

Text: Rom 9:1-5

Title: Israel, the Church, and the Purposes of God – part 4

Intro:

In Roman's 9:1-5, we are introduced to Paul's burden his fellow countrymen

- The Apostle Paul has deep sorrow over what has happened to Israel.
- This is Paul's reaction to Israel's failure to accept the Messiah.

For eight chapters, Paul has laid out the gospel of Jesus Christ—he is about to go into the 'application' of that teaching in chapter 12, but he must address the issue of the church and Israel in God's program.

- Thus, Romans 9-11 is Paul's teaching on God's plan for Israel.

Last time:

The integrity of Paul's burden.

9:1-2—"I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart."—Paul's conscience was burdened but notice that he ties it with Christ

- 'I am telling the truth in Christ'—in other wds, Paul's personal burden for Israel is a mirror example of God's burden for Israel.
- 'my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit'—only when the HS controls the conscience can it be trusted
- We said, 'when we line up our desires with the desires God has revealed in His Word, we can have a conscience informed by the HS.'
- Paul is not sentimentally concerned.
- Paul's burden is not for the conversion of his countrymen
- The highest, most supreme desire a Christian can have is not for the conversion of another, but that the righteousness and glory of God would be displayed—that God's righteousness would be vindicated and however God chooses to fulfill His redemptive purposes in whatever season of life is up to Him.
- Paul's burden here is not specifically for the conversion of individual Jews, even though that would be a righteous desire.
- Paul's burden is for the promises made to God's people would be fulfilled so that God's righteousness and power would be vindicated among the nations.
- Paul's desire goes far beyond the sentimental expressions of desire for God to save people.
- Paul's desire is for the 'unsearchable judgments' and 'unfathomable ways' of God to be put on display and vindicated among the nations.
- Paul wants the faithfulness of God put on display.

9:3—"For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,"

- 'If I could wish'—Lit 'if it were possible'
- This is Paul's way of expressing his deep desire to do something for Israel and at the same time, the impossibility of it.

- It is an impossible wish—Paul knows the impossibility of it—he knows that he cannot sacrifice himself for the salvation of others.
 - There's only one substitute for sin—Christ Jesus Himself
 - A true believer could not really wish to be estranged from Christ
 - Paul knew he could not reject his salvation and again become accursed and separated from Christ.
 - Paul just said that 'nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus'
 - Once God sets His electing love upon a sinner, you cannot undo it.
- But the expression brings out Paul's deep concern for fellow Jews—he was 'willing' to forfeit his salvation if that could save his fellow Jews from God's condemnation
 - He was willing to be damned to Hell if they could be saved in his place.

Notice: '...I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ, for the sake of my brethren...'—the idea is, 'he longed to be in their place that they might be in Christ'

- Paul's words were the language of passion—not logic
- He had a yearning for his kinsmen's salvation, a yearning so deep that he was willing to be lost forever, if that were possible.
- This is no small matter—some would be willing to die for another, but few if any would be willing to spend eternity in Hell for another.
- The love of God in Christ Jesus that was shed abroad in Paul's heart dominated his life and ministry.
- Therefore, Paul was heartbroken over Israel's failure to embrace Christ.
- One writer: "Paul's concern for lost people was an anguish of heart reminiscent of Christ's weeping over the city of Jerusalem (Matt 23:37) and then suffering judgment for its sin" (Kreloff, 20).

Moses expressed the same passion when he came down from Mt Sinai with the two tablets and the people were worshipping with the golden calf they made

- Ex 32:32—"But now, if You will, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!"—implied is the idea, 'take my life instead of theirs'
- This is the kind of compassion and love Paul had for his fellow Jews—'my kinsmen according to the flesh'

Appl—Why should we grieve over lost Jewish people more than other lost people??? Because no other nation was ever so blessed by God as Israel was, but she reaped nothing from her spiritual advantages.

- Paul's sorrow was over a nation that in spite of her privileges rejected the Messiah.
- It's not that the souls of Jews are more valuable or more important, but that they were given unique privileges from which they never benefited.

Notice: In 9:4-5, the Apostle Paul lists nine privileges that belong to Israel. These nine are all present tense—meaning, they presently belong to Israel

1. Israelites—Paul could have used the term 'Jews' but does not.

- 'Israelites' is the name of descendants of Abraham through Issac and then Jacob, (whose name was changed to 'Israel'—Gen 32:28)

- 'Israelite'—is the theocratic name of God's people

2. Adoption as Sons. God chose to adopt the Jewish people as a nation.

Does that mean that every ethnic Jew would be saved??? No.

- The promise was never that every Jew in ethnic Israel would be converted.
- The promise has always been that the nation will be blessed because of God's electing love—His choice.
- That is why Paul goes into a deep discussion on the sovereignty of God in this chapter.

The Scripture repeatedly says that God did not choose the Jews because they were better than other nations/people groups.

- Ezekiel 16:1ff—God uses the metaphor of a discarded life that God picks up, cleans off, and grants life—as a picture of what God did to Israel as a people
- God promised Israel a new heart and salvation
- Israel had a special relationship with God because of God's choice.
- Deut 7:6—"For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."
- Hosea 11:1—"When Israel was a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son."
- In Ex 4:22, God told Moses to say to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, 'Israel is My son, My firstborn.'"
- Through adoption Israel became the recipients of God's special favor and blessing.
- Israel was separated out to be God's special witness to the rest of the world.

Salvation has always been on an individual basis. One person cannot be saved by another person's faith.

- The Apostle Paul will make this clear in 9:6—"But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;"
- In other wds, being Jewish doesn't guarantee one's salvation.
- Isa 46:3-4—"Listen to Me, O house of Jacob, And all the remnant of the house of Israel, You who have been borne by Me from birth And have been carried from the womb; Even to your old age I will be the same, And even to your graying years I will bear you! I have done it, and I will carry you; And I will bear you and I will deliver you."

3. The Glory. God blessed Israel by revealing to her His own presence in the Shekinah glory.

- God dwelt among Israel in a unique and inexplicable way.
- In the wilderness, "the glory of the Lord appeared [to Israel] in the cloud" (Ex. 16:10).
- God's glory appeared to Israel at Mt Sinai—Ex 24:16-17—"The glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; and on the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. And to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the mountain top."
- God's glory was present in the tent of meeting where God spoke with 'the sons of Israel'—(Ex 29:42-43)
- God's glory was present in the 'Holy of holies' in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple—(Ex 25:22).

- No nation has been so privileged and blessed to have God's visible presence guiding, protecting, and assuring them.

4. The Covenants. God made covenants (agreements) with Israel's leaders: Abraham, Issac, Jacob, Moses, and David.

- The first covenant was with Abraham—the 'physical' father of all Jews—Gen 12:15-17 and the 'spiritual father' of all who believe—Rom 4:11
- Through Moses, Israel was given the covenant of the law—(Deut 29-30)
- Through David, Israel was given the covenant of an eternal kingdom—See: 2 Sam 7:8-16
- The New Covenant—Jer 31:31-34
- No other nation has or ever will be blessed with such covenants.
- One writer: "...no aspect of Israel's history pointed out their uniqueness as the recipients of redemptive revelation more than these covenants."¹

5. The Giving of the Law.

- As Christians we read the law of Moses, but it was not given to us but only Israel.
- The Mosaic Law taught Israel God's principles and precepts—the Ten Commandments and countless other principles and standards were given to Israel—the obeying of such would bring honor to God and blessing upon the people.
- God gave Israel the pathway to not only spiritual blessing but material prosperity.
- As Israel was encamped on the plains of Moab and about to enter the Promised Land, Moses reminded them in Deut 4:5-8—"See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it. So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him? Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?"
- In Romans 3:2, Paul told his readers that Israel had the incomparable privilege of being the custodian of the 'oracles of God'—meaning, not just the Law of Moses but the entire OT
- One writer: "Some of the laws of the United States are based upon the law of God, but God never gave His legal code to any nation but Israel" (Kreloff, 22).

6. The Temple Service. Israel was uniquely blessed by being entrusted with the Temple service through which she worshipped God and dealt with sin.

- The temple service—refers to entire system of ceremonial laws that God revealed through Moses: the instructions on sacrifices, the offerings, the cleansings, and other means of worship prescribed and administered through the priests and the Levites.
- When Israel obediently and reverently worshipped the Lord according to God's prescribed means, God promised to be in their midst.
- Ex 29:43-46—"I will meet there with the sons of Israel, and it shall be consecrated by My glory. I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; I will also consecrate Aaron and his

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., [*Romans*](#), vol. 2, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 14.

sons to minister as priests to Me. I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God. They shall know that I am the LORD their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them; I am the LORD their God.”

7. The Promises. Israel was given promises in a unique way.

While the Apostle Paul does not explain the nature of these promises it seems to imply that he is referring to the promise of Messiah, who would come out of Israel.

- The promise of Messiah, and His kingdom, and His eternal blessings.
- All other nations receive their blessings through Israel and through Israel’s King.
- On the Day of Pentecost, Peter reminded his audience in his sermon: “Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. “For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.”
- In Acts 13:32-34—“And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.’ “As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: ‘I WILL GIVE YOU THE HOLY and SURE blessings OF DAVID.’

8. The Fathers. Only Israel can claim Abraham, Issac, and Jacob as their ancestors.

God raised up those men, the patriarchs, and it was through those men that the foundations of all the blessings were laid.

9. The Messiah. Israel was privileged to provide the lineage of Christ according to the flesh. The greatest honor and blessing ever given to Israel is that from its loins would come the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

- Jesus Christ was not incidentally or accidentally born a Jew—that was foreordained by God to be a human descendent from Abraham and David
- Matthew gives Jesus’ lineage through His adoptive father Joseph—Matt 1:1-17
- Luke gives Jesus’ lineage through His natural mother Mary—Luke 3:23-38
- In closing this abbreviated but comprehensive account of Israel’s special blessings, Paul declares that Jesus Christ—by far their greatest blessing, the blessing in whom all the others find their full meaning—‘is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.’
- Those words are not so much a benediction as an affirmation of Christ’s divine majesty and lordship.
- Without exception in Scripture, both in the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament, a doxology always places the word “blessed” before the name of God.
- Here, Paul uses the reverse form, God blessed, indicating beyond doubt that the apostle intentionally equates Christ with God. The antecedent of God is who, and the antecedent of who is Christ.
- He was the supreme blessing, yet they rejected Him!
- This tragic unbelief is what grieved the heart of Paul and the heart of God Himself.

Close: No other nation has been so blessed and privileged as the nation Israel. No other people has ever been as privileged as the Jewish people. Yet in spite of her privileges and blessings she officially rejected Jesus as the Messiah. When Christ came to her, she did not want Him. The tragedy is that without possessing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ Israel cannot benefit from her privileges and blessings. This is what breaks the Apostle Paul's heart and should be our burden as well.

Was God righteous in His dealings with Israel??? Paul will launch into a defense of God's righteousness in His dealings with Israel...next time

Implications:

1. Compassion towards Jews—they are a privileged people
2. Hope in God's promises—if God is faithful to Israel, certainly He is faithful to Gentile believers.
 - a. All these privileges still belong to Israel
 - b. Even though Israel crucified their Messiah, they still have the adoption, they still have the Promises, they still have the Covenants
 - c. Israel still holds her position as the chosen nation that God will restore and bless in the future.
3. The sovereignty of God—God doesn't need to change His original promises to Israel because of unbelief
 - a. What we will see is Israel's unbelief and hardening (temporarily) was not only known by God beforehand but was God's plan all along.
 - b. What seems surprising to us is no surprise to God