

Notes on the Greek New Testament Day 206 – July 25th – Romans 9:1-24

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Romans

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Romans 9-11

These chapters in Romans have sometimes been viewed as a digression (Dodd argued that they were an old sermon Paul slipped in at this point breaking the flow from Romans 8 to Romans 12). Such views arise from a failure to understand the burden of Paul's ministry and his insight into the gospel.

From the beginning of this letter Paul has made it clear that the gospel he preached was that 'promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures' (1:2) and that the risen Saviour whom he proclaimed was none other than the promised Messiah, son of David (1:3, see also 1:16). Yet he knew from personal experience that most Jews rejected the gospel while there was a far better response from the Gentiles. Paul's ministry was therefore addressed to largely Gentile churches. How could he continue to maintain that the gospel he preached was a fulfilment of God's promise to his people *Israel*?

This situation was exacerbated by the tensions between Jews and Gentiles within the churches – tension which evidently existed also at Rome (see chapter 14). It is likely that after the relapse of the edict of Claudius which had expelled the Jews from Rome, Jews, including Jewish Christians, had returned to the city. A largely Gentile church had now experienced an influx of Jewish members. The Jewish Christians may have been suggesting that the Gentiles were only second-class people of God while the Gentiles, in turn, may have been suggesting that there was no significance in being a Jew or even that God had abandoned all concern for the Jews.

It is against such a background, and as an integral part of Paul's exposition of the gospel, that he pens chapters 9-11. "Two questions dominate these three chapters: the question of unbelieving Israel, and the question of God's faithfulness." Wright.

Verse 1-5

"The basic fact which though it is never actually mentioned, lies behind every verse in the opening paragraph, and sets in motion the whole long argument of chs 9-11 is that, notwithstanding her privileges, and his apostolic labour, Israel has rejected the Gospel that Paul preached." Barrett.

Verse 1

Ἀλήθειαν λέγω ἐν Χριστῷ, οὐ ψεύδομαι, συμμαρτυροῦσης μοι τῆς συνειδήσεώς μου ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ,

ἀληθεια, ας f truth, reality
ψευδομαι lie, speak untruth, deceive
συμμαρτυρω give evidence in support of
συνειδησις, εως f conscience, awareness

"'In the Holy Spirit' confirms the witness of conscience. It is only as we are indwelt by the Spirit and live in the Spirit, only as our minds are governed by the Spirit may we be assured that the voice of the conscience is in conformity with truth and right." Murray.
The construction "gives the strongest possible emphasis to what he is about to say." Wright.

Verse 2

ὅτι λύπη μοί ἐστιν μεγάλη καὶ ἀδιάλειπτος ὁδύνη τῆ καρδία μου·

λυπη, ης f grief, sorrow, pain
μεγας, μεγαλη, μεγα large, great
ἀδιαλειπτος, ον endless, constant
ὁδυνη, ης f pain, sorrow

"We should remind ourselves that the hearers of the letter would not yet know, at this point, what he was talking about; the effect of this statement would naturally be to excite sympathy and concern. Paul has led them to the point where they may, perhaps, be ready to listen to the topic he must now raise, if only because they have learnt to trust him. If he now turns to a matter of such agonising concern to himself, they should share it as well." Wright.

Verse 3

ἡχόμην γὰρ ἀνάθεμα εἶναι αὐτὸς ἐγὼ ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν συγγενῶν μου κατὰ σάρκα,

εὐχομαι pray, wish, long

ἀνάθεμα, τος n cursed, under the curse of God

Cf. 1 Cor 16:22; Gal 1:8-9. "The word carries overtones of the curse put on various people in Israelite history." Wright.

εἶναι Verb, pres infin εἶμι

"The grammatical construction of the sentence shows that Paul recognises that the wish is scarcely capable of fulfilment." Barrett.

συγγενής, ους m relative, kinsman, fellow-countryman

σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, physical body, human nature

"Paul did not consider it possible to be separated from Christ (8:38,39). Yet he expresses an intensity of love for his own people patterned after the love of the Saviour (Gal 3:13; 2 Cor 5:21)." Murray. Cf. Moses' prayer in Ex 32:30-32.

Verse 4

οἵτινες εἰσιν Ἰσραηλῖται, ὧν ἡ υἰοθεσία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ αἱ διαθήκαι καὶ ἡ νομοθεσία καὶ ἡ λατρεία καὶ αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι,

ὅστις, ἦτις, ὅ τι who, which

Ἰσραηλῖται "The name is important. In many Jewish intertestamental books, foreigners use the word 'Jew' as a simple national designation, but when Jews speak about themselves and their special position in salvation history, they call themselves 'Israelites.'" Moo.

υἰοθεσία, ας f adoption, sonship

See Ex. 4:22; Hos 11:1. The word is used here in a different way from 8:16,23. "Paul's application of the same word to regenerate believers and to Israel 'according to the flesh' within the space of twenty verses summarises the tension between Israel's promises and the church's blessing that infuses these chapters." Moo.

δόξα, ης f glory

Perhaps referring to the glory of God's visible presence at the Exodus. Cf. Ex 16:7; 24:16; 40:34-35. Paul has emphasised that 'glory' is the inheritance of the Christian, in Christ.

διαθήκη, ης covenant, will, testament

The singular, 'covenant' is strongly supported (p⁴⁶ B *et al*), but the plural (x C K Ψ *et al*) is probably original. The plural may refer to the Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic covenants.

νομοθεσία, ας f (God's) giving of the law (to Israel)

λατρεία, ας f service, worship; pl. rites

ἐπαγγελία, ας f promise, what is promised

"The force of this list is thus to say: the privileges that now belong to all those in Christ – 'not least,' Paul might add, 'those of you in Rome' (see 1:7,15) – are actually the privileges God promised to Israel according to the flesh. You Christians have come, as he says explicitly in 11:17 and 15:27, to share in the spiritual blessings of Israel. You must now spare a thought, and a prayer, for their present plight." Wright.

Verse 5

ὧν οἱ πατέρες, καὶ ἐξ ὧν ὁ χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα, ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων, θεὸς εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας· ἀμήν.

πατήρ, πατρος m father

At least Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, physical body, human nature

Cf. 1:3. "The point, then, is that God, having called ethnic Israel to be the light of the world, has now shone that light lavishly on the wider world, while Israel seems to have chosen to remain in darkness. Israel, called to be God's messenger to the world (3:1-2), has seen the message successfully delivered while itself failing to give heed to it. The irony and the tragedy of the situation is the reason both for Paul's anguish and for this poignant way of expressing it." Wright.

εὐλογητός, η, ον blessed, praised

αἰῶνας Noun, acc pl αἰών, αἰῶνος m age, world order, eternity

σαρκα· ὁ ὢν ... There are three main punctuations/interpretations of this phrase:

- i) Placing a comma after σαρκα and referring the words that follow to ὁ Χριστός ('who is God over all, blessed for ever.')
 - ii) Placing a stop after σαρκα and taking the following words as an independent clause, either:
 - a. 'God who is over all be blessed for ever'
- or

- b. 'He who is God over all be blessed for ever' *or*
 c. 'He who is over all is God blessed for ever'.
 iii) Placing a comma after σαρκᾶ and a stop after παντῶν ('... who is over all. God be (or is) blessed for ever'.)

The manuscript evidence is of no value here since the punctuation is a later addition.

The majority of the committee compiling UBS Greek Testament preferred the second of the above options, though a significant minority argued for the first reading.

Sanday and Headlam argue for the first option, as does Moo, and Murray argues for a variation on this reading, asserting that Paul does here refer to Jesus as God. Moo concludes, "This verse ... deserves to be numbered among those few in the New Testament that explicitly call Jesus 'God.'" Wright similarly comments "Grammatically the arguments weigh heavily on the side of (i); in other words, on the side of saying that Paul does indeed here ascribe divinity to Christ. Of the various arguments here, perhaps the strongest is that it would be highly unusual for Paul to write an asyndetic doxology – that is, an expression of praise that is not linked to a word in the immediately preceding sentence." And he concludes by saying, "If we read v. 5 in this way, what force does it add to the opening paragraph as a whole? Just this: that the Messiah who is from Israel's own race, their highest privilege and final hope, is the very embodiment of their sovereign Lord, their covenant God. And it is he whom they have rejected; this is precisely the point Paul makes in 10:21, at the close of the main 'story' of chaps. 9 and 10. Just as Israel rejected their God on Mt Sinai, precipitating Moses into his extraordinary prayer (see above), so now Israel according to the flesh has rejected its God as he came in the flesh, precipitating Paul into his own version of that prayer and his own great, unceasing grief. Israel's highest privilege, when spurned, becomes the cause of Israel's greatest tragedy.

"But even that tragedy contains within itself the seeds of hope. Just because the Messiah 'according to the flesh' is also 'God over all, blessed for ever,' and particularly because his 'flesh' was the place where God 'condemned sin' (8:3), so the strange and sad story of Israel's fate, to which Paul will now turn, is designed to lead on and out into new life. Read in this way, 9:5 becomes an exact, if ironic, summary of both parts of the argument which will now unfold."

Verses 6-13

"Since God has so clearly given Israel a position of unique privilege, does not Israel's defection mean that God's intention has broken down? The word of promise has been proved false by history. Paul's blunt negative answer to this question is supported by an analysis of the meaning of Israel." Barrett.

Wright adds, "It is of primary importance in reading Romans 9-11 to realise that its backbone is a *retelling of the story of Israel from Abraham to (Paul's) present day*. From 9:6 to 10:21, Paul is retelling the great narrative that every Jew knew. His retelling belongs with (though it subverts) other Second Temple retellings of the Jewish story: it is a retelling that speaks to what God has been doing all along, and that leaves Paul in a position to mount the fresh argument of chap. 11... Israel, Paul is saying, is Messiah-focused. The long story that began with Abraham reached its climax, its goal, its τέλος (*telos*) in him. And Israel is also Messiah-shaped. The pattern of Israel's history (rejection, failure, and exile followed by astonishing covenant renewal) is none other than the pattern of death and resurrection."

Verse 6

Οὐχ οἶον δὲ ὅτι ἐκπέπτωκεν ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ.
 οὐ γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἐξ Ἰσραήλ, οὗτοι Ἰσραήλ:

οἶος, α, ον relative pronoun such as, of what kind

οὐχ οἶον δε ὅτι 'But it is not as though ...'

ἐκπέπτωκεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s ἐκπιπτο fall off, fall away, lose, fail

Cf. Is 55:11. "To defend the gospel, Paul must defend God's faithfulness to his promises to Israel. For if God has gone back on his word to Israel, then a deep chasm between the Old and New Testament opens up, and the good news can no longer claim the God of Israel as its author." Moo. Wright adds, "The word for 'failed' in 9:6a means, literally, 'fall,' and though several transferred senses such as 'fail' are well attested we should note that Paul uses the language of 'stumbling,' 'tripping up,' and 'falling' several times later on in the argument. The answer to the implied question is: it is Israel that has stumbled, not God's word. In fact, Israel's stumble has been because of God's own Torah (9:32f.)."

οὐ γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἐξ Ἰσραήλ, οὗτοι Ἰσραήλ· Cf. 2:28-29. "Israel is not a term like Ammon, Moab, Greece or Rome. 'Israel' cannot be defined in terms of physical descent, or understood simply on the human side; it is created not by blood and soil, but by the promise of God, and therefore exists within the limits of God's freedom." Barrett.

Verse 7

οὐδ' ὅτι εἰσὶν σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ, πάντες τέκνα, ἀλλ'· Ἐν Ἰσαὰκ κληθήσεται σοι σπέρμα.

σπερμα, τος n seed, offspring

The Greek is ambiguous, it could mean:

- i) Neither because they are Abraham's seed are they all children; or
- ii) Nor are all the children of Abraham counted as seed.

The second fits better with Paul's general use of the term 'seed of Abraham,' cf. 4:13, 16, 18; Gal 3:16,19,29; 2 Cor 11:22 – and especially the following verse. For Paul, the phrase has a Christological focus.

τεκνον, ου n child; pl descendants
κληθήσεται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 s καλεω

Cf. Gen 21:12. Natural descent does not make children of promise.

Verse 8

τοῦτ' ἔστιν, οὐ τὰ τέκνα τῆς σαρκὸς ταῦτα τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀλλὰ τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας λογίζεται εἰς σπέρμα·

σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, physical body,
human nature

ἐπαγγελια, ας f promise, what is promised

Children who derive their origin from the promises of God.

λογίζομαι reckon, count, calculate, credit,
suppose

"The word 'counted' is of fundamental importance in this epistle. It has already occurred in several contexts, but especially in the quotation from Gen 15:6 (Rom 4:3). It points to the creative freedom of God, who creates 'righteousness' by 'counting' it, and annuls sin by not 'counting' it (4:6,8). He can raise up sons to Abraham out of stones (Matt 3:11; Lk 3:8) and freely determines what is seed and what is not.

"Seed' thus understood in the light of the creative freedom of God, is necessarily bound up with the 'promise.' Ishmael was a true son of Abraham, with as much of his father's blood in his veins as Isaac had; but he was a child of the flesh, not of promise. Isaac's birth, which took place in the context of human death and sterility (4:19), depended entirely upon God's gracious promise." Barrett.

Verse 9

ἐπαγγελίας γὰρ ὁ λόγος οὗτος· Κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν τοῦτον ἐλεύσομαι καὶ ἔσται τῆ Σάρρα υἱός.

Cf. Gen 18:10 or 18:14.

καιρος, ου m time, appointed/proper time
ἐλεύσομαι Verb, fut midd dep indic, 1 s

έρχομαι

ἔσται Verb, fut indic, 2 s εἰμι

"The quotation reminds us of God's gracious and miraculous intervention to enable Sarah, who was infertile, to bear the child of the promise (see Rom 4:18-20). The initiative, Paul makes clear again, is with God. Inheriting the promise is not based on birth alone; it depends on God's gracious intervention.

"This same point becomes even clearer in 9:10-13. For one can argue that Isaac and Ishmael are distinguished by a key physical difference: The former was born to Sarah and the latter to Hagar. Thus, to dispel any idea that physical descent plays a role in the promise, Paul brings us down one generation, to two children born of the same parents and at the same time." Moo.

Wright comments, "The point here, in case we missed it in the flurry of detail, is that God has done what was promised. The word of God has not failed (the 'word' here refers back to 9:6). God promised a son (Genesis 18); then, when the time came for a choice (Genesis 21), God reaffirmed the earlier word concerning Isaac."

Verse 10

οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ Ῥεβέκκα ἐξ ἑνὸς κοίτην ἔχουσα, Ἰσαὰκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν·

μονον adv only, alone

εἰς, μια, ἐν gen ἑνος, μιας, ἑνος one, a, an,
single

κοιτη, ης f bed, marital bed, act of
intercourse, conception

Verse 11

μήπω γὰρ γεννηθέντων μηδὲ πραξάντων τι ἀγαθὸν ἢ φαῦλον, ἵνα ἡ κατ' ἐκλογὴν πρόθεσις τοῦ θεοῦ μένη,

μηπω adv not yet

γεννω give birth to; pass be born, cause
 μηδε nor, and not, not even, neither
 πρασσω practice, do, collect (of taxes)
 αγαθος, η, ον good, useful, fitting
 η ορ, (η ... η either ... ορ, η και or even),
 than
 φαυλος, η, ον evil, wrong, bad
 εκλογη, ης f election, choosing, what is
 chosen

The main question here is whether the election Paul speaks of is personal or 'national' in the sense of God's choice of Israel and rejection of Edom. On the basis of the personal histories in vv. 11 and 12 Moo concludes that "it is hard to resist ... the conclusion that Paul is thinking of Jacob and Esau here as individuals." On the other hand, Wright comments, "The point is, though, that Paul is not here discussing what an abstract, impartial deity would or should have done; he is discussing the long purposes of God for Israel, and through Israel for the world. Central to those purposes is the principle that all must be of grace, 'not of works, but of the one who calls.'"

προθεσις, εως f purpose, plan, will
 μενω remain, stay, abide

Verse 12

οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἀλλ' ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦντος, ἐρρέθη
 αὐτῇ ὅτι Ὁ μείζων δουλεύσει τῷ ἐλάσσονι·
 ἐρρέθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s λεγω
 μείζων, ον and μείζοτερος, α, ον (comp of
 μεγας) greater, greatest
 ἐλασσων, ον (comp of μικρος) lesser,
 inferior, younger

Verse 13

καθὼς γέγραπται· Τὸν Ἰακώβ ἠγάπησα, τὸν δὲ
 Ἡσαὺ ἐμίσησα.

γέγραπται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γραφω
 Mal 1:2-3.

ἀγαπαω love, show love for
 μισεω hate, despise, be indifferent to

The meaning here is 'reject' in contrast to Jacob's calling.

"This ... raises for Paul, as it does for contemporary readers, the major question: Has God been unjust? To answer this, Paul continues the story of Israel with its next major moment: the exodus from Egypt." Wright.

Verse 14

Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν; μὴ ἀδικία παρὰ τῷ θεῷ; μὴ
 γένοιτο·

Paul anticipates the question that might pass through the minds of his readers. It "is essentially the same question as Paul grappled with in chap. 3, that of the δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ (*dikaïosyne theou*)." Wright.

ἐροῦμεν Verb, fut act indic, 1 pl λεγω
 ἀδικία, ας f wrongdoing, evil, sin

Here the sense is 'injustice.' Cf 3:5.

γένοιτο Verb, aor opt, 3s γινομαι; μη
 γενοιτο 'certainly not/ by no means'

Verses 15-18

"Determining right or wrong, what is just or unjust, demands a standard for measurement. The standard is ultimately nothing less than God's own character... God, therefore, acts justly when he acts in accordance with his own person and plan. This is precisely the point Paul makes in 9:15-18. The argument falls into two parallel parts, each with a quotation from the Old Testament (vv. 15 and 17) and a conclusion drawn from the quotation ('therefore,' vv.16,18)" Moo.

Verse 15

τῷ Μωϋσεῖ γὰρ λέγει· Ἐλεήσω ὃν ἂν ἐλεῶ,
 καὶ οἰκτιρήσω ὃν ἂν οἰκτιρῶ.

Cf. Ex 33:19. In context, an expression of God's mercy in the face of Israel's idolatry with the golden calf.

ἐλεήσω Verb, fut act indic, 1 s ἐλεαω and
 ἐλεεω be merciful, show kindness
 ἂν particle indicating contingency
 οἰκτιρήσω Verb, fut act indic, 1 s οἰκτιρω
 have compassion on

Justice would lead to God rejecting all. It is only because of his mercy and compassion that any are embraced as his people.

Verse 16

ἄρα οὖν οὐ τοῦ θέλοντος οὐδὲ τοῦ τρέχοντος
 ἀλλὰ τοῦ ἐλεῶντος θεοῦ.

θελω wish, will
 τρεχω run, exert oneself

"Salvation lies within man's grasp neither by his volition nor by his active exertion." Murray.

Verse 17

λέγει γὰρ ἡ γραφή τῷ Φαραῶ ὅτι Εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο ἐξήγειρά σε ὅπως ἐνδείξωμαι ἐν σοὶ τὴν δύναμίν μου, καὶ ὅπως διαγγελῆ τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῆ.

γραφῆ, ἡς f writing, Scripture
ἐξεγειρω raise, bring to power

I.e. gave him this position of power in Egypt.

σε Pronoun, acc s συ
ὅπως (or ὅπως ἄν) that, in order that
ἐνδείξωμαι Verb, aor midd dep subj, 1 s
ἐνδεικνυμαι show, give indication of
διαγγελῆ Verb, aor pass subj, 3 s διαγγελλω
proclaim, preach
ὄνομα, τος n name, title, person, authority,
reputation
γῆ, γης f earth

As with Pharaoh, so also Israel exists for this twofold purpose:

- i) To provide the occasion or context for God to demonstrate his power through a great act of deliverance.
- ii) To act as the means by which that act is published throughout the world.

Both took place precisely because Israel rejected the Gospel.

Wright comments, "What God has done to Pharaoh is not arbitrary. Pharaoh has already enslaved God's people and resisted the call to set them free. God has in view not the protracted punishment of Pharaoh for his own sake, but the worldwide proclamation of God's power and name."

Verse 18

ἄρα οὖν ὃν θέλει ἐλεεῖ, ὃν δὲ θέλει σκληρύνει.

σκληρυνω make stubborn; pass be
stubborn, be hardened

The hardening spoken of must be understood in the context of v.17. Nevertheless it is an offensive term which raises the natural objection of v.19.

Murray comments on this hardening, "There can be no question that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Though the instances are comparatively few in which the activity of Pharaoh is explicitly mentioned (cf. [Ex] 7:13; 8:32(28); 9:34), yet they are sufficient. But, preponderantly, the terms are to the effect that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart (cf. Ex 4:31; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:4,8)... It is impossible to suppress or tone down the sovereign determination of God's will any more than in the first part of the verse."

Wright comments, "Paul is not, then, using the example of Pharaoh to explain that God has the right to show mercy, or to harden someone's heart, out of mere caprice. Nor is it simply that God has the right to do this sort of thing when someone is standing in the way of the glorious purpose that has been promised. The sense of this passage is gained from its place within the wider story line from 9:6-10:21 – that is, as part of the story of Israel itself, told to explain what is happening to Paul's 'kinsfolk according to the flesh.' God's action upon Pharaoh was part of the means, not only of rescuing Israel from slavery, but of declaring God's name in the world."

Verse 19

Ἐρεῖς μοι οὖν· Τί οὖν ἔτι μέμφεται; τῷ γὰρ βουλήματι αὐτοῦ τίς ἀνθέστηκεν;

Cf. 3:6. Paul anticipates the question that may be raised by his reassertion of God's sovereignty in salvation in v.18.

ἐρεῖς Verb, fut act indic, 2 s λεγω
ἔτι still, yet, moreover
μεμφομαι find fault with, blame
βουλημα, τος n will, purpose, intention
ἀνθέστηκεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s
ἀνθίστημι resist, oppose, withstand

Verse 20

ὦ ἄνθρωπε, μενοῦνγε σὺ τίς εἶ ὁ ἀνταποκρινόμενος τῷ θεῷ; μὴ ἐρεῖ τὸ πλάσμα τῷ πλάσαντι Τί με ἐποίησας οὕτως;

"Paul again does not answer as we might expect. He offers no logical explanation of how God's determinative will and human responsibility cohere. Still less does he suggest that God's will is but his response to human decisions – as we would have expected him to say if, indeed, God's will to save were based on foreseen faith. No, rather than taking the defensive, Paul goes full speed ahead with yet further assertions of the freedom of God to do as he wants with his creatures." Moo.
Wright argues that Paul is continuing to reflect on the history of Israel and now has in mind the story of the exile. His point is that "God has the right both to remake nations and peoples in a new way and to withhold judgment for a while in order that salvation may spread to the rest of the world."

ὦ O!
μενουν and μενουνγε rather, on the
contrary, indeed, much more
ἀνταποκρινομαι reply, answer back
ἐρεῖ Verb, fut act indic, 3 s λεγω
πλασμα, τος n what is moulded (of clay)

πλάσαντι Verb, aor act ptc, m dat s πλασσω
mould, form; perhaps create
οὕτως thus, in this way

Dodd says that Paul's argument here is "the weakest part of the whole epistle," adding that man is not a pot and will answer back. But this is to miss the point. Moo writes, "As in the case with any analogy, the parallel is by no means perfect. Human beings, created in God's own image, have the power to think and make decisions; they are far more than inert clay. But the analogy works well as the one vital point the apostle wants to make here: God's right to fashion from the clay the kinds of vessels he wants."

For this analogy, cf. Is 29:15,16; 45:9; 64:8,9; Jer 18:1-6.

Wright comments, "If Bonhoeffer was right that putting the knowledge of good and evil before the knowledge of God was indeed, and remains, the primal act of human rebellion, then for a human to set up a standard and demand that God keeps to it already smacks of such rebellion. And where the humans are themselves among the sinners who have no claim on God except for judgment, their choice is in fact between accepting that judgment at once and accepting instead God's strange purpose in remoulding them to carry forward his larger plans. Paul's quotation of Isa 29:16 indicates that this is what he has in mind: the judgment on Israel, following its utter infidelity, will be the prelude to a new beginning, and Israel has no right to complain if this is so."

Verse 21

ἢ οὐκ ἔχει ἐξουσίαν ὁ κεραμεὺς τοῦ πηλοῦ ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ φυράματος ποιῆσαι ὃ μὲν εἰς τιμὴν σκεῦος ὃ δὲ εἰς ἀτιμίαν;

ἢ or

ἐξουσία, ας f authority, right, power

κεραμευς, εως m potter

πηλος, ου m mud, clay

φυραμα, τος n lump

ποιῆσαι Verb, aor act infin ποιεω

τιμη, ης f honour, respect, price

σκευος, ους n object, thing, vessel

ἀτιμία, ας f disgrace, shame, dishonour

"Paul uses similar language to describe the different roles believers have in the 'household of God' (see 2 Tim 2:20). So, again, he may be depicting the different roles people have played in salvation history. But the parallel with 'objects of his wrath' and 'objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory' (Rom 9:22-23) suggest rather that he is thinking of God's freedom to choose some people to be saved and leave others in their spiritual deadness." Moo.

The contrast may be between the larger part of Israel, presently in rebellion against God, and the 'remnant' of believing Israel through whom the gospel is presently being brought to the world. God has made these two from the same lump.

Verse 22

εἰ δὲ θέλων ὁ θεὸς ἐνδείξασθαι τὴν ὀργὴν καὶ γνωρίσαι τὸ δυνατὸν αὐτοῦ ἤνεγκεν ἐν πολλῇ μακροθυμίᾳ σκεύη ὀργῆς κατηρτισμένα εἰς ἀπόλειαν,

Verses 22-24 form an unfinished sentence. The sense is, '... Wouldn't that put the matter in a different light?'

εἰ here = 'what if...'

θέλω wish, will

θέλων – God determined to delay the punishment of those rebelling against him for the very purpose of making a public display of his wrath and power at the end of history.

ἐνδείξασθαι Verb, aor midd infin

ἐνδεικνυμαι see v.17

ὀργη, ης f wrath, anger

γνωρίζω make known, disclose, know

δυνατος, η, ον strong, powerful; το δυνατον power

ἤνεγκεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s φερω bring, carry, bear, lead

μακροθυμία, ας f longsuffering, patience

σκευος, ους see v.21

ὀργη, ης f wrath, anger

κατηρτισμένα Verb, perf pass ptc, n nom/acc pl καταρτιζω make complete; act & midd make, prepare

ἀπόλεια, ας f destruction, utter ruin

Wright comments, "Paul is speaking at two levels. He is talking of the pre-exilic generation, with whom God bore patiently despite their persistent idolatry, sending prophet after prophet to them until the only reaction left was the devastating judgment of exile. And he is talking of his own generation, those upon whom, as he said in 1 Thess 2:16, wrath was now coming 'to the uttermost.'"

Verse 23

καὶ ἵνα γνωρίσῃ τὸν πλοῦτον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ
ἐπὶ σκεύῃ ἐλέους, ἃ προητοίμασεν εἰς δόξαν,

καὶ ἵνα is supported by p⁴⁶ vid¹⁹ & A *et al*, a few MSS, including B, read simply ἵνα. The absence of καὶ was probably an attempt to simplify the construction.

God's delay serves also the greater purpose of displaying his glory in salvation.

γνωρίσῃ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s γνωρίζω see v.22

πλοῦτος, ου m & n riches, wealth

δόξα, ης f glory

ἐλεος, ους n mercy, compassion

προετοιμάζω prepare beforehand

Note that this latter group are not *deserving* of glory as the former are deserving of wrath.

"Behind verses 22-23 is a Jewish tradition that questioned why God was waiting so long to judge sinners and establish justice in the world. The cry of the martyrs in Revelation 6:10 reflects the same question: 'How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?' Paul answers the question by showing how God is using this time before the end to prepare for an even greater display of his powerful judgment and to bring glory to his chosen people." Moo.

Verse 24

οὗς καὶ ἐκάλεσεν ἡμᾶς οὐ μόνον ἐξ Ἰουδαίων
ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐξ ἐθνῶν;

μονον adv only, alone

Ἰουδαίος, α, ον a Jew, Jewish, Judean

ἔθνος, ους n nation, people; τα ἔ. Gentiles

The covenant promise has not failed but comes to effect in the true Israel, the children of promise, the true seed (cf. Galatians 3-4). Basic to Paul's thought is the promise given to Abraham that in his seed *all the families of the earth* will be blessed. This, God has accomplished by 'calling' whom he wills to be his own.