

Wrestling with the Sovereignty of God & the Freedom of Relationship Romans Chapters 9:1-5

- * Quick review of chapters 1-8 and letters history
- * God's Gospel unveils God's Righteousness
- * 2 aspects to God's righteousness

Now, the preeminent question on Paul's mind because it is on the mind of his church
What has God been doing with Israel?

Has God's election of Israel turned out to be a failure? Was it a mistake by God?

Specifically, there are 2 main questions that dominate this third section of Romans
Chapters 9-11

1. What to make of unbelieving Israel?
2. Has God been faithful?

Israel has almost completely rejected Jesus as the Messiah of the Gospel story

And this in turn begs the question how on earth then has God been faithful to His promises to Israel
The third section starts with this issue

- Romans 9:1-4

And the third section ends with this issue

- Romans 11:26-32

If we forget this double theme and the issues Paul is addressing, we run the risk of badly
interpreting some otherwise relatively straightforward verses

God's righteousness (i.e. His faithfulness to His covenant promises AND His determination to put
the world to rights again) get called into question by Israel's failure to believe the Gospel

There appears to be a MAJOR HOLE in the story

And the church now stands potentially divided by this hole which Paul must address

Karl Barth = "The Divine YES has heard a resounding NO"

And yet Paul will show this resounding NO is preliminarily necessary to gain the ultimate YES

Chapters 9-11 is essentially a RETELLING of the story of Israel

From Abraham to Paul's present day

There were also many other writings at the same time addressing this same issue

4 Ezra, Wisdom 10-19, and 4QMMT column C (even Stephen's speech in Acts 7)

Paul's main aim is to be fully ready for his questions in Romans 11:1, 11

- Romans 11:1a, 11a

God still plans on saving ETHNIC (meaning Israel of the flesh) Jews despite how things look

And from last weeks history lesson the answers as to why are obvious

- a) Rome had a long tradition of anti-Jewish sentiment
- b) The return of large numbers of Jews to Rome under Nero with an existing church
- c) By the late 50's tension in Judea & Galilee was huge – news in Rome was clear on this and simply further drove a wedge between Jews & Gentiles

Again, if God's goal is to ultimately build (Genesis 12) a unified covenant people, this is a huge
obstacle and problem and Paul is burdened by it

In chapters 5-8 Paul has provided an amazingly detailed explanation as to how Jesus accomplishes what God has always promised in the story...the fulfillment & culmination of the grand Gospel
And yet, Israel remains in unbelief
And it is critical that Gentiles not treat non-Christian Jews as unsavable and that they understand how they fit into the story
Likewise for believing Jews, it is critical they understand where the Gentiles fit in
And for non-Christian Jews it is important that they get the whole picture and how badly they have misunderstood God's project of redemption

- Romans 9:1-5

Reading these versus is interesting

Paul never in these first 5 versus really states what the problem is

But it is clear throughout this section

- Romans 10:1 (prays for their salvation)
- Romans 11:1 (will they fall permanently)
- Romans 11:11 (will they fall permanently)
- Romans 11:23 (they can rejoin if they believe)

The problem...

1. The majority of Paul's fellow Jews ethnically have not believed and are therefore excluded from salvation
2. Paul is as a result also worried Gentile Christians in Rome may be happy that Jews should stay forever in that condition

Remember, God has worked AT LEAST since the time of Abraham in Genesis 12 to put together a unified, Jewish/Gentile covenant people

And Paul knows it...and it bothers him to the core that it would go otherwise

- Romans 11:13-16

Now, back to verses 1-5

[Do you remember how Romans 8 ended? How?](#)

Amazing crescendo

And chapter 9 starts with an amazing THUD!

[Does this pleading of Paul sound familiar at all to the story?](#)

MOSES

[What is this statement Paul makes 2x...according to the flesh? Why does he do this?](#)

* Chapter 4 – Abraham's offspring according to faith

Will say this goofy but almost like there are 2 Israel's

Ethnic Jews and siblings IN CHRIST (both Jew & Gentile)

Christ is specified as being according to their flesh...this is their privilege, their tragedy, and their hope all at once...the chapters to come explain each of these

Summary:

1. Israel was called to be the light to the whole world
2. God thru Jesus ON BEHALF of Israel has shone that light
3. All who believe on Jesus as Messiah are adopted children of God and children of Abraham by Faith
4. What the Torah could not do holy as it is, God has done thru Jesus

5. All those adopted in Christ share the full inheritance of the Patriarchs
6. And yet ethnic Israel remains in unbelief and in darkness

People often treat chapters 9-11 as a sort of parenthetical passage that is on its own
And the whole letter is about the way God is fulfilling His promises thru Jesus

What is mentioned as the climax in this list of Israel's privileges?

One last comment on verses 1-5

Verse 5 says "whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, **God blessed forever**"

The Messiah, who is from Israel's own race, their supreme privilege and hope, is the very embodiment of God Himself

Just as Israel rejected God at Sinai pushing Moses to beg for their mercy, now Israel is rejecting God in the form of Messiah, the highest of their privileges, causing Paul to beg for mercy

Therein lies the main problem

The climax of God's work THRU His chosen ethnic people is the very person they have rejected
And yet somehow God needs to come out faithful in this process

SO...

When you read verses like Romans 9:15, 17, 18, 22

You HAVE to read this within the point, within the issue Paul is addressing

Ethnic CHOSEN Israel is not believing in Messiah...and then God throws the door open to Gentiles

1. How is this fair?
2. And how can you call Him faithful?