

ROMANS XXXV: SAVING THE REMNANT

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INTRODUCTION:

In order to understand Scripture rightly, we have to understand the flow of redemptive history. God's revelation to us is progressive, and it unfolds over centuries. If we treat the Bible as the book that fell from the sky, we are going to have a terrible time comprehending it rightly. The works of God's judgments and deliverances are *sequential*.

THE TEXT:

"As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved . . ." ([Rom. 9:25-29](#)).

SUMMARY OF THE TEXT:

In this short passage, we have four quotations, two from Hosea and two from Isaiah. This is a good place to let the apostle instruct us on what the two prophets were talking about. We have just learned in the previous verse that the vessels of mercy included the Gentiles (v. 24). Paul then confirms this by saying that Hosea predicted it by saying that God will take those who were not His people and make them His people (v. 25; [Hos. 2:23](#)). He follows it up with another citation. Those who were called not the people of God would be accepted as children (v. 26; [Hos. 1:10](#)). Isaiah cries out concerning Israel—even though the children of Israel were as the sand of the seashore, only a remnant would be saved (vv. 27-28; [Is. 10:22-23](#)). Isaiah had made the previous point that unless God saved a remnant, the Jews would have been wiped out just like Sodom and Gomorrah had been (v. 29; [Is. 1:9](#)).

SUMMARY OF THE CITATIONS:

If you read carefully through the first two chapters of Hosea, this is what you will find. God takes Israel as a bride, and just as Hosea found Gomer unfaithful, so God found Israel unfaithful. Because of this, God put Israel away entirely ([Hos. 1:6](#)), but will have limited mercy on Judah ([Hos. 1:7](#)). Then those who were put away for their apostasy (and called "not God's people") will again be called God's people. This is the doctrine of the remnant followed by the full restoration. Paul also quotes Hosea on this restoration in a way that includes the Gentiles in it ([Hos. 2:23](#)). The restoration of Israel (utterly put away) means that other nations can come to the Lord also. Note the phrase comparing Israel to the sands of the sea ([Hos. 1:10](#)).

Isaiah uses the same expression—the sand of the sea—and says that even though Israel be of that great number, a remnant shall return to the Lord ([Is. 10:22](#)). The Lord will make short work of it in a decisive judgment ([Is. 10:23](#)). Paul is not dragging the Gentiles into this without warrant because just a few verses later, Isaiah himself includes the Gentiles ([Is. 11:9-10](#)). This is not conjecture, because Paul himself quotes this verse later in Romans while justifying the mission to the Gentiles ([Rom. 15:12](#)). In short, Paul is not proof-texting here—he is appealing to a sustained vision from the Old Testament. And then of course we see what a great *mercy* that gift of a remnant was ([Is. 1:9](#)).

REDEMPTIVE TIMELINE:

Put all this together, and what do we have? The nation of Israel was called out from the nations to become and be a light for the nations. Though they grew and flourished numerically (sand of the sea), they consistently went astray, again and again, as anyone who has read their Old Testament knows. We have a history of cyclic apostasies and restorations. This typological pattern climaxed when the Messiah came. The vast majority of Israel fell away, and God spared a remnant. That remnant was to be used in such a way that the Gentiles would come to the Messiah, and then all Israel would eventually return, resulting in a huge blessing for the entire world ([Rom. 11:15](#)).

REMEMBER YOUR PLACE IN THE STORY:

Now take what this means at the simplest level. It means that the ratio of saved to lost varies widely based on what moment in redemptive history we are dealing with. We cannot take particular passages like "many are saved but few are chosen," universalize them for all time, and make them a permanent fixture. It is not playing fast and loose with the text to contextualize it.

NARROW THE WAY:

For example, if you were to say to someone that you believed that the vast majority of the human race will be saved (as you should believe), the first thing you will hear is that the Bible says that the way is narrow, and only a few find it ([Matt. 7:13-14](#)). But remember the remnant. What are the remnant? The few who find it. What else are they? They are *first century Jews*. Consider it this way—with comments interspersed.

"Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate [*through which the remnant enters*]: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able [*the majority of unbelieving Israel falls away*]. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets [*the streets of first century Israel, remember*]. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out [*the kingdom is taken from the Jews and given to those who will bear the fruit of it* ([Matt 21:43](#))]. 29 And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God [*the Gentiles will flood in and sit down with the patriarchs and with the remnant*]. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last" ([Luke 13:23-30](#)).



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