

07-30-2017

Message: Reconciling God's Faithfulness and Israel's Failure

Text: Romans 8:35 - 9:13

Introduction

- A. Last week we finished our series in the book of Esther, where we saw that God, though unnamed, was the main character, governing all things for the good of those who love Him, and manifesting His righteousness and faithfulness in preserving His promises to His people.

- B. The wicked Haman, chief prince in Persia under king Ahasuerus, had launched a plot to annihilate all the Jews in the empire, which would not only have resulted in the loss of mortal life for the Jews, but the loss of eternal life for Jews and Gentiles of every age, for God had promised to send His divine Messiah from the lineage of Abraham and David, in order to bless people from every nation with eternal salvation. The redemption of the world was at stake in preserving Israel and thwarting Haman's plot.

- C. There remains in our own day people and nations calling for the annihilation of the Jewish people. Adolf Hitler's infamous final solution during World War II reduced the worldwide Jewish population from an estimated 17 million before the war to 11 million at its end. Iran's foreign policy calls for the elimination of Israel as a nation, and several of its leaders, surrogates, and sympathizers have called for the annihilation of all Jews everywhere. E.g., ...
 - 1. Former president of Iran, Mohammad Khatami, stated, "If we abide by real legal laws, we should mobilize the whole Islamic world for a sharp confrontation with the Zionist regime ... if we abide by the Koran, all of us should mobilize to kill."
 - 2. Iran's current supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei stated, "It is the mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to erase Israel from the map of the region."
 - 3. The leader of Iranian back Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, said, "Israel is our enemy. ... Its destiny is manifested in our motto: Death to Israel." "If they [Jews] all gather in Israel, it will save us the trouble of going after them worldwide."
 - 4. A week ago the Friday sermon of California cleric Imam Ammar Shahin was translated from Arabic to English, understandably causing alarm. "Oh Allah, count them [the Jews] one by one and annihilate them down to the very last one. Do not spare any of them." "Oh Allah, make this happen by our hands. Let us play a part in this."

- D. While such death wishes for the Jewish people is horrible, would the annihilation of the Jewish people today in any way thwart God's purposes, plans, promises as it would have in Esther's day? And does their spiritual rejection of Jesus, and thus, eternal life, call into question the righteousness and faithfulness of God? Romans 9-11 addresses this

issue.

I. 9:1-3 The Pain of Christ's apostle over his fellow Jews' separation from their Messiah/Christ.

Romans 9:1 I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit,² that **I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.**³ For **I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren,** my kinsmen according to the flesh,

- A. Paul was a Hebrew, born of Hebrew parents of the tribe of Benjamin, and was a former Pharisee. His heart was continually hurting for his Israelite nation, which as a whole was separated from its Lord and Messiah, Jesus. Therefore, these Israelites were accursed and without hope and without God in this world, because they rejected Jesus as their Lord, God, Messiah/Christ.

John 1:11 He came to His own, and **those who were His own did not receive Him.**

1 Corinthians 16:22 **If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed.**

- B. Remember in our study of Esther how Mordecai grieved continually I sackcloth and ashes because of the sentence of physical death hanging over His Hebrew people. How much more deeply was Paul grieved over the physical and spiritual death sentence hanging over His unbelieving fellow Israelites.

Romans 10:21 But **as for Israel He says,** "ALL THE DAY LONG I HAVE STRETCHED OUT MY HANDS TO **A DISOBEDIENT AND OBSTINATE PEOPLE.**"

John 3:36 "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but **he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.**"

- C. It was good and right for Paul to feel this compassion and grief for his kinsmen in the flesh, even as it is good and right for us believers to grieve over our and one another's unbelieving sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, parents, grandchildren in the flesh. It reflects the heart of Christ who wept over unbelieving Jerusalem.

1. On His final journey to Jerusalem, Jesus lamented ...

Luke 13:34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *the city* that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! **How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!**³⁵ "Behold, your house is left to you *desolate*;

2. And as the city came into view, Jesus wept over it.

Luke 19:41 When He approached *Jerusalem*, **He saw the city and wept over it,**⁴² saying, "**If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes.**"⁴³ "For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side,⁴⁴ and **they will level you to the ground and your children within you,** and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."

- D. It also reflects the heart of Christ that Paul wished he could become cursed in their place so that they could be saved.

Romans 9:3 For **I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren,** my kinsmen according to the flesh,

Romans 10:1 Brethren, **my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.**

1 John 3:16 We know love by this, that **He laid down His life for us;**

- E. Moses also reflected this same heart of Christ when Israel came under God's wrath for worshiping a golden calf, but the Lord made Moses and Paul understand that only One would be worthy to be cursed for the sins of God's people. The animal sacrifices which symbolized an offering for sin, were not symbols of Moses or Paul, but of the lamb of God, Jesus Christ.

Exodus 32:31 Then Moses returned to the LORD, and said, "Alas, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made a god of gold for themselves."³² "But now, if You will, forgive their sin-- **and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!**"³³ The LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.

Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, **having become a curse for us--** for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE "

- F. Transition: But an Israel that was largely rejecting Jesus and Lord and Messiah created a problem in the minds of some regarding God's righteousness and faithfulness.

II. 9:4-6a The Problem of Israelites' separation from their Messiah/Christ.

- A. God determined to bless the Jew first, and then the Gentiles through them.

Genesis 12:1 Now the LORD said to Abram, " ...² ... **I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you,** and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing;³ And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And **in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.**"

Deuteronomy 7:6 "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; **the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.**

B. Therefore, Israel was initially given privileges not enjoyed by other nations.

Romans 9:4 who are **Israelites**, to whom belongs the **adoption as sons**, and the **glory** and the **covenants** and the giving of the **Law** and the **temple service** and the **promises**,⁵ whose are **the fathers**, and **from whom is the Christ** according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.⁶ **But it is not as though the word of God has failed.** ...

1. the adoption as sons - heirs of God
2. the glory - of God's presence in the tabernacle/temple, etc.
3. the covenants - to be a God to them and their descendants, to transform them and save them.
4. the giving of the law - that was to be written on their hearts
5. the temple service - enabling them to approach God
6. the promises - of eternal life and glory in the world to come
7. the fathers - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob
8. the divine Messiah - descended from them according to the flesh

C. But the Jews as a nation were rejecting Jesus as the Christ and opposing His apostles' message.

Acts 13:44 The next Sabbath nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of the Lord.⁴⁵ **But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming.**⁴⁶ Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; **since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.**

D. This observation tempted some to draw the wrong conclusion about God - about His righteousness to be faithful to His words of intention and promise to Israel.

Romans 9:6 **But it is not as though the word of God has failed.** For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;

Romans 3:1 Then **what advantage has the Jew?** Or what is the benefit of circumcision?² **Great in every respect.** First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.³ **What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it?**

E. Israel's failure to receive God's righteousness by faith in Christ appeared (to some) to undermine God's faithfulness to His promises to love, bless, and save the children of

Abraham.

Genesis 22:17 indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply **your seed** as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and **your seed** shall possess the gate of their enemies.¹⁸ "In **your seed** all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

Deuteronomy 30:6 "Moreover **the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants** (seed), to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, **so that you may live.**

Isaiah 60:20 "Your sun will no longer set, nor will your moon wane; For you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, and the days of your mourning will be over.²¹ "Then **all your people will be righteous**; They will possess the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified.

Jeremiah 31:34 "... **they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,**" declares the LORD, "for **I will forgive their iniquity**, and their sin I will remember no more."

Jeremiah 31:36 "If this fixed order departs from before Me," declares the LORD, "**Then the offspring of Israel also will cease from being a nation before Me forever.**"³⁷ Thus says the LORD, "If the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth searched out below, **then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done,**" declares the LORD.

- F. And if Israel, in spite of God's promises, is separate from the love of God in Jesus Messiah, then why should the largely Gentile church in Rome believe Paul's words of promise at the end of chapter 8?

Romans 8:38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, **will be able to separate us from the love of God**, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

III. 9:6b-13 The proof that God's word of promise has not failed (fallen)

- A. Answer to the apparent dilemma: Not all of ethnic Israel is the Israel of the promise, the "seed" of Abraham to whom the promise of blessing was made.

Romans 9:6 But it is not as though the word of God has failed. **For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;**

Romans 2:28 For **he is not a Jew who is one outwardly**, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.²⁹ But **he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that**

which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

Revelation 3:9 'Behold, I will cause *those* of **the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not**, but lie-- I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and *make them* know that I have loved you.

B. Corroboration from the Old Testament Scriptures that not all ethnic descendants of Abraham are his descendants to whom the promises were made.

1. Example #1 Ishmael & Isaac were both Abraham's sons. The younger was favored and the older was disfavored, contrary to the custom based on natural birth. Isaac, not Ishmael, was the child of promise.

Romans 9:7 **nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants (seed)**, but: **"THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS (seed) WILL BE NAMED."**⁸ **That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants (seed).**⁹ For this is the word of promise: "AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON."

Genesis 21:12 But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed because of the lad and your maid; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for **through Isaac your descendants (seed) shall be named.**

Genesis 18:10 He said, "I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, **Sarah your wife will have a son.**"

2. Example #2 Jacob & Esau (show Abraham, Isaac, Jacob genealogical slide), where once again the younger was shown covenant favor and the older was rejected, illustrating once again that God's blessing is not determined by natural descent.

Romans 9:10 And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when **she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac;**¹¹ for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, **so that God's purpose according to His choice (ekloge = election/selection) would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls,**¹² it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER."¹³ Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED."

- a. This illustration closes any alledged "loophole" in the illustration of Ishmael and Isaac, due to Ishmael being born of an Egyptian mother (Hagar). Jacob, like Isaac, was a child of promise ...

Genesis 25:23 The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb; And two peoples will be separated from your body; And one people shall be stronger than the other; And **the older shall serve the younger.**"

- b. Malachi 1:2-5 confirms that Esau's descendants, the Edomites, were outside of God's covenant people.

Malachi 1:2 "I have loved you," says the LORD. But you say, "How have You loved us?" "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the LORD. **"Yet I have loved Jacob; ³ but I have hated Esau,** and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness."⁴ Though Edom says, "We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins"; thus says the LORD of hosts, "They may build, but I will tear down; and men will call them the wicked territory, and **the people toward whom the LORD is indignant forever.**"⁵ Your eyes will see this and you will say, "The LORD be magnified beyond the border of Israel!"

- c. Neither Jacob's faith nor Esau's evil deeds were contemplated in advance by God as the reason for covenant blessing and exclusion. The reason for this is so God's purpose in election might "stand" vs "fall" (9:6a). God's "purpose" (Cf. 8:28) to bless Jacob with conformity to the glorified Christ was based on God's unconditional "election" (choice), brought about through a faith to which God effectively "called" (8:28) Jacob. Yet our being called does not rest on our faith, but on God's purpose in His election of us.

Romans 9:11 for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, **so that God's purpose according to His choice** (eklege = election/selection) **would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls,**

Ephesians 1:4 just as **He chose** (eklego = elected/selected) **us in Him** before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵ **He predestined us to adoption as sons** through Jesus Christ to Himself, **according to the kind intention of His will,** ... ¹⁰ ... In Him ¹¹ also we have obtained an inheritance, **having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,**

- d. Therefore, those God elects to inherit His promised salvation will not fail to inherit it. God never intended us to understand that every physical descendant of Abraham was a child of the promise, as demonstrated by Israel's earliest genealogy. Yet He does preserve an elect remnant.

Romans 11:5 **In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice** (election). ⁶ But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. ⁷ What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, **but those who were chosen (elect) obtained it,** and the rest were hardened;

Conclusion

- A. Since inclusion in the people of God does not depend on natural descent but on the effectual call of God, it follows that God's word of promise to Israel and the nations will surely be fulfilled.

God has us preach this gospel, not for the stirring up of controversy, but "for sinners who know that their only hope is the sovereign triumph of God's grace over their rebellious will." John Piper 11/3/2002

- B. So we who have been graciously chosen by God, effectively called to a faith in Christ that works through love, can be assured that nothing will be able to separate us from the unconditional electing love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. God is righteous and faithful. His Word to us and to the Israel of God has not failed and will not fail.