

Romans Chapter Nine

Romans 9:1-5 – Paul's Concern for Israel

v1. "I SAY THE TRUTH IN CHRIST, I LIE NOT, MY CONSCIENCE BEARING WITNESS WITH ME IN THE HOLY SPIRIT," (ASV)

Paul has spent a major portion of his epistle showing that the works of the Jewish law could not save sinners. Showing that sinners must be saved by the obedience of faith, by walking in the footsteps of the faith of Abraham, and that the Jews and Gentiles alike stand condemned without faith in Christ Jesus. Now lest the Jew might think Paul is also condemning the Mosaic Law and his brethren both in that faith and the flesh, he calls Christ and the Holy Spirit as witnesses of the truth of the assurance of his love for them. "I speak the truth as in Christ and accountable to him."

This is not an unusual statement for Paul to make and he probably had even been accused of lying and blaspheming the Mosaic Law:

"NOW TOUCHING THE THINGS WHICH I WRITE UNTO YOU, BEHOLD, BEFORE GOD, I LIE NOT." **Galatians 1:20 (ASV)**

"WHEREUNTO I WAS APPOINTED A PREACHER AND AN APOSTLE (I SPEAK THE TRUTH, I LIE NOT), A TEACHER OF THE GENTILES IN FAITH AND TRUTH." **I Timothy 2:7 (ASV)**

v2. "THAT I HAVE GREAT HEAVINESS AND CONTINUAL SORROW IN MY HEART." (ASV)

The fact that many of the Jews rejected Christ and were not in a saved state causes a great amount of sorrow in Paul's heart.

The Gentile world was very receptive to the gospel but the own people of Paul and Jesus had rejected the gospel although it was preached to them first. What a paradox that the people whom God sought so lovingly to prepare to receive the gospel -- through their having been given the law of Moses and through having been the very bloodline through whom the Messiah would come - - should fail to recognize Christ as King of Kings, whereas the Gentiles heard Him gladly!

v3. "FOR I COULD WISH THAT I MYSELF WERE ANATHEMA FROM CHRIST FOR MY BRETHREN'S SAKE, MY KINSMEN ACCORDING TO THE FLESH." (ASV)

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The language found here is very similar to that in Exodus when Moses returned from the mountain to find that the Israelite nation had abandoned God and made for themselves a golden calf to worship. His love for them is so great that he would give up his own soul in exchange for their forgiveness.

"YET NOW, IF THOU WILT FORGIVE THEIR SIN-; AND IF NOT, BLOT ME, I PRAY THEE, OUT OF THY BOOK WHICH THOU HAST WRITTEN." **Exodus 32:32** (ASV)

God responded back to Moses and said that it doesn't work that way..."AND JEHOVAH SAID UNTO MOSES, WHOSOEVER HATH SINNED AGAINST ME, HIM WILL I BLOT OUT OF MY BOOK." **Exodus 32:33** (ASV)

v4. "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;" (ASV)

Being God's chosen people was a great honor to the Jews. They were children of Israel and heirs of the promises made to him. The name "Israelite" was for the Jew his special badge and title. As descendants of Abraham they shared that honor with the Ishmaelites (**Genesis 16:15**) and from Abraham and Isaac the Edomites (**Genesis 25:26**) {descendants of Esau} as well did other peoples, some of whom we studied in the book of Job.

Out of all nations God had chosen Israel to stand in a special relationship with him as his children. One of the results of this adoption was their deliverance from Egypt.

"AND THOU SHALT SAY UNTO PHARAOH, THUS SAITH JEHOVAH, ISRAEL IS MY SON, MY FIRST-BORN: AND I HAVE SAID UNTO THEE, LET MY SON GO, THAT HE MAY SERVE ME..." **Exodus 4:22, 23** (ASV)

This made them those who received God's glory.

They had a covenant relationship with God; and extension of that same covenant that God made with Abraham, renewed with Isaac and again with their father Israel himself.

The Law of Moses was given to them as another sign of their importance, they were to serve God and thereby enjoy the fruit of the promises made to Israel.

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v5. "WHOSE ARE THE FATHERS, AND OF WHOM IS CHRIST AS CONCERNING THE FLESH, WHO IS OVER ALL, GOD BLESSED FOR EVER. AMEN." (ASV)

The reference here is made especially to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, whom God delighted to honor and whose names have been preserved in a place of honor for all ages. To have sprung from these forefathers was one of the most cherished of honors an Israelite could have. We see this especially in John's record of a conversation between Jesus and some unbelieving Jews in:

John 8:33 "THEY ANSWERED UNTO HIM, WE ARE ABRAHAM'S SEED, AND HAVE NEVER YET BEEN IN BONDAGE TO ANY MAN: HOW SAYEST THOU, YE SHALL BE MADE FREE?" (ASV)

Paul in one place emphasizes this relationship in writing to the church at Corinth. "ARE THEY HEBREWS? SO AM I. ARE THEY ISRAELITES? SO AM I. ARE THEY THE SEED OF ABRAHAM? SO AM I." **II Corinthians 11:22**

The crowning glory of being a descendant of Israel is to be from that same lineage which God brought Jesus, the Messiah into the world.

This passage is a testimony of the divinity of Christ, which the whole revelation of God proves, as the following clearly shows: God, the Father, is the basis of all life "YET TO US THERE IS ONE GOD, THE FATHER, OF WHOM ARE ALL THINGS, AND WE UNTO HIM; AND ONE LORD, JESUS CHRIST, THROUGH WHOM ARE ALL THINGS, AND WE THROUGH HIM." **I**

Corinthians 8:6

Romans 9:6-13 – God's Chosen

v6. "BUT IT IS NOT AS THOUGH THE WORD OF GOD HATH COME TO NOUGHT. FOR THEY ARE NOT ALL ISRAEL, THAT ARE OF ISRAEL." (ASV)

The Israelite nation received the word of God, the privileges and benefits of being God's people and then rejected God. But this does not mean the word of God was not effective. "FOR THEY ARE NOT ALL ISRAEL, WHICH ARE OF ISRAEL" What does he mean not all which are of Israel are all Israel, doesn't this sound like double talk?

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Paul is making a distinction here between those who were Israelites only because they were physically born into the nation of Israel and those who were truly Israelites because they were following God's commandments. Since obedience was required to be the true Israel or family of God:

Exodus 19:5 "NOW THEREFORE, IF YE WILL **OBEY MY VOICE INDEED**, AND KEEP MY COVENANT, THEN YE SHALL BE MINE OWN POSSESSION FROM AMONG ALL PEOPLES: FOR ALL THE EARTH IS MINE:" (ASV)

then not all who had Israel's -- Jacob's -- blood running through their veins would be the Israel of God or identified as the family of God. They were not true Israelites because they rejected God as their Father and Ruler. Not all Israelites obeyed God and thus there were those who were not in His favor. Is it not true that the same could be said of those who have been born into the family of God today? (**Acts 13:46**, "judged themselves unworthy")

v7. "NEITHER, BECAUSE THEY ARE ABRAHAM'S SEED, ARE THEY ALL CHILDREN: BUT, IN ISAAC SHALL THY SEED BE CALLED." (ASV)

" AND GOD SAID UNTO ABRAHAM, LET IT NOT BE GRIEVOUS IN THY SIGHT BECAUSE OF THE LAD, AND BECAUSE OF THY HANDMAID. IN ALL THAT SARAH SAITH UNTO THEE, HEARKEN UNTO HER VOICE. FOR IN ISAAC SHALL THY SEED BE CALLED." **Genesis 21:12** (ASV)

Abraham had other sons besides Isaac. These would include Ishmael, the father of twelve princes and father of many of the Arabic peoples of today (**Genesis 17:20**) and the six sons of Keturah (**Genesis 25:1**), Abraham's wife after Sarah died. Isaac was the son of promise, not the other sons of Abraham.

"HOWBEIT THE SON BY THE HANDMAID IS BORN AFTER THE FLESH; BUT THE SON BY THE FREEWOMAN IS BORN THROUGH PROMISE." **Galatians 4:23** (ASV)

v8. "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." (ASV)

The children of the flesh were not the children of God; the children of promise are the children of God. Ishmael was a child of the Abraham physically; he was as much the son of Abraham as Isaac but not after God's promise. Only through the child of promise were the descendants of Abraham to be blessed.

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v9. "FOR THIS IS A WORD OF PROMISE, ACCORDING TO THIS SEASON WILL I COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON." (ASV)

"AND HE SAID, I WILL CERTAINLY RETURN UNTO THEE WHEN THE SEASON COMETH ROUND; AND, LO, SARAH THY WIFE SHALL HAVE A SON. AND SARAH HEARD IN THE TENT DOOR, WHICH WAS BEHIND HIM."

Genesis 18:10 (ASV)

God promised to miraculously restore to Abraham and Sarah the ability to have children.

Verse 11 says that Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age - too old physically to bear children.

Verse 12 records that Sarah laughed within herself because she didn't believe what God's messenger's said.

Verse 13 tells of God's knowing Sarah's thoughts and then asking:

"IS ANYTHING TOO HARD FOR JEHOVAH? AT THE SET TIME I WILL RETURN UNTO THEE, WHEN THE SEASON COMETH ROUND, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON." **Genesis 18:14** (ASV)

What is all this business about the son of the flesh and the son of promise? What is its significance to us today?

Unbelieving Israelites claimed the blessings of the covenant of God on the grounds that these blessings were promised to Abraham's children. They further claimed that if they did not benefit from the promise made to Abraham then God's promise was of none effect. If God didn't provide them all of the rights and privileges of sons, regardless of their obedience, then God's promise wasn't any good. They took the position of spoiled brats. Their assumption was that all of the children of Abraham have a right to the blessings of God's covenant. Paul proves that this right was not granted by God to all of Abraham's children. Ishmael was a child of Abraham but not the child of promise. Therefore, the claim being made by the Israelites was not valid; it was precisely the same as the claim of Ishmael; the son after the flesh. The claim of the Jews due to their physical relationship to Abraham was not valid. In the same way the followers of Islam today seek to justify their false religion by their relationship to Abraham and fail for the same reasons.

This analogy carries over into our relationship with God under the new covenant as well. Under God's covenant of today the gospel announces that only believers are heirs of the promise, for:

"KNOW THEREFORE THAT THEY THAT ARE OF FAITH, THE SAME ARE SONS OF ABRAHAM." **Galatians 3:7** (ASV)

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“And IF YE ARE CHRIST'S, THEN ARE YE ABRAHAM'S SEED, HEIRS ACCORDING TO PROMISE.” **Galatians 3:29** (ASV)

v10. "AND NOT ONLY SO; BUT REBECCA ALSO HAVING CONCEIVED BY ONE, EVEN BY OUR FATHER ISAAC--;" (ASV)

Paul says “AND NOT ONLY THIS” but there was another child of promise involved. There was another miracle, another situation where God granted relief from the laws of nature to bring a promised child into the world, a child that was to carry the seed of the Kingdom.

“AND ISAAC ENTREATED JEHOVAH FOR HIS WIFE, BECAUSE SHE WAS BARREN. AND JEHOVAH WAS ENTREATED OF HIM, AND REBEKAH HIS WIFE CONCEIVED.” **Genesis 25:21**

The promise was not only restricted to the son of Sarah, but when Rebekah had conceived by Isaac, there was still further restriction of the promise to Jacob and not to Esau. Paul sets this before us in the next verse:

v11-12. “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, IT WAS SAID UNTO HER, THE ELDER SHALL SERVE THE YOUNGER.” (ASV)

"AND JEHOVAH SAID UNTO HER, TWO NATIONS ARE IN THY WOMB, AND TWO PEOPLES SHALL BE SEPARATED FROM THY BOWELS. AND THE ONE PEOPLE SHALL BE STRONGER THAN THE OTHER PEOPLE. AND THE ELDER SHALL SERVE THE YOUNGER.” **Genesis 25:23** (ASV)

Before the twins, Jacob and Esau, were born, God said that the older son would serve the younger son. The natural and usual order of things was to be reversed. God saw the character of the two children, and chose the younger to become the head of His chosen people because he would trust God when the other would not. It was not on account of any works of their own that either might do that caused God to make that choice at that time, but He knew that Jacob would trust and obey him.

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There is no scriptural record of Esau personally serving his brother, Jacob. The reference therefore refers to the relationship between the two nations that were their descendants. It is recorded concerning David that he put garrisons throughout Edom, and that "AND HE PUT GARRISONS IN EDOM; AND ALL THE EDMITES BECAME SERVANTS TO DAVID. AND JEHOVAH GAVE VICTORY TO DAVID WHITHERSOEVER HE WENT." **I Chronicles 18:13.** (ASV)

Under Joram they revolted (**II Kings 8:20**), but were defeated by Amaziah (**II Kings 14:7**), and Elath was taken from them by Azariah (**II Kings 14:22**). Indeed the Edomites were under subjection to Israel for many generations. At about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70, the Edomites, as a separate people, disappeared from the pages of history.

v13. "EVEN AS IT IS WRITTEN, JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED."
(ASV)

Many think this was written before the children were born, but this is not correct. Yet it is true that God foretold that Esau, the older, should serve Jacob, the younger, before they were born. This was no doubt because God, seeing the end from the beginning, saw that Jacob would trust and serve him and that Esau would not. To "love" and "hate" as God uses the term means to approve or to disapprove, to bless or curse, not literally hate with the furious passion that we mean when we use the term today.

Romans 9:14-18 – God’s Sovereign Mercy

v14. "WHAT SHALL WE SAY THEN? IS THERE UNRIGHTEOUSNESS WITH GOD? GOD FORBID." (ASV)

Because God chose Jacob over Esau did God play favorites or did he follow the rule of right that he revealed for us through Peter?

"...OF A TRUTH I PERCEIVE THAT GOD IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS: BUT IN EVERY NATION HE THAT FEARETH HIM, AND WORKETH RIGHTEOUSNESS, IS ACCEPTABLE TO HIM." **Acts 10:34, 35** (ASV)

No! God blessed the one who was righteous – he just knew which one that would be before they were born.

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v15. "FOR HE SAITH TO MOSES, I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION." (ASV)

The language we find here was spoken to Moses in **Exodus 33:19** and is quoted to prove that God's method of selection is not after the works of fleshly men. It is not according to the inventions and works of men, but according to the will of God. God will select those who trust and follow him, not those who trust their own fleshly relations or their own wisdom or man's works.

When the people trusted and obeyed God, he had mercy on them; when they refused to trust and follow him, he refused to have mercy on them. This was so universally understood to be the law of God that Solomon recorded it as a proverb:

"HE THAT COVERETH HIS TRANSGRESSIONS SHALL NOT PROSPER: BUT WHOSO CONFESSETH AND FORSAKETH THEM SHALL OBTAIN MERCY."
Proverbs 28:13 (ASV)

v16. "SO THEN IT IS NOT OF HIM THAT WILLETH, NOR OF HIM THAT RUNNETH, BUT OF GOD THAT HATH MERCY." (ASV)

Paul illustrates what he means by the case of Jacob and Esau. Isaac willed that Esau should inherit the blessing, and Esau ran with haste to obtain the venison for his father that he might have the blessing; but neither Isaac's will nor Esau's running could defeat the purpose of God to bless Jacob. If Esau had possessed the character approved by God, God would have made it his will to bless him. But since Esau did not possess the character that God required of one that was to be the father of His people, he did not approve of him. And his father's desire for him to have the blessing of being the father of God's chosen nation could not change God's mind.

v17. "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." (ASV)

"AND JEHOVAH SAID UNTO MOSES, RISE UP EARLY IN THE MORNING, AND STAND BEFORE PHARAOH, AND SAY UNTO HIM, THUS SAITH JEHOVAH, THE GOD OF THE HEBREWS,..." " BUT IN VERY DEED FOR THIS CAUSE HAVE I MADE THEE TO STAND, TO SHOW THEE MY POWER, AND THAT MY NAME MAY BE DECLARED THROUGHOUT ALL THE EARTH."
Exodus 9:13, 16 (ASV)

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Just how did God work through Pharaoh - did he raise up or create this wicked man just to serve his purposes or did he merely use a king that already existed, one who had already generated his own wickedness? God's purpose was twofold. The Messiah would come through His people, Israel. They were to be removed from Egyptian bondage for the benefit of all people of the earth. Consequently His freeing of Israel needed to be such an awesome demonstration of His power that it would gain the attention of all people.

Galatians 3:8 "AND THE SCRIPTURE, FORESEEING THAT GOD WOULD JUSTIFY THE GENTILES BY FAITH, PREACHED THE GOSPEL BEFOREHAND UNTO ABRAHAM, SAYING, IN THEE SHALL ALL THE NATIONS BE BLESSED." (ASV)

Galatians 3:22 "BUT THE SCRIPTURES SHUT UP ALL THINGS UNDER SIN, THAT THE PROMISE BY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST MIGHT BE GIVEN TO THEM THAT BELIEVE." (ASV)

Secondly, God needed to prepare the way for Israel to achieve His purpose in Canaan. He needed to show through them His power over their enemies and reduce the resistance that they would meet. We find the evidence of this purpose stated in scripture by the song Israel sang after passing through the Red Sea:

Exodus 15:14-15 "THE PEOPLES HAVE HEARD, THEY TREMBLE: PANGS HAVE TAKEN HOLD ON THE INHABITANTS OF PHILISTIA. THEN WERE THE CHIEFS OF EDOM DISMAYED; THE MIGHTY MEN OF MOAB, TREMBLING TAKETH HOLD UPON THEM: ALL THE INHABITANTS OF CANAAN ARE MELTED AWAY." (ASV)

That this in fact did happen is confirmed by the words of Rahab in **Joshua 2:9-11** and deception played by the Gibeonites or Hivites (they called both in scripture) in **Joshua 9:9**.

God never controlled the wickedness of Pharaoh or caused Pharaoh to do anything that would have been against his will. This would negate God's giving mankind the freedom of choice; making mankind free moral agents who are allowed to choose for themselves whom they will serve and would be inconsistent. God is not capable of being inconsistent. After Pharaoh, of his own will, had done evil, been wicked, committed high crimes against God and God's people, God made a very public example of him. He virtually destroyed the greatest nation known to man at that time in history.

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God punished Pharaoh and the nation of Egypt, before the whole world, so that the whole world could see their destruction, and know that it was inflicted by God and that it was inflicted because of their wickedness.

v18. "SO THEN HE HATH MERCY ON WHOM HE WILL, AND WHOM HE WILL BE HARDENETH." (ASV)

God has chosen to have mercy on those who honor and obey him. Pharaoh is an example of those who are allowed to become hardened that they might be destroyed.

In this expression, "hardening" we find the same idea as in "GOD GAVE THEM UP" (**Romans 1:26**), the terminology the apostle used to express God's judgment on the Gentiles, "BECAUSE THAT, WHEN THEY KNEW GOD, THEY GLORIFIED *him* NOT AS GOD." **Romans 1:21**

When man has willfully rejected the God of heaven, ignores the patience of His divine mercy, persists in following after evil, there comes a time when God will withdraw from him and leave him to be consumed by evil.

Romans 1:28f "AND EVEN AS THEY REFUSED TO HAVE GOD IN THEIR KNOWLEDGE, GOD GAVE THEM UP UNTO A REPROBATE MIND, TO DO THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT FITTING;..." (ASV)

Following this declaration is a list of the sins which those who reject God will commit. When man becomes so corrupt that he is unable and or unwilling to listen to the advice and counsel of those who would try to rescue him from his own destruction; when he rejects salvation for himself, he is free to do so. But he cannot prevent God from making use of him and of his ruin, as he did Pharaoh.

Romans 9:19-29 – God's Purpose

v19. "THOU WILT SAY THEN UNTO ME, WHY DOTHE HE STILL FIND FAULT? FOR WHO WITHSTANDETH HIS WILL?"

Now Paul raises another question, one that he knew would be on the minds of those who read his epistle. "If all are hardened or forgiven according to the will of God, why does God find fault with any?" This would be the cry of those who profess to be religious today but who have resisted His will. They will protest "Do we not serve Him as well?" God is the supreme ruler of the universe. When faced with war Jehoshaphat, king of Judah petitions God:

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"...O JEHOVAH, THE GOD OF OUR FATHERS, ART NOT THOU GOD IN HEAVEN? AND ART NOT THOU RULER OVER ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE NATIONS? AND IN THY HAND IS POWER AND MIGHT, SO THAT NONE IS ABLE TO WITHSTAND THEE." **II Chronicles 20:6** (ASV)

Job 23:13 "BUT HE IS IN ONE MIND, AND WHO CAN TURN HIM? AND WHAT HIS SOUL DESIRETH, EVEN THAT HE DOETH." (ASV)

God has the power to make man whatever he desires; but God does not make men what they become and then find fault with them. Morally, men make themselves what they are. When left to their own devices they usually make of themselves something they should not be. This is why God finds fault with them. It is true that God will make a choice, as in the case of Jacob and Esau, between the one he knows will be faithful and one he know who will not. But the fact that God made that choice between Jacob and Esau did not cause one to be evil and the other to be good. God is the same today. He will choose to bless those who are faithful and condemn those who only cry "Lord, Lord" and do not do his will.

v20. "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?" (ASV)

This is the argument that someone makes when they try to tell us that man's addiction to certain sins is genetic, inherited or beyond his control. The entire intent of this verse is to stop the one who would object and say that God is not dealing fairly with mankind. Basically Paul is saying 'who do you think you are; to question the motives of the all perfect God?'

v21. "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?" (ASV)

The potter has control over the clay he uses in his work but he is also limited by the quality of that material. When he makes a vessel the kind of vessel it becomes is based upon what kind of material he has to work with in the clay. In Central Missouri, where I grew up, there is an abundance of the clay used to make the fire brick used to line furnaces in steel mills and powerhouses. No other clay will work for that purpose. Likewise the potter doesn't make fine china out of the same material that he uses to make flower pots. So it is with the God of Israel - he deals with people based upon what they have done with the freedom that He gave them to choose what kind of person they want to be.

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If they have chosen to do good and to be faithful to the precepts found in scripture then God uses them to good purposes but if they have chosen to be evil or bad then God will use them to accomplish other purposes.

"THE WORD WHICH CAME TO JEREMIAH FROM JEHOVAH, SAYING, ARISE, AND GO DOWN TO THE POTTER'S HOUSE, AND THERE I WILL CAUSE THEE TO HEAR MY WORDS. THEN I WENT DOWN TO THE POTTER'S HOUSE, AND, BEHOLD, HE WAS MAKING A WORK ON THE WHEELS. AND WHEN THE VESSEL THAT HE MADE OF THE CLAY WAS MARRED IN THE HAND OF THE POTTER, HE MADE IT AGAIN ANOTHER VESSEL, AS SEEMED GOOD TO THE POTTER TO MAKE IT." **Jeremiah 18:1-4**

When the material under the potter's hand was marred, faulty or didn't work for the purpose intended he changed and made it into something else.

"O HOUSE OF ISRAEL, CANNOT I DO WITH YOU AS THIS POTTER? SAITH JEHOVAH. BEHOLD, AS THE CLAY IN THE POTTER'S HAND, SO ARE YE IN MY HAND, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL." **Jeremiah 18:6**

Let's not mistake what Paul is telling us here, as some do. God does not predetermine or predestine what man will do but rather uses man to accomplish what he purposes based upon the kind of person man decides to become.

v22. "WHAT IF GOD, WILLING TO SHOW HIS WRATH, AND TO MAKE HIS POWER KNOWN, ENDURED WITH MUCH LONGSUFFERING VESSELS OF WRATH FITTED UNTO DESTRUCTION." (ASV)

Why should man think it strange if God, in order to show his hatred of sin and his determination to punish it, that God should endure or indulge man for a long time? The nation of Israel became just like Egypt. They fitted themselves or purposed themselves to do evil and then God chose to visit his wrath upon them in such a fashion that the whole world saw and understood.

Romans 2:4-6 "OR DESPISEST THOU THE RICHES OF HIS GOODNESS AND FORBEARANCE AND LONGSUFFERING, NOT KNOWING THAT THE GOODNESS OF GOD LEADETH THEE TO REPENTANCE? BUT AFTER THY HARDNESS AND IMPENITENT HEART TREASUREST UP FOR THYSELF WRATH IN THE DAY OF WRATH AND REVELATION OF THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT OF GOD; WHO WILL RENDER TO EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS WORKS:"

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Here we see that these people became objects of God's wrath in spite of His effort to save them through the exercise of his goodness and longsuffering. Goodness and longsuffering which was intended to allow them time to repent.

Peter makes this even clearer:

II Peter 3:9 "THE LORD IS NOT SLACK CONCERNING HIS PROMISE, AS SOME COUNT SLACKNESS; BUT IS LONGSUFFERING TO YOU-WARD, NOT WISHING THAT ANY SHOULD PERISH, BUT THAT ALL SHOULD COME TO REPENTANCE."

"FOR GOD APPOINTED US NOT INTO WRATH, BUT UNTO THE OBTAINING OF SALVATION THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST," **I Thessalonians 5:9**

v23. "AND THAT HE MIGHT MAKE KNOWN THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY UPON VESSELS OF MERCY, WHICH HE AFORE PREPARED UNTO GLORY,"

What constitutes being prepared for God's glory? Did God prepare these "vessels" for his glory? If we answer in the affirmative then we go back to teach again the denominational predestination doctrine. God prepares to reward those who obey him just as he prepares to exercise his wrath upon those who do not do his will. That preparation was the giving of his son as our sacrifice:

"IN WHOM WE HAVE OUR REDEMPTION THROUGH HIS BLOOD, THE FORGIVENESS OF OUR TRESPASSES, ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE," **Ephesians 1:7**

"AND WE KNOW THAT TO THEM THAT LOVE GOD ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD, EVEN TO THEM THAT ARE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE. FOR WHOM HE FOREKNEW, HE ALSO FOREORDAINED TO BE CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON, THAT HE MIGHT BE THE FIRSTBORN AMONG MANY BRETHREN: AND WHOM HE FOREORDAINED, THEM HE ALSO CALLED: AND WHOM HE CALLED, THEM HE ALSO JUSTIFIED: AND WHOM HE JUSTIFIED, THEM HE ALSO GLORIFIED." **Romans 8:28-30** (ASV)

v24. "EVEN US, WHOM HE ALSO CALLED, NOT FROM THE JEWS ONLY, BUT ALSO FROM THE GENTILES?" (ASV)

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Both Jews and Gentiles, whom he called through the gospel, are these vessels of mercy, fitted to receive the riches of the grace in Jesus Christ. This was a direct and primary purpose of God's longsuffering toward the Jews even though they had become through their disobedience; vessels of wrath.

"...SALVATION IS FROM THE JEWS" (**John 4:22**). Even after Jesus Christ was crucified God delayed the destruction of Jerusalem that Jesus had predicted (**Matthew 24:15-28**) through his mercy until a great many of those Jews and their Gentile neighbors had become children of His and fled from the destruction that was to come.

v25. "AS HE SAITH ALSO IN HOSEA, I WILL CALL THAT MY PEOPLE, WHICH WAS NOT MY PEOPLE; AND HER BELOVED, THAT WAS NOT BELOVED." (ASV)

Paul here quotes from the prophet Hosea to show that it had been the purpose of God from the beginning to call the Gentiles. At the time that Hosea wrote they were not the children of God and were not beloved because of their trust in God. But that is what they would and did become; as we all know.

Hosea 2:23 "AND I WILL SOW HER UNTO ME IN THE EARTH; AND I WILL HAVE MERCY UPON HER THAT HAD NOT OBTAINED MERCY; AND I WILL SAY TO THEM THAT WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, THOU ART MY PEOPLE; AND THEY SHALL SAY, THOU ART MY GOD." (ASV)

The Apostle Peter in his general epistle to "STRANGERS", Gentile Christians, confirms and emphasizes this change in relationship:

"WHO IN TIME PAST WERE NO PEOPLE, BUT NOW ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD: WHO HAD NOT OBTAINED MERCY, BUT NOW HAVE OBTAINED MERCY." **I Peter 2:10** (ASV)

v26. "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." (ASV)

Paul again turns to the prophet Hosea and quotes the latter part of the following, speaking of spiritual Israel, His kingdom to come:

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Hosea 1:10 "YET THE NUMBER OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL SHALL BE AS THE SAND OF THE SEA, WHICH CANNOT BE MEASURED NOR NUMBERED; AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS THAT, IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID UNTO THEM, YE ARE NOT MY PEOPLE, IT SHALL BE SAID UNTO THEM, YE ARE THE SONS OF THE LIVING GOD." (ASV)

It had been God's purpose from the beginning that through Jesus Christ all men of all nations should be blessed:

Genesis 12:3 "AND I WILL BLESS THEM THAT BLESS THEE, AND HIM THAT CURSETH THEE WILL I CURSE: AND IN THEE SHALL ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH BE BLESSED." (ASV)

v27. "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:" (ASV)

Even though the children of Israel were God's chosen people and were numbered "AS THE SAND OF THE SEA," through their disobedience they went into captivity and only a remnant of them were faithful to God and returned. This is quoted here as a prophetic illustration of their rejection of Christ. Of the multitude, only a remnant would receive him and be saved. That was true of Israel before their captivity by Babylon and true of their acceptance of Christ.

v28. "FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD UPON THE EARTH, FINISHING IT AND CUTTING IT SHORT." (ASV)

Paul, at this writing, which most scholars place at about AD 57 or 58, tells us that God, after long forbearance, will finish the work of dealing with the remnants of Israel. In righteousness and fidelity he will speedily punish them as their sins demanded. That destruction came within 10 or 15 years of Paul's writing. Jerusalem was destroyed and the Israelite nation dispersed completely.

v29. "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." (ASV)

As Isaiah (**Isaiah 1:9**) had said of their former captivity, unless the Lord of hosts had spared a few as seed, they would have been utterly destroyed, as had been the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. God had proposed to save Sodom, if only a few righteous persons could be found.

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That remnant in Israel that remained faithful saved it from the utter destruction that came upon Sodom and Gomorrah.

Romans 9:30-33 – Israel's Rejection of The Faith

v30. "WHAT SHALL WE SAY THEN? THAT THE GENTILES, WHO FOLLOWED NOT AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS, ATTAINED TO RIGHTEOUSNESS, EVEN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS OF FAITH:" (ASV)

Now as Paul is directed by the Holy Spirit to write - we are asked to come to some conclusion; a conclusion that would be drawn from the prophecies recorded by the direction of the Holy Spirit and from the previous verses. What is that conclusion?

The Gentiles, who formerly refused to follow God and to seek the righteousness required in the law of Moses, have now attained to that righteousness through faith in Christ Jesus. This brings out again the reason why the Jews have rejected the gospel and the Gentiles have accepted it. The Jews sought righteousness by an outward observance of the Mosaic Law without purification of their hearts by faith. The Gentiles, on the other hand, sought righteousness by faith, which purifies the heart and causes them to do good works because of love more than because of law.

v31. "BUT ISRAEL, FOLLOWING AFTER A LAW OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, DID NOT ARRIVE AT THAT LAW." (ASV)

Galatians 5:4 "YE ARE SEVERED FROM CHRIST, YE WOULD BE JUSTIFIED BY THE LAW; YE ARE FALLEN AWAY FROM GRACE." (ASV)

Israel depended on their own merit and good works and considered themselves to be righteous by their outward conformance to the letter of the Mosaic Law. But even complete obedience to the Law of Moses would not provide or bring them to righteousness. Why?

v32. "WHEREFORE? BECAUSE THEY SOUGHT IT NOT BY FAITH, BUT AS IT WERE BY WORKS. THEY STUMBLER AT THE STONE OF STUMBLING;" (ASV)

The Old Testament Jews sought righteousness, not through believing with the heart and so purifying the heart by faith, but only used the law to regulate their outward actions.

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Since they were not led by faith; they stumbled at Jesus Christ. At the blessing of Jesus in the temple when he was brought to be presented unto the Lord, God's servant who was waiting for Christ to come says:

"AND SIMEON BLESSED THEM, AND SAID UNTO MARY HIS MOTHER, BEHOLD, THIS CHILD IS SET FOR THE FALLING AND THE RISING OF MANY IN ISRAEL; AND FOR A SIGN WHICH IS SPOKEN AGAINST;" **Luke 2:34** (ASV)

The Law of Moses regulated the outward actions but failed to reach the heart. This is the reason for the need of the new covenant that God would make with the house of Israel (**Jeremiah 31:31-34**)

v33. "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." (ASV)

Paul again uses the language of prophecy with which they were familiar:

Psalms 118:22 "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED IS BECOME THE HEAD OF THE CORNER." (ASV)

Isaiah 8:14 "AND HE SHALL BE FOR A SANCTUARY; BUT FOR A STONE OF STUMBLING AND FOR A ROCK OF OFFENCE TO BOTH THE HOUSES OF ISRAEL, FOR A GIN AND FOR A SNARE TO THE INHABITANTS OF JERUSALEM." (ASV)

As we just read; it had been foretold that God would lay in Zion a stone of stumbling. That stone of stumbling is the Lord Jesus Christ. There was probably never prophecy more literally fulfilled. When he spoke plainly, they were offended; and when he spoke in parables, they were displeased. When he healed, they took offense; when he did not heal and refused to give a sign, they were dissatisfied. If he came to the feast, they sought his life; if he did not come, they busied themselves searching for him, etc.

Whosoever believes on him (belief that brings an active obedience) shall not be brought to shame at the judgment seat of God.

The contrast is that those who do not believe (belief that brings an active obedience) in Jesus Christ shall be agitated, fall, and sink into eternal shame, contempt and punishment.

Just as another prophet records:

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Daniel 12:2 "AND MANY OF THEM THAT SLEEP IN THE DUST OF THE EARTH SHALL AWAKE, SOME TO EVERLASTING LIFE, AND SOME TO SHAME AND EVERLASTING CONTEMPT." (ASV)