

## Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 421

Paul's Use of the Old Testament Series: Romans 9-11

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### Episode Summary

In the preceding episodes, we've seen how Paul reconfigures Old Testament faith, faithfulness, and Torah keeping in light of the work of Jesus and his own encounter with the risen Christ. In this episode we look at how Paul recontextualized Israel's election in light of Christ as the risen messiah. Specifically, we'll look at Paul's use of Hosea in Romans 9, and how Paul sees Hosea's words describing God's election of Israel as including Gentiles, thus reconfiguring the concept of election.

### Transcript

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 421: Paul's Use of the Old Testament Series: Romans 9-11 with Dr. Matt Halsted. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike? How are you doing?

**MSH:** Oh, not too bad, not too bad. I can't complain. We're almost at the end of this series, you know?

**TS:** Yeah.

**MSH:** So we've got what we're going to be doing today and then we've got, I believe, one more to follow. So we're almost through this whole series, and it's been challenging, no doubt, but I think it's been good.

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Well, Matt Halsted is back with us again for another episode of what Paul does with the Old Testament in his New Testament writings, and this time you're really... I don't know if you're biting... My impression of Romans 9-11 is everybody who does work here bites off more than they can chew [laughing]. There are no exceptions to that. So I'm sure though that, again, for our listeners,

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if you have the Messianic profile in your head, we're just zeroed in on what Paul does with the Old Testament and how he reconfigures things through his own encounter with Jesus and how that is consistent with pre-Pauline or pre-Jesus Messianic speculation in the Jewish community. Paul is mainstream in that sense, but he does, you know, offer new material because he refracts everything through his experience of the risen Christ on the way to Damascus. So Matt, thanks for being here with us again, and what exactly are we going to do now?

**MLH:** Yeah, we're going to focus on Romans 9 and just dabble very briefly in Romans 11. And you're right, a lot of people when you get into Romans 9-11, they tend to bite off too much more than they can handle, right? And yet what's interesting here is that Romans 9 is not just a self-contained unit. You need Romans 11 and you need Romans 10 and, of course, then if you read Romans 9-11, you need Romans 2 and it's just... It is so much, but we're going to do our best to really narrow the focus quite down to the concept of election. And I think that Paul, you know, Christologically reconfigures the concept of election as well. And so like we said in the last episode, there is some freshness, some newness here, but it's still not inconsistent with the Old Testament view as well. The good thing though, Mike, about this episode with Romans 9 is we know that everybody will agree with us because everybody's in agreement about Romans 9, right? [laughter]

**MSH:** Right.

**MLH:** So that's good news, but anyway, so yeah. The last couple of episodes on Romans we've talked about how Paul reconfigures faith language, Torah language around the assumptions and the Messiah. He reconfigured the Abrahamic story around the Messiah, too. We saw that in the last episode. And, again, this episode more reconfiguration happens, this time with the concept of election. Election is a concept that is reconfigured around Christ and the Christ people.

So to introduce that whole thing, I think the best place to start is toward the end of Romans 9 and then we'll recircle at the beginning in a moment, but just to kind of see what's at stake here, Paul cites two texts from Hosea and Romans 9:25-26. And it's a quotation that's rather a conundrum, really, and so many countless commentators, scholars have commented on this and tried to make sense of this. There is really not a consensus and so it's a fun place to begin. And I'm going to read this passage of Romans 9:24-26 and then I'll explain it and you'll see where the conundrum is. Okay, so I'll begin with verse 24. (By the way, verse 24 kind of starts off in typical Pauline fashion with kind of a break in thought from the previous verse, but we'll just start here.) He says:

**<sup>24</sup> even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? <sup>25</sup> 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.’”**

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**<sup>26</sup> “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.’”**

Okay, so this is just a little snippet of a much larger argument. So let me just break it down and explain it briefly. Paul's argument here with these quotations from Hosea is to make the argument... He's making the argument that Gentiles can be included into the New Covenant family of God. The way these quotations are constructed and the context of Paul's argument here makes it pretty clear that Paul is talking about the Gentiles. So when he quotes Hosea who says, "I will call the 'not my people,' 'my people' and the 'not loved,' 'loved,'" Paul is using that to say, "I will call the Gentiles who are not my people, 'you are my people.'" So he is applying that text to the Gentiles. Now here's the conundrum. In the original context of Hosea, chapter 2, chapter 1... In that original context, Hosea uses that prophesy and these words to refer not to Gentiles, but to the rebellious tribes of Israel. So what Hosea is really doing in the original context is that he is prophesying that wayward Israel will be re-included in the covenant. But Paul uses this prophecy as an argument that Gentiles will be included in the covenant for the first time. So there are differences going on here between the original context and Paul's. What do you do with this? Well, again, as I said a moment ago, scholars are divided on this and not sure what to do with it. One scholar says that (it's humerus almost) that Paul just chose the wrong verse to argue for the right thing or something like that. And so, you know, you have that view, but let me go through sort of a tour of the views here of how scholars have made sense of this.

The first view is just very simple: Paul unilaterally imposes his own assumptions onto the text so that it can mean whatever he wants it to mean at the time. You know, some scholars, you know, might... Well, I'm thinking of one scholar and this scholar is not a relativist in the sense that I might have made it out to be. You know, he does not think that Paul is making the text mean whatever he wants it to mean, but he says that Paul is approaching this text with a New Covenant awareness. That allows him to give it some new meaning. Okay, that's interesting. I guess initially I would say I like that. I think there's something like that going on. But the problem ultimately with that view in particular (and again, for more context you have to read my book on his view)... But the problem with that view is that it really does not take into account how Paul appeals to that text as the basis for his argument. In other words, Paul does not seem to be merely reading his New Covenant awareness into the text, but he is rather using this text to argue for a New Covenant awareness. He is arguing from the text, right? So that needs to be taken into account. I mean, as I said, it is true that I think Paul is reading Christological assumptions into the text (and we'll talk about that more in a bit), but this can't be an excuse to disregard the way in which Paul employs the original Hosea text as the basis for his argument. Okay? So I think what we need

is a way to make sense of how Paul can read out of the text just as much as he can read into it. Okay? And some proposals that I've seen from scholars don't balance those two needs out the best. Okay, so that's the first view.

The second view just simply says, well, okay, Hosea's text originally meant to include the Gentiles. So if Paul is applying it to the Gentiles later, then there's no problem. Well, the problem, though, with that view is that it's just so hard to substantiate. We really can't know, for example, what Hosea was thinking, and we can't really like crawl into his mind and examine the corners of his thought. All we have is his text, and his text doesn't seem to give us reason to think that he was forecasting Gentile inclusion. He was, again, talking about Jewish re-inclusion. And in my opinion, I think to suggest that Hosea originally meant to include Gentiles is like saying that those passages in the Old Testament that speak about a *mashiach* or a messiah, they were all about Jesus, right? And like we've seen in the past episodes, those views would be mistaken to say that. You know, we can't go back and make Hosea's context fit our expectations because we need it to, right? So we need to be cautious of that. The original context needs to be our guide in more ways than one. Okay, but...

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**MSH:** Yeah, I think we have to acknowledge there's no problem with saying the original context for this Old Testament passage was Acts and along the way this is how it got fulfilled and so Paul uses it to say why. He's still attached to it.

**MLH:** Right, very much so.

**MSH:** I don't know if I'm saying that very well, but there's no crime in saying both.

**MLH:** Right, yeah, yeah, yeah, we *can* say both, I think. And again, that goes back to balancing out both what we examine in the original context and what Paul's doing in a new context. And we *can* balance those two things out. At the very least, I don't think it's wise to jump to the conclusion that Paul is just a bad reader of scripture. I mean, I think we should give him the benefit of the doubt here, and once we get into a book like Romans or Galatians or any of his letters, we find that he's actually a very careful reader. There's a strategy behind his interpretations and there's a logic, there's a rhythm, there's a cadence to his quotations that I think we will fail to see if we just jump to the conclusion. "Oh, see! The context says this and then Paul's doing this." You know, we throw our hands up in the air and say, "Paul's a bad reader." Okay, well, let's back up and give him the benefit of the doubt. And if there is data to suggest that he's a careful reader of scripture, then we'll go with that. And as it turns out, I think there is good data to suggest that.

So yeah, kind of going back to the whole messiah/*mashiach* example, just like those passages in the Old Testament that spoke about Messiah, we can say that

Hosea's original text still contributes to a New Covenant profile just like the messiah texts contribute to a messianic profile, even though those messiah texts don't really specifically talk about a messiah in the eschatological end times sense. So we want to, I guess, do the same thing. You know, we want to see how the Hosea text here can contribute to the overall New Covenant profile that Paul is working with.

So the next view would be number three. Paul uses the Hosea text just like Hosea used them—to refer to the Jews and not to Gentiles. So what this does is alleviate the problem by saying, okay, well Paul's not talking about Gentiles here. He's just talking about the Jews. He's talking about their re-inclusion, too. I won't go into the details on all this, but it really doesn't seem plausible grammatically, given how the Hosea text is introduced in Romans 9:24 and given how later (just a few verses later), Paul will actually cite Isaiah to make a case for Jewish inclusion in a couple verses later. So it seems like just given the construction that Paul clearly is using Hosea to argue for Gentile inclusion and then immediately after that using Isaiah to argue for the inclusion of Jews. I don't want to get into all the details, but I encourage the readers to go back and read that passage and just kind of see how Paul sets it up. It seems pretty clear to me.

Okay, the fourth option would be to say what we said earlier, that Paul simply chose the wrong passage to make his argument. And I mentioned this earlier. One scholar suggested that Paul should have used this Hosea quotation in Romans 11 where he does argue for Jewish re-inclusion. This scholar says, you know, Paul just simply messed up. He made a mistake by putting it here in Romans 9 instead of chapter 11, but the problem I have with that...

**MSH:** Yeah, blame it on the blundering scribe—the blundering Amanuensis or something.

**MLH:** Right, yeah, exactly.

**MSH:** In Old Testament scholars, that's common. We always talked about the bundling redactor.

**MLH:** Right, yeah.

**MSH:** If there's ever a problem in there, it's his fault.

**MLH:** Well, just to alleviate concerns from anybody who might have them, there's no evidence to think that that has happened here when you look at all the texts. But more than just that really... I mean, look, this just doesn't seem plausible. It doesn't seem plausible that Paul would not have noticed his own blunder here because it's the very blunder that some modern scholars claim to know. And as I said before, Paul has every mark of a careful and very respectful

15:00

reader of scripture that I just... I highly doubt that he wouldn't have noticed his mistake here (if it was a mistake) given how close in proximity Romans 9 is to Romans 11 and given how Romans 9 and 11 really go hand in hand. It doesn't seem to make sense with the overall argument. I just don't think Paul did that. So, again, I want to give Paul the benefit of the doubt here. I want to look at all the data. I want to look at all the textual evidence, and if there's something there that can make sense of what Paul's doing, I'm going to go with it. If there's no data there to help me out, okay, then logically this might be a live option, but, you know, I've researched this for years and I just don't see this as a live option. I think people jump to it too quickly. And I do want to say, though, that it is a minority view that Paul chose the wrong scripture here. Most commentators are going to find ways around how to make sense of this, okay? So I don't want to make this view sound like it has more adherents than it does.

The fifth view (and it's an interesting view) is that what Paul is doing is just principlizing, and the point is that Paul is using Hosea in such a way that he is not denying Hosea's original meaning. He is just simply drawing a principle out of it. Kind of like, just like God can re-include the Jews, you know, aka Hosea.

**MSH:** Mm hmm.

**MLH:** Well, he can also include the Gentiles, you know? And I get that. I like that idea; I think there's actually some truth to it. But the problem with this view is that it doesn't seem to capture the full force of the quotation in its rhetorical context. And here's what I mean: Paul seems to quote Hosea here as foretelling the inclusion of the Gentiles. I mean, notice again how he introduces the quotation itself. I mean, you know, the audience can go back and read that in Romans 9:24. Paul seems to think that Hosea is predicting this, or something to that effect. And one scholar (I think it was Doug Moo in his Romans commentary... It has since been revised for a second edition. I know in the first edition he says this)... He says that, you know, that really the problem with the principlizing view is that Paul needs more than a simple principle to make the sort of claims he's making, right? In order to be persuasive, I think that's the case. I think Paul is doing more than just saying, "Hey guys, here's a principle we can look at." I mean, the problem, really, with the principlizing view is that if it's true, then what Paul is really saying is that, "Guys, just because God can do something, therefore he is doing that something." You know, just because God can, in principle, call the Gentiles, it doesn't imply that he is, in fact, calling the Gentiles, right? I mean, you know, just because God can make a planet—a distant exoplanet—be teeming with unicorn life doesn't mean there actually is an exoplanet that is teeming with unicorn life, right? So it's just not a persuasive argument to say that just because God can, in principle, do something, that he is, in fact, doing it.

Okay. So my conclusion is that neither of these proposals really seem to capture that hermeneutic logic that Paul is operating by. Some of these approaches I do think come close and some of them aren't entirely wrong-headed, but at the end of the day I think they do fall short in some way or another. And I think we need a hermeneutic that can account for all of the data. And again, like I say in my book (I say this almost verbatim how I'm going to say it here), we need a hermeneutic that is flexible enough to account for how Paul does go beyond Hosea's original meaning, but one that is also stable enough so that we don't turn Paul into a textual relativist who thinks he can make the Bible mean whatever he wants it to mean. And another way to put that is to say that we need a way to account for how Paul can read his assumptions into Hosea's text *and* a way to account for how Paul can appeal to the text as the basis for his argument. So how can Paul do that? How can he argue from a text that he reads assumptions into? Again, I have a whole section in my book on how that might work, but we won't get into that philosophical stuff.

But for our purposes today, I simply want to offer that same storied approach that we've been talking about for many episodes now—that I think Paul reads Hosea as being part of that overall story of Israel as the rescue plan for the world. It is the story of Israel that also says Israel herself needs to be rescued and that she's in need of grace and, in fact, I think Paul will outline how Israel herself has always been in need of grace—that even her election, her calling, was based on grace. But I think for Paul, the term "Israel" really becomes a term that simply means that entity that is elected by grace, and as a result of that, I don't think there's any way Israel can boast. Paul excludes boasting. Israel cannot boast. And the Gentiles who are in Christ, they can rightfully claim elected status, too, but they can't boast either because they're included like Israel was by grace. And once we trace that line of thought, I think we can better understand how Paul would be motivated to quote Hosea in the way that he did.

20:00 Okay, so we've laid out, you know, this conundrum of a quotation. Now let's go back to the beginning of Romans 9 and see how Paul is reading the story of Israel and how he is reconfiguring it Christologically. So those two things need to be kept in mind as we proceed. He is retelling the story of Israel and their election, and he is going to do it Christologically and he is going to end Christologically. Okay, let me read Romans 9:1-5. That's the introduction to this text. Paul says:

**I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—<sup>2</sup> that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.<sup>5</sup> To them belong the**

**patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.**

So I just want to say on this real briefly that Paul has a high view of Israel—of ethnic Israel. He has a very high view of them. They are privileged in that they were entrusted with the covenants. We just read that. It was through them that the messiah came, and from this point on, Paul will give all of his readers a history lesson about how Israel came to be elected in the first place. And what he's going to say is that they were elected by grace, not by works of Torah. And this is where we get into the next section, Romans 9:6-13. Paul says here:

**<sup>6</sup> But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, <sup>7</sup> and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.”**

And that's a quotation from the Old Testament there. Then he goes on. Paul says:

**<sup>8</sup> This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. <sup>9</sup> For this is what the promise said: “About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.”**

(Another quotation from the Old Testament.)

So let me just share what Paul's doing here. Paul in that text we just read bases Isaac's inheritance of the Abrahamic covenant on the divine promise. And if you know the story, in all actuality Isaac should never have been born, naturally speaking. His birth was a miracle, and it was brought about by divine promise. And Paul interprets this to mean that Abraham's children should not be relegated to natural descent, either. So there's a supernatural element to what it means to be a child of God. And what Paul is doing here is he is hinting toward Gentile inclusion via Christ. He's doing that, but he's not actually saying it yet, but that's where he's going. Just like Isaac came about through Abraham and Sarah supernaturally and without regard to natural effort in the sense that we think, but through divine miracle. So also, Paul's going to say that we shouldn't push the ethnic... We shouldn't base election on ethnicity (toward natural descent), either. It's all about God's promise and God's spoken word that election is defined.

Right after this, Paul will go on to tell the story of Isaac's own children, Jacob and Esau. And the question going into this text we need to ask is which one will



receive the covenant promise. And the answer is really surprising because in verses 10, 11, 12, 13 it says this:

**<sup>10</sup> And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, <sup>11</sup> though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— <sup>12</sup> she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” <sup>13</sup> As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”**

So Paul is continuing that standard way of telling the Jewish story. It was Jacob, not Esau, who receives the promises and the covenant of Abraham, but really this is remarkable. I mean, it really is because Jacob was not first-born. His birth and his lineage, a second-born, gave priority to his brother, Esau. Esau was first-born. So Jacob (and by the way, we should remember that Jacob is really Israel—his name is later changed to Israel) and, by extension, Israel is the runt of the family, right? And yet, God had a plan, a purpose of election to make Jacob and Israel the recipient of the covenant. Before he could perform any works or Torah, he was chosen. God set his covenant love on Jacob, not Esau.

25:00 And I know we could chase a million rabbit trails here, but I do want to say something here about the text from Malachi that says “God hated Esau.” We touched on this in our Malachi episode, but it’s worth saying again here. When it says that God hated Esau, I don’t think we should take that in the sense of emotional hate like we might think. We should take this, rather, with respect to the covenant, not in terms of personal hate. I think this is hyperbolic in many ways. It is a purposeful exaggeration to make a point. One text I might use as parallel here is that nobody thinks that when Jesus says, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life then he cannot be my disciple.” Nobody thinks that when Jesus says that, he actually means “hate,” right? It’s hyperbole—a purposeful exaggeration. So I don’t think God literally hates Esau. And, again, we talked about this in the Malachi episode, but Paul quotes from Genesis 25 here. If you look at that text, it clearly refers to Jacob and Esau as nations. And so the same goes for the quotation from Malachi, “Jacob I loved, Esau I hated.” This is about nations and national elections. It’s not about individuals, right?

**MSH:** He’s doing a pretty poor job of hating them if the whole point is to redeem them in the end anyway.

**MLH:** Exactly. And see, the moment we narrow the focus down to just individuals and God’s personal hatred or something is the minute we’ve neglected to exegete the larger story that’s being told, right? And we have to let the larger metanarrative that we’ve been talking about a lot... We have to allow

that to guide our reading here. And if we don't, we really get off on the wrong foot quickly. My opinion here (and I know this is where everybody's going to agree with me [laughs])... But Paul's point really has nothing to do with individual election. Those are modern debates. I think Paul's point is much more profound. I think he's saying that Israel, like our forefathers (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob), Israel has no reason to boast. They were nothing when God elected them to their vocation of being the rescue plan for the world.

And in Jacob's case in particular, Israel is reminded... Israel (the nation) is reminded that she is second-born. You know, she is not... By virtue of her lineage, she is not in a privileged position. And I think what Paul is doing here is he is hinting subtly with a wink in his eye. He is saying that Israel should not boast now, especially over her Gentile colleagues. Just because the Gentiles are second in line to Israel, so what? Does that mean that they're outside of the bounds of God's covenant inclusion? No, no, no, no. Because that was the case of Israel. Israel was second-born. She was the runt, you know. So the point here is that God can do whatever he wants with his covenant and his mercy. He can bring mercy and compassion on the Gentiles if that is what he so chooses. It is his mercy. He can call Gentiles into the vocation of election if that's his plan. As it turns out, that's his plan, but he can do whatever he wants and that's the subject of the next passage. It gets really convoluted if you start seeing this outside of the storied approach that we've been crafting, but I do want to go ahead and read it because... Let me just read it and I'll make some comments on it again, but this is where Romans 9:14-21 says that God can do whatever he wants to with his mercy. So let's read it. It says:

**<sup>14</sup> What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! <sup>15</sup> For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." <sup>16</sup> So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. <sup>17</sup> For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." <sup>18</sup> So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.**

**<sup>19</sup> You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" <sup>20</sup> But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" <sup>21</sup> 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?**

Okay, I don't want to chase a rabbit trail too much here, but I do need to address it. Again, I don't want to get caught up in second century or modern debates about free will and determinism here. I don't think any of Paul's discussions here

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affirm a deterministic view of individual election. I think the emphasis is still national election. And by the way, if we don't see that, then we won't understand...

**MSH:** Could you say the emphasis is vocational election?

**MLH:** Yeah, that's a better term. I kept saying national election, but vocational election is better. That actually raises a good point, Mike, because if we don't see this as national or vocational election, then we will not be on the right track later on for how to understand those Hosea passages where the Gentiles become part of the elect ones, right?

**MSH:** Yeah, God's still looking to work the rescue plan.

**MLH:** Right.

30:00 **MSH:** And it's going to be through Israel, but not all Israel is Israel, you know.

**MLH:** Right. And this is where Romans 11 comes in. The way God in his wisdom does all that is remarkable, but anyway we'll postpone that for just a few minutes later. But I think the emphasis is still on vocational election, and I think one proof of this is the whole hardening motif. So I don't think hardening of Pharaoh... You know, I don't think it should be treated as deterministic in the sense that we think. And then, Mike, you might have more to say on this than I do, but the original context of Pharaoh's hardening in Exodus doesn't seem to speak of like a unilateral hardening on the part of God. I mean it's clear, I think, that God hardens Pharaoh, but I don't think it's just all God in that sense. I think Pharaoh is a pretty hard-hearted dude from the beginning anyway.

**MSH:** Yeah, I mean, when we went through Exodus, we basically concluded that God already knew what this guy was about.

**MLH:** Mm hmm.

**MSH:** He knew the condition of his heart already because there are indications of him hardening himself.

**MLH:** Exactly.

**MSH:** Pharaoh was the guy he was in the Exodus story for a long time and God knew it.

**MLH:** Right. That's exactly right. And I think Paul might give us some insight on how hardening works anyway. I mean, in my opinion... Again, maybe someone could debate this, but in my opinion, I don't think we need to speculate about

what Paul means by hardening at all, because in Romans 1 at the very beginning of the book, he tells us how it works. Hardening is God's way of responding to an ongoing willful rebellion. You know, this is why God will say... In Romans 1, because they have done this and that, God gave them up to their rebellious hearts in a debased mind. Hardening is God's way of not overriding a person's free will, but actually confirming it and affirming it, right? Giving them what they want which is not exactly a good thing sometimes.

But interestingly enough here, too, I think this view of hardening is pretty consistent even with the pottery image that Paul uses later. Actually, Paul uses it in the passage we just read about how God can do anything he wants to; he's the potter and we're the clay, right? Well, Paul does not get that out of thin air. I mean, that's a concept that comes from Jeremiah 18. And if you go back and read Jeremiah 18, I think the pottery image and the potter imagery actually works against a Calvinist determinist view because in the context there, according to Jeremiah 18, God forms and shapes people based on their decision. I mean, it's pretty clear in that context what God's doing. Like, you know, he'll start off by saying that if the people do this and they repent, then I'll do this. You know, "I'm shaping you for destruction, but if you repent then I'm going to have mercy on you." So it is really interesting. I just encourage the audience to go back and read Paul in light of Jeremiah 18.

The last thing I would say here on this is that I don't think the concept of hardening here is eternal anyway. Paul is very clear on this in Romans 11. I think Israel's hardening... First of all, it is spoken in corporate terms, not individualist. But Israel's hardening is temporary. And apparently in Paul's theology, those who are hardened can still be saved. It's not the eternal reprobation that we often see in some of the more Calvinistic schemes of things. You know, Calvinists often talk about election to salvation, but then the opposite of that is the so-called dark side of Calvinism where it talks about eternal reprobation and divine hardening for eternity, right? Well, as soon as we go down that path is the moment we get outside of what Paul is doing because Paul doesn't speak of eternal reprobation. When he does talk about the timing and the extent of reprobation here or the hardening, he calls it temporary, right? I just think something else is going on, but we won't belabor the point. He goes on in Romans 9:21 down to, I guess down to verse 26. Paul says:

**<sup>21</sup> 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? <sup>22</sup> 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, <sup>23</sup> in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— <sup>24</sup> even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? <sup>25</sup> 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.’”**

**<sup>26</sup> “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.’”**

35:00

So here's our text that we began with. By the time Paul has gotten to this passage, his Jewish readers, I think, would most likely have been in agreement with him, but only up until the point he quotes Hosea. Because the meaning he gives these quotations as we talked about, it probably would have been controversial, I think. I think Paul's interpretive logic with the Hosea quotations and the meaning that he finds in them, it's based on his Christology, and I think that's the defining factor (and we'll get to that in a moment). But the point I just want to make here is that when Paul throws these out to his Jewish readers at least, they going to wave a red flag and say, okay what are you doing, because that... You know, if they were familiar with the context, they would know this is about Jews. You know, “We were with you up until this point, Paul. Yeah, we were chosen by grace and so forth, but what exactly is going on?” But we'll see that in just a moment. It's because of his Christology. It's because of what he already believes about Jesus. He believes Jesus is the fulfillment of all those messianic expectations, and he also thinks that everyone associated with Christ can be considered in the covenant—that is, considered righteous.

Okay, so I want you to consider this next passage. It comes from Romans 9:27 all the way down to chapter 10 verse 4. Okay, let me read it. It says:

**<sup>27</sup> 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, <sup>28</sup> for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.” <sup>29</sup> And as Isaiah predicted,**

**“If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring,  
we would have been like Sodom  
and become like Gomorrah.”**

**<sup>30</sup> What shall we say, then?**

Listen to this part.

**That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; <sup>31</sup> but that Israel who pursued a law that would**

**lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law.<sup>32</sup> Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone,**

<sup>33</sup> **as it is written,**

**“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”**

That’s the quotation from Isaiah. Then he goes on in chapter 10. Paul says:

**Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.<sup>2</sup> For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.<sup>3</sup> For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.**

<sup>4</sup> **For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.**

Now let me explain what we just read. Gentiles, according to Paul, have become included in the covenant because he says they pursued covenant status by faith. Now Israel has not. She has not pursued it by faith, and all of this leaves the Gentiles in the same position as Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. So, you know, just like Abraham, the Gentiles are included in the covenant by faith. We’ve already talked about this. So it would be odd, wouldn’t it, to exclude the Gentiles from the covenant when, in all reality, they are doing nothing different than the patriarchs did—namely, believe in Yahweh and what Yahweh has done? But again, it’s good to remind us that the words “faith” and “believing” on the part of the Gentiles is always Christologically-oriented. In other words, they’re only in because they are united to Christ. And this is the reason many Jews have failed to become true covenant members. They have not recognized the messianic ministry of Jesus. Paul’s Christological interpretation of that stone passage in Isaiah that we just read, that’s the basis for his entire thought here. For Paul, covenant membership is based upon a person’s response to the Christ event.

So remember the Isaiah passage, “I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” Those passages from Isaiah there that are quoted are interpreted by Paul in the messianic ways and as Christologically-oriented. So if you want to be in the covenant, then you need to do something with Christ: you need to believe in him. And if you do not believe in him, you won’t be in covenant. So I like to say that Paul’s messiah (Paul’s Christ) is the axis upon which the covenant promises rotate. Everything revolves around the Christ. Everything is reconfigured around Christ, even the concept of election.

See, I think when we have all that in our mind, that's how we can see how Paul can legitimately apply Hosea's passage to the Gentiles. Not because Hosea was necessarily meaning to include them, but rather it is because believing Gentiles have become Israel by their inclusion into Christ so that they can legitimately be the reference to the Hosea passage.

40:00

So in one sense, yes, Paul is going beyond Hosea. He is giving the text new meaning. And it would've been shocking to the Jewish readers when they read this part of Romans 9, but Paul is by no means running against the grain of the story of scripture. Remember, the story of scripture is what we've been saying all along—that 1) humanity needs rescuing and 2) Abraham's family is elected by grace to the rescue plan to be blessed and to be a blessing to the nations. 3) But Israel cannot rescue the world because she needs rescuing. 4) God rescues Israel by bringing about a true Israelite—the messiah, the branch, the servant, the messenger. And Paul believes that this messiah is Jesus of Nazareth. He is the one who blesses and rescues the nations. He blesses and rescues Israel, which remember, not only is Abraham's family going to rescue the world, but the servant of Isaiah is going to rescue Israel. That is a very important thing here. And this is very important: anyone who is in messiah for Paul... Anyone in messiah gets to participate in that rescue plan.

I'll just kind of end with this little thought on that note. What does he mean? How does everybody participate in the rescue plan? Well, this is where we can jump briefly to Romans 11 because we see that Paul is thinking along that line that everybody gets to participate in the rescue plan if they're in Christ. So in Romans 11, Paul says that the Jews hardening (their rejection of the messiah) has ironically brought about the inclusion of the nations. In other words, Paul says that their disobedience has brought a blessing to the nations. And these Gentiles who become believers in Christ end up through their inclusion in the covenant... They end up driving Israel to jealousy and, hence, re-inclusion into the covenant. So these Christian Gentiles (true Israel), they end up blessing ethnic Israel by bringing them back into the fold, and in this way all of Israel is saved. In this way, Israel becomes the very entity that was promised to Abraham in Genesis 12—that Israel would be both blessed and that she will be a blessing. That fulfills the Abrahamic covenant. So Paul presents a reconfigured concept of election. It's reconfigured Christologically and it's one that is consistent with the storied approach of scripture. That's how I understand what's going on here.

**MSH:** Would you still say that Israel for Paul in Romans 9-11 has more than one meaning in places?

**MLH:** Yeah, I do. Yeah. Sometimes it's used to refer to ethnic Israel. Sometimes it's used to refer to spiritual ...

**MSH:** Yeah, because he almost... Paul almost threatens the church (the circumcision-neutral church) with the same hardening and setting aside... You know, hypothetically that the church should not be boasting, either, or the same thing could happen to them.

**MLH:** Exactly. Yeah. That's exactly right. Like they have no reason to boast because once they see Paul's argument that Israel is not as holy as maybe she thought she was and that she is really the runt... If they're following along that argument, then the Gentiles might say, huh, well look at us. You know, we're grafted in.

**MSH:** Yeah.

**MLH:** We didn't go through exile and we... Well, Paul has strong words to say: "Um, hold on. Just remember that you being grafted in is something that it would just... Well, you've been grafted in, right? You're not a part of the original root."

**MSH:** Yeah.

**MLH:** And so if that's the case, you can be chopped off *pretty* easily [laughs].

**MSH:** And if you're comparing the group that was grafted in to "Israel," then in some sense you have to be referring to national Israel there.

**MLH:** Yeah, because he talks about...

**MSH:** It's a both/and.

**MLH:** It is a both/and, and he talks about this nourishing root of the olive tree and this is in Romans 11:17. And kind of the way I understand all of this is that you have the root, which might have something to do with the Abrahamic covenant, the initial covenant (Abraham in Genesis 12)... and then you have what grows out of that ...

**MSH:** Davidic language, but Davidic language gets married to Abrahamic language anyway.

**MLH:** True, absolutely, yeah. And it includes all of those promises because even David, he's in that same line, right? We've talked about that before how God narrows down everything, not only through Israel, but through David's family as well. So there's some continuity there. So I would interpret that as really all of those maybe covenants—those initial covenants, especially, though, with the patriarchs. But then out of that comes Israel in exile—Israel as the nation that has sinned, and then so they have been hardened. But then you have Gentiles who believe in Christ, and they're put into that and yet you still have the natural



45:00 people. They're kind of left out, but Paul says they're going to come back in. So you kind of have three different entities sort of going on. And I recognize that this is metaphor. Paul is crafting an illustration and so I don't know if he's meaning for it to be parsed out in such literal detail here or to be pressed and to walk on all fours if you will, but I think you can sort of see three different things.

So I like to talk about Israel as that entity that is both blessed and as a blessing and that's an entity that ethnic Israel can choose to be part of or they may not be, right? Then the Gentiles can be part of that, too. And again, that kind of gives us three entities here almost, right? But I don't want to press that too much. But anyway, the remarkable thing for me is how Paul's logic works out in all of that. Because as I read, he goes on to say that it's because ethnic Israel ends up blessing the Gentiles because of her disobedience. Her disobedience has led Gentiles into the covenant, but being led into the covenant ends up being a blessing to wayward Israel who becomes jealous and comes back into the covenant. So really this entity that we're calling Israel really does become blessed and is a blessing. God's plan is brought to fruition through not only obedience, but acts of disobedience God still weaves in his plan.

**MSH:** Yeah, I tend to think modern scholarships sometimes because we couldn't have conceived as to how all these things would play out...

**MLH:** Yeah.

**MSH:** That we get sort of offended when we see it in scripture and want to deny it.

**MLH:** Yeah.

**MSH:** I want to say to Paul is doing something fishy here when...

**MLH:** No.

**MSH:** Just because this wouldn't have popped into your head, doesn't mean that it...

**MLH:** Right.

**MSH:** It doesn't mean that it's inconsistent.

**MLH:** Exactly, exactly, and yeah, I think I've said this before, but it's not fair to judge a premodern, pre-enlightenment interpreter like Paul...

**MSH:** Mm hmm.

**MLH:** It's not fair to judge him by enlightenment standards, right?

**MSH:** Yeah, yeah.

**MLH:** You know, enlightenment standards are much more analytical. There's not a lot of emphasis on stories and things like that, and Paul is a storied thinker and so he's going to be factoring in all of that here. And in terms of Christology, Paul's Christology is the axis on which all of this is spinning, whether it's the hardening of the ethnic Jews... I mean, they're hardened because they stumbled over the stone. Like hardening is essentially another way of saying that they've not believed in Jesus and what not. They're outside of that covenant—and why? Because they don't believe in Jesus. Well, okay, well then how do the Gentiles get in? By believing in Jesus, by building on the stone, by not stumbling on the stone which is Jesus. And so it's all Christological, and so that's how I think Paul has reconfigured this whole concept of election. Or in other words, he has reconfigured the whole concept of Israel around the messiah. But as soon as you say that, we want to remind ourselves that this reconfiguration was long predicted and anticipated in that messianic profile that we've been crafting and observing.

**MSH:** Yeah. Well, again, this is good stuff. I mean, Romans 9-11 is pretty... They're deep waters here, but again, I think you did a good job of showing that Paul's understanding here is consistent with what we get in the Old Testament. But once again, he is reconfiguring everything through Christ and his experience of the Christ encounter and what the scriptures really do say in hindsight. So I want to thank you again for being with us for the series.

**MLH:** Well, thanks, Mike, I've enjoyed it thoroughly.

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**TS:** Alright, Mike, Romans 9. You can really tell that Dr. Halsted's wheelhouse is Romans. He loves it. A lot of good content.

**MSH:** Yeah.

**TS:** That's good stuff, yeah.

**MSH:** Yeah, it is, and that's why we wanted to have him here to see what Paul is doing with some of these passages. Because, again, if you just look at him on the surface, it looks like Paul is making stuff up or you wonder what in the world he's thinking. Again, that's why we wanted to have the series to give that some context, to give that some backdrop. So if you have the messianic story in your

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head and you're like Paul—you experienced Christ on the road to Damascus, you already had the story floating in your head, that's what's going to make everything come into place and that's why Paul does what he does. That's why he says what he says. But it's just important to realize that messianic expectations before Paul could have made the same connections. You know, some of these things very well could have been the way the Jewish interpreters looked at the text. They didn't have any proof for it. It was just one of many possibilities, but on the other side of the Christ event, Paul is like, "Yeah we do have evidence to look at it this way and specifically interpret this through messiah." So that's why he is doing what he's doing. So I think this was a helpful series. I mean, we have one more to go, but this the goal of the series, just to show that Paul is not outside normal Jewish understanding when he does what he does, but he has an advantage. He has the hindsight of the resurrection and the ascension in view.

**TS:** And we're going to wrap up Romans in the next episode. Is that correct, Mike?

**MSH:** Yeah, one more.

**TS:** Okay, well one more in the series. It's good stuff. We'll be looking forward to it. And with that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.