

Romans 9 v1-5

In the chapters 9-11, Paul's philosophy of history. Already stated great themes of Gospel. Now problem of Jewish rejection of the Gospel. With all their great advantages, why did they reject Christ? **He came unto his own and his own received him not** (John1:11). Why?

Expresses his intense sorrow because of Israel's rejection of Christ. Then shows that God has not been unfaithful or unrighteous to Israel. From beginning, blessings of God were never intended for them as a nation. God was always sovereign in bestowing blessings even among Jews themselves. Always been some Jews, a remnant, who have been saved because elected to Salvation. But rejection of Jews was means of opening door for Gentiles.

Israel was unwilling to submit to God's righteousness, and rejected God's way of grace. But present rejection of Jews is not total and complete or final. They will come back to the Lord. Will eventually be a blessing to the whole world. Therefore, though grace makes Jew and Gentile one, there is still a place for the Jews in God's purposes.

These chapters show God has purpose for individual, church and the world. The last is the climax of all the rest. Hence here is great encouragement and inspiration in the midst of pessimism. Glorious hopes and prospects for the future. If Israel's rejection has been occasion of so much blessing for Gentiles, what will Israel's acceptance of Gospel mean?

Paul begins his argument with great sorrow because of the Jewish rejection of Christ. Poignant sorrow of broken heart. Like God, Paul hated sin but loved the sinner. Willing to lay down his life if he could have won Jews for Christ (c.f. Moses finding Israel worshipping golden calf). **Yet now if thou wilt forgive their sin – and if not, I pray thee, blot me out of thy book** (Exodus 32:32). Paul was willing to be accursed if it would do any good, i.e. under God's anathema or curse, that means under destruction and banishment from God.

Jews had special place in God's economy. Enumeration of their privileges (v.4-5).

1. In a special sense they were children of God, specially chosen and adopted into God's family. **Israel is my son, my first born** (Exodus 4:22). **Called my son out of Egypt** (Hebrews 11:1). The whole bible is full of this special sonship and of Israel's refusal to accept it.

F.W.Boreham visited friend's house as a boy. Forbidden to enter one of the rooms. One day discovered the door was left open, and inside he found a boy of his own age in a dreadful state of animal idiocy. The boy's mother went to his side. She looked at young Boreham, in all his health and sanity. Contrasted him with the state of her own son. Knelt by idiot boy's side and cried out in anguish, "I've fed and clothed and loved you – and you've never known me". God could have said that to Israel. Only it was worse in Israel's case because the rejection was deliberate and open-eyed.

2. Israel had the glory. Divine splendour of light which descended when God visited his people. Visible especially in the Tabernacle (Exodus 16:10; 24:16ff; 29:43; 33:18ff). Later in Solomon's Temple. Israel had seen God's glory and rejected it and Him. Love and mercy of God is seen in their glory in face of Jesus Christ. Therefore terrible indeed to reject Him.
3. Israel had Covenants. A covenant is a relationship between two people. Bargain for mutual profit. Encouragement for mutual friendship. Special relationship between God and Israel. Covenant with Noah (whose sign was the rainbow), Abraham (with sign on circumcision), Isaac, Jacob, Mount Sinai. In Jeremiah 31:31ff is the promise of the new covenant.
4. The Law. Knowledge of God's will.
5. Worship of Temple
6. Promises. Told of destiny, task and privilege in store for them, especially regarding the Messiah.
7. The Fathers, i.e. the Patriarchs who were the primary recipients of the promises.
8. Culmination, **of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came** (v5). In Him, all God's promises reach their consummation. All else was a preparation for this. Yet the tragedy was they rejected Him.

Interpretation of verse 5. AV renders it **Who is over all, God blessed for ever**. Is this phrase descriptive of Christ? Or should there be a full-stop after "Christ", and should the following words **God who is over all, be blessed for ever** be a separate sentence? N.B. there is no punctuation in ancient manuscripts, therefore the decision rests with the translator. In favour of it being a description of Christ, it suits the structure of the sentence, there is a parallel passage in 1:25, it balances the phrase **as concerning the flesh** (i.e. reference to human descent), because in human descent He was from Israel but in eternal being He is God overall, c.f.1:3. Also separate ascription of praise is apparently without motive. If this is the correct interpretation, this heightens Israel's sin in rejecting Christ.

On the other hand, Paul is not in the habit of calling Christ "God", and prefers to use "Lord" (c.f. 1 Cor.8:6; 12:3ff; Ephesians 4:4ff). Though he does say all fullness of the Godhead bodily was in him. Also, "Lord" is equivalent to "Yahweh". Yet legitimacy of alternative punctuation must be conceded. F.F.Bruce writes, "It is outrageous to cast doubt on the authority of those translators who prefer it" (e.g. RSV and NEB, also they do point out the other way of rendering it).

Two pictures of Paul:

1. The patriot – love for fellow countrymen. Patriotism is intensified, not weakened, by the Gospel. Above all, desire for fellow's salvation.

2. Soul-winner – great burden here. Burning compassion. Knew what men miss when they reject Christ. He loves, longs, prays, strives, writes and works for Israel's salvation. Rebuke to our dullness and deadness and dryness.