

## Romans Session 146

### Israel's Failure was ignorance of the person of God: His Righteousness 2

*Romans 10:1-3 (NASB)*

<sup>1</sup> *Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.*

<sup>2</sup> *For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.*

<sup>3</sup> *For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.*

Paul later in this chapter speaks of Israel, typified by such scribes and their followers, as having *"a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge (10:2)*

Of another group of Jewish religious leaders, the Sadducees, Jesus said;

*Matthew 22:29 (NASB)*

<sup>29</sup> *But Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God.*

In other words, with all their effort and presumed intense study of the Scriptures, they were ignorant of their true meaning. They could not truly know God's Word, because they did not know God Himself.

*John 8:19 (NASB)*

<sup>19</sup> *So they were saying to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also."*

A short while later the Lord answered their charge of blasphemy by declaring,

*John 8:54-55 (NASB)*

<sup>54</sup> *Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God';*

<sup>55</sup> *and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word.*

*John 9:39-41 (NASB)*

<sup>39</sup> *And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind."*

<sup>40</sup> *Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, "We are not blind too, are we?"*

<sup>41</sup> *Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.*

After healing the cripple at the gate of the Temple, Peter explained to the wondering Jews who gathered around;

*Acts 3:13-14 (NASB)*

<sup>13</sup> *"The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him.*

<sup>14</sup> *"But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you,*

*Acts 3:17 (NASB)*

<sup>17</sup> *"And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also.*

There are countless other passages in both testaments speaking of Israel's spiritual ignorance and its terrible consequences.

Through Isaiah the Lord declared;

**Isaiah 5:13 (NASB)**

**<sup>13</sup> Therefore My people go into exile for their lack of knowledge; And their honorable men are famished, And their multitude is parched with thirst.**

And through Hosea;

**Hosea 4:6 (NASB)**

**<sup>6</sup> My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.**

Through their history, the Jews thought they knew God's truth, but Isaiah declared to his people;

**Isaiah 1:2-4 (NASB)**

**<sup>2</sup> Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth; For the LORD speaks, "Sons I have reared and brought up, But they have revolted against Me.**

**<sup>3</sup> "An ox knows its owner, And a donkey its master's manger, But Israel does not know, My people do not understand."**

**<sup>4</sup> Alas, sinful nation, People weighed down with iniquity, Offspring of evildoers, Sons who act corruptly! They have abandoned the LORD, They have despised the Holy One of Israel, They have turned away from Him.**

And through the Psalmist He declared,

**Psalms 95:10 (NASB)**

**<sup>10</sup> "For forty years I loathed that generation, And said they are a people who err in their heart, And they do not know My ways.**

Centuries later, Jesus said to unbelieving descendants of those Jews, you;

**Mark 7:13 (NASB)**

**<sup>13</sup> invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that."**

On another occasion, He said,

**Matthew 15:8-9 (NASB)**

**<sup>8</sup> "THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.**

**<sup>9</sup> "BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.""**

Their leaders had so modified and explained away God's revelation that the resulting religious traditions frequently nullified His truth.

Consequently, Israel has walked a path of pain and turmoil, sorrow, and suffering, dispossessed, hated, and maligned. Because they believe they already know God and are favored by Him, such suffering and persecutions have always been hard for Jews to understand.

Sanford C. Mills, himself a Hebrew Christian, has commented, "Israel wants to be the captain of her own soul, the master of her one ship. But Israel lost both her rudder and her compass, and now, with the vessel of state careening about in a

*maelstrom of sin, what is to save her from being drawn into the vortex of hell? Yet this is the condition of Israel today, even as it was in Paul's day." (A Hebrew Christian Looks at Romans [Grand Rapids: Dunham, 1968], p. 333).*

Paul confesses to Timothy his own rejection and spiritual ignorance before coming to salvation

***1 Timothy 1:12-13 (NASB)***

<sup>12</sup> ***I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service,***

<sup>13</sup> ***even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;***

Paul makes clear that his own spiritual ignorance, like that of all other Jews, was due to unbelief.

In other words, ignorance of God does not bring rejection of Him, but rather rejection of God brings spiritual ignorance of Him.

In Romans 9, Paul focuses on God's sovereign election and on the elect's response of faith in Him.

The corollary is that because God has not elected all Jews, all Jews have not had saving faith.

As we learned earlier, because Paul knew how offensive that truth would be to most Jews, he began that chapter of Romans with great compassion and sorrow, testifying that he would gladly sacrifice his won salvations if doing so would bring salvations to his unbelieving kinsmen in the flesh.

***Romans 9:1-3 (NASB)***

<sup>1</sup> ***I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit,***

<sup>2</sup> ***that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.***

<sup>3</sup> ***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 is equally offensive to Jews, because the apostle here focuses on Israel's willing unbelief and the spiritual ignorance and divine condemnation that this unbelief brings.

#### PAUL'S PRAYER FOR ISRAEL

***Romans 10:1 (NASB)***

<sup>1</sup> ***Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.***

If we remember the verses above in 9:1-3, then we hear these words of his prayer we see the great love he had for his fellow Jews.

The antecedent of **them** is Israel, God's chosen nation through Abraham.

Paul did not have a cold and indifferent acquiescence to God's sovereign election.

He had a compelling, heartfelt longing to bring his physical kinsmen to Christ.

His deepest **heart's desire** was that every Jew be saved, and his earnest **prayer to God** on their behalf was **for their salvation**.

*Deesis* (prayer) conveys the idea of pleading and entreaty, of persistent petition to God.

Paul was not making a hopeless plea that he did not expect God to answer. He prayed because he fully believed God could save all Israel, that, no matter how seemingly unlikely, the people of Israel could be saved if they would place their trust in their Messiah and Savior.

Although Paul's foremost calling was to be the apostle to the Gentiles;

**Romans 11:13 (NASB)**

<sup>13</sup> *But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry,*

That did not lessen at all his unbounded love for the salvation of his fellow Jews.

He was doubtless aware of Jesus last earthly commission to the other apostles just before He ascended into heaven;

**Acts 1:8 (NASB)**

<sup>8</sup> *but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*

He also knew that Jesus declared that;

**John 4:22b (NASB)**

<sup>22</sup> *"for salvation is from the Jews."*

Paul had already proclaimed that;

**Romans 1:16 (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup> *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

In his earlier ministry, Paul always preached the gospel first in a synagogue or other place of Jewish worship if he could find one.

**Acts 9:19-20 (NASB)**

<sup>19</sup> *and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus,*  
<sup>20</sup> *and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."*

**Acts 13:14-15 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> *But going on from Perga, they arrived at Pisidian Antioch, and on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.*

<sup>15</sup> *After the reading of the Law and the Prophets the synagogue officials sent to them, saying, "Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it."*

**Acts 14:1 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup> *In Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks.*

**Acts 16:13 (NASB)**

<sup>13</sup> *And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled.*

As He was dying on the cross, Jesus prayed for those who placed Him there saying,

**Luke 23:34 (NASB)**

***<sup>34</sup> But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.***

That was a prayer for the salvation of His murderers! Following the Lord's example, Stephen prayed with his dying breath!

**Acts 7:59-60 (NASB)**

***<sup>59</sup> Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"***

***<sup>60</sup> Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep.***

That too was a prayer for his killer's salvation.

With the same forgiving compassion, Paul held no grudge against fellow Jews who maligned and persecuted His Lord or himself, but rather prayed for their salvations.

No apostle understood better or more fully declared God's sovereignty than did Paul.

Yet he knew with certainty that, perfectly consistent with God's sovereign power and grace, Israel's salvation was not impossible.

The apostle did not try to reconcile rationally the seeming incongruity between God's sovereign elections and man's willing faith.

The elective decree of God is absolute and certain, but it is a secret choice that He alone knows.

It is not our responsibility to try to determine whom God has chosen but to proclaim the saving gospel to every person who will hear it, praying with Paul's earnestness that they will all receive Christ and be saved.

Our responsibility is to diligently preach, teach, testify, and intercede, fully believing with Paul that;

**1 Timothy 2:3-4 (NASB)**

***<sup>3</sup> This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,***

***<sup>4</sup> who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.***

And with Peter;

**2 Peter 3:9 (NASB)**

***<sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.***

And we should also be able to say with Paul;

**2 Timothy 2:10 (NASB)**

***<sup>10</sup> For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.***

We are to pray and to witness to all unbelievers, knowing that God will faithfully save those who believe in His Son.