice, he decided to let Moses catch a glimpse of him. Notice, please, that the matters wherein these choices are made never involve salvation of a man's soul. When the eternal destiny of man is involved, God acts in accordance to the principles he has laid down for their salvation, and these principles have ever been the same: faith, repentance and obedience. Nevertheless, Jehovah chooses both the occasion and the object of mercy, and he is not regulated by anything external to him. Likewise the stronger element of compassion (mercy with the heart in it) is also shown to those persons chosen by God. I deem it imperative that we understand one principle right here, and that is that this free reign of God's mercy and compassion is all related as occurring in the Old Testament and must not be carried over into the New Testament dispensation. We find in the new covenant no such free reign of sovereign decision relating to that great host whom God calls to be his children. "God was free, but in his goodness he chose to provide salvation to those who would accept it on his conditions. Thus the Lord, being free, chose to be bound by his covenants and promises, even as the Lord Jesus, being rich, chose to be poor (2 Cor. 8:9). Paul proves God's past freedom;

225. State in your own words the second objection.

226. What was the principle stated in the case of the Moses which answered the objection?

227. In what matters does God make choices? In what matters is he regulated by his own covenant?

no one save the Jew of his day ever denied it; but to say that Paul establishes a present freedom and absolute sovereignty in God, which robs man of his freedom to do right or wrong, repent or continue in sin, accept Christ or reject him, etc., is to dynamite the gospel, and blast to shivers the entire rock of New Testament Scripture. Calvinism denies to God the possibility of making a covenant, or giving a promise, for each of these is a forfeiture of freedom, a limitation of liberty. According to Calvinism, God is absolutely free; according to the Scripture, he is free save where he has pledged himself to man in the gospel." McGarvey and Pendleton, p. 397. 9:14b-15

In conclusion concerning the exercise of God's power of choice, we have a negative statement with a positive conclusion: "So then it is not for him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy." "It is not of him that willeth" means that the desires of man have nothing to do with the decisions of God. Man's will has everything to do with his salvation, but nothing to do with the eternal decisions of God's economy. "Nor of him that runneth" is another figure of speech describing the same thought, suggesting that man could not influence God any more than a runner who has won a race could influence the judges (Man does influence God in some things, but not in the subject discussed). In other words, the reasons for showing mercy by making a choice between Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, are all of God, not through anything that either Isaac or Jacob did to influence God in his choice. 9:16

There is yet one more scriptural example of God's independent selection of men to occupy certain positions on earth. This had to do with his choice of Pharaoh. The choices we have discussed were confined to the Hebrew nation, but we now find an example of God's supreme authority in the life of a Gentile ruler. This would surely further strengthen the point under discussion that the Jew need not wonder that "it behooved the Christ to suffer" and that "by him everyone that believeth is justified from all things, from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39). If God could and did make these inexplicable choices, and especially the one in respect to Pharaoh, if these were not questioned, then neither should his choice be questioned in respect to salvation in Christ. 9:17

We do not wish to appear to be reproducing the works of another, but the words of McGarvey and Pendleton (pages 398-401) speak

228. What one principle is of import in a discussion of this section? Prove the principle by examples.

229. What is the predominant difference between Calvinism and the Scripture?

so well upon these verses that we feel a reproduction of their words would greatly enhance this section. "For this very purpose did I raise thee up (cause thee to occupy a time and place which made thee conspicuous in sacred history), that I might show in thee my power, and that my name might be published abroad in all the earth.' (For the publishing of God's name, see Ex. 15:14-16; Josh. 2:9, 10; 9:9). The dispersion of the Jews and the spread of Christianity have kept God's name glorified in the history of Pharaoh to this day. Paul is still establishing by Scripture God's freedom of choice. He chose the unborn in preference to the born; he chose between unborn twins; he chose between the shepherd Moses and Pharaoh the king. In this last choice Moses was chosen as an object of mercy, and Pharaoh as a creature of wrath, but his latter choice in no way violates even man's sense of justice. Instead of raising up a weak and timid owner of the Hebrew slaves, God exalted Pharaoh, the stubborn, the fearless. And who would question God's right to do this? Having put Pharaoh in power, God so managed the contest with him that his stubbornness was fully developed and made manifest, and in overcoming his power and stubbornness through the weakness of Moses, God showed his power. The transaction is very complex. God starts by stating the determined nature of Pharaoh (Ex. 3:19) and follows the statement with the thrice-repeated promise, 'I will harden his heart' (Ex. 10:1). Thrice it is said that his 'heart was hardened as Jehovah had spoken' (Ex. 7:13; 8:19; 9:35). Once it reads that his 'heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them, as Jehovah had spoken' (Ex. 7:22). Five times we read that 'Jehovah hardened' his heart (Ex. 9:12; 10:20; 10:27; 11:10; 14:8). Thus thirteen times (with Ex. 8:15, fourteen times) Pharaoh's hardness of heart is said to be the act of God. (cf. Deut. 2:30; Josh. 11:20; Isa. 63:17; John 12:40; 9:39; Mark 4:12.) Inexorably so? By no means: God would have gotten honor had he relented before matters reached extremes. Hence Pharaoh is called upon to repent (Ex. 10:3), and several times he is near repenting, and might have done so had not God been too ready to show mercy (Ex. 8:28; 9:27; 10:24). So there was sin in Pharaoh. We read that his 'heart is stubborn' (Ex. 7:14); 'was stubborn' (Ex. 9:7). 'Pharaoh hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them, as Jehovah had spoken' (Ex. 8:15). 'Pharaoh hardened his heart' (Ex. 8:32; I Sam. 6:6). 'Pharaoh sinned yet more, and hardened his heart' (Ex. 9:34). As the hardening

230. What is the meaning of 9:16?

231. In what sphere or in what realm were the choices of God confined?

232. Why would the example of Pharaoh be a particularly appropriate one to convince the Jew?

was the joint work of Pharaoh and God, and as Pharaoh sinned in hardening his heart, God's part in the hardening was not an absolute, overmastering act. It was not even a persuasive act, as in cases of conversion. God hardened Pharaoh's heart by providing opportunity and occasion, as the narrative shows, and Pharaoh did the rest by improving the opportunity in the service of the devil. The same act of patience, forbearance and mercy which softens one heart hardens another by delaying punishment, as we may see every day. The same sunshine that quickens the live seed rots the dead one. The Jews approved God's course toward Pharaoh, but resented the same treatment when turned upon themselves, ignoring the natural law that like causes produce like effects. God found Pharaoh hard and used him for his glory negatively. He found Israel hard and made the same negative use of them, causing the gospel to succeed without them, thus provoking them to jealousy. (Rom. 10:19) 'So then (see verse 16) he hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth.' (This does not mean that God arbitrarily chooses the worst people upon whom to shower his mercies and chooses those who are trying hard to serve him and hardens them that he may punish them.) The point is that, in the absence of any promise or other self-imposed limitation, God is free to choose whom he will for what he will. As applicable to Paul's argument, it means that God's freedom of choice is not bound by man's judgment or estimation, for he may prefer the publican to the Pharisee (Luke 18:9-14) and may choose rather to be known as the friend of sinners than the companion of the rulers and chief priests, and he may elect the hedgerow Gentile to the exclusion of invited but indifferent Jews (Luke 14:23, 24). God is bound by his nature to choose justly and righteously, but all history shows that man cannot depend upon his sin-debased judgment when he attempts to specify what or whom God approves or rejects. Here we must be guided wholly by his word, and must also be prayerfully careful not to wrest it. In short, it is safer to say that God chooses absolutely, than to say that God chooses according to my judgment, for human judgment must rarely square with the divine mind. Had the Jew accepted Paul's proposi-

233. How did these choices relate to salvation in Christ?

234. How did God use Pharaoh to show in him His power and to publish abroad His name?

235. How was God's power evidenced in His dealing with Pharaoh?

236. Explain the thought of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. What part did God have? What part did Pharaoh play?

tion, he might centuries ago have seen the obvious fact that God has chosen the Gentiles and rejected him; but, persisting in his erroneous theory that God's judgment and choice must follow his own petty notions and whims, he is blind to that liberty of God's of which the apostle wrote, and naturally—

“For, Och! mankind are unco weak,
an' little to be trusted;
If self the wavering balance shake,
It's rarely right adjusted!”

Text

9:19-29. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he still find fault? For who withstandeth his will? 20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why didst thou make me thus? 21 Or hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? 22 What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction: 23 and that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he afore prepared unto glory, 24 even us, whom he also called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles? 25 As he saith also in Hosea,

I will call that my people, which was not my people;
And her beloved, that was not beloved.

26 And it shall be, that in the place where it was said unto them,
Ye are not my people,
There shall they be called sons of the living God.

27 And Isaiah crieth concerning Israel, If the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that shall be saved: 28 for the Lord will execute his word upon the earth, finishing it and cutting it short. 29 And, as Isaiah hath said before,

Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed,

We had become as Sodom, and had been made like unto Gomorrah.

237. What did the Jews accept in the case of Pharaoh that they resented in their own case?

238. Explain verse 18, paying special heed to the notes.

REALIZING ROMANS, 9:19-29

422. Who would express the thought of vs. 19?
423. If God is so powerful, why doesn't he destroy the Jews, or anyone else who opposes him? Is this the thought of vs. 19?
424. One of our greatest needs is to understand, with our hearts, the nature of God. Is this what Paul is saying in vs. 20?
425. How could the clay speak to the potter? Why then is the figure in vs. 20b used?
426. If God "makes us" honorable or dishonorable, are we responsible? Note please in answering this the meaning of "honorable."
427. What period of time and what event is referred to in vs. 22?
428. In the case cited in vs. 22, who was responsible for the condition of the vessels?
429. Does the foreknowledge of God relate to the reason for man's action?—i.e., does man act *because* God knows how he will act? Does God influence the actions of man? If so, in what way?
430. In what sense were Christians (saints in Rome) "afore prepared unto glory"?
431. How does God call out a people for his name? cf. vs. 24.
432. The quotations from the prophets prove two great points. What are the points they prove?
433. We become the people of God by a definite process. What is God's part? What is man's part?
434. Note carefully the words that discuss the beautiful relationship man has to God. cf. vs. 25, 26
435. Isaiah indicated how many Jews would be saved. How can we harmonize this with the thought, "All Israel shall be saved" in 11:25, 26?
436. In this difficult section remember that the Christians in Rome understood this letter. You are no different than they. Define vs. 28
437. What was "the seed" left by the Lord? cf. vs. 29

Paraphrase

9:19-29. But thou wilt reply to me, Since God is to cast off the Jews, why doth he still find fault? By destroying them, he might easily have put an end to their provocations. For who hath resisted his will?

20 Nay, but, O man, who art thou that arguest to the dishonor of God? Is it reasonable for the thing formed, who hath its being merely by the will and power of its maker, to say to him who made it, why hast thou made me thus?

21 To use the argument whereby God formerly illustrated his sovereignty in the disposal of nations, Jer. xviii. 6. Hath not the potter power over the clay, to make, of the same lump, one vessel fitted to an honorable use, and another to a meaner service?

22 Yet, not to rest the matter on God's sovereignty, if God, willing to show him wrath for the abuse of privileges bestowed, and to make known his power in the punishment of such wickedness, hath upheld, with much long-suffering, the Jews, who, because they are to be destroyed, may be called vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, where is the fault?

23 And what fault is there, if God hath long preserved these vessels of wrath for this other purpose; that he might make known the exceeding greatness of his goodness on the objects of his favor, whom, by his dealings with the Jews, he had before prepared for the honor of becoming his people?

24 Even us whom, instead of the Jews, he hath called his church and people, not only among the Jews, but also among the Gentiles, because we have believed the gospel.

25 This need not surprise the Jews: It is agreeable to what God saith by Hosea, 'I will have mercy on her that had not obtained mercy;' on the ten tribes whom I cast off for their idolatry: 'and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people;' I will call the Gentiles my people.

26 The calling of the Gentiles is foretold by Hosea still more plainly: And it shall come to pass, that in the countries where it was said to the idolatrous Gentiles, Ye are not my people, there they shall be called the sons of the living God; the heirs of immortality, by believing the gospel.

27 Besides, the rejection of the Jews at this time is not more contrary to the promises, than the rejection of the ten tribes who were carried into captivity by the Assyrians, a rejection almost total; for Isaiah lamenteth concerning Israel, that 'though the number of the children of Israel,' who are carried away captives, 'be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them shall return.'

28 For, as the same prophet adds, ver. 22. finishing and executing speedily this rejection, according to the righteous threatening of God, certainly the Lord will make their rejection a speedy work upon the land of Israel.

29 And as Isaiah hath said before, (chap. 1:9), Unless the Lord of Hosts had left unto us a very small remnant of our nation, we should have become as Sodom, and been made like to Gomorrah, we should have been utterly destroyed as a nation.

Summary

But if God makes men what he pleases, why does he still find fault with them? He does not do so. He finds no fault with them for being what he makes them, but only for their own voluntary wrong. Again, in these choices, God's creatures should not presume to question him. They must take for granted that he acts justly. He has the absolute right to do what he does, and since he cannot do wrong, he must not be questioned.

But God, though determined to punish evil-doers in the end, has always borne long with them. Surely none can say this is unjust. He may do as he pleases. And that he might show the abundance of glory he has to bestow on those who prove themselves worthy of it, he called his disciples both from among the Jews and the Gentiles. He has thus shown himself perfectly impartial.

God did no injustice in choosing the Jews at first and in rejecting the Gentiles. Neither now does he do any injustice in choosing the Gentiles and rejecting the Jews. He has always intended to accept those who obeyed his Son, whether Jews or Gentiles, and to reject all the rest. This he long ago foretold both by Hosea and Isaiah.

Comment

c. Third Objection Stated and Answered. 9:19-29

(1) Objection Stated. 9:19. Paul is very patient with the prejudiced mind of the Jew. We find the apostle in the next verse inferring that the Jew would certainly place the wrong construction upon what he has just said. He has established the fact that in the Old Testament period God exercised his absolute sovereignty in certain worldly choices. Not one word was said about God's choices concerning eternal life, but from the questions of the Jew, "Why doth he still find fault? For who withstandeth his will?", we can see that the Jew supposed God's selections related to eternity as well as this world. 9:19

(2) The Holy Spirit did not even deem this position worthy of consideration. So repulsive was it when viewed in its true perspective that to offer an answer would have been to entertain a thought that was totally out of harmony with the position of man and the character of God. Indeed, it would have been even as Paul stated. It would present the awful spectacle of a mere creature of dust

239. What false construction was placed upon Paul's words by the Jews?

240. What was evidently the Holy Spirit's estimate of the third objection?

241. What illustration or analogy is used to show the absurdity of the objection?

arguing with the eternal Creator. The case is presented in the words of Isaiah (29:16; 45:9), "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, 'Why didst thou make me thus?'" 9:20

This idea of man criticizing God's choices is utterly preposterous. Even if he did foreordain or predetermine every soul by external acts for heaven or hell (which of course we know he didn't) we would have absolutely no right to question his justice. The relationship of man to God is as the potter to the clay: "Or hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" 9:21

To ascertain the meaning and extent of the words "honor" and "dishonor," all we have to do is to look back upon those vessels of honor, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and realize that the honor was purely of this earth and had to do with God's choice of men who would be best suited to carry out God's purpose through his children *in the world*. The honor bestowed upon them by God had nothing to do with their eternal destinies. And those vessels of dishonor, Ishmael, Esau and Pharaoh, were dishonored in a way which is the exact opposite of the way the other three were honored. 9:21

Over against the facts just stated and in addition to them is the following thought: "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction: . . ." Paul now adds this thought: "You could not understand the selection of God in the cases just cited. Yet you agree to the justice in them. If you could not understand that, what will you say to the longsuffering of God with the sin of man? We all know that those who are wicked should be and will be punished, and Jehovah assents to this and is willing that it should be so. But are they who have fitted themselves for destruction, such as Pharaoh, punished immediately, or soon after their rejection of righteousness? We know that God is long suffering with them and withholds his punishment to the intent that they might repent (cf. 2:4-5). This is all true, we know, but *WHY?* Oh, they are speechless before the mercy of God—they have no answer. Well, how then can they be so egotistical as to question any of those decisions which are exclusively Jehovah's?" 9:22

Verse 23 presents a reason for the action described in verse 22. The purpose of God's longsuffering with the wicked is that in thus

242. What is the meaning of the words "honor" and "dishonor" in verse 21?

243. Explain the analogy of verses 21 and 22.

244. Explain how the riches of God's glory are shown in the lives of the saints by his long suffering with sinners.

acting he can manifest the "riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy." How can this be? It is easy to see that if the judgment of God fell immediately upon the wicked, there would be no time for them to repent, and thus would there be torn up some potential wheat along with the tares (Mt. 13:28-30). He withholds his judgment even as he states that he might make known the riches of his glory (referring to the eternal glory in contradistinction to "destruction") upon the vessels of mercy "which he afore prepared unto glory . . ." How was this accomplished? It was surely not done in an arbitrary way. We know this is true from what we have already studied on the subject. Then how? It seems to us that God long ago prepared (before the foundation of the world) a plan whereby man, if he were obedient to God's plan, could inherit heaven, that all those who were called by the gospel and were faithful to the plan of God were thus "afore prepared unto glory." 9:23

Now comes the out-and-out statement of what has formerly only been directly inferred. What has been the purpose in all that has been said in this chapter? Has it not been to demonstrate to the Jews the reasonableness of their rejection in relation to the economy of God? If then the Jew is rejected, who is accepted? The answer is: all those in Christ Jesus. Whom does that include? Here we have the answer: ". . . even us, whom he also called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles." The statement just quoted is the latter portion of the repudiation of the question in verse 19, but it also contains the conclusion to the whole matter. 9:24

Paul, having established the reasonableness of God's rejection of Israel, now quotes from the prophets to show that they looked forward to this very circumstance. The first quotation is found in Hosea 2:23. It says that the time is coming when those that are not now accounted people, i.e., the Gentiles, will be called and considered as God's people, and those which are not his beloved (the Gentiles again) will be then "beloved." Again another prophet is summoned to speak on behalf of this truth. Hear Isaiah as he speaks: "And it shall be, that in the place where it was said unto them, ye are not my people, there shall they be called sons of the living God." The place referred to simply means among the Gentiles generally. 9:25-26

245. Explain how the vessels of mercy were "afore prepared unto glory."

246. How does verse 24 form a conclusion to all that has been said in this chapter?

247. What do verses 25-26 add to the argument just given?

There are two great facts to be established in this section: (1) that the Gentiles are to become the children of God; (2) that only a remnant of the Jews will be saved or finally become the true children of God. The first point was well established by the whole discussion from 9:1-24. The quotations from the prophets corroborate it. The fact that only a remnant of Israel would be saved must have surely suggested itself to the mind of the thoughtful Jew; but now we find the full proof of this from their own prophet Isaiah. "And Isaiah crieth concerning Israel, If the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that shall be saved." This prophecy is self-explanatory if we understand what has just been said. 9:27-28

The final word of Isaiah on the thought of a mere remnant being saved is found in Isaiah 1:9: "Except the Lord of Sabaoth (Lord of Hosts) had left us a seed (speaking prophetically of those Jews who would accept Christ) we (the nation of Israel) had become as Sodom and had been made like unto Gomorrah." That is, in the sight of God, if the small number of Jews that had accepted Christ would have failed to do so, God would have considered the Jews as extinct and condemned as Sodom and Gomorrah. What a need was there then and is there now for the nation of Israel to accept the Messiah! 9:29

Text

9:30-33. What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness, attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith: 31 but Israel, following after a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. 32 Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by works. They stumbled at the stone of stumbling; 33 even as it is written,

Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence:
And he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame.

REALIZING ROMANS, 9:30-33

438. Notice please that verses 30-33 are a conclusion to the section. The conclusion is easily understood. Reasoning from the conclusion, who would you say was responsible for the rejection of Israel?
439. Define the word "righteousness" as here used.
440. It is possible to seek to be righteous "by works" today? How?
441. Why was Jesus such a stone of stumbling to the Jews?
248. What are the two great facts to be established by the ninth chapter? What do verses 27-29 develop?
249. What two thoughts had been presented to the Jew that must surely convince him that God was just in rejecting Israel?

Paraphrase

9:30-33. What then do we infer from these prophecies? Why this: That the Gentiles, who being ignorant of the righteousness necessary to salvation, did not pursue righteousness, have obtained righteousness by embracing the gospel: not that righteousness which consists in a perfect obedience to law, but a righteousness of faith.

31 But the Jews, who endeavored to obtain righteousness by obedience to the law, have not obtained righteousness by obedience to law.

32 For what reason have they not obtained it? Because not by obedience to the law of faith, but verily by obedience to the law of Moses they pursued it; for they stumbled at the stumbling-stone, and fell: they refused to believe on a crucified Messiah, and were broken.

33 This happened according to what was foretold, Behold I place in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence: Yet whosoever believeth on this crucified Christ, as a sure foundation of the temple of God, and rests his hope of righteousness on that foundation, shall not make haste out of the presence either of men or of God, as ashamed of believing on him.

Summary

The Gentiles, for some reason, were not seeking justification, yet they found it. Why? Because with glad hearts they received Christ in whom alone it is found. But Israel was seeking justification, and yet they did not find it. Why? Because they sought it not by belief in Christ, but by works of law, a way in which it can never be found.

Comment

3. Conclusion as to Why God Rejected Israel. 9:30-33

The inspired author has now shown that God, in rejecting the Jews and receiving the Gentiles, has not been unjust, but has acted on principles which the Jews themselves approved. Their prophets had spoken of this time; hence it should not surprise them. We find in the three closing verses of chapter nine the conclusion of the topic of the chapter. The conclusion is stated in a rather paradoxical form. Paul says in substance: "It is strange, isn't it, that the Gentiles who were not looking or searching for justification, found it, and you Jews who were diligently seeking for a means of justification failed in your search? Why was this so? It was simply because the Gentiles attained a righteousness of justification by faith, or through Christ;

250. Show in your own words the touching and tragic picture of Israel's rejection as presented in verses 30-33.

on the other hand, you Jewish brethren were seeking to be justified by works, the works of the law." As to what was included in the faith of the Gentiles, enough has already been said to let us know that it was inclusive of obedience to the gospel. In further description of the tragic state of Israel, we can say that they fulfilled the very words of the prophet (Is. 28:16) and stumbled at the stone of stumbling. They were bound and determined to find justification through the law—any other method would be haughtily rejected. Hence when Christ came and offered in fulfillment of God's plan, justification through his blood, they accomplished to the letter the words of Isaiah: "Behold I lay in Zion (amidst Israel) a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence; and he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame." 9:30-33

Rethinking in Outline Form

Objection Stated: "God is arbitrary and unrighteous." 9:14a.

Objection Answered: 9:14b-18.

- a. God forbid! The case of Moses indicates that God's choices are not influenced by man. 14b, 15.
- b. Man's willingness, or lack of it, have no influence on the mercy of God. 16.
- c. The example of Pharaoh; he was raised up to show God's power. 17, 18.

Objection Stated: "If God acts as he does in the cases of Moses and Pharaoh how can man be responsible?" 9:19.

Objection Answered: 9:20-29.

- a. You are the clay and have no right to question. 20.
 - b. God, the potter, decides, not the clay. 21.
 - c. God is very merciful when dealing with the sinfulness of men. 22.
 - d. The purpose of his mercy is to give man an opportunity to decide which he will be, a vessel of mercy or of wrath. 23, 24.
 - e. Hosea and Isaiah both support the answer of Paul. 25-29.
3. Conclusion as to why God rejected Israel. 9:30-33.

The Jews failed to find righteousness because they looked in the wrong place. The Gentiles who were not looking for it found it. 30-33.