

Romans 9:1-15

“The Mercy of God”

Paul’s anguish over Israel (9:1-4a)

He doesn’t actually say what the cause of his anguish is, however it becomes apparent Paul means their lack of salvation. Perhaps it is because he can’t bring himself to write about their eternal destination. This is likely given the phrases:

- His grief over Israel not obtaining righteousness (9:31)
- Stumbling over the (Gospel) message (9:32-33)
- Still needing salvation (10:1)
- And facing the question over if their fall is permanent (11:1, 11)

Israel’s inherited privileges (9:4b-5)

The 8 privileges of Israelites:

- 1) Adoption – special relationship with God as ‘son’ (Ex. 4:22, Deut 14:1-2, Isa. 63:16; 64:8, Jer. 31:9, Hos. 11:1, Mal. 1:6; 2:10).
- 2) Glory – God’s glory as revealed to the Israelites (Ex. 33:18-23, Is. 35:2; 40:5; 66:18) or God’s presence with His people (Ex. 16:7, 10; 24:16; 40:34-35; Lev. 9:6; 23. Ex. 1:28).
- 3) Covenants – the OT covenants as promised Adam, Noah, Abraham, David, etc.
- 4) Receiving the law – not the negative effects, more the privileges of receiving them (Deut 31:10-11, Ezra 7:6; 10, Neh. 8:1; Ps 78:5).
- 5) Worship – the sacrificial system as a form of reverence towards God and means to maintain the relationship (1 Sam 1:3; 1 Kgs 17:35-36; Is 19:21, John 16:2, Heb 9:1, 6).
- 6) Promises – the promises of blessing as given to Abraham and other patriarchs (Gen 12:1-2; 15:1-5; 17:1-27).
- 7) Patriarchs – the privilege of being descended from the actual people to whom the promises were given.
- 8) Messianic lineage – the final privilege being that from Israel the Messiah comes.

Defining the ‘real’ Israel (9:6-13)

God’s word hasn’t failed, Israel has failed to understand.
Both Ishmael and Isaac were Abraham’s children; and Isaac wasn’t the first born!
God’s promise trumps tradition and custom.
God followed through on His promise, as He always does.
Twin sons, Esau and Jacob, were assigned not according to custom, but God’s word.

The justice and mercy of God (9:14-15)

The assumed question is that if God doesn’t choose to save all, then he cannot be just. However, if God does choose all He would be unjust. What then is the benchmark?
Paul’s recollection of Ex. 32-33: Israel’s failure in the golden calf followed by God’s mercy. Therefore, God is just in condemning all, yet He is proven to be merciful in saving some. His plan is to save a remnant rather than damning all.

Referenced through commentaries by F.F. Bruce, Schreiner, and Bird.