



Christian Life Fellowship

Becoming fully devoted followers of Christ



Recognizing and Claiming God's Grace

September 14, 2008

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Introduction:

This morning we are going to try to answer the question "Did God make a mistake?" Chapters 9, 10, and 11 in Romans deal with the nation of Israel. One might ask why this comes in the argument about justification by faith. We will find out that all this is a part of Paul's argument for justification by faith. In the ninth chapter we will see the way God dealt with Israel in the past, in the tenth chapter how God dealt with Israel in the present and in the eleventh chapter how God will deal with Israel in the future. In our study today, Paul defends the character of God by pointing out four of His attributes. If these attributes are true for the nation of Israel, then they are also true for each one who is a follower of Jesus Christ.

I. God's faithfulness (9:1-13)

Paul transitions from the joy of chapter eight into sorrow in chapter nine. He looked at the lost people of Israel and it brought him sorrow. Israel was elected by God as His own people. He gave them His glory in the tabernacle and the temple. God gave them His covenants and also His commandments in the form of the law. He gave His children promises and the patriarchs. The purpose of all this blessing was so that Jesus, through Israel would come into the world.

Despite these blessings, Israel failed. When Christ appeared, Israel rejected Him and crucified Him. Paul explains the basis for God's decision. Did Israel's failure mean God's Word had failed? NO! God is faithful to His Word no matter what people do.

God's choice was not based on natural descent. Paul goes on to explain the basis for God electing Israel. Abraham had two sons - Ishmael by Hagar and Isaac by Sarah. Ishmael was the firstborn and should have

been chosen, but God chose Isaac. Isaac and Rebecca had twin sons - Esau and Jacob. Esau should have been chosen, but God chose Jacob. God did not base His election on the physical. If the nation of Israel has rejected God's Word, this does not nullify God's elective purposes.

God's choice was not because of human merit. God chose Jacob before the babies were born. The two boys had done neither good nor evil. God's choice was not based on their character or their conduct. God is faithful even though His people often are not. God will be faithful to His Word and His will. Paul just gave us reason to believe that even though we are unfaithful to Him at times, still He is faithful.

Malachi 3:6- I the Lord do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.

II. God's righteousness

The fact of God's choosing seems to indicate that He is unrighteous. It is unthinkable that a holy God would ever commit an act of unrighteousness.

Election is always a matter of grace. If God acted only on the basis of righteousness, no one would ever be saved. Since God's election of Israel did not depend on human merit, their disobedience can not nullify the elective purposes of God. God is faithful even though His people are unfaithful.

All of us deserve judgment and condemnation, not God's mercy. Paul quotes from [Exodus 33:19](#) about God's mercy. **The LORD replied, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will call out my name, 'the LORD,' to you. I will show kindness to anyone I choose, and I will show mercy to anyone I choose.**

The incident took place while Moses was on the mountain receiving the Law from God. The people participated in idolatry and the whole nation deserved to die. They broke the law and their act showed exactly where their hearts truly were. Instead of destroying the entire nation, God only took the lives of 3,000. He did this not because the others were more wicked or less godly, but purely because of His grace and mercy.

Paul refers to [Exodus 9:16](#) and uses Pharaoh as an illustration. **But I have let you live for this reason—that you might see my power and that my fame might spread throughout the earth.** Moses was a Jew, Pharaoh was a Gentile, yet they were both sinners. In fact, they were both murderers. Both of them witnessed God's miraculous power. Pharaoh was lost and Moses was saved. Pharaoh was a ruler, Moses was a slave, but position had nothing to do with God's grace and mercy.

God brings His sovereign will to bear in His acts toward men. God is holy and must punish sin, but He also loves and desires that no one perish but all are saved. If everyone was saved, it would deny His holiness. If everyone was lost, it would deny His love. The only thing we can say is that God is righteous and he chose Israel and condemned Egypt.

Pharaoh's heart was hardened. This process is referred to at least 15 times in [Exodus 7-14](#). Sometimes we read that Pharaoh hardened his heart and other times we read that God hardened his heart. God certainly gave opportunity for Pharaoh to repent seeing all the miraculous signs he demonstrated to him. Instead, Pharaoh resisted God and hardened his

heart. The fault was not with God but with Pharaoh. The same sunlight that melts the ice hardens the clay. Recognize that God is righteous in His acts toward you and me. We have the choice to respond to His love and truth.

III. God's justice

The fact of God's sovereignty only seems to create a new problem. If God is sovereign, who can resist Him? Who are we to argue with God? God is the potter and we are the clay. We have feelings, desires, intellect and will power and we can resist God if we choose to do so. God is the one who chooses if we are a Moses or Pharaoh. We do not choose our family; we do not choose where or when we are born. We have to choose to believe that these decisions are in God's hands.

We have a responsibility to learn the truth about God and trust Him. We can choose to do so or we can choose to rebel. Paul, in his letter, didn't develop this aspect of truth because his theme was Divine Sovereignty, not human responsibility. The one does not deny the other.

Pharaoh had great opportunities to learn the truth about Jehovah and trust Him, yet he chose to rebel. It is our responsibility to trust God. God has his purposes. When we look at Pharaoh, we see that God gave Him multiple opportunities to be saved. The Word in [verse 2](#) does not suggest that God made Pharaoh a vessel of wrath. The Word is a reflexive action verb and it should read "he fitted himself for destruction".

Romans 9:20-22 No, don't say that. Who are you, a mere human being, to criticize God? Should the thing that was created say to the one who made it, "Why have you made me like this?" When a potter makes jars out of clay, doesn't he have a right to use the same lump of clay to make one jar for decoration and another to throw garbage into? God has every right to exercise his judgment and his power, but he also has the right to be very patient with those who are the objects of his judgment and are fit only for destruction. God prepares people to be vessels of honor and of His glory. Sinners prepare themselves for judgment. God's purpose was to form His church from both Jews and Gentiles.

Today believers are vessels of mercy. All of this was prophesied in [Hosea 2:23](#) "**At that time I will plant a crop of Israelites and raise them for myself! I will show love to those I called 'Not loved.' And to those I called 'Not my people,' I will say, 'Now you are my people.' Then they will reply, 'You are our God!'**" Here we read that God would turn from the Jews and call the Gentiles. Paul's defense is that God was not unjust in saving some and judging others because He was only fulfilling OT prophecies given centuries before. He would be unjust if He did not keep His own Word. More than that, these prophecies show that God's election has made possible the salvation of the Gentiles. This is only God's grace and mercy. At the exodus, God rejected the Gentiles and chose the Jews, so that through the Jews He might save the Gentiles. Israel's rejection did not cancel God's election; it only proved that He was true to His character and His purposes.

IV. God's grace

Paul moves next from Divine Sovereignty to human responsibility. Here is a paradox: the Jews sought for

righteousness but did not find it, while the Gentiles who were not searching for it, found it. Israel tried to be saved by works, not by faith. The Jewish people thought the Gentiles had to come up to Israel's standard to be saved, when actually the Jews had to get to the Gentile level to be saved. Instead of allowing their religious privilege to lead them to Christ, they used these privileges as a substitute for Christ.

The grace of God is seen in that because Israel rejected Him, it meant that the Gentiles could realize God's grace.

What kind of righteousness are we seeking? Are we depending on good works and character or do we trust Christ alone for salvation? God does not save people on the basis of birth or behavior. The offer is made that whoever will may find salvation. After we have trusted Christ then we have the witness and evidence that we are among His elect. God can be depended on to accomplish His purposes and keep His promises.

Conclusion:

If we can see God's faithfulness, righteousness, justice and grace directed toward the nation of Israel, then we can see those attributes at work directed toward you and me. *Rejoice in the fact that God has given opportunity to receive His grace and righteousness!*