

## ROMANS 9

### Israel, O' Israel

TO THE  
ROMANS

#### *God's Wrath on Unrighteousness*

us, called to be  
the gospel of God,  
beforehand through his  
Scriptures,<sup>3</sup> concerning his  
descended from David<sup>2</sup> according  
and was declared to be the Son of  
power according to the Spirit of holiness

<sup>18</sup> For the wrath of God is  
heaven against all ungodlines  
teousness of men, who by their  
ness suppress the truth. <sup>19</sup> For  
known about God is plain to  
God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For  
attributes, namely, his eternal po

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Last time we saw that creation, Christians, and the Holy Spirit are groaning, awaiting the Sons of God to come into their full inheritance. We learned that once we are *adopted* as God's children, we then must become *adapted* for heaven.

Then we saw that we were foreknown, predestined, called, justified, and glorified by God. Paul ended this incredible Chapter 8 with the triumphant refrain, "*We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us!*"—vs. 36

Now this time we turn our attention to Israel. We will see that chapters 9-11 are best read and reread as a single unit. They begin with a lament and end with a doxology.

Up to now, Paul has discussed the *principles* of the gospel, drawing together the various threads that make up the tapestry picture of man's sin, salvation and sanctification.

In the next 3 chapters he discusses the *problems* of the gospel, particularly as these problems relate to the Jewish people.

God had made many exceeding great promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to Moses, David, and Solomon.

Many of these promises centered in the person of the Messiah that was to come, the Lord Jesus Christ, ironically murdered by the Jews at Calvary.

#### John 1:10-11

He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. He came to his own people (the Jew), and even they rejected him.

In His love, God gave the nation a second chance, an opportunity to reverse its terrible verdict and, by repentance and faith, to accept Christ as Savior.

The Book of Acts, the history of which Paul himself plays a prominent part, records this second chance. The Jews, unfortunately, remained stubborn and hardhearted. The Jews of the homeland as well as the Jews of the Diaspora rejected Him once again.

When Paul wrote the letter to the Romans, the temple was still standing in Jerusalem; the sacrifices were still being offered; though now meaningless.

The decimation of Jerusalem predicted by Jesus was yet on the distant horizon. Yet Paul knew that Christianity was the end of the Judaism he had once served.

As a Christian, Paul knew that he would have to come to terms with the problems of the gospel as they related to the Jew. What about all those ancient promises—to the Jew? Were they cancelled now in light of their rejection of Messiah?

Where would the Jew now stand in relation to this new dispensation of grace? No honest explanation of the gospel could avoid these questions. This is why Paul wrote Chapters 9-11.

The great Apostle will first look back at the past, then at the present, and finally at the future. He shows that in all of God's past dealings with Israel is the *sovereignty* of God; that the key to all God's present dealings with Israel is the *salvation* of God; and that the key to all God's promised dealings with Israel is the *sincerity* of God.

In Romans 9, we will see Paul carefully weigh God's past dealings with Israel and find that all those dealings are based on the simple principle of *divine sovereignty*.

First we see:

### 1. Paul's anguish for the Jewish people

When Paul thought of his own people—the Jew—and their alienation from God, he felt an overwhelming grief.

**Romans 9:1-2**

I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit—<sup>2</sup> I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

Keep in mind that it had been the Jews who beat him, castigated him, imprisoned and cursed him. Wherever he went, they stirred up the populace against him. Even so, he loved them. Commentator John Phillips writes:

**Galatians 5:22**

Such a love is not of nature; it is supernatural and a fruit of the Spirit

And his anguish is so profound that he says:

**Romans 9:3-4**

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,<sup>4</sup> the people of Israel.

The word “cursed” is “anathema,” and never denotes simply an exclusion or excommunication, but always a devotion to perdition—a curse.

Paul’s soul-winning passion for men, especially his own countrymen, was such that he could actually, soberly and truthfully say that he would be willing to go to hell and be eternally damned, if that were possible, if by so doing it would lead his kinsmen to a saving knowledge of their Messiah, Jesus Christ!

Next, in verses 4-5, Paul lists several advantages of the Jews that made their rejection of Christ all the more tragic:

**Romans 9:4-5**

Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. <sup>5</sup> Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

- They were Israelites
- They were adopted as sons
- They experienced the glory of God
- They were covenant partners with God
- They had God's Law
- They had the Temple worship service
- They had God's promises
- They were descendants of the patriarchs
- They were the people through whom the Messiah was given

Yet with all these advantages of God's special blessings throughout their history, the Jews did not acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah.

Then did God's word fail? Were His promises rendered void? No!

**Romans 9:6**

It is not as though God's word had failed...

God's word hadn't failed, although most of Israel had not believed in Jesus Christ. How could this be? Because there was an "Israel" within Israel.

**Romans 9:7**

...For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. <sup>7</sup> 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."

When we see “Isaac” mentioned, it points to the principle of faith. Isaac had been the child of promise, and he arrived by faith in God’s promise.

#### Romans 4:18-21

Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” <sup>19</sup>Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. <sup>20</sup>Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, <sup>21</sup>being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.

God’s promises had not been for every Jew of Abrahamic descent, but were made for those Jews who placed their faith in Messiah.

Paul elaborates by saying:

#### Romans 9:8-9

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. <sup>9</sup>For this was how the promise was stated: “At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son.

So there is an Israel within Israel. There is natural Israel which are natural descendants of Abraham but have not yet embraced Messiah, therefore are not yet spiritually God’s children.

And there is spiritual Israel—those that have turned to God in faith by embracing Messiah Jesus.

So God’s promises to the Jew had not failed, they were fulfilled for every Jew that placed his or her faith in Yeshua, Jesus Christ the Son of God.



Paul continues:

### Romans 9:10-13

Not only that, but Rebecca's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. <sup>11</sup> Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: <sup>12</sup> not by works but by him who calls—she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” <sup>13</sup> Just as it is written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.

In these difficult passages, Paul describes God's choice of Jacob over Esau. Both sons had the same father and mother. Rebecca conceived both by Isaac (vs. 10). And God chose Jacob, the younger twin, rather than Esau before they were born (vs. 11). This was done so that the selection could not have been based on their doing right or wrong or any other natural factor.

The wisdom of God is what chose Jacob and rejected Esau. And going back a bit, it was God's wisdom that chose Isaac and rejected Ishmael. In both cases, the fathers (Abraham and Isaac) pleaded with God to accept the rejected one.

Yet God's wisdom is seen in the outworking of history. From Ishmael have come the Arab nations, bitter foes of Israel to this day, and for long centuries passionate embracers of Islam.

From Esau came Edom, the bitterest and most vengeful of all Israel's ancient neighbors. As time passed, both Ishmael and Esau personally manifested hostility to the things of God, whereas Isaac and Jacob were the opposite.

But God's choice of the two was also based on His sovereign will. God is under no obligation to explain His ways to man. He does what He pleases.

### Romans 9:14-18

What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! <sup>15</sup> For he says to Moses, “I



will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” <sup>16</sup> It does not, therefore, depend on man’s desire or effort, but on God’s mercy. <sup>17</sup> 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.” <sup>18</sup> Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

God showed mercy to Moses and Israel, but hardened Pharaoh’s heart. Paul attributes both the bestowal of mercy and the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart to God’s sovereign will.

Many say, “But that’s not fair!” Yet on closer inspection, of the many times we’re told that Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, most of those times are attributed to Pharaoh himself—he hardened his own heart.

It is only when still resisting God after the sixth of ten plagues to we read for the first time in the Hebrew language that ‘the Lord made firm the heart Of Pharaoh.’—Ex. 9:12 Up to then the Hebrew reads, “Pharaoh made heavy his heart.”

Paul anticipates our response:

#### **Romans 9:19**

One of you will say to me: “Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?”

Paul is saying, You, a mere man skewed in your judgment by sin, are not wise enough to question God. Secondly, such a question ignores the fact that God’s actions are always *born of righteousness* and ever *tempered with mercy*.

Paul asks:

### Romans 9:20-21

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?’ <sup>21</sup> 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?

As the potter is sovereign over the clay to do with it as he pleases, so is God over men.

### Romans 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? <sup>23</sup> 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— <sup>24</sup> even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?

Paul is now concluding his whole argument by stressing the fact that the Gentiles are as much an object of God’s mercy as are the Jews. The salvation of us Gentiles was never just an afterthought with God. Rather, we were His “forethoughts!” The Word of God predicted very clearly the ultimate blessing of God in a great Gentile revival.

### Romans 9:25-29

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,’ <sup>26</sup> 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.’ “

<sup>27</sup> “Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved. <sup>28</sup> For the Lord will

carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality.”

<sup>29</sup> 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.”

### **Romans 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; <sup>31</sup> but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. <sup>32</sup> Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the “stumbling stone.”

<sup>33</sup> 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 trusts in him will never be put to shame.”

