

Romans 11:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

Analysis

If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh—ei pōs parazēlōsō mou tēn sarka (εἴ πως παραζηλώσω μου τὴν σάρκα). The phrase "my flesh" (mou tēn sarka) refers to Paul's ethnic kinsmen, fellow Jews. The verb parazēloō (παραζηλόω) means to provoke to jealousy or emulation—the same word from Deuteronomy 32:21 (v. 11). Paul's Gentile ministry has an evangelistic hope toward Israel: **and might save some of them** (kai sōsō tinas ex autōn, καὶ σώσω τινας ἐξ αὐτῶν).

Notice the humility: "some of them" (tinas, τινας), not all. Paul recognizes he cannot save all Israel by his efforts—that awaits God's eschatological work (v. 26). But his ministry might save some, and this motivates him. The conditional "if by any means" (ei pōs) expresses longing, not certainty. Paul's passion for Jewish salvation permeates Romans 9-11 (9:1-3; 10:1). His Gentile apostleship serves dual purpose: Gentile salvation and Jewish provocation to faith.

Historical Context

Paul's practice in Acts demonstrates this strategy: he typically preached first in synagogues before turning to Gentiles (Acts 13:46; 18:6; 28:28). Even as apostle to the Gentiles, he never abandoned hope for Israel. His Roman readers needed to understand this.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's passion for saving 'some' of Israel demonstrate proper evangelistic realism without despair?
2. What does it mean that Christian blessing should provoke rather than alienate Jewish people?
3. How can Gentile believers today be used by God to provoke Israel to jealousy in a biblical, loving way?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	πως	παραζηλώσω	μου	τὴν	σάρκα	καὶ
G1487	G4459	I may provoke to emulation	them which are my	G3588	flesh	and
		G3863	G3450		G4561	G2532

σώσω	τινὰς	ἐξ	αὐτῶν
might save	some	of	them
G4982	G5100	G1537	G846

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 7:16 (Salvation): For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

1 Timothy 4:16 (Salvation): Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

Romans 11:11 (Salvation): I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

Romans 9:3 (Parallel theme): For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

1 Corinthians 1:21 (Salvation): For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

1 Timothy 2:4 (Salvation): Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

James 5:20 (Salvation): Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

Titus 3:5 (Salvation): Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

2 Timothy 2:10 (Salvation): Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.