

- I. What about the Jews? Why are they not all safe in the love of God?
 - A. Romans 9:19-29 . . . You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" [20] On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? [21] Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? [22] What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? [23] And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, [24] even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. [25] As He says also in Hosea, "I will call those who were not My people, 'My people,' and her who was not beloved, 'Beloved.' [26] And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' there they shall be called sons of the living God." [27] Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved; [28] for the Lord will execute His word on the earth, thoroughly and quickly." [29] And just as Isaiah foretold, "Unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left to us a posterity, we would have become like Sodom, and would have resembled Gomorrah."
 - B. Prayer
- II. Review
 - A. In Romans 9, Paul is defending God against those who would charge God with some failure or character flaw or outright evil because the Jews – who are God's chosen people as descendants of Abraham, and have the Law, the Temple, and the Seal of Circumcision – are not automatically justified and guaranteed eternal life. Why? Because they have no special standing with God or hold over God such that God must justify them and give them eternal life. In addition, they neither have the position nor the right to say who God must justify and to whom He must give eternal life.
 - B. However, the Jews strongly disagreed with these truths Paul was teaching about God and their relationship to God. And so they were attacking Paul's teaching with arguments that discredited God's character and God's behavior should God be like what Paul was saying He was like.

- C. Therefore, in defending God, Paul starts by defending God's word, that is, God's covenants and promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – and Paul is defending God's word against the assertion that if the Jews are not automatically justified, it proves God's covenants and promises have failed to fulfill their intended purposes (vs 6-13).
- D. The second thing Paul defends is God's justice, and he defends it against the claim that God cannot be just if only those God chooses are saved and if God's choices are not in any way based on our deeds.
- E. And this brings us to Paul's third defense, which is a defense against the accusation that if God independently and sovereignly chooses who He justifies, and if He is completely and perfectly just, then to condemn sinners to eternal damnation simply because they have not been chosen, is not just unjust, it is cruel.
 - 1. Last Sunday we looked at vs 19-21, where Paul defends God's right to condemn sinners by using the example of a potter having the right to make of the clay whatever he wishes. And Paul says that if the potter wishes to make some vessels for honorable use and some for dishonorable use, so be it. It is his right.
 - 2. However, this last part of the example presents a couple of problems.
 - a. First, if taken as a complete truth that is to be understood only within the context of Romans 9:6-30, it makes God to be a creator of mankind who independently, and seemingly arbitrarily, chooses some to live righteously and go to heaven and the rest to live sinfully and go to hell. The problem is that this view denies what the rest of Romans teaches about man's free will and about the responsibilities God places on us because of our free will.
 - b. Second, though Paul presents the potter as making some vessels for honorable use and some for dishonorable use, theologians strongly resist any hint that God is the author of evil, that is, that God created evil, set it free in our world, and then chooses some to live an evil life. However, Paul's example portrays God as making some vessels for dishonorable use, which means this part of his example must either be ignored or explained away rather than honestly dealt with.
 - 3. So what are we to do with this section? For me, the problem is more easily solved by using the larger contexts of Romans 9-11, and the even larger context of Romans 1-16, to bring clarity to these verses. And if we do this, it means we must acknowledge and hold as one the two truths that God is sovereign over all, including who He justifies and to whom He gives eternal life, and that man has freedom

of will with which he can resist God or submit God. For me, this is the most sensible thing to do. Therefore, the point Paul is making in Romans 9:19-21 is that God, and not man, and not man's birth heritage, and not man's religious heritage, and not man's religious zeal decides who is justified and who has eternal life.

- F. Which brings us to the rest of Paul's defense of God's condemnation of sinners. And in these ensuing verses, Paul continues saying the same thing by using different examples.

III. God justly judges and condemns sinners to eternal destruction

- A. Romans 9:22-23 . . . What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath (*against unrepentant sinners*) and to make His power known (*by condemning sinners – with the Flood, and Sodom and Gomorrah being classic examples*), endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? (*for example, God allowing Egypt to enslave the Israelites and keep them in Egypt longer so the Canaanites and others in the Promised Land would have an extended time to repent*). [23] And He did so to make known the riches of His glory (*glory here refers to the reasons God is worthy to be obeyed and worshiped*) upon vessels of mercy (*those God had stated years earlier He would show mercy to*), which He prepared beforehand for glory (*the righteous – who live by faith and are justified*), [24] even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles (*from every nation, tribe, language*).

1. There are two reasons these two verses are important to Paul's defense of God's right to condemn sinners.
 - a. First, is the Jews were convinced God would not accept Gentiles into His family unless they came through the Jewish system of conversion, purification, circumcision, Temple practices and other aspects of keeping the Law.
 - b. Second, Paul begins to make the point that God told Israel Gentiles would be brought in hundreds of years before.
2. In other words, Paul is using Jewish history to affirm that anyone, Jew or Gentile, who comes to God in faith and lives a faithful life of obedience to God will be justified and given eternal life.
3. And again, the point Paul is making is that God, not man or man's theology, decides who God justifies and who receives eternal life. God is the one who judges, and He does so freely and without partiality. And when we keep what Paul says here within the larger context of Romans, we see that Paul is doing this without negating free will or man's responsibility to repent, believe, and live a godly life.

- B. Romans 9:25-26 . . . As He says also in Hosea, "I will call those who were not My people, 'My people,' and her who was not beloved, 'Beloved.' [26] And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' there they shall be called sons of the living God."
1. These two quotes come from Hosea 2:23 and Hosea 1:10, and they convey the same message that God was conveying in Hosea – which is that a day is coming when God will redeem those who the religious establishment deems unredeemable, and love them as His own.
 2. In other words, God, not the Jewish religious establishment decides who God justifies and to whom He gives eternal life.
 3. And again, I want to remind you that Paul is not saying something new. Rather, he is affirming what God said 700 years earlier.
- C. Romans 9:27-29 . . . Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved; [28] for the Lord will execute His word on the earth, thoroughly and quickly." [29] And just as Isaiah foretold, "Unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left to us a posterity, we would have become like Sodom, and would have resembled Gomorrah."
1. As I have said a number of times already, the Jews believed they were automatically saved, and they acted as if God owed them justification and salvation because of their birth heritage and religious heritage.
 2. However, as far back as Hosea's prophecy (*over 700 years earlier*), it was predicted that many of the Jews would be rejected (*not justified*) while only a few would be accepted, or as Paul says, chosen by God.
 3. By the time Paul wrote Romans (*probably in the late 50's AD*), the Jews were only 20+ years away from God's judgment on them for being so evil – a judgment delivered by the Romans and that destroyed Jerusalem and killed most of the Jews in and around Jerusalem.
 4. The Jewish Christians escaped much of this destruction by leaving Jerusalem and spreading out throughout the surrounding nations before Rome attacked. And these Christian Jews were the remnant at that time, but there were other times in history that God judged the Jews for their evil ways and only left a few Jews in the land of Israel, while the rest were either killed or carried away.
 5. Again, the point is simply this – God decides who He will justify and to whom He will give the gift of eternal life, not you and not me, not Calvinism and not Arminianism, not the Free Grace movement and not the Eternal Security teaching. And we see that those God chooses does not include everyone who thinks they are among the chosen.

IV. Practical application for our day

A. At this point, I want to bring all this into a perspective that will enable us to apply it to ourselves and the current church life today. To do this, I will begin by using Christ's description of the Jews to show how religious yet sinful the Jews were in Paul's day. Then I will raise questions about the condition of many in the church today for the purpose of showing how easy it is for us to be like the Jews of Paul's day – zealously religious yet separated from God's love.

B. Jesus description of the Jews of His day

1. We see the condition of Judaism in Paul's day from Matthew 5:20, where Jesus said that unless our righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, we will not enter the kingdom of heaven.
2. In Luke 18:9-14, Jesus exposed the Jewish belief that they were spiritually superior to everyone else and secure in their standing before God. And Jesus did this by telling the parable of the Pharisee and tax collector who went to the temple to pray. Jesus concluded by saying it was the humble tax collector who went home justified.
3. In Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus shows how convinced the Jews were that they were guaranteed eternal life, and yet how wrong they were. Jesus said, "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles? And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"
4. In Matthew 23:13, 15, Jesus condemned the Jews' methods and means of evangelism, because they brought Gentiles into Judaism, but not to God, a sincere faith in God, and a life of righteousness.
5. In Matthew 23:14, Jesus exposes the Jews hypocrisy for separating their religious convictions and practices from their business (*landlord*) ethics and practices.
6. In Matthew 23:16-22, Jesus condemned the Jewish insane teaching that if you give your word without swearing by the gold of the temple, you do not have to keep your word. And if you give your word by swearing by the alter, you could break your word, but if you swore by the offering on the alter, you had to keep your word.
7. In Matthew 23:23, Jesus pointed out that the Jews tithed even their spices while neglecting those parts of the law that deal with relationships, such as justice, mercy and faithfulness.
8. In Matthew 23:25-28, Jesus exposed more hypocrisy by pointing out that the Jews diligently made sure that the part of their life the

religious world could see was religiously pure, while the part of their life the religious world could not see was dishonest, selfish, self-indulgent, and lawless.

9. Jesus concluded His condemnation of the Jew's practice of their religion with these words: "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?" (Matthew 23:33).

C. Now with this picture of Judaism in mind, I want to present you with a picture that describes what I think is a significant portion of the church today. And my purpose is to help you see that many in the church today are much like the Jews of Paul's day. And this is reason enough to take Romans 9 to heart so that we never think we have that kind of standing with God whereby He owes us or must justify us and give us eternal life.

1. We Christians believe the Bible is the inspired word of God . . .
 - a. Yet many live as if 2 Timothy 3:16 does not apply to them: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness."
 - b. And many live as if God is only the creator of the Big Bang, or as if practicing homosexuality is not equal to practicing sin, or as if the American Dream has nothing to do with greed, or as if sin is no big deal because Christ paid for it and God forgives it.
2. We believe idol worship is wrong, and something only heathens do
 - a. But there are many who don't believe, or at least don't live like they believe that greed is equal to idolatry (Colossians 3:5).
3. We believe we are saved by grace through faith, plus nothing, and that we are to live the Christian life by faith
 - a. But many don't live as if they believe Hebrews 12:14. "Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord."
 - b. Nor do they live as if James 2:26, is true: "For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead."
4. We believe God is omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, and good
 - a. But many worry and fret, manipulate and get angry over things and people and relationships that are not working out the way they want, as if they cannot trust Romans 8:28, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."
5. We believe in the deity of Jesus Christ
 - a. But how many believe that His words as found in the 4 Gospels must be taken seriously and lived out accordingly? And if we don't

do this, how many believe we are like fools building our lives on sand which will ultimately result in our destruction? (Matthew 7:24-27)

- b. Consider this, many in the church prefer Paul's teachings on grace over Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount.
- 6. We believe that God is holy
 - a. But many do not live as if they believe 1 Peter 1:14-16, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, [15] but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; [16] because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."
- 7. We believe in stirring, exuberant, and even loud worship led by a good worship leader and supported by a quality worship band
 - a. But do we believe John 4:23-24, "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. [24] God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

V. Conclusion

- A. What I hope you can see is that it is not enough to believe in the message of God's word, we must also live according to the implications of God's word. Like the Jews, we can know truth and speak truth with such conviction that we believe we are in good standing with God and that He then owes us justification and eternal life.
- B. However, if we don't live according to God's word, we are following in the steps of those Jews who thought they were secure in their salvation, but in reality were not justified in the sight of God.
- C. May we, like all who are part of the Jewish remnant, and that includes Gentile Christians today, verify our faith and pursuit of sanctification by living a life faithful to God and submissive to God's word. In other words, may we no longer live for ourselves, but for Him who died and rose again on our behalf.