

Once We Were Not, Now We Are

Romans 9: 24 - 26

- Remember what the problem was that set this chapter in motion.

Romans 9: 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

- Many of Paul's Jewish family members, neighbors and countrymen were not trusting Christ as their Messiah and were therefore accursed and cut off from Christ. As Paul expresses, in the first verses of Romans 9, this is causing unceasing anguish for him. He hurts for those who are lost, as we all should.
- But Paul also knows that without a proper understanding of why this is happening, it will drive a person to a crisis of faith that would cause them to reject the truths Paul has been teaching in the first 8 chapters of the book of Romans.
 - If members of the covenant people, the Jews, could be accursed and cut off from Christ, how can God's promises be trusted? Didn't God promise faithfulness and salvation to Abraham and his people in the Old Testament?
 - If God's word failed in the case of the Jews, then how can we be sure that it will not also fail with us, the Gentiles?
 - This is what Paul is seeking to address here in Romans 9. To do that he begins by simply answering the question he posed in verse 3.

Romans 9: 6 – 7 But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷ and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring

- God's promise has not failed. Why? Because the "true Israel" who inherit the promises is not made up of merely the biological offspring of Abraham. It takes more than bloodline to save a person. It takes more than religious works to save a person. It takes God's electing grace.
 - Without it, salvation is impossible. With it, salvation is unstoppable.

Romans 9: 8 it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

- Who is it that decides who the children of the promise are? God. Just as I have the right to decide who to give my inheritance to, God has the right to decide who will inherit eternal life.
 - God counts whomever He please to as the children of promise.
- Why does God act this way?

Romans 9: 11 in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls

- Why does God have the right to act this way?

Romans 9: 21 Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?

- After humanity chose to sin and rebel against God, God as the creator had the sovereign right to execute judgment on all of humanity. That would have been fair. That would have been just. But God also has the sovereign right to choose some of fallen humanity to be the objects of His mercy.

Romans 9: 15 – 16 “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” ¹⁶ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.

- So, true Israel, that is the children of promise, come into being not by their physical descent, or ethnic connections, or by their religious works, or even by their faith, but by God’s sovereign choice and God’s sovereign work in their lives.
 - It is that choice and that work that brings faith. Faith is a gift that comes as a result of God’s work.

Romans 9: 22 – 24 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— ²⁴ even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

- Now notice what Paul is doing there in verse 24. He is returning to where he left off in verse 6. Who are the true Israelites, that is the true people of God. It is not just people of Jewish descent; it is all who God has chosen to fashion into vessels of mercy. All whom God has called. They are the ones who will be saved.
 - It is not just Jew. It is Jew and Gentile. God has called some from the Jews and some from the Gentiles to be vessels of mercy, and all of those who God has graciously called are true Israel—the people of God.
- So, the point of verse 24 is that vessels of mercy include some Jews, though not all, as people might assume, but also many Gentiles, which was a surprise to many. But it shouldn’t have been.

Romans 1: 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (Gentile).

- God’s salvation is for every tribe, tongue, and race. Yes, the Jew first (theirs was the covenant promises, the patriarchs, the law, and the sacrifice) but also the Gentile.
- But the main reason that we shouldn’t be surprised at this is because the salvation of a remnant of Israel and a remnant of the Gentiles is exactly what the prophets foretold as they spoke for God in the Old Testament. Through the prophets, God spoke and said this was how it would be.
 - Listen to what James, the half-brother of Jesus, said in Acts 15, as the early church debated whether or not to even let Gentile believers into the church.

Acts 15: 16 – 17 And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written, “After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, ¹⁷ that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name,” says the Lord

- Those prophetic words came primarily from the prophet Amos, and notice what they point to:
 - First David’s fallen tent being restored. What does that mean? Well, God had promised David that someone from his family would always rule over God’s people. But David’s tent collapsed when Babylon invaded Jerusalem in 580 BC. No Davidic king reigned over Israel from the fall of Jerusalem to the birth of Jesus. But Jesus was born to David’s family line and now Jesus had come as the Messiah to rule and reign over the people of God. The fallen tent had been restored.



- But secondly, those prophetic words also pointed to the Gentiles seeing Jesus as the Messiah and the Gentiles flocking into the tent of his rule and reign.
 - At first, the early church, that is the followers of Christ, was comprised of a remnant of Jews, but now the Gentiles were also coming in. Why? Because in His mercy, God was calling them—fashioning them into honorable vessels of His mercy.
- Here in Romans 9: 25 – 29 , Paul also connects what he is teaching to the words of the prophets, as he quotes from the Old Testament prophets Hosea and Isaiah to show us that a remnant of both Gentiles and Jews are included.

Romans 9: 25 – 26 As indeed he says in Hosea, “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’” ²⁶ “And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’” ²⁷ And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, ²⁸ for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.” ²⁹ And as Isaiah predicted, “If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah.”

- As we begin to consider this, it is important that we understand how prophecy in the Bible works. As we look at scripture, we see that oftentimes prophecies have a twofold fulfillment. The first is usually in the immediate and literal, that is in the time of Israel’s history that the prophet was speaking, and the second is in the future of Christ and his church.
 - So, as we think of biblical prophecy, we often need to see it in terms of an arrow being shot through multiple targets.
 - A good example of this is Isaiah’s prophecy that points to the Virgin birth of Christ. You remember the words that Matthew quotes in His Gospel.

Matthew 1: 22 – 23 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³ “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel”

- Now, mistakenly, we often think that God caused Isaiah to just randomly utter those words to point to how Christ would be born. God did cause Isaiah to utter those words, and they do point to the birth of Christ, but we have to remember that they were initially spoken to deal with a crisis that was unfolding between Judah, the tribe of David, the tribe of the Messiah, and the rest of the nation of Israel.
 - The King of Judah, Ahaz, was living in mortal fear of imminent attack from the combined forces of Israel and Syria. God sent Isaiah to speak words of assurance to Ahaz. In other words, what Isaiah said wasn’t just for the birth of Christ but also for the present situation that Ahaz found himself in. Listen to them in that context.

Isaiah 7: 14 - 15 the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. ¹⁵ He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶ For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted.

- Many commentators think that this was immediately fulfilled when a young woman in the royal household was married, shortly after Isaiah spoke the prophecy, then conceived a son, and unknowingly naming him

“Immanuel.” Before this boy came to eat solid food, Israel and Syria would be defeated.

- Now, that is a very reasonable conclusion to draw because in the context those words were given, King Ahaz of Judah was in great fear of an attack from the combined forces of Israel and Syria, and those words of prophecy were given to Isaiah by God to reassure Ahaz that his attackers would indeed be defeated.
 - But as we have already seen, Matthew also takes those words of prophecy and applies them to the Virgin birth of Christ.
- This is the exact situation that we see with Hosea’s prophecy. Hosea spoke his prophecy to the time in which he lived, and I will show you that in a moment, but both the Apostle Paul, here in Romans 9 and Peter, in 1 Peter 2, take Hosea’s prophecy and apply them to show that God foretold in advance this miracle of the Gentiles entering the Kingdom of God.
 1. **Where we are coming from**
- The life of an Old Testament prophet was not an easy one. Not only were they often called to speak to the powerful and confront the evil that was part of their day, they also were often called on by God to become living object lessons of the message God gave to them. That is what happened with Hosea.

Hosea 1: 2 – 3 When the Lord first spoke through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, “Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord.”³ So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

- God wanted Hosea to provide a visible illustration of how the people of Israel have been unfaithful to God, and how God had remained faithful to them and love them in spite of their infidelity.
- Gomer begins to have children and God intervened to give the children symbolic names which is the point of the quotations picked up by Paul in Romans 9.
- God told Hosea to name his first-born son Jezreel, which is a Hebrew word that has to do with the motion of a hand used to scatter something to the wind.
 - By giving Hosea’s first-born son this name, God was saying that He was going to scatter the people of Israel among the Gentile nations because of their sin. This prophecy pointed to the coming permanent exile of the 10 northern tribes of Israel at the hands of the Assyrian empire. Like the seeds of a dandelion blown in the wind, they would be scattered among the nations of the world.
- God told Hosea to name his second born child, a daughter, Lo-Ruhamah. In Hebrew Lo means no and ruhamah means loved or pitied, so the combination means not loved or not pitied. This was to show that during the time the Jews would be scattered among the Gentiles, God would show them no pity and would seem to even cease loving them.
- There would be a third son born to Hosea. God told Hosea to name this son Lo-Ammi. So, this name also begins with the Hebrew word for no, but the rest of the meaning is my people. So, the meaning is not my people. This is pointing to a

time when the Jewish people would cease to be the people of God in any special sense.

- As Paul is showing us here in Romans 9, the people of God are not people of an ethnic heritage, or bloodline, but rather a people who by God's election and God's grace are transformed into vessels of mercy. But let's not get ahead of ourselves.
- The prophecy of Hosea, and Hosea's marriage to Gomer, were given to us by God to illustrate the unfailing love of God. But we don't see that yet in the story, do we? But we also don't know the rest of the story yet.

Hosea 2: 23 they will respond to Jezreel. ²³I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one.' I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people'; and they will say, 'You are my God.'"

- In these verses, which the apostle Paul is quoting in Romans 9, God changes the names of Hosea's children.
 - The name of the first-born son, Jezreel, actually stays the same but the meaning is different. Remember Jezreel refers to the hand motion of scattering something but think how farmers planted in that day. They scattered their seed.
 - Notice what God says in verse 23 "I will plant her for myself in the land." God is telling Hosea and Israel that what he has scattered will one day be replanted.
 - In the case of the second and third child, God changes their name by removing the Lo, which is the negative.
 - So now, Lo-Ruhamah becomes just Ruhamah, changing the meaning from not loved or not pitied to loved. And Lo-Ammi becomes simply Ammi, meaning my people.
- But changing the names of the children wasn't the only thing that God did through Hosea's marriage to Gomer to demonstrate his faithful love for his people.
 - After the birth of the third child, Hosea's wife, Gomer, ran off and resumed her life as a prostitute. But instead of abandoning her God sends Hosea to redeem her.

Hosea 3: 1 The Lord said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites,

- Through the words of Hosea, God would show His loving faithfulness by making a scattered people who had known no mercy, a people of His own.

2. Where we are headed

- There is a difficulty that seems to crop up here as Paul quotes this in Romans 9. In Hosea, the prophet is talking about the rejection, exile, and eventual restoration of the Jews. In Romans 9 Paul is clearly applying the words of Hosea to both Jew and Gentile. Remember how the whole passage fits together:

Romans 9:24 even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

- It is after that phrase that Paul gives this quote from the prophet Hosea.
- Clearly verse 24 is speaking of a new people, the elect people of God, the Church of Jesus Christ, which is composed of both Jews and Gentiles. Paul is taking a prophecy that was originally given to the nation of Israel and using it to teach that

the Gentiles, which were not a people have now become a people of God, along with a remnant of believing Jews.

- Interestingly enough Peter also uses Hosea 2:23 for this same purpose in his first epistle. Once again, speaking to a primarily Gentile audience Peter writes:

1 Peter 2: 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

- In applying the words of Hosea to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews what Peter and Paul are teaching us is that unbelieving Jews along with unbelieving Gentiles have now become the ones who are Gentiles, and God's elect, Jew, and Gentile alike, are now God's people under the rule and reign of Christ.
- Amos's prophecy concerning the restoration of David's fallen tent is being fulfilled, not in the ethnic Jewish people, but in the elect of God, both Jew and Gentile, in Christ's Church.

Acts 15: 16 – 17 "After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it,¹⁷ that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name," says the Lord

- Here in Romans 9, the main theme is not the eventual blessing of Israel as a nation, but the present blessing of Jew and Gentile alike, as individuals are called out of both groups to form the body of believers that is the true church. This began happening at the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, and it is continuing into the future, as people, Jew and Gentile alike, come under the rule and reign of Christ.

Revelation 7: 9 – 10 After this 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, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

- Think about that. Based on Paul's teaching here in Romans 9, Hosea's prophecy, Amos' prophecy is being fulfilled before our very eyes and that fulfillment culminates around the Throne of the Lamb in heaven.

3. **What it means for our present**

- Think of the wonder of what Paul is saying here. Once we were the Gentiles—people whom even Jesus referred to as dogs.

Matthew 7: 27 – 29 And he said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."²⁸ But she answered him, "Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."²⁹ And he said to her, "For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter."

- Why would Jesus call this poor Gentile woman a dog? Well, here's why. Think of how Paul describes Gentiles prior to their salvation.

Ephesians 2: 11 – 12 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— 12 remember that you were at that time 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.

- Apart from Christ, apart from the covenant promises of God the Gentiles were without hope. They were vessels of God's wrath marked for destruction. Scattered throughout the earth, they were not a people of God and were not loved by God. Christless, hopeless, and godless! What expressions could better convey the horror of the natural Gentile position?
- But what happened?

Ephesians 2: 13 – 14 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one

- Christ dies and grace is seen overflowing. Those who were once outside as unclean dogs are now the people of God, sons of the living God.
 - What an amazing thing! Whether it be restoration to divine favor of Israelites, or conversion of Gentiles, or even both, the cause or source of restoration and salvation in each case is exactly the same. The ever active, powerful, and sovereign grace of God almighty!
 - The way God works is always the same. "Not my people" I will call "My people" and "Not my loved one" I will call "My loved one."
- What is it that makes Jew and Gentile alike, not just the people of God but sons of the most high God? Nothing but God's electing grace and mercy.

John 1: 16 For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

- Jew and Gentile alike, if salvation has come to you, it is by grace alone.
- And if it is not yet come, you should know that it will never be found by any achievement on your part but only by the electing mercy of God. All you can do is throw yourself and all your hope for your salvation on him and his mercy.
 - Have you done that? If you haven't, may I ask you what are you waiting for? What else are you hoping in for your salvation?
 - Are you hoping in your connections? Your family, a church affiliation, a nationality, or even theology?
 - The Old Testament Jews had the prophets, the patriarchs, the law, the sacrifice, the temple worship, but they were cutoff and scattered.
 - Are you hoping in your good works? The Bible is clear they will not save you.

Isaiah 64:6 All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

- Why does God say our righteous acts are as filthy rags? Because unless the righteous things we do are a response to God's grace in our lives, every righteous thing we do is tainted with selfishness.
- If you are doing righteous things to make God pleased with you, to earn God's blessing, then don't you see that what you are doing isn't for God it is for your own selfishness—to secure blessing for you?

Isaiah 29: 13 These people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men

- Does that describe your relationship with God where you mouth praise and go through the motions trying to appease Him, but your heart is far from Him? If it does, I need to plainly tell you that you are not a child of God, and you are therefore without hope and without God in the world.



There is no salvation apart from the grace of God shown to us in Jesus Christ. How do you receive God's grace into your life? It is a free gift; all you have to do is ask. Ask God to give you the gift of His grace that is in Christ Jesus.

John 1: 12 to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God

- The him in that verse is Jesus. Jesus is the gift of God's grace. The gift that cleanses you of sin, and gives you righteousness, and give you the right to be called a child of God.
 - It is so easy and so free that so many look away and look for something more. But there is nothing more that God requires, just faith in the grace and mercy He has shown you in Jesus.
- God has loved you and given His Son to you as a gift of grace. What have you done to deserve it? Nothing. Please don't be offended, but each of us are Gomer.
 - Now, if it is not bad enough that I have called you Gomer, remember who Gomer was and what she represents. She is not just an unfaithful woman who had fallen into sin. She is a woman who was loved with a love she didn't earn or deserve and redeemed at a price she could never fully repay.

Hosea 3: 2 So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley.

- It was costly for Hosea to redeem his unfaithful wife. Not only in material goods, but also in the shame he would bear, as he took her back. Everyone knew who Gomer was. Her shame became his shame. But it didn't matter because Hosea made a decision to set his redeeming love upon her, and all he asked in return was this:

Hosea 3: 3 "You must dwell as mine for many days. You shall not play the whore, or belong to another man; so, will I also be to you."

- What did Hosea want in return for his redeeming love? Nothing except Gomer's faithfulness.
- Now as you think about the picture Hosea gives us of God's redeeming love think of what Peter tells us the cost of our redemption was:

1 Peter 1: 18 – 19 you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

- Christ has borne your shame, he purchased you from the slavery of sin by his own blood. It is what the word redemption means. Now you belong to him, and what he desires from you is your heart, your love.
- If God did not love us and had not moved to redeem us by the death of Jesus Christ, we might be excused for our failure to love him. But since he has loved us and saved us, our only proper response is to give him our all.

"Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul my life my all."

1 Peter 2: 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

- God live in mercy, grace, love, and faithfulness to the one who loved you and gave his life as a ransom for your life.