

# Jews and the Gospel - Bridging the Divide

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** Romans 9:1-5

**Preached on:** Sunday, March 11, 2012

Will you join me by taking your Bibles and turning to Romans chapter nine. This morning we will be looking at the issue of Jews and the gospel, bridging the divide as I have entitled my discourse to you.

Thus far in Paul's epistle, he has gone to great lengths to explain the gospel. He has gone to great lengths to explain the doctrines of justification, the security of the believer, the perseverance of the saints. But now the question is: Where does this leave his kinsmen the Jews? And here in chapters nine, 10 and 11 he addresses that topic. He addresses it with some profound doctrinal issues related to Israel's election, their defection and ultimately their salvation.

And before we look at the first five verses that I wish to exposit for you this morning, I think some context is very important. The doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone was horribly offensive to the Jews, because they believed that righteousness was through keeping the law and they felt now that Paul was presenting to them something that would mean that they had just been discarded. And so they considered him to be a blasphemer, a traitor.

"Are you telling us that we are no longer God's covenant people, no longer his chosen people, that he is finished with us, that God has abandoned us and now offers salvation to the Gentiles?"

This was just terrible.

You remember in chapter three verse one they said:

"Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?"<sup>1</sup>

Paul knew this was one of the questions they were asking. If being called God's chosen people and keeping his law are unable to make us righteous before God, then what advantage do we have in being a Jew?

They perceived that the gospel was an attack upon God's promises to Israel, hundreds and hundreds of promises in the Old Testament.

Chapter three verse three Paul thinks about what they are asking and he says:

"What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 3:1.

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In other words, Paul was saying to them that God will always remain true to his Word. He hasn't abandoned you. He is not finished with his covenant people. But only those who come to Christ in repentant faith will inherit the promises.

You will recall in chapter five he had to explain that a man cannot be justified by keeping the law. This was unbelievable to them. In fact, to do so actually would be a hindrance to salvation. And in chapter six he had to deal with the false notion that some were thinking, well, if grace abounds in the presence of sin, then are we to continue in sin so that grace might increase?

No, no, he says, may it never be. And in chapter seven he had to deal with their misunderstanding of a believer's relationship to the law and to Christ. He was telling them, "Yes, the law is holy, but a man cannot be sanctified by keeping the law."

And then he comes along in chapter eight and he says:

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."<sup>3</sup>

And he went on to say in verses three through four:

For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.<sup>4</sup>

So all of these things were just terribly offensive to the Jews. They were convinced that because of their racial heritage from Abraham, because of their strict adherence to the Mosaic law and all of the rabbinical traditions that their salvation was guaranteed.

But for eight chapters now this rabbi that is now a follower of Christ, that once killed Christians is saying, "No, no, no. You misunderstand." And so they thought he was a traitor.

Now for centuries the Jews had mistakenly and many of them to this day believe that Jewish ritualism and Legalism is the means by which a person will be saved. But they fail to understand that keeping God's law was never intended to be the means for salvation, that it was rather an expression of one's desire to be obedient to God while at the same time being exposed to the realities that in our flesh it is impossible to obey the

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<sup>2</sup> Romans 3:3-4.

<sup>3</sup> Romans 8:1.

<sup>4</sup> Romans 8:3-4.

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law, that we need a Savior. We need mercy, we need grace. And that was precisely what was taught in the Old Testament even though they got it all twisted around.

You see, the old covenant pointed to the perfect sacrifice of the Lamb of God that would find its full expression in the new covenant whereby God would call out his elect for his name's sake from every nation and every people, not just the Jews.

So after centuries of believing one way, the Jewish people are now being told something different. And it is not sitting well with them at all.

Now, we all know how we tend to react to even minor changes in our life. You do some changes here in the church and oh my goodness. We get upset, don't we? Well, think of the reaction of the Jews. This has been their life for millennia.

So aware of all of these objections and having experienced from his kinsmen the Jews numerous times all manner of persecution, he is now going to harmonize the Old Testament with the New in Romans nine, 10 and 11. He is going to try to help them understand that what the Jews perceived to be a blasphemous doctrine was, in fact, taught all through the Old Testament, that God is not contradicting himself here. He is not finished with his covenant people. Instead, he is going to demonstrate that God through the gospel is now demonstrating to all people the perfections of his person and his purpose in redemption, proving that he is absolutely consistent in all that he does.

So you might think of the main theme now in the next three chapters is really the glory of God that is manifested through his sovereign purposes which will include what he has promised and planned for Israel. And for this reason he will close this whole section with that magnificent doxology in Romans chapter 11 verse 33. He says:

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!  
How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For  
WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME  
HIS COUNSELOR? Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT  
MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? For from Him and through  
Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.<sup>5</sup>

Now, what you will find as we come to Romans chapter nine is that the apostle will deal primarily with Israel's election. He will assure them that God has not forgotten them. He has not rejected his chosen people. Quite the contrary. And in Romans chapter 10 he will deal with Israel's defection. There he will explain why most Jews reject their Messiah and remain in ignorance and unbelief. He will explain why salvation has been offered to the Gentile, all of which is a part of God's plan for Israel.

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<sup>5</sup> Romans 11:33-36.

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And in chapter 11 he will focus on Israel's salvation. God very clearly made specific promises to Israel as his chosen nation.

Now, some were conditional, dependent upon their obedience. But his greatest promises were unconditional, based upon his very character. Today because of their unbelief, God is disciplining them as a nation. They have been temporarily put aside. According to Romans 11 verse 25:

“...until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in.”<sup>6</sup>

And then verse 26, eventually:

“...all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, ‘THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB. AND THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.’”<sup>7</sup>

We must understand that Israel was God's unique focus of redemption in one dispensation in the Old Testament, while the Church consisting of both Jews and Gentiles has been his focus since their rejection of Jesus. Now ultimately as we look at Scripture we will see that God's focus will once again return to Israel during the millennial reign of Christ on earth when all of the remaining covenants that he gave in promise to Israel will be literally fulfilled including the promises of earthly blessings and the messianic earthly kingdom. Prophetic literature is absolutely filled with the pivotal role that Israel will play during that time.

We will learn over the next several months as we look at Romans nine, 10 and 11, that because Israel rejected her Messiah the mystery phase of the kingdom will be ... was actually ushered in, I should say, by the Church, as the Church became the temporary, not permanent, but the temporary replacement of Israel as the new custodians of truth, the body of Christ where Jews and Gentiles are described in Ephesians 3:6 as heirs together and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

But I would submit to you that Israel is never absorbed into the Church. It remains distinct from the Church as an ethnic people and as a nation they still have a prophetic future.

So the present Church age must be seen as an ongoing part of the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy that culminates ultimately in the messianic kingdom.

So you must understand that the Church shares in the promises of Israel, but not in her unique identity as a chosen nation. Israel is a magnificent object lesson in how God deals

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<sup>6</sup> Romans 11:25.

<sup>7</sup> Romans 11:26-27.

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with all mankind. He saves some. He judges others. Jews and the gospel, bridging the divide.

And we begin to see Paul dealing with these issues now in the first five verses. Let me read these to you.

Romans nine verse one.

I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.<sup>8</sup>

So let's begin by examining these first five verses of chapter nine where Paul deals with Israel's election. I wish to approach this by giving you just two very simple headings. First, we will look at Paul's deep burden for his unbelieving kinsmen. And, secondly, we will look at Israel's unchanging advantages as God's chosen people.

Now, let me give you a caution. There is always the tendency when we come to introductory remarks to kind of hurry through them as if they are really not all that important. After all, let's get on to the good stuff that is later on in the chapter. That is a big mistake. Most students of Scripture know that in Romans nine we have one of the most profound defenses of the doctrine of unconditional sovereign election anywhere in Scripture. So there is a tendency to want to just rush to it. But, my friends, that is a very bad habit to get into. Every word, every phrase, every sentence of God's Word has been given to us for a reason and we should be diligent in determining what that reason might be. And here even in these first five verses we are going to discover not just the context for what will follow pertaining to Israel's election, but we will also unearth some golden nuggets of practical doctrine that will speak directly to every humble heart that is willing to hear.

So let's not hurry by these treasures and miss out on what God would have for us.

So, number one, let's look at Paul's deep burden for his unbelieving kinsmen. Again, he knows now that his Jewish kinsmen consider him to be a blasphemous traitor and he is grieving over their stubborn unbelief and he says in verse one:

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<sup>8</sup> Romans 9:1-5.

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I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.<sup>9</sup>

Will you notice the ascending order in the elements of Paul's declaration that would assure the veracity of his claim that he loves so deeply his Jewish kinsmen. He begins by saying:

"I am telling the truth in Christ."<sup>10</sup>

Now think about this. This is more than just telling the truth. It is even more than speaking as one who is being observed by Christ. He is saying that I am one who is speaking as one who is in Christ.

Remember in chapter six verse three Paul tells us how we have all been immersed into his death. In verse four he says:

"Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."<sup>11</sup>

So what Paul is saying here is, "I am speaking as a man who has a totally new nature. I am speaking as a man who exists in Christ, not physically, but spiritually. I have been hidden in him. He knows the motivation of my heart."

But he doesn't stop there. He goes on. Secondly he says:

"I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness."<sup>12</sup>

In other words, my conscience is attesting to the truth that what I am saying is absolutely sincere.

Now our conscience is an amazing device that God has given us to monitor our thoughts and behaviors to arbitrate between truth and deception that goes on within us. Our conscience always has an opinion, doesn't it? It always has an opinion. But our conscience will only hold us to its highest standard. And if that standard is wrong, then our conscience will lead us astray.

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<sup>9</sup> Romans 9:1-3.

<sup>10</sup> Romans 9:1.

<sup>11</sup> Romans 6:4.

<sup>12</sup> Romans 9:1.

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Many people believe things that are false. It would violate the conscience, for example, of a Hindu, to eat a cow, because they believe it has a soul and to kill an animal somehow obstructs the natural cycle of birth and death in that creature and so on. Of course, according to the Word of God that is ridiculous. Nevertheless, that is their standard. Their conscience would hold them to that.

We see also that persistent hypocrisy can cause the conscience, according to 1 Timothy 4:2, to be seared as with a branding iron. In other words, your conscience can become like burned flesh where the nerves are no longer able to communicate and feel it.

So the conscience is only a reliable guide if it is fully and accurately informed.

In Titus one verse 15 Paul said:

“To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled.”<sup>13</sup>

So you want to be very careful with the old adage that says let your conscience be your guide. It is a great thing if your conscience is accurately informed, but if it is not, you can be in trouble.

Now even Christians can have their conscience hold them to positions that have no biblical support. We see that all the time. And worse yet, we can desensitize our conscience by consistently walking by the flesh rather than the Spirit. We can consistently do things that are dishonoring to the Lord and after a while we think that those things are ok and then our conscience no longer accuses us when we do those things.

Moreover, we can fail to habitually inform our minds with the truth of Scripture. And so, after a while, our conscience becomes rather dull.

But Paul made it clear in Romans 14 verses 20 through 23 that we should never violate our conscience even if it is misinformed. Remember some of the new believers had a real hard time eating meat sacrificed to idols and others thought, you know, that is ridiculous. There is no problem with that. But, hey, if that violates your conscience, then don't eat that meat.

Years ago I remember a family that visited this church and after the service was over the man was absolutely beet red and he was trembling and he came up to me and I knew this wasn't going to be good and he said to me, “The music in this place is of the devil and you preach from a perverted translation of Scripture.” And he kind of went on from there.

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<sup>13</sup> Titus 1:15.

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So obviously I didn't share his conviction and I tried to just humbly say to him, "My friend, I don't share your conviction, but please we would not want to bind your conscience. You shouldn't violate your conscience. You need to find a church that plays the music that you think needs to be played and uses the translation of Scripture, which was the King James Version for him, that you think you need to hear taught."

So we must be careful not to act contrary to the dictates and verdicts of our conscience. But the answer to a wrongly informed conscience is not to violate it, but to rightly inform it with the truth of Scripture, but here in Paul's case his conscience is fully informed by divine truth. He is speaking to his Jewish kinsmen with the same sincerity that he had when he spoke to the Corinthians. Do you remember in 2 Corinthians one verse 12? He said:

"For our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you."<sup>14</sup>

But then will you notice that Paul adds yet one final statement that further strengthens the sincerity of his words. Not only:

"I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness..."<sup>15</sup>

But he says, "...n the Holy Spirit."<sup>16</sup>

Well, this takes it to the ultimate level, because, see, again, the conscience can be fallible, but when it is enlightened by the indwelling Spirit of God, when it is fully subject to the Spirit of God as he has revealed himself in his Word, then anyone can be assured that the Spirit will bear witness to the truth of what we speak.

Beloved, we might want to pause here for a moment and make sure that we apply this to our life. When your life is being controlled by the Spirit of God, then you can trust your conscience and the Spirit will use your conscience to guide you.

Now, why would Paul to such great lengths to convince people that he was telling the truth? The answer is quite simple, because what he is about to say is absolutely unbelievable concerning his fellow Jews.

Notice verse two. He says:

"I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:12.

<sup>15</sup> Romans 9:1.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

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You see, Paul was so broken hearted over his lost brethren that he called upon two members of the trinity Christ and the Holy Spirit to bear witness of that great sorrow.

As I meditated upon this passage I thought, my, I am sure that as Paul penned these words tears were streaming down his cheeks. No doubt he remembered that he was once among the ranks of his Jewish kinsmen, spiritually dead, blind when he used be a zealous persecutor of the saints, when he used to be the most fanatical hater of Christ.

In Acts 9:1 we read that he would be breathing out threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord. Undoubtedly he knew that were it not for God's mercy he would be right there with his kinsmen, that because of God's mercy on the road to Damascus the truth came to light in a miraculous way.

The weeping prophet Jeremiah expressed the same great sorrow and unceasing grief in his heart over his people. In Jeremiah 8:18 we read:

“My sorrow is beyond healing, My heart is faint within me!”<sup>18</sup>

In verse 21 he says:

“For the brokenness of the daughter of my people I am broken; I mourn, dismay has taken hold of me.”<sup>19</sup>

And in chapter nine verse one he says:

“Oh, that my head were waters, And my eyes a fountain of tears, That I might weep day and night For the slain of the daughter of my people!”<sup>20</sup>

And then later he pleads with them in chapter 13 beginning at verse 15. He says:

Listen and give heed, do not be haughty, For the LORD has spoken. Give glory to the LORD your God, Before He brings darkness And before your feet stumble On the dusky mountains, And while you are hoping for light He makes it into deep darkness, And turns it into gloom. But if you will not listen to it, My soul will sob in secret for such pride; And my eyes will bitterly weep And flow down with tears, Because the flock of the LORD has been taken captive.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Romans 9:2.

<sup>18</sup> Jeremiah 8:18.

<sup>19</sup> Jeremiah 8:21.

<sup>20</sup> Jeremiah 9:1.

<sup>21</sup> Jeremiah 13:15-17.

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Beloved, this was the attitude that Paul had for his people.

“I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.”<sup>22</sup>

I would humbly ask you. Does this reflect the attitude of your heart for the lost, those that you know even in your own family? You know, as Christians we can get all worked up about things that are eternally insignificant. We can get all passionate about politics and all fired up about our pet doctrines and absolutely fanatical about our personal preferences, zealous to convert everyone to our own point of view. But do you have a contagious zeal for evangelism? Ask yourself. Do I share what Paul was saying? Do I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart of the lost? If not, you are probably ruled by the priorities of pride.

You see, evangelistic zeal is always proportional to our understanding of God’s mercy and grace on our behalf. The more we realize what we have received versus what we deserve, the more we will be humbled by his grace, the more we will be amazed by his grace, the more we will want to obey him, the more we will love as God loves and the more we will exhaust ourselves in spreading the good news of saving grace.

Paul was so passionate. He went on to say in verse three:

“For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”<sup>23</sup>

Now obviously he is using hyperbole here. He knew that such a transaction, first of all, was utterly impossible. Moreover, making such an exchange would be meaningless if it were possible. That type of an exchange would never save a single person. The grammar here helps us understand that basically what he was saying is that I was on the point of wishing that myself were accursed from Christ. Or I could wish, were the thing allowable and possible or proper. So the idea here is grammatically this is implying the presence of a condition which is known to be utterly impossible. And, indeed, this was an impossible wish.

Nor, frankly, would any believer ever want to be estranged from Christ. After all, he has just finished saying that there is nothing that can separate us from the love of Christ.

So Paul’s purpose here is to demonstrate how passionately concerned he was for this lost kinsmen the Jews.

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<sup>22</sup> Romans 9:2.

<sup>23</sup> Romans 9:3.

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Beloved, here we find the heart of evangelism. It is a sacrificial heart. It is one that is willing to give up anything so that others can come to Christ. After all, was this not the heart of God who is willing to send his own Son to purchase our redemption through his sacrificial death?

Remember the words of John Knox. He said, "Give me Scotland or I die."

That is the passion.

Beloved, the most accurate way to assess your spiritual condition is to look within your heart and measure your zeal of evangelism. I would venture to say that many of you have gone most of your Christian life without ever being bold enough to look a friend or a loved one in the eye and say, "I am burdened for you. I simply must tell you about my Savior."

God wants us to have sound doctrine. He wants us to worship him. He wants us to serve in the Church, but above all he wants us to sow the seeds of the gospel, not just pay somebody else to do it, not just pray for others who are doing it, but for you to get involved. And I would ask you. Do you have anyone right now who you are targeting for the gospel, who you are passionately praying for and you are coming up with ways whereby you can enter into that life and asking the Spirit of God to give you that opportunity?

Beloved, pray that God will give you a great burden for the lost, boldness to proclaim the truth.

So here we have a man that has been so incredibly mistreated, considered to be the enemy of his own people. Now he is expressing his uttermost love for his people.

So first we see Paul's deep burden for his unbelieving kinsmen. Secondly we see here in this text Israel's unchanging advantages as God's chosen people.

Now this is crucial to Paul's argument in helping the Jews understand that the New Testament message of the gospel of Christ does not contradict the Old Testament. No, it does not contradict it. It fulfills it. And so to demonstrate this, what Paul does is present a list of nine unique blessings, advantages, privileges, however you want to put it, that God has bestowed upon Israel, his chosen people.

The first advantage is that he says to them, number one, that they are Israelites. Notice, again, at the end of verse three he says:

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“...my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites.”<sup>24</sup>

Now, I find this fascinating. By Paul’s own confession he remained a distinctive, bonafide Jew even after he became a Christian.

Now many believers insist that the Church has replaced Israel permanently in God’s plan of redemption. Many will insist that ethnic, national, territorial Israel has been permanently absorbed into the universal Christian Church, permanently eliminating their national identity. This many times goes under various names, Replacement theology, Amillennialism, Supersessionism, Augustinian eschatology, Roman Catholic eschatology and so forth. Many believe that all of the promises given to Israel in the Old Testament were forfeited by their unbelief and were now given to the Church in some spiritual sense. And they would argue that we must now abandon a literal, grammatical, historical hermeneutic when interpreting the prophetic literature, we must deny somehow the normal meaning of language and interpret essentially one fourth of the Bible with a spiritual, not a literal type of hermeneutic. And I would humbly argue that I am very uncomfortable with that position. I do not have the apostolic authority to say, “Well, yes, I know that is what the text says, but that is not what it means. Let me tell you what it means,” nor do I therefore believe that that position is correct.

If God was finished with Israel and all her blessings now belong to the Church, then I would humbly ask you: Why doesn’t Paul say that right here in this passage? In fact, you will find that there is nowhere in the New Testament that we find a single passage that says that Israel has been permanently and nationally defrocked. Such a view has unfortunately fueled a very virulent strain of anti-Semitism among some, certainly not all Christians to this day. In fact, in his last sermon before his death Martin Luther pleaded that all the Jews should be expelled from Germany.

But I want you to notice this text again at the end of verse three. He says:

“...my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites.”<sup>25</sup>

Grammatically present tense. This indicates that the Jews still are Israelites and the blessings God has promised them still belong to them notwithstanding their stubborn unbelief. They are the promised descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob whose name was changed to Israel in Genesis 32:28. And late in Romans chapter 11 verse 28 he will confirm that Israel in his eyes are his beloved enemies. His purpose here is to remind Israel that... of their election.

Remember in 11:28 of Romans he says:

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<sup>24</sup> Romans 9:3-4.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

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From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.<sup>26</sup>

I would humbly argue that this is hardly the language of a superseded Judaism. And even in the great mystery of God's dealing with national Israel in the flesh, despite their unbelief, we see that God still names ... still maintains a present covenantal relationship with them. All the blessings still belong to them, which, according to the promises of the New Testament will be recognized and individual, national and territorial terms in the messianic age.

John MacArthur points out and I quote, "Throughout history Israelites or Jews, as they came to be called after the exile in Babylon, have distinguished themselves in virtually every field of human endeavor, in science, the arts, music, business, education, political leadership and countless other areas. They have always been a noble people and have produced a disproportionate share of the world's geniuses. When God prepared his special earthly vineyard according to Isaiah 5:2, quote, 'He planted it with the choicest vine, namely Israel.'"

So Paul begins. He reminds them. Hey, you are Israelites. Secondly he says:

"...to whom belongs the adoption as sons."<sup>27</sup>

Now think about this privilege. The Jews had the great privilege of having been adopted as God's Son. In fact, the Old Testament in the Old Testament God is not referred to as the Father of individual Jews, but as the Father of Israel. They were his sons.

Exodus 4:22 God commanded Moses to tell Pharaoh saying, quote:

"Thus says the LORD, 'Israel is My son, My first-born.'"<sup>28</sup>

And we read in Hosea 11 verse one how the Lord spoke through his prophet and said, quote:

"When Israel was a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son."<sup>29</sup>

Now please understand. Salvation is always granted on an individual basis. And nowhere do we see God saving all Israelites as a nation. In fact, he will make it clear in verse six.

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<sup>26</sup> Romans 11:28-29.

<sup>27</sup> Romans 9:4.

<sup>28</sup> Exodus 4:21.

<sup>29</sup> Hosea 11:1.

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“For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel.”<sup>30</sup>

A true Jew, he is going to explain, is one who has been circumcised in his heart by the Spirit and who has therefore been reconciled to God in faith in Christ. But please understand through all through Scripture we see that God has sovereignly bestowed a special calling and covenant and blessings and protections upon Israel as a nation. And this is what Paul is reminding us of here.

So:

“...to whom belongs the adoption as sons.”<sup>31</sup>

Thirdly, not only do they enjoy adoption, but also the glory, he said. This is a great thought.

We all know that God is spirit and whenever he materialized himself in Scripture he would reduce his attributes to visible life, but light, visible light, the glorious light of his shekinah, the blazing forth of his glory.

I'll give you a little Old Testament background here. The presence of God was housed, you know, within the tabernacle, later on in the temple. In fact, the Hebrew term for tabernacle is מִשְׁכָּן (mish-kawn) and it is derived from the root word שָׁכַן (shaw-kan) which means to dwell or to rest or abide. And from שָׁכַן (shaw-kan) comes the term shekinah, denoting the glorious presence of God.

So this ineffable, dazzling, brilliant light, the effulgence of God's glory, was that which shown there with the Israelites. It hovered over the mercy seat between the cherubim.

You will remember Daniels said in Daniel 2:22 that God emanates light without shadow saying:

“Light dwells with him.”<sup>32</sup>

And in Psalm 104 verse two we read that he covers himself with light as with a garment.

So the idea of the glory of the Lord speaks of his shekinah, speaks of his presence that is manifested in this resplendent light. This is the shekinah. Remember, it continued to even glow on the face of Moses after he descended from Mount Sinai, a reflection of the

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<sup>30</sup> Romans 9:6.

<sup>31</sup> Romans 9:4.

<sup>32</sup> Daniel 2:22.

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By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** Romans 9:1-5

**Preached on:** Sunday, March 11, 2012

glory of God that was so bright that the Israelites according to 2 Corinthians three could not look intently at his face.

So here they had the privilege of being in the very presence of God, experiencing the glory. But not only that, he says, number four,

“...and the covenants.”<sup>33</sup>

You are the recipients of the covenants. The first one was the Abrahamic covenant, remember, in Genesis 12. It had four elements to it. Out of Abraham, number one, would come a seed, which was the promised blessing of Christ. Secondly, that they would have a land, a specific territory that would set them apart as God’s people. Thirdly, that they would be a nation; fourthly, that they would have the promise of divine blessing and protection.

The second covenant was the covenant of the law given to Moses at Mount Sinai in Exodus 19 and following. Then you have the Davidic covenant of 2 Samuel seven, the promise of an eternal Davidic dynasty, an eternal kingdom whereby David’s throne would ultimately belong to his descendant, the Son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ. We have read about that some earlier this morning in Ezekiel 37.

And then, of course, the fourth is the new covenant, the covenant of redemption in Jeremiah 31 as well as in Ezekiel chapter 37 whereby through Israel God’s very Son would purchase our redemption.

So there they have the privilege of having received the covenants.

Fifthly:

“...and the giving of the law...”<sup>34</sup> he says.

This speaks not only of the 10 Commandments, but all that God would have his people do to honor him and to bring blessing upon themselves. The Israelites had the inconceivable honor of being the custodians of the oracles of God according to Romans 3:2 which included all of the Old Testament. Talk about a privileged people.

And, sixthly they had the privilege of the temple service. God spoke to them and explained to them how he was to be worshipped. They had the responsibility and the privilege to do this.

Number seven, he gave them the promises. This is probably a reference to the promise of

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<sup>33</sup> Romans 9:4.

<sup>34</sup> Romans 9:4.

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the Messiah who would come from the seed of Abraham and bring him, bring with him salvation and a spiritual and eventually a physical kingdom when the Lord returns in all of his glory.

And an eighth blessing in verse five. He said:

“...whose are the fathers...”<sup>35</sup>

Speaking of the patriarchal fathers of the covenant, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob by whom God condescended to even name himself and through whom he would make provision for salvation in eternal life.

And, then finally, number nine, he says:

“... and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.”<sup>36</sup>

Indeed, Jesus told the Samaritan woman in John four that salvation is from the Jews. He is saying here, “My heart is breaking for you. God is not finished with you. Look at all of the blessings. I have just listed nine of them. Oh, Israel,” he is saying, “All of these privileges, they have been withheld from others. They have been given specifically to you. All of these advantages, yet you have rejected him. Although he has not rejected us as a nation, we are still his chosen people. He is going to reject every Jew who does not repent and believe in the Messiah, our Savior, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is why I grieve.”

So this is where the apostle begins as he goes on to make his case for God’s election of his people.

Beloved, as we close this morning I want to challenge you with two things, very simple. Number one, as we have looked at this passage, may I encourage you to examine your heart with respect to your zeal for evangelism? Measure it against the apostle Paul. And wherever it is deficient, wherever you find misplaced priorities won’t you confess those things? Realize that everything else in life is secondary or tertiary. The primary thing is the living for the glory of God. One of the major ways we do that is to spread the good news of the gospel of Christ.

So ask the Spirit of God to fan the embers of your missionary zeal into full flame. Target people for evangelism.

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<sup>35</sup> Romans 9:5.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

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And then, secondly, may I encourage you to meditate just on the unfathomable reality that God is working this amazing plan of redemption and he is doing it perfectly. He doesn't give us all of the particulars. He gives us a general idea of what he is doing and where he is going, but we know that by his grace we are a part of it. Can you imagine that? I mean, let that sink in. We are a part of his plan of redemption.

Let these truths sink deep down within your soul. And when they do, something will happen. When they grip your soul as they should, you will find yourself in a state of worship, in a state of praise that will cause you to echo the same doxology that Paul eventually burst forth in Romans 11 verse 33. And I will close with this.

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!  
How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For  
WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME  
HIS COUNSELOR? Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT  
MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN?<sup>37</sup>

He is not in obligation to us.

“For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”<sup>38</sup>

Let's pray together.

*Lord, thank you of these eternal truths. Help us to understand them. Help us to embrace them. Cause us to meditate upon them and live consistently with them that we might enjoy the fullness of what it means to be in Christ, to enjoy all that the Spirit wants us to enjoy when we grasp his Word, when we view our lives and the world in which we live through the grid of Scripture. Lord, we commit these things to you. We ask that they might be so to the praise of your glory in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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<sup>37</sup> Romans 11:33-35.

<sup>38</sup> Romans 11:36.

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