

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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A REMNANT OF JEWS, A MASS OF GENTILES

Romans 9:22-33

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The title of my message is “A Remnant of Jews, A Mass of Gentiles”, and I’ll be reading from Romans 9:22-33.

INTRODUCTION: Today I’ll continue in the Romans series. The letter of Romans was to people in Rome, both Jew and Gentile, who were coming together to form the church with Christ as its head. The Jews had a rich, long history with God, filled with all kinds of adventure, joy, sadness, success, and failures. They had been schooled in the Law of Moses.

The Gentiles, however, were everyone else... those who weren’t Jews. The Gentiles were a mix of people with a variety of cultural and pagan backgrounds. Together the Jews and Gentiles were finding a new life, one unified in Christ. With that came new perspectives on everything.

I’ve had two previous messages from Romans chapter 9. One was last week’s message was about how God used Pharaoh to accomplish his will in the lives of the Hebrew people, which later became a nation, many of whom found themselves in Rome generations later.

Here are the three points to my message today:

- As prophesied, the family of faith was expanding
- As prophesied, God spared people because of his grace
- In Christ, all are equal

Read with me starting in Romans chapter 9, verse 22.

SCRIPTURE: Romans 9:22-24

What if God, although choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction? ²³ What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory— ²⁴ even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?

AS PROPHECIED, THE FAMILY OF FAITH WAS EXPANDING

EXPLANATION: Hosea was known as the prophet of doom in his day. In his prophecy, he does talk about redemption of a small group of people. Hosea married a prostitute at God’s command and his marriage and life represented God’s relationship with the nation of Israel. They had two children. A daughter was named Lo-ruhamah which means “not pitied”, and a son was named Lo-ammi which translates “not my people.”

In Romans, Paul quotes from Hosea.

SCRIPTURE: Romans 9:25-36

As he says in Hosea: “I will call them ‘my people’ who are not my people; and I will call her ‘my loved one’ who is not my loved one,” ²⁶ and, “In the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called ‘children of the living God.’”

EXPLANATION: The astute listener to Hosea’s prophecy would have wondered what in the world Hosea must have meant. After many generations of Jews seeing themselves as God’s people and everyone else as God’s enemies—which was pretty much the way it was—how could God possibly go in what seemed another direction? How could people who did not know God and were not God’s people suddenly become God’s people? It was a mystery to them. The very astute listener to Hosea’s prophecy must have settled on the truth that the Messiah who had been promised would be the one to fix the seeming dilemma. All they knew was that the future would be different.

One commentator said that the people had stooped so low and had intermingled with the Gentiles so much that there was no visible difference between them.

APPLICATION: There is something to be gained by all of us in this. We also have numerous clues in the scriptures that things will be different in the future. If I were to divide all of history into three periods of time, at least from a biblical point of view, it would be simple: before Christ, after Christ came, and life after we die. The first period had a definite starting point – “In the beginning...” The second had a definite starting point – when Christ was born. The starting point for the third period of time, life after we die, doesn’t have a worldwide beginning point because we all die at different times. For the believer, life after we die will be different from this life. The scriptures give us many clues about this. So, we can conclude that the people in Hosea’s prophecy had only a glimpse of the future similar to how we have a glimpse of the future. And we can further conclude that Christ made things so much better on this side of Hosea, therefore we can expect him to do the same when we die.

EXPLANATION: But back to the Hosea statement – who exactly did Hosea mean when he said the people who were not God’s people would be called God’s people? One commentator said he meant the Jews who had rebelled but would be restored, but since Paul references it in Romans he brought greater meaning to it all. Listen carefully:

Paul’s letter to the people in Rome was going to people with two different backgrounds. The Jews would have known about Hosea the prophet, but the Gentiles would not have known. That means that when Paul’s letter was read, someone would have to explain its meaning to the Gentiles. I believe Paul referenced these OT scriptures for several reasons: so they would realize they were living out *in real time* the prophecy where the family of faith would be expanded, so that the Jews would be reminded of their heritage, and so the Gentiles would have to learn how they had been grafted in because of Christ.

APPLICATION: Here’s another way to look at it. Just as the church of faith was expanding in the days when Romans was written, it is expanding today and we must be open to new believers.

AS PROPHECIED, GOD SPARED PEOPLE BECAUSE OF HIS GRACE

SCRIPTURE: Romans 9:27-39

Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved. ²⁸ For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality.” ²⁹ It is just as Isaiah said previously: “Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah.”

EXPLANATION: As you know, especially if you’ve been coming to our mid-week study, the Israelites struggled terribly throughout their history in terms of obedience to God. Their country divided into two countries, Israel and Judah. They made bad choices after bad choices. In fact, you wonder how the race survived at all. In every case, however, there was always at least one person who followed God. Paul’s reminder to the people in Rome was clear: there were times before when God’s people numbered relatively few and the same would happen in the future.

Only by the grace of God was there a remnant. He completely destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for their sin, so we know it was only by his grace that others were spared.

God demonstrated his patience over and over in the scripture. God demonstrates his patience today as well. Never misinterpret his patience as indifference. He’s being patient so people will repent.

IN CHRIST, ALL ARE EQUAL

SCRIPTURE: Romans 9:30-33

What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹ but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness, have not attained their goal. ³² Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone.

³³ *As it is written: “See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame.”*

EXPLANATION: Paul made it clear that the Law of Moses was intended to help people spiritually, but a race of people missed the point completely. Their approach to the Law of Moses was supposed to be one of faith, but it was not. It was an approach of works and legalism.

Now here are the Gentiles who weren't raised with the Law of Moses who had found salvation through faith in Jesus. It would have been easy for Christian Jews to become jealous... after all, they thought they'd earned it.

ILLUSTRATION: Let's say a man or woman who's never heard any of this... let's say the person is completely ignorant of the scripture and all things related to salvation in Jesus Christ. Let's say that person suddenly one day hears the Gospel and repents of sin, trusts Jesus as Savior and is called to the ministry and within five years the person has a successful growing ministry bringing people to the Lord. And then, let's say down the road there is another ministry led by someone who was never rebellious, grew up in church, memorized Bible verses, and so on. It would be easy for that person to be jealous of the person who just five years prior had no knowledge of any of it.

EXPLANATION: Let's compare this story to the people in Rome. On the one hand, you have a Jewish man who was schooled in all the scriptures, he followed the Law of Moses, and he believed Jesus was the Messiah. He would have a deep understanding of it all. And then worshiping beside him was a man who just learned about Jesus the prior week. It would be easy for the Jewish man to think he was superior.

But what Paul asked was -- what about those who followed the Law and never accepted Jesus as the Messiah? How about those in comparison to the Gentiles who are new believers? He makes it clear: out of the two, those who are saved are the Gentiles – because it is faith that saves not works. All along, I should have been keeping tally marks by all the scriptures that remind us it is faith that saves us, not works.

The Law of Moses, which was good and righteous because it was from God, was used by God to point out man's shortcomings and demonstrated the need for a Messiah.

APPLICATION: Don't think for one moment you're more special to God than a new believer.

Here is a review for us all to consider. Scripture, especially in the New Testament, tells us that:

- We are sinners
- We are hopeless without Christ
- That Christ is our Savior
- And once we come to Christ, we are all equals in the family of faith.

There is no hierarchy with Christ. We are all sinners saved by grace.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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