

Israel's Past

Text: Romans 9:1-33

Introduction:

1. Romans 9, 10 & 11 form an important trilogy concerning the nation of Israel.
2. Theme: The mystery of Israel's blindness (11:25). Acts 13:46 *"Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."*
3. Cloud: The subject of these chapters is this: Paul answers the question, "If God has saved the Gentiles and given them all blessings in Christ described in Romans 4-8, what about the nation of Israel?"
4. Introductory considerations:
 - a. Importance of immediate context – God's dealings with Israel as a nation the primary theme
 - b. Importance of consistency with other Scripture – do my conclusions about sovereign election place me in conflict with the united testimony of Scripture concerning God's love for all men and the universal, genuine offer of salvation? At the heart of these three chapters, we have a clear invitation to 'whosoever' to receive salvation (10:9-13)
 - c. Importance of faith – when all the studies over, our human minds will still fall short of understanding the mysteries of God's sovereign dealings. Our response is to kneel in reverence and worship of our Almighty God (note Paul's doxology in 11:33-36)
5. Main thrust of Paul's argument in Vs. 6-13 & 24-29. Vs. 14-23 deal with certain questions the argument raises

I. The Compassion of Paul for Israel (Vs. 1-5)

A. The Depth of Paul's Compassion (Vs. 1-3)

1. The truthfulness of Paul's statement (Vs. 1)
 - a. "I say the truth in Christ"
 - b. "I lie not"
 - c. "my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost"
 - d. Paul affirms his truthfulness in the strongest terms due to the incredible claim he is about to make.
2. The burden of Paul's heart (Vs. 2)
3. The desire of Paul's heart (Vs. 3)
 - a. "could wish" = Paul knows this is not actually possible but if he could have, he would have!
 - b. Example of Moses: Exodus 32:31-33 *"And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive"*

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their sin –; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of they book which thou hast written. And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.”

4. Note: If Paul believed in a cold and clinical form of election, then his burden (9:1-5) and prayer (10:1) for Israel’s salvation make little sense.

B. The Description of Israel’s Privilege (Vs. 4-5)

Note the 8 privileges of being an ‘Israelite’ (adapted from Wilmington):

1. Adoption – the nation chosen by God (Ex. 4:22; Deut. 14:1; Jer. 31:9)
2. Glory – the shekinah cloud that signified God’s presence. E.g. that lead them in the wilderness (Ex. 13:21-22); Num. 9:17-22); that filled the tabernacle and temple (Ex. 40:34-48; 1 Kings 8:10-11)
3. Covenants – Abrahamic (promise of a mighty nation); Palestinian (promise of the land); Davidic (promise of eternal kingdom); New Covenant (promise of new hearts)
4. Law – E.g. the 10 commandments (Ex. 20)
5. Service of God – tabernacle and temple
6. Promises – O.T. promises
7. Fathers – godly patriarchs like Abraham, Moses & David
8. Messiah – Israel produced the line through which Christ came:
Note: This verse contains a very clear statement of the Deity of Christ. “Who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.”

II. The Vindication of God’s dealings with Israel (Vs. 6-24)

A. The Defense of God’s Promises (Vs. 6-13)

1. Paul has just outlined the blessings of Israel in the previous verses. For some, the rejection of the Gospel by the majority in Israel seemed to undermine the credibility of God’s Word.
2. Paul refutes this by demonstrating the ‘remnant’ principle (the Israel within Israel) Just because one is an Israelite by birth that doesn’t mean he is an Israelite in terms of the faith.
3. The example of Isaac & Ishmael (Vs. 7-9)
4. The example of Jacob & Esau (Vs. 10-13)
 - a. Remember emphasis on national election in view, not election pertaining to personal salvation
 - b. Genesis 25:23 *“And the LORD said unto her, **Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.”***
 - c. Mal. 1:1-4 – note ‘Israel’ (Vs. 1) and ‘Edom’ (Vs. 4)

B. The Defense of God’s Character (Vs. 14-24)

1. Mercy an act of God’s sovereign will (Vs. 14-18)

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- a. God's choices and actions are always just and righteous
 - b. Rev. 16:7 "...Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments."
 - c. God is no man's debtor nor is He under any obligation to always show mercy. He has chosen to show all men His mercy, as Scripture testifies in many places, but if men rebel against Him, He may or may not extend further grace.
 - d. Illustration of Pharaoh
 - i. God knew what was in Pharaoh (foreknowledge): "*And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.*" (Ex. 3:19)
 - ii. Pharaoh rejected God's Word (Ex. 5:2) before God hardened his heart (Ex. 7:3)
 - iii. Pharaoh also hardened his own heart (Ex. 8:15, 9:34)
 - iv. "The same sun that melts the ice, hardens the clay. The nature of the sun's rays is the same in each case. The difference is found in the nature of the substance on which the sun's rays fall."
 - v. God is able to make even the wrath of man to praise him (Psalm 76:10)
 - vi. When men sin against the light God gives them and willfully harden their hearts, God often further hardens their hearts as an act of judgment.
 - vii. Illustration: Romans 1 – God is not a neutral bystander when men sin against the light they have been given
 - viii. Example: 2 Thess. 2:10-13 – Sinners damned because of their personal decision in relation to the truth. "*And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because **they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.** And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned **who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.***"
 - ix. Warning! To treat the opportunity to repent lightly is very dangerous. "...*behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation.*" (2 Cor. 6:2)
2. Illustration of the Potter & the clay (Vs. 19-24)
 - a. The objector effectively says: "Since God has that degree of power over a man, then He has no right to judge him for his sins. The sinner is not morally accountable, for he sins from necessity!" This objection receives a stinging rebuke. What an exhibition of human depravity that would charge God with "creating" sinners, when His loving kindness has held back His wrath for so long!

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- b. Figure of Potter & Clay used of Israel - Jeremiah 18. A study of this passage of Scripture will reveal that Israel's choice was involved in the process. God appeals to them to submit to His hands yet they choose to harden themselves against Him. Israel had been God's chosen vessel but down through the ages they had hardened themselves against Him. Therefore, they became the objects of His wrath. Through their own hardness of heart, they had transformed themselves into a vessel for destruction – vessels unto dishonor.
- c. So “fitted to destruction” is not a reference to sinners being arbitrarily reprobated without them having a genuine choice.
- d. “vessels of mercy” = refers to Gentiles to whom the Gospel has gone. God in His perfect plan chose to be merciful to all (11:32)
- e. B.H. Carrol explains: “High above human thought, beyond the scope of human sight, of the human mind, the Omnipotence and Omniscience is ruling, and his rule is supreme, and yet nobody is taken by the hair and dragged into hell, and nobody is taken by the hair and dragged into heaven...Those that were vessels of wrath, who voluntarily stand against God, God patiently endured a long time, and His forbearance signified that he was giving them opportunity to repent. The vessels of mercy also had opportunity for salvation, whether they were Jews or Greeks.”

III. The Predictions of Prophecy concerning Israel (Vs. 25-29)

A. Gentile reception foretold (Vs. 25-26)

- 1. Quotation from Hosea 2:23 & 1:10.
- 2. The charge that the promises of God had failed because the Gentiles embraced the Gospel while Israel rejected it, is again defeated.

B. Jewish remnant foretold (Vs. 27-29)

- 1. Quotations from Isaiah 10:22-23 & 1:9
- 2. The fact that most of the descendants of Abraham had rejected the Gospel, in no way damages its credibility.

IV. The Rejection of the Gospel by Israel (Vs. 30-33)

A. The contrast between Jew & Gentile (Vs. 30-31)

- 1. Gentiles didn't pursue righteousness but attained it.
- 2. Israel pursued righteousness but did not attain it.

B. The cause of the difference (Vs. 32-33)

- 1. Faith Vs. Works – “righteousness which is of faith”; (Vs. 30) “sought it not by faith (Vs. 32)
- 2. For the Jew who put so much faith in his privileged position as a child of Abraham and who strived so passionately to live by the law, the “Grace alone” message was offensive.

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3. Note: The biggest hurdle the religious professor must overcome to get saved is this; that his religious heritage and efforts cannot make him righteous before God. Religious pride will send you to hell!
4. 'whosoever' = this passage that focuses much on the Sovereignty of God concludes with the universal invitation of the Gospel.

Conclusion: Will you respond to God's gracious invitation while there is still time?
Please don't harden your heart!