

[Romans 9:1 – 5]

~ Some people erroneously believe God is finished with Israel as a nation; and that all of the Old Testament prophecies regarding the land and the people are now transferred over to the church. That may be accredited teaching in some circles, but this Spiritual Safari totally and completely rejects the error wholesale. The reason we reject it as tenable theology is because Scripture shows us very clearly what is correct and what is not correct. We come to a chapter in Romans that some theologians have said does not fit with the rest of the epistle. Well, this chapter is a vital organ to the overall doctrine and logic Paul uses as he writes to these saints in Rome; it may not fit well, but it's an inextricably intertwined part of everything we have learned thus far in Romans!

Our expedition arrives at an altogether new subject in this report. We have our first Biblical sighting on safari of a bad word in some theological circles — *dispensation*. We'll have several reports devoted exclusively to dispensation interlaced into our consideration of the epistle to the Hebrews. Our Spiritual Safari does not divide the Books of the Bible as a normal Bible study would because we aren't looking for theology or doctrine; we're looking for the Lord Jesus Christ on every page of Scripture. However, there are a few areas in the Word of God where doctrinal divisions cannot be avoided. If we did divide chapters as a typical Bible study would, then the first eight chapters of Romans would have been labeled '*doctrinal*.' Chapters nine through eleven is '*dispensational*.' Chapters twelve through sixteen is '*duty*.' Following are two further divisions that could be made in Romans; and notice they are *divisions of three*:

Chapters one through eight: ***Faith!***

Chapters nine through eleven: ***Hope!***

Chapters twelve through sixteen: ***Love!***

Chapters one through eight: ***Salvation!***

Chapters nine through eleven: ***Segregation!***

Chapters twelve through sixteen: *Service!*

In chapter nine, Paul places salvation on a very broad basis; making it available to anyone and all persons comprising the entire human race — because the entire human race is lost. *ALL* have sinned and *ALL* come short of the glory of God! So, salvation is offered on one basis alone: faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the entire thesis of this epistle. It is so overly simple; rendering it profoundly complex and complicated.

Many theologians recklessly and irresponsibly mishandle the next three chapters of dispensation, hope and segregation in Romans; and diminish or dismiss their importance; and they do so for a few reasons: the primary of which is that many people reject dispensation wholesale. Rejecting dispensation concludes with a deeply flawed view of theology, friends — we're going to learn *ALL* about dispensation later on safari in Hebrews, trust me. Others, who are smarter than to make a statement of denial concerning dispensation, espouse the same rejection, but with much subtler manners. Basically, they assert dispensation is simply not pertinent to a sincere conversation about Christ. Well, friends, God uses the word "*vital*" for the logic and doctrinal dispensation we extract from the overall epistle to the Romans. Let's try it this way: comprehending doctrinal dispensation is the difference between spiritual life and death.

There is no shocking or perplexing power connection to be made by taking chapter eight and twelve from this epistle and joining them together in a spiritual freight train that attempts to drive the entire Word of God. You could make a better case that the Pacific Ocean doesn't include the Hawaiian Islands than you could for the omission of chapters nine through eleven of Romans. Understanding these three chapters and their function in this epistle is integral and critical to comprehending the overall letter Paul wrote to them and its true spiritual value.

There are certain grand particulars that must be understood as fundamental principles and premises. There is a psychological factor; there is a historical factor; there is a doctrinal factor. Let's begin with the psychological factor. Of course, we're talking about the personal experience of the apostle Paul. Most say Galatians came from Paul's heart, but Romans

came from his head. Well, I don't know about that – but what I do know is that Paul's heart is laid wide open here, and he says his hearts desire is that Israel might be saved; and it is articulated thousands of years later through documentation of profound intelligence!

Interestingly, we closed chapter eight on an impressively high peak of triumph and joy! We learned all about the overwhelming truth that there is no separation of believers from God. It almost seems odd how this present chapter nine begins in despair and sorrow. There is a dramatic change of subject matter that reveals heart-break in the life of Paul the apostle.

There is also the historical factor; and modern theological interpretation has failed almost completely to factor in this variable. The present-day church is largely Gentile. The Jewish background has been all but forgotten! People assume the Old Testament promises have somehow been absorbed by the church. The arbitrary assumption is that somehow the church is heir to Old Testament prophecies, and that God is through with the nation Israel. The only way those conclusions are formed is as a result of abject Biblical illiteracy; because the early church was one hundred percent Jewish.

I have always found “*prophetic congresses*” rather amusing; but never accurate. People who present those seminars usually think they are irreplaceably important to God, and that He couldn't possibly operate this universe without them. My experience has been they are more disorganized – and *FAR* more dangerous – than any rank unbeliever. Most people never know those meetings are ever taking place; and comparing them to the entire city of Jerusalem being shaken in Acts is arbitrary. These people never have any place for the future program and purpose of God for the nation Israel according to the Bible. Well, if there were no place for Israel in the future, then why have a prophetic congress in the first place?

Paul asks later, “.... *has God cast off His people that He foreknew?*” Dr. Stifler answered, “.... *it has been passively assumed in Christian interpretation that Judaism's day is over, that an elect leveling church built on faith in the Lord Jesus Christ was the intent of the law and the prophets, and that it was the duty of all Jews to drop their peculiarities and come into*

the church. Such an assumption the Jew ascribed to Paul. It is strangely forgotten that the mother church in Jerusalem and Judaea never had a single Gentile within its fold. The outside convert could never have been admitted to the earliest church. Every member of that primitive body was highly zealous of the law. They accepted Jesus as the Messiah, but they abandoned none of their old customs or hopes. Christianity has suffered the most from an attempt to interpret it from a Gentile point of view as opposed to a Jewish point of view. Only the church at Jerusalem – NOT the church at Antioch or Ephesus or Rome - furnishes the only sufficient historic outlook.”

It is narrow, simplistic, and revealing of complete prophetic ignorance to espouse God is finished with His plan and purpose for the nation Israel as His witness to the world. God hasn't cast away His chosen people. He made a covenant with them. There are promises remaining to the nation Israel that are going to be fulfilled. Simultaneously, God has made other promises to the church. It's important to understand the distinction and difference between Israel and the church and the promises made to each. All the while, He is calling out a people to His Name from amongst the Jews and the Gentiles.

Acts 15: 13 *And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: 14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. 15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, 16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: 17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. 18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world ~*

I believe Acts chapter fifteen holds the crux of prophetic interpretation. When God is finished calling a people out to His Name, He will remove the church from the earth and rebuild David's temple – with David ruling and reigning physically and literally in Jerusalem. We're told ALL Gentiles at that time will turn to God. That is when Christ sets up His kingdom on the earth. Those are historical eschatological Scriptural facts that cannot be ignored.

Only when we process all of this correctly can we begin to rightly divide and consider the Biblical doctrinal factor. That concerns the proper, correct and complete dispensational interpretation *including* the sovereign purposes of God Almighty for His chosen people, the nation Israel! *All* of this is critical to our prophetic grasp of Scriptural understanding. If any piece of Romans or Hebrews is misunderstood or taught incorrectly, then prophecy simply won't work. Period.

Our safari has traced the great subjects of sin, salvation, sanctification – from grace to glory – in the first eight chapters. We now know that rituals and ceremonies have no weight or standing before God. Faith is the only currency accepted in the New Jerusalem. Any man, irrespective of race or condition, can find mercy in Christ; and, I'll admit, this does seem to level out the distinctions made in the Old Testament if we don't have all of the information. However, Paul says God has not cast away His people. So, we have to account for that. Also remember that, chronologically, this was given to the Jew first. God is not finished with Israel; it simply cannot be otherwise when the *totality* of Holy Writ is rightly divided and weighed.

This chapter brings us God's *PAST* dealings with the nation Israel. Chapter ten will bring God's *PRESENT* dealings with Israel. Chapter eleven brings God's *FUTURE* plan for His chosen people! If we keep that in mind, this will all make perfect sense. It is very important to note we're talking about God's *PAST* history in chapter nine regarding Israel in relation to Jehovah's functions and purposes. They are not the chosen people due to superior qualities or amazing abilities. On the contrary, God and His actions are all found to occur in His Own sovereign will! God functions through mercy in His dealings with Israel and all others because He sees their need when they cry out to Him. No other reason, friends.

Martin Luther said, "*... who hath not known passion? The cross and the travail of death cannot intreat the foreknowledge and the election of grace without injury and inward enmity toward God; wherefore, take heed that thou drink not wine while thou art yet a sucking babe.*" Maybe you should sit down for a while. That may be the strongest dose of medicine we've had in the Spiritual Safari thus far. Friends, We're going to look at something

now that will literally blow your mind, as they say; we won't be able to finish it in this report, but we will in the next....

1 I say the truth in Christ, I do not lie, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit,

2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.

~ Remember, Paul was being accused of being an enemy of his own Jewish people at the time he wrote this epistle. In Acts chapter twenty-three, the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed him. I think it is not possible for you and me to adequately understand Paul's anguish for his own people. His patience in the presence of their persistent persecution is impressive — and indicative of his love for them. Paul knew exactly how the Jews really felt about Christ and the church – Christianity, in general – and they didn't think good things about it. Paul once felt the same way himself. He was a Pharisee – that means he was a religious leader; and he truly desired for them to come to Christ as he had....

3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

~ Verse three presents a problem in translation. Let's try it this way: "...for I was once myself accursed from Christ as my brethren and kinsman according to the flesh." That is accurate; and, frankly, I do not understand Paul if the Authorized Version has this translation correct. It doesn't affect this doctrine either way; but Paul just finished telling us that *NOTHING* could separate us from the love of Christ Jesus. Christ loves Israel. So, if Paul were '*wishing he were accursed*' that would be meaningless, in my estimation. He just told us that he *CAN'T* be accursed; so, that reduces either argument to academic oratorical gesture. That could be a real problem, except Paul was always sincere and always knew *EXACTLY* what he was saying.

At one time, Paul *was* accursed from Christ; just as all the brethren were. Paul knew he couldn't be accursed in Christ, and he wanted *EVERYONE* to

attain to that position, also; and Paul wanted *EVERYONE* to come to know the Lord Jesus Christ in a personal saving relationship. It is beyond difficult to estimate the measure of love both Moses and Paul had for Israel; and we'll talk more about that later on safari....

4 Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;

5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

~ Who are Israelites? That's the group we're going to define ad infinitude as we move forward in our Spiritual Safari. Verses four and five are eight sub-indicators declaring Israel as God's chosen people. The adoption reference pertains to the national entity — *not* individuals. The *ONLY* nation God ever called His "son" is the nation Israel; Exodus chapter four verse twenty-two, God said to Moses Israel was His firstborn. Deuteronomy chapter seven verse six tells us they were a holy people unto the Lord thy God. God chose Israel to be a special people above all people on the face of the earth. Well, either God meant that, or He didn't mean it; and if you say He didn't mean it, then there is no reason for you to believe John chapter three verse sixteen. God meant every word of it; and that is a *big* problem for most contemporary theology.

Hosea 11: 1 When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt ~

God always speaks of the nation as a whole being His son — *NEVER* an individual. God never referred to Abraham, Noah, Moses, Joshua, David, Samuel, Solomon or Hezekiah — none of them — as a son. The adoption was theirs! The glory in verse four means the physical presence of God was with them; just as it was manifested in the tabernacle and later in the temple. Remember, in Exodus chapter forty verse thirty-five, Moses couldn't even enter the tabernacle because the cloud abode and filled the tent; and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

Israel is the only body of people who have ever had the physical and visible presence and leading of Jehovah. We have *NO* visible presence of Him today – and we need to remember that. I know people set tents dangerously close to a cliff edge and proclaim, “*you can see angels!*” No, friends, there’s just something radically wrong with your thinking. And it usually involves alcohol, too. They don’t call liquor spirits accidentally, you know? No other nation has had the visible presence of God, the church doesn’t have it, and no individual has it, either. Alright, we’ll continue examining the remaining indicators of why the nation Israel is the only people ever called by God in our next report. May God richly bless you, my beloved readers ~