

## Romans: Paul's Motivation

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### Abstract

Roman believers held the Jews in contempt. Paul wrote primarily to create benevolence by the Roman believers in order that no hindrance would occur to the related goal of reaching the Jews. The motivation of Paul appears best in Romans chapters 9 to 11.

### Notice

I am not writing this article so as to guide new students of Romans. The ideas herein are untested in scholarship, though the concepts came essentially from the Book of Romans. The effort at hand concerns the desire to help some older students see an alternate explanation of the context of Romans. This article does not match the typical commentary on Romans.

### Introduction

Romans 9 to 11 speaks of effective Israel as a subset or remnant of the bloodline Israel or of Jews. Paul must shift to the term "Israel" in order to relate the present situation with the prophecies, since the prophecies speak about Israel.

Paul justifies and supports the writings of the Law and Prophets while also acknowledging God's faithfulness to bring forth the resolution of the prophecies in light of the soon and coming deadlines.

The Roman believers were aware of the eschatological deadlines but had assessed that Jews were not going to be saved (i.e. saved from the wrath of God). Rom 11:18 shows that the Roman believers then obtained a bad reputation regarding their boasting against Jews (i.e. the wild grafted branches were condemning the branches removed from the olive tree). The Roman attitude went against the broader effort of Paul which not only was to share the message to Gentiles but was additionally intended to share Judaism (the sect called "the Way") to Gentiles for the specific effect of making the Jews jealous unto salvation (Rom 11:11).

[Among the Jews in general there was no awareness of that there was an eschatological end approaching. The Jews did not have understanding, the understanding of Matt 13:15,51 and of Dan 12:3 (speaking of "the wise"). ]

A study of chapters 9 to 11 show Paul as:

1. Trying to change the attitude of the Romans toward the Jews to increase benevolence
2. Narrowing of the scope of Israel to show that prophecies were being fulfilled
3. Showing that God is faithful to Israel (Rom 9:6 states the converse).
4. Showing that an eschatological end was near. See Rom 9:28 and reinforced by Rom 16:20.
5. Showing that salvation was always near to Israel and that God was bringing the gospel to Israel. Rom 10.
6. Showing that God's people were not cast away but actually had been spared. Rom 11:1-5

The analysis or commentary will be divided into one section per chapter to best represent the manner of presentation by Paul.

## **Review of Chapter 9**

Paul specifically mentions his concern for Israel (Rom 9:1-3), yet the broader concern is shown throughout chapters 9 to 11.

The Israelites or Jews are shown to be the natural recipients of the benefits of God (Rom 9:4-5). God's faithfulness to Israel is asserted (Rom 9:6) as an introduction to the subsequent content of chapter 9. Paul then explains the true Israel is more narrowly defined than the bloodline Israel. Rom 9:6

It should be observed that the letter to the Romans addresses the important issue of God's faithfulness to His promise to Israel. Yet the importance of this faithfulness goes beyond just the treatment of the Jews, for if the promise of God were not fulfilled to the Jews then there would also be an uncertainty among the Roman Gentile believers as addressed. The previous chapter considered issues of perseverance through trials and that issue was potentially being continued along the idea of God's faithfulness as pertaining to the perseverance.

### **Narrowing:**

The process of narrowing can be observed in the flow of the chapter.

1. First narrowing is that it is not all children of Abraham but is child of the promise to Sarah Rom 9:7-9 (Note that Paul selected Sarah's promise of a son as being the better argument than the promise to Abram)
2. Second narrowing is to the descendants of the promised child of Rebecca. Rom 9:10-13

Verses 14 to 26 basically provides counter arguments to the questions that might arise at this point of the discussion. Paul provides a counter argument to those who would then think God is unjust in this narrowing (Rom 9:14). The argument shows that God has full right to exercise His own will and has done it as seen in Moses and Pharaoh (Rom 9:15-18). And then Paul counters the idea of those finding fault with God in Rom 9:19-22.

Then in Rom 9:23-24 Paul shows that God has a positive benefit in those tumultuous times. Mercy was discussed to show that mercy was being shown to Jews too. This discussion of mercy and of presenting benefits to Jews stands in contrast to the apparent judgmental attitude spoken of in chapter 2. Paul was trying to move the Gentile believers from a judgmental attitude into one of mercy.

Rom 9:25-26 then shows the prophecy that benefits the Gentiles and Jews. Rom 9:25 in quoting Hosea 2:23 mentions the calling of "those not my people" then saying "thou art my people" which was to the Gentiles' benefit. Rom 9:26 quotes Hosea 1:10 which was for the Jew's benefit. And as a point of interest, a note is made that part of the fulfillment was that they would be reconciled where they were rejected of God, presumably in Jerusalem.

Paul, now being in the midst of an argument supporting Jews, also wants to remind the readers that they, the Gentiles, are still supported in prophecy. Also, the verses from Hosea lay a foundation showing God's mutual reach (as well as the contrast between who was being saved and who wasn't) to Jews and Gentiles that would then generate the jealousy to draw more Jews to salvation (Rom 11:14).

Rom 9:27 then mentions the prophecy of Isaiah that a remnant would be saved (Isa 10:22). This pigtails off Rom 9:26 which refers to Hos 1:10 that also speaks of number as the sands. The Isaiah verse narrows the sands by speaking of the remnant.

3. Then Rom 9:27 narrows further by speaking of the remnant.

Note that "saved" likely applies to being saved from a physical threat or physical destruction. This also is highlighted by the mention of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. But then, through Christ Jesus, "salvation" also started to have the concurrent attribute of an accrual of an immediate spiritual benefit, the down payment of the Holy Spirit abiding in those who were saved.

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Then the mention of Sodom and Gomorrah also connects Rom 9:27 with Luke 17:29-30 speaking of the revealing of the Son of Man. Hence, Paul shows that the Son of Man would be revealed soon, especially as he mentions, in Rom 11:5, of the remnant being present.

Romans 9 thus far has not supported the inclusion of Gentiles into Israel but rather has narrowed the scope of Israel to only a minor amount of people. Yet this small group had to exist in order for God's word to be fulfilled and for the remnant to get the kingdom (the kingdom to be restored to Israel, Acts 1:6). Though, the kingdom was also given to all who lived or died in Christ Jesus from AD30 to AD70.

### **Transitional Items**

Paul goes on in vs 28-29 to address some other issues but speaks of the issues in connection with the remnant mentioned in Rom 9:29. And Paul shows in Rom 9:28 that the work is "a short work" or that things are happening soon. Paul is starting to show that the time is at hand for fulfillment of the verses.

Rom 9:29 then speaks of the judgment that shows that Israel would not be wholly destroyed as Sodom and Gomorrah were. Again Paul is assuring that a remnant of Israel would be saved.

### **Righteousness**

Paul focuses on the righteousness that the Gentiles are following in Rom 9:30

Vs. 31 -- Israel followed law of righteous but didn't come to law of righteousness

Vs. 32 -- Didn't come by faith but stumbled on law

Vs. 33 -- Laid stumbling stone, he who believes will be saved Isa 28:16

These verses, 30 to 33, basically are trying to highlight the contrast of Gentile's salvation verses the non-reaction of Jews in general in order that Paul may now discuss the work of God in sending the message to the Jews showing that God is giving an opportunity for Israel to be saved.

### **Review of Chapter 10**

Note: due to the subtlety of Paul's argument there probably could be various equally viable renditions of an outline for chapter 10.

Paul went on to show in Chapter 10 that God had done His requirement to offer salvation to the Jews. Though, by the broader context of the letter to the Romans, it seems that Paul also wanted to make conditions better for even more to be saved (Rom 11:14 provides specific words to this goal). It should be remembered that the main problem was about the Romans' boasting against the Jews. See Rom 3:9 and again in Rom 11:18.

The main point now was to show that God had not forsaken His people, the people mentioned in Rom 9:1-5. And the additional point was the expression of Paul's desire and arguments for salvation of the Jews. Paul really had agonized over the future of his brethren as he saw the events of his time fulfilling the prophecies of the books of the Law and Prophets. The hope and grief, which Paul wanted to express even from the beginning of the epistle, now received its expression.

### **Closeness of salvation...**

In Rom 10:1 Paul appeals to the Gentiles by speaking to the Gentiles as brethren. Then Paul speaks an appeal for the salvation of Jews. So Rom 10:1-4 mentions several reasons why Jews should have the benefits, restating the types of ideas in Rom 9:1-5. It seems that Paul is saying that it should be natural for Jews to come to Christ (anticipating Rom 11:24) and that the Jews were really close to salvation (anticipating Rom 10:8-9).

Through the mention of Deut 30:14 (in Rom 10:6-7), Paul shows that faith was always near at hand to the Israelites.

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So in many ways the nearness or closeness of salvation is expressed. These include:

- 1) their zeal, Rom 10:2
- 2) the law, which ends in righteousness, Rom 10:4
- 3) the nearness of the Word, Rom 10:6-10
- 4) the nearness to believe, Rom 10:11 --this point is vague
- 5) the nearness to call on the Lord, Rom 10:13

Rom 10:8 to 10 provides what often has been used essentially in the role of a salvific formula by so many preachers of modern time. Note that the context concerns the closeness of salvation to the Jews and does not offer a formula.

Rom 10:10 answers the issue of righteousness mentioned in Rom 9:31. The righteousness which came by confession of the mouth was the true salvation or healing available to those mentioned in Rom 9:31 and all the way back to the time of Moses.

The Paul proceeds to check whether the salvation really was so near to his brethren. For the important message of the day was provided through the preaching of the gospel. Therefore Paul emphasizes the need for preaching as well as the provision of preachers (Rom 10:14-15). The message must be heard in order to change a man.

The steps in hearing were described as follows:

- 1) confessing Jesus requires hearing about Him, Rom 10:14
- 2) hearing requires a preacher, Rom 10:14
- 3) a preacher must be sent, Rom 10:15
- 4) the message must be heard or understood, Rom 10:16
- 5) faith comes by hearing (understanding,comprehending), Rom 10:17
- 6) the ability to hear(understand, comprehend) comes by the Word of God, Rom 10:17  
[parentheses and capitalization added]

This should be understood to mean that God makes the change in our lives through the gospel message being shared.

Then, in Rom 10:18 Paul said that the obligation to get the message out had been met. God's obligation had been fulfilled in that the message had gone out to the world. Also, the jealousy aroused in the hearts of the Israelites should have reminded them of the prophecy that God would make them jealous,Rom 10:19-20. Then the reader is reminded that God had an outstretched hand, Rom 10:21.

## **Review of Chapter 11**

The focus in chapters 9 and 10 was about the definition of Israel (the Jews) and the closeness of salvation to Israel. Now, chapter 11 reveals the prideful and condemning attitudes of the Roman believers.

Rom 11:1 asks if God has cast away His people. Such question seems to actually reflect the opinion of the Roman Gentile believers. Paul had been working toward this climax regarding the issue as presented in the rhetorical question which really reflected the attitude or position of these Romans. The answer to this question would also be the answer to the question whether the Roman believers should reject or cast away the Jews.

Earlier it was ascertained that "His people" referred to Israel or Jews. Indeed the Romans wouldn't have thought that they were being cast away now.

Rom 10 presents an essential positive and complete picture of God's work to reach and change Jews yet the Romans still had a potential to see chapter 10 in a negative light, that the Jews were just plain unresponsive. In apparent anticipation of this pessimistic view, Paul presented the pessimistic position that God would have naturally cast away such people. And really the Romans were identified for their assumption that God cast away the Jews. The Roman condemnation of the Jews was shown explicitly in Rom 3:1 (saying that the Jews were disadvantaged) and Rom 3:9 (we Romans are better than them).

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In the context of Romans, there may not even be any other logical reason for Paul to ask the question of verse 1 except that the Romans held the affirmative view on this question.

Paul counters the Roman response by showing the obvious, in your face, example of a Jew that was saved, namely Paul himself (see Acts 21:39). For Paul was not cast away. And the Romans' salvation relied upon Paul's understanding of true faith and his accurate rendition of the means of this faith. Although it should be mentioned that the Roman Church didn't start under the preaching of Paul, but the message heard by the Romans was indeed confirmed through the words of Paul.

The second argument against the casting away occurs through similarity to Elijah and is recounted in Rom 11:2-4. God basically revealed there was a remnant. Paul does the same in Rom 11:5. The remnant existed at that time and consisted of Jews who were believers and hence were true Israelites.

Rom 11:6 just continues on the idea of grace to the election. With the mention of being saved by grace and not works, it seems that Paul again reveals that God had done the choosing. This providence of God upon them is seen in the following:

- 1) That God preserved a remnant apart from the eyes of Elijah Rom 11:2-4
- 2) That a remnant existed at the time of the writing of Romans Rom 11:5
- 3) That the election was preserved by grace, by gift of God, Rom 11:6
- 4) That God put a spirit of slumber upon the non-elect, Rom 11:7-10, which of course implies an action of God.

Paul then had made an argument that Jews were in their condition (circa AD60) by the wisdom and working of God which then removed any reason for the Gentile believers to have personal or doctrinal issues against the Jews. Indeed the argument shows that this blindness was designed also to give Gentiles a chance to come to God (Rom 11:11).

An oddity occurs, namely that it seems that Rom 10:19,21 start to speak of the bloodline Israel by speaking only of negative aspects. Probably after the introduction of the remnant in Rom 9:27 and starting with Rom 9:31, Paul spoke of Israel only with respect to the Jews in general, to his unsaved kinsmen. The true Israel is mentioned in Rom 9:6 which then was called the remnant in Rom 9:27 and in Rom 11:5 which was called the election in Rom 11:7.

In Rom 11:11-15 represents the basis of Paul's concern about the attitude of the Gentiles. At this point, logical arguments reveal that the Romans were part of a system to draw God's original people too. But Paul saw this system failing because of the enmity of the Romans.

Now a change of topic occurs again in order to show how exactly the Romans were out of order from the "natural" operation. Here, at verse 16, the olive tree analogy starts forming and continues to verse 24.

### **Olive Tree Analogy**

Rom 11:16-24

It seems that Paul speaks of the olive tree and the root instead of the vine analogy used by Jesus. One key reason would seem to be that the vine (of John 15) does not have branches or leaves removed. But Paul took more liberality in removing branches from the olive tree, in his analogy.

The root in verses 16 to 18 represents the continuity and foundation of the tree. This tree doesn't represent Jesus nor Israel, at least not explicitly and likely not at all. Again this was so Paul could be more flexible in his argument. [The exact reason Paul used this analogy may actually be different. But this reason can be used for sake of discussion and for simplifying the effort of writing here.] The problem with assuming more to the analogy is that once a branch were grafted into eternal life then that branch wouldn't reasonably have that eternal life cut short.

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The root would not be referring to Israel since Israel was about a bloodline and/or a promise. But the root could not be considered to be Jesus either cause Jesus never lost His own. The Jews that were broken off were never of the Lord before. But there could be a rough meaning of the root as being the continuity of those who are God's people, then in this case the Gentiles were being **included for the first time in Paul's discussion** as being God's people.

The big point Paul makes is that the Roman Gentiles shouldn't boast against the languishing Jews. (Such attitude never is warranted or useful.)

Then when Rom 11:22 mentions about Gentiles possibly be broken off, Paul would seem to talk about those of his readers who may not have ever been saved. The gospels mention about perseverance and it seems that true believers continued following Christ while those born of bad seed never were of Christ Jesus.

### **Mystery**

The mystery was that partial blindness was occurring until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, Rom 11:25. The verse could not likely be chopped shorter without removing the mystery.

The fullness of Gentiles is a bit unclear. It seems though that this fullness was accomplished by AD70 since Rom 11:26-28 would seem to have to be finalized while the present remnant of Rom 11:5 still existed.

### **All saved**

Rom 11:26 can be seen to be fulfilled primarily through the remnant of Rom 11:5. The remnant, the election of Rom 11:5, was the part of Israel that was of the promise as seen in Rom 9:6-8. Rom 11:28 confirms the salvation that was coming for the election. Therefore, "all of Israel" was the portion of Jews/Israel who were the elect.

This had to occur by AD70 since the kingdom was restored to Israel (Acts 1:6) while the Israel remnant existed. And the kingdom had to come by AD70 in accord with Luke 21:30-32.

### **Final**

Paul then recaps the relationship of God's will acting by the interaction of Gentile with Jew (Rom 11:29-32). Paul ends again with an equalization of Jew and Gentile by saying "God has concluded them all in unbelief that He might have mercy upon all."

And Paul ends by giving praise to God for His wisdom being exercised, especially in the wisdom of God in this matter.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of Paul's writing to Romans and the summation of Paul's argument in chapters 9 to 11 in a sense shouldn't have required such a detailed presentation to convince people. And a simplified article on the same ideas may be more convincing. Nonetheless, the ideas shared here will likely withstand scrutiny.

Paul tried to change the minds of the Romans through many approaches in his letter to them. Paul was motivated by his interest in the Roman believers as well as the benefit of the Jews.

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