

Paul's Letter to the Church in Rome – Part 3 (Winter 54/55)

Romans 9–11

Paul's Anguish Over Israel's Failure to Believe

9:1 I am telling the truth in Christ (I am not lying!), for my conscience assures me in the Holy Spirit—

2 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed—cut off from Christ—for the sake of my people, my fellow countrymen,

4 who are Israelites. To them belong the adoption as sons, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the temple worship, and the promises.

5 To them belong the patriarchs, and from them, by human descent, came the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever! Amen.

God's Word Has Not Failed—His Promise Was to the Israel of Faith, Not Ethnic Israel (physical descent does not equal participation in the promised blessing)

6 It is not as though the word of God had failed. For not all those who are descended from Israel are truly Israel,

7 nor are all the children Abraham's true descendants; rather *"through Isaac will your descendants be counted."* [[Gen 21:12](#)]

8 This means it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God; rather, the children of promise are counted as descendants.

9 For this is what the promise declared: *"About a year from now I will return and Sarah will have a son."* [[Gen 18:10, 14](#)]

10 Not only that, but when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our ancestor Isaac—

11 even before they were born or had done anything good or bad (so that God's purpose in election would stand, not by works but by his calling)—

12 it was said to her, *"The older will serve the younger,"* [[Gen 25:23](#)]

13 just as it is written: *"Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."* [[Mal 1:2–3](#)]

God is not Unjust—He is Free to Grant Mercy as He Chooses (participation in the promised blessing has nothing to do with human effort)

14 What shall we say then? Is there injustice with God? Absolutely not!

15 For he says to Moses: *"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."* [[Exod 33:19](#)]

16 So then, it does not depend on human desire or exertion, but on God who shows mercy.

17 For the scripture says to Pharaoh: *"For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may demonstrate my power in you, and that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth."* [[Exod 9:16](#)]

18 So then, God has mercy on whom he chooses to have mercy, and he hardens whom he chooses to harden.

God is the Creator—We are Accountable to Him

(the fact that we cannot merit participation in the promised blessing does *not* mean that we are not accountable for our sin)

19 You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who has ever resisted his will?"

20 But who indeed are you—a mere human being—to talk back to God? *Does what is molded say to the molder, "Why have you made me like this?"* [[Isa 29:16; 45:9](#)]

21 Has the potter no right to make from the same lump of clay one vessel for special use and another for ordinary use?

22 But what if God, willing to demonstrate his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience the objects of wrath prepared for destruction?

23 And what if he is willing to make known the wealth of his glory on the objects of mercy that he has prepared beforehand for glory—

God has Called Both Jews and Gentiles to Participate in the Promised Blessing

24 even us, whom he has called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?

25 As he also says in Hosea:

"I will call those who were not my people, 'My people,' and I will call her who was unloved, 'My beloved.'" [[Hos 2:23](#)]

26 *"And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"* [[Hos 1:10](#)]

27 And Isaiah cries out on behalf of Israel, *"Though the number of the children of Israel are as the sand of the sea, only the remnant will be saved,*

28 for the Lord will execute his sentence on the earth completely and quickly." [[Isa 10:22–23](#)]

29 Just as Isaiah predicted,

"If the Lord of armies had not left us descendants,

*we would have become like Sodom,
and we would have resembled Gomorrah.”* [[Isa 1:9](#)]

Participation in the Promised Blessing is Through Faith, Not Works

30 What shall we say then?—that the Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness obtained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith,
31 but Israel even though pursuing a law of righteousness did not attain it.

32 Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but (as if it were possible) by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone,
33 just as it is written,

*“Look, I am laying in Zion a stone that will cause people to stumble
and a rock that will make them fall,
yet the one who believes in him will not be put to shame.”* [[Isa 28:16; 8:14](#)]

Paul Explains Where the Jews Went Wrong

10:1 Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God on behalf of my fellow Israelites is for their salvation.

2 For I can testify that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not in line with the truth.

3 For ignoring the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking instead to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.

4 For Christ is the end [*goal*] of the law, with the result that there is righteousness for everyone who believes.

The Law Described the Life to Be Lived by a Righteous People—But Righteousness Itself Comes by Faith

5 For Moses writes about the righteousness that is by the law: *“The one who does these things will live by them.”* [[Lev 18:5](#)]

6 But the righteousness that is by faith says: *“Do not say in your heart, [Deut 9:4] ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’”* [[Deut 30:12](#)] (that is, to bring Christ down)

7 or *“Who will descend into the abyss?”* [[Deut 30:13](#)] (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

8 But what does it say? *“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart”* [[Deut 30:14](#)] (that is, the word of faith that we preach),

9 because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

10 For with the heart one believes and thus has righteousness and with the mouth one confesses and thus has salvation.

11 For the scripture says, *“Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.”* [[Isa 28:16](#)]

12 For there is no distinction between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all, who richly blesses all who call on him.

13 For *everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.* [[Joel 2:32](#)]

Israel Cannot Plead Ignorance—the Gospel was Proclaimed to Them by the Prophets, Christ and the Apostles

14 How are they to call on one they have not believed in? And how are they to believe in one they have not heard of? And how are they to hear without someone preaching to them?

15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, *“How timely is the arrival of those who proclaim the good news.”* [[Isa 52:7](#)]

16 But not all have obeyed the good news, for Isaiah says, *“Lord, who has believed our report?”* [[Isa 53:1](#)]

17 Consequently faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the preached word of Christ.

18 But I ask, have they not heard? Yes, they have: *Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.* [[Ps 19:4](#)]

19 But again I ask, didn’t Israel understand? First Moses says, *“I will make you jealous by those who are not a nation; with a senseless nation I will provoke you to anger.”* [[Deut 32:21](#)]

20 And Isaiah is even bold enough to say, *“I was found by those who did not seek me; I became well known to those who did not ask for me.”* [[Isa 65:1](#)]

21 But about Israel he says, *“All day long I held out my hands to this disobedient and stubborn people!”* [[Isa 65:2](#)]

God Has Not Rejected True Israel

(there is always a remnant which participates in the promised blessing by grace through faith)

11:1 So I ask, God has not rejected his people, has he? Absolutely not! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin.

2 God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew! Do you not know what the scripture says about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?

3 *“Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars; I alone am left and they are seeking my life!”* [[1 Kgs 19:10](#)]

4 But what was the divine response to him? *“I have kept for myself seven thousand people who have not bent the knee to Baal.”* [[1 Kgs 19:18](#)]

5 So in the same way at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.

6 And if it is by grace, it is no longer by works, otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

7 What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was diligently seeking, but the elect obtained it. The rest were hardened,

8 as it is written,

*“God gave them a spirit of stupor,
eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear,
to this very day.”* [[Deut 29:4; Isa 29:10](#)]

9 And David says,

*“Let their table become a snare and trap,
a stumbling block and a retribution for them;*

10 *let their eyes be darkened so that they may not see,
and make their backs bend continually.”* [[Ps 69:22–23](#)]

The Gentiles Received Salvation in Spite of Israel’s Rejection of Christ—Paul Wants This to Provoke the Jews to Jealousy

11 I ask then, they did not stumble into an irrevocable fall, did they? Absolutely not! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make Israel jealous.

12 Now if their transgression means riches for the world and their defeat means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full restoration bring?

13 Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Seeing that I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry,

14 if somehow I could provoke my people to jealousy and save some of them.

15 For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

Paul Cautions the Gentiles Not to Be Arrogant of Their Inclusion in the Promised Blessing

16 If the first portion of the dough offered is holy, then the whole batch is holy, and if the root is holy, so too are the branches.

17 Now if some of the branches were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among them and participated in the richness of the olive root,

18 do not boast over the branches. But if you boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

19 Then you will say, “The branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.”

20 Granted! They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but fear!

21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, perhaps he will not spare you.

22 Notice therefore the kindness and harshness of God—harshness toward those who have fallen, but God’s kindness toward you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.

23 And even they—if they do not continue in their unbelief—will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

24 For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree?

Paul Reveals a Mystery—The Eschatological Salvation of All Israel

(Israel and the Gentiles take turns on the center stage of God’s salvation-historical drama)

25 For I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: A partial hardening has happened to Israel until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.

26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

*“The Deliverer will come out of Zion;
he will remove ungodliness from Jacob.*

27 *And this is my covenant with them,
when I take away their sins.”* [[Isa 59:20–21; 27:9](#)]

28 In regard to the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but in regard to election they are dearly loved for the sake of the fathers.

29 For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.

30 Just as you were formerly disobedient to God, but have now received mercy due to their disobedience,

31 so they too have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy.

32 For God has consigned all people to disobedience so that he may show mercy to them all.

Paul Bursts into Praise to God for His Great Wisdom

33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how fathomless his ways!

34 *For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor?* [[Isa 40:13](#)]

35 *Or who has first given to God
that God needs to repay him?* [[Job 41:11](#)]

36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever! Amen.

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