

ROMANS BIBLE STUDY

Romans 9:23-26

Lesson #30

Introduction

After a very thorough declaration and explanation of God's sovereign authority to choose and to act upon humanity, Paul goes on to make it clear that since it is God's purpose according to His choice that stands, not because of human works nor because of human will, but because of Him who calls, (Rm 9:11, 16) he now shows that God has promised from the days of Abraham that the gentiles would also eventually become a part of His chosen people. This would all happen according to the predesignated timetable, and according to the means and circumstances planned by God from before creation. Surely we remember Jesus repeatedly saying that His time had not yet come, meaning that everything has a set plan, and a set time, and all things whatsoever must happen precisely according to that plan. (Mt 26:54; Mk 15:28; Lk 4:21; Jn 13:18, 17:12) It is an undeniable fact that the scriptures teach us that God, from before creation, has carefully planned, and sovereignly ordained all things whatsoever that come to pass, and He implemented the necessary means into the creation plan to make it all happen, without any possibility of failure. (Isa 46:8-11; Rom 9:6-18)

Now, that he has clearly and undisputedly established the sovereignty of God over all humanity, Paul can go on to teach what God has planned for His people, both the Jews and the Gentiles. We know, and accept, that there are vessels of wrath, destined for destruction, (Rm 9:22) and the vast majority of humanity falls into this category, but in these next verses Paul is going to speak of the vessels of mercy, prepared beforehand for glory. He is going to reassure the Gentiles that they have not been left out of God's plan of redemption and mercy. The vessels of mercy have been chosen from among every nation, every race, and every culture, and are now being shown the means by which this was planned and made effectual. It is Jesus Christ, through His substitutionary death, and resurrection to eternal life, that unifies the vessels of mercy, prepared beforehand for glory, into a single family of eternal worshipers. (Eph 2:11-22) Now, let's listen to Paul's description, but we need to read the preceding verses to establish context. The title of this lesson is:

Sons of the Living God

Lead-in Verses:

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 [dishonorable] 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?

Romans 9:21-22 (NASB)

Study verses:

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."

Romans 9:23-26 (NASB)

Verse 23-24:

If we really desire to know what Paul is saying, and rightly understand his point, then we have to grasp the context of the reference verses themselves, or we won't be able to make the proper connection. Therefore I feel that we must read the section from Hosea that contains those verses:

¹ The word of the LORD which came to Hosea the son of Beeri, during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel. ² When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the LORD." ³ So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. ⁴ And the LORD said to him, "Name him Jezreel;

for yet a little while, and I will punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. ⁵ "On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel." ⁶ Then she conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. And the LORD said to him, "Name her Lo-ruhamah, [she has not obtained compassion] for I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel, that I would ever forgive them. ⁷ "But I will have compassion on the house of Judah and deliver them by the LORD their God, and will not deliver them by bow, sword, battle, horses or horsemen." ⁸ When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and gave birth to a son. ⁹ And the LORD said, "Name him Lo-ammi, [not My people] for you are not My people and I am not your God." (Hosea 1:1-9)

From these verses we can see that God was telling His chosen people Israel that they had forsaken their sacred bond to Him, as their only God, and gone after other gods, or had tried to keep Him, but also have several other gods whom they worshiped at the same time. This doesn't work in a marriage, and it doesn't work with God. So, in these verses from Hosea, God tells Israel that He has abandoned them for their spiritual adultery, and has no intention of extending compassion upon them, hence the child named Lo-ruhamah meaning she has not obtained compassion, and the subsequent child named Lo-ammi, meaning not My people. Sure enough the northern tribes were shortly carried away by the Assyrians and God did not choose to save them or restore them, and they never returned as a nation or tribes. We often hear reference made to the lost tribes of Israel but this is a misnomer, those tribes rebelled against the Lord and went after false gods. They are the adulterous offspring of Gomer, whom God has named Lo-ammi (not My people) and has designated the vast majority of them as vessels of wrath prepared for destruction. (Rm 9:22)

What was happening to the northern tribes was a classic example of what had already happened to the gentile population, whom God had designated Lo-ammi, (not My people), and whom He had named Lo-ruhamah, because they had not obtained His compassion. Remember Paul's words of verses 15-16:

¹⁵ For He says 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 *does not depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

And so it was with the Gentile populace when God freely chose Israel out of all the people on the face of the earth to be His chosen people. (Dt 7:6; 14:2) At that time the Gentiles of the earth were outsiders, as Paul says elsewhere in Ephesians chapter 2:

¹² *remember* that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

So, now we understand the context from which Paul speaks in the verses from Romans. Before the incarnation and crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the gentiles were strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and completely without God in the world. Now many don't or won't believe this, but it is precisely what the scriptures say. To appreciate mercy one must realize their condition of hopelessness or they won't recognize mercy for what it is. This is most certainly our condition today, isn't it? We don't think we need mercy, we think we're quite all right on our own merits, and the idea of needing mercy and forgiveness is downright repugnant to the vast majority of humanity. So, that large segment of humanity is very much like the children of Gomer, and carry the names Lo-ruhamah, because they don't even seek mercy, and Lo-ammi because, according to God's choice, they are not a part of God's people. What a bleak picture this poses for us gentiles, right? But, thank God, the verses don't stop there. There are a couple more verses from this example that change everything, at least for a small remnant. Let's read those verses:

¹⁰ Yet the number of the sons of Israel Will be like the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered; And in the place Where it is said to them, "You are not My people," It will be said to them, "*You are* the sons of the living God." ¹¹ And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together, And they will appoint for themselves one leader, And they will go up from the land, For great will be the day of Jezreel.

Hosea 1:10-11

These last two verses speak of a remnant of Israel, on whom the LORD chose not to show mercy in mass, who will yet find mercy and restoration to the status of "sons of the living God." Yes, these verses are about the people Israel, but God chose to make them an example to the whole human race, as Paul is doing in his reference to them in Romans 9. To prove that point let's use some more verses from Paul that make it certain that this reference is valid to us gentiles also.

¹¹ Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," *which is* performed in the flesh by human hands—¹² *remember* that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, ¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. ¹⁷ and He Came and Preached Peace to You Who Were Far Away, and Peace to Those Who Were Near; ¹⁸ for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (Eph 2:11-22)

Now, with the background clearly set, let's read our study verses one more time:

Verses 23-26:

²³ *And He did so* [speaking of withholding His demonstration of wrath] *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."

Romans 9:23-26 (NASB)

Paul isn't saying that these verses were originally written to the gentiles, but he is saying implicitly that they may be rightly applied to them as an example of the mercy of God, through Jesus Christ the Lord, Who has chosen to have compassion on a small remnant of gentiles who were Lo-ammi (not His People) and make them sons of the living God, through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. There is no other means under heaven by which any person can be saved from the wrath of God, except through belief, (saving faith) in the Lord, Jesus Christ. Unless Jesus Christ, the true Jesus Christ described in the scriptures, is your Lord and your God, you are a child of Lo-ammi, (not My people) and despite whatever you may think or believe, or desperately hope, you will not find compassion [Lo-ruhamah] on the day of judgement. But thanks be to God that He has chosen to save a small remnant and demonstrate the glory of His mercy upon them. If you are one of these few, do you comprehend the rarity and value of this gift of mercy? I hope you do, because the quality and authenticity of our eternal worship are based on our depth of understanding and appreciation of the glorious mercy of the forgiving God whom we worship. And on the knowledge of just how few who ever receive it. The next verses speak of this small remnant chosen out of a vast sea of humanity.

Verses 27-29:

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."

While the main emphasis of Paul's point is that the mercy of God has been extended to all the peoples of the earth, nevertheless this does not mean to every single person of the earth. By this I mean that every people group, every nationality, every race of people are made eligible in the eyes of God to receive mercy, and none have been excluded, but this does not mean that He is going to save every person in the world. We know it doesn't mean this. So what does it mean? Well, simply that this very small, and yes exclusive, remnant will be selected by God from every nation, tribe, race, and language group of humanity. Though the number of the inhabitants of the earth become as though they were grains of sand on a beach, nevertheless only a tiny fragment of those grains will be selected by God to receive His mercy and compassion, the remainder will get what they deserve, and yet that is exactly what they were made for in the first place.

I know this seems harsh, but we've just been told exactly that in the preceding verses, (vv. 21-22) and denial is not a river in Egypt. Denial is the unwillingness to set aside our own personal feelings when confronted with clear and unmistakable words of holy scripture. God is who He is, and He does what He does, and ours is not to sit in judgement but to listen and learn. But we refuse to accept a God who actually exercises His sovereign right of life and death over us, even though He made us out of the dirt of the ground. Like the clear example of Moses and Pharaoh. (vv. 17-18) Us pots staunchly refuse to acknowledge the right of the potter to make of us what ever He wills, and use us for whatever purpose serves His needs. We insist on talking back to God and calling Him into account to us for what He does. How absurd is that? (Rm 9:20) And it is this very same attitude that makes us unable to rightly and fully appreciate the value of His mercy and forgiveness when we receive it. We think it was owed to us, and that God desperately desires to give it to everyone, and we were wise enough to accept it by our own decision. Do you see how this popular Arminian concept ends up greatly diminishing our view of the rarity and value of God's gift of saving faith and His regeneration by the Holy Spirit? We've made it a common commodity, like an item on a grocery store shelf, and everyone is free to pick one up anytime they're shopping at the store. We consider God's forgiveness no more rare or valuable than a loaf of bread or a carton of milk.

Even among well known and respected Christian ministries we hear repeatedly that Christians are a majority in our country, or at least a major portion. But this is another case of denial. I just heard a well known end times prophecy preacher say that vast numbers of Christians will follow the False Prophet and the Anti-Christ during the tribulation. Now I understand his dilemma, as the whole world will accept the one world religion of the false prophet, but it is an apostate and false Christianity that will follow such a leader, not the true Christians. To the true Christian there is the call to "Come out of her My people." (Rev 18:4) And they will do just that, even at the expense of their lives for some of them. Just like the nation of Israel thought it was nationally accepted and protected, so our present day Christianity thinks it is accepted universally as a body, and protected by God from wrath and judgement. Using the words of Isaiah we might rightly proclaim to today's Christianity that though the number of professing Christians may be as the sands of the seashore, it is only the tiniest remnant who will be saved. Because not everyone who attends a church, and calls themselves a Christian actually is one. (Mat 7:21-23) There will be very, very many who are told to depart from the Lord because He never knew them. (Lo-ammi) In fact, unless the Lord had left us a remnant we would have become like Sodom, and we would resemble Gomorrah, meaning we would have entirely vanished from the face of the earth. The news media loves to label every right wing radical as a "Christian" and we understand that tactic, just as they do, but that body which does call itself Christianity does the very same thing, by accepting, and even courting, any and everybody that will attend their church and put something in the collection basket, regardless of their true beliefs, or behaviors, or Christlikeness. I have said before, and I will say it again, that the percentage of true regenerate Christians in our average churches is barely 10 percent. So if 10 percent of the church attendees are actually true Christians, and probably only 10 percent of the population even goes to a Christian church, then what is the real percentage of Christians in our country? Yes, probably somewhere in the neighborhood of one in a hundred, of the general population of this country, shows consistent signs of authentic regeneration.

The simple truth is that we Christians, the authentic Christians, are not even close to being a majority. We are not even close to being a serious political force of influence in our present day legislature. In fact, we are very, very close to being legally outlawed as purveyors of hate by those who have a carefully planned agenda, and are well practiced at the art of deception, calling those things that are evil, good, and those things that are good as evil. (Isa 5:20) And, to add to the frustration, an apostate Christianity is eager to jump on board with them and endorse everything they say. We, meaning our generation, will not see a revival until the return of Jesus Christ. We will not see a return to Christian morality and ethics. We will not take back our nation for Jesus, (whatever that's supposed to mean) as is sometimes the popular Christian battle cry. Like Paul says of the Jews in his next chapter, they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. And the same is true for most of Christianity. But Paul tells us the truth concerning what we must expect in the immediate future in his epistles to Timothy. (1Tim 1:8-11; 2Tim 3:1-5) Perilous times, violent activities, a self-serving and unforgiving attitude, a hedonistic humanity dashing headlong into sensual pleasures without any restraints. This is what Jesus told His disciples and it's what Paul tells us as well.

Now, having said this you may conclude that I'm a defeatist, that I've given up hope, but that is exactly the opposite of the truth. Jesus said that we must work while it is still light, because the night is coming when no one can work.

Metaphorically this implies that days are coming when doing our work of evangelism and preaching obedience to the commandments of God are impossible, because they will be prohibited by law, and doing so will get us imprisoned, or even worse.

Jesus told us that His kingdom was not of this earthly realm, so He had no interest in reforming it. (Jn 18:36) That's why He never spoke of political reforms and military actions in defense of the gospel. He told us that like Himself, our treasure must also be perceived as being in heaven where His treasure is, because our affections and attention will be focused where we perceive our treasures to be located. (Mt 6:21) Fortunately, there is still a little bit of light remaining in the day, and we are still allowed to preach the gospel and promote Godly morality, but that day is ending quickly. So, if there ever was a time to preach the gospel it is right now, every day is precious, because it might be the last we have. If there's anyone who you want to tell about Jesus Christ do it right now, don't wait. We know that most will not accept it, but we also know that there is a remnant out there who will, and who knows but what we ourselves might be that very one sent by God to preach the truth to a chosen vessel of mercy. If you work outside, at 6:00 AM in the morning you have the whole day ahead of you, but by 6:00 PM you're fortunate if you can still see to finish your work. And so it is with us today, it was 6:00 AM, and we had plenty of time, but now the day has almost past, and the sun is going down rapidly on our ability to work. In plain language we will not be legally allowed to preach the gospel or publically promote biblical morality very much longer without the very real threat of arrest and incarceration. The Constitution that has protected us for centuries is being redefined by godless men and women who have an alternate agenda they wish to promote, and the biblical interpretations are not acceptable to these men and women. They outnumber us by at least a hundred to one, so our chances of defeating them are not realistic. Now I can hear the cries of protest proclaiming "well my God can do anything." Of course God could prevent it, but just like the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, God didn't choose to prevent it, because He has ordained that things must take place exactly as planned, exactly as declared beforehand in holy scriptures. So, an atheistic humanity, and an apostate church, race hand in hand, headlong into the destruction that has been prophesied for them from the beginning of time. If Christianity were a stock traded on the stock market I would tell everybody to buy it, because it's about to become very rare. The only kind you will be able to find is the cheap imitation versions, the phoney knock-offs that are already prolific, and fill the TV channels. The authentic thing will be rare and priceless indeed.

I live in Miami, and the threat of hurricanes is a regular occurrence. When one is coming we all watch the forecasts and hope it will turn away and miss us. But if it's coming straight for us, and all the signs indicate a hit, then there comes a time when we stop relying on our hope of a miss and start preparing our homes for the coming storm. For real Christians we have been living for the last several years under a severe storm warning, and we're hoping it won't really hit us, but we are very near that point of inevitability, where we must accept the obvious and start preparing our houses for a coming storm of merciless intensity. Atheists hate Christians like the apostate Jews hated Jesus, and when they finally free themselves of the legal restraints that presently curb their actions, they will display a violent hatred just like they did for Jesus. Jesus told us straight out that they will hate us because we use His Name, (Mat 10:22, 24:9) and it's because that Name is associated with divine righteousness and godly behaviors that they hate it with a passion. When the dam finally bursts, the gush of violence and overwhelming hostility will sweep away everything in its path. The storm is coming, we can't make it go away, and it's not going to miss us, so do whatever you can right now to protect what you have. I'm speaking spiritually, not materially. Spiritually Not materially. The storm will take your earthly possessions no matter where you try to hide them, so accept that fact and be mentally prepared for it, the world will take your prized possessions, but it can't take your heavenly treasures, those are protected by the power of God, (1Pet 1:3-5) so start preparing yourself, mentally and spiritually for what's coming. And don't waste the precious little time that's remaining. How does one prepare you might ask, well, the answer remains the same throughout history, repent of your sins and spend much time in the study and knowledge of scriptures, that's the only thing that can't be taken from you. If and when all your possessions are gone, it's what's in your head and in your heart that becomes your only remaining treasure.

Do you remember the words written by that most wise writer of the book of Hebrews, where he said concerning the crucifixion of Jesus:

¹Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³For consider Him who has endured such

hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Heb 12:1-3)

The only things that Jesus didn't lose on that cross was His deity, His dignity, His righteousness, and all those things that make Him who He is, but as for His possessions and even the presence of His loved ones, they were all taken away. But as the Hebrews writer points out, it was for the future and eternal joy that was set before Him in the near future, that He endured all these temporary things.

Now, by the grace of God, not everyone has had to suffer the same fate as Jesus, although most of the Apostles did, but every follower must understand that, that choice belongs to God, and He may use His vessels (His people) as He sees fit to accomplish His divine purpose, just as He did with His own Son, Jesus. According to scriptures, but diametrically opposed to popular opinion, the vast majority of the human race is (Lo-ruhamah) having received no mercy, and has been named by God, (Lo-ammi). The chosen vessels of mercy, that have been prepared beforehand for glory, are much like the nation of Israel in the days of their Egyptian captivity, the smallest and least impressive of any on the earth, and the same for the followers of Jesus Christ, whom Paul describes in first Corinthians chapter one, verses 26-30 as the basest and least impressive by human standards of measure.

Conclusion:

By the grace of God, and because of His great love for His creation, (Jn 3:16) there is a small remnant of humanity, like the days of Noah, on whom He has chosen to show His mercy. He has chosen these to be (His People) and has provided for them His redemption. The world thinks this is the majority of humanity, and therefore no big deal, but the scriptures teach otherwise, and when all has been accomplished, then the rarity and the value of God's mercy will be revealed for all to see, and those who have received it will sing and shout and fall to their knees in eternal worship for the One true and living God, who has chosen them, out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be His People, His family of eternal worshipers. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Narrow Gate Baptist Church, Miami

Robert Andrews, Pastor

06/09/13