

Romans 9

In Romans 9-11 Paul addresses the future of the Jewish people based on their rejection of Christ. One must see these words being written through Paul's tears - not written in anger, but through anguish of heart.

"Each of these chapters begins with a personal statement by Paul, in which he identifies himself with the people of Israel and expresses his profound concern for them. To him, Israel's unbelief is far more than an intellectual problem.

- In 9:1,2 he writes of the sorrow and anguish he feels over them.
- In 10:1 he writes of his prayerful longing for their salvation
- In 11:1,2 he writes of his conviction that God has not rejected them." (Stott)

Keep these things in mind as we read through these chapters.

Read Romans 9: 1-5

From vv.1-5, how would you summarize Paul's attitude towards the Jews?

Note the many things Paul lists that God has done for the Jews, his chosen people.

Read Romans 9: 6-18

In vv.6-18, Paul speaks of God's election - that God chooses certain people to be his own. Note:

- a) The examples of Sarah and Rebecca - God chose Isaac, God chose Jacob (not Ishmael or Esau).
- b) It is not based on merit (v.11) - chosen before they were born.
- c) In v.14, we are tempted to cry foul, saying that God is unjust in only showing love to some.
- d) In v.15, Paul reminds us that God can choose to be merciful to whoever he chooses.
- e) In v.18, Paul also states that God can also choose to harden someone's heart, as well.

Paul is making an argument that, up to this point, any Jew would thoroughly understand and accept: (Barclay)

- There is more to Jewishness than descent from Abraham
- The chosen people were not simply the entire sum of all the physical descendants of Abraham
- Within that family tree there was a process of election all through history

To our minds, however, this argument seems unfair - how could God call some and not others?

To the Jew, the argument hits home: because everything is of God. God has a purpose behind everything.

Story: The year MZ didn't win the preaching award! No one did!

Read Romans 9: 19-29 Arguing with God

"The clay can't tell the potter what he wants to be."

Objection: Some call this Paul's worst analogy ever. People are not clay. This sounds like what a tyrant would say, not what a loving father would say.

But remember: Paul writes this out of the anguish of his own heart. He wished his own people had not crucified God's own Son. Paul didn't wish to say this, but he was driven to say this.

The rejection by the Jews had happened in order that the door might be opened to the Gentiles.

He supports this argument through quoting their own Scriptures:

- a. God can call whoever he wants to be his children (Hosea)
- b. Only a remnant of Israel will be saved (Isaiah)

Read Romans 9: 30-33

Two contrasting views of getting right with God

1. The Jewish way - you can make yourself right with God through earning it yourself. Through strict obedience to the law, you can build up a credit balance with God. Thus, God can become in your debt and owe you salvation.
2. The Gentile way - when presented with the incredible love of God in Jesus Christ, they simply threw themselves upon that love in total trust. They never knew a law they had to try to live up to - they simply accepted the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Thus,

- The Jews sought to put God in their debt; the Gentiles were content to be in God's debt.
- The Jews believed they could win salvation by doing things for God; the Gentiles were lost in amazement at what God had done for them.