

Evangelistic Love for Unbelieving Israel
Romans 9:1-5
February 10, 2021

Review and Context

Theme of Romans: The gospel of God (1:16-17)

1:18-3:20 The universality of sin and condemnation (the universal need for the gospel)

3:21-4:25 The gospel as the righteousness of God by faith

Chs 5-8 The gospel and the sure hope it gives

Chs 9-11 The gospel and Israel

- *Thesis:* 9:6a “But it is not as though the word of God has failed.”
- After Paul has taught the doctrine of salvation in depth and rooted in the OT, a problem arises—the nation of Israel’s rejection of Christ.
- The OT is filled with promises of Christ and salvation to the nation of Israel.
- The apostle proves that the word of God to Israel has not failed. He does so by looking to the past, the present, and the future.
- In teaching doctrine about Israel, the apostle teaches other interconnected doctrines.
- The section goes from great depths of sorrow (9:1-2), to great heights of rejoicing in 11:33-36.

In 9:1-5, the apostle introduces the problem of Israel’s unbelief. And he does so in a very personal way that ought to impact our lives.

The depth of the apostle Paul’s evangelistic love for unbelieving Israelites (1-3)

verse 1

1. “speaking the truth in Christ”
2. Emphasizes the truthfulness of what he is about to say regarding what is in his heart

verse 2

- It is possible for a Christian to be full of unspeakable joy (8:31-39), and at the same time have deep sorrow

Question: What does Paul mean in verse 3, “For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh”?

“I could wish”

1. Paul is expressing his deep desire to do something that he knows is impossible
2. It is impossible because of the truth in 8:38-39

“accursed and cut off from Christ”

1. Devoted by God to destruction in eternal hell, and thus forever separated from Christ
2. Forfeiting his salvation

“for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh”

- In the place of his fellow Israelites who were perishing in unbelief, in order that they would be saved

Question: Can you relate to what Paul feels in his heart and wishes in this passage? Why or why not?

Sorrow over the condition of the lost is also expressed in:

Psa. 119:136 "My eyes shed streams of tears,
because people do not keep your law."

Jer. 13:15–17 "Hear and give ear; be not proud,
for the LORD has spoken.

Give glory to the LORD your God
before he brings darkness,
before your feet stumble
on the twilight mountains,
and while you look for light
he turns it into gloom
and makes it deep darkness.

But if you will not listen,
my soul will weep in secret for your pride;
my eyes will weep bitterly and run down with tears,
because the LORD'S flock has been taken captive."

Ex. 32:30–32 "The next day Moses said to the people, “You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.” So Moses returned to the LORD and said, “Alas, this people has sinned a great sin. They have made for themselves gods of gold. But now, if you will forgive their sin—but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written.”"

Jesus wept over Jerusalem in Luke 19:41-45

John MacArthur: “It was exactly Paul’s great love for the lost that made him such a powerful instrument in the hands of God.”¹

Such self-sacrificing devotion can only be produced by Christ’s own gracious love in our hearts.

¹ MacArthur, *Romans 9-16*, page 12.

The reason for such a depth of love (4-5)

4 “They are Israelites...”

1. Physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (to whom God gave the name Israel)
2. Emphasizes their membership in the nation of Israel
3. In Romans, the terms “Jew” and “Israelite/Israel” occur as follows:
 - “Jew” is used 11 times outside of chapters 9-11, and only 3 times in chapters 9-11
 - “Israelite/Israel” is not used outside of chapters 9-11, but 14 times in chapters 9-11

What follows in verses 4-5 is a list of eight privileges God has graciously and lovingly bestowed on the nation of Israel

1. Paul speaks of these privileges currently belonging to the unbelieving nation of Israel. It is not that these privileges once belonged to Israel but now have been revoked or transferred to another.
2. Some theologians teach that the church replaces, supersedes, or fulfills national Israel in God’s plan. This position that the church is the “new” or “true” Israel is called “replacement theology,” or “supersessionism,” or “fulfillment theology.” However, I believe such teaching is contradicted by the passage we are studying and other passages.

4 “...and to them belong the adoption,”

1. God has made the nation as a whole His son
2. **Ex. 4:22–23** "Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.’”"
3. **Hos. 11:1** "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son."
4. The only nation whom God has called his son
5. Speaks of a special relationship with God, established by God in His grace

4 “...the glory,”

1. God’s presence manifested visibly
2. **Ex. 40:34–35** "Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle."
3. Also 1 King 8:10-11
4. God temporarily withheld His glory in discipline

4 "...the covenants,"

1. Includes the covenant with their father Abraham, the covenant given through Moses at Mt. Sinai, the covenant with David promising an eternal kingdom, and the New Covenant promised through the prophets
2. Presumably, Paul has in mind all dimensions of these covenants

4 "...the giving of the law"

- **Deut. 4:5–8** "See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?"

4 "...the worship"

1. NASB "the temple service"
2. A system in which God's people can approach Him in worship

4 "...and the promises."

- The many promises God gave Israel in the OT, including His promises of the Messiah, the kingdom, and salvation

5 "To them belong the patriarchs,"

- Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who received great promises from the Lord for them and their descendants

5 "...and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ..."

1. A privileged position
2. There is more to be said about the person of Christ than his humanity

5 "...who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen."

1. A clear declaration of Christ's deity
2. You have to twist the Greek in order to translate it differently
3. Christ Himself is the greatest blessing, the blessing in whom all the other blessings find their full meaning

The apostle Paul loved his fellow Israelites so deeply because God loves the nation of Israel so deeply.

When Paul thought of the privileges graciously given to Israel, Paul, a believing Israelite, did not just thank God for what he had received. He sorrowfully looked at the multitude of unbelieving Israelites who were perishing, and wished He could take their place in hell in order that they would be saved.

Application

Rom. 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

Jewish people are not "off limits" in our evangelism, but should have a priority in our evangelism and in our prayers for the lost.

- **Rom. 10:1** "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved."

Ask Christ to grow within our hearts love for the lost.