

Sermon Title: The Troubling Tension Over Israel's Unbelief: "God's Sovereignty vs Human Responsibility"

Sermon Text: Romans 9:1-5

Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to understand God's Sovereignty in election, versus Human Responsibility in faith.

Sermon Proposition: There are 4 passionate responses Paul illustrates for the lost condition of his kinsman.

I. Introduction to Romans 9-11

Bears his heart over the application of the Scriptures and the Gospel.

The Sovereignty of God, and Human Responsibility

Paul is wrestling with the problem of Israel's unbelief.

Must recognize the importance of the Jewish motif in Romans to give Romans 9-11 its proper place. He is talking about Israel herself, as he wrestles with the implication of the gospel for God's "chosen people" of the Old Testament.

Paul frames Chapters 9-11 with allusions to the key tension he is seeking to resolve: the Jews, recipients of so many privileges 9:4-5, are not experiencing the salvation offered in Christ (implied in 9:1-3); they are the objects of God's electing love, yet from the standpoint of the gospel, they are "enemies" (11:28). Paul's aim is to resolve this tension. The tension arises from the (historical) circumstance that the majority of Jews have rejected the gospel. Why is this true, if indeed the gospel is "first of all" for Jews (cf. 1:16)? But the tension has theological roots also. Paul's explanation of the gospel in Chapters 1-8 is partly responsible for the theological tension.

Romans 9-11, therefore, is an integral part of Paul's letter to the Romans. These Chapters contribute to Paul's exposition of the gospel by showing that it provides fully for God's promises to Israel, when those promises are rightly understood.

Paul vindicates the ways of God in rejecting Israel by three lines of argument (one in each Chapter):

- 1) the absolute sovereignty of God (Chapter 9);
- 2) the moral responsibility of man (Chapter 10);
- 3) the final purpose of God (Chapter 11).

We are confronted with an amazing and beautiful unfolding of the plan of God:

- 1) Chapter 9 – election – The absolute sovereignty of God is seen in election.
- 2) Chapter 10 – rejection – The moral responsibility of man is seen in rejection.
- 3) Chapter 11 – reception – The final purpose of God is seen in reception – that is, the future reception of Israel back into the will of God.

II. Overview of Romans 9-11

The body of Romans 9-11 is framed by an opening personal lament (9:1-5) and a closing doxology (11:33-36) of celebration.

The structure of the material can be divided into four basic sections:

- 1) The first (9:6-29) opens with a positive assertion – "It is not as though the word of God has failed" – that states a possible implication from what Paul has written in vv. 1-5.
 - A. 9:1-5 Introduction of the issue Paul seeks to resolve: the Jew's failure to embrace the gospel (vv. 1-3) call to question the value of the privilege's and promises God has given them (vv. 4-5).
 - B. 9:26-29 Defense of the proposition in v.6a – "the word of God has not failed." Paul argues that God's word never promised salvation to all the biological descendants of Abraham (9:6b-13). Salvation is never a birthright, even for Jews, but always a gift of God's electing love (vv. 14-23), a gift he is free to bestow on Gentiles as well as Jews. (vv.24-29).
 - C. 9:30-10:21 Connected to 9:6b-29 (and esp. vv. 25-29) with the rhetorical question "What shall we say?" Paul uses his understanding of the gospel to explain the surprising turn in salvation history, as Jews are cast aside while Gentiles stream into the kingdom.

- D. 11:10 Connected to 9:30-10:21 (esp. vv 20-21) and indirectly to 9:6b-29 with the rhetorical question “I ask, then ...” Paul summarized the situation of Israel as he has outlined in the previous two sections and purposes for the next section by offering the continuation of Israel’s election.
- E. 11:11-32 Connected to 11:1-10 (esp v. 7a) with the rhetorical question “I ask then ...” Paul argues that Israel’s current harden state is neither an end in itself nor is it permanent. God is using Israel’s casting aside in a salvific process that reaches out to Gentiles and will include Israel once again.
- F. 11:33-36 Response to the teaching of Romans 9-11 with extolling of God’s transcendent plan and doxology.
 - Shift from celebration (8:31-39) to Lamentation (9:1-3). Paul begins his exposition of the gospel and Israel with an impassionate assertion of his own concern for his “kindred according to the flesh” (vv. 1-3). (v.3) made especially clear, is a circumstance well understood among the Roman Christians: the majority of the Jewish people have not responded in faith to the gospel.

III. Beginning of Romans 9-11

Sermon Title: The Troubling Tension Over Israel’s Unbelief: “God’s Sovereignty vs Human Responsibility”

Sermon Text: Romans 9:1-5

Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to understand God’s Sovereignty in election, versus Human Responsibility in faith.

Sermon Proposition: There are 4 passionate responses Paul illustrates for the lost condition of his kinsman.

- A. The **reality** of the Apostles sorrow and grief. V.1 (**2 Cor 1:12; Acts 23:1**)
 - “Through neglect of fellowship with God and disobedience to His Word, even a believer’s conscience can become insensitive and unreliable. That is why Paul does not allow for believers to violate conscience, even in regard to nonmoral things. To do so is to train yourself to reject conscience (cf. Romans 14:20-23). All believers should be able to say with Martin Luther, ‘My conscience is captive to the Word of God.’
 - A conscience surrendered to God’s Word is a conscience that is subject to the Holy Spirit, whom Paul next invokes as a witness to his truthfulness and to the reliability of his conscience.
 - The human conscience by itself is neutral. It is activated by and according to the nature of the person to whom it belongs. The conscience of an evil, unregenerate man is no guard against sinful thoughts and actions. The conscience of a faithful believer, on the other hand, is reliable, because it is activated by the truths and standards of God’s Word and is energized by the power of God’s indwelling Holy Spirit. When we live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, and obey the Spirit, we can trust our conscience because it is under divine control. The Spirit’s perfect prompting will either commend or condemn what we are doing or are planning to do.” [John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Romans 9-16*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1994, pp. 9-10.]
- B. The **intensity** of the Apostles sorrow and grief. V.2 (**Ps 119:136; Jer 9:1**)
- C. The **sincerity** of the Apostles sorrow and grief. V.3
- D. The **audience** of the Apostles sorrow and grief. V.4-5
 1. The adoption and glory of God’s people – that is, God’s manifested presence was with them, the shekinah glory.
 2. The covenants of God’s people – God has covenanted with this people as He has covenanted with no other people on earth.

3. The laws of God's people – no other nation had a code of laws that God gave directly, even though other laws are based on these laws.
4. The service of God's people – the temple ritual, the sacrificial system, all that service of God that was rendered in the temple.
5. The promises of God's people – the Messianic promises were to Israel alone.
6. The Father's of God's people – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David – all those great men belonged to Israel, not to Gentiles.
7. The origin of Christ's people – His humanity came from Israel, but He was the "bread that came down from heaven." "According to the flesh" He was a man of Israel.
8. The God came down from above people – In His own true inner personality, "He is over all, God blessed forever!"

Conclusion:

The Apostle Paul has faced the problem of Israel rejecting the gospel, and yet he declares that there is still the adoption. Israel as a nation still has the promise. That is the problem Paul has summed up here. Israel has rejected the gospel and yet they are still holding their position in the Old Testament.