

Unbelief among the Chosen # 31

Romans 9: 1-5

As we continue to move through the book of Romans, we arrive at what has come to be known as the parenthetical passages. Chapters 9, 10, and 11 deal primarily with the Jewish people and the nation of Israel at large. Considering the strong foundation Paul has laid regarding salvation by faith in the finished work of Christ alone, some feel as if these chapters are out of place. Some argue there is a natural flow from Romans 8:39 into Romans 12:1. Granted, Paul does resume vital instruction for believers and our Christian conduct in Romans 12, but we cannot and should not disregard or ignore these chapters.

As we move through these parenthetical chapters, you will notice they do speak primarily to a Jewish audience. It seems apparent that while promoting the Gospel among the Gentiles, Paul was led of the Spirit to deal with God's continued plan for Israel. Although they had rejected Jesus as the Christ, Paul wanted them to know God had not forsaken them and He still had plans for their future.

Although these chapters have much to say to the Jews, we will discover benefit and application for our lives as well. I pray we approach them seeking to learn from the truths they reveal. Here Paul shares his heart for the salvation of Israel. There is a great lesson for us as we deal with the lost around us. As we begin, I want to examine the [reflections](#) Paul shares and consider: [Unbelief among the Chosen](#).

I. The Burden for Israel (1-3) – It is evident Paul carried a heavy burden for Israel. He knew the struggles devout Jews had concerning the Gospel, and he well understood the benefit and liberating power of salvation. Consider:

A. Paul's Desire (1) – [I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost](#). Paul affirms his burden and genuine desire to for the Jewish people. Some may have thought he only sought personal recognition or advantage, but he was compelled to share the truth of God's Word with all who would hear, including the Jews. He had been saved by the grace of God and he longed for others to experience that as well, regardless of race or background. He was moved of the Spirit in ministry.

- Paul's honesty and genuine desire ought to challenge and motivate us as well. Just as in his day, we are surrounded by many who reject the Gospel. We all have loved ones, friends, and neighbors who need to experience salvation. Do we share the desire Paul had for the salvation of men, regardless of their race, upbringing, or background?

B. Paul's Despair (2) – [That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart](#). He too had been steeped in religious ceremony and tradition, seeking the favor of God through works, rituals, and based upon his heritage. He had been delivered from that as his eyes were opened to the truth. Paul had received Christ as his Savior, fully trusting Him in salvation. As he looked around at the Jews he encountered, he saw those who lived as he had. He saw a people continuing to seek approval to God through their own efforts. This brought great heaviness and continual sorrow to his heart. His times of rejoicing were tempered with heaviness by the reality of the lost.

- Where is our burden? Do we share the heaviness and sorrow Paul possessed for those apart from Christ? We talk of the need for their salvation, but are we genuinely burdened?

C. Paul's Devotion (3) – [For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh](#). Allow me to read that again. Do you realize what Paul has just said? There can be no doubt he was burdened and grieved over the lost condition of many Jews. He declares that if it were possible, he would be willing to be separated from God and condemned to Hell if it would bring them to salvation in Christ. We must be careful not to place Paul on a level reserved for Christ, but he is showing the love of Christ for lost souls. He would be willing to suffer in their place if it would result in their salvation.

- I don't know about you, but this brought deep conviction to my heart. I am sure none of us have prayed this prayer. If we are honest, most don't even want to be inconvenienced for the lost, much less being willing to suffer so they might be saved. The average Christian has a hard enough time finding time for worship services. Few are willing to bear the burden and suffer difficulty, ridicule, or shame for the Lord to reach the lost. I pray we develop a heavy burden for those who need Christ in salvation!

II. The Blessedness of Israel (4-5) – In these verses, Paul speaks of the many ways God had blessed Israel throughout their history. The promised Messiah came through them. God had dealt specifically with them for thousands of years. They had received more favor and light than any other people, and yet they refused to embrace the Gospel. Consider:

A. Their Position (4) – [Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption](#). Paul reminds all who read this letter, including the Jews of the great heritage of Israel. They were the chosen of God. He had called them out of idolatry to follow Him and become His people. They had experienced the favor of God as no other people. His love for Israel was proven time and again.

- We do not enjoy the position Israel had and will have, but we too have a position in Christ. We have been brought out of the bondage of sin and placed within the family of God. Our sins have been cleansed and we have been reconciled to God, enjoying a personal, intimate relationship with Him through Christ. Of all people, we ought to serve the Lord with gladness.

B. The Presence (4) – *Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory.* Israel was not unfamiliar with the presence of God. After the exodus, He led them with the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. This revealed His glory to them. The Shekinah glory rested over the Tabernacle, and later the Temple. They alone experienced God's presence in such a way.

- We too are blessed by the divine presence of God, although it is much different. The believer enjoys a benefit the Israelites did not have. God dwelt within the holy of holies, behind the veil, but He inhabits the body of believers in His Spirit. We are now the tabernacle of God.

C. The Precepts (4) – *and the covenants, and the giving of the law.* Israel enjoyed a great benefit the other nations and peoples didn't: the covenants and Word of God. They were chosen of God and through His dealing with them, several covenants were made, to which God remained faithful. They were given the written Word to guide them, point out their sin, and lead them into a loving relationship with God. The Word they received pointed them to the promised Messiah. They were truly blessed to enjoy covenants and a Word from the Lord.

- The covenants God made with Israel do not apply to the church, but we have been given a new and better covenant through Christ Jesus our Lord. *Matt.26:28 – For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.* *Heb.9:15 – And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.* We also have the complete revelation of God through the Word He has given us. All that we need to know for salvation, service, and fellowship with the Lord is given to us in His Word.

D. The Privileges (4) – *and the service of God.* Israel alone enjoyed the Tabernacle, and later the Temple, where the presence of God dwelt; and they had the privilege of gathering for worship unto the Lord. They were blessed to have a physical location where they could meet and worship.

- I was reminded of the great privilege we have to serve the Lord and worship Him. He deals with the believer unlike any other people before us. We have buildings where we gather, but the body of believers makes up the church, the body of Christ. We can worship and serve the Lord anywhere, at any time, because we are His tabernacle.

E. The Promises (4) – *and the promises*. Paul reminded the Jews of the countless promises God had made to Israel. He was always faithful to His promises, never failing to keep His Word. No doubt Paul also referred to the promise of their Messiah and King, the Lord Jesus. Although they had not recognized Jesus as the Christ, God's promise had not failed.

- Time will not permit to speak of the numerous promises we have of the Lord recorded within His Word. In my mind the greatest are the promise of salvation to all who look to Christ by faith, the promise of eternal life, and the promise of our Lord's return. *2 Pet.1:3-4 – According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: [4] Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

F. The Parentage (5) – *Whose are the fathers...* Paul speaks of their fathers receiving all these gracious gifts from the Lord. In this he reminds the Jews of the great benefit they enjoyed through their association with their fathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, etc... Their being born into this lineage wouldn't secure their salvation, but they were truly blessed to come from a long line of those who faithfully served the Lord and sought Him.

- If you can claim a godly heritage, you ought to rejoice and thank the Lord for His blessing in your life. We were blessed to be born in a time, and in a place, where the Word of God is proclaimed, the Gospel is shared, and people are saved by the grace of God.

G. The Provision (5) – *Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.* Although many of the Jews denied Jesus as the Christ, Paul is faithful to proclaim His deity and the fact that He had come, according to God's divine plan and promise. He was born of the same lineage as the Jews. He was a born into the bloodline of Abraham and David. However, greater than that, He came as Lord and Savior, One who holds a place of preeminence over all, and blessed of God forever. Paul seeks to reveal unto them the need for Christ. All the prior blessings and promises were great, but they could not compare to Christ. In fact, much of what they enjoyed as benefits from God served to point them to Christ. He wanted them to rejoice in the provision that was made for their salvation in Christ.

- We too ought to rejoice in all that God has given us, but we cannot and must not let the blessing hide the One who provided all we enjoy. Had Christ not come to provide redemption and reconciliation, we all would remain in our sin. The greatest gift one can receive is the gift of salvation by grace.

Conclusion: Clearly Paul spoke primarily to the Jews in this passage, but there has been benefit for us as well. I had no desire to “over spiritualize” these verses in seeking to make application to our lives, but just as the Jews, we too have received much. In fact, we have received more light through the complete revelation of God in His written Word and the Holy Spirit that abides within.

The Jews were without excuse. God had kept His promises, sending His Son as the Savior of men. Many of them rejected Christ, but God had been faithful. We too are without excuse. We have been given the Truth and the opportunity to respond to the Truth. How have you responded to the Truth you have received? Have you believed on Christ by faith for salvation?

Christian, do you share the burden Paul had for the lost? Are we genuinely concerned for those around us and within the world who have never been saved? I pray these verses stand as a challenge for each of us.