

A Commentary on Romans 9-16

**A Commentary on
Romans 9-16**

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Works Cited With Abbreviations

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Introduction

The Relation of Romans 9–16 to Romans 1–8

It is generally agreed that the book of Romans divides rather nicely into two parts. Commentaries such as Hendriksen's in Baker Book House's *New Testament Commentary* series and Stoeckhardt's (Concordia Mimeograph Company, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO) treat Romans in two separate volumes. This is not to say that there isn't any obvious connection between the two major parts of this book.

Romans 1–8 deals primarily with sin and grace and the believer's thankful response of a sanctified life.

- a. After a lengthy introduction in chapter 1, Paul spends the rest of chapter 1 (v18ff), chapter 2, and the first part of chapter 3 (vv1-20) establishing the "charge," which he summarizes in 3:9, "that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin"—"under sin" in the sense of being under the condemnation of death that rests on all who sin.
- b. Romans 3:21–5:21 spells out, perhaps in greater detail than anywhere else in Scripture, the truth of 3:24 that all who sinned "are justified [acquitted] freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" and of 3:22 that this acquittal "from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe."
- c. Romans 6–8 shows the Christian's response to God's free gift of salvation. The sinful nature in us will wage war against the new spiritual nature the Spirit created in us (7:18,23), and the trials of life will be used by Satan to try to separate us from the wonderful love God showed us in Christ (8:39). But the knowledge that "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (8:1) leads believers to "offer the parts of your body to [God] as instruments of righteousness" (6:13) and to look forward in joyous faith to "the glory that will be revealed in us . . . the glorious freedom of the children of God" (8:18,21).

Romans 9–16 expands on Romans 1–8 by making a number of different practical applications of the three basic truths taught in those eight preceding chapters.

- a. Romans 9–11 reminds the Romans, most of whom were Gentiles, that the elect, whether Jew or Gentile, are part of God’s people only as a result of God’s mercy (9:16). The rejection of the message of salvation on the part of many Jews (10:16) resulted in the gospel being brought to the Gentiles (11:11). But if Gentiles reject the gospel, as the Jews did in self-righteous unbelief, God will also take the gospel from them (11:20,21).
- b. In Romans 12, Paul again returns to the thought of believers living their lives in conformity with God’s holy will (12:3), humbly serving one another with their different gifts (12:6) in sincere love (12:9ff).
- c. Romans 13 first addresses the Christian’s attitude and action in regard to government officials and then calls on every believer to fulfill God’s law of love by obeying his commandments rather than gratifying the desires of the sinful nature.
- d. Romans 14–15a spells out the debt of love that those who are strong in faith owe to the weak in regard to adiaphora.
- e. In Romans 15b, Paul reveals his plan to go to Spain and stop off in Rome for a brief visit for mutual encouragement—Paul by the Romans and the Romans by Paul (cf. 1:12).
- f. Romans 16 includes Paul’s greetings from himself and his coworkers to the believers in Rome along with a command to separate from anyone who teaches anything false (16:17).

With these 16 chapters, Paul fulfills an obligation that he felt as the apostle to the Gentiles to preach the good news about Christ also to the Romans (1:14,15). Though he plans to come to Rome, he is not sure that he will make it (15:31,32). He writes this letter reviewing the basic truths of sin, grace, and sanctification in chapters 1–8 (15:15,16a) and adds instruction on various points in chapters 9–16 so that the Roman Christians would continue in the truth (16:19) and “become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (15:16b).

Author, Recipients, Date, and Purpose of This Letter

The reader will find a more detailed account in regard to these subjects in the introduction to the volume titled *A Commentary on Romans 1–8* (NPH, 2007). What follows is a brief summary of the thoughts presented there.

The author is the apostle Paul. The recipients are a number of groups of Christians in Rome, most of whom were Gentiles. Paul writes this letter from Corinth in early A.D. 57 while on his way to Jerusalem. After he completes his work in Jerusalem, he intends to come to Rome on his way to Spain. This letter is intended to fulfill, in part at least, his obligation to preach the Good News to the believers in Rome just in case he never makes it to Rome himself.

Exegesis-Based Interpretation

Again what follows is a concise summary of what is found on this subject in the aforementioned *Romans 1–8*.

The Bible is God's inspired Word. This fact has two important implications for an exegesis-based interpretation of any portion of Scripture.

- a. Every word of every verse is important since every word is God-breathed.
- b. The interpreter must use Scripture to interpret Scripture if he is to present what God says a verse means. This procedure means
 - first analyzing each word of a verse in the Greek text and using the analysis of each word to interpret the other words in the verse,
 - then adjusting the meaning according to any adverbial or adjectival modifiers and any parallel or subordinate thoughts in the surrounding verses, and
 - then using any parallel verse in the wider context of Scripture to determine the final meaning of the verse.

Several differences between the Greek and English languages complicate the task a bit for the interpreter:

- a. Greek writers such as Paul tend to string together long sentences with multiple conjunctions and use many adverbial and adjectival modifiers. Schemas (diagrams) of shorter sections of the Greek text in this volume are intended to help visualize the structures of the long sentences used by the author.
- b. Though the grammar of both languages is much the same, there are three places where they are not parallel:
 - Verb tenses in Greek most often stress the type of action rather than the time of the action.

- The use of an article with a noun and the lack of an article with a noun are both more significant in Greek than in English.
- Greek uses multiple participles in most sentences that serve three different functions: completing the action of the verb (supplementary), modifying the action of the verb (adverbial), and modifying a noun (adjectival).

Establishing Which Variant Is the Original Text

Again the reader will find more on this subject in the introduction to *Romans 1–8*.

The objective way to work with New Testament variants is not to use only a portion of the witnesses to the text, as the *Textus Receptus* (Byzantine minuscules) and the Westcott-Hort text (early uncials) do. Rather, the best approach is to use all the witnesses God has preserved for us, taking into account the date of each witness and the geographical region the witness represents. When one variant is recorded in copies that are early and represent many of the regions while the other variant is in copies that are either later or represent only one or two regions, the former can safely be considered the original.

Romans 9

The Flow of Thought in Romans 9–11

These three chapters form a separate unit in Paul's letter to the Romans. Passages from these chapters have been the sources of teachings such as double predestination and the salvation of all Jews. Since such teachings usually arise from interpretations that do not take the whole context of a verse into account, it might be good to have an overview of all three chapters before beginning a study of the individual verses. This overview follows in the form of a fairly detailed outline.

One word in particular in these chapters, the word *Israel*, deserves special mention. It has two different meanings in these chapters, as becomes evident when one carefully considers each use of this word in its context. *Israel* can refer to spiritual Israel, that is, all believers whether Jew or Gentile. It can also have a narrow meaning referring to physical Israel, that is, the Jews.

What complicates the matter even more is that the second meaning, the Jews, can refer to one of three groupings of Jews. One group consists of those physical Jews, like Paul himself, whom God called to faith in the Savior prior to the gospel being brought to the Gentiles; this group Paul refers to as "the remnant." A second group consists of those physical Jews, like most of the Pharisees and others, who stubbornly rejected the Savior and were hardened in their self-righteous unbelief. The third group consists of those physical Jews (from the second group) whose envy of believing Gentiles God used to bring the Jews to faith in the Savior.

God's Saving Plan for All Israel (Romans 9–11)

- A. It is only by God's mercy that people are chosen to be part of God's people, Israel. (9:1-24)
 - 1. Paul grieves for his fellow Israelites who are lost even though God showered many blessings on them. (9:1-5)
 - 2. Not all of Abraham's descendants are part of Israel, only the children of the promise. (9:6-9)

3. Jacob didn't earn God's election to be the bearer of the promise rather than Esau; it was entirely a matter of God's mercy. (9:10-13)
 4. Since no one has earned anything from God, there can be no complaint that God is unfair when he in mercy chooses some to be his people. (9:14-16)
 5. Nor, for the same reason, can there be a complaint when God hardens a stubborn unbeliever like Pharaoh to show his power in order to make himself known to all people. (9:17,18)
 6. Nor, for the same reason, can there be any complaint on the part of unbelievers who didn't stubbornly harden themselves as Pharaoh did. (9:19-29)
 - a. Their complaint against their Creator is impertinence. (9:19-21)
 - b. God's mercy toward them is shown by his patient bearing with their unbelief rather than his making his power known by destroying them instantly as they deserve. (9:22)
 - c. This patience demonstrates God's mercy all the more to those whom in mercy he did elect and call to faith: (9:23-29)
 - both the believing Gentiles whom God calls his people even though they are not part of physical Israel (9:25,26)
 - and the believing remnant of physical Israel. (9:27,28)
- B. Many Jews are no longer God's people, Israel, because they rejected God's free gift of salvation. (9:30–10:21)
1. Physical Israel lost God's gift of righteousness (acquittal) because they pursued it by works rather than by faith. (9:30-33)
 2. Their religious zeal was misguided. (10:1,2)
 - a. They did not know that God sent the Savior to provide righteousness (acquittal) by faith so that no one had to earn it on his own. (10:3,4)
 - b. This was in spite of the fact that the Old Testament told them a perfect keeping of the law was needed to earn God's acquittal. (10:5)
 - c. And it was in spite of the fact that the Old Testament told them the Savior would eliminate the need for them to earn God's acquittal. (10:6,7)

- d. And it was in spite of the fact that the Old Testament told them that everyone, Jew and Gentile, who trusts in Jesus will be saved. (10:8-11)
3. God sent his messengers to proclaim the saving Word to all people so that they might hear, believe, and call on his saving name. (10:14,15)
4. But many physical Israelites did not accept the saving message. (10:16,17)
 - a. It was not because they didn't hear the message. (10:18)
 - b. It was not because the message was too hard to understand; it was understood by many who weren't part of God's special people. (10:19,20)
 - c. It was only because of their obstinate unbelief. (10:21)
- C. God grafted some gentile branches and broken-off Jewish branches to join the remnant Jewish branches in forming "all Israel." (11:1-36)
 1. God didn't reject all the Jews but chose a remnant by grace. (11:1-6)
 2. He hardened other Jews because of their stubborn unbelief. (11:7-10)
 3. But God found a way to recover some of the hardened Jews. (11:11-15)
 - a. God had the Good News proclaimed to Gentiles to make Jews envious. (11:11)
 - b. In this way the rejection of the Good News by Jews led to Gentiles hearing it so that in turn some envious, unbelieving Jews would be turned to faith. (11:12)
 - c. Paul rejoiced in the part God gave him in all this with his ministry to the Gentiles. (11:13-15)
 4. Paul warns believing Gentiles not to become sinfully proud about God's choosing them to be saved. (11:16-22)
 - a. Yes, they were grafted into God's people, Israel. (11:16-18)
 - b. But unbelief could result in their being broken off again from God's people just like many original Jewish branches were because of unbelief. (11:19-22)
 5. Some of the unbelieving Jewish branches that were broken off will be grafted in again as believing branches to form "all

Israel” together with the remnant Jewish and grafted-in gentile branches. (11:23-27)

6. So God’s mercy is evident

- a. in his choosing physical Israel to be his special people. (11:28,29)
- b. in his using the unbelief of physical Israel to save unbelieving Gentiles. (11:30)
- c. in his using the mercy he showed Gentiles to call some unbelieving Jews back to faith. (11:31)

Conclusion: The paradox of God’s mercy on some Jews and Gentiles in spite of their unbelief leads Paul to laud the infinite wisdom of God in devising a plan to save unbelievers without their earning it. To God be the glory! (11:32-36)

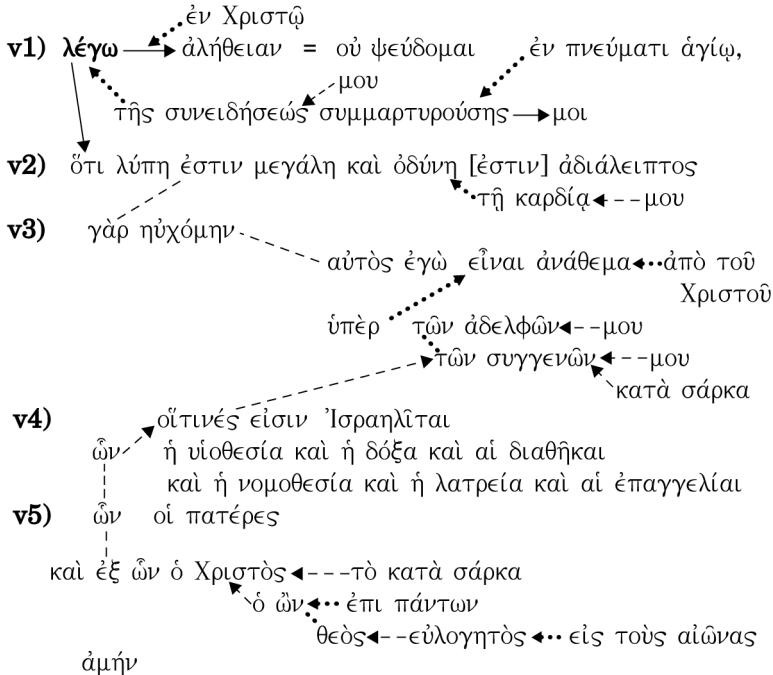
Romans 9:1-5

(Key: ———▶ indicates an object of verbal action

.....▶ indicates an adverbial modifier

-----▶ indicates an adjectival modifier

----- indicates a connection between clauses / words)



Romans 9:1a ἀλήθειαν λέγω ἐν Χριστῷ, οὐ ψεύδομαι, = *I am speaking truth in Christ, I am not lying—*

- Since there is no conjunction at the beginning of this verse, Paul is beginning an entirely new subject. As the paragraphs called The Flow of Thought in Romans 9–11 in the previous section indicated, this new subject continues through three chapters. Paul will not be able to say much that is complimentary about Jews in this long section. So he begins with an oath that is intended to show that in spite of what he must say, his love and concern for Jews are genuine.
- The positive statement ἀλήθειαν λέγω (“I am speaking truth”) followed by the negative assertion οὐ ψεύδομαι (“I am not lying”) are meant to underscore the fact that what he will say next does not have one bit of falsehood in it, nor is it said to cover his true feelings in any way.
- Two things add emphasis to the point Paul is making. First, the lack of an article with ἀλήθειαν stresses the basic meaning or the essence of this word, namely, “words that are genuine.” Second, the prepositional phrase ἐν Χριστῷ (“in the sphere of Christ”) gives what follows the aura of an oath. Everything he is going to say is spoken in the presence of Christ. In a sense it is like calling Christ as his witness that what he is speaking is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Romans 9:1b συμμαρτυρούσης μοι τῆς συνειδήσεώς μου ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ = *the conscience of mine joining in witnessing with me in the sphere of the Holy Spirit,*

- The words συνειδήσεώς and συμμαρτυρούσης are both genitive case because they form a genitive absolute. This construction is a clause that has a different subject than the main subject of the sentence and that serves as an adverbial modifier in the sentence.
- If what he has said is not enough to convince his readers that what he will say next is the truth, Paul adds two more witnesses to the list. The first is his conscience. The article τῆς and the possessive adjective μου (“my”) underscore the fact that he is talking about his own conscience. The conscience (συνειδήσεώς) is the voice that God has placed in every human to call his inscribed law to mind in order to accuse or defend the thoughts, words, and actions of that individual (Ro 2:15). Paul is asserting that

nothing he will say will cause his conscience to accuse him of wrongdoing.

- The present, adverbial participle συμμαρτυρούσης (“witnessing together at the same time”) modifies the verbs λέγω and οὐ ψεύδομαι by stating an action that is taking place simultaneously with those verbs. At the same time as Paul will speak the next words, his conscience is also speaking up. It is another witness that corroborates what Paul is going to say. The verb μαρτυρέω means “to be a witness”; the prefix συμ- means “together with”; and the dative μοι (“me”) indicates the person that the conscience is joining as a witness.
- The second witness in this verse is expressed by the prepositional phrase ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ (“in the sphere of the Holy Spirit”). Like ἐν Χριστῷ in the previous clause, Paul is saying that his conscience is speaking in the presence of the Holy Spirit, calling the Holy Spirit as a witness that what he will say is the truth and nothing but the truth. More than that, what he will say is also directed by the Holy Spirit. Confer other passages where this same expression is used to speak of prayer (Jude 20) or of prophecy (Mk 12:36) produced by the Spirit, of travel directed by the Spirit (Ac 19:21), or of the Christian’s whole life being guided and directed by the Spirit (Ro 8:9).

Romans 9:2 ὅτι λύπη μοί ἐστίν μεγάλη καὶ ἀδιάλειπτος ὁδύνη τῇ καρδίᾳ μου. = *that the grief for me is great and unceasing the distress for the heart of mine.*

Chiasm

λύπη	μεγάλη
ἀδιάλειπτος	ὁδύνη

- The conjunction ὅτι introduces the content of the statement about Paul’s own attitude toward the Jews that he wanted the Romans to know was absolutely true.
- He says that his λύπη is “great” (μεγάλη). The word λύπη means “grief, a state of unhappiness marked by regret, a state of mental pain and anxiety.” When he says his grief is “great,” he wants to

emphasize that his mental pain is not an occasional dull ache but a sharp, ever-present state of regret.

- The dative μοί (“my”) used with the linking verb ἐστίν (“is”) is an emphatic way of expressing possession. This grief is a very personal thing for Paul, and the present tense of the verb ἐστίν underscores the ongoing sorrow he has in regard to the Jews.
- To underscore what he had just said, Paul repeats the two main points he wants to make with different words (explanatory καὶ). His grief is an “intensive emotional distress” (ὀδύνη) that affects his (μου = “my”) “heart” (τῆ καρδίᾳ). When Paul says this distress affects his heart, he is indicating that his whole inner being is touched by the emotional pain he feels. The continuing day-by-day nature of his grief, implied in the previous clause, is now stated clearly with the adjective ἀδιάλειπτος, which means “never ending, unceasing, incessant.”
- The adjective ἀδιάλειπτος is placed ahead of the subject and verb to give it special emphasis. This placement also forms a chiasm that gives special emphasis to the inner parts of the chiasm, the two adjectives “great” and “incessant” (cf. previous chart).

Romans 9:3 ἠύχομην γὰρ ἀνάθεμα εἶναι αὐτὸς ἐγὼ ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν συγγενῶν μου κατὰ σάρκα. = *Yes, I myself kept on wishing to be cursed apart from Christ in place of the brothers of mine, the relatives of mine in line with the body,*

- Though the previous comments suggest that Paul is talking about his attitude toward the Jews, he doesn’t make that clear until this verse. He made the point that what he was about to say was absolutely true (v1). He stated that he was deeply disturbed about something (v2). Only now does he reveal what he was referring to in those two previous verses. The explanatory γὰρ (“yes, indeed”) indicates that what follows will clarify.
- The verb εὔχομαι means “to pray, to wish.” ἠύχομην is imperfect tense, indicating that the action of this verb was ongoing in the past. Did Paul actually pray “to be cursed” (ἀνάθεμα εἶναι) or was this a pious wish on his part? Since Paul certainly knew that he could not take the curse of someone else on himself, it would seem that this was something he could have wished might take place, but it was not actually a prayer he addressed to God.

- The prepositional phrase ἀπὸ (“apart from, separated from”) τοῦ Χριστοῦ (“Christ”) expresses the kind of curse he is talking about. In Galatians 5:4 Paul parallels being apart from Christ with falling from grace. Why would Paul wish for something as terrible as this, namely, to lose the salvation Christ won for him and instead be placed under God’s eternal curse?
- Paul explains with the words αὐτὸς ἐγὼ (“I myself”) ὑπὲρ (“for the sake of, in the place of”) τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου (“my brothers”). Here it is not the feeling of his total worthlessness that leads Paul to wish that God would curse him. Rather, it is his love for his brothers, the Jews, that prompts this wish. Paul knows that many Jews have rejected Christ and so will be lost eternally. He wishes that it were possible that he might take their places and suffer the curse of God instead of them so that they might be saved. As Paul will say later in Romans 10:1, he desires the salvation of all Jews. It was the thought of his brothers’ eternal condemnation that caused him the great grief and incessant distress (v2) that led to this amazing ongoing wish. This wish, he asserted in verse 1, is not hyperbole but the absolute truth.
- The following five words spell out that by “brothers” Paul means his fellow Jews. Τῶν συγγενῶν is an appositive to ἀδελφῶν (“brothers”) and refers either to those who belonged to the same family as Paul (μου = “my”) or to the same group of people to which Paul belonged. The prepositional phrase κατὰ (“in line with, according to”) σάρκα (“the flesh, the body”) indicates that the latter, a group of people, is what Paul means. They all share a common, human connection with him as descendants of Abraham. The next verse makes this completely clear.
- It is the close connection he has with the Jews that causes him to have grief and distress over their eternal fate. Like Moses in the Old Testament (Ex 32:32,33), Paul wishes that he could take their place and save them all from God’s eternal curse. So great is his love for them! As was said earlier, Paul will not have many kind words to say about the Jews in Romans 9–11, but he wants it to be clear that it is not any grudge that he bears against the Jews that leads him to speak as he does about them. The joy he expresses toward the end of chapter 11 is prompted by the knowledge that God had found a rather striking way to save at least some of the Jews who had at first rejected Jesus as their Savior.

Romans 9:4 οἵτινες εἰσιν Ἰσραηλίται, ὧν ἡ υἰοθεσία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ αἱ διαθήκαι καὶ ἡ νομοθεσία καὶ ἡ λατρεία καὶ αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι, = *who are Israelites, theirs the adoption and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law and the worship and the promises,*

Parallels

υἰοθεσία	←	→	νομοθεσία
δόξα	←	→	λατρεία
διαθήκαι	←	→	ἐπαγγελίαι

N.B. Both διαθήκαι and ἐπαγγελίαι have alternative readings in the singular: διαθήκη, ἐπαγγελία. However, the textual evidence in each case favors the plural. It seems some scribes substituted the singular for each since they felt the plural forms were harder to explain.

- After speaking about those in whose place he wished to be cursed, namely, his “brothers”—those who shared a common ancestry with him—Paul clearly identifies them as “the Israelites” (Ἰσραηλίται). This term in this verse, as in 11:1 and 2 Corinthians 11:22, has both a physical and spiritual connotation. When the Jews are referred to as “the people of Israel,” it not only identifies a group of people as the physical descendants of Jacob/Israel but also as those whom God chose to be his special people (Mt 2:6; 15:31; Eph 2:12). That is also why Paul, instead of using the simple pronoun οἱ uses οἵτινες, which indicates that these people belong to a class that has a certain characteristic (“such ones”). Other examples of this meaning are found in Matthew 2:6; 16:28; 19:12; 21:41; 25:1; et al. The six things that Paul mentions next spell out the special relationship that the Israelites had with God.
- The relative pronoun ὧν refers back to the Israelites. The genitive case expresses possession, and the placement of this pronoun at the beginning of the clause puts special emphasis on the fact that all the things Paul will list next belong to the Israelites and to them alone. Israel is the nation God chose to be his special people, and each of the six things underscores the special relationship God had with his people. Each also has an article, making it specific, that is, each is a unique possession of God’s people.

- Israel was adopted as God’s child. The word υἱοθεσία (“adoption”) literally means “to put or place” (-θεσία) into the status of a son (υἱο-). This was an act done by God, and God gladly spoke of Israel as his son or his child (Ex 4:22; Jer 31:9; Hos 11:1; Lk 1:54). Like any beloved child, God blessed Israel with a place to live, food to eat, and protection from danger.
- A second unique possession of Israel (coordinate καὶ) was the presence of God’s “glory” (δόξα) in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and later in the temple. God said that his glory would be present in this place and that this would be a symbol of his presence among his people as their God (Ex 29:42,43). God’s glory filled the tabernacle Moses made (Ex 40:34,35) and the temple that Solomon built (2 Ch 5:13,14). Only the high priest could go into the Holy of Holies (where God was present over the atonement cover), and he could go in only once a year on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16). No other nation had the glory/presence of God continually among it in this special way.
- God also (coordinate καὶ) established two special covenants (διαθήκαι) with Israel. The first of the two covenants, the one with Abraham, said that the Savior of all people would be born from Abraham’s descendants (Gal 3:8). The Sinaitic law covenant was added 430 years later to show the people their sins and their need of the Savior; it was in effect only until Christ came to carry out God’s plan of salvation (Gal 3:19,23). No other nation had such special covenants with God.
- The next three items are, in a way, parallels to the first three (cf. the parallels chart at the beginning of this verse).
- The fourth item (coordinate καὶ), νομοθεσία (“giving the law”), parallels υἱοθεσία. When Moses led the people of Israel to Mount Sinai, God told him to tell the people (if they would keep the laws he would give them), “Then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession . . . a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex 19:5,6). This law set the Israelites apart from all other people, and it was a constant reminder that they were God’s holy people in whose midst the Savior would appear. Thus, the law given at Sinai was the outward sign that the people of Israel were God’s “adopted sons and daughters” (υἱοθεσία).
- The fifth item (coordinate καὶ), λατρεία (“sacrificial worship”), parallels δόξα. The tabernacle/temple was the place of God’s δόξα

(“glory”), the place where he was present among his people in a special way. The sacrifices the people brought to God at this place gave him the glory due him as the only true God—the God who forgave all their sins and the God to whom they gave thanks for all their undeserved blessings.

- The sixth item (coordinate καὶ), ἐπαγγελίαι (“promises”), parallels διαθήκαι. Paul had addressed the Sinaitic covenant, the law covenant, separately with νομοθεσία. Now he refers to the first and foremost of the covenants God made with Israel, namely, the Abramitic covenant, the promise of the Savior. Paul uses the plural “promises”—as he does in Ephesians 2:12 and Galatians 3:16—since God repeated this promise three times, to each of the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It’s not surprising that Paul closes this sextet of God’s special blessings on Israel with the promises of the Savior. All five of the other blessings rested on this blessing and were centered in the special relationship God had with Israel based on the promised Savior. This sixth item also serves as a natural bridge to the two special blessings Paul mentions in the next verse.

Romans 9:5a ὧν οἱ πατέρες, καὶ ἐξ ὧν ὁ Χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα· = *theirs [are] the fathers, and from them [came] Christ in respect to (according to) humanity,*

- All of the Jews were descended from “the fathers” (οἱ πατέρες)—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This was also a special blessing that belonged only to them (ὧν, possessive genitive = “theirs”; cf. comments on ὧν in v4 above). This was not just a physical thing. Since the promises of the Savior were to be fulfilled through the descendants of the fathers, all the Jews were loved by God “on account of the patriarchs” (Ro 11:28). That this is Paul’s point is evident from the words he adds next (coordinate καὶ).
- Paul now breaks the pattern he had used up to this point in listing the special blessings of God on Israel. He no longer uses the simple possessive genitive ὧν, but instead uses a genitive of source, which he makes evident by introducing ὧν (“them”) with the preposition ἐξ (“from, out of”). The greatest blessing of God on the Israelites was that they were the source of “the Christ” (ὁ Χριστὸς), the One through whom God said that all nations would be blessed.
- In the second part of this verse, Paul will emphasize again, as he did in Romans 1:4, that Jesus is true God. So he adds three words

to underscore the fact that Christ came from the Jews. The article τὸ (neuter, accusative case) makes the phrase κατὰ σάρκα an adverbial accusative of respect, spelling out in what way Christ came from Israel. The phrase κατὰ σάρκα means “in line with/according to the flesh/physical body.” This phrase alone would have expressed the idea that Jesus’ human nature came about by his being born from the Jews, but it seems Paul adds the construction with the article τὸ to make this point all the more emphatically.

Romans 9:5b ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων θεὸς εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν. = *the one who is over all, God worthy of praise forever. Amen.*

- Who is being referred to in this doxology? Some argue it has to be the Father. Several arguments are brought for this interpretation: (1) εὐλογητὸς elsewhere in the New Testament is always used in reference to the Father; (2) Paul does not use the term θεὸς elsewhere to refer to Christ; (3) God is the one who is spoken of as being ἐπὶ πάντων in Ephesians 4:6.
- However, there are stronger arguments that suggest Paul is speaking of Christ here: (1) Paul does often speak of Christ as God (Php 2:6; Col 1:15,19; Col 2:9; 1 Co 8:6; Ro 10:13; Tit 2:13); (2) the antecedent of ὁ ὢν in this verse, as in other doxologies of Paul, is the person spoken about in the previous clause—not a person imported from outside the context; (3) having these words refer to Christ makes them a natural climax to Paul’s grief over his brothers’ apostasy: they had so many blessings from God, yet they rejected the Savior who came from them as far as his human body was concerned and who was also true God; and (4) to break off from the line of thought in which Paul is grieving over the Jews and to inject totally independent words of praise about the Father seems highly unlikely.
- The attributive participle ὁ ὢν (“the one who is”) points back to Christ and stresses an important characteristic of the One who was born as a man from the Jews. The present tense of the participle indicates that this characteristic is an ongoing one.
- Whether one construes ἐπὶ πάντων or θεὸς with the participle ὢν makes little difference in meaning. The former (“who is over all things”) would put the emphasis on Christ’s rule over all things and make θεὸς (“God”) an appositive, explaining that he does this since he is divine. The latter (“who is God over all things”) would put the

emphasis on his divine nature with the prepositional phrase adding the point that as God he is supreme. It seems that the word order would tip the scale slightly in favor of the former.

- One other question is whether πάντων refers to “all people” or “all things.” It would seem that the universal rule of Christ over (ἐπὶ) all things would make Paul’s point best. Both Ephesians 1:21,22 and Colossians 1:15,16 speak of the universal rule of Christ, and there doesn’t seem to be any reason to limit this rule to just people in this context.
- The adjective εὐλογητός (“worthy of praise, blessed”) modifies θεός. It encourages the Romans and all believers to give Christ the honor due him as the One who rules over all things as God. This, unfortunately, is what the Jews failed to do in spite of their special relationship with God as the people from whom the Christ would come.
- The phrase εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας means literally “into the ages” and came to mean simply “forever.” Christ as true God deserves to be praised without end. And with the emphatic particle ἀμήν (“amen, this is true”), Paul affirms both the truth of Christ’s rule over all things as God and the truth that he deserves to be honored without end.

Summary and Application The Jews of the Old Testament time were truly blessed, as Paul briefly recounts in verses 4 and 5. But as blessed as they were, we New Testament believers are even more blessed. God has also adopted us as his dear children (Gal 4:5). The Old Testament Jews were assured of God’s presence by the dwelling of his glory in the tabernacle and temple; God has sent the Spirit of his Son to dwell in us as his temples (1 Co 6:19). They had the circumcision of males as a sign and seal that they were God’s special people; we have Baptism as a sign and seal that we belong to Christ (Gal 3:26,27). In faith they brought sacrifices to God for the forgiveness of sins and to express their thanks to God; we remember the sacrifice our Savior made of himself for us as we take part in Communion, and we bring ourselves as living sacrifices to God as we devote our whole lives to him in thanks (Ro 12:1). They looked forward to the coming of the promised Messiah; we have seen him come and rejoice in the knowledge of the completed work of salvation.

In spite of all the special blessings of God on them, most of the Jews were not faithful to God. Paul expressed how troubled his heart was about their apostasy by expressing the wish that he could be cursed

in their place that they might not be lost eternally. Paul knew that such a way of saving them was not possible, but his deep concern for them shows through in this wish of his. He later rejoices that the work God chose for him to do in bringing the gospel to the Gentiles was also used by God to save some Jews (Ro 11:13b,14). Paul's spirit is one that God wants us to imitate. When we see a fellow believer falling away—no matter what the reason—may this also cause us sorrow and anguish, as it did Paul. And may we set out to restore that person, if at all possible, with God's help (Gal 6:1), as Paul did.