

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study through the Epistle to the Romans – Part 24

I. Exposition of Chapter Nine.

A. **Introduction:** It's important to note, as we start this chapter, that it is considered by many to be a very difficult chapter. This is also the chapter that those who embrace a Calvinistic theology will always point to in order to validate their belief that some people are predestined for salvation and others for hell. What often happens with interpreting chapter nine is that it is taken out of context. It is not interpreted within the context of the chapter itself, used within the context of the rest of Romans, with the rest of Paul's writing, and with the rest of Scripture. Even so, there is no question that some of the things mentioned here are difficult subjects but by the grace of God and the help of the Holy Spirit we will receive all that the Lord desires for us. (cf. **II Peter 3:14-16**)

B. Paul's heart for Israel.

1. In the **chapters 1-8**, Paul thoroughly convinced us about man's need for righteousness and God's provision through the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Now, in **chapters 9-11**, Paul deals with the problem associated with the condition of Israel. What does it mean that Israel, in general, has missed its Messiah? What does this say about God? What does it say about Israel?
3. Many scholars see **chapters 9-11** as parenthetical. In other words they think Paul pauses from his current topic and deals with Israel as a side topic. This doesn't seem right, however. Paul deals with both Jew and Gentile throughout Romans. (cf. **1:1-6; 16; 2:8-11; 28-29; 3:1-2; 19-26; 4 [David and Abraham], etc.**) Righteousness is shown as having always been acquired by faith and never by the works of the Law.

C. Verses 1-2 - Paul's sorrow.

1. **Verse 1 – "I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit."** - Paul strongly assures the readers that he has a great concern for his fellow Jews.
 - a. Notice how Paul's conscience and the Holy Spirit bore witness to the truth. Paul always endeavored to have a clear conscience before God and man. (**Acts 23:1; Hebrews 9:14**).
2. **Verse 2 – "That I have great sorrow and continued grief in my heart"** – This expresses his deep love and concern for his fellow Israelites.

D. **Verses 3 - Paul's great love and sorrow for his brethren is dramatically displayed in his declaration "I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren."** Paul says he himself is willing to be separated from Jesus if that could somehow accomplish the salvation of Israel.

1. Paul reflects the same heart Moses had in **Exodus 32:31-32**: "**Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, 'Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin; but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.'**"
2. Of course Paul also shows the heart of Jesus, who was willing to be accursed on behalf of others that they might be saved. (**Galatians 3:13**)

E. **Verses 4-5 – Eight Privileges of the Jews. (Note: 3:1-2 mentions another advantage – "...to them were committed the oracles of God.")**

1. **"The adoption"** – Israel was adopted as God's own firstborn son among the nations (**Exodus 4:22-23; Hosea 11:1**).
2. **"The glory"** – The visible manifestation of the presence of God was evident with Israel (**Exodus 24:16; 40:34-35; I Kings 8:11**)
3. **"The covenants"** – The Abrahamic, the Mosaic, the Davidic and finally the New Covenant were made with Israel. (**Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-6; Exodus 24:7-8; II Samuel 7; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:7-13**).
4. **"The giving of the law"** – The moral, civil, and ceremonial laws were given to Israel (**Exodus 20-24; Deuteronomy 4-5; Psalm 147:19**).
5. **"The service of God"** – The Tabernacles of Moses and David and the Temple of Solomon with their respective orders of worship, including the priesthood. (**Exodus 25-40; Hebrews 9:1**).
6. **"The promises"** – Especially the promise of the Messiah and the land (**Genesis 13; 15; 22**)
7. **"The fathers"** – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were usually referred to as the **"patriarchs"** of Israel. (**Genesis 48:15-16; Exodus 3:6; Deuteronomy 10:15**).
8. **"...according to the flesh, Christ came."** – The human lineage of the Messiah came through Israel (**Jeremiah 23:5; Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38; Romans 1:3**.)

F. **Verses 6-13 – The True Israel of God.**

1. **Verse 6 – "But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel."** – Paul is assuring us here that even though Israel has not accepted their Messiah, it

doesn't mean the Word of God and its promises are not effective. (cf. **Hebrews 4:1-3**).

“But the case is not such as this, that the word of God is fallen powerless;” – Romans 9:6a – Wuest Translation¹

2. **“For they are not all Israel who are of Israel.”** - The absolute meaning of **Israel**” is uncertain. It originated when God renamed Jacob when he wrestled with the angel (**Genesis 32:28**). Different potential meanings are: **“he who prevails with God”**; **“God persists”**; **“God strives”** and **“God’s fighter”**.
 - a. There are basically two applications of **“Israel”** within Scripture:
 - 1) Israel, meaning Jacob's descendants (cf. **Genesis 32:22-32**)
 - 2) Spiritual Israel, meaning the Church, (cf. **Galatians 3:26-29; 6:16; I Peter 2:8-10; Revelation 1:6**) versus natural Israel. Made up ethnically of both Jews and Gentiles who have received Christ.
3. **Verse 7 – “Nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called.’”**
 - a. Paul is saying here that just because a person is a child of Abraham, it doesn't mean that he's part of Israel.
 - 1) We know that Abraham had other natural seed other than Isaac:
 - a) Ishmael was born of Hagar – **Genesis 16**.
 - b) After the death of Sarah, Abraham married Keturah and had at least six more sons – **Genesis 25:1-6**.
 - 2) But, if they're not the descendants of Isaac, they're not considered the **“seed”** and, therefore, not heirs.
4. **Verses 8-9 – Contrast:**
 - a. **“children of the flesh” (All the sons but Isaac) “are not the children of God.”**
 - b. **“children of the promise” (Isaac and his faithful descendants) “counted as the seed.”**
5. **Applying this to the Church (Spiritual Israel) – Galatians 4:21-31.** The Two Covenants.
 - a. **Verse 22-** (Refers to the account recorded in **Genesis 16** and **Genesis 21:1-8**.) Ishmael was born of Hagar the **“bondwoman”** and Isaac was born of Sarah the **“freewoman”**.
 - b. **Verse 23-** Two sons; one **“born of the flesh”** and the other **“born of promise”**.
 - c. **Verse 24** - The two sons are symbolic of the two covenants. The Abrahamic and the Mosaic.
 - d. **Verse 25** - Hagar is symbolic of Mount Sinai – where the law was given.
 - e. **Verses 26-27** - Sarah becomes a symbol of the mountain the church has come to - Mount Zion. Not mentioned here but is mentioned in **Hebrews 12:18-23**.
 - f. Hagar (Mount Sinai) corresponds (parallels) to the Jerusalem that now is. **Verse 25. This is referring to natural Israel.**
 - g. Sarah (Mount Zion) corresponds (parallels) to the Jerusalem above. **Verse 26. This is referring to spiritual Israel.**
 - h. **Verse 28** - Must be compared to **Romans 9:6-9**.
 - i. **Verse 29** - Paul begins to make a shift. Begins comparison of flesh and Spirit. **(This verse sets the stage for the final two chapters of Galatians.)**
 - j. WE are children of the **“freewoman”!!** - See also **Galatians 3:6-9; 26-29**.
6. **Verses 10-13 – Jacob and Esau. (Note: In verses 6-9, Paul makes it clear that it's NOT by our natural ethnicity [bloodline] that we're children of God and in these verses he illustrates that it's not by our works either.)**
 - a. There were two things that the Jews thought would make them right with God – their lineage and keeping the works of the law.
 - b. Remember, the Biblical pattern is **“elect, according to the foreknowledge of God” (I Peter 1:2)**.

“Verses 11–12 are one sentence in Greek. This account is taken from Gen. 25:19–34. This example is used to prove that it is God's choice (cf. v. 16), not (1) human lineage or (2) human merit or achievements (cf. v. 16). This is the heart of the gospel, the new covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:22–36). However, it must be remembered that God's choice was not meant to exclude, but to include! The Messiah will come from a select seed, but He will come for all (who exercise faith, cf. chapter 10).”²

 - c. **“Hate”** here is a Hebrew idiom meaning, **“love less”** and is used simply to make a comparison. (cf. **Luke 14:26**).
 - d. **Verse 13 – A quote from Malachi 1:2-3. Referring to the corporate nations, not the individuals.**

¹Kenneth S. Wuest, *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1961), Ro 9:6–7.

²Robert James Utley, *The Gospel according to Paul: Romans*, vol. Volume 5, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 1998), Ro 9:11–12.