**Lesson 24: Privileged and Yet in Unbelief**

Text: Romans 9:1-5

**Introduction**

In the previous lesson, we considered the fact that believers are secure in Christ’s love. Paul reached the pinnacle of his explanation of justification by faith. It is as though Paul was shouting from the mountain tops and rejoicing in God’s work to save any who comes to Him by faith. You would expect Paul to begin a section of application. You certainly wouldn’t expect the next section to be characterized by lamentation!

Rather than immediately applying these great truths, he dealt with the problem of Israel’s unbelief. This is not a detour in Paul’s train of thought. From the beginning of his letter, Paul has been dealing with the subject of salvation and how it relates to Jews and Gentiles alike. Everywhere Paul traveled he encountered tension between Jewish and Gentile believers. As we have seen, there were those who had their concerns about Paul’s position on this matter. As the apostle to the Gentiles, he often found himself in the midst of a debate regarding the Jewish law and Christian liberty. In chapters 9-11, Paul speaks from the heart as he addresses this issue. Instead of continuing in praise, he grieves over the fact that privileged Israel was still in unbelief! They were privileged in so many ways and yet in unbelief!

1. **With all the attention given to the church, it is natural to wonder what would happen to Israel.** 
   1. How could the Jews be the chosen people of God and condemned at the same time? Has the church replaced Israel? Did God fail to keep His promises to Israel? What is going to happen to Israel?
   2. These are important questions because they involve the character of God.
   3. They are also of great importance because they relate to the future of Israel.
      1. “Unless you understand God’s plan and program for Israel, you will never understand the Bible and you most certainly will be confused about Bible prophecy.” (Sam Davison)
      2. “Israel is the only nation in the world with a complete history – past, present, and future.” (Warren Wiersbe)
      3. By the time we conclude our study of chapter 11, you will see that God will be true to every promise He ever made to Israel.
2. **Paul’s great concern for his own people is evident in these chapters.** 
   1. He longs for them to come to Christ (10:1-3). Their Jewish birth does not grant automatic salvation. They need the new birth as much as any Gentile. (John 3:1-7)
   2. He hopes to convince the Jewish Christians residing in Rome that his position regarding the relationship between Jews and Gentiles is completely founded on God’s Word.
   3. Paul went to great lengths to persuade his readers that he was being completely honest. (v. 1)
      1. He said that he was stating the truth in Christ. He was not lying! His conscience and the Holy Spirit confirmed that he was telling the truth. Why would he sense the need to establish that he was speaking honestly and transparently?
      2. He knew that his teaching regarding freedom from the law had caused many Jewish believers to distrust him. They considered him a traitor to their own people. He wrote to clarify his position on this hotly debated issue. He is also going to make a staggering statement in the next verses.
   4. He had *great* *heaviness* (grief) and *continual sorrow* (unceasing anguish) in his heart for his fellow countrymen. (v. 2) Like Jesus, he grieved over Israel’s lost state (Matthew 23:37).
   5. He was grieved for his own nation because he knew that they were still condemned in their sin. (v. 3)
      1. He cared so much for them that he was willing to take their place.
      2. The word *accursed* has the idea of being cut off from Christ. They were eternally doomed without Christ. He knew that he couldn’t do this, but that Christ did (Galatians 3:13).
   6. It is significant that Paul begins to use the term “Israelite” and “Israel” in this section. “Israel” was the name given to Jacob. It signified their relationship with God.
   7. In verses 4-5a, Paul lists seven privileges of the Israelites.
      1. They were blessed to adopted by God. Wait a minute! He just described Christians in this fashion (Romans 8:14-17). Is he saying they have the same status? This would not be consistent with what Paul has communicated to this point. He is referring to the nation as a whole, not to individuals within the nation. This is an important distinction to keep in mind throughout chapters 9-11. Israel is referred to as God’s son (Exodus 4:22-23; Hosea 11:1). This simply means that He chose them as His people to work His plan through them.
      2. Israel was privileged to know the glory of God at Mount Sinai, the Tabernacle and the Temple. They were blessed by the presence of God.
      3. They are privileged to be in a covenant relationship with God. He made a covenant with Abraham, Moses and David. Add to this list the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31).
      4. They were privileged to receive the law at Mount Sinai.
      5. They were privileged to be instructed in the way to serve God in the Tabernacle and Temple.
      6. They are privileged to be the recipients of God’s promises.
      7. They were privileged to share in the same heritage as their fathers. To be a descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as well as other great patriarchs was a privilege indeed!
   8. On top of all these wonderful privileges, they shared the same lineage as Christ! (v. 5b)
      1. The phrase “of whom as concerning the flesh” means that Jesus came from the physical descendants of Abraham. They were privileged to be the people group through whom God would send the Savior of the world!
      2. How sad that He came to His own people and they did not receive Him! (John 1:11)
   9. The end of verse 5 serves as a reference to Jesus’ deity.
      1. He is over all!
      2. He is God blessed forever!
3. **Central Idea: Paul was grieved because Israel was privileged and yet remained in unbelief.**
4. **Application: It is sad to be privileged and yet remain in unbelief.** 
   1. Americans have many privileges. They have more opportunity to hear the gospel than any people on earth and yet so many remain in unbelief. Too busy for God. Too intelligent for God!
   2. There may be someone here who has been privileged to hear the gospel numerous times and yet you are resisting the Holy Spirit’s conviction.
   3. There are political leaders, business leaders, athletes, evangelists and others who have abused the privileges they have been granted.
   4. It is possible for believers and members of our church to be privileged in more ways than we can count and yet not live for God. Many are blessed to have godly parents, a great church family, and still live for themselves. How sad!

**Conclusion**

Have you taken advantage of the way that you have been blessed by God? Pause to consider all the privileges that are in your life and then consider if you have allowed them to make you self-sufficient or more dependent on God. God has been so good to all of us! Make sure that you have trusted Him for salvation and that you are living each day for Him.