

The Epistle of Paul to the *Romans*

Restoration: Israel's Reception of God's Righteousness (9:1 - 11:36)

In the next 3 chapters, Paul writes passionately about Israel's Past ⁹, Present ¹⁰, Future ¹¹.
Note other key sets of 3 chapters: Zechariah 9-11, 12-14, Matthew 5-7, 1 Corinthians 12-14.

9:1-5 I speak the truth in Christ – I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit – I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen. Paul expressed his love (desiring the best) for his Jewish “brothers” by the emotions “sorrow” and “anguish”, and even being eager to be “cursed” for their “sake”. He then gave a long list of blessings the people of Israel have received from God, which makes these sentiments seem unnecessary. The Greek form of the verbs indicate that Paul’s desire to be “cursed” for his “brothers” was sincere, but at the same time, not possible ^{John 10:28, Romans 8:1-2,38-39}. Paul’s main issue was: while God’s promises were made for His chosen nation (the “people of Israel”), many of the physical offspring of Abraham will not receive the promises individually, due to unfaithfulness.

The thoughts from man’s conscience cannot be trusted without a confirmation from God, which must come directly from the Holy Spirit ^{v.1} or from the Word of God ^{1 Corinthians 4:3-5}.

The Greek word translated “cursed” (*anathema*) means “devote to destruction in eternal hell”. Paul also applied *anathema* to the penalty for people who don’t “love the Lord” ^{1 Corinthians 16:22}, and the extreme meaning of *anathema* is clearly seen in his letter to the Galatians ^{Galatians 1:8-9}.

The six Biblical covenants are: (1) the covenant with Noah ^{Genesis 9:8-17}, (2) the covenant with Abraham ^{Genesis 12:1-3, 15:1-19}, (3) the covenant of Law through Moses ^{Exodus 19-31}, (4) the priestly covenant ^{Numbers 25:10-13}, (5) Davidic covenant ^{2 Samuel 7:8-16}, (6) the New Covenant ^{Jeremiah 31:31-34}. And each is an “everlasting covenant” ^{Ezekiel 37:26}, except for the Mosaic covenant ^{Hebrews 8:7-13}.

9:6-9 It is not as though God’s word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham’s children. On the contrary, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” In other words, it is not the natural children who are God’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as

Abraham's offspring. For this was how the promise was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son." There are two main interpretations of the quote ^{Genesis 21:12} Paul chose: the "children of promise" (1) would not come from Abraham's other children (the sons of Hagar and Keturah) and (2) would be the 'unnatural' children of Abraham. Isaac was unnatural, because he was a miracle: born of a 100-year-old father and a 90-year-old Mother ^{Genesis 17:15-21}. Other unnatural children ("God's children") would also have miracle births, through the power of the Holy Spirit ^{Acts 2}. Paul's second quote ^{Genesis 18:10} indicated Isaac was born "in God's timing" (i.e., when there was no doubt the birth was supernatural). God never intended for spiritual Israel to include all of physical Israel ^{Matthew 3:7-10, John 3:1-6}.

9:10-13 Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad – in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls – she was told, "The older will serve the younger." Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." The twins born to Isaac and Rebekah were Esau and Jacob. They were born in that order, which would indicate, by law, that Esau would be the favored son. However, during Rebekah's pregnancy, God told her that "The older will serve the younger." ^{Genesis 25:23}. And, much later, Malachi put the relationship in a much more blunt way: "Jacob I loved, Esau I hated." ^{Malachi 1:2-3}.

God gave man laws to live by as a general plan of living together with other humans. However, He has the ability to see all aspects of a situation and is not constrained by simplistic rules, and so God sometimes makes decisions to change outcomes that are counter to His law. Paul referred to this as "election" as a way to indicate the sovereignty of God ^{Psalms 71:16}. Some Biblical examples: Cain/Abel, Ishmael/Isaac, Esau/Jacob, Manasseh/Ephraim, Aaron/Moses, Eliab/David, Old Covenant/New Covenant, First Adam/Last Adam.

Many have asked: "Why did God hate Esau?". A better question: "Why did God love Jacob?".

Coming up, Paul addressed 3 general doctrinal questions: (1) Is God righteous? ^{v.14-18}, (2) Why does God find fault if none can resist His will? ^{v.19-29} and (3) What about the Gentiles? ^{v.30-33}.

9:14-15 What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

Anyone who has experienced or observed the love, grace, mercy and compassion of God would not respond (1) by questioning the justice or righteousness of God ^{Genesis 18:25, Psalm 7:9} or (2) by claiming any right to the receiving of any of His many blessings, but only be thankful for God's incredible kindness ^{Jeremiah 9:23-24}. Paul quoted God speaking to Moses ^{Exodus 33:19} as

a way of expressing the absolute sovereignty of God and a reminder to mankind that they have no right to question anything the Lord decides to do ^{Job 42:1-6, Isaiah 55:8}.

9:16-18 It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden. The concepts of "man's desire or effort" do not deny the concept of free will, but man's first (and natural) choice is to reject God ^{Psalm 14:2-3, Jeremiah 17:9, John 7:7}, because all humans are "by nature children of wrath" ^{Ephesians 2:1-3}. God's sovereign call on a person is what creates "man's desire" ^{John 1:11-13}, so when a man is saved the credit is always God's, and "man's...effort" can only have eternal value after he has been connected to the "vine" (Jesus Christ) ^{John 15:5}. However, the quote concerning Pharaoh is seemingly impossible to interpret apart from a belief in the absolute sovereignty of God and a denial of free will, obedience, crowns, etc. The last two verses ^{v.17-18} seem to be counter to the idea that God has called everyone, but a wooden literal interpretation of these verses leads to a conclusion of human puppets.

9:19-21 One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?" But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? The quotes in this passage ^{Isaiah 29:16, 45:9} could be interpreted in terms of man questioning God why He decided to create man with a free will ^{Job 9:12, Daniel 4:35}, since He knew it would lead to Adam giving in to temptation by sinning against God and passing a seed of sin to all of humanity. However, the last verse points to the same conclusion as above: God is Sovereign ^{v.17-18}. Paul chose an analogy to remind mankind who the boss is ^{Genesis 2:7 ⇒ Jeremiah 18:1-8 ⇒ Genesis 3:19}.

9:22-24 What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath – prepared for destruction? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory – even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? Paul lists three reasons for God permitting the presence of evil: (1) to demonstrate His "wrath", (2) to "make His power known" and (3) to display the "riches" of His glorious "mercy". Of these reasons, the desire of God's heart is to display His glorious mercy ^{Romans 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9}, however, when His patience is exhausted, God will decide the time for His wrath ^{Revelation 11:18}. Please direct questions/concerns about the notes to ron price, ron@hopeinchristnm.com, 505-294-4743.

There is no "limited atonement": salvation is available for all ⇒ Jews and Gentiles ^{1 John 2:1-2}.

9:25-26 As he says in Hosea: "I will call them 'my people' who are not my people; and I will call her 'my loved one' who is not my loved one," and, "It will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.' "

Here Paul mentioned two OT quotes ^{Hosea 1:9-10, 2:23} to remind his readers of Hosea's proclamation of the ultimate restoration of Israel to God (Peter later stated this in terms of the restoration of Gentiles to God ^{1 Peter 2:10}). Paul emphasized the necessity of restoration, because of their present (at that time) alienation from God. And the future restoration will produce (by faith) "sons of the 'living God' " ^{Joshua 3:10, 1 Samuel 17:26, Matthew 16:16}, instead of worshipers of "worthless idols" ^{Psalms 31:6, Isaiah 44:9} as many of their ancestors were ^{Jeremiah 2:5}.

9:27-29 Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved. For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality." It is just as Isaiah said previously: "Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah." Paul, once again, utilized some OT quotations to help his Jewish readers to realize the dangerous position they were in. In the first passage ^{Isaiah 10:22-23}, Isaiah was prophesying the destruction and scattering of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, due to the unbelief of the Israelites. In this way, Paul was also illustrating the devastation and scattering that would result from their rejection of the Messiah. Paul indicated through this passage and the next ^{Isaiah 1:9} that they would die without God's mercy, but a "remnant" would be saved. Israel's "remnant" always indicates Jews who are saved ^{Isaiah 37:32, Jeremiah 23:3-4, Zephaniah 3:12-13}.

9:30-33 What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone". As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trust in him will never be put to shame." In this concluding passage, Paul seems to bring out some inconsistent points with the concept of absolute sovereignty. He contrasted "faith" and "works", and that the only proper responsibility of mankind is to "pursue righteousness ... by faith". In Paul's final quote of the chapter ^{Isaiah 8:14, 28:16}, God spoke through Isaiah about Israel's rejection of Jesus Christ (the "cornerstone" ^{Psalms 118:22-23, Matthew 21:42} who became a "stumbling stone" ^{1 Corinthians 1:23}).