

Paul's Epistle to the Romans

LESSON **XXII** : OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS 9-11 / PAUL'S BURDEN FOR ISRAEL – CHAP 9 VERSES 1-5

Moo's outline:

- I. The Letter Opening (1:1-17)
- II. The Heart of the Gospel: Justification by Faith (1:18 – 4:25)
- III. The Assurance Provided by the Gospel: The Hope of Salvation (5:1 – 8:39)
- IV. The Defense of the Gospel: The Problem of Israel (9:1 – 11:36)
 - A. Introduction: The Tension Between God's Promises and Israel's Plight (9:1-5)
 - B. Defining the Promise (1) : God's Sovereign Election (9:6-29)
 - C. Understanding Israel's Plight: Christ as the Climax of Salvation History (9:30 – 10:21)
 - D. Summary: Israel, the "Elect," and the "Hardened" (11:1-10)
 - E. Defining the Promise (2) : The Future of Israel (11:11-32)
 - F. Conclusion: Praise to God in Light of His Awesome Plan (11:33-36)

“Paul frames chaps. 9-11 with allusions to the key tension he is seeking to resolve: the Jews, recipients of so many privileges (9:4-5), are not experiencing the salvation offered in Christ (implied in 9:1-3); they are the objects of God's electing love, yet, from the standpoint of the gospel, they are ‘enemies’ (11:28). Paul's aim is to resolve this tension. *The tension arises from the historical circumstance that the majority of Jews have rejected the gospel. Why is this, if indeed the gospel is ‘first of all’ for Jews (cf. 1:16)? But the tension has theological roots also. Paul's own explanation of the gospel in chaps. 1-8 is partly responsible for this theological tension. He has denied that Jews are guaranteed salvation through the Mosaic covenant (chap. 2, especially). What, then, becomes of their OT status as ‘God's chosen people’? Magnifying the problem is Paul's repeated insistence that what once apparently belonged to, or was promised to, Israel now belongs to believers in Jesus Christ, whether Jew or Gentile. Christians are Abraham's heirs (chap. 4), God's adopted children (8:14-17), possessors of the Spirit (chap. 8), and heirs of God's own glory (5:2; 8:18-30). If Jewish rejection of the gospel creates the problem Paul grapples with in Rom. 9-11, Gentile acceptance of that same gospel exacerbates it. It seems that Israel has not only been disinherited but replaced. Paul earlier categorically but briefly rejected the conclusion that his teaching implied the cancellation of all the Jews' advantages (3:1-4). Now he elaborates.*

“Of course, Paul could have cut the Gordian knot by simply claiming that the church had taken over Israel's position and leaving it at that. But what, then, would become of the continuity between the OT and the gospel? For the Jewish claim to privileged status arises not simply from a self-generated nationalistic fervor; it is rooted in the OT: ‘*The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people*’ (Deut 7:6b). Paul could not jettison these promises, for to do so would be to jettison the gospel. *The gospel is ‘the gospel of God’ (1:1), and the God of whom Paul speaks is none other than the God who has spoken and acted in Israel's history. Paul must, then, demonstrate that the God who chose and made promises to Israel is the same God who has opened the doors of salvation ‘to all who believe.’ To do so, Paul must prove that God has done nothing in the gospel that is inconsistent with his word of promise to Israel; that the gospel he preaches is not the negation but the affirmation of God's plan revealed in the OT (see, e.g., 1:2; 3:21; as Beker says, ‘... the gospel to the Gentiles has no foundation and no legitimacy unless it confirms the faithfulness of God to his promises to Israel.’). It is for this reason that Paul quotes the OT so often in Rom. 9-11 (almost a third of all Paul's quotations are found in these chapters): he is seeking to demonstrate ‘the congruity between God's word in Scripture and God's word in Paul's gospel.’ At the same time, then, Paul is demonstrating that God is consistent, faithfully fulfilling all his promises — whether they are found in the OT or the NT (cf. 9:6a).*

“*Romans 9-11, therefore, is an integral part of Paul's letter to the Romans. These chapters contribute to Paul's exposition of the gospel by showing that it provides fully for God's promises to Israel, when those promises are rightly understood.* The appropriateness of Rom. 9-11 within the letter is revealed also in the many specific textual and thematic contacts with chaps. 1-8. But the very number of these contacts suggests that chaps. 9-11 form a distinct argument, relating generally to the argument of chaps. 1-8 without being tied to any one text or theme. *However, to call Rom. 9-11 the climax or center of the letter is going too far. Such an evaluation often arises from a desire to minimize the importance of the individual's relationship to God in chaps. 1-8. But the individual's standing before God is the center of Paul's gospel, which offers salvation only on the basis of a personal response (1:16). If some earlier expositors of Paul were too preoccupied with his teaching about the individual's relationship to God at the expense of his emphasis on the corporate relationship between Jews and Gentiles, many contemporary scholars are making the opposite mistake. Individual and corporate perspectives are intertwined in Paul. His claim that individual Jews are sinners, in danger of God's wrath (2:1 – 3:20), requires him to deal with the status of the people Israel.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 548ff]

ISRAEL IS THE FOCUS OF CHAPTERS 9 – 11 — Douglas Moo lists opinions of those who believe chaps. 9-11 disrupts the flow of Romans: Augustine thought that Paul added these chapters to illustrate and expand on his view of predestination. C. H. Dodd (*St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*) thinks Paul inserted these chapters from a pre-existing sermon. James Denney

(*Expositor's Greek NT: Romans*) finds a psychological but no logical link between chaps. 1-8 and 9-11. F. Refoulé makes a more radical suggestion: chapters 9-11 may have been added by a disciple of Paul's. This is to misunderstand the purpose of these three chapters.

“Paul’s celebration of God’s faithfulness and love in 8:31-39 is a fitting end to his theological exposition. We might now expect Paul to solidify and apply his theology in a series of exhortations of the kind that often conclude his letters. But these exhortations do not begin until chap. 12. What fills the gap between the end of chap. 8 and the beginning of chap. 12 is Paul’s anguished wrestling with the problem of Israel’s unbelief. Is this section, then, a detour from the main line of Paul’s argument in Romans, an excursus that disrupts the natural flow of the letter? Not at all. Rom. 9-11 is an important and integral part of the letter. ***Those who relegate chaps. 9-11 to the periphery of Romans have misunderstood the purpose of Rom. 9-11, or of the letter, or of both.... Paul’s presentation and defense of ‘his’ gospel to the Roman Christians occurs against the backdrop of controversy over the relationship between Judaism and the church. Paul, the ‘apostle to the Gentiles,’ found himself at the center of this debate. A decade of struggle to preserve the integrity and freedom of the gospel from a fatal mixture with the Jewish torah lies behind him; a critical encounter with Jews and Jewish Christians suspicious of him because of his outspoken stance in this very struggle lies immediately ahead (cf. Rom 15:30-33). And the Roman Christians themselves are caught up in this issue, divided over the degree to which, as Christians, they are to retain the Jewish heritage of their faith. Once we recognize the importance of this Jewish motif in Romans we can give Rom. 9-11 its appropriate place in the letter. In these chapters Paul is not simply using Israel to illustrate a theological point, such as predestination or the righteousness of God. He is talking about Israel herself, as he wrestles with the implications of the gospel for God’s ‘chosen people’ of the OT.***” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 547f]

“[T]he purpose of Rom 9-11 must be explained in relation to the purpose of the whole letter.... [N]o suggested purpose for the letter is more probable than the one implied in 1:10ff and 15:20ff: ‘Paul writes to this community because in spite of the existence of a Christian community there he feels *obligated* to preach the gospel there too (1:15), *and* because he desires the material help of the Romans for his mission plans in Spain and the spiritual help of the Romans for his perseverance in Jerusalem (15:24).’ Paul aims to lay before this church the Christian gospel which he preaches so that they can see ‘the grace given to me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God’ (15:15f). ***Since the gospel that he proclaims in Rom 1-8 is the power of God unto salvation ‘to the Jews first’ (1:16) and since the Christ is ‘descended from David according to the flesh’ (1:3) and ‘there is great value in circumcision’ (3:2) and ‘the faithlessness of the Jews does not nullify the faithfulness of God’ (3:3) and a saving promise was made ‘to Abraham and his descendants’ (4:13), the question of Israel’s destiny becomes acute. It grows necessarily out of the exposition of Rom 1-8.***” [Piper, John, *The Justification of God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 9:1-23*; Baker Books, originally published 1983; seventh printing 2003; pg 18]

HOW CAN WE AS BELIEVERS TRUST GOD IF HE FORSOOK ISRAEL? — “[I] see the necessity for Rom 9-11 in this: the hope of the Christian, with which Rom 1-8 came to a climax, is wholly dependent on God’s faithfulness to his word, his call (8:28, 30). But ... ‘Can the new community trust God’s Word when it seems to have failed the Jews?’ The unbelief of Israel, the chosen people, and their consequent separation from Christ (Rom 9:3) seem to call God’s word into question and thus to jeopardize not only the privileged place of Israel, but also the Christian hope as well. Therefore, in Paul’s view, the theme of Rom 9-11 is not optional; it is essential for the securing of Rom 1-8. This view of Rom 9-11 assumes that Rom 9:6a (God’s word has not fallen) is the main point which Rom 9-11 was written to prove, in view of Israel’s unbelief and rejection. What is at stake ultimately in these chapters is not the fate of Israel; that is penultimate. Ultimately God’s own trustworthiness is at stake. And if God’s word of promise cannot be trusted to stand forever, then all our faith is in vain. ... [L. Goppelt, *Israel und die Kirche*]: ‘If God’s word, which calls Israel to become his people and expresses his election of them (Rom 9:6; 11:28), has fallen then the ground of Christian hope, the climax of Rom 1-8, has also collapsed: “Those whom he predestined, these he also called; and those whom he called, these he also justified; and those whom he justified, these he also glorified” (Rom 8:30).’ ... [J. Munck, *Christ and Israel*]: ‘If God has not fulfilled his promises made to Israel, then what basis has the Jewish-Gentile church for believing that the promises will be fulfilled for them?’” [Piper, *The Justification of God*, pg 19]

pe-nul-ti-mate (pī-nūl-tē-mīt)
— adj: next to last

C. E. B. Cranfield: “But why did Paul place these chapters just here, in spite of the obvious connexions of thought which exist between chapters 1 to 8 and 12.1-15.13? To this question the following observations provide, we think, a sufficient reply:

“(i) A connexion of thought may be discerned between the subject matter of chapters 9 to 11 and 8.17-39 on life in the Spirit as characterized by hope, and especially vv. 28-39 dealing with the certainty of that hope. In 8.28-30 Paul has referred to God’s purpose as the ground of our certainty. But, according to the OT, the nation of Israel had a special place within God’s purpose. The end of this section was therefore a natural point at which to introduce a discussion of the relation of Israel to the divine purpose. We may, in fact, go further and say that at this point the need for such a discussion has become urgent, since the very reliability of God’s purpose as the ground of Christian hope is called in question by the exclusion of the majority of Jews. ***If the truth is that God’s purpose with Israel has been frustrated, then what sort of a basis for Christian hope is God’s purpose? And, if God’s love for Israel (cf., e.g., Deut 7:7f; Jer 31:3) has ceased, what reliance can be placed on Paul’s conviction that nothing can separate us from God’s love in Christ (v. 38f)?***

“(ii) The connexions of thought between chapters 1 to 8 and 12.1-15.13, though close, are not such as to make the insertion of the

three chapters between them undesirable; for the ethical consequences of God's deed in Christ have already been indicated in principle in the course of chapters 5 to 8, and what Paul is going to give in 12.1-15.13 is teaching of a different kind, namely, particular and concrete exhortation. Moreover, there is an important positive advantage in the order which has been adopted; for the discussion of God's dealings with Israel makes possible a fuller and profounder understanding of the gospel Paul has already set forth and chapters 1 to 11 are therefore a more satisfactory theological basis for the ensuing ethical exhortation than chapters 1 to 8 could have been." [Cranfield, *Romans*, pg 446f]

DOES THE GOSPEL REPLACE ISRAEL OR IS IT A CONTINUUM? — "Tied though these chapters are to the immediate needs and problems of both Paul and the Roman Christians, we should not miss the larger and enduring theological issue that they address. Israel's unbelief of the gospel is a matter of significance not only to the Roman Christians, or to first-century Christians generally, but to all Christians. For it raises the question of the continuity of salvation history: *Does the gospel presented in the NT genuinely 'fulfill' the OT and stand, thus, as its natural completion? Or is the gospel a betrayal of the OT, with no claim therefore to come from the same God who elected and made promises to Israel? We need to hear Paul's careful and balanced answer to these questions. He teaches that the gospel is the natural continuation of OT salvation history — against an incipient 'Marcionism' that would sever the gospel from the OT and Judaism. But at the same time, he teaches that the gospel is also the fulfillment of salvation history — against the Judaizing tendency to view the gospel in terms of the torah....* [quoting J. Munck] 'The unbelief of the Jews is not merely a missionary problem that concerned the earliest mission to the Jews but a fundamental problem for all Christian thought in the earliest church. Israel's unbelief is a difficulty for all Christians, both Jewish and Gentile.'" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 553]

COMMENTS REGARDING CHAPTERS 9 – 11 — "With regard to the special difficulties which the contents of these chapters present, those features which have struck very many students of the Epistle to the Romans — not surprisingly — as offensive and repugnant, several things may usefully be said at this point.

"(i) It is of the utmost importance to take these three chapters together as a whole, and not to come to conclusions about Paul's argument before one has heard it to the end; for chapter 9 will certainly be understood in an altogether un-Pauline sense, if it is understood in isolation from its sequel in chapters 10 and 11.

"(ii) We shall misunderstand these chapters if we fail to recognize that their key-word is 'mercy'. Paul is here concerned to show that the problem of Israel's unbelief, which seems to call in question the very reliability of God Himself, is connected with the nature of God's mercy as really mercy and as mercy not just for one people but for all peoples; to show that Israel's disobedience, together with the divine judgment which it merits and procures, is surrounded on all sides by the divine mercy — and at the same time to bring home to the Christian community in Rome the fact that it is by God's mercy alone that it lives.... Too much weight should not be put on statistics of word-occurrences; but it is hardly accidental that the verb ἐλεεῖν [ellein, 'compassion, mercy'], which occurs once elsewhere in Romans and five other times in the whole of the Pauline corpus (including the Pastorals), occurs seven times in these chapters, that the noun ἔλεος [eleos, 'mercy'], which occurs elsewhere in the Pauline corpus only once in Romans, once in Galatians, once in Ephesians and five times in the Pastorals, occurs twice in these chapters, while the verb οἰκτίρειν [oiktirein, 'pity'] occurs in the NT only in Rom. 9:15....

"(iii) It is only where the Church persists in refusing to learn this message, where it secretly — perhaps quite unconsciously! — believes that its own existence is based on human achievement, and so fails to understand God's mercy to itself, that it is unable to believe in God's mercy for still unbelieving Israel, and so entertains the ugly and unscriptural notion that God has cast off His people Israel and simply replaced it by the Christian Church. These three chapters emphatically forbid us to speak of the Church as having once and for all taken the place of the Jewish people.

"(iv) Mention must be made here of the magnificent section on God's election of grace [by Karl Barth], which, it may be confidently affirmed, would have been enough by itself to place its author among the greatest theologians of the Church, even if he had written nothing else. The decisive amendment of doctrine which he has proposed is something which, when once it has been clearly formulated, seems so entirely obvious that it is almost incredible that it had not been proposed and carried through long before. It is that *'the doctrine of election must not begin in abstracto either with the concept of an electing God or with that of elected man. It must begin concretely with the acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as both the electing God and elected man.'* Although this insight was present in Reformation theology as a pastoral direction, it was not allowed to control and illumine the doctrine of election. Instead, the Church's doctrine of election was isolated from Christology, as though it had to do with an electing God from which Christ was somehow absent. Against this divorce of the doctrine of election from Christology Barth has protested that 'There is no such thing as a *decretum absolutum*. There is no such thing as a will of God apart from the will of Jesus Christ.' And, because he has recognized in God's election of grace 'the eternal beginning of all the ways and works of God in Jesus Christ' and seen that 'In Jesus Christ God in His free grace determines Himself for sinful man and sinful man for himself' and 'therefore takes upon Himself the rejection of man with all its consequences, and elects man for participation in His own glory', he is able to affirm that the scriptural doctrine of predestination is 'not a mixed message of joy and terror', but 'is light and not darkness' and 'The election of grace is the sum of the Gospel.'

"For Barth election means first of all and basically God's election of Jesus Christ, but included in His election Barth sees both the election of 'the many', i.e. of individual sinful men, and, in a mediating position between this election of 'the many' and the election of the One, the election of 'the one community of God by the existence of which Jesus Christ is to be attested to the

whole world and the whole world summoned to faith in Jesus Christ'. We thus get a threefold scheme: the election of Jesus Christ, the election of the community, and the election of the individual. The recognition of these different elections included in the election of Jesus Christ will save us from immediately attempting to refer what Paul says to the ultimate destiny of individuals, on which the traditional doctrine has tended to concentrate attention almost exclusively. It is, in fact, with the election of the community that Paul is concerned in Romans 9 to 11, and Barth's account of the two forms of the one community illumines many of the difficulties of these chapters. For example, it makes it possible to see how it is that Paul can speak in 9.6ff of some members of Israel who in a sense are not members of Israel, and yet in the sequel speak of Israel as a whole (including these members who in one sense are not members) as being the people whom God has elected. For, according to Barth's exposition, the one community of God exists in history in two forms, on the one hand, as the Israel within Israel and (continuous with it) the believing Church made up of both Jews and Gentiles, and, on the other hand, as that bulk of Israel which is not the inner Israel and (continuous with it) the unbelieving Jews; and, while it is only in the one form that its testimony to Jesus Christ is positive, conscious, voluntary, joyful, even in its other form it cannot avoid bearing witness to Him and its testimony is, in its own negative, unconscious, involuntary and joyless way, most eloquent and effective."
 [Cranfield, *Romans*, pg 447ff]

Alva McClain: *"So we are confronted with an amazing and beautiful unfolding of the plan of God: chapter 9 — election; chapter 10 — rejection; chapter 11 — reception. The absolute sovereignty of God is seen in election. The moral responsibility of man is seen in rejection. The final purpose of God is seen in reception — that is, the future reception of Israel back into the will of God."* [McClain, *Romans*, pg 175]

Douglas Moo: "The body of Rom. 9-11 is framed by an opening personal lament (9:1-5) and a closing doxology (11:33-36). The intervening material can be divided into four basic sections. The first (9:6-26) opens with a positive assertion — 'It is not as though the word of God had failed' — that states a possible implication from what Paul has written in vv. 1-5. This assertion is taken by many to be the thesis that Paul defends throughout Rom. 9-11. While it is true that Paul is concerned to show the compatibility of his understanding of the gospel and the OT throughout these chapters, those who view each of the main units of Rom. 9-11 as parallel defenses of this statement may be guilty of imposing a neat 'outline' format on Paul that he never intended. Paul's argument proceeds in a more 'linear' fashion, with each new section building on, or responding to, points in the previous section (or sections). Suggesting such a progressive form of argument is the fact that each of the three remaining units in Paul's argument is introduced with a rhetorical question that ties it to what has preceded. We may then summarize the movement of Paul's argument as follows:

9:1-5 — Introduction of the issue Paul seeks to resolve: the Jews' failure to embrace the gospel (vv. 1-3) calls into question the value of the privileges and promises God has given them (vv. 4-5).

9:6-29 — Defense of the proposition in v. 6a — 'the word of God has not failed.' Paul argues that God's word never promised salvation to all the biological descendants of Abraham (9:6b-13). Salvation is never a birthright, even for Jews, but always a gift of God's electing love (vv. 14-23), a gift he is free to bestow on Gentiles as well as Jews (vv. 24-29).

9:30-10:21 — Connected to 9:6b-29 (and esp. vv. 25-29) with the rhetorical question 'What then shall we say?' Paul uses his understanding of the gospel to explain the surprising turn in salvation history, as Jews are cast aside while Gentiles stream into the kingdom.

11:1-10 — Connected to 9:30-10:21 (esp. vv. 20-21) and indirectly to 9:6b-29 with the rhetorical question 'I ask, then' Paul summarizes the situation of Israel as he has outlined in the previous two sections and prepares for the next section by affirming the continuation of Israel's election.

11:11-32 — Connected to 11:1-10 (esp. v. 7a) with the rhetorical question 'I ask then' Paul argues that Israel's current hardened state is neither an end in itself nor is it permanent. God is using Israel's casting aside in a salvific process that reaches out to Gentiles and will include Israel once again.

11:33-36 — Response to the teaching of Rom. 9-11 with extolling of God's transcendent plan and doxology....

Note also that each of these sections concludes with a series of OT quotations, or a mixed OT quotation; 9:25-29; 10:18-21; 11:8-10; 11:26b-27." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 553f]

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law,

I speak the truth in Christ — I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit — I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the

Truth I say in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing testimony with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great grief and unceasing pain in my heart — for I was wishing, I myself, to be anathema from the Christ — for my brethren, my kindred, according to the flesh, who are Israelites, whose [is] the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the lawgiving, and the service, and the

and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. (Rom 9:1-5 KJV)

temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen. (Rom 9:1-5 NIV)

promises, whose [are] the fathers, and of whom [is] the Christ, according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed to the ages. Amen. (Rom 9:1-5 Young's Literal Translation)

“Paul signals a break in his argument by the abrupt transition from chap. 8 to chap. 9. No conjunction or particle connects the two chapters, and the tone shifts dramatically from celebration (8:31-39) to lamentation (9:1-3). Paul begins his exposition of the gospel and Israel with an impassioned assertion of his own concern for his ‘kindred according to the flesh’ (vv. 1-3). Implied by this concern, as the word ‘accursed’ in v. 3 makes especially clear, is a circumstance well known among the Roman Christians: the great majority of the Jewish people have not responded in faith to the gospel. ***But Paul’s concern is not the result only of a natural love for his own people; nor is it directed only to their salvation. As the rehearsal of Israel’s privileges in vv. 4-5 makes clear, Paul is also concerned that Israel’s unbelief has ruptured the continuous course of salvation history: the people promised so many blessing have, it seems, been disinherited. It will be Paul’s task to show that this is not the case.***” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 555]

V 1 — RHETORICAL DEVICE USED BY PAUL — Paul begins this chapter with a series of double expressions for rhetorical effect: “I am speaking the truth” / “I am not lying” ; “in Christ” / “in the Holy Spirit” ; “great pain” / “ceaseless anguish”.

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not — “Paul draws his readers’ attention to what he is about to say by forcefully proclaiming his sincerity. He emphasizes the point by putting it both positively — ‘I am speaking the truth’ — and negatively — ‘I am not lying.’ And he adds conviction to his assertions by joining to each a reference to the Christian reality from which he speaks. The truth that Paul speaks (the word for truth in the Greek comes first for emphasis), he speaks ‘in Christ,’ ‘as one united with Christ.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 555f] ***“The Jews regarded the Apostle Paul as their most determined enemy. What, therefore, he was about to declare concerning his great sorrow on account of the present state of his countrymen, would not easily procure from them credit. Yet it was a truth which he could affirm without hypocrisy, and with the greatest sincerity.”*** [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 441f]

my conscience also bearing me witness — “Moreover, his assertion that he does not lie is confirmed to him by the witness of his conscience. ‘Conscience’ in Paul is an inborn faculty that monitors a person’s conformity to a moral standard (see 2:15; 11:5; 1 Cor 8:7, 10, 12; 10:25, 27, 28, 29 [twice]; 2 Cor 1:12; 4:2; 5:11; 1 Tim 1:5, 19; 3:9; 4:2; 2 Tim 1:3; Tit. 1:15). The word thus has much the same meaning as it has in modern usage, when we speak, for instance, of having ‘a good conscience’ or ‘a bad conscience.’ Paul assures the Romans that he has a good, or ‘clear,’ conscience about the truthfulness of what he is about to tell them. But one’s conscience is only as good as the moral standard that it monitors. Hence Paul reminds the Romans that, as a believer with a ‘renewed mind’ (12:1-2), his conscience testifies ‘by means of’ the Holy Spirit.... Reference to both Christ and the Holy Spirit could be Paul’s attempt to meet the biblical requirement of ‘two or three witnesses’ to establish lawful testimony (Deut 17:6; 19:15; cf. 2 Cor 13:1).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 556] This probably has the sense of being instrumental; i.e., his conscience testifies to Paul *through* the Holy Spirit (cf. NRSV). “For the sincerity of his love for the Jewish nation, the Apostle appeals to his conscience. His countrymen and others might deem him their enemy: they might consider all his conduct towards them as influenced by hatred; but he had the testimony of his conscience to the contrary.” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 442]

V 2 — “Paul’s grief over the spiritual state of Israel is similar to laments over Israel’s sinful or fallen state in the OT prophets (see, e.g., Jer 4:19; 14:17; Lamentations; Dan 9:3). In these texts, lament over Israel’s fallen condition generally gives way to expressions of hope for her future. Without, then, calling into question Paul’s grief, we can see how naturally his lament fits into the subject that he develops in these chapters.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 557]

V 3 — “for” ... — “Paul now gives the reason for his sorrow: the condemnation under which so many of his fellow Jews stand by reason of their refusal to embrace the gospel. To be sure, he does not state this as his cause for concern in so many words. ***But that no less than eternal condemnation is the issue is plain from his expressed wish to be ‘accursed’ and ‘cut off from Christ’ for the sake of his fellow Jews.***” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 557]

the Messiah — The Greek word “Christ” is equivalent to the Hebrew “Messiah,” both meaning “anointed, the Anointed One.” ***Here the word has the definite article, “the Christ” and therefore has that sense: “I could wish that myself were accursed from the Messiah for my fellow Jews’ sake...”***

accursed — “‘Accursed’ translates the Gk. *anathema*, which, transliterated, has entered into ecclesiastical English to denote a person who is excommunicated. Paul, however, applies the word to the underlying spiritual reality of which the church’s excommunication is but the response: eternal damnation. Paul’s willingness to suffer such a fate himself makes sense only if those on behalf of whom he offers himself stand under that curse themselves.... Cf. 1 Cor 12:3; 16:22; Gal 1:8, 9. Paul picks up the word ἀνάθεμα [anathema] from the LXX, where it translates Heb [cherem], ‘something set apart for God.’ That which is so set apart may be, in a positive sense, an offering in devotion to God (e.g., Lev 27:28; Jud 16:19). But, more often, it has the negative sense of something destined to destruction as an offering to God (e.g., the city of Jericho and the plunder of the Caananite cities is

called ‘anathema’ [Josh 6:17, 18; 7:1, 11-13; 22:20; 1 Chron 2:7]). The rabbis later used [cherem] to denote excommunication. Besides the four Pauline occurrences cited above, ἀνάθεμα [anathema] is found only twice elsewhere in the NT, both with a positive or neutral meaning (Acts 23:14; Luke 21:5).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 557f]

wish, prayer — εὐχομαι [euchomai] is here translated ‘wish’ by many (see NRSV, KJV, NIV, NASB; cf. also Godet) but all other NT occurrences of the word denote a wish expressed to God (Acts 26:29; 27:29; 2 Cor 13:7, 9; James 5:16; 3 John 2) and, therefore, for all intents and purposes, a prayer (see REB; NEB; cf. also Moo, Cranfield). [Moo, *Romans*, pg 558]

my brothers, my kindred — Paul calls his fellow Jews his “brethren,” adding “my kindred according to the flesh” to make clear he is not using “brothers” in his usual spiritual sense of fellow Christians. *“The unbelieving Jews for whom Paul grieves are his ‘kindred’ in the sphere of human relationships — ‘the flesh.’ Paul applies ‘kindred’ to his fellow Jews to demonstrate the degree of his continuing identification with, loyalty to, and concern for them. ‘Apostles to the Gentiles’ he may be; but a Jew he remained. ... Cranfield ... claims that Paul’s application of the word ἀδελφοί [adelphoi, ‘brothers’] to unbelieving Jews means that he ‘recognizes them still, in spite of their unbelief, as fellow-members of the people of God’ and ‘within the elect community.’ Lexically, Cranfield is on solid ground, for 130 of Paul’s 133 other uses of ἀδελφός [adelphos, ‘brother’] clearly mean ‘fellow Christian.’ Paul also furnishes some theological ground for this interpretation; as 11:1-2 makes clear, Paul continues to view Israel as an ‘elect people.’ But it is important to distinguish between this general (and nonsalvific) corporate election of Israel and the salvific individual election of 9:6-29 and 11:5-7. Nevertheless, it is possible that Paul is using ἀδελφός [adelphos, ‘brother’] here to mean simply ‘fellow countrymen’ (BAGD; cf. Acts 2:29; 3:17, 22; 7:2, 23, 25-26).”* [Moo, *Romans*, pg 559]

DID PAUL PRAY TO BE DAMNED IN THE PLACE OF HIS BRETHREN? — “Paul’s prayer that he become *anathema* for the sake of his fellow Jews strikingly demonstrates his love for his own people. But it also creates a difficulty: Would Paul actually have prayed that he be eternally damned so that others could be saved? A few scholars, noting that Paul uses a Greek tense that usually denotes past action (the imperfect), think that Paul is describing only what ‘he used to pray.’ But this is both contextually unlikely and grammatically unnecessary (While the imperfect tense that Paul uses here often denotes past action, it is not, strictly speaking, a past action tense. Only context can make clear that a action denoted by the imperfect takes place in the past, and the context here speaks against a past reference.). *I prefer, in agreement with most English translations, to ascribe a hypothetical nuance to the imperfect tense; as Cranfield paraphrases, ‘I would pray (were it permissible for me so to pray and if the fulfillment of such a prayer could benefit them).’ Paul’s willingness to suffer on behalf of Israel may reflect certain ideas in his own heritage. He would know the stories of the Maccabean martyrs, whose deaths were sometimes thought to have atoning value for the nation of Israel as a whole (see esp. 4 Macc 6:28-29; 17:20-22). Closer to Paul’s situation, however, and more likely to have influenced him, is the example of Moses, who, after the Golden Calf incident, prayed that God would forgive the people of Israel and asked that his own name be blotted out of ‘the book’ if God chose not to forgive (Exod 32:30-32). Allusions to Moses’ history and person elsewhere in Rom. 9-11 (e.g., 9:14-18; 10:19; 11:13-14) make it likely that Paul does see Moses as, to some extent, his own model. As Moses, the leader of God’s people, offered himself for the sake of his people, so Paul offers himself. In keeping with this substitutionary concept, the preposition translated ‘for the sake of’ probably includes the connotation ‘in place of.’ It is by taking the place of his ‘kindred according to the flesh’ under the curse of God that Paul will be able to act ‘for their sake,’ and thus save his fellow Jews (see 10:1).”* [Moo, *Romans*, pg 558f]

“It was for the salvation of his fellow Jews that Paul expresses himself in hyperbole, saying he was willing even to forfeit his salvation, if, somehow, that could save them from God’s condemnation. No one, of course, knew better than Paul that salvation is a believer’s most precious treasure and that only Christ’s sacrificial death has the power to save. *But here he was speaking emotionally, not theologically, and there is no reason to doubt that his awesome statement of self-sacrifice was the expression of a completely honest heart.... It was exactly Paul’s great love for the lost that made him such a powerful instrument in the hands of God. Evangelism has little effect if the evangelist has little love for the lost. John Knox reflected Paul’s great love when he prayed, ‘Give me Scotland or I die,’ Henry Martyn when he said, ‘O that I were a flame of fire in the hand of God,’ and David Brainerd, who prayed that he might burn out for God, which he did before he was thirty years old.”* [MacArthur, *Romans 9-16*, pg 11f]

“In this utterance of self-sacrificing love for his kinsmen, the apostle evinces that the same mind is in him that was also in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. ii. 16; Phil. ii. 5-8). The Redeemer was willing, and in his case it was possible and permissible, to endure, objectively, the pains and penalty of sin without the subjective consciousness of sin.... St. Paul affirms solemnly, and as a man in Christ, that if it were possible and permissible, and the blessing which he desires for his people could come from it, he would do the same thing.” [Shedd, *Romans*, pg 275]

“The common interpretation, and that which seems most natural, is, ‘I am grieved at heart for my brethren, for I could wish myself accursed from Christ, that is, I could be willing to be regarded and treated as anathema, a thing accursed, for their sakes. That this interpretation suits the force and meaning of the words, and is agreeable to the context, must, on all hands, be admitted. The only objection to it is of a theological kind. It is said to be inconsistent with the apostle’s character to wish that he should be accursed from Christ.... *If we can view, unmoved, the perishing condition of our fellow-men, or are unwilling to make sacrifices for their benefit, we are very different from Paul, and from Him who wept over Jerusalem, and died for our good upon Mount Calvary.*” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 297]

Most commentators agree with the gist of the preceding. In contrast however is Robert Haldane: “Does not separation from Christ

mean, being excluded from all hopes of salvation?’ Such a thing is impossible, and would be highly improper. This would do more than fulfill the demands of the law, — it would utterly go beyond the law, and would therefore be sinful; for all our affections ought to be regulated by the law of God.... Paul’s affection for his countrymen is here indeed expressed in very strong terms, but the meaning often ascribed to it is not for a moment to be admitted.” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 443] As mentioned above, Haldane takes Paul’s statement in the past tense and translates “wish, pray” as “boast.” Haldane therefore interprets this a pre-salvation desire of Paul rather than a present prayer of damnation: “*I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart (for I myself made it my boast to be separated from Christ) for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.*”

v 4, 5 — ISRAEL’S PRIVILEGES INCONSISTENT WITH THEIR PRESENT STATE — “In vv. 4-5, Paul enumerates some of the divine privileges given to his ‘kindred according to the flesh.’ *This suggests that Paul’s willingness to sacrifice himself for unbelieving Israel (v. 3) arises not only from love for his own people but also from love for the truthfulness of God’s word. Paul’s concern is not just that so many of his own people seem doomed to hell; it is also that their fate seems incompatible with the many privileges and promises granted to Israel by God in the OT. Thus Paul’s listing of Israel’s blessings prepares the way for the question that is central to this whole section: Has God’s word failed (v. 6a)? But, more than this, it also suggests, albeit very indirectly, one of the answers to that question. For the blessings Paul lists relate not only to Israel’s past that she has forever forfeited; some of them, at least, relate also to Israel’s present state and are pregnant with potential future significance (especially, ‘adoption,’ ‘promises,’ and ‘patriarchs’). While, then, Paul’s inventory of Jewish privileges has as its main purpose the explanation of his willingness to sacrifice himself for his people, it also hints at why that sacrifice will not be necessary: God ‘has not rejected his people whom he foreknew’ (11:2)....* Paul appears to begin such a list in 3:2 without completing it. Since Paul often in Romans introduces briefly themes that he treats in detail later in the letter, we may view this list, along with the larger discussion in chaps. 9-11, as the continuation and expansion of that earlier digression.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 559f]

CAREFULLY ARRANGED LIST — “Paul’s list of Jewish privileges reflects a careful organization. The first term, ‘Israelites,’ stands in its own clause and is the heading for the whole series. There follow three clauses, each connected to Israelites with the relative pronoun ‘whose’ :

- v. 4b, ‘whose are the adoption ... and the promises’;
- v. 5a, ‘whose are the patriarchs’;
- v. 5b-c, ‘and from whom ... forever.’ ...

The first of the clauses that unfolds the significance of the word ‘Israelites’ lists six privileges. The Greek suggests an arrangement in two series of three [adoption ... glory ... covenants / giving of the law ... service to God ... promises].” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 560ff]

“This designation is probably intended to resonate with a richness that sums up all the other privileges in 9:4,5. Not only does it stand at the head of the list of privileges, but also grammatically the rest are subordinate to it. Its significance for Paul is unfolded through three relative clauses (ὧν ... ὧν ... ἐξ ὧν) [hōn ... hōn ... ex hōn, ‘who ... who ... out of who’] whose antecedent in each case is Ἰσραηλίται [Israēlitai, ‘Israelites’]. Within the first relative clause (9:4b) six feminine nouns, each connected simply with καί [kai, ‘and’], describe the privileges belonging to the ‘Israelites.’ The formal pattern of these six nouns is visibly (and was audibly) obvious:

ἡ νομοθεσία	... καὶ ἡ δόξα	... καὶ αἱ διαθήκαι
καὶ ἡ νομοθεσία	... καὶ ἡ λατρεία	... καὶ αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι
[hē huiiothesia	... kai hē doxa	... kai hai diathēkai
kai hē nomothesia	... kai hē latreia	... kai hai epangeliai]

The list falls into two groups of three with endings corresponding between the first and fourth, second and fifth, third and sixth.... Two other implications of this structure emerge for interpretation. **First, the willingness to choose some words on the basis of rhyme or assonance implies that the meaning may lie more in the total, unified impact of the six-fold group than in the separate, distinct meanings of each member....** **Second, since such a symmetrical structure tends to resist alteration and facilitate memory, it suggests that the unit is perhaps traditional rather than created ad hoc for this occasion. The occurrence of the unusual [nomothesia] and the plural [diathēkai] could also suggest that Paul is here using a traditional Jewish list of privileges....** **But since Paul was one of the most creative and seminal theologians of the early church, we should consider seriously whether Rom 9:4 reflects his own selectivity, artistry and theology.** This would not have to mean that Paul composed this list of privileges just for this letter. The letter clearly reflects Paul’s give-and-take with Jewish and Greek listeners during his missionary efforts. It would be likely then that if Rom 9:4 is Paul’s own composition, it originated as early as his reflection on the problem of Israel’s rejection (Rom 11:14, 15). If this were the case, the intervening years of repeatedly handing on this teaching to various groups would justify calling Rom 9:4 both genuinely Pauline as well as ‘traditional.’” [Piper, *The Justification of God*, pg 21f] Piper also notes that this parallel structure alone would account for Paul’s use of several irregular words; see comments below.

IMPORTANT: ISRAEL STILL ENJOYED THIS STATUS DESCRIBED BY PAUL — Some would replace Israel with what they call the Church (all Christians of this present age). “It is of utmost importance to notice that the antecedent of οἱτινες [hoitines, the ‘who’ in ‘who are Israelites’] is Paul’s kinsmen according to the flesh who are anathema, separated from Christ

(9:3); and that this group of unbelievers is even *now* called Israelites (present tense: 9:4a). *The tense of the verb in 9:4a as well as the relationship between 9:1-5 and 9:6a resists every effort to relegate the prerogatives of Israel to the past. Furthermore, Paul's bold assertion that the glorious privileges of Israel belong to unbelieving Israel resists [those who would] argue from 9:6b that 'the promises refer not to the empirical-historical Israel, but to the eschatological Israel' (by which [they mean] the Church, without regard to ethnic origins).*" [Piper, *The Justification of God*, pg 23f]

ISRAELITES: THE SPECIAL RELIGIOUS POSITION OF THE JEWS — *"Paul's selection of the term 'Israelites' to head this list is significant. For, in contrast to the colorless, politically and nationally oriented title 'Jew,' 'Israelite' connotes the special religious position of members of the Jewish people. It is therefore no accident that Paul in Rom. 9-11 generally abandons the word 'Jew,' which has figured so prominently in chaps. 1-8 (1:16; 2:9, 10, 17, 28, 29; 3:1, 9, 29; neither 'Israel' nor 'Israelites' occurs at all), in favor of the terms 'Israelites' and 'Israel' (9:6 [twice], 27 [twice], 31; 10:19, 21; 11:1, 2, 7, 25, 26; 'Jew' occurs only twice [9:24 and 10:12], and in each place in explicit contrast to Gentiles). Paul is no longer looking at the Jews from the perspective of the Gentiles and in their relationship to the Gentiles but from the perspective of salvation history and in their relationship to God and his promises to them. The appellation 'Israelites,' then, is no mere political or nationalistic designation but a religiously significant and honorific title. And despite the refusal of most of the Israelites to accept God's gift of salvation in Christ, this title has not been revoked (note the present εἰσιν [eisin], 'they are'). Here is set up the tension that Paul seeks to resolve in these chapters.*" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 560f]

ADOPTION: ISRAEL AS "GOD'S SON" — *"Adoption,' Paul has just informed us, is the Spirit-conferred status of all those who have been justified by faith in Christ (8:15, 23; cf. Gal 4:5 and Eph 1:5). Paul's attribution of this blessing to the Israelites, most of whom are unbelieving (cf. v. 3), is surprising — particularly since the word is not used in the OT or in Judaism... [I]srael's 'adoption' here must mean something different than the adoption of Christians in chap. 8. The term is Paul's way of summing up the OT teaching about Israel as 'God's son' (e.g., Exod 4:22-23; Deut 14:1-2; Isa 63:16; 64:8; Jer 31:9; Hos 11:1; Mal 1:6; 2:10). The privilege is one that adheres to the nation as a whole, branding the people as set aside by God from other peoples for blessing and service. God's 'adoption' of Christian gives to every believer in Christ all the rights and privileges that are included within new covenant blessings. God's adoption of Israel, on the other hand, conveys to that nation all the rights and privileges included within the Old Covenant. These blessings, as Paul indicated earlier (2:17-3:8) and as he will reiterate again in the next paragraph (vv. 6-13), do not include salvation for every single Israelite. Nevertheless, Paul's choice of the term 'adoption' is a deliberate attempt (after 8:15, 23) to highlight the continuing regard that God has for Israel, despite her widespread unbelief. It may therefore hint at the new and ultimate work of God among the people Israel that Paul predicts in 11:25-28."* [Moo, *Romans*, pg 562]

"It is clear from the context of [Ex. 4:22; 19:6; Hos. 11:1], as well as countless other parts of Scripture, that the nation of Israel was, in some respect, God's child. Salvation has always been on an individual basis. One person cannot be saved by another's faith. As Paul makes clear a few verses later, 'They are not all Israel who are descended from Israel' (Rom. 9:6). Yet, while not in the sense of salvation, it was as a nation that God sovereignly bestowed on Israel His special calling, covenant, blessing, and protection. The Old Testament does not refer to God as the Father of individual Jews — in the way the New Testament does of God as Father of individual Christians — but as the Father of Israel. It was for that reason, among others, that the Jewish leaders were so incensed when Jesus referred to God in a personal relationship as His Father. But Israel poorly fulfilled that calling, wasting its privilege. Through Isaiah the Lord lamented, 'Listen to Me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, you who have been borne by Me from birth, and have been carried from the womb; even to your old age, I shall be the same, and even to your graying years I shall bear you! I have done it, and I shall carry you; and I shall bear you, and I shall deliver you' (Isa. 46:3-4)." [MacArthur, *Romans 9-16*, pg 13]

"As Paul is speaking here of the external or natural Israel, the adoption or sonship which pertained to them, as such, must be external also, and is very different from that which he had spoken of in the preceding chapter. They were the sons of God, i.e., the objects of his peculiar favor, selected from the nations of the earth to be the recipients of peculiar blessings, and to stand in a peculiar relation to God. Exodus 4:22, 'Thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Israel is my son, even my first-born;' Deuteronomy 14:1, 'Ye are the children of the Lord your God;' Jeremiah 31:9, 'I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born.' As the whole Old Testament economy was a type and shadow of the blessings of the New, so the sonship of the Israelites was an adumbration of the sonship of believers. That of the former was in itself, and as common to all the Jews, only the peculiar relation which they sustained to God as partakers of the blessings of the theocracy. The latter, common to all the true children of God under any dispensation, is that relation in which we stand to God in virtue of regeneration, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and adoption into the household of God." [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 298f] John Piper disagrees and makes 'adoption' the same meaning as Paul has used elsewhere. Piper quotes OT passages in Isaiah, Hosea and Malachi which places the sonship of Israel with the implication of future glory. Adoption is therefore not a past nor temporary blessing for Israel.

ad-um-bra-tion (ăd-əm-brā-shən)
noun: (1) the act of providing vague advance indications; representing beforehand [syn: prefiguration, foreshadowing] (2) a sketchy or imperfect or faint representation

INTERESTING SIDE-NOTE: "BI-COVENANTAL" THEOLOGY — *"Some interpreters think this indicates that Paul is affirming that the people of Israel remain God's children in just the way that the church is God's people. There are, according to these scholars, two 'separate but equal' peoples of God, both saved and destined for glory: the church, those who become God's*

children through faith in his Son, and Israel, those who are God's children by virtue of God's covenant through Moses. [This theological position, labeled 'bi-covenantal' theology, has become particularly influential in the last twenty years.] But this view is incompatible both with what Paul has said earlier in this letter (e.g., 2:1-29; 3:9-20) and with what he will say later in this same section (e.g., 9:6b-13; 9:30-10:8). Moreover, if Israel remains within the sphere of salvation, we cannot explain Paul's anguish in the preceding verses." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 562]

GLORY: GOD'S PRESENCE WITH THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL — "The second privilege that adheres to the Israelites is 'the glory.' *It is difficult to know whether this term, like 'adoption,' is picked up from chap. 8 and refers therefore to eschatological blessing (e.g., 5:2; 8:17, 18, 21, 30), or whether it is historically oriented to the manifestation of God's presence with the Israelites in the OT — 'the splendour of the divine presence' (NEB).* ... The OT often speaks of the appearance of 'the glory of the Lord,' especially in the temple and on significant occasions, such as the giving of the law at Sinai (e.g., Exod 16:7, 10; 24:16; 40:34-35; Lev 9:6, 23; Num 14:10, 21; 16:19, 42; 1 Kings 8:11; Ezek 1:28). The use of the simple term, without the addition of a divine name, is unusual, but it may be the product of Paul's desire for stylistic parallelism (the adoption / the glory).... But *these are not mutually exclusive alternatives. Granted the other items in this list, 'glory' probably refers basically to God's presence with the people of Israel; but the very fact that Paul raises the question that he does here suggests that it is the ultimate continuation of that presence that is the issue.*" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 563] Piper again places this emphasis upon the future: "Especially noteworthy is Rom 2:10 where it says that God will render 'glory, honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.' This implies that for Paul the glory of the age to come was in a special sense the prerogative of Israel." [Piper, *The Justification of God*, pg 33]

"[T]he dignity and distinction of the theoretical people. It was their glory to be the people of God. In the Old Testament, however, that symbolical manifestation of the divine presence which filled the tabernacle and rested over the ark, is called *the glory of the Lord*. Exodus 40:34, 'A cloud covered the tent of the congregation; and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle;' Exodus 29:43, 'There will I meet with the children of Israel, and *the tabernacle* shall be sanctified by my glory.' Leviticus 16:2, 'I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy-seat;' 1 Kings 8:11, 'The glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord;' 2 Chronicles 5:14; Haggai 2:7; Revelation 15:8. By the Jews this symbol was called the *Shekinah*, i.e., the presence of God. Besides this, the manifestation of God's presence in general is called his glory; Isaiah 6:3, 'The whole earth is full of his Glory,' etc. It is probable, therefore, that Paul intended by this word to refer to the fact that God dwelt in a peculiar manner among the Jews, and in various ways manifested his presence, as one of their peculiar privileges." [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 299] "This most probably refers to the manifestation of the glory of God over the mercy-seat in the sanctuary. God, too, set His tabernacle among the Israelites, and walked among them, which was their peculiar glory, by which they were distinguished from all other nations, Deuteronomy 4:32-36. The glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud that went before them in the wilderness. It often filled the tabernacle and the temple. His house was the place of His glory." [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 444]

COVENANTS: ISRAEL AS GOD'S SPECIAL PEOPLE AMONG ALL THE NATIONS — "Paul's use of the plural 'covenants' is unusual, the singular being much more frequent in both OT and NT. He could be referring to (1) the covenants with Abraham and the other patriarchs (see Gen 17 especially; also Gen. 6, 9, and 15 and the references to the 'covenant' with the forefathers; e.g., Deut 4:31; 7:12), (2) the several ratifications of the Mosaic covenant (there were three such ratifications, as the rabbis saw it: at Sinai – Exod 19:5-6, on the plains of Moab – Deut 29-31, and at Mounts Ebal and Gerizim – Josh 8:30-35), (3) the several covenants mentioned throughout the OT (with Noah, Abraham, the people of Israel at Sinai, and David), or (4) all the biblical covenants, including the New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34; cf. 11:26-27). The third option is best, since intertestamental passages that use the plural 'covenants' refer generally to all the covenants that God had made with the 'fathers' (Sir. 44:12, 18; Wis. 18:22; 2 Macc. 8:15). *Paul uses the plural 'covenants' in the same sense in Eph. 2:12, where he refers to 'the covenants of promise' that mark Israel as God's special people and from which, therefore, Gentiles were alienated.*" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 563] While not disagreeing, Piper warns of being too strict with this definition: "Here we should recall the observations made earlier concerning the structure of Rom 9:4b. I suggested there that the unusual plural [*the covenants*] may well have been used to create the assonance with the structurally corresponding [*the promises*], and that this willingness to let form influence the particular words of the text probably means that the meaning lies more in the total general impact of the list than in unique, particular meanings of each word. This is another warning against trying to specify a limited number of covenants to which Paul is referring here. In fact, the parallel with [*promises*] inclined [some theologians] to settle for the simple observation that the 'covenants' are simply 'synonymous with the promises.' In view of the parallel structure and the open-endedness of the term, this is probably very nearly the case. In other words, Paul probably means that Israelites are the people whose destiny has been, and will be, determined by the fact that God has made covenants / promises with them." [Piper, *The Justification of God*, pg 35]

GIVING OF THE LAW: ISRAEL RECEIVING THE REVELATION OF GOD'S STANDARDS — "Paul begins his second triad of Israelite privileges with mention of the 'giving of the law.' *The word Paul uses can refer both to the act of giving a law or to the results of that act, the law or 'legislation.'* Many scholars adopt the second definition here (They note occurrences of the word with this meaning in Jewish literature roughly contemporary to Paul and argue that Paul has used this rare word [it occurs only here in the NT and the canonical OT], rather than the familiar νόμος, nomos, to match in form the other words in his series). But the first definition has better lexical support and fits Paul's argument better: he wants to focus on the law as given to Israel by God, not on its negative effects on the people as a result of the power of sin." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 563f] "*To them the law was given at Mount Sinai; and they were the only people on earth so distinguished by God.*" [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 444]

Again, Piper warns against dogmatism in defining these words: “When one reflects for a moment, the rigid distinction between the law and its promulgation becomes artificial. The very character of the law is that it is divine revelation and was, therefore, *given*. And the giving would be empty and without effect if there were no valuable *gift*.... Therefore, I conclude that, since in the law itself God expressed his saving purpose for Israel (Ex 19:6; 29:45f; 31:16f; 32:13; 33:19; 34:6f) and taught the way to life through faith (Rom 9:32), both the giving of the law and the possession of its message were a great privilege for Israel, full of grace and a window of hope toward the future.” [Piper, *The Justification of God*, pg 36f]

SERVICE TO GOD: WORSHIP VIA THE TEMPLE AND SACRIFICES — “‘Worship’ could refer broadly to Israel’s worship of God wherever and however that was carried out. But it is more likely to *focus more narrowly on the Israelite sacrificial system*. The importance of the temple cult and the worship associated with it is seen in one of the most famous statements of the Mishnah: ‘By three things is the world sustained: by the Law, by the [Temple-] service, and by deeds of loving-kindness.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 564] “Paul uses the word *λατρεία* [latreia] one other time: Rom 12:1, ‘I urge you therefore, brothers, through the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable *service of worship*.’ Elsewhere in the New Testament it is used once in John (16:2 — they will think that killing you is offering *service* to God) and twice in Hebrews (9:1, 6 — with reference to the priestly activities in the Old Testament sanctuary). In the LXX the term refers three times to the performance of the Passover or feast of unleavened bread (Ex 12:25, 26; 13:5), once to the sacrifices at the altar built by the Reubenites, Gadites and half-tribe of Manasseh (Josh 22:27), once to the total priestly ministry in the temple of Solomon (1 Chron 28:13) and four times in the Maccabean context with reference to sacrifices to pagan deities (1 Macc 1:43; 3 Macc 4:14) as over against the true worship of the fathers (1 Macc 2:19, 22)... In the context of law and covenants (Rom 9:4), *λατρεία* [latreia] would naturally be construed to refer to the various sacrificial provisions in the Old Testament.” [Piper, *The Justification of God*, pg 37f] “This refers to the tabernacle and temple service, or Mosaic institutions of worship. *All other nations were left to their own superstitious inventions; the Jews alone had ordinances of worship from God.*” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 444]

PROMISES: PATRIARCHAL PROMISES OF THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL — “‘The promises’ conclude Paul’s initial list of prerogatives enjoyed by the Israelites. Paul’s characteristic emphasis on the promises given to Abraham and the other patriarchs suggests that these are the promises that he has in mind here (cf. ‘the promises given to the patriarchs’ in 15:8; the plural [promises] refers to the promise[s] to Abraham and the patriarchs also in Gal. 3:16, 21).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 564] “As with [diathēkai, ‘covenants’] so with [epangeliāi, ‘promises’] we do best not to specify which divine promises are meant and which are not. They no doubt embrace the ‘promises to the patriarchs’ (Rom 15:8; Gal 3:16), but the use of the plural in 2 Cor 7:1 with reference to a collage of prophetic promises (2 Cor 6:16-18) and the absolute use in 2 Cor 1:20 (‘all the promises of God are Yes in him’) forbid that we limit its meaning in Rom 9:4b.” [Piper, *The Justification of God*, pg 39]

PATRIARCHS: PHYSICAL DESCENT FROM THOSE GOD CHOSE — “The first [of the last two Jewish privileges] is a final privilege ‘belonging to’ the Israelites: ‘the fathers,’ or ‘the patriarchs.’ Descent from the patriarchs is valuable because God gave promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that were valid both for them and for their descendants. *The meaning and extent of these promises are the linchpin in Paul’s interpretation of salvation history; see 9:6b-13; 11:15; and especially 11:28, which forms with this verse an ‘inclusio’ surrounding Paul’s discussion in these chapters. Much of what Paul says in Rom. 9-11 is an attempt to explain just what the Israelites legitimately can expect to inherit from their founding fathers.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 564f] “The descent of the Jews from men so highly favored of God as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was justly regarded as a great distinction.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 299]

OUT OF WHOM CAME THE MESSIAH — “*This last privilege mentioned by Paul not only occupies its own clause but is introduced in a different construction. Rather than ‘belong’ to the Israelites, the Messiah ‘is from’ them. The shift is significant, suggesting, as do vv. 2-3, that the Israelites, for all the privileges they enjoy, have not, as a group, come into genuine relationship with God’s Messiah and the salvation that he has brought. As Paul qualified the meaning of his own relationship to the Jewish people (‘kindred according to the flesh,’ v. 3), so he now qualifies in the same way the descent of the Messiah from the Israelites. The Messiah, Paul is pointing out, comes from the people of Israel ‘only in respect to that relationship which is strictly and narrowly human.’*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 565] “*This was the great honor of the Jewish race. For this they were separated as a peculiar people, and preserved amidst all their afflictions.* As it was true, however, only in one sense, that Christ was descended from the Israelites, and as there was another view of his person, according to which he was infinitely exalted above them and all other men, the apostle qualifies his declaration by saying *as concerning the flesh*.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 300] “This was the completion of all the privileges which the Apostle here enumerates. *It was a signal honor to the Jewish nation, that the Messiah was by descent an Israelite. Concerning the flesh.* — This declares that He was really a man having truly the human nature, and as a man of Jewish origin. At the same time it imports that He had another nature.” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 444f]

THE DEITY OF CHRIST? — “*Does Paul explicitly complete the picture by denoting in the last part of v. 5 another aspect of Messiah’s person: his deity? Exegetes and theologians since the inception of the church have been sharply divided over this question. The issue is one of punctuation and therefore of interpretation, for Greek manuscripts of the NT rarely contain punctuation marks and the marks that are found tend to be sporadic and irregular. At least eight different possibilities for the punctuation of the last part of the verse have been suggested, but they can be reduced to two basic choices.*

“(1) A comma could be placed after ‘flesh,’ meaning that the words following the comma would modify ‘Messiah.’ The words following ‘Messiah’ can then be punctuated in two different ways:

“a. ‘...from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen’ (NRSV; cf. also KJV; JB; NASB).

“b. ‘...from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen’ (NIV).

“(2) The second general approach to the punctuation of these words places a period after ‘Messiah’ and takes what follows as an independent ascription of praise to God. Again, two possible translations result, depending on the punctuation adopted within the clause.

“a. ‘...of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed for ever. Amen.’ (RSV; cf. also NEB; TEV).

“b. ‘...from them, in natural descent, sprang the Messiah. May God, supreme over all, be blessed for ever! Amen’ (NEB; cf. also TEV).

“The christological implications of this issue are great, for if the first alternative is adopted, Paul here calls Jesus ‘God,’ and Rom. 9:5 becomes one of the most important ‘proof-texts’ for the deity of Christ.... Favoring a comma after ‘Messiah’ (and thus the first option) are several stylistic arguments. First, the words ‘the one who is’ are most naturally taken as a relative clause modifying a word in the previous context (see the similar construction in 1 Cor. 11:31). Second, Paul’s doxologies are never independent but always are tied closely to the preceding context. Third, independent blessings of God in the Bible, with only one exception (Ps. 67:19), place the word ‘blessed’ in the first position. Here, however, the Greek word for ‘blessed’ occurs after ‘God,’ suggesting that the blessing must be tied to the previous context. As Metzger points out, it is ‘altogether incredible that Paul, whose ear must have been perfectly familiar with this constantly recurring formula of praise, should in this solitary instance have departed from established usage.’ Fourth, ... the qualifying phrase ‘according to the flesh’ implies an antithesis; and Paul usually supplies the antithetical element in such cases, rather than allowing the reader simply to assume it. In other words, we would expect, after a description of what the Messiah is from a ‘fleshly’ or ‘this-worldly’ standpoint, a description of what he is from a ‘spiritual’ or ‘otherworldly’ standpoint; see especially Rom. 1:3-4.... Connecting ‘God’ to ‘Christ’ is therefore exegetically preferable, theological unobjectionable, and contextually appropriate. **Paul here calls the Messiah, Jesus, ‘God,’ attributing to him full divine status. The frequent association of God with ‘blessed’ makes it likely that these should be kept together, and the whole taken in apposition to ‘the one who is over all’: ‘Christ, who is supreme over all things, God blessed forever.’**” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 565ff]

“A clear statement of the deity of Christ following the remark about his humanity. This is the natural and the obvious way of punctuating the sentence. To make a full stop after *sarka* [flesh] and start a new sentence for the doxology is very abrupt and awkward. See Acts 20:28; Titus 2:13 for Paul’s use of *theos* [God] applied to Jesus Christ.” [Robertson, *Word Pictures*, vol 4 pg 381]

“Over all is equivalent to most high, supreme. The same words occur in Ephesians 4:6, ‘One God, who is above all.’ **This passage, therefore, shows that Christ is God in the highest sense of the word.** Amen is a Hebrew word signifying *true*. It is used as in the New Testament often adverbially and is rendered *verily*; or, at the close of a sentence, as expressing desire, *let it be*, or merely approbation. It does not, therefore, necessarily imply that the clause to which it is attached contains a wish. It is used here, as in Romans 1:25, for giving a solemn assent to what has been said.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 302]

“This is a most clear and unequivocal attestation of the Divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every engine of false criticism has been employed by those who are desirous to evade the obvious meaning of this decisive testimony to the Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ; but they have never even plausibly succeeded.... After speaking of the Messiah’s coming through the nation of Israel, in respect to His human nature, the Apostle, in order to enhance the greatness of this extraordinary distinction conferred upon it, here refers to His Divine nature, to union with which, in one person, His human nature was exalted. The declaration of His coming in the flesh clearly imports, as has been remarked, that Christ had another nature. When it is said, 1 John 4:3, that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh — which could not be said of a mere man, who could come in no other way — it shows that He might have come in another way, and therefore implies His pre-existence, which is asserted in a variety of passages of Scripture.” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 445]