

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

"Israel's Rejection and God's Righteousness"

Romans 9:30-33

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INTRODUCTION

1. Romans 9-11 are a logical statement of God's purpose for the nation Israel. These chapters demonstrate that His purpose never comes to naught.
2. True, Israel had privileges (vv 3, 5), but the nation still turned from Messiah. This caused Paul horrible pain (vv 1-3).
3. Because of Israel's rejection of Messiah, did this mean God's promises were of no effect? Answer: no (vv 6-13). Did it mean God's justice was questioned? Answer: no (vv 14-18). Did it not mean God is wrong to find fault with Israel? Answer: no (vv 19-24). In every instance, Scripture upholds God and His Word.
4. Now a fresh step is taken in the argument. Since Israel's failure is not due to failure on God's part, their failure is traced to their own wilful disobedience to God and His Gospel of righteousness. Study it!

1. THE BASIC QUESTION vv 30, 31

Note the form of the question is the same as earlier (v. 14).

a. About Gentiles v 30

There is no article before "Gentiles" in Greek, hence some but not all are meant. They did not pursue ("follow") righteousness. The verb is in the present tense. Yet, aside from this constant pursuit, Gentiles did attain righteousness. Here the verb is aorist. It means to grasp, seize, overtake. It completes the figure of "pursue" in relation to a runner or a race-course. Thus, Gentiles laid hold of the prize which is righteousness. This is explicated to mean the righteousness "out of" (sourced in) faith, thus God's true righteousness (cf. 1:16, 17).

b. About Israel v. 31

Here is an anomaly. In spite of the fact that some Gentiles even without seeking it have attained righteousness, Israel has failed. The particle "but" is a strong adversative. The verb "followed" is the same as the one in v. 30. It means to pursue. Thus the nation pursued a law which they thought would give them righteousness. In all this pursuit, Paul adds, they did not attain (arrive at, anticipate, 1 Thess. 4:15) to the law of righteousness they pursued after! They really did not "hear" the law (cf. Gal. 4:21).

What a charge. How different was it for Gentiles (Acts 13:44-46-49).

2. THE SPECIFIC ANSWER vv 32-33

"Wherefore?" is asking why this twofold result concerning Gentiles and Jews took place. The explanation is simple:-

a. Israel Pursuit v 32a

They sought righteousness "as it were works." Their scheme was "out of works" and not "out of faith." There simply is no righteousness in this way. It was a Jewish idea, but it was wrong.

b. Israel's Stumbling v 32b, 33

The verb means to "cut against." It is not to stumble over by inadvertence, but to be annoyed with, show irritation at. The Jews expressed their indignation over Christ. They found Christ a stumblingblock (1 Cor. 1:23). Isaiah 8:14 is quoted in v. 32b and again in v. 33 where Isaiah 28:16 is also quoted. The Messiah is noted as a stumbling stone and rock of offence to His enemies. Those who believe on Him, will not be ashamed. For the verb "ashamed," the Hebrew has "shall not make haste" i.e. to flee because of fear. Rather, they have boldness (cf. 1 John 2:28; 4:17).

CONCLUSION The God of Romans 9 is the same as the God of John 3:16. There are not two Gods. The sovereign God is not opposed to a whosoever will Gospel nor is a whosoever Gospel opposed to a sovereign God. If you find it difficult to harmonize, leave it with exactly what Scripture says. Our responsibility is to accept all of Scripture--leave it there! Amen.