

## Why Israel failed to obtain the righteousness of God

Romans 9:1-33

In the chapters 9 through 11 the apostle Paul pours out his heart regarding his concerns and desires for his fellow Jews.

From these chapters, and especially from chapter 11 we also learn that this letter was written to a church mainly consisting of disciples from a Gentile background

All too often we think that God finally is finished with the Jewish people and that the church has taken the place of Israel.

But that is not what Paul teaches us in these chapters and also from Revelation chapter 7:1-8 we have to conclude that God isn't finished with the Jewish people yet.

Nevertheless, the majority of the Jewish people from the time of Paul have failed to obtain the righteousness of God.

And in these 3 chapters Paul is explaining why that happened.

And we definitely should keep in mind that there are many valuable lessons to learn for us from these chapters.

## Romans 9:1-2

- I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart.
- Ik spreek de waarheid in Christus, ik lieg niet en mijn geweten getuigt mee door de Heilige Geest, dat het een grote bron van droefheid voor mij is, en een voortdurende smart voor mijn hart.

For us it may be hard to understand the feelings of Paul for his fellow Jews.

But these first two verses already make it very clear that he was heartbroken about the situation of his kinsmen.

Maybe we would understand it better if some of our children would wander away from the Lord. If that happens to anyone of us it probably will help us to understand his pain.

For me personally, my heart is always broken over the division that there is in the Body of Christ and about the watering down of the truth in order not to offend people by the Gospel.

But the Gospel is confrontational by nature and it has to be so in order to wake us up to see our miserable condition.

### Romans 9:3-5

- For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

The Dutch version of these verses is on the next sheet.

### Romans 9:3-5

- Want ik zou zelf wel wensen vervloekt te zijn, weg van Christus, ten gunste van mijn broeders, mijn familieleden wat het vlees betreft.
- Zij zijn immers Israëlieten; voor hen geldt de aanneming tot kinderen en de heerlijkheid en de verbonden en de wetgeving en de eredienst en de beloften.
- Tot hen behoren de vaders, en uit hen is, wat het vlees betreft, de Christus voortgekomen, Die God is, boven alles, te prijzen tot in eeuwigheid.
- Amen!

This part always reminds me of Moses pleading with God after the Israelites had made the golden calf and were dancing around it. He pleaded with God and even said, that, if God was not willing to forgive, he too wanted to be condemned with them.

And let's be honest, see how much God has given unto us through the Jewish people. Even our Savior came from them as far as his flesh was concerned. And it was through them that the Scriptures came to us, both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

And let's be honest, even the church started in Jerusalem on the first day of Pentecost with 3.000 people from among the Jews being saved in that one day.

### Romans 9:6-7

- But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called."
- Ik zeg dit niet alsof het Woord van God vervallen is, want niet allen die uit Israël voortgekomen zijn, zijn Israël.
- Ook niet omdat zij Abrahams nageslacht zijn, zijn zij allen kinderen. Maar: Alleen dat van Izak zal uw nageslacht genoemd worden.

In these verses the apostle Paul starts to explain why things didn't work out the way we mostly think it should have worked out.

Paul makes it clear that people cannot just claim to be children of God because they were born in a certain family or nation.

That wasn't even true of all the children of Abraham and it is also not true of all the children of Israel, or Jacob as his name used to be.

And he explains it by giving several examples where God specifically spoke about people He elected for specific purposes.

Paul continues to speak about this in the following verses.

### Romans 9:8-9

- That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.
- For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son."
- Dat is: niet de kinderen van het vlees zijn kinderen van God, maar de kinderen van de belofte worden als nageslacht gerekend.
- Want dit is het woord van de belofte: Rond deze tijd zal Ik komen, en dan zal Sara een zoon hebben.

Before Isaac was born Abraham had already a son from Hagar and at some time he even pleaded with God to fulfill his promise through Ismael.

But God was not going to do that. He was going to fulfill His plan through the son He would give to Sarah. And that son was given at a point in time that it was no longer possible from a human point of view. As a matter of fact the promise itself was given at a point in time that it physically was not possible anymore.

Also the sons that Abraham got later on by Keturah, the wife he took after Sarah had died, were not included in the promise of God.

But let's continue.

### Romans 9:10-13

- And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, “The older shall serve the younger.”
- As it is written, “Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.”

Again the Dutch version is on the next sheet.

### Romans 9:10-13

- En dit niet alleen, maar zo was het ook met Rebekka, die zwanger was van één man, namelijk Izak, onze vader.
- Want toen de kinderen nog niet geboren waren, en niets goeds of kwaads gedaan hadden – opdat het voornemen van God, dat overeenkomstig de verkiezing is, stand zou houden, niet uit de werken, maar uit Hem Die roept – werd tot haar gezegd: De meerdere zal de mindere dienen.
- Zoals geschreven staat: Jakob heb Ik liefgehad en Ezau heb Ik gehaat.

As a matter of fact, we see the same thing happening with the children of Isaac and Rebecca.

Again God is the one who chooses through which one He will fulfill His promises.

And what God decides man can never change.

### Romans 9:14-16

- What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!
- For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."
- So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

Again the Dutch version is on the next sheet.

### Romans 9:14-16

- Wat zullen wij dan zeggen? Is er onrechtvaardigheid bij God? Volstrekt niet!
- Want Hij zegt tegen Mozes: Ik zal Mij ontfermen over wie Ik Mij ontferm en zal barmhartig zijn voor wie Ik barmhartig ben.
- Zo hangt het dan niet af van hem die wil, ook niet van hem die hardloopt, maar van God Die Zich ontfermt.

Sometimes people may claim that God is not fair, choosing to bless one person and rejecting another one.

But the fact is, that our salvation does not depend on what we do, but it depends fully and completely on what God has done in the past and is doing now.

For many people this is unacceptable, but this is how it is. Our salvation completely depends on God and unto whom He will show mercy. We cannot claim a right to mercy, because if we would be able to claim mercy, it wouldn't be mercy anymore. Receiving something you are entitled to is never mercy. Mercy is always getting something you are not entitled to.

## Romans 9:17-18

- For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth."
- Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.
- Want de Schrift zegt tegen de farao: Juist hiertoe heb Ik u verwekt: dat Ik in u Mijn kracht bewijzen zou, en dat Mijn Naam verkondigd zou worden op de hele aarde.
- Dus Hij ontfermt Zich over wie Hij wil, en Hij verhardt wie Hij wil.

God wanted to show mercy to the people of Israel after they had been enslaved for 400 years. But Pharaoh was not willing to let them go. He didn't want them to be blessed by God. As a matter of fact he even didn't recognize the authority of God.

In His dealing with Pharaoh God still pursued His purpose of showing mercy unto Israel.

And through that story we learn that we cannot stop or disturb the plans of God.

His works out His purposes always, even when we don't understand exactly how He does it and why He does it that way.

And He has full authority to do so, because He created everything and everything belongs to Him.

In the following verses Paul is explaining that.

## Romans 9:19-21

- You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?”
- But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?”
- Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

Let's display also the Dutch version on the next sheet.

### Romans 9:19-21

- U zult dan tegen mij zeggen: Wat heeft Hij dan nog aan te merken? Want wie heeft Zijn wil weerstaan?
- Maar, o mens, wie bent u toch dat u God tegenspreekt? Zal ook het maaksel tegen hem die het gemaakt heeft, zeggen: Waarom hebt u mij zó gemaakt?
- Of heeft de pottenbakker geen macht over het leem, om uit dezelfde klomp klei het ene voorwerp tot een eervol, het andere tot een oneervol voorwerp te maken?

We cannot blame God for anything and we cannot say that He is unfair.

Let's be honest, if God would not have prepared a way for us to be saved and would have condemned all of mankind, He still would have been righteous, because all of us deserved to be condemned because of our sins, isn't it?

Then, how could we claim the right to tell God who He has to save and who He has to condemn? That's His decision and His decision only.

Paul continues about this subject in the next verses.

### Romans 9:22-24

- What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

Let's quickly move on to the next sheet for the Dutch version of these Scriptures.

### Romans 9:22-24

- En is het niet zo dat God, omdat Hij Zijn toorn wilde bewijzen en Zijn macht bekendmaken, met veel geduld de voorwerpen van Zijn toorn, voor het verderf gereedgemaakt, verdragen heeft?
- En dat met het doel om de rijkdom van Zijn heerlijkheid bekend te maken over de voorwerpen van Zijn ontferming, die Hij van tevoren bereid heeft tot heerlijkheid?
- Hen heeft Hij ook geroepen, namelijk ons, niet alleen uit de Joden, maar ook uit de heidenen.

How would we know the righteousness of God if He would not punish evil? And how would we get any idea of His glory if He would not be merciful to the ones He wants to show mercy.

As a matter of fact, it was quite a surprise to most of the Jewish people that God also did call people from among the Gentiles.

But even in Isaiah 56:1-8 God speaks about how He will accept those from among the foreigners (Gentiles) who fear Him and come to worship Him, humbling themselves before Him.

The message of the Gospel in the Old Testament is no different from the Gospel in the New Testament and in both cases faith was the key that was given to us by God for salvation.

When the apostles shared the Gospel they did it from the Old Testament, because that was all they had.

## Romans 9:25-26

- As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved."
- "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God."
- Zoals Hij ook in Hosea zegt: Ik zal Niet-Mijn-volk noemen: Mijn volk, en de Niet-geliefde: Geliefde.
- En het zal zijn dat op de plaats waar tegen hen gezegd was: U bent Niet-Mijn-volk, daar zullen zij kinderen van de levende God genoemd worden.

Many times God was very angry with Israel and several times He told Moses to separate himself from the people so He might destroy them completely and make a new start with Moses.

But as Moses pleaded with Him, he relented from His plans and continued with the Jewish people, even though under severe restrictions.

So it is with us today. Let's be honest, if we consider the situation in many churches why would God not make an end to the whole thing. Isn't that what in many cases we would deserve?

But God continues to go on with the church, even though we need to realize that not all of those who come to church are necessarily children of God.

Let's continue.

## Romans 9:27-29

- Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, The remnant will be saved.
- For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, Because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth.”
- And as Isaiah said before: “Unless the LORD of Sabaoth had left us a seed, We would have become like Sodom, And we would have been made like Gomorrah.”

The Dutch version is on the next sheet.

### Romans 9:27-29

- En Jesaja roept over Israël uit: Al zou het getal van de Israëlieten zijn als het zand van de zee, slechts het overblijfsel zal behouden worden.
- Want Hij voltooit een zaak en handelt die af in gerechtigheid. De Heere immers zal metterdaad Zijn zaak snel afhandelen op de aarde.
- En zoals Jesaja van tevoren gezegd heeft: Als de Heere van de hemelse legers ons geen nageslacht had overgelaten, zouden wij als Sodom zijn geworden en aan Gomorra gelijkgesteld zijn geweest.

Even through the prophets of the Old Testament it becomes clear that not all of the nation of Israel would be saved.

But the promise is clear that a remnant of them would be saved. And we already see a fulfillment of this promise in the 3.000 that were saved on the first day of Pentecost.

And it is a fact that until this day still Jewish people also are saved. We just need to think about the many Messianic Jewish communities there are in the world today.

Let's continue.

### Romans 9:30-33

- What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness.
- Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone.
- As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

Again the Dutch verses are on the next sheet.

## Romans 9:30-33

- Wat zullen wij dan zeggen? Dit: dat de heidenen, die geen gerechtigheid hebben nagejaagd, gerechtigheid verkregen hebben, gerechtigheid echter die uit het geloof is.
- Maar Israël, dat de wet van de gerechtigheid najaagde, is aan de wet van de gerechtigheid niet toegekomen.
- Waarom niet? Omdat zij die niet uit geloof zochten, maar als uit werken van de wet. Want zij hebben zich gestoten aan de steen des aanstoots, zoals geschreven staat: Zie, Ik leg in Sion een steen des aanstoots en een struikelblok. En: Ieder die in Hem gelooft, zal niet beschaamd worden.

It is in these last verses of chapter 9 that Paul explains clearly why Israel failed to obtain the righteousness of God.

The reason is that they wanted to obtain it by works and that simply doesn't work. Seeking salvation on the basis of works will lead to legalism. And legalism cannot save us. Even in the church we can experience different forms of legalism. It can be of the kind that tells us we only can be children of God if we live in a certain way. Or it may tell us to disregard portions of the Word of God. Legalism will always hinder us to truly obey God and live according to His Word.

I have said it many times before: as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ we obey God not in order to be saved, but because we have been saved. And we do so because we believe that God gave His commandments for our wellbeing. Let's pray!