

THE PRIVILEGES OF ISRAEL AND THEIR TRAGIC FAILURE

ROMANS 09:01–05

DIVISION OVERVIEW: (Romans 09:01 – 11:36) Israel

The change from Chapter 8 is abrupt and striking. Chapters 9-11 have to do with the place of the Jews in world history. The church faces this bewildering problem because the Jews were God's chosen people with a unique and special place in God's purposes. However, when God sent His Son into the world, the Jews rejected Him. How can this tragic and terrible paradox be explained? Why would God's people choose to reject and crucify God's very own Son? This is the problem that Paul begins to deal with in these chapters.

Two things need to be noted throughout this section: First, the Jews were the special chosen people of God. Paul never questioned this. The Jews had a very special place in God's plan for the salvation of man down through human history. (See *Israel, God's Special People*, Jn. 4:22; *Jews, The Seed of Abraham*, Rom. 4:1-25.)

Second, the real chosen people, the real Israel, always lay in a righteous remnant, not in the whole nation (see Rom. 9:25, esp. 27f).

Introduction: (Romans 09:01–05)

Paul bears his heart in this passage, revealing a deep evangelistic fervour for his people, the Jews. It is a rare glimpse of the burning compassion that every servant of God should possess for his own loved ones and kinsmen.

- I. A man's great love for his people (vv. 1-3).
- II. A man's great respect for his people's position with God (vv. 4-5).

I. Romans 09:01–03 Paul's Love for His People

This is the picture of a man's great love and concern for his people, a love and concern for their salvation.

1. Paul pleads for his people to trust him. The Jews called Paul a false prophet and a liar. Why? He was now proclaiming God's love and salvation for all men instead of just for the Jews. Man no longer had to become a proselyte of Jewish religion in order to know God (see Rom. 10:12-13). To the traditional Jew, Paul was a heretic. He was a man who was to be utterly distrusted. They hated and despised him and wanted to kill him and do away with his message (see Acts 21:27-30; 24:1-9. See Acts 22:22; 1 Cor. 4:13).
 2. Note how distressed Paul's heart is. Despite the rejection and ill treatment from the Jews, Paul still loved his kinsmen, and he sensed a deep urgency for them to grasp the truth. Their salvation was of such concern that he swore his concern by three things: Christ, his conscience, and the Holy Spirit. Paul was forcibly saying, "I am not lying..."
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- “I speak the truth *in Christ*...
- “my conscience confirms it...
- “my conscience confirms it in the *Holy Spirit*...

“I do have a great concern and love for my kinsmen. But my concern is not that their sinful ways be approved, but that they come to know the truth; for without the truth, they will be lost and doomed.”

Just how deeply Paul’s heart was distressed over his kinsmen is clearly seen in the description of his heart.

=> “I have great sorrow” (lupe): pain, grief, mourning.

=> “I have...unceasing anguish” (odune): intense pain, sorrow, torment. And note: it is continuous and unceasing. Paul was always bearing pain for the salvation of his kinsmen. The depth of Paul’s love and concern is graphically seen in what he said.

3. Paul is the picture of a man who had an unbelievable willingness to be sacrificed for his people. He could wish to be cursed (anathema), that is, separated from Christ if it would save his people. He could be willing to swap his salvation for their doom if it would lead to their salvation. Paul felt the deepest emotion and love and concern for his people.

Note: the words of Paul must not be stretched too far. Paul was speaking from an evangelistic fervour, not from a theological view. He was immersed in emotion, just as so many of God’s people sometimes become over loved ones who are lost. Many have been so immersed in emotion that they have offered to swap their salvation for a loved one. Sometimes the Spirit of God works in the hearts of God’s people to strain and suffer through intense prayer for the salvation of lost souls, and sometimes the strain and intensity of prayer is so deep that a believer could wish one extreme (his own salvation) for the other extreme (the salvation of loved ones).

Thought 1. The point is forceful: God’s people should be willing to suffer the ultimate pain for the salvation of souls.

John 4:35 “Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.”

Rom 10:1 Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.

2 Cor 5:20 We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.

1 Cor 9:22 To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.

1 John 3:16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

Jude 1:21-23 *Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear — hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.*

II. **Romans 09:03–05** *Israel, Privileges of Glory*

A man's great respect for his people's position with God. Paul had just declared his great love for Israel; now he assures them of his respect. He did not deny their place in the plan and purposes of God. He knew they were a greatly privileged people, a people who had been highly favoured by God. (See *Israel, Israelites, Adoption, Covenants, Shekinah Glory, Law, Worship and Witnessing, and Promises*, Rom. 9:4 *Heritage, Backsliding, and Israel — Messiah*, Rom. 9:5. Also see *Israel, Gentiles, New Creation*, Mt. 21:43 for an overview of Israel.) ■

ROMANS 09:04 ISRAEL, ISRAELITES

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.

Romans 09:04

The Jews were Israelites. Their very name, Israel, meant a *prince with God* or *one who rules with God* or *one who contends with God*. And their name had been given them from the very founding of their nation. It had come from Jacob, whose name had been changed by God to Israel. The name was later adopted by the descendants of Jacob (Gen. 32:28; 34:7; Jn. 1:47).

Thought 1. In the providence of God, believers have been highly privileged just as Israel was. Believers have been given the name of God's own Son, *Christian*, which means a *follower* or a *disciple of Jesus Christ*. What we must guard against is bringing shame to the Lord's name. Too many profess His name, but do not really follow Him.

Mat 7:21 *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”*

Mat 15:8 *“These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.”* (see Isa. 29:13)

Titus 1:16 *They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.* □

ROMANS 09:04 ADOPTION

The Jews had the privilege of being adopted by God. They were chosen in a very special sense to be the children of God (see *Israel, God's Special People*, Jn. 4:22; *Israel, Gentiles, New Creation*, Mt. 21:43).

Deu 14:1 *You are the children of the Lord your God. Do not cut yourselves or shave the front of your heads for the dead.*

Exo 4:22 *Then say to Pharaoh, 'This is what the Lord says: Israel is my first-born son.'*

Hosea 11:1 *"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son."*

Note a crucial point: this does not mean that the whole nation of Israel was saved. Not all citizens of Israel *believed* God, and being adopted into God's family has always been by genuine faith. In order to be a true child of God it has always been necessary for a *person* to believe in God, entrusting his whole being into God's keeping. (See Rom. 9:6-8, 27, 29; 2:28-29; 4:13. See *Israel, Gentiles, New Creation*, pt. 3, Mt. 21:43)

Thought 1. Believers, too, have the glorious privilege of being adopted by God through faith (see *Adoption*, Rom. 8:15; 8:16-17; *Adoption*, Gal. 4:5-6).

John 1:12 *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*

Rom 8:15 *For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."*

2 Cor 6:17-18 *"Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."*

Gal 4:5-6 *To redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." □*

ROMANS 09:04 COVENANTS

The Jews had the privilege of the covenants. A covenant is an agreement made between two parties; a contract drawn up between two or more people; a special relationship set up and established between persons. Note the plural is used: covenants. God made several covenants with Israel. There was...

- the covenant with Noah after the flood (Gen. 9:9f)

- the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1f; 15:18; 17:4f)
- the covenant of law made at Mount Sinai (Exo. 19:5; 24:8; 34:10; Dut. 29:1f)
- the covenant with David (2 Sam. 7:16)
- the covenant of grace (Heb. 8:8-13)

The point to note is the great love of God. He did not reach out for man only once and then leave man to his doom. God reached out to man time and again. God sought man at every opportunity, seeking to establish a relationship with him.

Jer 31:3 The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving kindness."

Psa 36:10 'Continue your love to those who know you, your righteousness to the upright in heart.'

Rev 3:20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. □

ROMANS 09:04 SHEKINAH GLORY

The Jews had the privilege of the glory of God, that is, the Shekinah Glory. The Shekinah Glory was the brilliant light which descended into the midst of God's people when God was visiting His people. It symbolized God's glorious presence and was revealed in the form of a cloud. The cloud of God's glory and presence was revealed in two very special ways.

1. It was the glorious presence of God in the cloud that led Israel through the desert wanderings.

Exo 13:21 By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night.

Exo 16:10 While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the Lord appearing in the cloud.

Exo 19:16, 18, 20 On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, The Lord descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up.

2. It was the glorious presence of God in the cloud that filled the tabernacle and came to rest over the ark.

Exo 40:34 *Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.*

Exo 29:43 *There also I will meet with the Israelites, and the place will be consecrated by my glory.*

Lev 16:2 *I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.*

1 Kng 8:11 *For the glory of the Lord filled his temple.*

Thought 1. Believers have seen “the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6); believers are the light of the world (Mt. 5:14). This means two significant things.

1) It is a terrible thing to possess the light and the glory of God and not to share it with those in darkness (see Mt. 5:14-15).

Mat 5:16 *“In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”*

2 Tim 2:10 *Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.*

1 Pet 5:1 *To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ’s sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed:*

2) It is a terrible thing to be in darkness and to see light off in the distance and not follow after it. There is absolutely no excuse for seeing the glory of God and failing to follow it.

John 12:36 *“Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light.” When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them. □*

ROMANS 09:04 LAW

The Jews had the privilege of the law. They did not just have the ten commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai, but they had the whole law of God. By law is simply meant the will of God written down. Through the centuries God simply had Moses and His messengers write out His will so that man would always know exactly how to live.

Thought 1. One of the great tragedies of human life is for a person to know that something is right and not do it. Yet, this is the daily life of man. It may be a simple matter of consuming something that damages his body or the more serious matter of cursing God’s name. No matter what the transgression is, man stands guilty. He is inexcusable, for he has the law of God, and he has had God’s law for centuries. Man knows how to live in love and justice. No greater indictment could exist than the charge: “There is no one righteous, not even one” (Rom. 3:10; see Rom. 3:9-18).

Luke 12:47 “That servant who knows his master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows.”

James 5:17 *Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.*

Jer 48:10 “A curse on him who is lax in doing the Lord’s work!” □

ROMANS 09:04 WORSHIP AND WITNESSING

The Jews had the privilege of true worship and of the true service of God. They had...

- the true temple.
- the true ordinances of God.
- the true priests, prophets and messengers of God.
- the true approach to God.
- The Jews had been given every opportunity and privilege to approach God, and even more, to understand and grasp the person of God Himself. The Jews were greatly privileged. While other people stumbled and wandered about in the darkness of false worship, creating *gods* within their own imaginations, the Jews had access to God Himself, access to the only true and living God. They had the opportunity to establish a personal relationship with God.

Thought 1. What an indictment! To have the opportunity to know God personally, but to turn one’s back and walk away. However, there is an even greater offense than this. How much greater is the offense when a person knows the true approach to God and does not share it.

Believers know the truth; they know the way to God. Therefore, they must share the glorious message of the only living and true God. Note two significant facts.

- 1) Many know the truth; they know the true approach to God, yet they refuse to enter His presence. The tragic fact is this; God does not close the door to them; they shut the door upon themselves.

Acts 28:27 *‘For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.’*

- 2) The blood of the lost is upon the hands of the believer. Why? Because the way to God and the means to *proclaim the message* to the world has existed for some time. Yet, we have failed to go into the world and share the life-saving news. There is no one to blame but us. Note the severe warning of God to His people:

Ezek 33:6-8 *'But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people and the sword comes and takes the life of one of them, that man will be taken away because of his sin, but I will hold the watchman accountable for his blood.'* "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you will surely die,' and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood."

The only way for us to be freed from the judgment is to share the message of God and warn men. □

ROMANS 09:04 PROMISES

The Jews had the promises of God. God had shared with them all of His blessings and He had given them the hope for which a man's soul craves. He had shared with them the plan and destiny for which He had created man. When man sinned and turned away from God, it was to the Jews that God gave...

- the promise of the Saviour. (See Lk. 3:24-31.)
- the promise of the world as an inheritance (see Acts 13:23, 32-33. See Rom. 4:13; *Inheritance*, Rom. 8:17; Acts 7:2-8.)
- all the glorious promises stretching from Genesis to Revelation.

Thought 1. Three things are essential when dealing with the promises of God, three things which so many within Israel failed to do.

1) We must not stagger or waver at the promises of God.

Rom 4:20 *Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God.*

Heb 11:6 *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

2) We must be careful not to fall short of His promises.

Heb 4:1 *Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.*

Heb 2:1-3 *We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.*

3) We must steadfastly look for the promise of the new heavens and earth.

2 Pet 3:3-4, 10-13 *First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. □*

ROMANS 09:05 HERITAGE, BACKSLIDING

*Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen. **Romans 09: 05***

The Jews had the privilege of the fathers and their heritage. Their ancestors had been the primary recipients of the promises between God and man. They had the tradition and the history. (See *Israel, God's Special People*, Jn. 4:22 for the reasons God chose Israel.)

Thought 1. It is a sad thing for a person to have a godly heritage (parents, friends, teachers, schooling, etc.) and go astray. The Bible is full of examples.

=> There were the two who began denying the resurrection (2 Tim. 2:16-19).

=> There was Demas, who turned back to the world (2 Tim. 4:10).

=> There was Judas, who forsook Christ (Mt. 26:14-16).

Heb 6:4-6 *It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.*

Heb 10:26-27 *If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. □*

ROMANS 09:05 ISRAEL AND THE MESSIAH

The Jews had the privilege of the Messiah coming from their roots. This was the most glorious privilege of the Jews. It involved being the very people...

- through whom God was to send His Son.
- through whom God was to bless the world.

Note that Paul declares both the humanity and deity of Jesus Christ. He came as a man, but He “is God over all, forever praised.”

Thought 1. A person’s attitude and response toward Jesus Christ determine his eternal destiny.

Mat 10:32-33 *“Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.”*

Mark 8:38 *“If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”*

Luke 12:8 *“I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God.”*

Rom 10:9 *That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

2 Tim 2:12 *If we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us.*

2 Pet 2:1 *But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them — bringing swift destruction on themselves.*

1 John 2:22-23 *Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist — he denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.*

1 John 4:15 *If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. □*