

ROMANS 9:1-11:36 | GOD'S WORK FULFILLED THROUGH ISRAEL

Supplemental Resource: Romans Graphically Presented, pg. 38

ROMANS 9:1-10:21 | PAUL'S PRAYER & GOD'S PLAN FOR ISRAEL IN THE DISPENSATIONAL CHANGE & BEYOND

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ROMANS 9:1-5 | PAUL'S PRAYER FOR ISRAEL

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The chapters of Romans 9-11 are critical for understanding God's plan for Israel in the dispensational change and beyond. From a strongly dispensational perspective, these chapters reveal that God has not forgotten His covenant with Israel and that He has a future plan for His chosen people. The Apostle Paul's prayer for Israel in Romans 9:1-5 highlights the importance of Israel in God's plan and sets the stage for the discussion of God's work fulfilled through Israel in the chapters that follow.

VERSE 1 – BLACK

In Romans 9:1, Paul begins by saying "**I say the truth in Christ, I lie not.**" This type of language is not uncommon in Paul's epistles; he often uses this language to emphasize the importance of his message and to assure his readers of his sincerity. For example, in Galatians 1:20, he says "**Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.**" Likewise, in 1 Timothy 2:7, he says "**Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I SPEAK THE TRUTH IN CHRIST, AND LIE NOT;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.**" By using this language, Paul seeks to establish his authority and credibility as an apostle of Christ.

In 1 Timothy 1:15, Paul writes "**This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.**" Like his language in Romans 9:1, Paul emphasizes the truth of his words and seeks to establish his credibility as a source of trustworthy information. By stating that his message is "**faithful**" and "**worthy of all acceptation**," Paul reinforces the importance of his message and encourages his readers to take it seriously.

Paul may have made the three explicit testimonies of "I lie not" and the less direct message of "this is a faithful saying" because his credibility as an apostle was often in question. The letter was written less than a decade after receiving the mystery, so many likely considered Paul a charlatan. Paul was rightly sensitive about this issue and always on guard to avoid any message being considered as fabrication on his part.

The phrase "**my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost**" suggests that Paul's own conscience, guided by the Holy Spirit, testifies to the truthfulness of his message. In other words, Paul is saying that he is absolutely certain of the truth of what he is about to say, and that the Holy Spirit confirms it as he writes these words.

VERSE 2 - BLACK

In Romans 9:2, Paul expresses his deep sorrow and anguish for his fellow Israelites, saying "**That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.**" This sorrow is an indication of Paul's deep love for his people and his desire to see them come to faith in Christ.

Paul's Jewish background and identity were significant factors that shaped his ministry and methodology. In his epistles, he often highlighted his Jewish credentials, such as his circumcision on the eighth day, his status as a Pharisee, and his zeal for the law (Philippians 3:4-6). For instance, he referred to himself as one who was

more exceedingly zealous in Judaism than other, who persecuted the church before his conversion (Galatians 1:13-14). He also identified himself and fellow believers as **Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles** (Galatians 2:15). Moreover, in Acts 21:39, he mentioned that he was a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia. These and other references to Paul's Jewish heritage help contextualize his ministry and theology. To forget Paul's Jewishness and love for his nation is to misunderstand Paul.

Without an appreciation of Paul's Jewish background and his great love for the nation of Israel, it would be impossible to fully grasp his theology and the significance of his message.

☞ The Greek term "ἀδιάλειπτος" (adialeiptos): This term translates as "unceasing" or "continual," and is used to express Paul's continual sorrow. It's derived from "a-", a negative prefix, and "dialeipō", meaning "to leave a space or interval." In English, we have the word "indelible," meaning something that can't be removed, wiped away, or eliminated.

VERSE 3 - BLACK

In Romans 9:3, Paul expresses a radical desire to be "**accursed from Christ**" if it meant that his fellow Israelites recognize their Christ. This is a powerful statement that underscores Paul's love for his people and his desire to see them saved.

To understand the significance of Paul's statement, it's helpful to consider the context of his ministry and the historical situation of the Jewish people at the time. Throughout his ministry, Paul faced significant opposition and persecution from his fellow Jews, who rejected his message and saw him as a traitor to their faith. Despite this opposition, Paul continued to preach the kingdom message to the Jews (Acts 28:31), hoping that they would recognize the error of rejecting Christ.

VERSE 4 - BLACK

In Romans 9:4, Paul clarifies that the "**kinsmen**" he refers to in verse 3 are in fact "**Israelites**." This is an important distinction, as it reinforces the idea that Paul's sorrow and anguish is specifically for his fellow Israelites, who have rejected Christ.

In Romans 9:4, Paul lists six things that belong to Israel. These are:

- The adoption - It is commonly understood that adoption is something owned by every believer. However, this verse limits the adoption to Israel. Passages like Hosea 2:23 and Exodus 19:5-6 show the concept of adoption as it relates to Israel. Due to similarities of Gentiles being outside the scope of God's work and then brought in, many Christians assume adoption to be theirs. I would argue that adoption, like election, belongs to Israel.
- The glory - In this context could refer to the Shekinah glory, which is a visible manifestation of God, or to the glory of being God's chosen people. It could also refer to the future Kingdom glory of Israel. Paul states that the glory belongs to Israel, so it is important not to transfer this glory to the church. Acknowledging the truth of Scripture and attributing "the glory" to Israel does not diminish the body of Christ in any way. As Paul says in another context, "**THERE IS one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars**" (1 Corinthians 15:41).
- The covenants - This includes all covenants from Abraham onward. The New Covenant, which is often assumed to be for the Church, is an Israelite covenant. Jeremiah 31:31-34 specifically states that the New Covenant is made with the House of Israel and the House of Judah. It is vital to understand that the covenants were made with Israel and cannot be transferred to the Church. This is at the heart of "**rightly dividing the word of truth**" (2 Tim. 2:15). The Church has its own unique relationship with God, but it is not the same as the relationship that Israel has with God.

- The giving of the law - Since the law was given to Israel, why would the church want to put itself under it? Likely the only reason is because the human psyche loves the self-achievement that can come from the law.
- The service of God - The Greek word used for "service" in Romans 9:4 is "λατρεία" (latreia). This term is used in the New Testament to denote religious or cultic service, particularly in the context of worship directed towards God. It is used to refer to the priestly service in the Jewish Temple (Hebrews 9:6), as well as the acceptable service that the Roman Jews were instructed to offer to God, as described in Romans 12:1. From the Greek, we get the English word "liturgy", which is a "service of God" word used almost exclusively in a Christian church setting. This is yet another of the subtle issues of replacement theology and "wrongly dividing" found in Christianity. For the Christian, the word service is "δουλεύω" [douleuoo], which is a word of devotion or commitment, while "λατρεία" (latreia) is a word used for religious ritual service. Since the body of Christ is not under laws and covenants, there is no ritual service to be provided. Members of the body of Christ can consider themselves **servants** in the **doulos** sense, but not in the **latreia** sense.
- The promises - It is an amazing thought to consider that the promises belong to Israel, yet this is what Paul says. The promises that belong to the dispensation of grace are few, including that God saves by grace and through faith, and that the body of Christ will someday be raptured. We do not have promises of healing, protection, or well-being. Most of the great prayer promises belong to Israel, and the prosperity and Kingdom promises also belong to Israel. Rather than being disconcerting, this frees the believer in this dispensation from trying to shoehorn promises into our lives that simply do not belong.

VERSE 5 - BLACK

Romans 9:5 affirms that the patriarchs belong to Israel, and that Messiah came from them, at least in fleshly terms. This is not controversial in almost any circle of theology. The placement of the comma in this verse is a matter of controversy, however. The New World Translation of the Jehovah's Witnesses moves the punctuation so that the verse does not claim Christ to be **over all** and **God**, but simply that He came from Israel, then moves into a benediction of God. The NWT reads, "To them the forefathers belong, and from them the Christ descended according to the flesh. God, who is over all, be praised forever. Amen." The Jehovah's Witnesses are not Trinitarian and do not view Jesus Christ as God.

The issue in verse 5 is one of interpretation, not translation. All matters of punctuation in the Scripture are interpretive since the Greek manuscripts do not contain punctuation. To argue a Trinitarian view, one would be better to use other passages of Scripture rather than this one, since the NWT has not altered the words, but only interpreted the words differently.

Ultimately, the best translation is one that does very little interpretation. However, the movement from one language to another without some interpretation by the translator is virtually impossible. As students of the Word, however, we want to find the translations that do as little interpretation as possible. Interpretation belongs with the student, not the translator.