

“SONS OF THE LIVING GOD.”
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First Christian Reformed Church
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Scripture Texts: Romans 9:24-29

Introduction.

We have been working our way through this challenging chapter nine in Paul’s letter to the Christians in the church in Rome, a racially and ethnically mixed congregation of Jews and Gentiles. If we could get ourselves into the minds of those Christians we would find this chapter a scandal to the Jews and a comfort to the Gentiles.

Vss. 24-26

First, Paul scandalized the Jews by saying not all Israel is Israel, not all the children of Abraham are true offspring. Then, he doubled down and quoted God saying, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.” Then he said God has mercy on whom He chooses to have mercy, on some but not others.

And now if all of that is not enough, what if God choosing to display His glory made vessels of mercy not out of the Jews but out of the Gentiles? Say it ain’t so? No way. Impossible.

The Jews despised the Gentiles, that vast pagan horde, that uncircumcised, unclean, unbelieving, irreligious, law breaking, Sabbath breaking, idolatrous people.

In those days, if a Gentile became a God-fearer, a God-worshipper he was still a second class citizen and could only go into the court of the Gentiles. He couldn’t get any closer to the Temple than that.

It is hard for us to enter into the scandal of God choosing to include Gentiles in the vessels of mercy. And on top of that, there would only be a remnant of the Jews saved because the majority rejected their own Messiah, they denied Jesus.

To support this scandalous proclamation Paul turned to the OT prophets and quoted Hosea twice and Isaiah twice. In other words, this should not have come as a surprise, it was right there in the Bible all along. The glorious truth is the failure of the Jews and the inclusion of the Gentiles was always part of God’s plan to extend His salvation to the likes of Gentiles, to us.

Why did God harden so many of the Jews? So that the Gospel would overflow to the Gentiles who would become objects of mercy and experience the riches of God's glory and grace. That the whole world would know the riches of the glory of God.

God took outcast outsiders, nobodies, those who were outside of the covenant promises, those who were dead in their trespasses and sins, without hope in this world, lost.

Hosea is a great story illustrating how God loves to make the unloved, objects of His love, to bring outsiders inside, to make those who were not His people to be His people, to be adopted to become sons of the living God, sons meaning having all rights as heirs of God.

What a reversal. This means some of Ishmael's descendants and some of Esau's descendants would become vessels of mercy, objects of God's love and grace.

God is going to raise up a people who are going to be on the same level as the Jews.

The Jews thought they were included because they were Jews, and the Gentiles thought they were excluded because they were Gentiles. Oh, the scandal of it all.

Those who were His people will not be His people.
Those who were not His people will be His people.

Revelation 7:9 I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

Such is the riches of the glory of God.

Vss. 27-29

The reference to the story of Hosea being called by God to marry a prostitute was to illustrate God's mercy toward the adulterous nation of Israel. The reference to the story of Sodom and Gomorrah was to illustrate the justice of God, as I spoke of last week.

The truth is, all deserve the judgment that fell on Sodom and Gomorrah, and all would receive that just judgment if God had not intervened and saved for Himself a remnant, just as He did when He spared Noah and his family from the judgment of the flood, so He spared Lot and his family from the judgment that fell on Sodom.

This is why God is so patient with this sinful world of ours. It is so He can show to more and more of the most undeserving people the riches of the glory of His grace and mercy to more and more vessels of mercy, even to us Gentiles.

The last Isaiah quote sums up the situation and what Paul has been trying to show us all along. If God had not saved us all would be lost. If God had not intervened in changing our hard hearts, we would all be without hope. If God had not acted there would not even be a remnant.

God decided there would be a remnant. God chose that not all of would be lost. He made the difference. Learn from this how massively important the grace of God is in your life. We are all on our way to be like Sodom and Gomorrah if God doesn't step in and save us. It was His grace, His salvation, the finished work of His Son, the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ that made all the difference.

Salvation belongs to the Lord. God makes followers of God. God makes Christians. It is not based on who you are, on how good you are, on how well you know your Bible, on your baptism or church membership or Christian upbringing. Not all Israel is Israel, not all Christians are Christians. Salvation belongs to the Lord.

What is the Apostle Paul's point in all of this?

Romans 9 is a Copernican revolution. You remember Copernicus, the Polish astronomer who blew up everyone's worldview in the 1500s by discovering the earth is not the center of the universe, let alone even the center of the solar system like everyone thought.

If we could personify the earth for a moment, you can imagine the big blow to the earth's ego and pride. Imagine thinking you are the center of your universe, you are in control, everything revolves around you, you get to decide everything and make all your choices. We probably all know someone like that. It's kind of scary when you think about it.

Do you have any idea how bad it would be if the earth was the center of the solar system. The earth could never have the gravitational ability to hold the rest of the solar system in orbit. We would all die. When we remain the center of our lives we will die.

When we try to make ourselves the center of our little solar system everything becomes disordered, unstable, chaotic. We don't have the power to hold everything together, and we become overwhelmed with the stress of it all. We try harder and harder to do better and be better and it collapses under the weight of our sin and finiteness. We can't save ourselves.

When God is at the center, His glory, grace and sovereignty give the gravitational pull to hold everything in place.

In the words of Colossians 1:17, “Christ is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

Hebrews 1:3 Christ upholds the universe by the word of his power.

When God is at the center, life may still have trials, but it is properly aligned under His sovereign rule. We must come to grips with the spiritual reality that God is God and we revolve around Him, not Him around us. As the sun gives life to our solar system, the Son gives life to us.

If the sun were a person, the most loving thing the sun could do would be to keep itself at the center. So it is with us and God. The most loving and lifegiving thing God can do is keep Himself at the center of our world and lives, and to reveal the glory of His greatness and goodness, His mercy and His justice, and the His supremacy over us and our salvation. It is most loving because it is true.

From all Paul said in Romans 9 take to heart these truths for the comfort of your souls.

First, God is God. This doctrine like all doctrine is meant to *humble us*, to kill our pride and our self-righteousness.

My salvation owes nothing to my birth, my desires, actions, merit, knowledge or connections. I am saved entirely by the pure pleasure of a holy God who delighted to love me in Christ and poured out on me His grace and mercy.

This truth forces us to wrestle with whether or not we really see ourselves as truly unworthy of the gospel. Do you deep down believe that God owes you salvation? That you don't deserve condemnation and hell? Scripture's testimony is that you and I are worthy to be condemned forever.

Second, we are debtors to His grace and mercy alone. Christ took all our debts and paid them with His body and blood on the cross, removing all my guilt and shame. Remember what you once were so that you may see more clearly the riches you have received and glorify and worship God for His mercy and grace.

Ephesians 2:11-13, 19 Remember that at one time you ... were ... separated from Christ, alienated 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 once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

Romans 9 is designed to bring us to our knees. The only thing for me to do is to humble myself before a merciful Savior and thank Him for His grace

Third, we are Beloved!

When God says, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion," God is telling us the love He gives us is not a love that can be lost by our failures or sin. The love He has for us originates in His character and nature, not ours. He calls us His beloved.

Fourth, we are sons of the living God. Family, children of the living God. We are adopted and given a new name, Christian, and given His inheritance in heaven.

What comes with this glorious title?

Membership in God's family means you have permanent access to the Father at any time. You have His personal private cell number. "We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand" (Romans 5:2). We Gentile believers have the right to go to God and say, "Abba, Father."

Fifth, with this great title we have a great provision, as a Father provides for His children.

"Give us this day our daily bread."

"My God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19).

Sixth, we Gentile believers enjoy the privilege of our Father's instruction and discipline. We are beloved and those the Father loves, He disciplines and corrects.

Hebrews 12:5-6 "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. 6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

Seventh, we are brothers and sisters and should recognize the privilege of being so. This will affect how we view and treat each other. We are all debtors to God's grace and

mercy. None of us are better than or superior to anyone else. Anyone we might be tempted to look down on is actually on the same level as me.

The Russian writer Tolstoy tells of a time of famine when he met a beggar who stretched out an empty hand for money. The author reached into his pocket for money to find he had none at all. Tolstoy was embarrassed that he had raised the beggar's hope by putting his hand in his pocket and he blurted out, "Please don't be angry with me brother, I don't have any money at all." The beggar said, "Oh you've given me something; you've called me 'brother.'"

Christians address one another in the New Testament as 'brother' and 'sister.'

"All of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble" (I Pet. 3:8)

"Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other" (I Thess. 4:9).

Eighth, this will also affect how we view and treat those on the outside. We of all people should be accepting of sinners, because we know God chose us who were unworthy of being chosen.

The Gentiles were the greatest sinners, just ask any Jews. The Gentiles were the worst of the worst. How does God get glory? God gets glory by choosing the weak, foolish, poor, needy, least, lost, lonely. It is the greatest sinners who bring God glory.

This should affect how we pray for the lost, to grieve like Paul and be earnest in prayer like Paul.

Finally, we are welcome at God's own table, at the marriage feast of the Lamb, at the head table.

At the table where we see most displayed the riches of the glory of Christ. What mercy.

Remember Joseph when his brothers came to Egypt for mercy in the famine. Remember when Joseph revealed himself to his brothers and they were afraid as they should have been for their sin. What did Joseph do? He forgave them and invited them to eat at his table. Vessels of mercy.

Remember David when he showed covenant love and mercy to Mephibosheth, the grandson of the defeated King Saul. David invited him to eat at his table. Vessels of mercy.

Here is displayed the riches of God's glory and grace for the objects of His mercy. Do you see the astounding grace, the lavish riches of God's grace, the steadfast faithful covenant love? So great a mercy, the likes of which the world has never seen.