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# Romans

**Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.** Romans 10:1

The NU text for this verse, upon which many translations are based, states, "Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation." (NASB)

The intent is the same either way. It is Israel who was being spoken of in 9:27-33. Whether they were named by Paul specifically or not, this verse either implicitly or explicitly is speaking of Israel and only Israel. It's important to understand this because, time and again Paul will speak of Israel as a united group of people who are his brethren, the Jews. He never speaks of the church as Israel, nor does he speak of Israel transitioning into the church. Accepting this, verse 10:1 can only mean one thing - Paul's "heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel (the Jewish people) is that they may be saved."

Salvation had come to the gentiles and those few Jews who had received their Messiah (the remnant of verse 9:27). Those Jews who had called on Jesus were not the impetus for a great movement of their people and a national salvation, but a small group from the nation. In large part, Israel had rejected their King.

Paul's "heart's desire" reflects the seat of his will, mind, and hopes. The word is kardias from which we derive our word cardio (heart). Though they had beaten him, mocked him, chased after him, and intended to kill him, the affection of his

heart was for his brethren in the flesh. He had no room in himself to desire anything but their calling on Jesus and being saved; a great national revival.

The salvation he is speaking of is that of individual salvation, but that which would spread to individuals throughout the nation. Someday this will occur as is promised in both the Old Testament and, as we will see, in Chapter 11. But before this occurs, the tribulation period will come and Israel will be refined as a people. When they are so broken that there is no hope left, Christ Jesus will return and rescue them. This is clearly taught in the Bible and it is so spoken by the mouth of the Lord also. And so "all Israel will be saved."

Life application: Salvation is an individual occurrence. Each person must come to the Lord and call on Him personally. But individual occurrences can translate into national revivals. It has happened in both biblical times and in great movements since then. It is the wise and understanding soul who would pray for his leaders and his nation when they are living contrary to the truth of the gospel. Even today, our leaders are promoting filth and wickedness, but it is right that we should pray for their hearts to turn to the Lord.

**For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.** Romans 10:2

Paul begins verse 2 with "For" as he so often does. In Greek, "for" or gar will normally follow the thought such as "I bear witness, for to them..." but the conjunction comes first in our translations. "For" then joins verses 1 and 2. What he will explain comes from his direct knowledge of the situation, "I bear them witness."

What this means is that he can fully testify to the statement he will make; he is qualified to make the case. Being a Jew, Paul had a right to speak on behalf of his people, but a commoner, one lacking knowledge of the law, wouldn't be able to speak on behalf of a leader who had proper training in the written word. However, Paul could. In Philippians 3, he lists his credentials -

"If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." Philippians 3:4-6

Elsewhere in Acts and in his writings, more of Paul's proven right to speak on such matters is given. Because of his ability to bear this witness, he now ties his desires for Israel in with his knowledge of Israel. "For... they have a zeal for God."

Zeal for something can be a good thing or a bad thing. Many adherents to Islam have a zeal for their belief in God, going so far as to blow themselves and others up in crowded bus stations. But this zeal is misdirected. The same is true with the Hindu zeal to make a trek to bathe in the Ganges river - "I will go wash and God will be happy with me." The Jew, likewise, had a zeal for God, but Paul explains, "not according to knowledge."

The Jew looked at the law as an end in and of itself, and thus set to establish righteousness based on adherence to the law. But even their law, as has been shown in many previous commentaries, reveals that righteousness is not of the law, but of faith. And in the end, that faith must be in the provision of the Lord. Jeremiah 23 gives an explicit rendering of where our righteousness lies -

"Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord,  
"That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness;  
A King shall reign and prosper,  
And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.

In His days Judah will be saved,  
And Israel will dwell safely;  
Now this is His name by which He will be called:

THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Jeremiah 23:5, 6

However, failing to pick up on these Old Testament concepts, Israel looked to adherence of the law as the final goal. But, unfortunately, this type of zeal was

"not according to knowledge." In the coming verses, Paul will explain what he means by "knowledge." But it should be noted that because of the path they took, it actually set up a division between them and those with the needed knowledge. It became such a point of difference that Jesus explained what the outcome would be -

"They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me." John 16:2, 3

Being blinded to their need for Christ, Israel actually thought that their service to God was to kill those who rightly called on Him. This is documented in the book of Acts. There it relates such accounts, including the actions of a man named Saul who would later be known as Paul.

Life application: The Bible says that those who please God do so by placing their faith in the finished work of Christ. Nothing else can satisfy the righteous requirements of the law. Either Jesus is all-sufficient or no person can be saved. Let your zeal for God be found in Christ Jesus.