
Wednesday Night GEL Group Online

In tonight's study, we will see a shift from Paul's writings about Christ and salvation to an in-depth discussion on the people of Israel. From the beginning of Paul's letter, the overall theme is 'the gospel of God', i.e. the good news sent by God – promised in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New. Paul stated this in the words from chapter 1:2 "that was promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures." Paul had good reason to talk about Israel's role in God's plan in light of the good news of Christ. It is evident throughout the book of Acts that again and again Paul preached to the Jews, only to receive a minimal response. When he turned to the Gentiles, however, their response was much more significant. Paul desired for his readers to understand how God's work in the gospel of Christ was entirely in accord with what He had promised in the Old Testament. Ultimately, chapters 9-11 are not so much about Israel as they are about God.

Let's pray and start reading chapter 9 of the book of Romans from verses 1-18.

1. Paul starts this chapter with high emotion (1-5). Why is this the case?
2. What points does Paul draw out in these first five verses?
3. How does Paul list the benefits of being a Jew in verses 4-5?
4. On the surface, it might seem that God had failed to fulfil his promise to the Jews. But this is not the case. We can note from earlier parts of this letter that not everyone born into a Jewish family is truly a Jew. That is, not all Jews are part of spiritual Israel. Let's read Romans 2:28-29; 11:5-6; Galatians 3:7-9 and note what Paul stated.
5. How does Paul illustrate two ways in verses 7-9, 10-13?
6. What is Paul's conclusion in verses 14-15?
7. How does Paul further illustrate this in verses 17-18?

8. How would you describe “hardening of the heart?” Could it be that it occurs when a person has a track record of disobedience and rebellion? Is Paul’s warning here implicit? How do we avoid attitudes that lead to hardness of heart? Maybe 1 Corinthians 10:6-10 and Hebrews 3:7-11 can provide us with some clues.

9. What does this all depend on then?

10. It’s interesting to note that God put up with Pharaoh’s fickleness and defiance for a purpose: he used Pharaoh’s hardened heart and rebellion (1) to deliver Israel, and (2) to show an example of what happens when one does not heed God’s commands and then keeps on disobeying. Eventually, all nations would hear what God had done for His people in Egypt and have great fear of the Israelites and their God. What does Joshua 2:10-11, 9:9 and 1 Samuel 4:8 say about this?

11. Would you think there is the same level of fear of God today? Why?

12. Is this a case of ‘what happened in history stays in history’?

13. What do you think may happen into the future if people not only lose their fear of God but also their sight of God? Does the church have a role to play in this situation?

14. Do we sometimes lose our awe of who God is in amongst the noise of the day?