

## ROMANS 9:1-5

Romans 9-11 is recognized by the vast majority of Bible believers as dealing with the nation of Israel. Many posit that chapter 9 speaks of Israel's PAST, chapter 10 of Israel's PRESENT, and chapter 11 of Israel's FUTURE. Although this is a tidy way to outline these chapters, they don't fall in line with this simplistic breakdown. Yet, within these 3 chapters we DO HAVE the past, present, and future of Israel presented to us.

There are many within the Christian world who want to establish God's pre-destination of individuals to either heaven or hell based on this chapter. Many years ago, I listened to a recording by R.C. Sproul who commented to the objection to his teaching that Romans 9 speaks of God's election/pre-destination of individuals, when the context is clearly national (Israel), by stating, "Correct, the passage is speaking of national Israel, but nations are made up of individuals, so it is also speaking of individual election." The fallacy of this claim should be obvious.

So, is it speaking of national election (of Israel), or individual election of people? It certainly is not both. The use of Romans 9 to support individual election was absent in the first 400 years of the church.

*"For the first four hundred years of church history, people read Romans 9 and did not think it taught what came later to be called Calvinism."* Speaking of Romans 9 and the early Church Fathers, Gerald Bray notes, 'Only Augustine, and then only in his later writings, was prepared to accept the full implications of divine predestination.'<sup>68</sup>

End Note 68 ...Similarly, Gregory Boyd notes that no one prior to Augustine - except the dualistic and deterministic Manicheans - read Romans 9 in this fashion. Interestingly enough, Augustine was a Manichean prior to becoming a Christian. See Boyd, *Is God to Blame?*, 205."

Austin Fishcer, *Young, Restless, No Longer Reformed*, pg.48

As we consider Romans 9, Austin Fishcer make a salient point:

"All that Paul has said up until this point...has *begged the question of Israel*. Why has Israel, by and large, rejected its Messiah? What is God doing with Israel? Has he forsaken his first chosen people (Israel) for a new chosen people (Gentiles)? If so, hasn't God been unfaithful to his promises to Israel?"

As Romans 9:1-6 makes clear, these questions are the glasses through which we must read chapters 9-11 and if you take them off for a second, everything is going to get fuzzy."

Austin Fishcer, *Young, Restless, No Longer Reformed*, selections from pg. 100

The context of chapter 9 (as well as chapters 10 and 11) is the nation of Israel! After 8 chapters of establishing the surety of God's promises to believers, he now addresses the surety of God's promises to the NATION of Israel.

### **1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,**

Paul states a three fold foundation for what is about to follow:

1. He states what is true because he is IN CHRIST  
As a believer he is "in Christ," 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:17, and because of this must be truthful.
2. He is not lying.
3. His conscience is clear IN THE HOLY SPIRIT that what he is going to say is true as the Holy Spirit testifies to this statement.

Paul's purpose in making this initial statement is because of the unfathomable statement to come in verse 3.

### **2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.**

Paul has continual heaviness and sorrow. The heaviness and sorrow are testimonials to Paul's desire to see ***both Jewish and Gentile people saved***, as we shall see in the next verse.

### 3 **For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:**

Paul states that he wishes he could be sent to the Lake of Fire, accursed from Christ, if his Jewish people could be saved.

This is not just an altruistic love for his family (Jewish people), but his desire that both Jews and Gentiles would be spared the eternal punishment of the Lake of Fire. The foundation of this statement is the command that the gospel go first to the Jewish people, Romans 1:16, in order that more Gentiles would be saved, Romans 11:12-15.

"These chapters [Romans 9 – 11] establish that the God who justifies those who call upon His name [Romans 3:24] and one day will glorify them [Romans 8:29-30], is faithful to bring to fruition His promises to Israel. As Romans 11:27 and 29 declare: *"For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins...For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."* These chapters are not dealing with God pre-determinatively calling individual Jews and Gentiles to salvation, but with the place of the nation of Israel in God's plan of salvation [Romans 9:1-5]. These chapters answer why the gospel is to be to the Jew first [Romans 1:16], why the nation of Israel's unbelief doesn't thwart God's plan [Romans 3:3-4], why Paul was willing to be accursed for Israel [Romans 9:3], and why he implored Gentile believers to bring the gospel to Jewish people that some might be saved [Romans 11:12-15]. These chapters challenge the church to make God's priority in sharing the gospel, which was Paul's priority, their priority. *"To the Jew first, and also to the Gentile."*

Mark Robinson, *Israel's Messenger*, "Israel: Romans 9-11 in Light of God's Promise of Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification," Winter 2018 [ ] with references added

### 4 **Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;**

Paul's brethren, his kinsmen, Jewish people, are Israelites. To them God gave:

**the adoption** huiothesia from *huiós* = son + *títhemi* = to place, is literally *the placing of one as a son*

*"And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn,"* Exodus 4:22.

God has a glorious future for Israel (chapters 9-11) when He will place Israel, who is His son, as the head of the nations with many blessings.

**the glory** δόξα dox'-ah - dignity, praise

Most commentators believe the "glory" is the shekinah glory of the LORD that resided with Israel in the Tabernacle and the Temple.

*"And ye said, Behold, the LORD our God hath shewed us his glory [כבוד kaw-bode' - splendor] and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth,"* Deuteronomy 5:24.

I have a slightly different take on "the glory." The glory is the God of Israel, yes, but, God's glory is seen in the history of the nation of Israel (as God's glory is seen in the life of Jesus, John 1:14, for example).

*"I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory [תפארתה tif-aw-raw' - beauty as an ornament],"* Isaiah 46:13.

**the covenants** This is the Abrahamic, Land, Davidic, and New Covenant. The plan of God for the world is wrapped up in these covenants God gave to Israel.

Psalm 105:

6 *O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen.*

7 *He is the LORD our God: his judgments are in all the earth.*

8 *He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations.*

9 *Which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac;*

10 *And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant:*

11 *Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance:*

**the giving of the law** The Mosaic Covenant has been a moral guide for generations. One can see the character of God in the Law and the privilege of giving it was to Israel.

**the service of God** This includes the prophets, priests, and kings in their service as God's spokesmen, mediators, and rulers.

**the promises** The many promises to Israel and the Jewish people, including the promises of the Covenants, will come to pass.

"For thus saith the LORD; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them," Jeremiah 32:42.

**5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.**

**Whose are the fathers** The patriarchs of our faith - Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - are the progenitors of the Jewish people.

**of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came**

Here is the climax of the importance of the nation of Israel. Messiah came through the Jewish people. His mother, Miriam, was Jewish. His tribe was Judah, the tribe of Israel's kings. Born in the small Jewish town of Bethlehem. In the flesh, Jesus was Jewish!

**who is over all, God blessed for ever** Jesus is God in the flesh!

Jesus was more than a Jewish man (an Israelite), He is the very God of the universe! The Creator!

A.T. Robertson, Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament:

"A clear statement of the deity of Christ following the remark about his humanity. This is the natural and the obvious way of punctuating the sentence."

Charles Hodge, Commentary on Romans, Ephesians and First Corinthians, Romans 9

"It is not the relation of the persons of the Trinity, however, which is here brought into view, but simply the true and supreme divinity of our Lord. Paul evidently declares that Christ, who, he had just said, was, as to his human nature, or as a man, descended from the Israelites, is, in another respect, the supreme God, or God over all, and blessed for ever."

**Romans 9  
(as well as 10 and 11)  
is focused on the nation of Israel**

"As to the scope of the passage, it will become obvious that it is all about God's dealings with men and nations historically and dispensationally, and is *not* about individual salvation and destiny beyond the grave. Now that is the absolutely vital fact to remember in reading the problem verses of the chapters. John Calvin is wrong when he reads into these verses election either to salvation or to damnation in the eternal sense. That is not their scope. They belong only to a divine economy of history....Let us further say that God could never create any man either to be wicked or to be eternally damned. 'Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid!' In Romans 9 we simply must not read an after-death significance into what is solely historical."

J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*, Vol. VI. Pp. 88-89

"So what is going on with Israel?"

Appropriately enough, Paul answers this question by retelling Israel's history, illustrating that from start to finish the faithfulness and mercy of God have been stronger than the faithlessness of Israel. From the patriarchs (9:6-13), to the exodus (9:14-18), to the exile (9:19-29), God has found a way to overcome the futility of Israel's sin and circumstances so he might show the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, both Jew and Gentile (9:23-24)...."

"The emphasis - from start to finish - is on God's desire to let people in, not keep them out. It is about the wideness of God's mercy, not its narrowness. Israel doesn't deserve it, the Gentiles don't deserve it, but God nevertheless gives it."

Far from being a treatise meant to justify God's righteousness in unconditional election, Romans 9-11 is a treatise about the incomprehensible mercy and scandalous faithfulness of God toward his creatures, through the crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ."

Austin Fishcer, *Young, Restless, No Longer Reformed*, selections from pgs. 100-104