

Romans 9:1-3 (NKJV)

1-2 I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart.

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

1

- Granted, modern day Protestants, including Lutherans and others of a Reformed tradition condemn Luther's book and antisemitic ideas, but that didn't initially happen until the 1950s – *after* the Holocaust!

- By then the damage was done

2

Wikipedia: "With the rise of the Nazi Party in Weimar Germany, [Luther's] book became widely popular among Nazi supporters. During World War II, copies of the book were commonly seen at Nazi rallies, and the prevailing scholarly consensus is that it may have had a significant impact on justifying the Holocaust."

- How can we have any respect for a man's theology when we know he thinks like this?
- This was the same man who called the biblical book of James an "epistle of straw"

3

- This Reformer did NOT understand the doctrine of justification, yet the vast majority of Protestantism – including multitudes of Baptists – continue to teach his version of Augustinian justification

- Satan highjacked the Reformation and has used it to confuse, fracture, and divide Christianity for the past five hundred years

- Martin Luther's theology dealt the death blow to kingdom inheritance doctrine taught by Jesus and the apostles

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- Jesus predicted this would happen in His parable of the leaven in the loaf (Matt. 13:33)
- Sadly, kingdom inheritance doctrine has been leavened (corrupted) in virtually all segments of Christianity, in large part due to Roman Catholicism as the first wave and Luther's Protestant Reformation doctrines as the second wave

- But that's not all Luther left to us ...

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- His antisemitism snatched away from the church the biblical doctrine of universal reconciliation, which is ...

- The teaching that God will ultimately save all mankind through Jesus Christ by the end of the ages, using the lake of fire as a remedial tool of purging, so that in the end:

Every knee will bow ... and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:10-11)

6

- Jan Bonda (1918-1997) – a Dutch Reformed pastor in the Netherlands (a young adult during WW2)
- After studying the Scriptures intensely, he had to forsake much of his Reformed theological heritage and his views on Israel

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Jan Bonda, *The One Purpose of God*:

In all likelihood, no chapter of Scripture has been so much misunderstood by the church throughout the ages as Romans 9. In this chapter the church has read that God rejected Israel forever. It has also been interpreted as the cornerstone of the traditional doctrine of predestination. “I have loved Jacob, but I have hated Esau (v. 13, RSV), and “He has mercy on whomever he chooses, and he hardens the heart of whomever he chooses” (v. 8, RSV). The idea that God does not want to save all people began with the conviction that God does not want to save Israel.

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Jan Bonda, *The One Purpose of God (cont'd)*:

What has this doctrine of Israel's rejection brought about? The great catastrophe of our century tells us: The murder of almost six million Jews from 1940 to 1945 in post-Christian Europe would not have been possible without the preparatory work of this ecclesiastical tradition. Here the exegesis of Romans 9-11 played a major role.

9

Jan Bonda, *The One Purpose of God (cont'd)*:

The genocide was not committed by Christians, but by pagans who had rejected faith in Jesus. However, this would not have happened in Europe if through the centuries the church had taught the people to see Israel as the apple of God's eye; if the church had learned to focus her expectations on the great salvation that God would give to the world through Israel.

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- Despite these indicting statements by Bonda, replacement theology continues alive and well within Reformed Protestant Christianity, including Reformed Baptist churches
- Replacement theology teaches that because of Israel's disobedience, God has forsaken Israel and turned His attention to the church, which is now spiritual Israel
- The promises in the OT for Israel will be fulfilled by the church in a spiritual sense

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- Thus, replacement theology typically results in an amillennial view of the end times, which dramatically reshapes the Scriptural view of future events
- Incidentally, replacement theology dates back long before Luther and the Reformation
- Augustine wrote a booklet called, “A Tract Against the Jews” and promoted replacement theology

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- The Roman Catholic Church picked it up and ran with it, and that is why R.C. churches have priests – in like manner as OT Israel – and masses, which are essentially bloodless sacrifices
- Instead of quashing it during the Reformation, Luther's antisemitism fueled-the-fires all the more, popularizing replacement theology for modern Christianity
- Thus, this perverted doctrine continues alive and well into the 21st century

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- In stark contrast to Augustine's and Luther's antisemitism and replacement theology, the apostle Paul demonstrates a deep love for the Jewish people and predicts a prominent future for national Israel
 - This is the clear teaching of Rom. 9-11
 - Israel's future salvation will be critical to the salvation of all mankind through Jesus Christ
- Bonda: The idea that God does not want to save all people began with the conviction that God does not want to save Israel.

14

- Remember: there are no chapter divisions in the original, so when Paul requests that he be *accursed* on behalf of Israel, he says that in the context of what he has just written at the end of ch. 8 – and what is that?

Rom 8:38-39 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

15

- Paul knows that even if he becomes accursed, God will love him regardless
- He confidently steps in on Israel's behalf as an intercessor, just like Abraham did for Sodom and Moses did for Israel in OT times

Rom 9:1-2 I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart.

9:3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh.

16

- Why does Paul wish himself *accursed* on behalf of Israel? And what does it mean to be accursed?

Rom 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.

- Paul's driving passion for Israel is that the nation would become "saved" – even to the point that Paul is willing to be accursed if it will result in Israel's salvation

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What is this *salvation*?

- The word SAVED in 10:1 must be defined in the same manner the word is used throughout the book of Romans – and considering the context of the book itself
- Most commentators believe Paul wrote Romans in the late 50s AD, when he was at Corinth (Zane Hodges says AD 56-57)
- Paul later arrived in Rome around AD 60

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- **Important: he is writing within the parenthetical era of sorts, extending from the resurrection of Christ (around AD 32) to the end of the book of Acts (around AD 62) – a period of about 30 years**
- **During this time frame the apostles re-offer kingdom inheritance to the entire generation of Israelites who were alive at the time of Christ's ministry – that is what the book of Acts is about**

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What is kingdom inheritance?

- **Israel was already deemed to be God's first-born son amongst the nations (see Exod. 4:22)**
- **As such, the nation will inherit a place of rulership on Earth, over all the nations in Christ's forthcoming millennial kingdom – that had been promised in the OT prophets**
- **But during His 3-year ministry on Earth, Jesus offered Israel something additional, something much grander**

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- **If the nation were to repent in the spirit of 2 Chron. 7:14 and return to fellowship with Jehovah, they would inherit a place of rulership, not merely on Earth, but in the heavenly New Jerusalem, which will be the millennial headquarters**
- **It is not the third Heaven, per se, the place of God's dwelling**
- **It is a city that comes down from Heaven and hovers over Earth (see Rev. 21-22)**
- **It is the place described in the book of Rev. as having streets of gold and gates of pearl**

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- **Jesus offered to national Israel a place of rulership in THAT realm of His kingdom if the nation would return to fellowship with Jehovah by repenting of sins**
- **But the nation rejected Christ's offer and, instead, crucified Him**
- **After the resurrection, God allowed the apostles to re-offer Christ's initial offer of kingdom inheritance through the end of the book of Acts, which ended a few years before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70**

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- **Because of Israel's rejection of the offer, Jesus is now making the same offer to Christians of the church age (see Matt. 21:43)**
- **However, the prerequisites for receiving this offer are living righteously, in dependence on Christ, and suffering with Him as a result of confessing Him before others**
- **At this point in the book of Romans, near the end of the 30-year re-offer period, Paul is speaking to Jewish Christians about those Jews who have not yet believed Jesus is the Messiah**

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- **However, at this particular point in Jewish history, this is still the generation of Jews who are regenerate, for they have believed God and have a zeal for Him – they are OT believers**

Rom 10:2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

- **That same statement – *zeal for God without knowledge* – described Paul before He realized Jesus was indeed the Messiah**

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- He was zealous for God, he was an OT believer, but he did not understand about Jesus – he was ignorant of that aspect of the Scriptures – until he met Jesus on the road to Damascus
- So when Paul says that his heart's desire and prayer for Israel is that they might be **SAVED**, he is **NOT** saying that he passionately desires for his fellow Israelites to be saved from Hell so they can go to Heaven (as is commonly interpreted in the Reformation tradition)

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- Rather, Paul yearns for his fellow countrymen, who are already believers, to recognize Jesus as the Messiah and move forward with the salvation of their souls, that is, becoming sanctified and conformed to the image of Christ by living righteously, in daily dependence on Jesus through faith, rather than depending on the Mosaic rituals
- If they repent and live in this manner, they will become kingdom inheritors

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- Paul knows the 30-year period of re-offering kingdom inheritance to national Israel for that generation is coming to a close, thus he cries out:

Rom 9:2-3 I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh.

- The great sorrow and grief in Paul's heart sounds like the heart of Jesus

27

Luke 19:41-42 Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.

43-44 For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation."

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- Because of this sorrow, Paul offers himself to become *accursed* if it will result in Israel's salvation
- What does he mean by wishing himself *accursed*?
- Is Paul saying, "Lord, send me to Hell so that my countrymen might not have to go there?"
- No, as already determined, the salvation in this text is not initial salvation, or regeneration of one's spirit

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- Israel was already a regenerated nation, at this particular time in history, on the basis of the blood of the Passover lamb
- This text – like the preponderance of the NT – is about soul-salvation, i.e., sanctification unto reward
- *accursed* = Greek word *anathema* = "excommunicated"
- Paul wishes to be excluded from kingdom inheritance if it will result in Israel's inheritance – but there's more to it than that

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- *anathema* is used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word *cherem* in the OT, which means to devote someone or something to destruction as an offering unto God – it was under a ban, so to speak, for it belonged to God
- When the Israelites entered into Canaan land and the walls of Jericho were miraculously leveled, God specified that all of those wicked Canaanites were to be killed, except for Rahab and her family who had turned to Jehovah

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- All others were to be killed, and all the material goods of value were to be brought into the tabernacle
- It was all *cherem*, devoted to God as an offering of the first fruits of victory

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Josh 6:17 Now the city shall be doomed by the LORD to destruction, it and all who are in it. Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all who are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.

18 And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.

19 But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are consecrated to the LORD; they shall come into the treasury of the LORD.

33

- Achan sinned by stealing what had been devoted to God – and that was a dreadful mistake, costing his life and defeat for Israel at the next battle of Ai
- Paul uses this very word *cherem* (i.e., the Greek equivalent *anathema*) – and asks God to devote him as an offering to destruction, in this case, disinheritance, so that national Israel might receive kingdom inheritance

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Chitwood, Salvation Message

Israel's repentance was of such import that Paul, knowing and understanding the gravity of that involved, *was willing to go to the extent of relinquishing HIS OWN POSITION in Christ's coming kingdom IF the nation's repentance COULD be effected through such actions on his part.*

- How unselfish of the apostle!
- Just like the selfless intercession of Moses in the book of Exodus

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- While Moses is up on the mountain with God, the people think he must have died, for he has been absent many days
- So they have Aaron fashion a golden calf out of their gold jewelry which is melted down
- They had learned about a golden calf for worship in Egypt – the Egyptians worshipped the apis bull as a god
- Now Israel is doing the same, calling this calf "Jehovah," which God had forbidden in the 10 commandments

36

Exod 32:7 And the LORD said to Moses, "Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves.

8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!' "

9 And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people!

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Exod 32:10 Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation."

- Do you ever wonder, "Why didn't Moses take God up on His offer?"
- Would it have been wrong for him to do so, seeing that God offered it? No, it would not
- But we find instead that Moses intercedes with God for Israel, because he is concerned about two things:

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Exod 32:11 Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said: "LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?

12 Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, 'He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people.

39

Exod 32:13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.' "

14 So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people.

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What is Moses is concerned about?

- 1.** He is concerned that God will appear too harsh and judgmental to the Egyptians, so he pleads with God, "Turn from Your fierce wrath"
- 2.** He is concerned that God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will not be fulfilled

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- Granted, God has said he will fulfill the promises through Moses, but Moses knows that means the salvation of all nations (that God had promised to Abraham in Gen. 12:3) will have to wait for Israel to become a nation once again
- He does not want that to happen
- Interestingly, Moses does not merely ask God to spare the righteous; he asks him to spare the entire nation, and that includes the sinful idolaters as well

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- Otherwise, this problem would happen again and again in the future, for man is sinful
- God would have to start over repeatedly
- The result would be continued delays for all the families of the earth being saved through Abraham
- In fact, if Moses had not interceded, Israel would have entered an endless loop of sorts, sinning and being destroyed and starting over again, sinning and being destroyed and starting over again, ad infinitum

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- Is this merely a charade? In other words, if Moses had not intervened on behalf of Israel, would God have spared Israel regardless?
- No! Otherwise, this passage has absolutely no meaning
- If Moses had not intervened, God would have destroyed Israel, and this would likely have started an endless loop of sorts throughout the centuries ...
- With the end result being that Israel would never be saved and the nations would never be saved

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- Perhaps, if that were the case, the prophecies that came later about Israel possessing the promised land in the Millennium and saving the nations would never have been written
- For that matter, would the prophets have ever spoken about a millennial kingdom?
- Or would we all be amillennialists?
- (Just logical speculation on my part) 😊

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- Thus, by stating these two objections Moses does exactly what God wants him to do – he appeals to God's character and the specific promises to Abraham that through him all of humanity will be saved
- Based on Moses' intercession, God agrees to spare the people
- But later Moses returns to the Lord to make atonement for the sins of the people

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Exod 32:31 Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold!

32 Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written."

- Moses essentially gives God a choice: Either forgive Israel's sin or blot me out of your book
- As if to say, "I don't want inheritance if Israel can't have it"

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- Many commentators believe the book mentioned here is the Book of Life
- Because this same book is opened at the Great White Throne, many of those same commentators assume it is a record of those who are saved, i.e., regenerated
- Thus, those not in the book are unsaved (unregenerate)
- But I believe this assumption is incorrect
- The Israelites were already a regenerated people as a result of the blood being applied in the first Passover

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- A comprehensive study of the book of life throughout the entire Bible reveals it is not a record of those who have been regenerated
- It is a record of those who have lived righteously and therefore stand to be rewarded
- Moses knows he is qualified to be in this book, so he asks God to forgive Israel, but if He will not, then Moses wants to be removed from this book – in other words, Moses offers to be disinherited from reward – so that Israel might be forgiven and spared God's judgment

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- Incidentally, if God had killed Israel for this sin, they would not have gone to Hell
- Rather, like Sodom, they would have experienced instant death and, for Israel, it would have been in a disinherited state
- Moses wants to take Israel's disinheritance upon himself as the substitute for the people
- Does God honor his request? YES!

50

- Ps. 106:23 Therefore He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses His chosen one stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, lest He destroy them.
- This is EXACTLY what Paul offers on behalf of Israel in Rom. 9
 - What is the significance of this?
 - BOTH Moses and Paul were concerned that God's promises be fulfilled by Israel and not someone else

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- Yet the Reformation has taught that it is acceptable for disobedient Israel to be replaced by another – the church of Jesus Christ
- This is NOT what God wants – He wants intercessors who will stand for Israel – even at their own peril – so Israel can fulfill its mission of saving the nations

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Jan Bonda: Thus we notice that God's purpose for Israel is not achieved automatically. It is realized only when Moses stands in the breach before God. God wants salvation for Israel, and through Israel he wants to reach all nations with his redemption. He wants to achieve this through human beings (mortals!) who share in the same aim, and who want that so eagerly that they are willing to put their own salvation at risk! We completely miss the point Scripture is trying to make if we argue that God would have done this anyway, since it had been predetermined what he would do!

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Jan Bonda (cont'd):
No, God himself puts everything at risk. If Moses had not intervened, Israel would not have received the forgiveness required for the fulfillment of the promise to the fathers. This Moses, who refuses to quit until God has assured him that he will forgive Israel and will dwell in their midst, appears as no other to be God's tool by which the divine intentions with Israel – and with all of humanity – can be realized.

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Jan Bonda (cont'd):

Again we ask from the perspective of our tradition. Is it God's will that his children passively accept the perdition of the many? This story about Moses makes abundantly clear that this spirit of acquiescence is the complete opposite of what Scriptures teaches us about the will of God. Whoever is called by him is called not to accept passively the doom people have brought upon themselves. And those who do acquiesce cannot be the tools through which God realizes his purposes.

55

- What Bonda says about Moses is also true of the apostle Paul in Rom. 9 – so that leaves us with three alternatives or options:

Option 1: We can acquiesce to man's will rather than God's and accept replacement theology, as Reformed Protestant Christianity has done

Option 2: We can reject replacement theology but continue to embrace its logical conclusion – eternal conscious torment – the doctrine that the overwhelming majority of humanity will be tormented forever in the lake of fire, eternally separated from God, with no way of escape

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- Sadly, this is held by virtually all of Christianity, but it is the logical conclusion of replacement theology; it is NOT biblical doctrine
- To repeat Bonda's profound statement:
- "The idea that God does not want to save all people began with the conviction that God does not want to save Israel."

Option 3: We can choose to believe God wants all of Israel to be saved so they can lead all the nations to God through Jesus Christ, in fulfillment of the promise to Abraham

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- After offering himself to be accursed on behalf of Israel, Paul is given God's answer, and he writes about it in ch. 11:

Rom 11:26-27 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written [in Isa. 59:20]: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins."

- Then Paul states God's purpose for saving Israel:

Rom 11:32 For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.

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- Israel will finally become God's instrument for showering His mercy upon all mankind, unto salvation – and that prompts Paul to write:

Rom 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

- Is not God most glorified in the salvation of all men? And is this not the ultimate of love?

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- Paul sums up the Christian life in 3 words at the end of 1 Cor. 13

1 Cor 13:13 Now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

- In the next verse, he says: Pursue love. (14:1)
- FAITH living is the Christ life that leads to holiness and victory, which Paul covers in Rom. 6, 7, and 8:1-11
- HOPE living is kingdom preparedness that leads to reward (Rom. 8:12-39)
- LOVE living is universal reconciliation, the salvation of all mankind (Rom. 9-11, 15)

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- **LOVE is what Abraham and Moses and Paul each had**
- **How can Christianity be loving if it views Israel as replaced by the church?**
- **That's not God's will! Israel is His means of reaching the whole world with salvation! (Read Isa. 43)**
- **How can Christianity be loving if it expects the masses of humanity to burn forever and ever in the lake of fire?**
- **Is that God having mercy on all (Rom. 11:26)?**

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- **No, I prefer to believe that God will save all of humanity by the end of the ages**
- **In small part, He will use the church to accomplish that goal, but in much greater part He will use Israel**
- **May we, like Moses and Paul, yearn for Israel's salvation, for her salvation is the key to the salvation of all**
- **When you have this heart of love for Israel and mankind, then you have truly discovered the heart of God**

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