

Today's Topic: Israel and the Church (Elect Jews and Gentiles)

I. Scripture: Romans 9-11

Romans 9. 2I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, 4the 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. 5Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! 6It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. 7Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. . . . 8In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. . . . 14What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! . . . 22What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction? 23What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory— 24even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? 25As he says in Hosea: "I will call them 'my people' who are not my people; and I will call her 'my loved one' who is not my loved one," . . . 27Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved." . . . 30What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; 31but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. 32Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone."

Romans 10. Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. 2For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. 3Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. 4Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. . . . 6The righteousness that is by faith says: . . . 9That 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. 10For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. . . . 16But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. . . . 18But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world." 19Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, "I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding." . . . 21But concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."

Romans 11. I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. 2God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. . . . 5(Just as there was in Elijah's time) So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. . . . 7What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened, 8as it is written: "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day." . . . 11Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. 12But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring! . . . 15For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? 16If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches. 17If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, 18do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. . . . they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. 21For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. . . . 23And if they do not persist in unbelief, God is able to graft them in again. . . . 25Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. 26And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. 27And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins." 28As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, 29for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. 30Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, 31so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. 32For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

II. Discussion Questions

- a. Paul clearly says that God did not reject his people Israel (11:1), but that they did not attain righteousness (9:33). What is the difference?
- b. Paul says in 9:6, "For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel," and in 11:26, "And so all Israel will be saved." Who, then, is Israel, and which Israel will be saved?
- c. Paul, in vv. 9:22-24, states in the form of a "what if" question what he seems to be restating as fact in vv. 11:30-32. This sounds like a divine psychological ploy that our sovereign God uses to get everyone's attention (binding some over to disobedience to show others the riches of his glory and his mercy). Can you see how this divine ploy has been a reality in your life?

III. Next Week's Topic & Scripture: Love and Spiritual Gifts, Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12-14.