

THE APOSTLE'S DEEP GRIEF

Romans 9:1-5

Intro: Of all of the words written or spoken by the people of God, and recorded in the Bible, I do not know of anything that surpasses what Paul wrote at the beginning of chapter 9 in Romans. In fact, it is so amazing that he called upon the Lord and upon the Holy Spirit to be his Witnesses that what he was writing is the truth. There were many things that the Lord said which were even more amazing. For example, just the simple statement that "God so loved the world..." But the Apostle Paul in this one statement went beyond anything that we would ever expect to hear from any child of God. I have spoken about his statement to many of the Lord's people, and I have yet to find one who feels that he could say what Paul said.

The prophet Jeremiah came close to saying what Paul said, and so did Moses when he pled with the Lord about Israel saying that if he could not forgive Israel, then he wanted to be blotted out of the book which the Lord had written. But I still feel that Paul's statement goes beyond the others because Paul had a much greater understanding of what was involved in being separated from Christ.

I am referring, of course, to the Apostle's words in verse 3. (Read.)

This introduces a three-chapter emphasis upon God's plan for the nation Israel. It is a glorious statement of the sovereignty of God, and to the immutability of His purposes. If you don't believe in sovereign grace after you finish the first eight chapters of Romans, you need to go back and read them over again. And if that is not enough, read them again and again until you do see it. However, by the time you get finished with chapter 11 you should be so firmly convinced of God's sovereignty that you could never be shaken in your assurance of it.

Let me encourage you to read and re-read chapters 9, 10, and 11. And then every week or so read the first eleven chapters together. We all need to read the Word more than we do, and there is no better way to reach an understanding of the Scriptures than through constant and repeated reading.

But let us get right to our text because there is much food for our souls in the first five verses, my text for today.

(Read Rom. 9:1-5.)

As I have said, Paul's statement in verse 3 is the heart of

this section. Verses 1, 2, 4, and 5 have to be interpreted in the light of what Paul had to say in verse 3.

The first verse gives us:

I. THE CONFIRMATION OF PAUL'S STATEMENT (Rom. 9:1).

Verse 1 should alert us to the fact that Paul was about to write something very important. But, as I have emphasized, it would not only be important, but so unbelievable that only the testimony of the Godhead could possibly convince any reader that Paul was really telling the truth.

Now we have had no reason not to believe Paul. He has been very careful in his epistles not to exaggerate. In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, which was written before he wrote Romans, this is what Paul had to say about the experiences of suffering which he had just mentioned. He not only vouched for their truth, but also about the fact that he was not glorying in them. Here are his words:

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not
(2 Cor. 11:31).

Even in this epistle to the Roman church Paul had written this in 1:9,

For God is my witness,
whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son,
that without ceasing I make mention of you always
in my prayers.

This meant that there was no question but that Paul was praying always for the believers in Rome.

However, with Paul there is another matter that we need to consider concerning his statement. Paul was writing to the church at Rome under the direction of the Holy Spirit. And we know that the Holy Spirit would not lead Paul to write anything that was not absolutely true. So considering these two things, (1) the twofold witness that Paul took, and (2) the fact that he was speaking as directed by the Holy Spirit, gives indisputable evidence that Paul was telling the truth here. We must get ready for something very important because we learn from verse 1 that Paul is preparing to tell us the truth.

Verses 2 and 3 really go together, making up the statement that he was making here, but I want to consider them separately because verse 2 shows us how constantly Paul felt the burden that he was under. And so let us call it:

II. THE INTENSITY OF HIS BURDEN (Rom. 9:2).

Some who have written on the book of Romans say that there is no connection between chapters 1 through 8 and chapters 9 through 11. I disagree! I disagree strongly! I believe that there is a very close connection between the two sections.

However, we have to recognize that we go from the mountain peak of Scripture at the end of chapter 8 to the depths of experienced by a burdened heart in chapter 9.

Perhaps you have heard people in our day minimizing the importance of doctrine by saying that doctrine makes us hard and unfeeling and cold in our relationship with others. We would have to agree that this is sometimes the case. But Paul shows us here that doctrine rightly understood causes us to be deeply concerned about others. I think that we would all agree that no one knew more about doctrine than the Apostle Paul. As I have mentioned many times, he is the one who has given us the most thorough statement of salvation that we have any place in Scripture. Paul knew the natural condition of man, and his alienation from God. He knew what it meant to be declared righteous before God. He knew what it required before God could declare anyone righteous. He knew that our justification before God was only the beginning. That leads immediately to our sanctification, and ultimately, without any exceptions, to our glorification. Paul's heart was full of doctrine. He loved doctrine. He taught doctrine in all of his epistles. And I would be inclined to say that it was his knowledge of doctrine which brought him into such a heavy state of anxiety for his fellow Israelites.

Don't let anyone scare you away from doctrine. Doctrine is basic to everything else in the Christian life. Without a proper understanding of doctrine, we can soon get completely sidetracked in our lives. When Paul told Timothy in 2 Tim. 3:16 why the Scriptures are important, the first thing he mentioned was doctrine!

But how did he express the intensity of his burden?

He said, "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart." If we are to benefit from his words, we need to know what they mean. We can tell that he was speaking of something that made him very sad, extremely so.

"Heaviness" is grief. It speaks, as we might think, of an inward feeling. Sometimes grief is expressed outwardly. But here Paul was expressing a grief which, as Trench says in his Synonyms (p. 238), which "a man may so entertain in the deep of his heart, that there shall be no outward manifestation of

it, unless he himself be pleased to reveal it." And then Trench cited this verse as a place where it is so used.

And this grief was not just a grief like any other grief. This was "great"! He meant that it was intense. It was the kind of grief which was like a heavy burden that is on top of you, and you can't get out from under it.

By "sorrow" Paul meant that it caused him pain. It tormented him. He was in distress because of it. And this was not just occasionally, but continually. Godet (p. 339) wrote that it accompanied all of the moments of his life. He was never without it. We can be sure that Paul had shed many tears over this. It was a grief which even had an effect upon him physically.

What was his burden? We see it in verse 3.

III. THE APOSTLE'S BURDEN (Rom. 9:3).

When I speak of going from the heights to the depths, this verse will help you to understand what I mean. After those glorious statement at the end of chapter 8 about nothing being able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, then Paul wrote this.

It means that at sometime in the past he had could to the realization that, if he could, he would give up all that he had in Christ, and be separated from him forever, if only the Lord would save his fellow-Israelites. He meant that he had felt this way for a long time, and that as he was writing, he still felt like that.

Now let us think his statement for a moment.

It would probably be impossible for even a babe in Christ, someone who had just been saved, to make a statement like this. But we are reading the words of an apostle! This is the statement of a man who experienced fellowship with his Savior as few people experience it. He knew the joy and relief of having his sins forgiven. He had tasted of the joy to come in his anticipation of being with the Lord in heaven, and of being like the Lord. For a man like the Apostle Paul to make such a statement, knowing what he knew, and having tasted of the joys of salvation, is truly incredible.

But let me add something else for you to think about.

Paul was not speaking here just about his friends. Most of those he was speaking about were his enemies. He was talking about people who hated him, people who wanted to kill him. I

don't know if the Jews had a "most wanted list" in those days, but, if they did, the Apostle Paul was #1 on that list. The Jews pursued him from city to city. He had been beaten by them, stoned by them, starved by them, imprisoned by them. I repeat, we are not speaking about a man's concern for his family and his friends, but about his "great heaviness and continual sorrow" for his enemies.

As I was studying this passage again, I am sure it was the Holy Spirit Who brought to my mind those words of the Lord Jesus when He said,

But I say unto you, Love your enemies,
bless them that curse you,
do good to them that hate you,
and pray for them which despitefully use you,
and persecute you;
That ye may be the children of your Father
which is in heaven;
for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil
and on the good, and sendeth rain
on the just and on the unjust.
for if ye love them which love you,
what reward have ye?
do not even the publicans the same?
and if ye salute your brethren only,
what do ye more than others?
do not even the publicans so?
Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father
which is in heaven is perfect (Matt. 6:44-48).

I thought also of those words of prayer which our Lord spoke on the Cross when He said concerning His enemies, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

And Stephen said, as he was dying, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:60).

Do you remember that back in Rom. 5:7, 8 Paul wrote these words,

For scarcely for a righteous man would one die:
yet peradventure for a good man
some would even dare to die.
But God commendeth his love toward us, in that,
while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

If Paul had been speaking of members of his family, or of some close friends, it would not be as hard to believe. But he was saying this about his enemies!

If the Lord were to tell me that the only way he could save Lucille was for me to go to hell, I would agree to that. Or

if He said that the only way He could save John would be for me to agree to go to hell, I would agree to that. But to give up my salvation for someone who hated me, who perhaps had cheated me, and had done everything possible to make life miserable for me, that would be something else. It is only as the love of God laid hold of our hearts that we could even think of doing what Paul suggested here that he would be willing to do.

Think about this, and you will see how much growing we have to do. When we realize what it means that people will spend eternity in hell, it will move our heart with "great heaviness and continual sorrow," too.

But let me move on quickly to the last two verses, 4 and 5. In these verses Paul spoke of:

IV. THE BLESSINGS GOD HAD GIVEN TO THE PEOPLE FOR WHOM HE WAS CONCERNED (Rom. 9:4, 5).

Even though Paul gets into the subject of election again in this section, as he did in the last, it does not seem that he was speaking of the elect of Israel here, but of the nation as such. It shows that it is right for us to be concerned about the spiritual welfare of all people. We do not know who the elect are, and so we are unable to single them out for ministry to them. Our charge is to preach the Gospel to every creature; the Lord is the One Who determines who will really hear and be saved.

This section is unusual also because Paul was not the Apostle to the Jews; Peter was. Paul had been called to a ministry to the Gentiles. But we see here that his burden was not limited to the Gentiles; he was far more concerned about the Jews than most people are about their own friends and neighbors. So it shows that while the Lord may call us to minister with certain people, yet our mission is to the world. Paul called to go to the Gentiles nevertheless had a deep and constant burden for the Jews.

But look at the blessings given to Israel which were not bestowed upon any other nation. Paul mentioned nine special blessings:

- 1) They are Israelites.
- 2) To them pertained the adoption.
- 3) And the glory.
- 4) And the covenants.
- 5) And the giving of the Law.
- 6) And the service of God.
- 7) And the promises.
- 8) Whose are the fathers.

9) And of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came.

Think of all of the privileges that were theirs. Paul could easily have felt that they had opportunity enough. God had shown great mercy to them when time and time again He had reasons to cast them away. But He didn't! And Paul felt as burdened for them as he would have if they had never had any of the blessings that God had given to them. If any nation were ever without excuse, it is the nation Israel. Why would Paul wish that he could give up his own salvation if he could only see them saved?

The answer to that is found only in the love of God. In Rom. 5:5 Paul had said, "Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." It was the love of God in his heart which made him so greatly concerned for, as he described them, "my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." And it is as the love of God fills our hearts that we will feel about people and their salvation the way Paul did.

Concl: Is there not a parallel between Paul's love for the Jews and the way we should feel about people in our country. I have said that no nation has ever been blessed as Israel has been. No nation has had the opportunity to know God that Israel has had. No nation has had a greater opportunity to hear the Word of God, or to hear the Gospel of the grace of God.

But what about our country? With the exception of Israel, what nation has been as blessed as we have been? The Word of God had a major part in the founding of our country. The Gospel has been preached from coast to coast throughout our history. We have so many churches it is hard to count them all. We have established schools of higher learning for the purpose of sending pastors and missionaries throughout the world. The Lord has blessed us materially as no other nation has been blessed. But for many years we have been in the process of throwing it all away. We have despised the Lord by our sinning. We have opened the door to false cults and all kinds of religions. We are gradually closing the doors on the very liberties we have enjoyed throughout our history. Should we not wash our hands of our own country? Why should we spend money to broadcast the Word of God? Why should we give our money and spend time in prayer for Portland and Gresham and Beaverton and Vancouver and Washougal, or wherever it is that you live? Why? Because the love of Christ constrains us to do so. We are under the same commission every generation of the Lord's people has been under. And so let us work harder, and pray longer and more fervently, looking to the Lord for His blessing. Our job is not done.

GOD'S PURPOSE IN HIS PROMISE
Romans 9:6-13

Intro: The big question which the Apostle Paul was dealing with in this part of Romans 9 is, Has the Word of God failed? This is a question of supreme importance to all of us. Has God made any promises that He finds it impossible to keep? Or, even though He can keep His promises, has He for some reason decided that He is not going to keep them? Perhaps he has found that man will not let Him keep His promises.

I heard some television preachers discussing this question the other day. They stated it this way: Is there anything stronger than the Word of God? To my amazement the answer they gave was, "Yes." And then they went on to refer to these verses in Mark 7, verses 9 and 13. Let me read them to you:

And he said unto them,

Full well do ye reject the commandment of the God,
that ye may keep your own tradition...

Making the word of God of none effect

through your tradition, which ye have delivered,
and many such things ye do.

These men acted like they had made a great discovery, and seemed pleased over what they had found. How could anyone find pleasure in believing that it is possible for man, by his tradition, or in any other way, to set aside the Word of God? God would be dependent upon us. A God like that would be no God at all. If God is God, then no one can withstand Him, no one can keep Him from carrying out His Word or from doing all that He has ordained from the foundation of the world that He would do.

What did the Lord mean by these statements? He meant no more than what He said in the first verse I read to you: "Ye reject the commandment of God." And then He went on to explain to them that they had allowed their traditions to become more important to them than the Word of God, and so they were not going to experience the blessing of God in their lives. People do this every day. It does not mean that they are greater than God. It simply means that they are shutting themselves out of salvation.

But then let me ask another question: If we reject the Word of God for the traditions of men, does that mean that God is helpless where that person is concerned?

Let me give you an outstanding example from Scripture.

Paul gave his testimony to the churches of Galatia in Gal.

1:13-16 in these words:

For ye have heard of my conversation in time past
in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure
I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:
And profited in the Jews' religion
above many my equals in mine own nation,
**being more exceedingly zealous
of the traditions of my fathers.**

Now let me stop there for a moment.

Paul was telling the Galatian believers that he hated the church. He did not want Christ. He did not want to be saved. He was one who was making void the commandments of God not just by the traditions of the Jews, but by being "more exceeding zealous" of those traditions than anyone else was. Therefore, the possibility that Saul of Tarsus (which was his name originally) could ever be saved, was nil! It was non-existent. If, as these preachers were saying, the traditions of men are stronger than the Word of God, Paul would be in hell today! He was not about to give up his Jewish traditions for the Gospel of Christ.

But what did he go on to tell the Galatian churches? Listen to his words:

But when it pleased God,
who separated me from my mothers' womb,
and called me by his grace,
To reveal his Son in me,
that I might preach him among the heathen;
immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:
Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them
that were apostles before me...

What do these words mean? They mean that although Paul believed that the traditions of Judaism were the truth, yet when the time came that God had planned to save him, he was saved--and it was not because any apostle convinced him that Christians were right, and he was wrong. When the Lord met Paul on the road to Damascus, the traditions flew out of the window of his soul, and he became a new creature in Christ!

What do Isa. 55:10, 11 tell us?

For as the rain cometh down,
and the snow from heaven,
and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth,
and maketh it bring forth and bud,
that it may give seed to the sower,
and bread to the eater.
**So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth:
it shall not return unto me void,
but it shall accomplish that which I please,**

and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

To say that we can keep God from fulfilling His Word is the height of pride. It is setting ourselves above God. It is really blaspheming both God and His Word. I was amazed that those men were so ignorant of the truth.

Do you remember what Jeremiah said in one of those times that he was in the Slough of Despond? He felt that God had deceived him, and he had decided never to preach again. Listen to what he wrote in Jer. 20:9:

Then I said, I will not make mention of him,
nor speak any more in his name.
But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire
shut up on my bones,
and I was weary with forbearing,
and I could not stay.

Heb. 4:12 tells us that "the word of God is living..."

And I love those words in Num. 23:19:

God is not a man, that he should lie;
neither the son of man, that he should repent:
hath he said, and shall he not do it?
or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

Jeremiah also gave us another good verse on the power of the Word of God found in Jer. 23:29:

Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord;
and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?

So have no doubt, or doubts, about the Word of God. Paul even went so far as to tell Timothy in 2 Tim. 2:13,

If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful:
he cannot deny himself.

And our Lord said,

Heaven and earth shall pass away,
but my words shall not pass away (Matt. 24:35).

Let me go now to our text and let us see:

I. THE PROBLEM (Rom. 9:6a).

But why did this question come up? Paul did not actually state it as a question, but referred to the problem which Israel's condition had apparently raised in the mind of many people. And probably Paul was dealing with a problem that he knew was bothering the believers in Rome.

Why did Paul write so strongly and positively in defense of the Word of God?

It was because of the spiritual condition of Israel at the time that Paul wrote this epistle. He mentioned in verses 4 and 5 many of the main blessings that God had given to Israel. They are "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." And then he went on to mention "the fathers," climaxed with the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ had been born a Jew. And yet the nation had rejected Christ. They had played a major role in putting Him to death. And the chief persecutors of the Church were Jews. Did this not all mean that the Word of God had failed? Did this not mean that God was unable to get the Jews to do what He wanted them to do? That is certainly what it looked like!

How did Paul answer the problem? He gave them:

II. A LESSON IN HISTORY (Rom. 9:6b-13).

The Jews have always taken a great deal of pride in their history. It is very possible that much of it was passed down by word of mouth generation after generation. Possibly you remember some of those OT passages where the parents were told to make their children well informed about God's dealings with Israel. The history of Israel is scattered all through the OT, not just in the books which we usually speak of as the books of history. We find history in the Pentateuch, we find it in the Psalms, and in the prophetic books, as well as those that are clearly historical. If we were to take history out of the OT, we wouldn't have much of it left. History is quite obviously very important to God! And He does not want us to forget it--especially Biblical history!

However, it is very possible to know a lot of the details of history without knowing what those details mean. That was the problem of many of the Jews, but it was also a problem with many Gentiles who had been saved. They needed someone to explain history, Biblical history, for them. Biblical history is a record of God's dealings with His people, not just a record of who they were, and what they did, and where they went. Bible history is the only history that has ever been written which is completely accurate. That is because those who have written the Bible were guided by the Holy Spirit in what they wrote.

What did Paul have to say about Israel's history? Who did he mention?

If you will let your eye run down through verses 6 through 13 you will find the names of some of your OT friends. There is Abraham in verse 7, along with Isaac. Sarah, Abraham's wife

is mentioned in verse 9. Rebecca is mentioned in verse 10 along with her husband, Isaac. And then we have the names of their twin sons, Jacob and Esau, in verse 13. And that is as far as we will go today.

Now what was Paul attempting to show the believers at Rome?

He wanted them to know that when the Lord spoke of His blessing upon Israel, He was not speaking of the whole nation. He wanted them to know that it was never God's will that all the people of Israel would be saved. And it is the history of Israel which teaches us that.

Paul had touched upon this truth back at the end of Romans 2 when he wrote in verses 28 and 29,

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly;
neither is that circumcision,
which is outward in the flesh,
But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly,
and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit,
and not in the letter;
whose praise is not of men, but of God.

It never has been true that if a person were a Jew, a natural descendant of Abraham, and only that, that He was a child of God. Jewish people had to believe in the coming Redeemer just as any Gentile does who intends to be saved.

"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made," said Paul in writing to the Galatian churches (3:16). And he went on to say that the seed to Whom he was referring was Christ. And this is why we go back to Abraham. It was to Abraham that the promises regarding our salvation began to be very clear.

But what does Bible history from Abraham on down teach us?

Abraham had a son born to him before Isaac was born. I am speaking of Ishmael who was Abraham's son by Hagar, the Egyptian handmaiden. But he was not a part of the purpose of God. But God told Abraham that his Seed would be called in Isaac. Isaac was Abraham's son in fulfillment of the promise of God because he was born after Abraham and Sarah were actually too old to have children.

And then we move on to Isaac and his wife, Rebecca. They had twin sons. Esau was born first, and then Jacob. Normally the promise would have been carried on through Esau. But even before they were born the Lord told Rebecca that "the elder would serve the younger." Jacob was chosen by God; Esau was rejected. This is the meaning of "hated" in Mal.

1:2, 3. Paul began his quotations of the OT in this text with the book of Genesis, and concluded it with Malachi. So, in a sense, he was showing that the truth about God's promise extends from the first book of the OT to the last of the prophetic books.

But now what does all of this teach?

It teaches that God's purpose in salvation did not rest upon man's willingness to obey God, but upon the sovereign choice and power which God exercised upon the hearts of those whom He ordained for salvation. Actually, the doctrine which Paul was teaching here, and continues to teach through this chapter, is the doctrine of election.

So, if we are to understand the doctrine of salvation we must also understand the doctrine of election because salvation begins and ends with God, not with man! As people have looked at Israel in any generation, they could easily believe that God's Word had failed. They could easily think that God has not been able to do what He originally intended to do. But that is because they have the mistaken idea that God intends to save everyone. That is not His purpose, and it never has been. God has chosen those who are going to be saved. He chose them before the foundation of the world. And in confirmation of His promises we see in every generation that God's purpose in salvation is being carried out exactly as He has ordained it. And this is the meaning of this passage which we have before us today. It may not be the way that you and I would do it, but that is none of our business. What we need to do if we are to glorify God as we should is to see what His Word teaches about salvation, and then believe it. This is where our security is, and this is where we will find our hearts filled with praise to God for what He has done, and continues to do, in the hearts of His chosen ones. Don't be afraid of it. It is the teaching of the Word. The Church has gotten away from it, but there are many indications that the Lord is bringing us back to this Biblical doctrine which God ordained for His glory.

But before I close this morning, let me point out one way in which this chapter answers one of the main objections to the doctrine of election.

Concl: We are often told that this is a great hindrance to evangelism, that if God has elected those who are to be saved, then it does away with any burden for the lost.

How does this chapter help us answer that objection?

First, you have to admit that Paul was teaching election in

this chapter. Verse 11 surely proves that. It may be a new doctrine to you because it is not being taught today as it used to be taught. We have become so man-centered in our evangelism that we have put God in a position where He does not know who is going to be saved, and is really powerless to do anything for anybody unless, by their so-called "free will," they will let God do what He wants to do. We hear that slogan, Let God be God! I am here to tell you that God is going to be God whether you and I let Him be God or not! He is God! He is a sovereign God. He is not under our authority, we are under His. And to know this and to believe it, is one of the greatest means of assurance and joy that we can possibly have. If you turn away from the doctrine of election, you are the loser, not God.

But let me add this second point.

Did Paul believe in election? Obviously he did. You find it in many of his epistles. Now for this question: Did his knowledge of the sovereignty of God in election keep him from being burdened for the salvation of the people of Israel?

Look back at the first three verses of this chapter, and follow are I re-read them to you. (Read Rom.9:1-3.)

Paul's own experience shows us that knowing and believing the doctrine of election intensifies our burden to see people saved. And it intensifies it beyond what any person will have if he does not believe in election.

May the Lord be our Teacher. Cast aside any prejudice you might have against this precious doctrine of Scripture. Know that if the Lord had not chosen us, and if He does not draw us to Himself, and enable us to believe, no one would ever come to Christ. Therefore, the doctrine of election is our great encouragement for evangelism and our greatest proof that the promise of God for salvation is being carried out exactly as He planned before the foundation of the world.

DOES ELECTION MAKE GOD A SINNER?

Romans 9:14-18

Intro: The main theme of this epistle to the Romans is salvation. The doctrine itself is presented in the first eight chapters. We have seen that salvation is made up of justification, sanctification, and glorification. (Explain each.)

And so, after showing at the beginning of the epistle man's need of salvation and that all men are under divine condemnation, Paul proceeded to show what salvation is. The high point of the epistle is reached in chapter 8!

As he began to write chapter 9, he started to show how this salvation related to Israel.

Anyone who reads the OT can readily see that before Christ and after Abraham God was dealing primarily with the Jewish people, the nation of Israel. I say "primarily" because it was not exclusively. From the beginning God had in His mind the salvation of Gentiles also, but the promises were given to the Jews. The fathers of our faith were Abraham and his son, Isaac, then Jacob, Judah, and so on throughout Scripture. However, at the time the Apostle Paul wrote this epistle, it was clear that most of the people of Israel did not want to have anything to do with the Lord Jesus Christ. And so this raised a series of questions.

The first, in verse 6, although not stated as a question, had to do with the Word of God. Had the Word of God failed? That was the equivalent of asking, If the Jews were rejecting Christ, did this not mean that **God had failed?**

I took the time last week to give you a number of Scriptures to show you that the Word of God cannot fail! God stands behind His own Word. And so, since no person has ever been able to stand against God, there is nothing that man can do, or that men together can do, to keep God from carrying out His will which He has expressed in His Word.

The problem was that divine history had not been rightly understood by most people. We learn in verse 6 through 13 of this chapter that it was never God's intention to save every Jew. Being a natural descendant of Abraham never made anyone a child of God. The book of Genesis clearly shows in the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that the people of God were a special group chosen personally by God Himself. And so after Abraham, we have Ishmael and Isaac. God chose Isaac. After Isaac we have Esau and Jacob. God chose Jacob. This work of God in choosing those who are to be saved is

known as THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION. Scripture teaches that God's choices were made before the foundation of the world, and that in every generation those people who have been saved, were chosen for salvation before the foundation of the world.

If you want Scriptural proof of that, read 2 Thess. 2:13, 14 and Eph. 1:4.

Unfortunately there has been much opposition to this doctrine. It appears to be contrary to those Scriptures which teach that whosoever will may come to Christ. In addition, because sin has made man very proud, man does not like to think that he does not have a vital part in his own salvation, even to the point where he initiates it rather than God. But we have to start with any doctrine on what the Scriptures teach, and the Scriptures teach that salvation is a divine work, and that it begins and ends with God, not with us. It is true that we have to believe. We have to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. But even our faith is a gift from God. And sin has such a hold on all of us, holding us captive, that we would not and could not come to Christ if God had not chosen us, called us, and then drawn us to Himself. Our faith in Christ is proof that God has done His work of salvation in our hearts.

I hope this is clear to all of us. If not, ask the Lord to make His truth clear to you. I can assure you that, if you have not known this doctrine of election, knowing it and believing it will bring you greater joy than you have ever known.

But now all of this raises another question.

I. THE QUESTION (Rom. 9:14).

Paul was asking this question from the standpoint of a believer who knows about election, and who believes it. But he is still troubled by it.

The question is this: Is God doing the right thing by choosing some, and not choosing all? Only Paul stated it even more strongly than I have. He asked, "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God?"

I doubt if there has ever been a person who, on first learning about election, has felt that it really isn't fair for God to handle salvation that way. We naturally feel that, if He is going to save anyone, He ought to save everyone! And that if salvation originates with God, He ought to choose everyone. We say, "That is the only way that God can be

fair."

But let us look at that question for just a moment. If we are thinking that God has done something that is UNrighteous, we are saying that God is a sinner. We are saying that God has sinned.

Most people would probably step back from that and say that they don't believe that God has sinned; they just don't believe that He has chosen those who are going to be saved, and only those He has chosen will be saved.

But let me come back with this: If you don't believe in the doctrine of election, this is one part of the Word of God that you don't believe! The only way that you can honestly reject the doctrine of election is to take Romans 9, and other passages that teach it, out of your Bible. You would not want to do that, would you? I wouldn't think that any Christian would be willing to do that. If you start along that path, where are you going to stop?

So you and I really have no choice but to accept it. The Bible teaches it, and we believe the Bible, therefore, we must believe it! But let us say that you still have some question as to whether or not God has done the right thing. And so Paul has raised a question that you would like to have answered.

To be perfectly honest, we all, at various times in our lives, have questioned what God has done. We would not say that God is a sinner, but if you really look at our questions, that is what they really mean.

Let me cite an example from the life of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah was called to preach in Judah during one of the worst times in Judah's history. And he went through some times of great discouragement. He did not feel that the Lord was standing behind what He had told Jeremiah to say. Jeremiah had preached judgment, but God had not judged. And so Jeremiah said this: "O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived" (Jer. 20:7).

Now let me ask you a question. Is it a sin to deceive someone? Deceiving is lying, isn't it? And lying is certainly a sin. Therefore, Jeremiah was accusing the Lord of sinning! What a blasphemous charge to bring against a holy, absolutely righteous, and sovereign God!

Let me give you another illustration from one of our recent Sunday School lessons in the book of Exodus. It is taken

from the life of Moses.

You all remember, I trust, that Moses had run ahead of the Lord when he was 40 years old, had killed an Egyptian, and then fled for his life into the land of Midian. When he was 80, the Lord appeared to him and called him to go back into Egypt to deliver the Israelites from the Egyptians. Moses went back, and went in to Pharaoh and told Pharaoh that the Lord was commanding him to let the Israelites go. Pharaoh refused. But that was not all. He made the Israelites work harder, making them gather their own straw to make bricks, and yet he did not reduce the number of bricks that the Jews were to make each day.

The Jews could not do what they were told to do, and so the officers who were over them blamed Moses and Aaron for increasing the trouble of the Jews. Moses had no one to turn to except the Lord. But listen to his prayer recorded in Ex. 5:22, 23:

Lord, wherefore hast thou **so evil entreated** this people?
why is it that thou hast sent me?
For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name,
he hath done evil to this people;
neither hast thou delivered thy people at all.

I can see three things that Moses pointed out that God had done which proved to be wrong:

- 1) He said that the Lord had "evil entreated" the people.
- 2) He questioned God's wisdom in bringing him back to Egypt. Instead of helping the people, they were worse off than before.
- 3) He rebuked the Lord because He hadn't kept His promise. He had not delivered the people "at all."

Doesn't it sound to you like Moses was charging God with being unrighteous, not doing the right thing--actually, sinning?

I'm not pointing an accusing finger at Moses, nor at Jeremiah. There have been times in my life when in my discouragement I have felt like they did. How ashamed all of us should be that we have ever entertained such thoughts! We would not like to say that we are charging God with sin, but that is what it amounts to.

Paul had probably heard this words countless numbers of times from people who were having trouble with the doctrine of election. What they probably meant was that a righteous God would not do such an unrighteous thing, but you can see what in actuality it means.

How did Paul handle this? Let us look at his answer.

II. THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION (Rom. 9:14b-16).

The answer has two parts. The first part is:

A. "God forbid."

We have had this expression before, and I have explained it to you. Actually the name of God is not a part of it. A literal translation would be, let it not be, or may it not be. It was a saying expressing amazement that such a thought would ever occur to us. And let us learn from this ourselves. There are going to be many times when we will not understand the teaching of the Word of God. There will also be times when we do not understand what God is doing with us. But we should never let our lack of understanding bring us to the point where we will find ourselves charging God with sin. If there is anyone at fault, I am, you are, but it is never God. If it seems to us like God is not doing the right thing, remember that the fault is with our lack of understanding, never with God.

If we would remember this, it would save us much unhappiness, and we would be more inclined to trust the Lord and to let Him make His way clear to us.

Let me give you a verse to remember along this line. It is Psa. 145:17, a good verse for all of us to memorize:

**The Lord is righteous in all his ways,
and holy in all his works.**

Let us never forget it. And note the two times that the Psalmist said "all."

What is the second part of Paul's answer?

B. The Lord's words in Ex. 33:19.

Paul quoted these words in Rom. 9:15, and then drew his conclusion in verse 16.

What does this mean?

It means that God has reserved His right to two things:

- 1) To work in people's hearts, or not to work in their hearts.
- 2) To choose those for whom He intends to be merciful.

This is what we see in the doctrine of election. God had the right not to do anything for the salvation of sinners, if that had been His will. But He chose to provide salvation.

However, He reserved for Himself the right to say who would be the recipients of His mercy and His compassion (in salvation, understood).

Recently we heard about that terrible train wreck down south in which several people lost their lives. We also heard of a young man who risked his life to save some who otherwise would have drowned in the river. Would any of us say that he did the wrong thing because he did not, and could not, save everybody who was in the water? Certainly not. The same is true of the Lord. Obviously He could have saved everyone if that had been His will. But He chose only to save some. We must, therefore, believe that He has done the righteous thing in what He is now doing.

Therefore, as he went on to say in verse 16, we have to conclude that people are saved,

- 1) Not because they willed to be saved,
- 2) Nor because they have run, i.e., they have earned it in some way,
- 3) But because God has been pleased to show them mercy.

The fact is that we do not know who the Lord is going to save. And so we preach the Gospel to every creature, as we are told to do. We don't find people standing in line to hear the Gospel. But when a person does hear, and believes, then we know that God is at work carrying out His purpose in election, and is deserving of all of the praise.

This section concludes with an illustration from Scripture (the best kind of an illustration), and yet it provides us also with more answers to the question that Paul had raised.

III. THE ILLUSTRATION (Rom. 9:17, 18).

Who gave Pharaoh his position and his power? God did. He sets up kings, and He removes them.

Why did God allow Pharaoh to exercise His power against the people of Israel? It was to show that God's power was infinitely greater, and that, in overthrowing Pharaoh, God made a name for Himself among the nations of the earth.

God's dealings with Pharaoh did not make Pharaoh seek the Lord. It made him only stronger in his resistance. Pharaoh was an illustration, not of one whom God had chosen for salvation, but whom God chose to harden. And yet we see that as far as Pharaoh was concerned, he was doing exactly what he wanted to do.

And so we see that verse 18 expresses the truth. (Read.)

Robert Haldane, in his great commentary on Romans, had this to say about verse 18:

It concludes that His own sovereign pleasure is the rule both with respect to those whom He receives, and those whom He rejects. He pardons one and hardens another, without reference to anything but h\His own sovereign will, in accordance with His infinite wisdom, holiness, and justice (italics mine)... God is not chargeable with any injustice in electing some and not others; for this is an act of mere mercy and compassion, and that can be no violation of justice (p. 472).

Concl: What should be our response to this great teaching?

We should be thankful that God has chosen to provide salvation at all, and the realization that He has chosen us and saved us, should cause us to live to glorify Him for His mercy toward us. Robert Haldane reminds us (Ibid.) that to talk of deserving mercy is a contradiction of terms. If it is mercy, it is undeserved. If God deals with us in grace, it is because we deserve the opposite from what we get. The saved are just as deserving of hell as the unsaved. The explanation as to why we have been saved lies in the heart of God. And we must be content to leave it there unless and until the Lord shows us more when we get to heaven.

Until then, may our hearts overflow with praise to God, and may we show our gratitude by being faithful in living for the Lord and telling others of the only One through whom we can be saved and have perfect acceptance with God.

PUTTING MAN IN HIS PLACE

Romans 9:19-29

Intro: When Paul wrote the book of Romans, before he got to the subject of salvation, he spent time showing that man is a sinner. He mentioned many sins so there would be no question in the minds of his readers as to what he was talking about. When we read chapters 1, 2, and half way through chapter 3, we can easily feel that Paul was describing life in the United States.

Every day we see evidence that what Paul wrote, is true. Unless we are so spiritually blind that we cannot see it, we don't have to look beyond ourselves to see the evidence that we are sinners. We think sinful thoughts. We say sinful things. We do things that are sinful. And I would remind you today that when I speak of "sinful things," I am speaking of things that are wrong in God's sight. We have been fairly successful in deleting any reference to sin from twentieth century talk, but that does not change the fact that there is such a thing as sin. Nor does it change the fact that man is a sinner. We try to blame our heritage for our troubles. Or we blame the way we were raised and the influence of society upon us. And there is no doubt but that our upbringing and our society can make things worse for us. But every man's real problem is in himself. Man by nature is a sinner, alienated from God, and, if he is left to himself, he will destroy himself. And it seems that in our society today we are well on the way to doing just that.

However, the chief effect of sin upon man is seen in his attitude toward God. We see that in Adam before he was put out of the Garden of Eden. He had eaten of the forbidden fruit, but he dared to blame God for his sin. God asked him, "Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?" (Gen. 3:11). And Adam answered the Lord, "The woman ~~whom~~ **thou gavest to be with me**, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:12). You see, he was really blaming God for his sin. He meant that if God had not given Eve to him, he never would have eaten of the forbidden fruit.

From that day to this man has tried to make God accountable to him instead of recognizing that he is accountable to God. Adam was telling God that he was not to blame, he was not responsible for what he had done. And so man became not only a sinner, but he became an irresponsible sinner. In addition, he has really not wanted to have anything to do with God from that day until this. Oh, man will pray when he gets into trouble, but, when things are going quite well, he feels that he can do OK without God.

Unfortunately this feeling of holding God accountable to us is still in our hearts as believers. It is that feeling that we often find ourselves contending with even when we consider the teaching of Scripture. However, the strongest opposition to the truth always comes from people who do not know the Lord.

One thing that we can certainly tell about the questions Paul raised and answered in this chapter, they help us to see that when people raise the same questions about our teaching, that we must be teaching what Paul taught. And anyone who has seriously considered the doctrine of election has come up with the questions that we find in Rom. 9:19.

I. THE QUESTIONS (Rom. 9:19).

Look at the questions again:

Thou wilt say then unto me,
Why doth he yet find fault?
For who hath resisted his will?

The point is, If God is sovereign, and acts according to His will, then how can he find fault with man because nobody can stand against the will of God?

That sounds reasonable, doesn't it? That is one of the big questions that people have today about the doctrine of election. So, if you are thinking the same thing, then we must not be misinterpreting Paul's teaching. However, the question itself is an attack upon God.

How did Paul answer the question? The answer takes us down to the end of verse 29.

II. THE ANSWER (Rom. 9:20-29).

Paul answered the questions with some questions of his own.

A. Question #1 (Rom. 9:20a).

Here is the question: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God."

To reply against God is to argue with Him. It also means to contradict Him.

You see, the problem is not what the Word of God teaches. That is very clear. It was clear in God's choice of Israel. It was clear in God's choice of Isaac instead of Ishmael. It was clear in God's choice of Jacob instead of Esau. The problem is with us, and with our failure to accept what the

Word of God teaches. And so Paul responded by saying, Who are we to say that God has done the wrong thing?

People were doing that in Isaiah's day, and so he wrote, "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker" (Isa. 45:9a).

You see, we forget that God is God! We forget that He is the Creator, and we are His creatures. We forget that we are responsible to Him; He is not responsible to us. This attitude is reflected in the way many people read the Bible. They make up their minds that they are going to decide what is right and what is wrong. And so they never learn anything. They forget that this is the infallible Word of the living God!

And so Paul was telling those who raised this question that their attitude was all wrong. They were setting the rules when they had no right to do so. We make a god out of ourselves and try to reduce God to someone who is less than we are.

B. Question #2 (Rom. 9:20b).

Paul asked secondly,

Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it,
why hast thou made me thus?

Do we have the right to question the Lord as to why He made us men, or women, as the case may be? Do we have the right to question Him as to why He put us in America in this generation rather than in another nation a thousand years ago? Once we start questioning God, there is no end to what we can say or do.

What we are, and who we are, and where we are, is all the work of the God Who made us. And we have no right to question Him in anything that He has done. Instead, we need to marvel at His goodness, and to look at the many ways in which He has made the right choices for us.

Robert Haldane had this to say about this question:

Can anything be more presumptuous than for the creature to pretend to greater wisdom than the Creator? Any wisdom the creature possesses must have been received from the Creator; and if the Creator has the power of forming rational beings, must He not Himself be infinite in wisdom? And does it not insult the Creator to pretend to find imperfections in His proceedings?... Let the Lord's people be satisfied with the Apostle's answer, and let it be sufficient for them to know that God has willed both the salvation of the elect, and the destruction of the wicked,

although they are not able to fathom the depths of the ways of God. The apostle tells us the fact, and shows us that it must be received on God's testimony, and not on our ability to justify it. That God does all things right there is no question, but the grounds of His conduct He does not now explain to His people. Much less is it to be supposed that He would justify His conduct by explaining the grounds of it to His enemies. No man has a right to bring God to trial (Romans, p. 481).

C. Question #3 (Rom. 9:21).

The first question asked who we were that we could enter into controversy with God. The second question raised the extent of our authority over God. This third question has to do with God's authority over us. But he illustrates it from a human situation.

If a potter decides to make pots, does he not have the right to make some for special use, and others for common use? The answer is: He has the right to make whatever he wants to make.

That being the case with a creature, how much more would it be the case with the Creator. "Power" in the original language is the word meaning authority, or right. But it is not just the arbitrary authority of someone like a dictator. It is authority which is consistent with the righteousness of God. If God does it, although we may not understand it, yet we can be sure that there is nothing wrong with it.

Paul probably took this illustration from Jer. 18:6 where the prophet was declaring the words of God when He said,

O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter?
saith the Lord.

Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand,
so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.

The Lord had sent Jeremiah to the potter's house, and the Lord had said this as Jeremiah watched the potter work.

You can see how a different idea is brought out by the questions which Paul raised.

This brings us to the fourth question. This question takes up the next three verses.

D. Question #4 (Rom. 9:22-24).

This question brings out a truth which is so easily passed over in our desire to reject the teaching of Scripture regarding election.

Paul here focused his attention, and the attention of his readers, upon GOD!

See this in verse 22 where Paul wrote, "God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known." And then in verse 23 he wrote, "And that he might make known the riches of his glory."

The point that Paul was making here is that God does what He does first and foremost for His own glory. We have the idea that God is interested primarily in man's happiness, and so many today want to look upon church attendance as a place where we can have fun! That is why many churches have entertainment at the top of their agenda. But God has made all of us for His glory. He has not made us for ourselves, or for each other. He has made us for His glory. And in some He has ordained that He will display "His power" and His "long-suffering; in others He intends to show "the riches of his glory" and His mercy. And He has determined to do this with both Jews and Gentiles, and not just with the Jews. This is the message of verses 22 through 24.

Before I say more about election, let me go on to my last point which is:

IV. THE CONFIRMATION OF GOD'S WORK IN SALVATION (Rom. 9:25-29).

The first two of these verses are quotations from the prophecy of Hosea. Verse 25 is from Hos. 2:23; verse 26 contains a quotation from Hos. 1:10. If you read the first two chapters of the prophecy of Hosea, you will see that the prophet was speaking of God's work in Israel, and what He would do to bring Israel back to Himself. Israel's history is one long record of the nation's rebellion against God. If He had given them what they deserved, no one would have been saved. But consistent with His own glory, and through the exercise of His longsuffering and mercy, He intends to bring them back. And it will not be because they have come back of their own accord, but because the Lord has brought them back.

But then to make it even clearer, and to show that the Scriptures teach what Paul had taught earlier in the chapter about the elect of God within the nation Israel, Paul quoted in verse 27 from Isa. 10:22, 23, and he quoted in verse 29 from Isa. 1:10.

It cannot be that God spared some because they did not deserve to perish. They all deserved to perish. Instead, He spared those who were sovereignly chosen for salvation to show His mercy and "the riches of his glory."

What about verse 28?

Here the work of the Lord is looked upon from the standpoint of eternity. But the point is that God is doing the work. If God had not seen fit to spare some, who were as deserving of judgment as others, no one would have been saved. But in spite of Israel's rebellion, the Lord will without fail do all that He intended to do from before the foundation of the world. He will finish the work. It will be a righteous work. And He will shortly bring it to its full end.

When we come to this point in the chapter our hearts should be filled with praise to God IF we believe what the Apostle has written. It is pathetic to see how some people try to make the judgment of God upon the wicked a deserved judgment, but somehow those who are saved are not as bad as those who are lost. Let me say as strongly as I know how, WE ALL DESERVE THE JUDGMENT OF GOD! If the Lord were to save us on the basis of personal merit, we all would be lost. But He has chosen for His own glory to save some, not all. And for this endless praise needs to be given to God. We cannot answer all of the questions that come to our minds, but we can believe as Abraham said so long ago, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25). Yes, He will! Let me ask you: The Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, but he saved unworthy Lot and his two daughters--and that was all! Did He do right? Without any question He did! Did the angels who warned Lot warn everybody? There is no evidence that they did. And yet God was absolutely righteous in what He did, and the way He did it.

Concl: Where does this leave us?

Every doctrine in Scripture has been designed for the glory of God. And so, even though we may have questions, instead of confronting God and charging Him with being unfair and unrighteous (which is impossible for Him), let us praise Him. If He had not chosen an elect people, had not sent Christ to die for them, and had not sent the Holy Spirit to convict them and draw them to Christ, no one would have been saved. But people are being saved, and that is all to God's glory.

But I would remind you that we do have a responsibility, not to bring accusations against God, but to obey Him! What has He told us to do? He has told us to go into the all world and preach the Gospel to every creature. And this has to be done in every generation because babies are constantly being born, and people are constantly dying.

And I will say this also, and I say it from my own experience. I don't know why it is, but when we understand the

doctrine of election, it does not kill our desire to witness and to bring people to Christ. IT INTENSIFIES IT! I would remind you that the man who wrote this ninth chapter of Romans was a man who said something about lost people that you and I probably have never said, and really meant it! He said that He would gladly give up his own salvation if God would only save His brethren, the people of Israel. Don't ask me why that is, but I know from my own experience that my burden to reach people was greatly increased when I understood that God has a chosen people.

So what are we to do?

We are to continue to spread the Gospel, telling everyone who will listen to us about the Savior. We don't know where the Lord is going to make His Word fruitful. We know that we can't help people if the Lord does not see fit to work in their hearts. But the doctrine of election assures us that our work in seeking the lost will not be in vain. God will use us as we give out the Word to accomplish His purposes in the lives of those who hear.

And so we sincerely preach, "Whosoever will may come." But we know that when people come, it is not of their own will, but by the constraining influence of God's Spirit carrying out His will.

So let us daily praise the Lord for saving us, and continuously keep spreading the Gospel that God's people may be gathered in.

CHRIST, THE STUMBLING STONE
Romans 9:30-33

Intro: In Peter's first epistle he referred to the same quotation that we have in our text today, a text which is taken from Isaiah 8 which Mr. Wierson has read for us. In that reading, Isaiah was speaking of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is what Isaiah told the people in Isa. 8:14,

And he shall be for a sanctuary:
but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence
to both the houses of Israel, for a gin
and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

And Isaiah followed that verse with this verse:

And many among them shall stumble, and fall,
and be broken, and be snared, and be taken (v. 15).

The only other NT writer to quote Isa. 8:14 was the Apostle Peter. But before Peter quoted this verse, he quoted also another passage from Isaiah's prophecy. And this verse was taken from Isa. 28:16. Let me read that verse to you.

Therefore thus saith the Lord God,

Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone,
a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation:
he that believeth shall not make haste.

If you will, please turn to 1 Peter 2 where Peter combined these two Isaiah passages into one. Let me read to you 1 Pet. 2:4-10, noting especially how Peter used the two passages from Isaiah 8 and 28.

(Read 1 Pet. 2:4-10.)

There is no question but that Isaiah, Paul, and Peter were all speaking about the Lord Jesus Christ. Neither is there any question but that they all were speaking about something which God had done. He is the One Who had made Christ the foundation stone, the cornerstone, of His house on earth. This had to do with His dwelling place among His people in Israel in the OT times, and with His dwelling place among the people of the Church in the NT. It is a figure of speech taken from the Temple in the OT, and, as Peter said, from the Church as living stones built upon Christ Who is both the foundation and the chief cornerstone.

Taken together, all of this means that the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation and cornerstone of the work of God on earth. All of God's works are done in and through and upon the Lord Jesus Christ. God the Father never by-passes His Son. He never leaves His Son out of things. Christ is not only involved, but He is preeminently involved! The Scrip-

tures make this very clear. If you refuse Christ, you refuse God. If you believe in Christ, you are believing in God.

However, Peter speaks of those of those who are disobedient to this truth. That is, they reject it. They do not want Christ, and they will not believe in Him. To them the Lord Jesus Christ is not the "chief corner stone," but He becomes to them "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence." It is only to those who believe in Him that Christ becomes "precious" (1 Pet. 2:7). And being precious, those who believe know that there is no one who can take the place of Christ.

To those who are disobedient, who are unbelieving, Christ is "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence." Let us look at those terms to find out exactly what Isaiah and Paul and Peter meant.

I. THE MEANING OF OUR LORD'S NAME (1 Pet. 2:33).

He is called, "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence." Let us make sure we understand both parts of His Name.

A. "A stone of stumbling."

This means that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the One Who turns some people away from God and salvation. Those of us who believe in Him consider Him to be not only "precious," but most precious! He is dearer than life itself to us. As the old hymn says, "Take the world, but give me Jesus." And there is that other song which says, "I'd rather have Jesus than anything this world affords today." But not everybody feels that way about the Lord Jesus Christ. History is full of evidence that the Lord Jesus was and continues to be "despised and rejected of men" (Isa. 53:3). Instead of being attracted by Him, they are "turned off" by Him, they turn and go away. It is hard for those of us who believe to feel that anyone could feel that way about Christ, but they do! They did in OT times. They did while He was here on earth. And they still do today.

So, instead of being the One Who draws people to God, He is the One through Whom people are driven away. Instead of being the way to God, Jesus Christ is to many the obstacle which keeps them away from God. They would say that He keeps them away from God. When you and I insist (as we should) that Christ is the only way to God, the only way to salvation and heaven, you can stir up a lot of opposition. There are people who just don't like that, and will not accept it.

B. "A rock of offence."

While these are different words in the original, the meaning is basically the same. People are offended with Jesus Christ. In their minds, He keeps them from coming to God. When He was here on earth, many people did not like as a Person. They did not like what He said. They did not like what He did. They were offended at the purpose for which He said He had come. They did not like His disciples. They didn't like anything about Him.

And the fact that our Lord was "a stone" and "a rock" indicates that those who were offended by Him never could see any change in Him. There is no question but that when we consider Christ as "a stone" and "a rock," we are seeing Him as the One Who does not change.

Isaiah prophesied that all of this would be the case. He said,

He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him (Isa. 53:2). And in the next verse Isaiah added, "He was despised, and we esteemed him not."

I repeat that it is hard for those of us who know the Lord, who have trusted Him as our Savior, and who love Him very much — it is hard for us to understand how people can feel that way about our Lord. But they did, and they do! And, as it was in our Lord's time here on earth, sometimes He is hated the most by the people who profess to be the most religious. There are many churches today where you would not be welcome if you went there to talk about the Lord Jesus Christ. They do not believe that He was the Lord. They do not believe that He existed before He became a Man. They do not believe in His miracles, nor in His resurrection, nor in His ascension into heaven. And they certainly do not believe that He is essential for our salvation today.

However, although we have looked briefly at Isaiah and 1 Peter, we are primarily concerned today about Paul's words about Christ in the last four verses of Romans 9. So, now that we understand why the Lord is called "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, let us notice how Paul introduced these names of the Lord.

In verses 30 and 31 we have:

II. THE MAJOR DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GENTILES AND ISRAEL (Rom. 9:30, 31).

Notice first in verse 30 what Paul said about the Gentiles.

A. The Gentiles (v. 30).

Paul was referring to the difference between the Gentiles and the Jews in his day. Paul said here that they "followed not after righteousness." This means that they were really not seeking the true God. They did not have the Word of God, and so they were not looking for a Messiah. They were very satisfied with their pagan religions. They were not seeking to find acceptance with the one, true God.

And yet what had happened in the first century? Where had the Gospel been most effective? Where had it found the greatest acceptance? If you thumb through your NT, you will soon be able to answer those questions. Every letter from Romans to 2 Thessalonians was written to a church in a city which was predominantly Gentile! Review them: Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Phillipi, Colosse, and Thessalonica. There are seven churches in seven areas.

What do you have in the book of the Revelation? To whom was it first sent? To seven churches in the Roman province of Asia: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. They were all predominantly Gentile churches. Hebrews was probably written to the church in Jerusalem (although that is not certain); but it was written for Jewish believers. James was written to Jewish believers, and so were the epistles of Peter. But you can see that the Gospel was very fruitful in the first century among the Gentiles! And yet they were not seeking to be righteous before God, but they "attained" it. And Paul said, as he has been emphasizing through this epistle, that they attained "the righteousness which is by faith."

But before we consider that statement let us go on to see what Paul said about Israel.

B. Israel (Rom. 9:31).

They pursued righteousness by the Law. I don't think that there is any question but that Paul was speaking here about the Mosaic Law, that is, the Law which God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai.

They tried hard (at times) to earn their salvation. They felt that they could work their way into God's favor. They believed that if they did enough in the way of God works, they would somehow be able to compensate for their sins. Or, if some knew that was impossible, they felt that God would be gracious in forgiving them if they sincerely showed that they were sorry for the sins they had committed, and wanted to do right in the future.

That brings us to Paul's final point in this chapter:

III. THE EXPLANATION FOR THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE GENTILES AND THE JEWS (Rom. 9:32, 33).

And so Paul said, "Wherefore?" That is, why did the Gentiles attain to righteousness, why were they justified before God, while the Israelites were not?

Please keep in mind that Paul was not talking about all Gentiles, nor was he referring to all Jews. Not all Gentiles found acceptance with God, and not all Jews were rejected by God. Many Gentiles were not saved, and many Jews were saved. But Paul seems to be referring to the fact that the Gospel was very fruitful among the Gentiles, but not so fruitful among the Jews. WHY?

There were two reasons. And Paul gave his explanation from the standpoint of the Jews.

- A. They did not seek salvation by faith, but by works, the works of the Law (v. 32a).

This basically means that they thought that salvation was something that they earned for themselves, not something that was a gift from God for which they only had to trust Him. They forgot that God's promise of salvation was given to Abraham over 400 years before He gave the Law to His people. And, as Paul showed in his epistle to the Galatians, once God gave an unconditional promise of salvation to Abraham, He cannot come along 400 years later and add some conditions to it without nullifying the whole covenant altogether. It was written in their scriptures that "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6, quoted by Paul in Rom. 4:3).

The Law instructed the people of Israel in the way God wanted them to live, and their failure to keep it perfectly showed that they were sinners. But nobody was ever saved by obedience to the Law, nor by any other kind of works.

It is hard for anyone to believe that they can get "something for nothing" from God. And yet we are undeservedly receiving God's gifts every day. However, when you talk about having our sins forgiven, the blood of bulls and goats didn't solve the sin question. It was not until the Lord Jesus Christ came, and died, and rose again, that the work necessary for the salvation of sinners was completed.

But now the second reason for their failure to attain righteousness explained why they were so rigid about the first:

- B. "They stumbled at that stumblingstone" (vv.32b,33).

Isn't it interesting to see the way that Paul quoted Isa. 8:14." One commentator I read said that the Jews made the Lord a stumbling stone. See A. T. Robertson. But this is not what Paul said. Paul said that the Lord made Him a stumbling block and a rock of offence. God could have made it so that no one would have had any trouble with Christ, but He didn't do it that way. Why?

We have to say that the primary reason that God did it this way was for His own glory. He is not going to share the glory for salvation with any of His people. All of the glory is rightfully His.

A second, and very important reason, is that the OT predicted that people would have trouble accepting Christ as the only Redeemer. They would have trouble believing that He was the Son of God in the flesh.

A third reason is that for Christ to be a stumbling stone and a rock of offence would mean that if any Jew were ever saved (and this would apply to Gentiles as well), it could only be as an act of God in sovereign grace. The Jews are an outstanding proof that all human hearts are spiritually blinded. And if we are to understand Who Christ is, and why He came, He would have to reveal it to us.

But what was there about the Lord Jesus Christ that the Jews did not like? Why did they stumble over Him?

Thinking back over the Gospel records, we can think of several reasons.

A. He was not what they were looking for.

They were looking for a King, not a carpenter. They wanted to be freed from Rome. Even after He had died, and had arisen from the dead, His own disciples still had this in mind when they asked Him, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). It was so indelibly written on their minds that to them this was really the main reason for the coming of the Messiah. They had overlooked what the prophets had said about His first coming in favor of what they predicted about His second coming.

B. They did not like what He said, or what He did.

Official Judaism said that He was casting out demons by the prince of the demons. They said that He was a messenger of Satan.

They scorned His teaching because He had not been trained in

the schools of that day.

One of the greatest objections that they had to the Lord Jesus was what they said was His failure to observe the Sabbath. If He performed a miracle on the Sabbath Day, they accused Him of working, and were ready on several occasions to stone Him.

C. They scorned Him because of what He said He had come to do.

They did not believe that they needed a Savior. They thought that they were already the children of God because they were the natural descendants of Abraham. They scorned Him as being the friend of publicans and sinners. And they even charged Him with being born in sin.

More could be said, but I hope I have said enough to show that the Jews did stumble over Christ. They rejected Him and were not satisfied until He was nailed to a Cross, thinking that then they were through with Him.

But from all of this, what is the truth? Look at the last part of verse 33: "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."

The fact that people stumbled over Christ, and are still stumbling, doesn't change anything. Christ came to save sinners. He had to do the work of salvation because no one was capable of saving himself. But He came as "a stumbling-stone and a rock of offence" so that everyone would realize that when we do understand Who He is, and why He came, we would know that we would never have been saved if the Lord had not opened our eyes to the truth. I am speaking not only about the truth concerning Christ, but the truth concerning God, and the truth concerning ourselves. God will have all of the glory, and He would have us see ourselves as deserving of eternal judgment, and saved only by His grace.

Concl: Did you come to church this morning as one who is still stumbling over Christ? If so, I trust that the Lord has been pleased to open your eyes, and to put an end forever to your stumbling. If you have seen that He could not be anyone but the Son of God, and that He came to die for sinners who would never have been saved if He had not died, then let me assure you that you will never be ashamed if you trust Him for your salvation.

He is the only Savior, and everyone needs a Savior. Therefore, come to Him today. Quit trying to save yourself. You can never do it regardless of how sincere and how zealous you

are. Come to Christ now, right where you are. Believe in Him and He will save you. That is His promise.

For those of us who are saved, it is good to be reminded again of how much we owe our Savior. We can never pay Him back for what He had done for us. But we can show by our lives of obedience to His Word how much we love Him, and how thankful we are that He has saved us. Thank God we are not still stumbling over Christ, but by God's grace we have seen the truth of the Gospel.

ZEAL WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE

Romans 10:1-4

Intro: The Bible is a very wonderful book. If we read it carefully, we will find that it answers all of the questions we could possibly have about God and about the truth. Not only that, but we will find ourselves described on many pages of Scripture.

Many times you will hear a person leaving a service and saying, "He was speaking right to me today." Or they might say, "That Scripture described me perfectly."

The same thing will happen when we are reading the Bible. We will feel that some passage we have read was written with us in mind. All of this happens because the Holy Spirit is using the Word to reach our hearts.

We have come to a passage in Romans where Paul discussed the main problem of the Jews in his day, and it seems to have reached epidemic proportions in our day. It not only affects Jews, but also Gentiles. And this disease is described by the title of my message, ZEAL WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE. Perhaps I need to qualify that a little because zeal is not always apparent, but believing things, or doing things WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE, is very common.

I am not speaking about doing things generally. We know that in certain areas we have to be well informed, and we have to be careful to act according to the information which we have. In many things that we buy there are papers included which contain a warning of some kind. If we fail to observe those warnings, we could kill ourselves.

This past week I was having trouble with a wall heater that I have in my study. It would run for about a minute, then the heat would cut off, but the fan would continue to run. Then the heat would come on again. I used our vacuum to blow it out as the instructions told me to do. Sometimes, I was told, dust causes a heater to malfunction. But that was not the problem.

So I called the company that manufactures the heater to find out if they could tell me what was wrong. The lady I spoke with asked if I had blown it out with a vacuum, and I told her I had. They she said that she was going to send me two small parts which I could install. She said that this was most likely the problem, and she promised to get the parts in the mail that day. The next day they arrived, I put them in, and the heater works fine again.

But this is the point that I want to make. The instructions on the grill of the heater said that before I did anything to the heater I should shut the power off at fuse box. It had a 220 volt line coming into the heater, and I could easily have gotten into serious trouble if I failed to heed the warning. If I had told myself that I could save a few minutes by not going to the circuit breaker, and just proceeded to work on the heater, I might not be here this morning. I was very anxious to get it finished. You might say that my zeal to get the job done was running high at that time because the weather outside was turning cold. It was good to have the zeal, but I needed to exercise that zeal using all of the information that I had been given about an electric wall heater. Zeal without knowledge, or zeal ignoring the knowledge that I had been given, could have been fatal.

But you know, people are funny. We will be very careful to learn about the possible dangers when working on a piece of equipment, but when it comes to things which have to do with our relationship with God, we get extremely careless. In fact, people will ignore the truth. They won't even open a Bible. You would think that people can get right with God any way they want to as long as they are sincere! Zeal and sincerity usually go together, but to be zealous, to be sincere, and yet to be ignorant of the truth of God, is fatal eternally! Zeal and sincerity are great characteristics. But if your zeal moves you in a false direction, nothing is going to compensate for the lack of the truth.

As Paul wrote this tenth chapter of Romans, this is where most Jews were. They were zealous, very zealous, in all of the religious activities they were doing, but they were ignorant of the truth. And this is why Paul was so greatly concerned about them. He had been where they were! But, as he described his life before he was saved, he told Timothy that what he had been doing, thinking he was serving God, he had done "ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. 1:13).

Do you remember the parable that the Lord told about the publican, a tax collector, and the Pharisee? They both went to the temple at the hour of prayer, and the Pharisee in his prayer told the Lord some of the good things he was doing. He said,

God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are,
extortioners, unjust, adulterers,
or even as this publican.

I fast twice in the week,

I give tithes of all that I possess (Luke 18:11, 12).

Now, if what he said was true, all that he did and didn't do was very commendable. He showed a lot of zeal. But how did the publican pray? He couldn't even lift up his head toward

heaven he was so ashamed of himself. He, with bowed head, kept hitting himself in his chest as he said, "**God be merciful to me a sinner**" (Luke 18:13). The Greek says, God be merciful to me **THE** sinner!

What application did the Lord make? He said,
I tell you, this man (speaking of the publican)
went down to his house justified
rather than the other (the Pharisee):
for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased;
and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted
(Luke 18:14).

You see, the Pharisee thought that you get right with God by doing good things and by not doing bad things. On the other hand, the publican knew that he had done so many bad things that he could never do enough to earn God's forgiveness. And so he did what the Pharisee should have done, he cast himself upon the mercy of God!

You couldn't fault the Pharisee for a lack of zeal. How many people do you find today who fast twice a week (unless it is to lose weight), and tithe everything that they have. And we will take his word that he wasn't an extortioner (like the publican was), nor unjust (like the publican was), nor an adulterer. But, neither by what he had not done, nor by what he had done, was he justified by God. He had a lot of zeal, but he apparently did not know that zeal does not cause God to forgive us. We are not saved because we have done a lot of good things, and haven't done a lot of bad things. We aren't saved by what we do. Salvation is not a reward for our works; salvation is a gift of God received by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But now let us look to see how Paul presented this truth in the first four verses of Romans 10.

The first thing we see here is:

I. THE APOSTLE'S HEART DESIRE AND PRAYER (Rom. 10:1).

Before we look at this verse, let me mention two things in passing.

We have just finished a chapter which is very strong on the doctrine of election — very strong! There are two common objections that are raised against the doctrine of election. One is, that it is a great hindrance to evangelism. People will say that if God has elected those who are going to be saved, then He is going to save them, and we don't have to be concerned about telling them the Gospel. We won't be bur-

dened for their salvation. The ministry of Paul proves that is not true, as does his statement at the beginning of chapter 9, especially verse 3. (Read.) I have never heard any evangelist today express that kind of concern for lost people. So I would be inclined to say that knowing the doctrine of election gives us a stronger burden to reach people than we can ever have otherwise.

The second thing is this (and it fits in with our text for today). People say that if God has elected people to be saved, then we don't need to pray for them. What did Paul say here in Romans 10:1? (Read.)

This means that with all of their Sabbath observances, with all of their sacrifices, with all of their tithing, with all of their attempts to be obedient to the Mosaic Law, they were not saved! And his heart's desire (meaning that it was genuine, a true burden) was for their salvation. But he not only felt that way; he earnestly prayed day in and day out that the people of Israel would be saved.

Therefore, we can see that not only did the doctrine of election not hinder Paul's praying, but it caused him to pray more diligently than he would have prayed otherwise. You see, when God chooses anyone for salvation, He also chooses the means whereby that person is going to hear the Gospel. That is why we need to pray, and that is why we need to tell people about Christ.

Let us follow the Apostle in this. If you aren't praying for people who need to know the Lord, you should be. And if you aren't praying for the testimony of others, you should be. We need God's blessing today as much or more than ever before. And He usually gives His blessing in answer to prayer.

However, note secondly,

II. ISRAEL'S PROBLEM (Rom. 10:2, 3).

Their problem was not a lack of religion. They were very religious. Nor was their problem a lack of zeal in doing what they were doing. They were very zealous, extremely so. The Greek word for "zeal" is related to the idea of heat. In today's language we would say that they were "on fire" in their desire to know God and to please God.

However, the problem was that they were ignorant of the truth in the way they were exercising their zeal. From what Paul said here we could say that, if people could have been saved by sincere, religious acts, they would have won an abundant entrance into heaven. But, in spite of all that they were

doing, or not doing, they were not saved! They were really ignorant of the true meaning of Scripture. This is what we call spiritual blindness. This is not just a Jewish problem; it is also a Gentile problem. And until God gives us eyes to see, and ears to hear, we are not going to understand the truth.

We are coming to the Christmas season. This supposedly is the time when we remember the birth of Christ. I say "supposedly" because Christmas has become so commercialized that many people think that Christians are trying to intrude upon a good holiday just to make their own point. If the Lord tarries, the time may come when Christmas will have nothing to do with Christ just like the word Christian, in the minds of many people, has nothing to do with Christ.

Most people, if they are concerned about God at all, know that they have displeased Him. They know that they are not prepared to face Him in judgment. They know that they are not what they ought to be. And so what do they do? They do what the Jews were doing, and still are doing. They try to make themselves acceptable to God. The Gentiles may make up their own way of trying to please God, but with the Jews it meant trying to make themselves acceptable to God by obeying the Law of God given through Moses. But because they misunderstand God's purpose in giving the Law, they do not see that it was never His purpose that anyone could be saved by keeping the Law. The Law showed the people of Israel their need for a Savior, but the Law was not their Savior. Even in the OT it is possible to learn that a Redeemer was coming, the Messiah, or Christ. And that "the righteousness of God" could not be placed to our account except through the Redeemer. The OT makes it clear that the Messiah was coming to provide salvation for all people who would, not work for Him, but trust Him!

Before we move on from verse 2 and 3, please look at the word "submitted" in verse 3. Paul was saying that Israel's problem was a lack of submitting themselves to the righteousness of God. This teaches us that, if we are to be saved, it is not for us to say how that is going to be done. God alone has the right to set the conditions under which sinners can be saved from the judgment which rightfully is theirs because of their sin. They went to the Law, and they didn't go any farther in their search. And they were so blinded by their sin that they completely overlooked what their own Scriptures had to say about the justification of Abraham. We are so proud by nature that we want to be able to say that we have had a great deal to do with our salvation. We refuse to submit ourselves to God and to the Word of God.

And so this brings us to:

III. THE ANSWER TO THE PROBLEM WHICH THE JEWS FACED (Rom. 10:4).

I can give you the answer is one word, or better, in one Name. It is not Moses, BUT CHRIST! (Read verse 4.)

This is a very important verse, and it is very necessary that we understand it.

What does it mean that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness"? Does it mean that the moral standards of the Law are no longer expressive of what is right and wrong in God's sight? No, it doesn't mean that. It is still wrong to worship other gods and to make idols. It is still wrong to murder and steal and lie and covet. We still need to honor our parents. God's standards of right and wrong never change. Then what does this expression mean then?

Let me point out three things that it means.

- A. It means that the Law was given to Israel to show them their need of a Savior.

We have already learned that in our study of this epistle to the Romans. In Rom. 3:20 Paul wrote, "For by the law is the knowledge of sin." And although the Law was only given to Israel, it was to be a testimony to everyone, Jew and Gentile alike, that we are all guilty before God. See Rom. 3:19. If we are guilty, then something needs to be done about it. And so the Jews saw that the Law condemned them, and therefore they felt that, if they tried to obey the Law, the Law would save them. That is where they went wrong. And so when Christ came, they were not looking for someone to save them from their sins; they were looking for someone to save them from Rome.

Christ is "the end of the law for righteousness" because the Law showed the Jews their need of a Savior, the Savior whose coming was foreshadowed in the very ceremonies of the Law, as well as in the clear declarations of the prophets.

But there is another sense in which "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness."

- B. The coming of Christ put an end to the time when the Mosaic Law was the rule of life for the people of God.

When Christ died the veil in the Temple was torn from top to

bottom, signifying that there was no longer any need for the priesthood of Aaron. It signified that there was no longer any need for the animal sacrifices. Paul expressed this in his letter to the Galatian churches when he wrote in Gal.

3:24, 25,

For the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

But after that faith is come,
we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

We have learned this also in Romans. Romans 6, verses 14 and 15, tells us very specifically that "ye are not under the law, but under grace." This applies also to the Sabbath Day. Nowhere in Scripture are we told that the Jewish Sabbath has now been changed to the first day of the week. We worship the Lord together on Sunday because that is the day our Lord was raised from the dead. We will learn more about the observance of days when we get to Romans 14. But the requirement to keep the Sabbath passed with the death and resurrection of Christ.

But there is at least one other way in which "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness":

- C. Christ, by His death, satisfied every requirement of the Law so that God is absolutely just whenever He forgives any sinner.

What does this mean? It means that God requires no more than what His Son did when He died on the Cross. It is not Christ plus something else. Salvation is by Christ, and Christ alone. A sinner's search for righteousness, complete acceptance with God, the full forgiveness of every sin -- the sinner's search for salvation ends when he comes to Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ did not leave even one thing for us to do when He had finished His work on the Cross.

Concl: But our text says one more thing, and with this I close.

Your ignorance of God and salvation disappears when once you learn that salvation is through Christ alone. But we must believe, believe in Him, trust in Him and in His work on the Cross. We know that He died to provide salvation for all who put their trust in Him.

Is your faith in Christ for your salvation -- totally in Christ, none in yourself, nor in anything that you have done or ever will do? Paul told the Philippian jailor, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

There is an old hymn which describes what Paul was teaching here in Romans 10. Listen as I close by reading the words of the first stanza and chorus. It goes like this:

Free from the Law, O happy condition,
Jesus hath bled, and there is remission;
Cursed by the Law, and bruised by the fall,
Grace hath redeemed us once for all.

Once for all, O sinner, receive it;
Once for all, O brother, believe it;
Cling to the cross, the burden will fall,
Christ hath redeemed us once for all.

Make sure that you are trusting in Christ for your salvation. Your work and my work don't even make it easier for God to save us. Salvation comes through Christ, and Christ alone.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH

Romans 10:5-13

Intro: We have just gotten started in this middle section of Romans, chapter 9 through 11, and I want to encourage you to read and re-read these important chapters. One of our big faults as Christians is that we do not read our Bibles as much as we should. It would be interesting to know how many Christians living today have read the Bible through from start to finish. I am sure that the percentage would not be very high. But let us be sure that we are a part of that percentage, whatever it might be. And let us be continually seeking to increase the time each day that we give to the simple reading of the Word of God. Such a goal can only lead to greater blessing for us, and greater understanding of the truth as well.

In these chapters, Romans 9 through 11, Paul discussed God's purpose in salvation for both the Jews and the Gentiles. Although Paul mentioned in Rom. 11:13 that he had commissioned by God to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles, yet he had a tremendous burden for the salvation of the Jews. He said so in the first verses of Romans 9, and then he said it again in the first verses of chapter 10. (Read.) You can see in chapter 10 that, because they were ignorant of "God's righteousness" and how they can get it, they tried to work out salvation for themselves. See Rom. 10:3. But the greatest gap in the understanding of spiritual truth is that they had not seen the place that Christ has in salvation. They just could not let go of their Law even though Christ, by His death and resurrection, had satisfied every demand that God in the Law had made.

However, even religious Jews can be blinded to the truth if the Lord had not open their understanding. In the same way, Gentiles can sit in church for years and never really hear anything. That is why it is so important for all of us to be reading the Word of God, and hearing it taught whenever we can. The Psalmist said to God, long before Paul wrote Romans that:

The entrance of thy words giveth light;
it giveth understanding to the simple.

A simple person is one who does not know what he needs to know, and the Psalmist was saying that the way to learn what we need to know about God and His salvation, is by exposing ourselves to the Word of God.

Paul said a very similar thing in a verse beyond my text for today, but in this same tenth chapter of Romans--verse 17:

So then faith cometh by hearing,
and hearing by the word of God.

It is important for everyone to understand that the way of salvation from sin and judgment is determined by Scripture. It makes no difference how many people might agree that it should be a certain way, if that way cannot be supported by Scripture, it is wrong!

Now let us look at what Paul wrote, beginning with verse 5, and see that:

I. THERE ARE TWO POSSIBLE WAYS OF SALVATION (Rom. 10:5, 6a).

Note the two expressions that Paul used here in verses 5 and 6. He spoke of "the righteousness which is of the Law" as compared with the statement, "the righteousness which is of faith."

He meant by these two expressions that we can either look to the Law as the way of salvation, or we believe that it is "of faith," meaning that we trust God to save us.

There may be many different categories into which these two possible ways might be expressed, but when you consider all teaching then and now, it comes down to two ways:

- 1) Either man works for it, or
- 2) God gives it as a gift of His grace.

Some might say that salvation is the result of what God and man both do. But that is just another way of saying that man has to work for it. If he doesn't do his part, it makes no difference what God may have done. If you think that salvation is a cooperative work of God and man together, God's work will not be enough if man does not do his part. So even in a case like that you would have to say that man works for it.

But Paul here was concerned about the Jew. How can a Jew be saved from divine judgment because of his sins?

In verse 5 Paul reminds us that the prominent idea among the Jews of his day was that, if you want to be saved, you have to obey the Law. In other words, you work for it! And, if salvation can be earned, that was certainly right. Paul proved his point by quoting Lev. 18:5. That verse in the KJV reads like this:

Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments:
which if a man do, he shall live in them.

And then, just as though the Lord were signing His Name to this as a divine agreement, Moses added, "I am the Lord."

You will notice that Paul does not argue the point with the reader. He has already taught earlier in this epistle that God never intended for the Law to be a means of earning

salvation. Instead, it exposed man's sin, and left man guilty before God because no man can possibly do what he would need to do if he is to save himself.

When Paul wrote to the Galatian churches, he said this in Gal. 3:21:

For if there had been a law given
which could have given life,
verily righteousness should have been by the law.
But, you see, God cannot lower his Law to make it easier for man to be saved. He has to require that which will satisfy His own righteousness. If God did anything less, He would be inconsistent with Himself--and that could never be!

But Paul does not argue that case again here in chapter 10. What did he do?

He simply pointed out to the Jews from their own Scriptures,

II. WHAT THE SCRIPTURES DO NOT SAY, AND THEN WHAT THEY DO SAY (Rom. 10:6-10).

When Paul referred in verse 6 to "the righteousness which is of God" speaking, that was the equivalent of declaring that the Word of God has a completely different message for us.

(Read vv. 6-8.)

Paul was referring here to Deut. 30:12-14. Listen to the way it is stated in Deuteronomy:

For this commandment which I command thee this day,
it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off.
It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say,
Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us,
that we may hear it, and do it?
Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say,
Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us,
that we may hear it, and do it?
But the word is very nigh unto thee,
in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.

Although the reading is different, we must remember that the Holy Spirit has the right to make any changes or additions that He wants to in order to bring out the meaning of the passage.

I believe that there are a couple of things that Paul had in mind when he quoted from Deuteronomy, and made the application to Christ.

Remember that he was speaking particularly of the Jews.

In the first place he was saying that we are not to think about salvation as a great mystery which has not yet been made known to us. And so we have to send someone, or go ourselves either to heaven, or to the abyss, to heaven, or somewhere overseas, to get the answer as though God were reluctant to give it to us. The way of salvation is no mystery. It has been clearly revealed.

But I think that Paul also was saying here that we are not the ones who asked Christ to come, nor did we have any part in raising Him from the dead. The coming of Christ was planned from before creation. He came because the Father sent Him, not because we asked for Him. And it was the Father Who raised Him from the dead. We had no part in that. Such a thing would have been completely beyond us.

So if we are trying to take some credit to ourselves, we need to forget it. Christ came because the Father sent Him, and because sinners needed Him, but not because we asked for Him to come, and certainly not because we went after Him.

No, it was not that way at all.

What do the Scriptures tell us?

The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth,
and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith
which we preach.

Paul said, in so many words, "The way of salvation is no hidden mystery. It is in your scriptures. You have read it. It is in your hearts. And it is the very message which we have come preaching to you."

The very same thing could be said to many Protestants and Catholics and Jews today. The Jews have it in their Scriptures, our Old Testament. The Catholics and Protestants have it in their Bibles. They read it. They talk about it. They even have it in their hearts. But they don't understand it. The problem is not that the way had not been revealed; the problem is that man by nature is spiritually blind and incapable of understanding the truth until God gives him eyes to see and a heart to understand.

And so the problem is not with God. It is not with the Bible. The problem is with man.

Now this brings us to the next point:

III. THE WAY OF SALVATION (Rom. 10:9-11).

In verses 9 and 10 Paul was summarizing the message he

preached, and in verse 11 he was giving the Scriptural authority for such preaching.

True salvation must always include two things: faith, and the confession of that faith. One is inward (faith); the other is outward (confession).

Verse 9 states the conditions necessary before one can claim to be saved. Verse 10 gives assurance that when those conditions are present, salvation is sure.

Note that in verse 9 confession is mentioned first, then faith. In verse 10 the order is reversed: faith first, and then confession. Instead of trying to figure out some difference between the two, it would seem that Paul was indicating that it is not the order that we need to be concerned about, but the fact that both are present.

The confession that Paul had in mind was not a once-for-all confession, but a continuing confession--a confession of the mouth in which a person is not ashamed to acknowledge that Jesus is Lord. We have both the humanity of the Lord here as well as His Deity. But we also have in the name "Jesus" the purpose of His incarnation. It was, as the angel told Joseph, to "save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

And yet this is not all. It is one thing to recognize the Deity of Jesus; it is another thing to recognize that He is the Lord of all who are saved. In the present controversy over whether or not the Lord Jesus can be our Savior without necessarily becoming our Lord at the same time, we would seem to have Paul's answer. When the Lord becomes our Savior, He also becomes our Lord. And this means a complete change in the way we live. If the change is not there, there is reason to doubt the confession.

And faith is not merely an acceptance of the fact that our Lord died and rose again, but a firm conviction that God raised His own Son from the dead as evidence that His work was finished and fully accepted by God. By this statement the Apostle was indicating that the important thing about the death of our Lord is whether or not God is satisfied. Did the Lord do all that was necessary for the salvation of sinners? Was God pleased and satisfied with His death? The answer to those questions is, Yes!

It is evident by what Paul said here about the message which he preached, that giving the Gospel has to include preaching the truth concerning Who Christ is, why He died, and that God is satisfied with His work on the Cross on behalf of sinners.

And so it is apparent that salvation is not a human work, but a divine work. Faith is not just an intellectual matter, but a matter of the heart, a life-changing relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the reason we know that Paul was preaching the Gospel when he urged people to trust the Lord and to confess Him with their mouths was because this was all in accord with Scripture.

Although it is doubtful if the Gospel of Matthew was written before Paul's Epistle to the Romans, yet the teachings of our Lord were probably well known among the early Christians. And one thing that the Lord said along this line is recorded for us in Matt. 10:32, 33:

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men,
him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven.
But whosoever shall deny me before men,
him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

Paul also may have had in mind a passage like Isa. 28:16:

Therefore thus saith the Lord God,
Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone,
a tried stone, a precious corner stone,
a sure foundation:
he that believeth shall not make haste.

Jeremiah 17:7 is another possibility:

Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord,
and whose hope the Lord is.

It does not seem that Paul was giving a direct quotation, but rather summarizing what the teaching of Scripture is concerning salvation. Both the OT and the NT speak of the same salvation.

There is one more very important matter which the Apostle mentioned in our text. It has to do with:

IV. THE INCLUSIVENESS OF THE GOSPEL (Rom. 10:12, 13).

In Rom. 3:22, 23 Paul made it clear that there was no difference between the Jew and the Gentile as far as sin is concerned. Jews and Gentiles alike are under the curse of sin, and so under the judgment of God. And when it comes to salvation from sin, God does not have one way of salvation for Jews, and another different way for Gentiles. There is only one Savior for Jews and Gentiles, which means that there is only one Savior for the whole world because Jews and Gentiles include the whole human family. This means that wherever we go on the face of the earth, we will find that people are sinners and under divine judgment. But we also

know that there is only One Who can save sinners from their sins, and He is the Lord Jesus Christ. He "is rich unto all that call upon Him." He is rich in mercy, rich in grace, rich in forgiveness, rich in love. And His riches are inexhaustible! There is grace enough in Christ to save every sinner who calls upon Him for salvation.

Notice that in verses 9, 10, and 11 salvation is received by faith. In verses 12 and 13 people are said to be saved when they "call upon the name of the Lord." They are not different things, but two ways of expressing the same faith in Christ.

Concl: So it is clear from Scripture that salvation is not something we do for ourselves; salvation is a divine work which God does in pure grace. It is not a reward for any good that we have done; it is a gift from God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, we need to recognize that what was true of the Jews in Paul's day, and still is true concerning countless numbers of Jews today, can be equally true of church-going Gentiles today. "But," you may say, "what do you mean?" I mean that it is possible for us to know a lot about the Bible without knowing the God of the Bible. It is possible to know much about the Bible without ever seeing the need for salvation. Our hearts deceive us. The Devil deceives us. We live in a world that deceives us with its promises and hopes. But the important thing is: Do we know the Lord? Are we trusting in Him for our salvation. That is what really matters.

How can you know that you do? Cf. Rom. 10:9, 10.

THE WORD OF GOD IN PREACHING
Romans 10:14-17

Intro: The great promise of the Gospel is given to us in those wonderful words of Romans 10:13, **"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."**

This same idea is given in verse 12 of this same chapter.

To call means to appeal for help. It pictures a person who is not only in trouble, but in danger. And it seems that in the word "call" is the idea of imploring with a worshipful attitude, not with any idea that the person being called upon is under any obligation whatever to help. It is a call from one in a helpless condition to another who is in a position to exercise mercy.

However, the verse leaves no question as to the outcome, nor is there the slightest suggestion of any delay in getting the help that is needed. And the invitation is thrown open to anyone at any time who recognizes his need -- "Whosoever" -- and what a tremendous word that is. Man or woman, boy or girl, regardless of nationality or race, and no matter how great or how many the sins, the invitation is extended to anyone who calls. But we need to see that one person cannot call for another; every person must call for himself, and that is all that he can do.

Please notice also that no specific place is designated from which the call must be given. Paul did not say that you have to be in church when you call. He did not say that you have to be in some evangelistic service. He did not say that you have to call so the people around you can hear you. It makes no difference where you are nor how you call, audibly or inaudibly. In the quietness of your own heart where no one but you and the Lord know what is going on, you can call and be saved, saved eternally! To call is the same as believing. No one will call upon the Lord unless he does believe that by calling he can be saved.

The need is for salvation, salvation from divine judgment because of sin, salvation from sin's power and bondage. And what makes it even more amazing is the fact that the One Who is in the position of being our Judge is the very One Who has provided the Savior. And there is only one Savior! He is "the Lord," the Lord Jesus Christ. To call upon His Name means to call upon Him, recognizing Who He is and what He has done to make it possible for Him to save all who call upon Him.

Perhaps the marginal reference in your Bible tells you that

this is a quotation of a verse in the OT: Joel 2:32. So this would remind us that there never has been any other way of salvation. People in the OT called upon Him before He came and died on the Cross, assured that He would come. Now we look back upon His finished work and know that He has been faithful to His promise to provide salvation for every sinner who would call upon Him.

The Gospel is as simple as it is wonderful, isn't it? There can be no mistake as to the meaning of these words. All people need to be saved, and the invitation is open to all. And it is clear that this salvation from divine judgment as well as from sin's power, is only available in one Person: "the Lord," the Lord Jesus Christ.

But now as we move into the verses I want to consider with you today, we see that there is a big problem in connection with the Gospel, this good news of salvation.

I. THE PROBLEM (Rom. 10:14).

The problem could be that when a person learns that he is a sinner and under divine judgment, there would be no provision for his need. But there is a provision, and, as we have learned, God's answer for man's need is CHRIST!

Neither is there a problem in understanding what God has done for sinners through Christ. And nobody is excluded because they cannot earn it or pay for it because it is free! But this is the problem; THERE ARE PEOPLE ALL OVER THE WORLD WHO HAVE NEVER HEARD THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION. In fact, there are people all over Portland who have never heard the Gospel. They don't go to church, and even in many churches you will never hear the Gospel. They never read the Bible. In fact (again), there are thousands of people in this greater Portland area who do not even own a Bible. So what is the possibility that people will hear? Most people will not listen to a message on radio or TV. What is the solution to this gigantic problem?

Paul present the problem in verse 14 by asking three questions:

- 1) "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?"

Here Paul was linking the call with believing. Look at the second question:

- 2) "And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?"

This is really the basic problem, isn't it? If a person has not heard of the Lord, and has not been told why He died, they would never know enough to believe in Him or to call

upon Him.

And then comes the third question:

- 3) "And how shall they hear without a preacher?" A more literal translation of this verse would be, But how shall they hear without him who preaches.

This means that the only way people are going to learn about Christ is for someone to go to them to tell them about Him.
This is the job of the preacher.

Whenever we see that word "preacher" I think we are all inclined to think of a pastor, or another elder, or possibly an evangelist. And there is no question but that they are preachers. But the word goes beyond them. In its larger meaning, every Christian is a preacher because a preacher is a person who makes known a message.

We have all hear how in olden times when an important message was to be given to people, a man called a herald would go through the streets, calling, "Hear ye, hear ye, hear, ye." And then he would give his message.

At Christmas we sing, "Hark, the herald angels sing." That means that we are to listen because the angels have a message for us. Angels are often preachers.

Isaiah gives us an example of what an OT preacher, or prophet, would do. We have it in Isa. 55:1 where we read,
Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,
and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat;
yea, come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.

Now this does nt mean that we have to walk through the streets calling out for people to hear the Gospel (although occasionally that might not be a bad idea). But it does mean that we have a message to proclaim, and whether we are telling one other person, or a crowd of a thousand, we are preaching, and this is what we are to do.

But caused Paul to ask another question which amounts to this:

II. WHERE DO PREACHERS COME FROM? Cf. Rom. 10:15.

The answer to this question is, They are sent! They are commissioned. There always have been many in any generation who pose as preachers, but when you listen to them you realize that they don't know what they are talking about, and obviously they have not been sent!

I came across a definition of a preacher in Thayer's Greek

Lexicon (or dictionary) which I really like, and I want to pass it on to you. Dr. Thayer said that a preacher or herald is one who gives his message "with a suggestion of formality, gravity, and an authority which must be listened to and obeyed" (p. 346).

This is the most important and most serious business in the world, and we must make sure that we do it, and that we do it correctly. The call of God is upon us. The world is not waiting for us. People do not usually appreciate it when we talk to them about their need of Christ. But that is not why we go to them. We go to them because it is God's will for us to go, and we can't keep the message to ourselves without being disobedient to the Lord.

But when they hear, and God enables them to understand and to trust in Christ, then what do they say?

How beautiful are the feet of them
that preach the gospel of peace,
and bring glad tidings of good things!

Paul was quoting from Isa. 52:7.

Notice the words "feet" and "bring." Some "feet" go all of the way across the ocean to another nation to "bring glad tidings of good things." Sometimes they take us to a member of our own family, or to a neighbor across the street, or to the person who works next to us on the job. But I will guarantee you that, if this is how you were brought to Christ, you will always think that the feet who brought a person to you to tell you about Christ, are beautiful feet!

Who was it in your case? Probably with most of us it was more than one person! But however many it may have been, I can assure you that you weren't looking for the Gospel. You weren't looking for Christ. You probably didn't even know you were under God's judgment because of your sins until somebody told you. But they did! And you believed, and called upon the Name of the Lord. And now it is your business, and mine, to tell others.

I wish I could stop there, but I can't. I wish I could tell you that all you and I have to do is to preach the Gospel of Christ, and people will be saved. But I can't tell you that. You will probably find more who will reject your message than will accept it.

And so Paul went on to speak of:

III. STILL ANOTHER PROBLEM (Rom. 10:16).

And this, too, comes from the OT, from Isaiah, the prophet.

We find these words in Isa. 53:1. He wrote, "Lord, who hath believed our report?"

Literally this means, Lord, who has believed what they have heard? Isaiah felt like every other preacher has felt at times. If the problem is that people have not heard, then why don't they believe when they do hear? Evidently Isaiah felt that his preaching was almost totally without fruit.

This is the heartbreaking thing about preaching the Gospel. Those of us who know the Lord have a hard time understanding how anyone can turn away from Christ. We all wish that we had come to Him long before we did (unless we were children when we were saved). And yet we all have to learn people naturally are not receptive to the Gospel. Sometimes they will tell us not to talk to them any more about Christ and salvation. But our commission is not dependent upon the willingness of people to listen, and to believe. We are to preach the Gospel faithfully and accurately even though no one believes. And yet we cannot help but be discouraged when people turn away from Christ. We know that if they turn Him down, there is no one else to whom they can turn who will save them.

We are so happy when people do receive Christ, but it seems that they are a very small minority.

So what are we to do? Paul gives us our guidance in verse 17.

IV. THE WAY PEOPLE ARE BROUGHT TO FAITH IN CHRIST (Rom. 10:17).

Many people, and often they are pastors or other Christian leaders, will tell us that, if the old fashioned way of preaching the Gospel does not "work," then we have to find other ways of reaching people with the Gospel. And so they turn to music that will attract them, and preaching that will entertain them, and language that will not convict them, and other methods that will not let them see what our real objective is.

Such people have never heard, or if they have heard, they have forgotten, that we are commissioned to do a job, we are herald of a most serious message, and we need to proclaim it realizing that the authority of an Almighty God is upon us. The response of people is not to change our method. We are called to preach, to preach the Gospel, to use the Word of God to show people their sin, and to proclaim to them that Jesus Christ is the only Savior.

How did Paul express it here? He said,
So then faith cometh by hearing,
and hearing by the word of God.

Even though people do not believe the Word of God, we continue to give them the Word because the Word is truth and the only way that people will be brought to faith in Christ, is by the Word.

The Apostle Peter expressed it this way:
Being born again, not of corruptible seed,
but of incorruptible, by the word of God,
which liveth and abideth for ever.

If we turn from the Word of God to anything else in our attempt to win people to Christ, we are turning from that which cannot fail to that which will always fail. The writer of Hebrews has taught us that "the word of God is quick (living), and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword..." (Heb. 4:12). So the problem is never with the Word; the problem is in the hearts of those who hear it.

Concl: Let me close by referring to what Isaiah wrote over 700 years before Paul wrote Romans -- and Paul was well acquainted with this truth. I am referring to those great verses in Isaiah 55, verses 10 and 11. Listen to them again although most of you have heard them many times from this pulpit:

For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven,
and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth,
and maketh it bring forth and bud,
that it may give seed to the sower,
and bread to the eater:

**So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth:
it shall not return unto me void,
BUT IT SHALL ACCOMPLISH THAT WHICH I PLEASE,
AND IT SHALL PROSPER IN THE THING WHERETO I SENT IT.**

You see, the Lord has commissioned us to preach the Word, but He has not told us that the preaching is always going to produce what we want it to do. God has reserved that for Himself. His Word is always effective in some way. It never is without some results even though we may not see them at the time. But the Lord knows what He is doing. He knows those whom He intends to save. He has called us to preach the Word, to spread the Gospel, trusting Him to use it when and where and with whom He has determined that it shall be used.

That ought to be a great comfort to us. But we need to know that winning people to Christ involves three things:

1) Our preaching the Word of God.

- 2) God's working.
- 3) And, as a result of God's working, people will believe.

The simple message of the Gospel is that "Christ died for our sins." Have you called upon the Lord to save you? Are you trusting in Christ to be your Savior? He died to save sinners like you and I are. Perhaps if you have never called upon the Lord to save you, the Lord has been putting that in your heart today. The promise is, and it will hold true as long as time last, that "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." In your heart call upon His Name now, and then when you are ready, tell someone else what you have done. It will soon become evident in the way you live.

Let those of us who know the Lord remember our commission. And let us be looking for the opportunities which the Lord will surely give us this week to tell somebody about Christ. And let us remember the many who are scattered throughout the world for this same purpose, praying that the Lord will be pleased to give them much fruit for His glory. But let us also pray that we may never substitute anything for the Word of God. We can only be preaching in the true sense of the word if we are proclaiming the message of the Bible.

GOD'S AMAZING GRACE

Romans 10:18-21

Intro: If I were asked the difference between Romans 9 and Romans 10, I would have to say that in Romans 9 we see the sovereignty of God in salvation, while in Romans 10 we see man's responsibility to hear and believe the Gospel. In chapter 9 we see God exercising His right to save whomever He will, choosing those who are to be saved, and calling them to Himself.

And yet along with this, we see in chapter 10 that all people, whether Jew or Gentile, are responsible for their own response to the Gospel. As evidence of this we read in verse 13,

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

However, the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man are not subjects which we can treat separately. Although it might appear to some that it is impossible to have the two at the same time, yet when we come to Scripture there is a glorious harmony between the two which causes us to give even greater glory to God. The grace of God initiates, and permeates, and culminates (brings to its highest point) all the work of salvation. If God had no grace, man would have no salvation. Our condition before God is so deplorable in His sight, and we are so hopelessly ruined by our sin, that only by the grace of an omnipotent God can there be any hope for any of us.

It is good for us to remember this when we see examples of human depravity day by day -- and we are seeing a lot of it in these days. Was it Moody or Spurgeon who was watching a human derelict suffering the effects of his sin, and who said, "There go I but for the grace of God"? That is very true. If you and I haven't fallen into the depths of sin, there is only one reason we haven't: the grace of God.

Probably most of us understood our responsibility to receive Christ before we even thought of what God in His sovereignty had done in our lives. If it were not for God's sovereignty there would have been no Gospel. If it were not for God's sovereignty, we would never have heard the Gospel. And if it were not for God's sovereignty we would never have believed the Gospel and trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ. And if it were not for God's sovereignty and God's grace, none of us would be here today. Man would have destroyed himself long ago.

People who reject the sovereignty of God in salvation as

expressed in divine election and the effective call of God in bringing people to himself say that, if you believe all of that, you can't preach the Gospel to everyone. The Scriptures show us again and again that that is not true! With the one exception of our Lord, there probably never has been a greater preacher of the Gospel to the masses of humanity than the Apostle Paul was. His burden was for all Israelites. He went throughout the Roman Empire preaching the Gospel to Jews and Gentiles alike until there was no other place for him to go. He suffered great physical pain because he refused to preach the Gospel. But all of the time he was preaching his heart out, he did so with the positive assurance that God was at work in him, using him, and that in every place he went there was an elect people to be reached.

So, while we may not be able to explain fully the relationship between the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man to hear and believe the Gospel, let us not be guilty of rejecting either truth. And I can assure you that the more you are convinced of the doctrine of election, the greater will be your burden to preach the Gospel -- even though it might be just to one person at a time.

Last week, as we considered verses 14 through 17 here in Romans 10, we were reminded of the way in which Isaiah was so grieved because he had seen such a meager response to the Gospel he was preaching. His words here are in verse 16, but Paul was quoting from the original source, Isa. 53:1. I am referring to the question Isaiah asked the Lord: **"Lord, who hath believed our report?"** In Isaiah 53 we find that Isaiah followed that up with a second question: **"And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"** You will notice that the first question had to do with man's responsibility to believe the Gospel which Isaiah was preaching; the second question has to do with the sovereignty of God. It seemed to Isaiah as though the Lord had not supported him in his ministry. We can be sure that our preaching will accomplish nothing if we don't have the Lord's blessing upon us. And that was Isaiah's complain.

However, by what Paul said in verse 17 we can see that Isaiah knew better than to change his message or to quit preaching altogether. He knew that if people were ever to be brought to faith in Christ it could only be through the preaching of the Word of God. He knew that this is the way that God gives faith. Without the Word of God no one will believe. And so we need to keep preaching the Gospel even though no one believes. People must hear the truth first, and this is how God brings them to faith.

This brings us to the verses I want to consider with you

today. And like so many times in the book of Romans, the verse begins with:

I. A QUESTION AND AN ANSWER (Rom. 10:18).

The question, **"Have they not heard?"**

The idea behind the question is, If they have heard, and faith comes by hearing the Word of God, they why have they not believed?

But let us take the question first: **"Have they not heard?"**

This question is really a ridiculous question to ask. Anyone who is acquainted with the history of Israel knows what the answer is. Of course they have heard. They have heard time and time and time again.

Think of all of the prophets God raised up to preach the Gospel. Think of all of the pictures of salvation the Jews had in their sacrifices and in their sacred days and in the Tabernacle itself. Think of the times God Himself spoke in OT times.

When the prophet Jeremiah was preaching just before Judah was taken into captivity, the Lord said one thing over and over about what He had done to save them. You find this in Jer. 7:13 (as one example) after the Lord had rebuked the people for their sins. This is what the Lord said through Jeremiah:

And now, because ye have done all these works,
saith the Lord, **and I spake unto you,
rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not;
and I called you, but ye answered not.**

And don't you remember the words of the Lord Jesus, lamenting over the city of Jerusalem when He said,

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets,
and stonest them which are sent unto thee,
how often would I have gathered thy children together,
even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings,
and ye would not!

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate
(Matt. 23:37, 38).

This does not mean that man was greater than God. It means that God was telling them that they were responsible to listen to and obey the prophets, and when they didn't they would suffer the consequences.

And so when you ask the question, "Have they not heard?", think of God's messages to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Think of all that God said to Israel through Moses (four books of

the Bible). Think of what God said through Joshua, and the judges, and David, and Solomon, and all of the writing prophets as well as the non-writing prophets. And then think of the ministry of our Lord, and of the apostles. "Have they not heard?" Oh, yes, they have heard generation after generation. They are without excuse.

What was Paul's answer in verse 18? He quoted from Psa. 19:4.

It is very interesting that Paul would quote that passage because if you read Psalm 19 you will see that David was talking about the testimony of nature to the existence of God. But Paul, directed by the Holy Spirit, took that passage to show that the ministry of the Word has been just as extensive as the ministry of nature. And let us not contradict what Paul said. God is doing far more in every generation than we give Him credit for doing. It may not look like the testimony of the Gospel is that extensive to us, but let us take God's record, not man's.

Yes, yes, yes; they have heard! So they cannot blame God that they have not believed.

But then Paul went on to a second question (second in these four verses).

II. THE SECOND QUESTION AND ITS ANSWER (Rom. 10:19, 20).

The objection which Paul put in the mouth of his skeptic, was, **"Did not Israel know?"**

Here we must ask, "Know what?" And it seems that the answer would be, in view of what we have in verses 19 and 20, "Know that the Lord intended to save Gentiles?"

Well, we will have to say again that, if they didn't, it wasn't God's fault because God told both Moses and Isaiah, just to mention two prophets, what He was going to do.

Look first at what He told Moses -- a quotation from Deut. 32:21. (Read verse 19.)

Notice that this is a statement of God's sovereignty: "I will provoke you to jealousy..." God is a jealous God, and there is a legitimate place for jealousy in human hearts. Have those of you who are fathers ever tried to get one of your children to crawl up in your lap to give you a hug, but the child has refused until you have said, speaking of another of your children, "Jimmy (or Susie) will come and give Daddy a hug." And then the first child races to you to give

you a hug.

This is what God was doing. And if God does it, it is a legitimate way to act. He would seek to provoke Israel to trust in Him by telling them that He was going to save the Gentiles. God called the Gentiles "foolish," not because they were dumb nor incapable of learning, but because He had not revealed to them what He had revealed to Israel, and so they were without understanding.

But what did the Jews do? Instead of trying to beat the Gentiles to the Lord, they wanted to destroy the Gentiles and to destroy any Jew who would take the Gospel to the Gentiles. Even a prophet like Jonah was adversely affected by what God did for the Gentile city of Nineveh.

And then Paul quoted Isaiah whom he said was "very bold," that is, even stronger and clearer than the word given to Moses. (Read verse 20.) This is a quotation from Isa. 65:1.

I want you to look at this twentieth verse very carefully. I have taken my subject from verses 20 and 21, GOD'S AMAZING GRACE, although God's grace is clearly evident in verses 18 and 19 as well, isn't it?

If the Gentiles found the Lord even though they were not seeking Him, how do you explain that? And if the Lord made Himself known to them even though they hadn't asked for Him, how do you explain that?

You can see that if the Gentiles (some of them) found the Lord although they were not seeking Him, it had to be because He was seeking them! And if He revealed Himself to them even though they were not inquiring about Him, again the initiative in their salvation was taken by God.

Doesn't this remind you of that hymn we often sing (#397 in our Hymnal)?

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me;
It was not I that found, O Saviour true,
No, I was found of Thee.

This is grace, amazing grace! No Gentile would ever have sought the Lord. Neither would any Jew ever seek the Lord "on his own." You would never have sought the Lord. I would never have sought the Lord. The Lord seeks us. The Lord seeks us through the preaching of His Word. And it behooves us to pay attention to what He is doing, and, in turn, seek Him with our whole heart.

This is what Isaiah had in mind when he preached,
Seek ye the Lord while he may be found,
call ye upon him while he is near.

"Near"? What is He doing "near" to us? He is seeking us if we do not already know Him. And then Isaiah continued:

Let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts:
and let him return (or, turn) unto the Lord,
and he will have mercy upon him:
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

You see the reason that the Gospel is being preached throughout the world in our day is the same reason that it has always been preached, not just to inform people as to what the Gospel is (that is a big part of it), but it is that people who hear the Gospel may believe it and turn to Christ. Make sure that you do not hear the Gospel in vain. "Christ died for our sins." That is the Gospel message. There is no other Savior. Forsake your old ways, and come to Christ today. He will have mercy upon you and abundantly pardon you for all of your sins.

But I have one more verse. Let me explain it by asking a question of my own:

III. WHAT ABOUT ISRAEL? (Rom. 10:21).

We are going to learn more about Israel in chapter 11, but look at what Paul wrote in verse 21. This, too, is quotation from the OT, from Isa. 65:2. (Read.)

This is pure grace, amazing grace, "grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt," "grace that will pardon and cleanse within," "grace that is greater than all our sin."

The passage in Isaiah reads, "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people." What is meant by spreading out, or extending the hands?

I remember when my folks were living and I would take my family home, both of my parents met my family with hands stretched out. And we met them with hands stretched out. You know what that means. It means that we wanted to embrace each other we were so glad to be together again.

Look at the picture of God expressing His love for Israel. He said that He kept His hands stretched out "all day long." This not only means all of the time, but when you think of how long the Lord had been dealing with Israel when Paul wrote this, from Abraham's day down to Paul's, the Lord has had His hands stretched out for two thousand years!

How did Israel respond to Him?

Paul called them "a disobedient and gainsaying people." Not only did they refused to come to the Lord, to believe on Him, and to do His will, but they were "gainsaying."

I think the best translation for this word "gainsaying" is that they talked back to the Lord. We could say that they sassed Him! They contradicted Him. They said that what He was saying was not true!

Concl: If you ever talked back to your parents, I am sure that you regret it now. And if you ever in your heart talked back to the Lord, even just by refusing to do what He wants you to do, to believe Him, to trust Him, to trust Him to save you, you probably regret that a thousand times more!

But do you know what? God still has His hands stretched out to Jewish and Gentile sinners even though they both continue to talk back to Him, and want to have nothing to do with Him. This is grace, isn't it, amazing grace? If God had been like we are, He would have pulled His hands in long ago. But He hasn't done that. His hands are still stretched out.

Some day they will be stretched out in judgment, but now they are stretched out in love. His hands may have been stretched out to some of you for a long time, but still you refuse to come. Come to God through the Lord Jesus Christ today, right now, this very moment. Delay no longer. He will save you. And when you have come to Him, you will not only be amazed at His grace, but you will be amazed that you did not come a lot sooner than you did.

May the Lord make this a day when many will come to those stretched out arms, and find forgiveness and eternal salvation in Him.