

Transformed!

How God Renews the Lives of His People

Get Personal

Part 11: *The Privilege of Being God's People*

A Note from Pastor Keith...

The Gospel is a message of love: an undeserved love demonstrated at the Cross as Jesus died for our sins; a transforming love provided for our spiritual renewal; an unending love promised by our heavenly Father to us, His children. A reassuring message, and yet one that seems undermined by a glaring counter-example: Israel. By the time of the writing of the book of Romans, these covenant people of God seem to have been passed by as God's covenant program moved beyond them to the nations. What are we to make of this? Does the temporary setting aside of Israel bring into doubt all that we've learned about the constancy of God's love? Certainly not! But it does provide us with an important and timely warning about what it means to be a nation under God.

The Question in Context:

If God's love never fails, then what happened to Israel?

The Question for Today:

What does it mean to be "God's people" today?

We didn't choose God, He chose us —and He can "unchoose" us, too!

*We're not talking about an individual losing his place in heaven.
We're talking about a people group losing its place in God's plan.*

1. Any people group once used by God can be set aside. It was true of Israel and it can be true of us.

¹I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit—²I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, ⁴the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. ⁵Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

Romans 9:1-5 (all references are NIV)

2. God's people are not defined ethnically, politically or geographically, but spiritually and based on His promises.

⁶It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. ⁷Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." ⁸In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.

Romans 9:6-8

3. God's promises are not made to people groups without distinction, but to the specific people whom He has chosen.

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Israel holds a unique place in God's plan for human history. Though they have been set aside, the Scriptures are clear that this is only temporary. God's chosen people will one day be restored to their central place in God's plan.

In the meantime, other peoples, including in recent centuries the people of the United States of America, have been privileged to play crucial roles in building God's Kingdom in this world.

I know this isn't the sort of thing we were taught in history class, but think about it: What role has our nation played in advancing the cause of Christ worldwide?

⁹For this was how the promise was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son." ¹⁰Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. ¹¹Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: ¹²not by works but by him who calls—she was told, "The older will serve the younger." ¹³Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

Romans 9:9-13

“But that’s not fair!” (An Objection)

1. This isn't about fairness or justice.* It's about mercy.

¹⁴What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! ¹⁵For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." ¹⁶It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. ¹⁷For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." ¹⁸Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

Romans 9:14-18

*If God acted justly, giving us all what we deserve, we would all be dead.

2. When we rebel, God is free to use that, too!

¹⁹One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?" ²⁰But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" ²¹Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? ²²What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction? ²³What 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—²⁴even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?

Romans 9:19-24

3. God always provides ample warning.

²⁵As 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," ²⁶and, "It will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.'" ²⁷Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved. ²⁸For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality." ²⁹It 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."

Romans 9:25-29

4. But what do we do? We go our own way.

³⁰What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. ³²Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone." ³³As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

Romans 9:30-33

Get Personal!

How in recent years have we, the American people, wavered from our historic commitment to the cause of Christ?

But it's not too late to live as God's people should! What are you and your family doing to go against that cultural trend?

What should we be doing as a church family?