



Portion:

Title:

SCRIPTURES

- Romans 9:19-33
- Joshua 24:14-28
- Hosea 2:14-23; 1:2-10
- Isaiah 10:20-23; 1:9-20;
8:13-22; 28:16-19

PAVLOV'S HUMANS

- Clay Pots
- Why have You made me
like this?
- The Prophets Speak
- Trip Hazards

SEED:

"Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?"

Romans 9:21 NKJV

"As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved.""

Romans 9:25 NKJV

"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." Romans 9:27 NKJV

"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.” Romans 9:30-31 NKJV

“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.”” Romans 9:33 NKJV

FRUIT:

““Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served **on the other side of the River and in Egypt**. Serve the Lord! And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, **choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve**, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. **But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.**”” Joshua 24:14-15 NKJV

NARRATIVE FOR TODAY’S SCRIPTURES: ROMANS

We must begin this section where we ended the last—with Pharaoh. And that is because Paul understands the rollercoaster of emotions that is expected from any disciple who is learning to die daily. All are on the same journey from slavery to freedom, from the bondage to sin to becoming a prisoner of righteousness. And, as

previously stated, that is not without a tsunami of emotions, rising to destroy the old man and then receding to reveal the catastrophic damage to the carnal nature left behind. It seems on the surface that Pharaoh's fate was set in stone; God will share His mercy with some, and others He will harden, so how can you blame someone for fulfilling the role for which God created them?

A misinterpretation like this is bound to elicit strong emotions, and Paul can predict this is exactly how his reader is presently feeling; he is certain that the old man is rising up to indict God. If God made a cat to act like a cat, then how can He punish the cat for acting like a cat? God gave Pharaoh his personality and Pharaoh willingly exercised those character traits, with terrible results. So, how can God fault Pharaoh for displaying the very nature that God willfully placed in him? No man can reject what was inserted in him before his birth. Therefore, we must conclude that Yahweh is responsible for Pharaoh "acting like a cat." And maybe that is where the animals analogy breaks down—runs into its limitation. Humans are the only members of God's creation that can opt out of their inherent nature, and that is because everyone of us was created in the image of God. The cat was not! There is within all of us the DNA of our Creator and there is within all of us, no matter how deeply hidden, the option to express that DNA.

As such, you should not be fooled. Knowing that Pharaoh would choose his carnal nature over God's hidden DNA, and forcing his hand to make the choice that would cause his own destruction are not the same, nor should such foreknowledge handcuff the Lord's authority, or restrict His rights in any way. Yahweh is the Lord and He maintains all rights; He is sovereign over all of creation and is not limited by the choices any of us will make, even though He can see those choices in advance.

Yahweh did not harden Pharaoh's heart, just so He could destroy him. It was the revelation that Yahweh is the One and only God, a God not of Pharaoh's own making that exposed the darkness already lurking in his heart. Pharaoh held out to his people that he was a god, and now his encounter with Yahweh has made his claim vulnerable—and he doesn't like it. Pharaoh chose the wide road that leads to destruction—instead of the narrow road of dying to self, to submit to the One true God, the same choice each one of us must make. It is true; we all come naked and vulnerable before the Lord with a whole pantheon of personal gods, idols that we set up against the knowledge of Yahweh. The god of self that sits on the throne, as our supreme leader, is exposed. And let's get up close and personal; you must choose whom you will serve—all the gods on the other side of the River and in Egypt that are lurking in your heart, or Yahweh. And be very careful, once you know who is the

only true God, you become a witness against yourself if you continue to serve the gods of your carnal nature. You can't serve both and that is with what Pharaoh struggled. He traveled from the "innocence" of not knowing, to the realization of his need to repent, and onto the danger zone of being fully aware of God—and yet, he chose anyway to reject Yahweh and opt to serve the foreign gods of his own heart!

This is where the rubber hits the road in your understanding of God's nature. I'll grant you permission to dislike what you discover, but only temporarily, only until you fully grasp that you have within you the mind of Christ. You will likely have a reflex reaction, a knee-jerk response initially. But after that gets out of your system, a rebuke is forthcoming. Remember, He is the Creator and you are the creation. You don't get to question His motives or modes. If you scrutinize God as if to judge His authority, His veracity, His character, or to limit His rights in any way, you are essentially saying to Him that you would be a better god over creation than He. Satan tried that and it did not end well for him!

The entire premise would be as absurd as an inanimate lump of clay telling the man at the potter's wheel how to spin that clay, what he should make from it, and for what he should use what he made. Yes, it gets a bit difficult to accept that some clay will ultimately be used to craft a king's cup and other clay as receptacles

of human waste. And yet, if you indeed formulate it correctly in your mind, you will be freed from your desire to judge God. Here is the proper way to frame your understanding. God creates all the clay; and God creates all the vessels made from that clay. And He maintains that right even though some will opt to hold a king's wine and others a king's urine. In other words, He need not restrict His own sovereignty because some of what He creates will choose to reject Him as their Creator. Think about it, if that was the case and the outcome exercised a controlling influence over God, it would be creation that was dictating God's choices, and that would make creation the Sovereign. History is showered with examples of mankind playing God, beginning in the Garden; tell me, how has that worked out thus far?

Let's begin with the end of this passage and then work our way backwards. The Jewish people, whom Paul likens here to those who represent all of God's chosen people, stand in stark contrast to pagans. And yet, God has made a way for all to choose His mercy, not just the Jews. That should settle it for you. Both clay pots have the option. And like we previously learned when Paul revealed that they are not all Israel who are of Israel; it's not only that Gentiles have the necessity to opt in, Israel must opt in as well, as bloodline does not determine true sonship—opting in by faith does.

And now that we have that settled we can continue to work our way backwards to make sense of it all. What it means to be “called” is that you were invited to be a born-again child of God and you accepted the invitation. Yahweh has the foreknowledge of everything from eternity past to eternity future. He already sees who has responded to His invitation to spend that eternity future with Him. And as such, you might say that what God has prepared beforehand, for those who will choose Him, is glorious. God’s foreknowledge should now begin to make sense, but only to those who have had an authentic encounter with Him through Christ. It is only they who can possibly understand the glory attached to His mercy, because no one can know the things of God except the Spirit of God that is in him, and it is only once you have been born-again that you are filled with His Spirit.

Moving up from there we can easily deduce that those who will never choose God, no matter how long He waits, and no matter how patient He is, will face the devastating consequences of their decision. God knows that some of whom He created will inevitably succumb to their human nature, but that does not prevent Him from creating them. Instead, He uses the fact that some will choose to self-destruct to demonstrate the majesty of His grace towards those who will choose to accept Him as their God—the One and only God.

Paul then does again what Paul does so well. He proves the doctrine he is espousing by finding support in the Scriptures. This time he displays his acumen for the prophets. He begins with Hosea and then moves to Isaiah to bolster his teaching. If you look closely into the Prophets' writings, and also search their words in proximity to what he is emphasizing, you will see that he is specifically highlighting some things that point away from bloodline and toward faith, which by its very nature speaks of choice! Let me explain.

If the entire point Paul is making is that you are called into the family of God by bloodline, which was predetermined before the foundations of the earth, then there would be no reason for him to search the prophets for passages that emphasize how God called those who were not natural sons to be sons. And we can go deeper if you are willing to read further what Hosea prophesied. Paul is a sophisticated writer and requires his readers to amalgamate what he reveals throughout his letter. That may appear like I am stating the obvious because this is one letter, so why wouldn't we assume it is all meant to be taken together in context? And that might be true in past generations, but today's readers have become handicapped by a culture of soundbites, bells and whistles, and all sorts of distractions that have caused us to find it very difficult to carry

thought-forms over long spans of reading. We have developed a bullet-point mentality; short choppy thoughts that move rapidly from one interest to the next. “Don’t make me think too hard and please keep it colorful and entertaining.” And yet, Paul’s rabbinic style requires us to slow down, re-read; go back and integrate what you read earlier with what he is revealing now; even take the time to care about from where he is extracting his thoughts. Hosea says two things that Paul sees as relevant to prove his point. God says, “You are My people!” And the people say, “You are my God!” And that very same prophecy contains the words Paul referenced earlier in this chapter. “I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy.” Can you see that when these two ideas are blended, the mixture resolves the dilemma. His mercy is not just available to some predetermined people group, but to anyone who will receive it, and that is not determined by bloodline, but by faith. The apostle John taught it like this; “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Hosea also reveals that God’s relationship with his people, those who receive Him, will be like a marital covenant—beginning with betrothal; He has offered to betroth us and then to marry us forever and we have accepted His offer. Who are we? That is where Paul’s second reference to Hosea

emerges. We are a people who were not originally His people by bloodline, but have by faith become sons of the living God. And yes, even those with the original bloodline coursing through their veins can and must become sons of God by faith.

And again, in similar fashion, Paul integrates the point he is making here with a previous deep revelation; not all of Israel is Israel! And He does so by referring to Hosea's use of Abraham. "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand." That idea is stationed in the very same verse in Hosea that says, "'You are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God." Paul does not state it here, but that exact concept is where he continues his next prophetic insight, but this time from Isaiah.

Carrying forward multiple streams of thought will help you understand the depth of Paul's thinking, as he pivots towards what Isaiah has to say on the matter. "God will have mercy on whom He wishes. God will call a people sons who were not originally His people. He will do so with a marriage covenant. There will be a people as numerous as the sand of the sea, which must naturally be contrasted with the stars of heaven, because that was the promise to Abraham. Why? Because, they are not all Israel who are of Israel."

Isaiah intimates, and it is imperative that you recognize the contrast—there are two Israels, "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved." And

must I repeat? I think it necessary, as repetition is the mother of learning. Seek from where Paul is obtaining his reasoning and you will find... Isaiah prophesied, just prior to from where Paul refers to the sand of the sea, "The remnant of Israel have escaped the house of Jacob; they will depend on the truth of the Lord. The remnant of Jacob will repent." Can you see it? A piece of Israel has broken off and will become sons by faith. That makes two Israels, the original will inhabit the earth, represented by the sands of the sea; and the sons of faith separate themselves as a remnant, but will become as numerous as the stars of heaven.

If we are to fully comprehend the seed of faith in contrast to the bloodline, it is worth repeating from our previous chapter. "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."" They are not all Israel who are of Israel. If you are counting on your blood lineage from Abraham as your ultimate salvation, you are headed down the wrong path. Sure, God has created and called the nation of Israel and that will never change. But national heritage is not that to which you want to yoke your identity. Yes, it looks the same on paper, Israel vs. Israel. But to one their is only earthly promises and earthly citizenship; to the other heavenly promises and heavenly citizenship awaits. Abraham's life is the perfect

picture of this duality. To him were born two primary sons, Ishmael and Isaac. But in only one of them is the seed of the heavenly call, and that is Isaac, the second born who, from a spiritual perspective takes on firstborn status. The point here again is that bloodline is secondary to faith. Technically, the firstborn Ishmael carried the bloodline and Isaac the seed of promise. Remember, Abraham believed God and it was accounted to Him as righteousness. And isn't it revealing that after his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, his son of promise, that is when Abraham was guaranteed descendants as numerous as the stars of the heavens (heavenly citizenship) and the sand of the seashore (earthly citizenship)? Isaiah also speaks of a third option, total destruction.

The Lord of Sabaoth, that is the Lord of a host of warring angels, stands ready to separate those of righteousness from those to whom He will make a determined end. Isaiah brings both a promise and a warning; "Unless there was seed of promise, the remnant, Sodom and Gomorrah would be the fate of us all!" God has an army of angels who stand ready to deal harshly with those who choose the way of fire and brimstone. Just read on from where Paul taps Isaiah and you will see the destiny of the rebels. These rebels appear scarily similar to the modern-day seeker-friendly compromised church. God does not appreciate their ritualistic gatherings nor their religious assemblies and sacred meetings. God

sees their compromised self-indulgent worship services and manmade holidays with disgust, and He will not hear their prayers. His admonition: Repent! Make yourselves clean; put away evil. Turn from these wicked practices and, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword"; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

We must conclude with what certainly seems unfair, even completely absurd. Pagans who had absolutely no desire to know Yahweh, no pedigree as God's chosen people, no inclination to recognize, let alone obey God's laws, not even the tiniest hint of interest in pursuing the truth, have become those whom God considers righteous? Yes, they have! And conversely, God's chosen people, who were all about every one of those things, have missed the mark by as far as east is from west? Yes, they have! But why?

Don't you love how Paul takes us up onto a sheer cliff of anticipation, and then drops us? If you feel like you are in a free-fall, you're not alone. If you have studied this letter thus far, with the same intensity that has again been reiterated here, then you too will feel the exhilaration. God's original people, Israel, missed the memo. It was never about bloodline and always about faith. That is the stumbling block! Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness. Belief is an act of faith, and for Christians,

confession is their first act; “I am a sinner; Y’shua is my Savior; I am now a new person created to obey God!” We will explore that process in granular detail in the next chapter, but if we take a brief journey backwards and forwards, you will be better prepared when we get there.

God’s law was never the problem. It was Israel’s religious leadership, who erroneously assumed that they could catalogue God’s commands in enough detail and then introduce that list of laws to an eager people who, by their own strength and self-determination, could be good enough—disciplined enough—to obey it, and thus be considered righteous by God. That has never and will never work—that is works of law which is a brand of legalism. Simply defined, legalism is a philosophy that promotes and even demands, that somehow and in some way you can be good enough, on your own, to obey God’s commands, and that will put you in right standing with God.

And yet, the ignorant unsuspecting pagans would be introduced to this Jesus character; they’d have no preconceived notions and wrong thinking that would bias their opinion; God’s grace would more easily soften their scarred hearts and their faith would blossom. That is all it takes to be infused with God’s strength through Christ, and it is only with that strength that you can become completely obedient to God’s commands, as they are

presented to you. You achieve this while simultaneously giving God all the credit for your abilities and your salvation. But, introduce Jesus to a legalistic lot of religious zealots, and all He becomes is a giant stone wall standing between them and truth.

One final time in this passage Paul returns to Isaiah to sink teeth into his premise. When you attempt to expose legalism and replace it with faith in Jesus, those hell-bent on religion get completely offended. And no one who believes they have a special ability because of their particular bloodline is immune to this potential infection. It's a trap, a snare. They prefer their own belief over God's word. Why? Isaiah says, "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Jesus is the light of the world, but there is no light in them! This stone has become a tripping hazard; it exposes their sclerotic heart disease, easily diagnosed by how offended they are by Jesus. He is the foundation stone, the chief cornerstone. Believe that and you will... "bind up the testimony and seal the righteousness of law among His disciples. He who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame, and their covenant with death will be annulled." If you don't recognize the light, then the rock of offense will simply prove that the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, while to us who are being saved it is the power of God. "Think in Bible." DJH

INTRODUCTION TO TODAY'S MESSAGE:

You came prepackaged with an ensemble of built-in character traits. These personal attributes seem to be part of your inborn nature. Many of them are good and can be used for good; some are not so good, and those can tend to hurt you and others. Then add life-experiences to your natural tendencies, and your unique personality becomes cemented. Yet, life is not all sunshine and rainbows; difficult moments arise when the not so pretty aspects of your unique personality take over and rule the day. This oftentimes can inflame circumstances. In those moments you might recognize from a feeling of inner turmoil and conviction, or because it was pointed out, that you are not only harming yourself and others, but that your behavior is offensive to God. A great controversy ensues and you put God on trial for how He made you. "Why have you made me this way?" The inner voice gets louder. "This is the way I am; I was born this way. If it's wrong, then why did God make me like this? If God gave me certain natural instincts and tendencies and those involuntarily intersected with life and formed who I am, and some of those ways offend God, then it must be God's fault." What would God say about your reasoning? "Who are you to talk back to God, to question Him?"

In the famous experiments that Ivan Pavlov conducted with his dogs, he believed that events could trigger a conditioned response.

In 1902, Pavlov started with the premise that there are some things that a dog does not need to learn. For example, dogs don't learn to salivate whenever they see food. This instinctive behavior is a reflex and is hard-wired into the dog. However, Pavlov showed that dogs could be conditioned to salivate at the sound of a bell if that sound was repeatedly presented at the same time that they were given food. This conditioned response or triggered behavior demonstrated the formation of a new association between the unconditioned stimulus (inborn nature) and the neutral stimulus (life experiences). Pavlov's research shed light on the underlying mechanisms of learning and provided a framework to understand how environmental stimuli and repetitive experiences can shape our behaviors and responses.

If God made a dog to act like a dog, then He certainly can't punish the dog for being a dog. And aren't humans just like animals, with animal instincts hard-wired into us? It seems plausible that the same reasoning should apply to humans. How can God fault you for displaying the very nature that He willfully placed in you? No man can reject what was inserted in him before his birth. Therefore, we must conclude that Yahweh is responsible when you "act like a dog."

To a certain degree, it's true, but this faulty argument quickly fades as it runs into its limitations. Humans can opt out of their

inherent nature, their conditioned responses and triggered behaviors, because we were created in the image of God. The dog was not! Man is the only member of God's creation that carries His DNA. As such, no matter how deeply hidden, you have the option to express the DNA of your Creator. But, the full expression of God's genetics can only manifest when, by grace, you personally encounter God, and you become aware of who He is and who you are in Him. However, this encounter will not change your personality or your triggered behaviors. Your new creature will still look like the old you and will tend to act like the old you, unless you purposely change. Those built-in character traits and the conditioning from your life experiences can only be effectively altered with God's help—with further access to His grace.

When you come naked and vulnerable before the Lord a whole pantheon of personal gods and idols are uncovered. And when the god of self is exposed, the one who sits on the throne as your supreme leader, you must make a choice. Serve Yahweh—or all the gods on the other side of the River and in Egypt that are lurking in your heart. We are all on the same journey from slavery to freedom, from the bondage to sin to becoming a prisoner of righteousness. And that is not without a tsunami of emotions, rising to destroy the old man and receding to reveal the catastrophic damage to the carnal nature left behind.

CLAY POTS

1. A Rollercoaster of Emotions

A. Yahweh is Sovereign

(1) A Poor Excuse

(a) We must begin this section where we ended the last— with Pharaoh.

1. "You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For **who has resisted His will?**" " Romans 9:19 NKJV
2. Paul understands the rollercoaster of emotions that is expected from any disciple who is learning to die daily.
 - a) All are on the same journey from slavery to freedom, from the bondage to sin to becoming a prisoner of righteousness.
 - b) There is a tsunami of emotions, rising to destroy the old man and then receding to reveal the catastrophic damage to the carnal nature left behind.
 - c) It seems that Pharaoh's fate was set in stone; God will share His mercy with some, and others He will harden, so how can you blame someone for fulfilling the role for which God created them?

3. A misinterpretation like this is bound to elicit strong emotions.

a) Paul can predict this is exactly how his reader is presently feeling; he is certain that the old man is rising up to indict God.

1) If God made a cat to act like a cat, then how can He punish the cat for acting like a cat?

2) God gave Pharaoh his personality and Pharaoh willingly exercised those character traits, with terrible results.

3) How can God fault Pharaoh for displaying the very nature that God willfully placed in him?

4) No man can reject what was inserted in him before his birth.

5) Therefore, we must conclude that Yahweh is responsible for Pharaoh “acting like a cat.”

b) This is where the animals analogy breaks down—runs into its limitation.

1) Humans are the only members of God’s creation that can opt out of their inherent nature.

2) We are created in the image of God. The cat was not!

- 3) There is within all of us the DNA of our Creator and there is within all of us, no matter how deeply hidden, the option to express that DNA.
- c) As such, you should not be fooled.
 - 1) Knowing that Pharaoh would choose his carnal nature over God's hidden DNA, and forcing his hand to make the choice that would cause his own destruction are not the same.
 - 2) God's foreknowledge of man's choice should not handcuff the Lord's authority, or restrict His rights in any way.
 - 3) Yahweh is the Lord and He maintains all rights; He is sovereign over all of creation and is not limited by the choices any of us will make, even though He can see those choices in advance.
4. Yahweh did not harden Pharaoh's heart, just so He could destroy him.
 - a) The revelation that Yahweh is the One and only God, a God not of Pharaoh's own making exposed the darkness already lurking in his heart.
 - b) Pharaoh held out to his people that he was a god, and now his encounter with Yahweh has made his claim vulnerable—and he doesn't like it.

c) Pharaoh chose the wide road that leads to destruction—instead of the narrow road of dying to self, to submit to the One true God, the same choice each one of us must make.

1) **The Plague of Darkness:** *“But **the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart**, and he would not let them go. Then Pharaoh said to him, “Get away from me! Take heed to yourself and see my face no more! **For in the day you see my face you shall die!**” So Moses said, “You have spoken well. I will never see your face again.”” Exodus 10:27-29 NKJV*

d) It is true; we all come naked and vulnerable before the Lord with a whole pantheon of personal gods, idols that we set up against the knowledge of Yahweh.

1) **God’s truth will come against anything that puts itself over Him:** *“Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you. But I beg you that when **I am present I may not be bold with that confidence by which***

I intend to be bold against some, who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

II Corinthians 10:1-6 NKJV

2) **It will all be exposed:** *“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”*

Hebrews 4:12-13 NKJV

e) The god of self that sits on the throne, as our supreme leader, is exposed.

f) And let's get up close and personal; you must choose whom you will serve—all the gods on the other side of the River and in Egypt that are lurking in your heart, or Yahweh.

1) *““Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served **on the other side of the River and in Egypt**. Serve the Lord! And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, **choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve**, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.””*

Joshua 24:14-15 NKJV

2) **The Choice: We reject our old gods!** *“So the people answered and said: **“Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods; for the Lord our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, who did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way that we went and among all the people***

through whom we passed. And the Lord drove out from before us all the people, including the Amorites who dwelt in the land. We also will serve the Lord, for He is our God.”“ Joshua 24:16-18 NKJV

g) And be very careful, once you know who is the only true God, you become a witness against yourself if you continue to serve the gods of your carnal nature.

1) **You can't serve both:** *“But Joshua said to the people, “**You cannot serve the Lord, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive** your transgressions nor your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve **foreign gods**, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good.”“ Joshua 24:19-20 NKJV*

2) **You are a witnesses against yourselves:** *“And the people said to Joshua, “No, but we will serve the Lord!” So Joshua said to the people, “**You are witnesses against yourselves** that you have chosen the Lord for yourselves, to serve Him.” And they said, “We are witnesses!” “Now*

therefore,” he said, “put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord God of Israel.” And the people said to Joshua, “The Lord our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey!” So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.” Joshua 24:21-25 NKJV

3) **Sealed in stone:** *“Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said to all the people, “Behold, this stone shall be a witness to us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord which He spoke to us. It shall therefore be a witness to you, lest you deny your God.” So Joshua let the people depart, each to his own inheritance.” Joshua 24:26-28 NKJV*

5. You can't serve both and that is with what Pharaoh struggled.
 - a) He traveled from the “innocence” of not knowing, to the realization of his need to repent, and onto

the danger zone of being fully aware of God—and yet, he chose anyway to reject Yahweh and opt to serve the foreign gods of his own heart!

1) "...***Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go.***" Exodus 5:1-2

b) But soon after, he repents and openly acknowledges that Yahweh is the one true God, and yet... his sinful heart is so dark that he ultimately chooses to resist Yahweh, and not only resist, but to declare war against Him. Pharaoh is God in his own mind, and there will be no other.

1) 4th Plague Flies (He acknowledges that Yahweh is a god, but the god of the hebrews): "...***Go, sacrifice to your God in the land.***" Exodus 8:25

2) 7th Plague Hail (He acknowledges he has sinned and Yahweh is the Lord): "...***I have sinned this time. The Lord is righteous, and my people and I are wicked.***" Exodus 9:27

3) 8th Plague Locusts (He acknowledges he has sinned and Yahweh is the Lord and asks for forgiveness ONE TIME): "...***I have sinned against the Lord your God and against you.***

Now therefore, **please forgive my sin only this once...**” Exodus 10:16-17

c) Now You Choose!

- 1) ““Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served **on the other side of the River and in Egypt**. Serve the Lord! And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, **choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve**, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.””
Joshua 24:14-15 NKJV

(2) Why have you made me like this?

(a) This is where the rubber hits the road in your understanding of God’s nature.

1. “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?**” Romans 9:20-21 NKJV

2. Permission to dislike what you discover, but only temporarily, only until you fully grasp that you have within you the mind of Christ.
 - a) You will likely have a reflex reaction, a knee-jerk response initially.
 - b) But after that gets out of your system, a rebuke is forthcoming.
 - c) You can either accept Yahweh for who He is or recreate God in your own mind to satisfy your own needs and understanding!
 - 1) *“**No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.**”* Matthew 6:24 NKJV
3. Remember, He is the Creator and you are the creation.
 - a) You don't get to question His motives or modes.
 - b) If you scrutinize God as if to judge His authority, His veracity, His character, or to limit His rights in any way, you are essentially saying to Him that you would be a better god over creation than He.
 - c) Satan tried that and it did not end well for him!

- 1) The disease of pride: *“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! **For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit.**”* Isaiah 14:12-15 NKJV
- 2) **Don't be lured into that trap!** *“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And **no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.** Therefore it is no great thing if **his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.**”* II Corinthians 11:13-15 NKJV
- d) The entire premise would be as absurd as an inanimate lump of clay telling the man at the potter's wheel how to spin that clay, what he

should make from it, and for what he should use what he made.

- e) It gets a bit difficult to accept that some clay will ultimately be used to craft a king's cup and other clay as receptacles of human waste.
- f) Yet, if you indeed formulate it correctly in your mind, you will be freed from your desire to judge God.
- g) Here is the proper way to frame your understanding.
 - 1) God creates all the clay; and God creates all the vessels made from that clay.
 - 2) He maintains that right even though some will opt to hold a king's wine and others a king's urine.
 - 3) In other words, He need not restrict His own sovereignty because some of what He creates will choose to reject Him as their Creator.
- h) Think about it, if that was the case and the outcome exercised a controlling influence over God, it would be creation that was dictating God's choices, and that would make creation the Sovereign.

- i) History is showered with examples of mankind playing God, beginning in the Garden; tell me, how has that worked out thus far?
- 1) **God NEVER said that:** *“And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, **God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ ”** Then the serpent said to the woman, **“You will not surely die.** For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.””*
Genesis 3:2-5 NKJV
- 2) **I did it my way!** *“Now the Lord sent you on a mission, and said, ‘**Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.**’ **Why then did you not obey the voice of the Lord?** Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the Lord?”* And Saul said to Samuel, **“But I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and gone on the mission on which the Lord sent me, and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have**

*utterly destroyed the Amalekites. **But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal.*** So Samuel said: *“Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, **to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king.**”*” I Samuel 15:18-23 NKJV

B. Vessels of Wrath vs. Vessels of Mercy

(1) God is Patient

(a) Explanation: this is how it works.

1. “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?”

Romans 9:22-24 NKJV

2. Let's begin with the end of this passage and then work our way backwards.
 - a) The Jewish people, whom Paul likens here to those who represent all of God's chosen people, stand in stark contrast to pagans.
 - b) And yet, God has made a way for all to choose His mercy, not just the Jews.
 - c) That should settle it for you. Both clay pots have the option.
 - d) And like we previously learned when Paul revealed that they are not all Israel who are of Israel; it's not only that Gentiles have the necessity to opt in, Israel must opt in as well, as bloodline does not determine true sonship—opting in by faith does.
 - 1) **Israel vs. Israel:** *“But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. **For they are not all Israel who are of Israel,**”* Romans 9:6 NKJV
 - 2) See: [Let's Get Historical](#)
 - 3) **Israel must opt in as well:** *“And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted*

*in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, **how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?***” Romans 11:23-24
NKJV

3. Now that we have that settled we can continue to work our way backwards to make sense of it all.
 - a) What it means to be “called” is that you were invited to be a born-again child of God and you accepted the invitation.
 - b) Yahweh has the foreknowledge of everything from eternity past to eternity future.
 - c) He already sees who has responded to His invitation to spend that eternity future with Him.
 - d) You might say that what God has prepared beforehand, for those who will choose Him, is glorious.
 - e) God’s foreknowledge should now begin to make sense, but only to those who have had an authentic encounter with Him through Christ.

f) It is only they who can possibly understand the glory attached to His mercy, because no one can know the things of God except the Spirit of God that is in him, and it is only once you have been born-again that you are filled with His Spirit.

1) *“For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so **no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.** Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, **that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.**”* I Corinthians 2:11-12 NKJV

4. Moving up from there we can easily deduce that those who will never choose God, no matter how long He waits, and no matter how patient He is, will face the devastating consequences of their decision.

a) God knows that some of whom He created will inevitably succumb to their human nature, but that does not prevent Him from creating them.

b) Instead, He uses the fact that some will choose to self-destruct to demonstrate the majesty of His

grace towards those who will choose to accept Him as their God—the One and only God.

THE PROPHETS SPEAK

2. Scripture Defines Scripture

A. God's Word supports God's Word

- (1) Paul refers to Scripture to make his point...
 - (a) Not up for private interpretation...
 1. *"And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." II Peter 1:19-21 NKJV*
- (2) However... this was not reserved for just *"holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"* from the past!
 - (a) We are assigned explore, be faithful, and to make known God's hidden wisdom!

1. *"As **each one has received a gift**, minister it to one another, as **good stewards of the manifold grace of God.**"* 1 Peter 4:10 NKJV
2. *"Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and **stewards of the mysteries of God.** Moreover **it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.**"* 1 Corinthians 4:1-2 NKJV
3. *"I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, of which **I became a minister according to the stewardship from God** which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, **the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.** To them **God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery** among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Colossians 1:24-27 NKJV*
4. *"**It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter.**"* Proverbs 25:2 NKJV

5. *"But **we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,**" I Corinthians 2:7 NKJV*

6. *"Jesus said to them, "**Have you understood all these things?**" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." Then He said to them, "Therefore **every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.**""* Matthew 13:51-52 NKJV

(3) It's your job to uncover the mysteries of the Kingdom!

(a) It's why Y'shua spoke in parables!

1. *"And the disciples came and said to Him, "**Why do You speak to them in parables?**" He answered and said to them, "**Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.**"* Matthew 13:10-12 NKJV

(b) Like the parable of the Talents Matthew 25:14-30

1. **The servant who executed his assignment:** *"So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five*

*talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ His Lord said to him, ‘**Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.** Enter into the joy of your Lord.’” Matthew 25:20-21 NKJV*

2. **The servant who wasted his assignment:** *“Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. ‘**For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.**” Matthew 25:28-29 NKJV*

B. Hosea

(1) Paul refers to Scripture to make his point...

(a) Hosea Quote #1 & #2

1. **“As He says also in Hosea: “I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved.” [Hosea 2:23] “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. [Hosea 1:10]”” Romans 9:25-26 NKJV**
2. Paul then does again what Paul does so well.

- a) He proves the doctrine he is espousing by finding support in the Scriptures.
 - b) This time he displays his acumen for the prophets. He begins with Hosea and then moves to Isaiah to bolster his teaching.
 - c) If you look closely into the Prophets' writings, and also search their words in proximity to what he is emphasizing, you will see that he is specifically highlighting some things that point away from bloodline and toward faith, which by its very nature speaks of choice!
 - d) Let me explain.
 - 1) If the entire point Paul is making is that you are called into the family of God by bloodline, which was predetermined before the foundations of the earth, then there would be no reason for him to search the prophets for passages that emphasize how God called those who were not natural sons to be sons.
3. We can go deeper if you are willing to read further what Hosea prophesied.

- a) Paul is a sophisticated writer and requires his readers to amalgamate what he reveals throughout his letter.
 - b) Unfortunately, today's readers have become handicapped by a culture of soundbites, bells and whistles, and all sorts of distractions that have caused us to find it very difficult to carry thought-forms over long spans of reading.
 - c) We have developed a bullet-point mentality; short choppy thoughts that move rapidly from one interest to the next.
 - d) "Don't make me think too hard and please keep it colorful and entertaining."
 - e) Paul's rabbinic style requires us to slow down, re-read; go back and integrate what you read earlier with what he is revealing now; even take the time to care about from where he is extracting his thoughts.
4. Hosea says two things that Paul sees as relevant to prove his point. (Hosea 2:23)
- a) *"Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, **And I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; Then I will say to those who were not My***

people, 'You are My people!' And they shall say, 'You are my God!' "" Hosea 2:23 NKJV

b) God says, "You are My people!" And the people say, "You are my God!"

c) And that very same prophecy contains the words Paul referenced earlier in this chapter (Romans 9:18). *"Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens."*

5. Can you see that when these two ideas are blended, the mixture resolves the dilemma.

a) His mercy is not just available to some predetermined people group, but to anyone who will receive it, and that is not determined by bloodline, but by faith.

1) The apostle John taught it like this; "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:12-13

b) Hosea also reveals that God's relationship with his people, those who receive Him, will be like a marital covenant—beginning with betrothal; He

has offered to betroth us and then to marry us forever and we have accepted His offer.

- 1) **This is what comes immediately before Paul's direct reference:** *“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, Will bring her into the wilderness, And speak comfort to her. I will give her her vineyards from there, And the Valley of Achor as a door of hope; She shall sing there, As in the days of her youth, As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt. “And it shall be, in that day,” Says the Lord, “**That you will call Me ‘My Husband,’ And no longer call Me ‘My Master,’ For I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals, And they shall be remembered by their name no more. In that day I will make a covenant for them With the beasts of the field, With the birds of the air, And with the creeping things of the ground. Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth, To make them lie down safely. “I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me In righteousness and justice, In lovingkindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in***

faithfulness, And you shall know the Lord. *“It shall come to pass in that day That I will answer,” says the Lord; “I will answer the heavens, And they shall answer the earth. The earth shall answer With grain, With new wine, And with oil; They shall answer Jezreel.”* Hosea 2:14-22 NKJV

6. Who are we? That is where Paul’s second reference to Hosea emerges. (Hosea 1:10)
 - a) We are a people who were not originally His people by bloodline, but have by faith become sons of the living God.
 - 1) **“...‘You are not My people,’ There it shall be said to them, ‘You are sons of the living God.’”** Hosea 1:10 NKJV
 - b) Even those with the original bloodline coursing through their veins can and must become sons of God by faith.
 - 1) *“What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? **“Abraham***

*believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” [Genesis 15:6] Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, {13} **For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.***

*{16} Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, **but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham,** who is the father of us all” Romans 4:1-5, 13, 16 NKJV*

- 2) **(Genesis 15:1-6)** *“After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.” But Abram said, “Lord God, what will You give me, seeing **I go childless,** and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” Then Abram said, “Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my*

house is my heir!" And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "***This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.***" Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." {6} ***And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.***" Genesis 15:1-6 NKJV

3) See: [Belief is an Act of Faith](#) (Romans 4:1-12)

4) See: [The Empty Womb](#) (Romans 4:13-25)

- c) And again, in similar fashion, Paul integrates the point he is making here with a previous deep revelation; not all of Israel is Israel (Romans 9:18)!
- d) He does so by referring to Hosea's use of Abraham which we can see if...

1) ...we look at the whole verse: "***Yet the number of the children of Israel Shall be as the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass In the place where it was said to them, 'You are not***

My people,' There it shall be said to them, 'You are sons of the living God.'" Hosea 1:10 NKJV

- 2) **Do you see it?** *"Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand."*
- 3) That idea is stationed in the very same verse in Hosea that says, *"'You are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God."*
- e) Paul does not use Hosea to solidify his point just yet, but that exact concept is where he continues his next prophetic insight, but this time from Isaiah.

C. Isaiah

(1) Paul refers to Scripture to make his point...

(a) Isaiah Quote #1(Isaiah 10:22)

1. **"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. (Isaiah 10:22)**
For **He will finish the work** and cut it short in righteousness, Because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth.""
Romans 9:27-28 NKJV
2. Carrying forward multiple streams of thought will help you understand the depth of Paul's thinking, as

he pivots towards what Isaiah has to say on the matter.

- a) God will have mercy on whom He wishes. God will call a people sons who were not originally His people.
- b) He will do so with a marriage covenant. There will be a people as numerous as the sand of the sea, which **must naturally be contrasted with the stars of heaven**, because that was the promise to Abraham. Why? Because, they are not all Israel who are of Israel.” (Romans 9:6)
- 1) **By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac (Genesis 22:1-19), and see that there are TWO promises (Israel and Israel):** *“Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: “By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son— **blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed***

*all the nations of the earth shall be blessed,
because you have obeyed My voice.”“ Genesis
22:15-18 NKJV*

3. Isaiah intimates, and it is imperative that you recognize the contrast between two Israels.
 - a) “Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved.”
(Romans 9:27)
 - b) Seek from where Paul is obtaining his reasoning and you will find Isaiah prophesied, just prior to from where Paul refers to the sand of the sea...
 - 1) *“And it shall come to pass in that day **That the remnant of Israel, And such as have escaped of the house of Jacob**, Will never again depend on him who defeated them, But **will depend on the Lord**, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. **The remnant will return**, the remnant of Jacob, To the Mighty God.”* Isaiah 10:20-21 NKJV
 - 2) And then Paul’s Reference: *“**For though your people, O Israel, be as the sand of the sea, A remnant of them will return**; The destruction decreed shall overflow with righteousness. For the Lord God of hosts Will make a determined*

end In the midst of all the land.” Isaiah

10:22-23 NKJV

- 3) Two Israels: the separation of the Church (the remnant) from Natural Israel
4. Can you see it?
 - a) A piece of Israel has broken off and will become sons by faith.
 - b) That makes two Israels, the original will inhabit the earth, represented by **the sands of the sea**; and the sons of faith separate themselves as a remnant, **but will become as numerous as the stars of heaven.**
 - 1) God has created and called the nation of Israel and that will never change. But national heritage is not that to which you want to yoke your identity. Yes, it looks the same on paper, Israel vs. Israel. But to one their is only earthly promises and earthly citizenship; to the other heavenly promises and heavenly citizenship awaits.
 - c) Notice the call to heaven and the call to earth!
 - 1) *“that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, **of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,** and that every*

tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:10-11 NKJV

(b) Isaiah Quote #2 (Isaiah 1:9)

1. "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. (*Isaiah 1:9*)"" Romans 9:29 NKJV

2. Thank God for the Seed

a) If we are to fully comprehend the seed of faith in contrast to the bloodline, it is worth repeating...

1) "*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.**"*" Romans 9:6-7 NKJV

b) They are not all Israel who are of Israel. (See: [Let's Get Historical](#))

1) If you are counting on your blood lineage from Abraham as your ultimate salvation, you are headed down the wrong path.

2) God has created and called the nation of Israel and that will never change.

- 3) But national heritage is not that to which you want to yoke your identity.
 - 4) It looks the same on paper, Israel vs. Israel.
 - 5) But to one their is only earthly promises and earthly citizenship; to the other heavenly promises and heavenly citizenship awaits.
3. Abraham's life is the perfect picture of this duality. To him were born two primary sons, Ishmael and Isaac.
- a) But in only one of them is the seed of the heavenly call, and that is Isaac, the second born who, from a spiritual perspective takes on firstborn status.
 - b) The point here again is that bloodline is secondary to faith.
 - c) Technically, the firstborn Ishmael carried the bloodline and Isaac the seed of promise.
 - d) Remember, Abraham believed God and it was accounted to Him as righteousness.
 - e) And isn't it revealing that after his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, his son of promise, that is when Abraham was guaranteed descendants as numerous as the stars of the heavens (heavenly citizenship) and the sand of the seashore (earthly citizenship)?

4. Isaiah also speaks of a third option, total destruction.
 - a) The Lord of Sabaoth, that is the Lord of a host of warring angels, stands ready to separate those of righteousness from those to whom He will make a determined end.
 - 1) Isaiah brings both a promise and a warning;
“Unless there was seed of promise, the remnant, Sodom and Gomorrah would be the fate of us all!”
 - 2) You should notice that Isaiah brings both a promise and a warning... *“Him we preach, **warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom**, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.”* Colossians 1:28-29 NKJV
 - 3) God has an army of angels who stand ready to deal harshly with those who choose the way of fire and brimstone.
 - 4) Just read on from where Paul taps Isaiah in 1:9 and you will see the destiny of the rebels in 1:10-20.

5. These rebels appear scarily similar to the modern-day seeker-friendly compromised church.

a) God does not appreciate their ritualistic gatherings nor their religious assemblies and sacred meetings.

1) *“Hear the word of the Lord, You rulers of Sodom; Give ear to the law of our God, You people of Gomorrah: “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?” Says the Lord. “**I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, Or of lambs or goats. “When you come to appear before Me, Who has required this from your hand, To trample My courts? **Bring no more futile sacrifices**; Incense is an abomination to Me. **The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies— I cannot endure** iniquity and the sacred meeting. Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them.”** Isaiah 1:10-14 NKJV*

b) God sees their compromised self-indulgent worship services and manmade holidays with disgust, and He will not hear their prayers.

- 1) ***“When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear.”*** Isaiah 1:15 NKJV
- c) His admonition: Repent!
 - 1) ***““Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. **Cease to do evil**, Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow.”*** Isaiah 1:16-17 NKJV
 - 2) ***““Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the Lord, **“Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.** If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword”; For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”*** Isaiah 1:18-20 NKJV

TRIP HAZARDS

3. The Stumbling Block

A. Two Laws

- (1) The Law of Righteousness/Faith

- (a) We must conclude with what certainly seems unfair, even completely absurd.
 - 1. "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.**" Romans 9:30-31 NKJV
 - 2. Pagans vs. Israel
 - a) Pagans who had absolutely no desire to know Yahweh, no pedigree as God's chosen people, no inclination to recognize, let alone obey God's laws, not even the tiniest hint of interest in pursuing the truth, have become those whom God considers righteous? Yes, they have!
 - b) And conversely, God's chosen people, who were all about every one of those things, have missed the mark by as far as east is from west? Yes, they have! But why?
- (2) The Law of Works (See [Wrongthink & Thoughtcrimes](#) & [Vernacular](#) for a deep study on this topic.)
 - (a) Faith vs. Works of Law

1. “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.**” Romans 9:32 NKJV
2. Don’t you love how Paul takes us up onto a sheer cliff of anticipation, and then drops us?
 - a) If you feel like you are in a free-fall, you’re not alone.
 - b) If you have studied this letter thus far, with the same intensity that has again been reiterated here, then you too will feel the exhilaration.
3. God’s original people, Israel, missed the memo.
 - a) It was never about bloodline and always about faith. That is the stumbling block!
 - b) Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness.
 - c) Belief is an act of faith, and for Christians, confession is their first act; “I am a sinner; Y’shua is my Savior; I am now a new person created to obey God!”
 - 1) See: [Belief is an Act of Faith](#) (Romans 4:1-12)
4. We will explore the righteousness of the law and the righteousness of faith in granular detail in the next chapter, but if we take a brief journey backwards and

forwards, you will be better prepared when we get there.

- a) God's law was never the problem.
 - 1) *"But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as **He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.** For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. **Because finding fault with them,** He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—" Hebrews 8:6-8 NKJV*
 - 2) *"For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, **having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances,** so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace," Ephesians 2:14-15 NKJV*
 - 3) It was Israel's religious leadership, who erroneously assumed that they could catalogue God's commands in enough detail and then

introduce that list of laws to an eager people who, by their own strength and self-determination, could be good enough—disciplined enough—to obey it, and thus be considered righteous by God. **The problem was not the law but the people!** *“For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.”* Romans 10:3 NKJV

- b) That has never and will never work—that is works of law which is a brand of legalism.
 - 1) Simply defined, legalism is a philosophy that promotes and even demands, that somehow and in some way you can be good enough, on your own, to obey God’s commands, and that will put you in right standing with God.
 - 2) The many ugly faces of Legalism
 - a. For an in-depth teaching on legalism see also [Religionship or Relationship](#).
 - b. The practice of adding anything to the free gift of salvation by grace through faith.

- c. Even if what you are adding to your faith is a good thing, something God wants you to do, a law that God requires you to obey, if you believe you must do it to receive or maintain your eternal redemption, then it is legalism.
- d. When we build our relationship with God into a system of rules and procedures—that is called religion.
- e. When we insist others adhere to our preferred system of rules and procedures—that is called legalism.
- f. Legalism is equivalent to strangle-ism. It's the way we choke the life out of our relationship with God.
- g. God is not interested in your legalism or your religion.
- h. And this is precisely the problem with works of law. It is complete bondage because redemption has been attached to something other than faith in Christ.
- i. Even if it's a good thing, like obeying God's commands, if you attach any requirement for

justification, other than faith, it is total bondage!

- j. The liberty we have in Christ is that we have been freed from the erroneous belief that we can obey our way into redemption.
 - k. Traditions that dictate strict obedience to God's commandments for salvation is legalism.
 - l. It is legalistic to insist others must adhere to our or a preferred system of rules and procedures to be in right standing with God.
- c) And yet, the ignorant unsuspecting pagans would be introduced to this Jesus character; they'd have no preconceived notions and wrong thinking that would bias their opinion; God's grace would more easily soften their scarred hearts and their faith would blossom.
- 1) That is all it takes to be infused with God's strength through Christ, and it is only with that strength that you can become completely obedient to God's commands, as they are presented to you.

- 2) You achieve this while simultaneously giving God all the credit for your abilities and your salvation.
- d) But, introduce Jesus to a legalistic lot of religious zealots, and all He becomes is a giant stone wall standing between them and truth.

B. The Stumbling Block

(1) The Rock of Offense

(a) One final time in this passage Paul returns to Isaiah to sink teeth into his premise. (Isaiah 8:14; 28:16)

1. "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.'" Romans 9:33 NKJV
2. When you attempt to expose legalism and replace it with faith in Jesus, those hell-bent on religion get completely offended.
 - a) *"He will be as a sanctuary, **But a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense To both the houses of Israel**, As a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem."* Isaiah 8:14 NKJV
 - b) *"Therefore thus says the Lord God: "**Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, A tried stone, a***

precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; *Whoever believes **will not act hastily.***“ Isaiah 28:16 NKJV

c) No one who believes they have a special ability because of their particular bloodline is immune to this potential infection. It's a trap, a snare.

d) They prefer their own belief over God's word.

Why?

1) Isaiah says, *“To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is*

because there is no light in them.“ Isaiah 8:20

NKJV

e) Jesus is the light of the world, but there is no light in them!

1) This stone has become a tripping hazard; it exposes their sclerotic heart disease, easily diagnosed by how offended they are by Jesus.

f) He is the foundation stone, the chief cornerstone. Believe that and you will by no means be put to shame...

1) ***“Bind up the testimony, Seal the law among my disciples.***“ Isaiah 8:16 NKJV (See Isaiah 8:13-22)

2) ***“Your covenant with death will be annulled, And your agreement with Sheol will not stand;***

*When the overflowing scourge passes through,
Then you will be trampled down by it.”* Isaiah
28:18 NKJV (See Isaiah 28:16-19)

g) If you don't recognize the light, then the rock of offense will simply prove that the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, while to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1) *“For **the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing**, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: **“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”**”* I Corinthians 1:18-19 NKJV

(2) Y'shua taught us with the perfect object lesson about the stumbling stone.

(a) The parable of the wicked vinedressers: *The son is the ultimate problem. If we get rid of him our problems is solved.*

1. *“Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far*

country. Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. **Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.'** So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?" **They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men** miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.'" Matthew 21:33-41 NKJV

(b) The Son is the Stumbling Block. Those that come against Him will be destroyed.

1. "Jesus said to them, **"Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes'?**

[Psalms 118:22-23] "Therefore I say to you, the

kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. **And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.**" Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet."
Matthew 21:42-46 NKJV

(3) Peter ties it altogether!

(a) A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.

1. "[You] **Coming to Him as to a living stone** [it's your turn], **rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones,** are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, **"The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone,"** {8} and **"A stone**

of stumbling And a rock of offense.” They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. [Your Calling...] But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, **that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, **who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy [AGAIN Hosea 2:23].“** I Peter 2:4-10 NKJV**

Summary: CLAY POTS

1. A Rollercoaster of Emotions

A. Yahweh is Sovereign

(1) A Poor Excuse

(a) We must begin this section where we ended the last— with Pharaoh.

1. Paul understands the rollercoaster of emotions that is expected from any disciple who is learning to die daily.

a) All are on the same journey from slavery to freedom, from the bondage to sin to becoming a prisoner of righteousness.

- b) There is a tsunami of emotions, rising to destroy the old man and then receding to reveal the catastrophic damage to the carnal nature left behind.
 - c) It seems that Pharaoh's fate was set in stone; God will share His mercy with some, and others He will harden, so how can you blame someone for fulfilling the role for which God created them?
2. A misinterpretation like this is bound to elicit strong emotions.
- a) Paul can predict this is exactly how his reader is presently feeling; he is certain that the old man is rising up to indict God.
 - 1) If God made a cat to act like a cat, then how can He punish the cat for acting like a cat?
 - 2) God gave Pharaoh his personality and Pharaoh willingly exercised those character traits, with terrible results.
 - 3) How can God fault Pharaoh for displaying the very nature that God willfully placed in him?
 - 4) No man can reject what was inserted in him before his birth.

- 5) Therefore, we must conclude that Yahweh is responsible for Pharaoh “acting like a cat.”
- b) This is where the animals analogy breaks down— runs into its limitation.
 - 1) Humans are the only members of God’s creation that can opt out of their inherent nature.
 - 2) We are created in the image of God. The cat was not!
 - 3) There is within all of us the DNA of our Creator and there is within all of us, no matter how deeply hidden, the option to express that DNA.
- c) As such, you should not be fooled.
 - 1) Knowing that Pharaoh would choose his carnal nature over God’s hidden DNA, and forcing his hand to make the choice that would cause his own destruction are not the same.
 - 2) God’s foreknowledge of man’s choice should not handcuff the Lord’s authority, or restrict His rights in any way.
 - 3) Yahweh is the Lord and He maintains all rights; He is sovereign over all of creation and is not limited by the choices any of us will make, even though He can see those choices in advance.

3. Yahweh did not harden Pharaoh's heart, just so He could destroy him.
 - a) The revelation that Yahweh is the One and only God, a God not of Pharaoh's own making exposed the darkness already lurking in his heart.
 - b) Pharaoh held out to his people that he was a god, and now his encounter with Yahweh has made his claim vulnerable—and he doesn't like it.
 - c) Pharaoh chose the wide road that leads to destruction—instead of the narrow road of dying to self, to submit to the One true God, the same choice each one of us must make.
 - 1) **The Plague of Darkness: *For in the day you see my face you shall die!***
 - d) It is true; we all come naked and vulnerable before the Lord with a whole pantheon of personal gods, idols that we set up against the knowledge of Yahweh.
 - 1) **God's truth will come against anything that puts itself over Him:**
 - 2) **It will all be exposed:**
 - e) The god of self that sits on the throne, as our supreme leader, is exposed.

f) And let's get up close and personal; you must choose whom you will serve—all the gods on the other side of the River and in Egypt that are lurking in your heart, or Yahweh.

1) **The Choice: We reject our old gods!**

g) And be very careful, once you know who is the only true God, you become a witness against yourself if you continue to serve the gods of your carnal nature.

1) **You can't serve both:**

2) **You are a witnesses against yourselves:**

3) **Sealed in stone:**

4. You can't serve both and that is with what Pharaoh struggled.

a) He traveled from the "innocence" of not knowing, to the realization of his need to repent, and onto the danger zone of being fully aware of God—and yet, he chose anyway to reject Yahweh and opt to serve the foreign gods of his own heart!

b) But soon after, he repents and openly acknowledges that Yahweh is the one true God, and yet... his sinful heart is so dark that he ultimately chooses to resist Yahweh, and not only

resist, but to declare war against Him. Pharaoh is God in his own mind, and there will be no other.

1) 4th Plague Flies (He acknowledges that Yahweh is a god, but the god of the hebrews):

2) 7th Plague Hail (He acknowledges he has sinned and Yahweh is the Lord):

3) 8th Plague Locusts (He acknowledges he has sinned and Yahweh is the Lord and asks for forgiveness ONE TIME):

c) Now You Choose!

(2) Why have you made me like this?

(a) This is where the rubber hits the road in your understanding of God's nature.

1. Permission to dislike what you discover, but only temporarily, only until you fully grasp that you have within you the mind of Christ.

a) You will likely have a reflex reaction, a knee-jerk response initially.

b) But after that gets out of your system, a rebuke is forthcoming.

c) You can either accept Yahweh for who He is or recreate God in your own mind to satisfy your own needs and understanding! You

2. Remember, He is the Creator and you are the creation.
 - a) You don't get to question His motives or modes.
 - b) If you scrutinize God as if to judge His authority, His veracity, His character, or to limit His rights in any way, you are essentially saying to Him that you would be a better god over creation than He.
 - c) Satan tried that and it did not end well for him!
 - 1) The disease of pride:
 - 2) **Don't be lured into that trap!**
 - d) The entire premise would be as absurd as an inanimate lump of clay telling the man at the potter's wheel how to spin that clay, what he should make from it, and for what he should use what he made.
 - e) It gets a bit difficult to accept that some clay will ultimately be used to craft a king's cup and other clay as receptacles of human waste.
 - f) Yet, if you indeed formulate it correctly in your mind, you will be freed from your desire to judge God.
 - g) Here is the proper way to frame your understanding.

- 1) God creates all the clay; and God creates all the vessels made from that clay.
 - 2) He maintains that right even though some will opt to hold a king's wine and others a king's urine.
 - 3) In other words, He need not restrict His own sovereignty because some of what He creates will choose to reject Him as their Creator.
- h) Think about it, if that was the case and the outcome exercised a controlling influence over God, it would be creation that was dictating God's choices, and that would make creation the Sovereign.
- i) History is showered with examples of mankind playing God, beginning in the Garden; tell me, how has that worked out thus far?
- 1) **God NEVER said that:**
 - 2) **I did it my way!**

B. Vessels of Wrath vs. Vessels of Mercy

(1) God is Patient

(a) Explanation: this is how it works.

1. Let's begin with the end of this passage and then work our way backwards.

- a) The Jewish people, whom Paul likens here to those who represent all of God's chosen people, stand in stark contrast to pagans.
 - b) And yet, God has made a way for all to choose His mercy, not just the Jews.
 - c) That should settle it for you. Both clay pots have the option.
 - d) And like we previously learned when Paul revealed that they are not all Israel who are of Israel; it's not only that Gentiles have the necessity to opt in, Israel must opt in as well, as bloodline does not determine true sonship—opting in by faith does.
 - 1) **Israel vs. Israel:** See: [Let's Get Historical](#)
 - 2) **Israel must opt in as well:**
2. Now that we have that settled we can continue to work our way backwards to make sense of it all.
- a) What it means to be “called” is that you were invited to be a born-again child of God and you accepted the invitation.
 - b) Yahweh has the foreknowledge of everything from eternity past to eternity future.

- c) He already sees who has responded to His invitation to spend that eternity future with Him.
 - d) You might say that what God has prepared beforehand, for those who will choose Him, is glorious.
 - e) God's foreknowledge should now begin to make sense, but only to those who have had an authentic encounter with Him through Christ.
 - f) It is only they who can possibly understand the glory attached to His mercy, because no one can know the things of God except the Spirit of God that is in him, and it is only once you have been born-again that you are filled with His Spirit.
3. Moving up from there we can easily deduce that those who will never choose God, no matter how long He waits, and no matter how patient He is, will face the devastating consequences of their decision.
- a) God knows that some of whom He created will inevitably succumb to their human nature, but that does not prevent Him from creating them.
 - b) Instead, He uses the fact that some will choose to self-destruct to demonstrate the majesty of His

grace towards those who will choose to accept Him as their God—the One and only God.

Summary: THE PROPHETS SPEAK

2. Scripture Defines Scripture

A. God's Word supports God's Word

- (1) Paul refers to Scripture to make his point...
 - (a) Not up for private interpretation...
- (2) However... this was not reserved for just *“holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”* from the past!
 - (a) We are assigned explore, be faithful, and to make known God's hidden wisdom!
- (3) It's your job to uncover the mysteries of the Kingdom!
 - (a) It's why Y'shua spoke in parables!
 - (b) Like the parable of the Talents Matthew 25:14-30

B. Hosea

- (1) Paul refers to Scripture to make his point...
 - (a) Hosea Quote #1 & #2
 1. Paul then does again what Paul does so well.
 - a) He proves the doctrine he is espousing by finding support in the Scriptures.

- b) This time he displays his acumen for the prophets. He begins with Hosea and then moves to Isaiah to bolster his teaching.
 - c) If you look closely into the Prophets' writings, and also search their words in proximity to what he is emphasizing, you will see that he is specifically highlighting some things that point away from bloodline and toward faith, which by its very nature speaks of choice!
 - d) Let me explain.
 - 1) If the entire point Paul is making is that you are called into the family of God by bloodline, which was predetermined before the foundations of the earth, then there would be no reason for him to search the prophets for passages that emphasize how God called those who were not natural sons to be sons.
2. We can go deeper if you are willing to read further what Hosea prophesied.
- a) Paul is a sophisticated writer and requires his readers to amalgamate what he reveals throughout his letter.

- b) Unfortunately, today's readers have become handicapped by a culture of soundbites, bells and whistles, and all sorts of distractions that have caused us to find it very difficult to carry thought-forms over long spans of reading.
 - c) We have developed a bullet-point mentality; short choppy thoughts that move rapidly from one interest to the next.
 - d) "Don't make me think too hard and please keep it colorful and entertaining."
 - e) Paul's rabbinic style requires us to slow down, re-read; go back and integrate what you read earlier with what he is revealing now; even take the time to care about from where he is extracting his thoughts.
3. Hosea says two things that Paul sees as relevant to prove his point. (Hosea 2:23)
- a) God says, "You are My people!" And the people say, "You are my God!"
 - b) And that very same prophecy contains the words Paul referenced earlier in this chapter (Romans 9:18). *"Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens."*

4. Can you see that when these two ideas are blended, the mixture resolves the dilemma.
 - a) His mercy is not just available to some predetermined people group, but to anyone who will receive it, and that is not determined by bloodline, but by faith.
 - 1) The apostle John taught it like this; "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:12-13
 - b) Hosea also reveals that God's relationship with his people, those who receive Him, will be like a marital covenant—beginning with betrothal; He has offered to betroth us and then to marry us forever and we have accepted His offer.
5. Who are we? That is where Paul's second reference to Hosea emerges. (Hosea 1:10)
 - a) We are a people who were not originally His people by bloodline, but have by faith become sons of the living God.

- b) Even those with the original bloodline coursing through their veins can and must become sons of God by faith.
 - 1) See: [Belief is an Act of Faith](#) (Romans 4:1-12)
 - 2) See: [The Empty Womb](#) (Romans 4:13-25)
- c) And again, in similar fashion, Paul integrates the point he is making here with a previous deep revelation; not all of Israel is Israel (Romans 9:18)!
- d) He does so by referring to Hosea's use of Abraham which we can see if...
 - 1) **Do you see it?** *"Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand."*
 - 2) That idea is stationed in the very same verse in Hosea that says, "'You are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God."
- e) Paul does not use Hosea to solidify his point just yet, but that exact concept is where he continues his next prophetic insight, but this time from Isaiah.

C. Isaiah

- (1) Paul refers to Scripture to make his point...
 - (a) Isaiah Quote #1(Isaiah 10:22)

1. Carrying forward multiple streams of thought will help you understand the depth of Paul's thinking, as he pivots towards what Isaiah has to say on the matter.
 - a) God will have mercy on whom He wishes. God will call a people sons who were not originally His people.
 - b) He will do so with a marriage covenant. There will be a people as numerous as the sand of the sea, which **must naturally be contrasted with the stars of heaven**, because that was the promise to Abraham. Why? Because, they are not all Israel who are of Israel." (Romans 9:6)
 - 1) **By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac (Genesis 22:1-19), and see that there are TWO promises (Israel and Israel):**
2. Isaiah intimates, and it is imperative that you recognize the contrast between two Israels.
 - a) "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved."
(Romans 9:27)

b) Seek from where Paul is obtaining his reasoning and you will find Isaiah prophesied, just prior to from where Paul refers to the sand of the sea...

1) Two Israels: the separation of the Church (the remnant) from Natural Israel

3. Can you see it?

a) A piece of Israel has broken off and will become sons by faith.

b) That makes two Israels, the original will inhabit the earth, represented by **the sands of the sea**; and the sons of faith separate themselves as a remnant, **but will become as numerous as the stars of heaven.**

1) God has created and called the nation of Israel and that will never change. But national heritage is not that to which you want to yoke your identity. Yes, it looks the same on paper, Israel vs. Israel. But to one their is only earthly promises and earthly citizenship; to the other heavenly promises and heavenly citizenship awaits.

c) Notice the call to heaven and the call to earth!

(b) Isaiah Quote #2 (Isaiah 1:9)

1. Thank God for the Seed

- a) If we are to fully comprehend the seed of faith in contrast to the bloodline, it is worth repeating...
- b) They are not all Israel who are of Israel. (See: [Let's Get Historical](#))
 - 1) If you are counting on your blood lineage from Abraham as your ultimate salvation, you are headed down the wrong path.
 - 2) God has created and called the nation of Israel and that will never change.
 - 3) But national heritage is not that to which you want to yoke your identity.
 - 4) It looks the same on paper, Israel vs. Israel.
 - 5) But to one their is only earthly promises and earthly citizenship; to the other heavenly promises and heavenly citizenship awaits.
- 2. Abraham's life is the perfect picture of this duality. To him were born two primary sons, Ishmael and Isaac.
 - a) But in only one of them is the seed of the heavenly call, and that is Isaac, the second born who, from a spiritual perspective takes on firstborn status.
 - b) The point here again is that bloodline is secondary to faith.

- c) Technically, the firstborn Ishmael carried the bloodline and Isaac the seed of promise.
 - d) Remember, Abraham believed God and it was accounted to Him as righteousness.
 - e) And isn't it revealing that after his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, his son of promise, that is when Abraham was guaranteed descendants as numerous as the stars of the heavens (heavenly citizenship) and the sand of the seashore (earthly citizenship)?
3. Isaiah also speaks of a third option, total destruction.
- a) The Lord of Sabaoth, that is the Lord of a host of warring angels, stands ready to separate those of righteousness from those to whom He will make a determined end.
 - 1) Isaiah brings both a promise and a warning;
"Unless there was seed of promise, the remnant, Sodom and Gomorrah would be the fate of us all!"
 - 2) You should notice that Isaiah brings both a promise and a warning...

- 3) God has an army of angels who stand ready to deal harshly with those who choose the way of fire and brimstone.
 - 4) Just read on from where Paul taps Isaiah in 1:9 and you will see the destiny of the rebels in 1:10-20.
4. These rebels appear scarily similar to the modern-day seeker-friendly compromised church.
 - a) God does not appreciate their ritualistic gatherings nor their religious assemblies and sacred meetings.
 - b) God sees their compromised self-indulgent worship services and manmade holidays with disgust, and He will not hear their prayers.
 - c) His admonition: Repent!

Summary: TRIP HAZARDS

3. The Stumbling Block

A. Two Laws

(1) The Law of Righteousness/Faith

(a) We must conclude with what certainly seems unfair, even completely absurd.

1. Pagans vs. Israel

- a) Pagans who had absolutely no desire to know Yahweh, no pedigree as God's chosen people, no inclination to recognize, let alone obey God's laws, not even the tiniest hint of interest in pursuing the truth, have become those whom God considers righteous? Yes, they have!
 - b) And conversely, God's chosen people, who were all about every one of those things, have missed the mark by as far as east is from west? Yes, they have! But why?
- (2) The Law of Works (See [Wrongthink & Thoughtcrimes](#) & [Vernacular](#) for a deep study on this topic.)
- (a) Faith vs. Works of Law
 - 1. Don't you love how Paul takes us up onto a sheer cliff of anticipation, and then drops us?
 - a) If you feel like you are in a free-fall, you're not alone.
 - b) If you have studied this letter thus far, with the same intensity that has again been reiterated here, then you too will feel the exhilaration.
 - 2. God's original people, Israel, missed the memo.
 - a) It was never about bloodline and always about faith. That is the stumbling block!

- b) Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness.
 - c) Belief is an act of faith, and for Christians, confession is their first act; “I am a sinner; Y’shua is my Savior; I am now a new person created to obey God!”
 - 1) See: [Belief is an Act of Faith](#) (Romans 4:1-12)
3. We will explore the righteousness of the law and the righteousness of faith in granular detail in the next chapter, but if we take a brief journey backwards and forwards, you will be better prepared when we get there.
- a) God’s law was never the problem.
 - 1) It was Israel’s religious leadership, who erroneously assumed that they could catalogue God’s commands in enough detail and then introduce that list of laws to an eager people who, by their own strength and self-determination, could be good enough—disciplined enough—to obey it, and thus be considered righteous by God. **The problem was not the law but the people!**

b) That has never and will never work—that is works of law which is a brand of legalism.

1) Simply defined, legalism is a philosophy that promotes and even demands, that somehow and in some way you can be good enough, on your own, to obey God's commands, and that will put you in right standing with God.

2) The many ugly faces of Legalism

a. For an in-depth teaching on legalism see also [Religionship or Relationship](#).

b. The practice of adding anything to the free gift of salvation by grace through faith.

c. Even if what you are adding to your faith is a good thing, something God wants you to do, a law that God requires you to obey, if you believe you must do it to receive or maintain your eternal redemption, then it is legalism.

d. When we build our relationship with God into a system of rules and procedures—that is called religion.

e. When we insist others adhere to our preferred system of rules and procedures—that is called legalism.

- f. Legalism is equivalent to strangle-ism. It's the way we choke the life out of our relationship with God.
- g. God is not interested in your legalism or your religion.
- h. And this is precisely the problem with works of law. It is complete bondage because redemption has been attached to something other than faith in Christ.
- i. Even if it's a good thing, like obeying God's commands, if you attach any requirement for justification, other than faith, it is total bondage!
- j. The liberty we have in Christ is that we have been freed from the erroneous belief that we can obey our way into redemption.
- k. Traditions that dictate strict obedience to God's commandments for salvation is legalism.
- l. It is legalistic to insist others must adhere to our or a preferred system of rules and procedures to be in right standing with God.

- c) And yet, the ignorant unsuspecting pagans would be introduced to this Jesus character; they'd have no preconceived notions and wrong thinking that would bias their opinion; God's grace would more easily soften their scarred hearts and their faith would blossom.
 - 1) That is all it takes to be infused with God's strength through Christ, and it is only with that strength that you can become completely obedient to God's commands, as they are presented to you.
 - 2) You achieve this while simultaneously giving God all the credit for your abilities and your salvation.
- d) But, introduce Jesus to a legalistic lot of religious zealots, and all He becomes is a giant stone wall standing between them and truth.

B. The Stumbling Block

- (1) The Rock of Offense
 - (a) One final time in this passage Paul returns to Isaiah to sink teeth into his premise. (Isaiah 8:14; 28:16)

1. When you attempt to expose legalism and replace it with faith in Jesus, those hell-bent on religion get completely offended.
 - a) No one who believes they have a special ability because of their particular bloodline is immune to this potential infection. It's a trap, a snare.
 - b) They prefer their own belief over God's word.
Why?
 - c) Jesus is the light of the world, but there is no light in them!
 - 1) This stone has become a tripping hazard; it exposes their sclerotic heart disease, easily diagnosed by how offended they are by Jesus.
 - d) He is the foundation stone, the chief cornerstone. Believe that and you will by no means be put to shame...
 - e) If you don't recognize the light, then the rock of offense will simply prove that the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, while to us who are being saved it is the power of God.
- (2) Y'shua taught us with the perfect object lesson about the stumbling stone.

- (a) The parable of the wicked vinedressers: *The son is the ultimate problem. If we get rid of him our problems is solved.*
 - (b) The Son is the Stumbling Block. Those that come against Him will be destroyed.
- (3) Peter ties it altogether!
- (a) A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.

QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

- 1. Discuss Paul's explanation for, "Why have you made me like this?" (Romans 9:20-21)**
 - A. History is showered with examples of mankind playing God, beginning in the Garden; tell me, how has that worked out thus far? (See: Genesis 3:2-5; I Samuel 15:18-23)
- 2. Explain Romans 9:22-24.**
 - A. How does this prove that God has made a way for all to choose His mercy, not just the Jews?
 - B. How does Romans 11:23-24 support that both Jews and Gentiles must opt in with God.
- 3. Use each of the following passages to support the premise that God's people are called to uncover His mysteries.**
 - A. II Peter 1:19-21

- B. I Peter 4:10
- C. I Corinthians 4:1-2
- D. Colossians 1:24-27
- E. I Corinthians 2:7
- F. Matthew 13:51-52
- G. Matthew 13:10-12
- H. Matthew 25:14-30

4. Write essay showing how Paul used the prophets to support what he was teaching.

- A. Use Hosea 2:14-23;1:10; Isaiah 10:20-23; 1:9; 8:13-22; 28:16-19

5. Use the following scriptures to show how it was always a people problem and not a law problem.

- A. Hebrews 8:6-8; Ephesians 2:14-15; Romans 10:3

6. Romans 9:33 speaks of a stumbling stone and rock of offense...

- A. How does Y'shua teach masterfully about such in Matthew 21:33-46?
- B. How does Peter teach masterfully about such in I Peter 2:4-10?
- C. How does Peter show that we are to take on the same position as Y'shua as the rejected stone?