

NO GREATER BURDEN
Romans 9:1-5

Intro: A new section in Romans. Paul's explanation of the doctrine of salvation has been completed.

Note the glorious truth, the spiritual heights of Romans 8. As a chapter it remains unrivaled in the Word of God for the grandeur of its truth.

Romans 8 -- a chapter of assurance, emphasizing the work of the Three Persons of the Godhead in our salvation.

A sharp contrast as chapter 9 begins. We go from the heights to the depths.

The problem: the present situation of Israel. Since it was the Scriptures given to them that formed the basis of Paul's teaching, and since God had worked through them almost exclusively,

what about Israel now?

Why were they as a nation opposed to Paul, looking upon him as a πλάνος, a deceiver, a seducer, one who had wandered from the fold of Israel, a traitor to the nation and to the truth of God?

Why had Paul gone to the Gentiles?

Had God turned His back upon Israel forever because of the way they had treated Christ?

These are the questions that Paul was to deal with in Romans 9, 10, and 11.

But we must not permit a break in our thinking between Romans 8 and Romans 9 because there is the most intimate relationship between Romans 8 and the heavy burden which the Apostle expressed in the opening words of this chapter. I want to speak more about this later.

But let it be said now -- there is no greater burden that has ever been expressed by any man of God in any generation than the burden which Paul expressed here for his own people according to the flesh, the people of Israel!

Let us consider it verse by verse.

I. THE SINCERITY OF HIS BURDEN (Rom. 9:1).

It was so great that Paul could not just state it; he had to give evidence that it was really true!

" . . . a triple oath" (Robertson, IV, 380).

It was customary for Paul to speak in this way when he was

dealing with something of major importance. Cf. Rom. 1:9;
2 Cor. 1:23; 2:17; 11:31; 12:19; Gal. 1:20; Phil. 1:8;
1 Thess. 2:5; 1 Tim. 2:7.

" . . . in Christ . . . in the Holy Spirit" is a strong statement meaning two things:

- 1) He had been prompted by Them to say what he was saying.
- 2) This is what They Themselves would say if They were to speak directly.

" . . . I lie not . . ." -- a negative statement to intensify and support the positive statement Paul made first.

" . . . my conscience . . ." -- cf. 1 John 3:20, 21.

The three statements declare:

- 1) The importance of what he was about to say.
- 2) Its truthfulness.

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

He seems to have been groping for words to express what was in his heart.

The two expressions have this difference:

- 1) The first is inward, not shown unless he would choose to uncover it (as he does here).
- 2) The second is outward, the effect of the first, a burden which affected his outward appearance and behavior.

III. THE EXTENT OF HIS BURDEN (Romans 9:3).

This is the unbelievable part, that which made him make the first two statements first.

Actually a prayer.

It defies all doctrine, all reason. Man, even believers, have an impossible time trying to understand this.

Paul's statement does not mean that such a thing would be possible, but it does mean that this is the length to which Paul would go for his "brethren," his "kinsmen according to the flesh."

He would give up all that he had in Christ if it could only mean the salvation of his fellow Israelites!

This could not have been prompted by:

- 1) Their worthiness.
- 2) Their desire.
- 3) By Paul's lack of understanding of what it would mean to him both then and for all eternity!

This was greater than what Moses said in Ex. 32:32 (although the spirit of the two men was certainly the same). But Moses would die with Israel; Paul would die for them.

¹Αὐτῶν means "final and fatal separation" (Denney, Ex. Gk. Test., II, 657). It means the loss of salvation, eternal perdition, devoted to destruction.

IV. THE OBJECTS OF HIS BURDEN (Rom. 9:4, 5).

To show how great the tragedy was, Paul here mentioned 9 specific privileges given to the Jew which altogether did not add up to salvation if they did not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

- A. "Who are Israelites.
- B. "To whom pertain the adoption."
- C. "And the glory."
- D. "And the covenants."
- E. "And the giving of the law."
- F. "And the service of God."
- G. "And the promises.

Verse 5:

- H. "Whose are the fathers."
- I. "And of whom as concerning the flesh Christ (the Messiah) came."

Note the implied reference to the humanity of Christ as well as to His Deity (in spite of problems of punctuation suggested in the Greek text).

Concl: This passage is tremendously important in showing us:

- 1) The heart of the Apostle Paul.
- 2) Answering those who minimize the teaching of doctrine.
- 3) Showing that the doctrines of the grace of God, instead of killing evangelism and missions, are the only basis for a true burden for the salvation of unlovely, undeserving, obnoxious sinners.
- 4) Both a rebuke and an encouragement for us in our concern for those in our families, our neighbors, the people we work with, etc. -- that they might come to know Christ.
- 5) The place that prayer has in getting such a burden.
- 6) How much people can have and still have nothing if they do not have Christ.

THE UNBROKEN WORD
Romans 9:6-13

Intro: The teaching of the Apostle Paul raised questions. That is apparent from the book of Romans.

But it is also clear that the Apostle Paul did not try to avoid those questions which his teaching raised. In fact, he brought up the questions as he came to them in his teaching.

All of this illustrates one great truth which was established in the OT, and is seen over and over again in Scripture in the revelations which God has made, as well as in His dealings with men. It is the principle enunciated in Isaiah 55:8, 9.

We need to write Isaiah 55:8, 9 over this passage, which means that we must write it over the Biblical doctrine of election.

For illustrations see, 2 Sam. 7:19 (and context); the story of Job; Matt. 16:23.

Returning to our text, what is the special problem that Paul was facing here?

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

It had to do with the condition of Israel in Paul's day.
But we can also say, it also has to do with the condition of the nation Israel in our day.

The question is this: IF GOD DID ALL OF THE THINGS MENTIONED IN VERSES 4 AND 5 FOR ISRAEL, AND SINCE THEY ARE ALL RECORDED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES, THEN THE PRESENT CONDITION OF ISRAEL HAS TO MEAN THAT THE SCRIPTURES ARE NOT TRUE!

To state it another way: IF ONE JEW IS LOST, IF ONE JEW TURNS FINALLY AGAINST GOD, THEN THE WORD OF GOD "HATH TAKEN NONE EFFECT." This means that "the word of God" has failed, has fallen, has collapsed!

Israel had had its part in crucifying Christ. The city of Jerusalem had in the past been the center for the killing of the prophets. Cf. Matt. 23:37-39. Paul had just expressed his **great burden** for his people. Was this because the Word of God had given him false hopes, and he was in agony over that?

But notice, the problem is even deeper.

If one part of the Word of God fails, what about the rest of it? We then can be sure of nothing in the Word. If one part of a building gives way, the whole building is threatened

and may even be condemned! Is this true of the Word of God?

But look even beyond the Word of God.

If the Scriptures fail, then what about God? Can we come to any other conclusion than that, if the Word fails, it can only be because God has failed!

God and His Word stand, or fall, together. Cf. Psa. 138:2, I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.

Thus, it is difficult to see how there could be a greater problem than the one that Paul is faced with here.

Is there an answer? If so, what is it? How did Paul handle it?

II. THE ANSWER (Rom. 9:6b).

Actually it is very simple, and it will not shake our faith in "the word of God," if we have rightly understood the message of God in the Old Testament.

Here is the answer: God never intended to save every individual Jew! "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." CONSISTENT W/ OT TEACHING - ISA. 45:8,9; 1:9; 10:20-22; 37:31,32; 46:3

There is no doubt but that He could have saved every Jew if He had intended to do so, but that was not His purpose. And it would have been a violation of the doctrine of His grace and of the truth expressed in John 1:13.

We need to know the intention of God, the purpose of God, before we raise questions about God and His Word!

We have the same problem today with regard to the world! Was it the intention of God to save the whole world? Did He want to do something which He cannot do? What was His intention, His purpose?

These questions are answered by "the word of God" itself! And it can be seen in the Old Testament revelations in connection with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (or, Israel).

A. Regarding Abraham (Rom. 9:7-9).

Here we have 2 of the 4 OT quotations that are found in this passage:

- 1) Gen. 21:12 in v. 7.
- 2) Gen. 18:10, 14 in v. 9.

Cf. Matt. 3:9

Obviously being the natural "seed" of Abraham did not constitute a person as a spiritual child of Abraham and the promises that God made to him. Isaac and Ishmael prove this!

The true children of God are the result of God's doings just as certainly as Isaac was prepared, named, and given to Abraham and Sarah as a special, sovereign act of God Himself!

Thus we see as far back as the life of Abraham that God was manifesting distinguishing grace. He did not deal with all men exactly alike!

B. Isaac (Rom. 9:10-12).

Here in v. 12 we are pointed to what the Lord said to Rebekah, Isaac's wife, in Gen. 25:23,

The elder shall serve the younger.

Thus, we have the same principle declared here which was apparent in God's dealings with Ishmael and Isaac!

God's choice of Jacob was:

- 1) Announced before they were born.
- 2) And so it was before either of them had "done any good or evil" by which they could have merited God's choice, or forfeited it.
- 3) Plus -- it was not even on the basis of preferring the firstborn. Otherwise Esau would have been chosen.

The reason for all of this is explained by Paul in verse 12, " . . . that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth."

Note three things here about the doctrine of election:

- 1) It is not new. It is not just a NT doctrine. It is to be seen in God's dealings with men from the very beginning of time. It stands, remains!
- 2) It is impossible to understand "the purpose of God" unless we recognize the doctrine of election, that it is true, and that God always acts according to it in His dealings with men--whether in the OT or in the NT.
- 3) The reason for God's choice is not to be found in men, but in God Himself. It is "of him that calleth!"

If God's choice were based upon His foreknowledge of what Jacob would do, do you think He would have chosen Jacob?

This answers Pelagianism and its modern counterpart, Arminianism. It is not by man's supposed "free will," but by God's Will!

But we have one more verse.

C. Jacob (Rom. 9:13).

This quotation from Mal. 1:2, 3 is cited in proof of Gen. 25:23.

" . . . loved . . . hated" = chosen and not chosen, or chosen and rejected.

We have this same contrast in

- 1) Gen. 29:30-33.
- 2) Matt. 6:24.
- 3) Luke 14:26; cf. Matt. 19:29 where hating means to forsake!
- 4) John 12:25.

This raises questions about the righteousness of God and about man's ability to be saved, questions which Paul himself raised in the following verses, BUT FOR THE PRESENT LET US MAKE SURE THAT WE RECOGNIZE AND BELIEVE THIS DOCTRINE REGARDLESS OF THE PROBLEMS IT MAY PRESENT. GOD'S WAYS ARE NOT OUR WAYS, AND NEITHER ARE HIS THOUGHTS OUR THOUGHTS.

And we must remember that ~~is~~ this election or this rejection ^{is not} national! It is individual and personal. If it were national, we would have the same problem with regard to Jacob that the Jews had with Abraham. It was on this point that the Jews were confused. Cf. John 8:33, 39.

^{to salvation}
Election is always personal, individual. If it were national, then it would mean that all descendants of Jacob would be saved, and it would also mean that there would never be any hope for the Edomites. So Arminianism is in trouble with either point of view!

Concl: What, then, are we to learn from this passage?

- 1) The total dependability of the Word of God, and of God Himself! Cf. Psalms 119:89
- 2) The sovereignty of God in our salvation.
- 3) Election as the key to understanding the purpose of God.
- 4) Evangelism -- none of the truths above contradict this, but they all must be taken into consideration.

IS GOD UNJUST TO ELECT?
Romans 9:14-18

Intro: The question which Paul raised in verse 14 arises out of what he had just written in the preceding verses. And he was even dealing with a problem in that passage: Why there were Jews who were not saved? Had God's Word been broken? Had God, for some reason, not been able to do what He originally intended to do?

In dealing with that problem Paul had moved right into the doctrine of election.

Basically his answer was this: It had never been God's intention to save all Jews.

This idea, the intention of God, was a new thought to many people in Paul's day, and it certainly is a new idea to many of the Lord's people today. Naturally we think that man's destiny is in his own hands, and that whether or not he spends eternity in heaven or hell is dependent upon his own will, that most people never think about what God intended when He first planned our salvation.

But this is the crucial point.

See Romans 9:11b -- " . . . that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth."

"The purpose of God" speaks of God's intention, of what He set out to do regarding salvation. His purpose has been expressed in election. It will "stand." It cannot fail because God is God! If we will understand this truth of election, it will not only transform our ideas about the work of God, but it will enable us to see that God has not failed nor have the Scriptures been broken.

You will remember that Paul proved what he was saying by referring, first, to Isaac and Ishmael (although Ishmael is not mentioned), and then to Jacob and Esau.

-- God chose Isaac, but not Ishmael;

-- He chose Jacob, but not Esau.

And Paul also made it clear that this choice was not made because the one He chose was better than the one He did not choose, but that His choice was a gracious choice, completely undeserved by the one whom He chose.

You can see all of this very clearly stated in verses 6 through 13 of Romans 9.

Now, regardless of how clear this may be in the Word of God, this teaching always raises questions in peoples minds, sometimes

violent objections! People begin to say, "This is not right! This is not fair!" What they actually mean is that God has done something that is wrong! God has been unjust in His intention to save only those whom He has chosen!

- And so, in our text for today, Paul headed right into that problem, and he actually deals with it all the way to the end of chapter 9. So we are only getting a part of the answer in the 5 verses we are looking at just now.

Let us look at these verses now, and I trust that the Lord will open our hearts to what Paul has written.

I. THE PROBLEM AND ITS ANSWER (Rom. 9:14).

"Is there unrighteousness with God?

This question suggests one important thing in dealing with all matters of doctrine. It is this: We must always start with God, not with man.

If our doctrine puts us into a position where we are accusing God of doing something wrong, then obviously our doctrine has to be at fault -- BECAUSE GOD CANNOT SIN. HE IS NEVER GUILTY OF ANYTHING THAT IS UNRIGHTOUES.

- If people do not want to accuse God of being unjust, they will do something else which is just as bad; they will decide that they are just going to leave that doctrine alone. If we do this, then we are actually guilty of taking away from the Word of God.

This is a most serious error because of what we have in Revelation 22:19. It amounts to removing something from the Word of God.

And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of the prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

So, as difficult as it may be for us to do so, we must recognize two things:

- 1) that the doctrine of divine election is in Scripture;
- 2) that God cannot possibly have sinned, or been unrighteous, when He determined in eternity past that He would chose those whom He would save.

- Let us join in repeating Paul's answer in which he expressed his abhorrence at such a thought: "God forbid," let it not be, away with the thought!

II. THE PROOF OF THE ANSWER (Rom. 9:15-18).

Now I want you to notice very carefully what Paul did in these four verses:

- 1) He did not appeal to human reason.
- 2) He did not say that it should be accepted or rejected on the basis of who was on one side as compared with who was on the other side, nor did he say that it was determined by how many were on each side.
If he were alive today he would not say that it was determined by Calvin or Arminius.
- 3) What he did say was that it was determined solely by the Word of God!

He referred to just one Old Testament book -- the book of Exodus.

So, as in the preceding verses, we are to see again that the doctrine of election is not just a New Testament doctrine, but it is an Old Testament doctrine as well.

The verses Paul referred to are Exodus 33:19 and Exodus 9:16.

The first has to do with a Jew who was saved; the second has to do with a Gentile who was not saved. The doctrine of election applies equally in both cases.

A. Regarding Moses (Rom. 9:15, 16).

Here we have what GOD said to Moses. Be sure to note that carefully.

It would have been just as authoritative if Moses had said that God told him to say this, but in order that we might have it directly from God, we have What God actually said to Moses.

God was determined to act according to His will. This is the meaning of verse 15.

Consequently -- it could NOT be according to man's will. This is the teaching of verse 16. It is not man's will which ultimately determines his eternal destiny. Nor is it "of him that runneth," i.e., it is not because man has contended for salvation and won it as a prize!

God did not choose Moses because of anything He saw in Moses, nor because of anything that Moses had done to win His favor. If you think that Moses deserved to be chosen by God, you are wrong! It was solely "of God that showeth mercy."

Cf. John 1:11-13; Jas. 1:18, "Of his own will . . ."

But what about those who are not chosen? What about Pharaoh?

If we have problems about God's choice of Moses, we will surely have greater problems with the hardening of Pharaoh. Notice what Paul wrote

B. Regarding Pharaoh (Rom. 9:17, 18).

How did Pharaoh become the ruler in Egypt? Because God "raised" him "up."

Why did God make him the ruler? For two reasons:

- 1) That God might shew his power in Pharaoh.
- 2) That the Name of God "might be declared throughout all the earth."

In other words, what God did with Pharaoh He did for His own glory!

God did not choose to do for Pharaoh what He did for Moses because His purpose for these two men was entirely different. With Moses, God moved upon him with His grace. With Pharaoh, his own heart remained unchanged and so he did the only thing he could do: he hardened his heart against God. And then God stepped in and hardened his heart, sealing his doom. (To harden means to make obstinate or stubborn.)

— Concl: Obviously these are difficult truths. According to our thinking it is not fair. But God's thoughts and ways are not only different from ours, but they are infinitely higher. Cf. Isa. 55:8, 9. Consequently we need not be surprised if God does things in a different way from what we would do them.

But I want you to see in this passage that Paul has given us some very important principles about how to deal with the teachings of Scripture, especially in cases like this.

Let me point them out for you. There are five of them.

- 1) Always remember that whatever God does is right! Cf. Gen. 18:25b; 50:20; Deut. 32:4,
He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.
Jehoshaphat said in 2 Chron. 19:7, " . . . for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God . . ." Bildad's words in Job 8:3 are worth noting: "Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice?"
- 2) Always remember, too, that the Word of God is our final authority. Whatever the Word teaches is what we are to believe.

We learn this from Paul again and again throughout Romans.

There is no greater authority than the Word of God. All disputes are settled by the Scriptures, by the plain statements of Scripture. It is not true that the Bible teaches different things or that we can make it say what we want it to say. By comparing Scripture with Scripture under the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God stands united in its teaching from Genesis to the book of the Revelation!

In Rom. 9:17 the expression "the scripture saith" is the equivalent of Thus saith the Lord!

3) Make sure you understand what the doctrines mean.

The Holy Spirit has been given to you to guide you into the truth. Read the Word for yourself. Consult other believers in whom you have confidence for their understanding of the Scriptures. But don't let anyone explain away a passage just because it is difficult or because it runs contrary to your thinking.

Paul here is explaining the teaching of the Old Testament.

4) Believe it!

This is an important part of understanding the Word, and it is surely the key to enjoying the Word, of being blessed by it!

The people of the world say, "If I can see it, I will believe it." The Lord told Martha that, if she would believe, she would see.

5) Do not be afraid to teach it.

The Lord will bless His Word, and it is through His Word that He brings others to see the truth of His Word, and to believe in it.

The doctrine of election is not a doctrine to be neglected. It is just as much a part of the Word as any other doctrine. It was meant for the blessing of the people of God. It was meant for the glory of God. And, if we deny it, or neglect it, we are robbing God of glory which rightfully belongs to Him. And we cannot do this without taking some of God's glory for ourselves.

"O MAN, WHO ART THOU?"
Romans 9:19-24

Intro: Here in Romans 9 we are dealing with doctrines which are among the hardest, if not the hardest, for men to accept. I refer to two statements in our text:

- 1) The first in v. 22 -- "the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction."
- 2) The second in v. 23 -- "the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory."

It is hard for us to accept because it runs contrary to our thinking about what a good God would do and against what we think salvation ought to be.

But lest you think that this is just a Pauline doctrine, let me ask you to turn to a passage which the Apostle Peter wrote: 1 Peter 2:6-10. (Read, noting especially verse 8.)

This is the truth that Paul was referring to in Romans 9, verses 10-13.

It is the doctrine known among theologians as double predestination.

We are all in either one of two positions regarding it: either we have had trouble believing it, or we are having trouble believing it!

But let me ask you to turn to another passage of Scripture which I trust the Lord will use to help us understand this doctrine which is so hard for us to accept: Isaiah 55:6-11. It is especially significant that this is a Gospel passage in the Old Testament.

All of the doctrines of Scripture stand together. And it is often the case that we have trouble with one doctrine because we either do not know other doctrines which we should know, or we may simply fail to apply them.

There are two other doctrines that we need to remember as we come to our text for today:

- 1) The doctrine of God's sovereignty.
- 2) The doctrine of man's depravity.

I will be dealing with the first of these in explaining our text, but I want to take just a minute to refresh your mind concerning the second one.

Please turn to Romans 1:18-26a, 28.

Then turn to Romans 3:9-11, especially verse 11.

Sin has left man spiritually dead, in absolute bondage, and has

set him at enmity with God! Man not only will not come to God, but he cannot come to God. He does not want to come to God.

So -- if any man is going to be saved, it must be by the sovereign working of God. Note Paul's statement in Romans 9:24. This is God's effectual call. This is why Isaiah could write what he did in Isaiah 55:6, 7. Men will only seek God when God is personally calling them. And when God calls men, they come!

Now there certainly is a general call in Scripture, and anyone who comes to the Lord will be saved. But the fact remains that no one comes apart from the sovereign working of the Lord.

Remember John 6:44,

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent men draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

So the fact remains that not everyone comes because it is not the purpose of God. If He had chosen to save all men, all men would be saved.

And so in approaching our text in Romans 9, bring to it that which the Bible teaches about the sovereignty of God and the total sinfulness, the unworthiness, the inability of man and the antagonism of man with regard to God and to His truth. If you do, your attitude toward these doctrines which we have before us in this text will undergo a great change.

First of all we have

I. MAN'S OBJECTION (Rom. 9:19).

Actually this is the second objection we have had in this chapter. (See v. 14.)

To "find fault" is to blame, or to condemn.

To resist God's will means, as one commentator has explained it, to withstand, or to maintain a stand, against God's deliberate purpose.

If these questions have occurred to you, it is proof that you are beginning to see what the Apostle Paul was teaching in this passage.

In the verses which follow, Paul dealt with the first of the first of these questions.

The whole passage shows the answer to the second -- that no one resists ultimately the will of God. Think of this in connection with those who are saved, and you will see why we speak of irresistible, or efficacious, grace.

Nor is this a new doctrine in the New Testament. Cf. what Nebuchadnezzar said in Dan. 4:35,

And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he (God) doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

Nebuchadnezzar did not exclude anyone in all of creation, either men or angels, from being subject to the will of God. And he learned this a very, very hard way. If we reject it, God has ways of teaching us, too -- and they are often hard ways. So we had better be careful what we say.

II. THE ANSWERS (Rom. 9:20-24).

There are always things that we cannot understand about God's dealings with us, or with others, but it is wrong to say that Paul did not give some answers to the objection that had been raised many times.

The first is this:

A. A rebuke of man's arrogance (Rom. 9:20).

The emphasis is on the word, "thou."

Notice also the contrast between:

- 1) "Man" and "God."
- 2) "The thing formed" and "him that formed it."
- 3) In verse 21, "the potter" and "the clay."

Man is so proud that he will even take on God! He feels that He has the right to call God into court and make Him explain why He does what He does. Man acts like he is God, and he treats God as though He were a mere creature.

We need to go back and think about Psalm 100, verse 3:

Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Cf. also the parable in the first part of Matt. 20, and then see the question in verse 15.

The reference in Romans 9 is obviously to Jer. 18:1-6, especially verse 6.

Cf. also Jer. 27:5,

I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me.

Oh, how obnoxious is the pride of man! We need to give heed to the words in Ecc. 5:2,

Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.

B. The rights of God, or His authority (Rom. 9:21).

We are always hearing about civil rights, or women's rights, or the working man's rights, but what we need to hear more about are God's rights!

The gist of v. 21 is the God has the right to do whatever He chooses to do. We forget that God does not owe us anything!

He had the right to determine when we would be born, and where! He had the right to determine our sex, our nationality, who our parents would be. He has the right to give us the gifts as well as the frailties that we have. He has the right to say when we will die, and how we will die. All of these things are divine rights -- and we cannot change them.

So God had the right to save no one, if He chose that route. Or He would have had the right, and the power, to save everyone, if He had chosen to do so. In the same way, He has the right to save some, but not to save all. He is God!

You and I will be saved a lot of trouble and will have a great measure of peace if we remember the sovereign, divine authority of God!

The fact that anyone is saved is a miracle!

But there is one more point:

C. The will of God (Rom. 9:22-24).

His will is to be observed in two ways -- what He is constantly doing with "the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction," and how He makes "known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory."

1. "The vessels of wrath."

God endures, or bears, puts up with, with great restraint ("longsuffering") those who are "fitted to destruction."

We have all been amazed at the patience of God with

the ungodliness of men, but even this is an evidence of both the wrath of God and His power. He is demonstrating this continually.

2. "The vessels of mercy."

It is "mercy" because they do not deserve it any more than the others do, but God has seen fit to deal with some in mercy for the glory of His own Name!

And so Paul wrote, "What if God . . . ?" He has "vessels of mercy" among both Jews and Gentiles. And God has chosen to reach them through the preaching of the Gospel!

Concl: What are we to learn from this passage?

Several things:

- 1) Our inability to understand all that we would like to know about the ways of God.
- 2) The arrogance of our hearts -- inclined to reject the Word of God, and to call God to give an account to us of His doings.
- 3) Our failure to recognize the absolute authority of God.
- 4) Man's tendency to reject the Word of God. It is not our reason, but divine revelation, that finally settles all matters of doctrine.

How important it is for us to submit ourselves to God and to praise Him for His righteous dealings with us, and with all men.

GOD'S PLAN CONFIRMED
Romans 9:25-33

Intro: We might wonder as we first begin to read the verses of our text, "Just what is the purpose of this section with its quotation of OT passages of Scripture?"

A careful reading of the whole chapter will show that this passage is:

- 1) To show that what has happened throughout the world in connection with the ministry of the Word is entirely in accord with that which was predicted in the Word of God. This takes us back to the first part of verse 6: the Word of God has not been broken; instead, it has been confirmed!
- 2) To show that the work of God is actually being accomplished by God in accordance with His will--not the will of men. This takes us back to verse 16. Both the acceptance of the Gospel by men, and the rejection, are according to God's Word.

This all concerns the two major groups into which the human race is divided: the Gentiles, and the Jews.

From the appearance of things then, and even today, it might appear that there is something different about the Gentiles which makes them more receptive to the Gospel. But Paul wanted to show that that was not the case. What has happened is not due to a difference in the Gentiles, but it is the outworking of the plan of God with regard to the salvation of men.

All of this in verses 25 through 33 was introduced by Paul's statement in verse 24. (Read.)

Consequently we have the following divisions which are easy to see:

- 1) Vv. 25, 26 -- THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE GENTILES, established by Hosea 2:23 and Hosea 1:10.
- 2) Vv. 27-29 -- THE OLD TESTAMENT AND ISRAEL, established also by two Old Testament passages: Isaiah 10 22, 23 in vv. 27 and 28; Isaiah 1:9 in v. 29.
- 3) Vv. 30-33 -- THE WORD OF GOD CONFIRMED.
 V. 30 speaks of the Gentiles.
 V. 31 speaks of Israel.
 Vv. 32, 33 explain the reason for the situation. A part of the explanation is a final quotation from the OT which is actually made up from two verses: Isaiah 28:16 and Isaiah 8:14.

Let us now examine the passage in detail.

I. THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE GENTILES (Romans 9:25, 26).

Why, as Paul wrote this Epistle, had there been such a great

response to the Gospel in the Gentile world?

Paul's answer is this: Because GOD has been calling Gentiles to Himself.

One amazing thing about these quotations is that they both have to do with God bringing Israel back. Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 were not written about the Gentiles. Paul could have chosen other OT passages which did speak of Israel (which he did in chapter 15), but here he uses verses which have to do with Israel and applies them to the Gentiles. WHY? Because he is emphasizing God's call.

How can we fail to link together:

- 1) "Called" in v. 24;
- 2) "Call" in v. 25;
- 3) And "called" in verse 26?

The Gentiles who were being saved in such large numbers were not more receptive to the Gospel. Their hearts were just like Jewish hearts. They were being saved because God was doing a special work among them. He was calling them to Himself. They were "called" according to his purpose," and, according to the OT as well as the NT, this is the only explanation for their response.

Our Lord said this when He was here on earth. See John 6:44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him . . ." The implication is that then he will come. "For it is God which worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

What about Israel?

II. THE OLD TESTAMENT AND ISRAEL (Romans 9:27-29).

Why was there no a greater response among the Jews?

The answer: Because God never intended to save the whole nation. Even the return from captivity illustrated that. Only "a remnant" returned -- which is the point in Isaiah 10:22, 23! "Remnant" is just another word for the elect.

Verse 28 tells us three things about God's work with Israel, with the "remnant":

- 1) God will finish it.
- 2) He will do it shortly.
- 3) He will do it in righteousness because He will do what He said in the OT that He would do!

So there is no breakdown of Scripture here either.

The quotation of Isaiah 1:9 in verse 29 shows that salvation

for Israel was not something that they deserved. If God had given them what they deserved, their fate would have been like Sodom and Gomorrah!

Now we are ready for the conclusion of the whole matter. This is given in verses 30-33.

III. THE WORD OF GOD CONFIRMED (Romans 9:30-33).

The Gentiles did not pursue "righteousness" like a person running to obtain a prize. They did not pursue it at all. "There is none that seeketh after God" (Rom. 3:11).

And yet they found it! They "have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith."

How could this be?

Because the call of God was upon them, and God was the One Who opened their eyes to see that it was "of faith," not of works.

It is like Dr. Sutcliffe, one of the founders of the Multnomah School of the Bible, taught years ago. When he spoke of the time he was first saved, he said, speaking of the Lord, What was He (the Lord) doing . . . ? He was drawing me to Christ. He said, "You are one of the ones I've chosen before ever the earth was formed. You are one of those I've given to my Son. I am going to draw you to my Son." And He drew me.

And then Dr. Sutcliffe said this:

I didn't approach Him; He approached me. I wasn't looking for Him; He was looking for me. I didn't want Him; He wanted me. And He wanted me in order that He might give me to His Son.

And it was then that Dr. Sutcliffe realized that "righteousness" is "of faith" in Jesus Christ, and only through faith in Jesus Christ!

That is what Paul meant here in Romans 9:30.

But what about Israel?

God gave Israel the Law, and she went after it with all her might. But instead of seeing in that Law, her guilt and condemnation, which should have led her to seek the mercy of God in salvation, she assumed that salvation was by works, and so many of them never knew what it was to be saved.

But Paul made another point in verse 33.

The Jews were not only mistaken about the Law, but they stumbled over Christ! And even this was according to God's

plan. When the Lord came, the Jews did not like Him and they did not want Him!

Cf. Isaiah 53:1-3. (Read.)

Why was this the case? God could have made the Lord attractive to the people of Israel. But they did not like what He said. They did not like what He did. They did not like anything about Him. Why?

Because God ordained it this way. See verse 33.

"Behold" means that God did not do this secretly, but openly, intentionally, even calling attention to what He was doing!

"I lay" is the equivalent here of indicating that He ordained it this way.

"In Sion," or Zion, means, in Israel.

When Jesus Christ came, He came to Israel, not as they wanted Him to come, but as the Father ordained that He should come -- "a stumblingstone and a rock of offence" -- two terms which mean essentially the same thing.

Cf. 1 Peter 2:6-8. (Read.)

When Christ came, He came in such a manner that it was like a large rock obstructing the salvation of Israel. In this way, God made it more apparent than ever that, if any Jew were to be saved, it would have to be by the sovereign grace of God!

And the quotations from Isaiah 28:16 and 8:14 clearly show that it was all planned this way by God.

And yet we have well-meaning people today who, not understanding the need for a sovereign work of God, do all that they can to make the Lord more attractive than God made Him. Our failure to understand the grace of God causes us to do things that are directly opposed to the work that God is doing in the hearts of men.

So we are brought down to the final statement of the chapter: " . . . and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."

If you say that "whosoever" means that salvation is dependent upon the so-called "free will of man," you have missed the whole point of the passage. It simply means that it makes no difference whether a person is Jewish or Gentile, if he believes, he will be saved! But the Gentiles who do not seek Him, and the Jews who do not want Him, will only believe when God calls them and imparts to them faith in Christ.

Concl: What does all of this teach us?

- 1) The absolute reliability of the Word of God. If we want to understand salvation, we must go to the Scriptures.
- 2) The sinfulness of all human hearts--Jewish and Gentile.
- 3) The power of God to accomplish what He ordained from eternity past.
- 4) The need for the work of the Spirit in convicting both Jews and Gentiles of their need of Christ.

Cf. 1 Cor. 1:22-24. (Read.)

We must not seek to change Christ and His Cross, but proclaim Him as He is. People will love Him when their eyes are opened to see Who He really is, and not until then!

ZEAL WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE
or
IS SINCERITY ENOUGH?
Romans 10:1-4

- Intro: Chapter 10 is a continuation from chapter 9, and, in fact, it seems that Paul has made a complete circle from the beginning of chapter 9 when he gets to this point: Romans 10:1.

Here again we realize that we are reading a letter from a man who carries a heavy load upon his heart.

I. HIS GREAT BURDEN (Romans 10:1).

We saw the same in the first 17 verses of the Epistle. This is not just a theological treatise, not just an Apostle fulfilling his duty, but this is the outpouring of a heart that was moved in a most unusual way.

These are the words of a man who knew God, who knew God's will, and who understood the primary need of all men!

Note how he wrote. Each word is important!

- A. Those to whom he expressed his burden: "Brethren."
B. The way he described his burden: "my heart's desire."
C. The One upon Whom he cast his burden: "and prayer to God."
D. Those for whom he was burdened: "for Israel."

We need to remember in these days when we seem to pigeonhole our responsibilities, even in the Lord's work. This has largely come about with our distorted ideas about spiritual gifts. Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, but he was just as burdened for Israel. Cf. Rom. 11:13.

- E. The burden: "that they might be saved."

II. AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT (Romans 10:2).

This is in the first part of the verse.

Paul believed in giving credit where it was due even though it might be, as it was in this case, for wasted effort.

— Here it concerned their "zeal of God."

They were like many professing Christians today who actually reject the Gospel, but they do it with the idea that they are really serving God by doing it.

They were zealous for God's honor and glory. To be zealous in a case like this means to be jealous -- jealous for God! But the significant thing is that at the same time they were jealous for God they would have nothing to do with the Lord Jesus Christ!

Anybody who teaches that you can under any circumstances be on the right track to God while ignoring the Lord Jesus Christ is a person who is ignorant of some very important truth.

This led Paul to verse 3 and

III. A SAD EXPLANATION (Romans 10:3 -- with v. 2b a part of it).

A. "Not according to knowledge" (v. 2b).

They had knowledge, but they did not have full knowledge!

Note:

- 1) How dangerous a little knowledge can be.
- 2) Also, how important teaching is. It is important that we be taught all of the truth.

Apply this to the Jews and to the knowledge that they had, much of which came from their consciences as well as from the Old Testament Scriptures.

What was their deficiency?

B. "Being ignorant of God's righteousness."

How often the Word of God speaks of the ignorance of men! Note some of the passages.

Note also what it means that they were "ignorant of God's righteousness."

Ignorance leads to wasted effort, however sincere it might be!

C. "Going about to establish their own righteousness."

And so they made another mistake:

D. "Have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

This is so-called, "free will." Let us call it by its right name: SELF-WILL! Cf. Rom. 8:7. Their spiritual blindness had led them to do the wrong things which could never produced the results they were after. The

Jews, thus, in their jealousy for God's glory, were in actual rebellion against Him. They would not listen to nor obey the Word of God regarding what it meant to be right with God!

People make all kinds of mistakes when they refuse to hear all of the Word of God, when they refuse teaching!

All of this brought Paul to his statement of

IV. THE REAL TRUTH (Rom. 10:4).

The problem with the Jews had to do with the Mosaic Law.
Cf. Rom. 9:31.

Instead of seeing that the Law pointed them to Christ, they took it as being the way by which they worked for their own salvation!

Even though many commentators say that there was a time when salvation was by the Law, that is not the truth. The Law never saved anyone, and it was not given by God for that purpose! The aim, or purpose, of the Law, was to show the people of Israel their need for a Saviour, their need for CHRIST!

Note each part of the verse again.

Concl: We cannot produce "the righteousness of God" by our obedience to the Mosaic Law, or by any other works.

Paul had to learn this. See his testimony in Phil. 3, esp. vv. 6, 7-9.

The Lord is our righteousness. This is what the OT prophets said too. Listen to two of the greatest of them: Isaiah and Jeremiah:

- 1) Isa. 54:17, " . . . and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."
- 2) Jer. 23:5, 6,
Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Robert Murray M'Cheyne who lived in Scotland in ahd last century and who died two months before his 30th birthday, left a mark upon Scotland and the world that has never to this day been removed. He not only was a great and powerful preacher, but he

wrote a number of poems, some of which have been set to music.

One of his poems was entitled, JEHOVAH TSIDKENU -- which is a transliteration of the Hebrew words for "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Let me read it to you because it describes what Paul was saying about the needs of his Jewish brethren. M'Cheyne called this expression, "The watchword of the Reformers."

I once was a stranger to grace and to God,
I knew not my danger, and felt not my load;
Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree,
Jehovah Tsidkenu was nothing to me.

I oft read with pleasure, to soothe or engage,
Isaiah's wild measure and John's simple page;
But e'en when they pictured the blood-sprinkled tree
Jehovah Tsidkenu seemed nothing to me.

Like tears from the daughters of Zion that roll,
I wept when the waters went over His soul;
Yet thought not that my sins had nailed to the tree
Jehovah Tsidkenu--'twas nothing to me.

But now listen:

When free grace **awoke** me, by light from on high,
Then legal fearsshook me, I trembled to die;
No refuge, no safety in self could I see--
Jehovah Tsidkenu my Saviour must be.

My terrorsall vanished before the sweet name;
My guilty fears banished, with boldness I came
To drink at the fountain, life-giving and free--
Jehovah Tsidkenu is all things to me.

Jehovah Tsidkenu! my treasure and boast,
Jehovah Tsidkenu! I ne'er can be lost;
In thee I shall conquer by flood and by field--
My cable, my anchor, my **breastplate** and shield!

Even treading the valley, the shadow of death,
This "watchword" shall rally my faltering breath;
For while from life's fever my God sets me free,
Jehovah Tsidkenu my death-song shall be.

(Written, November 18, 1834.)

Is He your righteousness? If your hope of acceptance with God is not in Christ, then you have no hope!

The lessons of the passage . . .

RIGHTEOUSNESS: THE FALSE AND THE TRUE

or

HOW MUST WE BE SAVED?

Romans 10:5-10

— Intro: From the beginning of Romans 9 Paul had been dealing with the nation Israel. Chapters 9 and 10 show the great burden that he had on his heart for their salvation. There is no doubt but that his heart was greatly moved by this subject.

He was forced to face the question, Why were not all Jews being saved? Did this mean that God was unable to do what He had planned to do?

Paul's answer is twofold -- one answer having to do with God, the other having to do with Israel. In other words, there was both a divine answer and a human answer.

The answer with regard to God led Paul to discuss the doctrine of election -- that it never had been God's purpose to save every Jew, but He had an elect, a remnant, within the nation who most certainly would be saved!

— The answer with regard to Israel led Paul to discuss the false interpretation that Israel had given to the Law. They had sought God by their own words, trying to obey the Law, instead of realizing that it was by faith that people are saved. They did not understand the righteousness of God and so they had set out to merit their own righteousness by their good works.

Consequently in Paul's day there was more fruit among the Gentiles because, not having the Law, they sought to be right with God by faith!

At the point where we are in Romans 10 Paul was again declaring the Gospel, simply and clearly and powerfully showing what all men must realize if they are to be saved. In our text specifically he was showing why the Law could not save, and why salvation had to be by faith.

The first thing he did was to call Moses to the witness stand, so to speak. This should remind us of what Paul did in the earlier part of Romans when he was leading up to the Gospel in Romans 3.

I. THE TESTIMONY OF MOSES (Romans 10:5).

There would be no stronger evidence for what Paul was teaching than to produce the testimony of Moses, the great law-giver. What did he understand about the Law? Did he teach that it was the way of salvation?

Paul cited just one verse in which Moses summed up his understanding about the Law. It is Lev. 18:5, " . . . the man which doeth those things shall live by them."

The emphasis is upon the word, "doeth." This means that any Jew who wanted to be saved by the Law had to obey the Law perfectly, without a single violation, and he had to continue his obedience to the day of his death.

This had never been done!

Review what Paul wrote in Romans 3:9-20. Practically all of that passage is Scripture. All are "guilty" because no one has ever under every circumstance obeyed God.

That is the reason that Solomon wrote so long ago,
For there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not (Ecc. 7:20).

Romans 3:23 says,

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

Paul did concede to the Galatians that

if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law (Gal. 3:21b),

but God did not give that kind of a law. He could not have given that kind of a law, a law lowered to human standards. He had to demand that men measure up to His standards. This is exactly what He did, and all men fail the test. In fact, David said in Psalm 58:3,

The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.

This should remind us of what Isaiah wrote in Isa. 53:6,

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way . . .

James wrote,

For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all (Jas. 2:10).

It is not necessary for a man to commit murder in order to violate the Law; he is guilty if he lies or if he steals.

Therefore, the Law does not save us; it condemns us. Listen to Paul's words in Galatians 3:10:

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

Paul was quoting here from Deut. 27:26 -- also the words of Moses!

To summarize: The Law was never given to save. " . . . by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20b).

Obviously there could be no greater works than the works that a man would attempt to do in obedience to God's Law. If this fails, then all works are eliminated. Where do we turn?

Paul's answer had been given in verse 4:

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Note two words in that verse: "Christ" and "believeth."

Salvation is therefore through faith in Christ! This is how sinners attain to righteousness. It is not earned by works, but it is received by faith. It is not the result of what we do, but it is through faith in what Christ has done.

So, at this point, Paul personifies the Gospel, and calls the Gospel to the witness stand.

II. THE TESTIMONY OF THE GOSPEL (Rom. 10:6-10).

What is the testimony of the Gospel with respect to Christ and to righteousness?

It is presented negatively first, and then positively.

A. First, what the Gospel does not say.

Read verses 6 and 7. Here and in verse 8 Paul is drawing from Moses' writings again in Deut. 30:10-14.
(Read.)

Why does not "the righteousness which is of faith," that is, the righteousness which is received by faith, say this?

There are two reasons:

1. Because no person on earth could possibly do such a thing: " . . . bring Christ down . . . bring up Christ again from the dead.)"

What two truths are here?

- 1) The incarnation of Christ.
- 2) The resurrection of Christ -- thus implying that He died!

I heard of a young man just recently who claims to be a Christian, but he said that he did not think that you had to believe in the virgin birth of Christ nor in the resurrection of Christ in order to be saved. Paul certainly would not agree with him! These are the two truths that are emphasized here.

Who of you would like this kind of an assignment -- to go to heaven and to convince Christ to come to the earth, making all of the arrangements for Him to be virgin-born, and then who would like to have the task of raising him from the abyss of death?

You see, this would put salvation as far from us as trying to keep the Law. No man could bring Christ down from heaven, and no man could bring Christ up from the dead!

But notice a second reason why this does not need to be said:

2. Because it has already been done!

Christ has come down. He was born of the virgin Mary. He has died! And He has been raised from the dead! His work in providing salvation for sinners does not need to be done; it has been done!

So, "Say not in thine heart . . ." Do not even let the thought enter your mind. The work for our salvation is not something which needs to be done; it has been done.

All right, if the Gospel does not say this, " . . . what saith it?"

B. What the Gospel does say.

Three things:

- 1) Its accessibility.
- 2) Its simplicity.
- 3) Its specificity, or its explicit requirements.

1. Its accessibility.

God has not hidden the message. We do not have to go to heaven to find it. Nor do we have to penetrate the lower parts of the earth to discover it. What does the Gospel say -- referring again to Deut. 30:14? "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach"!

It is in the Word of God. It is the message which has been preached from Genesis to the book of The Revelation of Jesus Christ. It is the message that Paul preached to Jews and to Gentiles. It is as near as the mouths and hearts of men.

But what else do we note about the Gospel?

2. Its simplicity.

Read vv. 9 and 10 and see if you have any difficulty understanding them.

Isaiah was talking about the Gospel and about salvation in Isaiah 35:8 when he said, " . . . the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err (ur) therein."

Even our Lord said,

Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3).

So apparently even little children can understand how to be saved.

Too many of us are like Nicodemus -- we stumble over the simplicity of the Gospel. But it is simple. It is easy, by God's grace, to be saved.

Notice finally,

3. Its specificity -- its specific details, in vv. 9, 10.

Just because the Gospel is simple, we must not assume that we can it can mean anything that we want it to mean. The Bible is very clear as to what it means to be saved.

Paul reduces it here to two things which cannot be separated from each other. You never find one without the other in the life of any person who is truly saved.

One is faith; the other is confession.

a. Faith.

To have faith is to believe. To believe means that we are trusting in something for our salvation.

What, or who, is the object of our faith?

Look at verse 9. It is faith in God, faith in the Lord Jesus, faith in His resurrection (which implies faith in His death and the reason for His death).

"Lord Jesus" brings together His Deity and His humanity!

Thus, saving faith is faith in God Who sent His Son to die to satisfy every righteous demand of God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ Who did just exactly that. It is faith in His work, not in ourselves nor in our work, that results in our salvation.

Cf. Eph. 2:8, 9.

But there is another point about the Gospel which we must not overlook.

- b. Confession -- "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus . . . for . . . with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:9a, 10b).

Will you note the difference between faith and confession? Faith is inward, "in thine heart"; confession is outward, "with thy mouth."

Faith in Christ is that which cannot be seen by others, but its effect can be seen in our confession.

Unfortunately this word "confession" in modern evangelism has come to mean walking forward in some public service and "confessing Christ before men." Cf. 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.

But is this all that there is to confessing Christ -- walking an aisle to say that I want to be a Christian? NO! The confession that Paul was talking about, and the confession that our Lord was talking about, is the confession of a changed life -- it is to "confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus," i.e., that Jesus is your Lord! It is the confession of a changed life, that you are a new creature in Christ, that you are no longer the Lord of your life, but Jesus Christ is!

Concl: Nothing short of this, nothing else, is salvation. Is your hope in Christ. Do you believe that He did everything necessary in God's sight in order to declare righteous those who trust in Christ. This is the Gospel -- faith, not in our works, but in His, and in His alone! Come to Christ and believe in Him now. Cf. Acts 4:12. ~~This is the true righteousness.~~ There is no righteousness by works.

WHO SHALL BE SAVED?
Romans 10:11-15

Intro: It is clear that, in this passage, Paul was speaking of the necessity of calling upon the Lord, or of calling upon the Name of the Lord. See verses 12, 13, 14.

Is this in conflict with the teaching that we had in Romans 8 which indicated that believers in Christ are those who are called? See Romans 8:28, 30. See also Romans 9:11, 24.

How can we be saved because we are called, and at the same time because we call? One seems to make our salvation dependent upon the Lord; the other upon ourselves.

We have the answer in our text today, but in order to see it we need to examine these five verses very carefully.

I. THE TEXT EXPLAINED.

In verses 9 and 10 of Romans 10 Paul made a very important statement regarding salvation, backing up what he had written before, to the effect that salvation is by faith alone. Confession is the outward manifestation of the inward faith; it is not something in addition to faith!

Here in Romans 10:11 he gives his proof for what he wrote in verses 9 and 10--THE WORD OF GOD in Isaiah 28:16 (which he had quoted in the last verse of Romans 9).

Again and again Paul cited the Old Testament Scriptures as his authority for what he taught.

But, since he was speaking by the Holy Spirit (in a way that you and I cannot speak), he added a word which was not in Isaiah 28:16, but which was clearly included in the thought of that verse. It is the word "whosoever," or everyone.

The reason for this is that Paul here was seeking to establish the fact that there is only one way of salvation for all men, whether Jew or Gentile, and that is by faith.

Notice that the result of believing in Christ is here stated negatively: "shall not be ashamed." This is actually a Hebrew expression which means that he is not going to find out too late that he was deceived. In such a case who could measure how overwhelmed a person would be with disappointment?

But that is exactly where people will be who are trying by their own works to earn their way to heaven. It is only those who trust in Christ who will not be "ashamed."

Verse 12: This led Paul to make a further word of explanation in v. 12.

"Difference" is the same word we had back in Romans 3:22. It is explained for us if we will look at the way Paul used it also in 1 Cor. 14:7,

And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?

The word "distinction" is the same word we have in our text translated "difference." A person cannot play a tune on a trumpet or a harp unless he makes a difference between his notes.

This is what a preacher of the Gospel does not do. He does not play one song of salvation for the Jew, and another song for the Gentile. It is the same song for both!

And that is because they are dealing with "the same Lord" Who "is rich unto all that call upon him. Note He is "the same Lord over all . . ." He is sovereign over all men, and He will be "rich" unto those who call upon Him because He will give them all that they need to be righteous before God.

God's riches are never depleted, nor does His blessing upon one person limit His ability to help another. That is what it means that He is "rich."

Verse 13: And then Paul gave another verse from the OT to prove what he was saying: Joel 2:32.

The additional thought that we have in this verse is that of calling "upon the name of the Lord."

This is not different from calling upon the Lord (v. 12), but it also is a Hebrew expression which means that, when a person calls "upon the name of the Lord," he is calling upon all that that Name represents: His Person and His Work. The person who calls upon the name of the Lord has forsaken his own merit and his own work, and he is declaring his faith in the character and work of the Lord Jesus Christ!

The promise for such faith is that he "shall be saved."

Verses 14, 15: But then we come to a series of four questions.

Here we are confronted with a real problem. Paul wanted the Roman believers to know that it does not lie within either the will (the desire) nor the ability of man to call upon

the Lord, to call upon his name!

The answer to every question is, He cannot; he will not!

Think of it this way:

Man will not call until he has believed;
 he will not believe until he has heard;
 he will not hear without a preacher;
 a preacher will not preach unless and until he is sent.

But who does the sending in every case? Who sends the preacher so that men will hear and believe and then call "upon the name of the Lord" so they can be saved?

Obviously God does the sending. This is the calling of God which we learned about in Romans 8 and 9. Thus the salvation of every person who is saved is traceable to God.

So these verses, these questions, are meant to teach us:

- That it is impossible for a sinner to call on the Lord unless he believes;
- That it is impossible for him to believe unless he hears;
- that it is impossible for him to hear unless someone preaches;
- that it is impossible for one to preach unless he is sent!

Thus in these questions Paul was moving from the effect to the cause. God is the cause of our salvation; our salvation is the effect of what God does.

A preacher could have been an apostle, an elder, a deacon, or any other child of God who is used to carry the message of salvation to someone the Lord intends to save.

Here we see the providence of God in salvation. It is illustrated again and again in the book of Acts. Missions or evangelism is not some kind of a haphazard thing that we do, but it is God at work sending a preacher to sinners whom He intends to hear the Word, and through hearing the Word receive faith, and because they have faith will call upon the name of the Lord!

Calvin once wrote,

. . . the gospel does not fall like rain from the clouds, but is brought by the hands of men wherever it is sent from above (XIX, p. 399).

Thus, whenever the Gospel is preached, what Paul called "the gospel of peace . . . glad tidings of good things," we can be sure that God is at work. And His Word does not return empty to Him. Cf. Isa. 55:10, 11. Or, as Jay Adams said when He was here, "God is up to something good!"

But look at the last part of our text--the quotation in verse 15 of Isaiah 52:7. (Read.)

What are "beautiful . . . feet"?

"Beautiful" means timely. It means that at a God-given hour, or time, God does something for someone which is going to be the turning point in their lives.

The person who suddenly hears the Word of God, "the gospel of peace," the "glad tidings of good things," will declare that he never heard the Gospel before even though he may have been in a place where it was preached all of the time!

In God's time for him he hears how he can be at peace with God, and he realizes that the Gospel is "good" because it will profit him as nothing else will, not only in this life but for all eternity!

It is of God that non-Christians are put together with Christians. It is of God that a Christian gets concerned about a particular person who is not a Christian. It is of God when a Christian begins to pray for the salvation of a person who is not saved. And it is of God when a Christian preaches the Gospel to a person who does not know the Lord Jesus Christ.

God does not work in all, nor does He do everything at once in the hearts of those who are eventually saved. But he very definitely is working, and every person's salvation is eventually traceable to God!

Do you see the answer to the problem I brought up at the beginning? There is not conflict between our calling and God's calling. It is simply a case that we call upon the Lord as a result of what He has been doing to call us to Himself!

II. THE MAIN POINTS IN THIS PASSAGE.

A. The authority of Scripture.

Three times in these five verses Paul quoted from the OT--in verses 11, 13, 15!

What a tragedy that there is so much preaching today that contains more human reasoning than it does of the Word of God.

There is only one way to be sure that our doctrine is right, and that is to see that it is taught in the Word of God.

The second point:

B. The oneness of salvation.

God does not have two ways of saving people, one for Jews and one for Gentiles--or three ways, or four ways, etc. There is only one way for all people regardless of the distinctions we may make in other ways.

See verse 13.

C. The authority of the preacher.

He is one who is sent of God! Never forget this. The authority of God is behind him. Cf. Matt. 28:18, 19, 20.

Cf. John 1:6, "There was a man sent from God whose name was John."

Cf. John 20:21, " . . . as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you"--with my authority behind you!

D. The timeliness of preaching.

We see this over and over again--the Gospel going to the right person at just the right time, God's time!

E. The specific nature of the Gospel.

It is not any preaching which men decide that they want to call the Gospel, but it is the good news of peace with God and how it can be attained, and of the benefits, the good things, which come to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

F. Man's responsibility-- to "call upon the name of the Lord."

Here Paul was showing us how it all comes about, but his teaching only emphasizes that every person must face the fact that he needs to be saved and that this is the only way he can be saved, and that, if he does not call upon the Lord Jesus Christ, he will not be saved!

One other point that I must emphasize:

G. The certainty that, if you call, you will be saved.

Again let me quote Calvin on this point:

. . . for since he who is the Creator and Maker of the whole world is the God of all men, he will show himself kind to all who will acknowledge and

call on him as their God: for as his mercy is infinite, it cannot be but that it will extend itself to all by whom it is sought (XIX, p. 395).

The person who calls in faith cannot call in vain.

Concl: Have you called on His Name? Perhaps you have been thinking of all of the reasons why the Lord should save you--all of the works you have done, or all of the promises you have made to the Lord, but you have not been crying out your confidence in Christ, in what He is, and in what He did when He died on the Cross!

Call upon Him and you will be saved. If you fail to call upon Him, you will never be saved.

Can't you see the providence of God in your life even in the very fact that you are here today, listening to the Word of God, listening to someone who tells you to turn to Christ and to call upon Him, instead of being somewhere else where you would be hearing something altogether different?

May God grant that He is calling sinners to Himself today. Then you will be able to sing that wonderful old hymn,

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

THE WORK OF THE GOSPEL IN GOD'S HANDS
Romans 10:16-21

Intro: Charles Hodge, who taught for 56 years at Princeton Seminary (1822-1878), issued the final version of his commentary on Romans in 1864 (which was during the Civil War). It is still being published and has been recognized as one of the greatest commentaries on Romans that has ever been written.

Wilbur Smith used to say that, regardless of what other commentaries on Romans one might have, he learns to turn to Hodge first.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones once wrote of Hodge,
One always turns to Hodge's commentaries with great confidence, for in him there is that perfect blending of theology, scholarship and a devotional spirit which are the prime requisites of a commentary.

(All of the above facts are given on the jacket of the Banner of Truth's edition of Hodge's commentary on Romans.)

Charles Hodge wrote this about this section of Romans which we are considering and have been considering:

Paul's object in the whole context is to vindicate the propriety of extending the gospel call to all nations (Romans, p. 349).

In Romans 11:13 we will find these words,
For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office.

But Paul does not do this at the expense of the Jews. Twice we have seen his great burden for the Jews--once at the beginning of chapter 9, and again at the beginning of chapter 10. And this was in spite of the fact that the Jews had turned against him with such hatred and had done everything possible to cut off his ministry.

In 2 Corinthians, which Paul wrote before he wrote Romans, Paul said, "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, . . . in perils of mine own countrymen . . ." (2 Cor. 11:24, 25a, 26m).

Paul had suffered from both the Jews and the Gentiles, and yet he persevered in the calling that God had laid upon him, not seeking the salvation of the Gentiles only, but of the Jews as well.

But here, as Dr. Hodge has pointed out, Paul was concerned that the Romans church know why he had gone to the Gentiles, and why he wanted to come to see them!

Our text for today is really a treatise of how the work of the Gospel has fared in the Lord's hands. See the reference to God's hands in verse 21.

The first thing that we have in verse 16 is

I. THE APPARENT WEAKNESS OF GOD'S WORK (Rom. 10:16).

"They" probably refers here to the Gentiles. The work among the Gentiles had not been 100% successful. It was similar to the work of the Gospel among the Gentiles. And this was confirmed by a quotation from Isaiah, 53:1.

Elijah felt this way about his work among the Jews, too. Cf. 1 Kings 19:14.

"Our report" speaks of a message which had been preached and heard, not one that had been concealed.

And all of this had been in spite of the fact that the prophets of the OT and the apostles of the NT had preached with authority!

Notice the words, "But they have not all obeyed the gospel."

This is the emphasis that Paul made about his ministry at the beginning of this Epistle. See Romans 1:5. Failure to believe the Gospel was disobedience.

Listen to what Paul said when he was preaching to the Gentiles in Athens on Mars' Hill--that God "now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30b).

Listen to the authority which Peter manifested when he was preaching to the Jews in Jerusalem as it is recorded in Acts 3:19: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out . . ."

Even when Paul met with the Ephesian elders, who were Gentiles, in Acts 20, he reminded them of how he had preached to them--"Testifying both to Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21).

This is what infuriated both Jews and Gentiles. Paul left them no alternative. He commanded them to repent, and to believe. Christ was the only way. This kind of preaching still infuriates people.

But what was the response? "But they have not all obeyed the gospel." God said through His servants, "Repent and believe." They said, "NO!"

What is this but evidence of human depravity? This is how man exercises his so-called "free will." It is always contrary to what God tells him to do.

Cf. John 1:11; 3:19, 20; Rom. 3:11.

At this point in our text notice THE APPARENT WEAKNESS OF GOD'S WORK, but also keep in mind that it is backed by a divine authority which prophets and apostles have recognized and exercised.

But let us go on to the second point. The work of God is

II. A WORK OF POWER (Rom. 10:17).

There is an element in Gospel preaching which makes it effective, an element which goes beyond the preaching itself.

But, at first glance, this verse might seem to add to our dilemma. If "faith cometh by hearing," then why is it that all who hear do not believe?

To answer this question we need to note the latter part of this 17th verse--"and hearing by the word of God."

Paul does not use the common word for the Word of God in this verse. It is not , but . This is a word which indicates a spoken word of command. (At least the idea of a command is in several passages where this word is found in the NT.) Cf. Luke 5:5; Heb. 1:3; 11:3. On this latter verse, notice what God said in Genesis 1 as He created the heavens and the earth. Cf. also Psa. 33:6, 9,

By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth . . . For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.

Romans 10:17 means that a person is brought to faith in Christ when, as a preacher preaches, God speaks too--just like He is speaking audibly to sinners who are hearing the Gospel.

This is God's call. This is an effectual call. This is a call that makes men respond, not against their wills, but as God changes their wills.

This is what happened to Paul on the road to Damascus. This shows that the preaching of the Gospel is not a work which we are expected to do by ourselves, but it is a work in which God works with us and through us and usually beyond us!

Notice the words at the end of Mark's Gospel--16:20:

And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

Cf. Paul's words in Romans 15:17-19.

Cf. also John 15:5; 1 Cor. 3:6-9; 2:4, 5; 6:1; Heb. 2:3, 4; Acts 4:29, 30. And our old standby: Isa. 55:10, 11.

This is what the servants of the Lord in the past have called unction. How different it is as, when we speak, God also speaks. Then men are brought to faith in Christ. He calls, He commands, and sinners come! He does not do this all of the time with every one who hears, but He does it according to His own will and in accordance with His own purposes.

But there is another thing here about how the work of the Gospel has fared under the hands of God.

III. AN EXTENSIVE WORK (Romans 10:18).

In verses 14, 15 we learned about the preachers that God had sent out with timely ("beautiful") feet!

How far had they gotten? Had the Gentiles ("they") heard?

"Yes, verily" -- and then Paul quoted from Psalm 19:4, a verse which actually speaks of God revealing Himself in nature.

But what is the point?

Evidently Paul wanted us to know that that verse in Psalm 19 was really predictive of what was going to happen with the Gospel. This was especially true of the Roman world.

Cf. Col. 1:5, 6 where Paul was speaking of the hope of the Gospel "which," he said to the Colossian church, is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit . . ." In verse 23 of that same chapter he again spoke of "the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven . . ."

That is what happened in the first century, and that mighty work has been going on to varying degrees of effectiveness from that day until this. It has never been done perfectly, but it is being done, even today--all to the glory and praise of God!

See why Paul wanted to go to Rome according to Rom. 15:20-24.

But now we come to a final point about God's work. It is:

IV. A GRACIOUS WORK (Romans 10:19-21).

This means that it is undeserved. This means that God has done, and is doing, something which He did not have to do. The only constraint upon Him is that of His own love and of His own promises.

You see the grace of God here in these last three verses:

- 1) First, toward Israel.
- 2) Secondly, toward the Gentiles.
- 3) And finally, toward Israel again.

A. Toward Israel (Rom. 10:19).

Paul raises the question, "Did not Israel know?" That is, Did they know that God was going to save Gentiles, too?

Again the answer is, Yes. They knew because Moses mentioned it in Deut. 32:21 (which Paul quoted in verse 19). They knew also because of what Isaiah said in Isa. 65, verses 1, 2.

What did Moses say? (Read v. 19b.)

What did he mean? Did Moses mean that God was going to abandon the Jews altogether by turning to those Gentiles who were not His people, a people who were "without understanding," as "foolish" is translated in Rom. 1:31? This latter term means people who have not and who cannot put it altogether!

Why would God "provoke" Israel "to jealousy," and "anger" them? Was it to drive them away? No, it was to bring them to repentance and to faith in Christ.

So God's grace to the Gentiles was also an act of grace toward Israel.

But let us look at what Paul said about the Gentiles.

B. Toward Gentiles (Rom. 10:20).

"Bold" here means very plainly and openly and bravely. Such preaching was not popular in Isaiah's day either, but he said it anyway because it was the Word of God.

Here again we see the sovereignty of God in salvation--in the salvation of the Gentiles! The Gentiles did not seek the Lord. They did not put any question to Him about the way of salvation. But the Lord caused them to find Him. He revealed Himself to those who were

not looking for Him.

Again--how marvelously this is illustrated by the experience of the Apostle Paul. See Gal. 1:13-24, esp. vv. 15, 16a.

We can all sing,

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

One last word from verse 21:

C. Toward Israel again (Romans 10:21).

God continues to deal with Israel.

"All day long" means always.

"I have stretched forth my hands" -- in invitation and supplication.

To whom? "A disobedient and gainsaying people."

- 1) "Disobedient" means stubborn, rebellious, people who will not comply, who will not be persuaded, who absolutely refuse to obey.
- 2) "Gainsaying" means that they talk back to God and talk against Him.

Again--what evidence of depravity! Why waste time with people like this? Does God stretch forth His hands in vain? What is God's hope of reaching any in Israel?

Read Isaiah 65:1-9 and you will see, esp. vv. 8, 9, where you have these words,

Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all. And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and myservants shall dwell there.

This is what Paul was talking about in Romans 11:5,
Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

and Paul
Isaiah were not speaking of the elect nation, but of an elect within in the nation. They are the ones to whom God extends His hand, and they are the ones who, like the chosen ones among the Gentiles, will be saved!

Concl: As I close, I call any of you who have not received Christ to repent and to believe in Him. By the authority of God I command you to repent. Your only hope for salvation is in Jesus Christ and His blood which was shed on the Cross. To refuse to believe is to disobey God and to bring upon yourself even greater judgment.

And, as I speak to you, I trust that God is speaking through me to you. Faith will come to you as you hear God's word, enlightening your heart and compelling you to believe.

HAS GOD TOTALLY REJECTED ISRAEL?
Romans 11:1-10

Intro: Today we come to the last of those three great chapters which are found in the heart of Paul's Epistle to the Romans: chapters 9, 10, and 11.

Up through chapter 8 Paul was concerned about the message of the Gospel. There we saw conclusive proof of man's condemnation. And then Paul followed that up with those great discourses on justification, sanctification, and glorification. All of those 8 chapters have to do with the content of the Gospel--what the Gospel is!

But when he got to chapter 9 he turned to the ministry of the Gospel. In these chapters he showed, on the one hand, his great burden for the people of Israel, but, on the other hand, he showed that the Gentiles were to hear the Gospel, too--and that Gentiles were to be saved!

In addition, in these chapters, Paul shows that God's work among both Jews and Gentiles must be understood in the light of the doctrine of election. He has clearly shown that salvation is for both Jews and Gentiles, but not for all Jews and Gentiles. The Gospel is to be preached to all, and all are to be exhorted to believe in Christ, but the ultimate outcome of the preaching of the Word of God rests in the hands of our sovereign God!

Think of all of this in the light of the theme of the Epistle: Romans 1:16, 17. Actually the statement of those verses also includes Romans 1:14, 15 which speak of the ministry of the Gospel. IT IS CONCERNING BOTH THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL AND THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL THAT PAUL SAYS, "I AM NOT ASHAMED . . ." HE WAS "NOT ASHAMED" EITHER OF ITS MESSAGE OR OF THE WAY IN WHICH GOD HAD DETERMINED TO USE THE GOSPEL. By the time we get to the 11th chapter we can see that this means that Paul was "not ashamed" of the great Biblical doctrine of election!

Let us not be ashamed of it either! It is clearly taught in the Word of God. It is impossible to understand what God is doing in the world today unless we understand this truth. And this goes for the work of God throughout human history. In eternity past God chose those who were to be saved--a countless throng which no man can number. Throughout time by the preaching of the Gospel He has been calling those people to Himself--and that is exactly what He is doing today!

But now let us look at Romans 11. What is the situation here?

Well, it seems that Paul had proved so conclusively two things that he needed to clear up one point which could have been a question in the minds of his readers. He had shown not only that

the Gospel was for the Gentiles, but he had shown how the Jews had misinterpreted the Gospel instead, and had sought righteousness, not through the Gospel, but by their own works as they tried to obey the Law. This led Paul to raise and answer another question.

I. THE QUESTION.

See it in Romans 11:1a. (Read.) It means, Has God pushed His people away from Himself, has He rejected them, has He now refused to have any further dealings with them?

This, in turn, means, Has God turned to the Gentiles so completely because of Israel's disobedience that it is no longer in the plan of God for Jews to be saved?

It appears that this is what Paul might have been teaching.

II. THE ANSWER.

In his characteristic style, Paul does not keep us waiting long for his answer. Right away he said, "God forbid." He was appalled at the thought. The expression means, Let it not be! Or, May it never be! Perish the thought!

And then Paul proceeded (which was also characteristic of him) to give some reasons for his answer.

III. THE REASONS FOR HIS ANSWER, or THE PROOF.

We have this in the remainder of our text--from v. 1b to v. 10.

Here is the first proof:

A. The fact that Paul was saved (Rom. 11:1b). (Read.)

There was no question about the nationality of Paul. He was a real Jew!

If God had rejected all of the nation, then he would never have been saved! But he was saved. Thus all Israel could not have been rejected.

It will usually help us to understand the ways of God if we look carefully at what is going on.

We might compare this with Peter's deliverance from prison in Acts 12. The people who had gathered to pray told Rhoda that she was crazy, "but Peter continued knocking . . ." (Acts 12:16a). How would they explain that?

The second reason, or proof:

- B. The purpose of God--which is unchangeable, immutable (Rom. 11:2a).

Do you remember the doctrine of foreknowledge from Rom. 8:29? It means far more than just that God knows things and people ahead of time. This would apply to those who are not saved just as much as it does to those who are saved.

No, God's foreknowledge means that He chose, He elected, He selected, not only Israel, but those who were going to be saved out of the nation.

And God does not change His purposes!

Take a couple of OT verses to prove this:

- 1) 1 Sam. 12:22,

For the Lord will not forsake his people
for his great name's sake: because it hath
pleased the Lord to make you his people.

- 2) Psa. 94:14,

For the Lord will not cast off his people,
neither will he forsake his inheritance.

We do not have a God Who tries one thing, and, if that doesn't work out, will try another thing! God accomplishes what He determined before creation that He would do! After all, He is God! He is sovereign!

But there is a third proof:

- C. A proof from Israel's history (Rom. 11:2b-4).

Things had looked bad for Israel and for the purposes of God before. They looked bad to Elijah, no less! He felt that it was all over. He even brought his accusation against Israel to God in prayer.

Elijah accused Israel of:

- 1) Killing the prophets -- which meant that they rejected the Word of God.
- 2) Digging down the altars -- which meant that they had turned to other gods.
- 3) Wanting to kill him. And he felt that he was the only prophet left!

But what was "the answer of God," or, the divine response? Listen to it:

I have reserved to myself seven thousand men,
who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal
(v. 4b).

What does this mean? It means that we must always distinguish between the apparent situation and the real situation.

That was true in Paul's day, and it is true today, too! Things can look very bad, even hopeless, but God is always at work! Note very carefully, "I have reserved to myself . . ."

Do you think that we are the only ones who believe in the sovereignty of God, in the doctrines of grace, in the truth of election? Of course not! The people who hold to these truths keep popping up everywhere!

But there is still another proof.

D. The proof of divine reasoning (Rom. 11:5, 6).

Since Saul of Tarsus was saved, and since God's purposes do not change, and since God did not push Israel away in the past when He could have, then we may conclude that

Even so at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.
And if it be by grace . . .

The "remnant" is the elect--in this case, an elect in Israel! There has always be the "remnant," the elect, and there still is today--in 1983! "God" has NOT "cast away his people," the elect of Israel!

This all brings us to

IV. THE CONCLUSION (Rom. 11:7-10).

We see this in the question, "What then?"

Two things can be said:

- 1) "Israel" as a nation "hath not obtained that which he seeketh for," that is, righteousness.
- 2) "But the election hath obtained it," i.e., righteousness.

And so what has happened to the rest of the nation, those who have "not obtained" righteousness?

They "were blinded," or, hardened. They are like a huge callus had grown over their eyes and their ears and their hearts!

Who did it to them? See verses 8, 9, and 10, and note that it is "God" Who has done it. And both Isaiah and David are

Paul's authorities for what he says here. Paul was citing such passages as Isa. 29:9-14; 6:9, 10. He may also have had Deut. 29:2-4 in mind, in which case Moses also became one of Paul's authorities. In vv. 9, 10 Paul was quoting David's words in Psa. 69:22, 23.

When David said, "Let their table be made . . . ," he meant that God should make them eat, or experience:

- 1) "A snare" -- a sudden loss, destruction.
- 2) "A trap" -- meaning that they should be hunted and destroyed.
- 3) "A stumblingblock" -- that which they would fall over to their eternal destruction.
- 4) "A recompence" -- that which they had coming to them.
- 5) "Let their eyes be darkened" -- so they could never see again.
- 6) "And bow down their back alway" -- what Hodge calls the "decrepitude of old age" (p. 358).

This all means that Moses and David and Isaiah all concurred that what God was doing was right!

Anyone who is shocked at the doctrine of election needs to ponder these verses very carefully.

V. THE LESSONS.

Two truths stand out in this passage:

- 1) The sovereignty of God. Note "God" or references to God in vv. 1, 2, 4 (2x), and 8.
- 2) But it is especially the sovereignty of God toward His elect people, and particularly toward Israel, even though we see His sovereignty over all people, elect and non-elect alike!

We are to learn:

- A. That there is an elect people in every generation (v. 6).
- B. That God never changes His mind about His elect people (v. 2a).
- C. That the elect will most certainly be saved (v. 7), and this, regardless of how the Gospel may be corrupted by the masses.
- D. That it cannot be a matter of pride that one is elect because the choice was made by God according to grace (vv. 5, 6).
- E. That it cannot be a matter of pride, either, that the elect are not guilty of sins which others have committed (v. 4).

Matthew Henry wrote on this point, "If he (God) had left them to themselves, they had gone down the stream with the rest" (VI, 445, 446).

Finally,

F. That God is always doing more than we can see (v. 4).

Concl: But there is also a solemn warning to all people here regarding the treatment that is given to the Gospel. Those who persist in denying that salvation is wholly by grace, and who seek to attain it by works, are destined to face the wrath of God Who will harden them so that they can never be saved.

Listen to the exhortation that the Holy Spirit has given us in the book of Hebrews, chapter 3, verses 7 through 11. We "harden" our hearts when we refuse to believe that salvation is all of God -- "by grace through faith" in our Lord Jesus Christ! Cf. Eph. 2:8, 9.

Come to Christ today. Delay no longer. There is no other way of salvation. Believe in Him and you shall be saved!

THE FALL AND FULNESS OF ISRAEL
Romans 11:11-16

Intro: At the end of chapter 11 we have one of Paul's many doxologies! See it in verses 33 through 36. It begins with this:

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!

As Paul went through the content of the Gospel in chapters 1 through 8, and then wrote about the ministry of the Gospel in chapters 9 through 11, his heart was very obviously overwhelmed with God--with God's wisdom, His knowledge, His judgments, and His ways! We can understand why he was overwhelmed as we learn more about the marvelous outworking of God's plan for the salvation of men.

Two things are very apparent:

- 1) If the salvation of the Jews had been dependent upon the Jews, it would have failed, and failed miserably!
- 2) Also--if the salvation of the Gentiles had been dependent upon the Gentiles, it, too, would have failed!

It did not fail, and will not fail, because the divine plan of salvation for Jews and Gentiles is dependent upon God alone.

But there is another problem here in chapter 11--and we are involved with this in our text for today.

The Jews were fearful about the salvation of the Gentiles because of what it would mean to them, the Jews. On the other hand, there seems to have been some apprehension among the Gentiles as to what would happen to them if God ever turned to the Jews again.

There seems to be the fear in all of our hearts, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, that, if God blesses someone else, it is going to mean a loss of blessing for us.

And this fear is always intensified if we feel that we have done something to forfeit the blessing of God. This is where we are in our text. Notice that again Paul introduced a question.

I. PAUL'S QUESTION (Rom. 11:11a).

(Read it.) What is the difference between the question in verse 1 and the question here?

Many are inclined to distinguish between them by saying that in verse 1 Paul was asking if God's rejection of Israel at the present time were total, and that verse 11 has to do with whether or not it were final.

But that does not seem to be right. If Paul were going to

ask two such questions, it seems that they would be in the opposite order--is it final first, and then is it total.

Besides, such an interpretation does not seem to fit the questions when you begin to compare them with each other.

Let me suggest another possibility.

The question in verse 1 seems to ask if God has taken action against them. The question here in verse 11 seems to ask if the Jews themselves had ruined things!

After all, there seems to be a very real reason for asking such a question when we consider the cases of Esau in the Old Testament, and Judas in the New Testament--plus many others.

Even today you will hear such an idea about salvation when someone quotes the words of the Lord Jesus when He said about His sheep, " . . . neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand," and then, " . . . no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:28b, 29b). They will quickly follow the quotation by saying, "No, God will not let us go, but we can take ourselves out of the hands of God!"

That seems to be the idea here in the first part of Romans 11:11. Is man capable to ruining the plans and purposes of God by his own rebellion and sin? The treatment which our Lord had received at the hands of the Jews certainly would deserve such treatment from God.

What is the answer? "God forbid." Let it not be! Perish the thought. Again, as previously, Paul was astounded that such a question would be asked. No man can nullify the purposes of God. You may see that in some cases, but that does not mean that God's purposes have been frustrated. When men are turned away because of their sin it is simply a confirmation of God's purpose for that particular person.

But let us notice how Paul handled this question. We can call them . . .

II. PAUL'S ASSURANCES (Rom. 11:11b, 12).

First of all he gave a word of assurance for the Jews, and then in verse 12 he followed this with a word of assurance for the Gentiles.

A. For the Jews (Rom. 11:11b).

Remember, now, that we are talking about those whom God

has appointed for salvation both among the Jews as well as among the Gentiles.

In Paul's answer in both of these verses (11, 12) we see evidence of the way God sovereignly overrules things even when man sins so that His own gracious purposes are accomplished.

Paul's assurances to the Jews go along three lines:

1. The sins of people cannot nullify God's purposes.
2. Through the "fall" of the Jews, God is accomplishing another purpose: the salvation of the Gentiles.
3. God will also use the salvation of the Gentiles to bring the Jews back.

This is what Paul meant by the statement, " . . . to provoke them to jealousy."

You see, if you do not believe in the sovereign, overruling hand of God--that God is greater than even the sins of men--then you will always be in trouble as far as your thinking is concerned.

See from verse 11 how amazingly God accomplishes His own plan.

But now this brought consternation to the Gentiles. What would happen to them if God turned back to the Jews? And so now we find a word of assurance for the Gentiles.

B. For the Gentiles (Rom. 11:12).

Instead of the blessing of God upon Jews meaning that the elect among the Gentiles would be lost, it will only mean greater blessing!

"Dimⁿⁱishing" means their loss, or their being removed from the chief place that they once had. "Riches" points to the blessings of salvation. "Their fulness" means:

- 1) The completion of God's purposes for Israel.
- 2) The salvation, or filling up, of the elect number of Jews whom God intended to save.

So, instead of fearing God's blessing upon the Jews, the Gentiles had every reason to pray for it, and to seek it. Remember that Old Testament word in Psalm 122:6,

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.

Do you see how the blessing of God upon others should affect us?

- 1) It should make us desire God's blessing, too.
- 2) It should make us expect God's blessing to increase in our own lives. If "one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12:26b).

Now let us look at the four remaining verses in our text-- verses 13 through 16. Here we see what Paul had to say about his ministry.

III. PAUL'S MINISTRY (Rom. 11:13-16).

Needless to say, a reading of these verses shows how excited he was to be doing what he was doing. He magnified his "office," his place of service to other for three reasons:

A. Its immeasurable extent (Rom. 11:13, 14).

He had been called by God to go to the Gentiles, but the result of his ministry to the Gentiles was that "some" Jews would be saved, too. How many? No one could possibly predict. That was in the hands of God.

Here even we can be led to expect that the overflow of blessing in what God has given us to do will be far greater than we ever would have thought.

Cf. Joseph in the book of Genesis. Or Ruth. Or David. Or the little boy who gave his lunch to Andrew. There are many illustrations.

B. The prospect (Rom. 11:15).

Paul expressed it here with the words, "life from the dead."

Not only could Paul expect great things in his day, but he knew that this was leading to even greater things as far as the whole world was concerned!

Listen to what Charles Hodge wrote about this: "Life from the dead,"

That is, it will be a most glorious event; as though a new world had arisen, not only glorious in itself, but in the highest degree beneficial to the Gentiles. . . . The conversion of the Jews will be attended with the most glorious consequences for the whole world (Romans, p. 365).

When will this be?

It will be when the Lord comes again! Look at the

description in Isaiah 11, especially in verse 9:

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

"The earth" has never seen a time like this, but it is coming! What a glorious day is coming, leading indeed to the "new heavens and a new earth." Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3:13,

Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

The Church will not bring it in. Neither will Israel. But God will; Christ will!

But there is one other point having to do with Paul's ministry:

C. Its certainty (Rom. 11:16).

How could Paul make such statements, and give such glowing words of assurance, when things were like they were at that time among the Gentiles as well as the Jews? What, or who, was it all based upon?

Many interpret this verse to indicate that "the first-fruit" and "the root" refer to the patriarchs of Israel, or to all who in Old Testament times turned to the Lord among the people of Israel.

But that does not seem to fit the imagery that Paul used in this chapter. See the word, "root," in verses 17 and 18.

It is true that believers are called "firstfruits" in passages like Romans 16:5; James 1:18; Revelation 14:4. It meant that they were the first, with more to come!

But the important thing is to realize that both of these expressions are used of Christ!

1) "Root":

Isaiah 11:10, And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious, or, glory shall be his resting place.

2) "Firstfruit":

1 Corinthians 15:20-23, esp. verses 20 and 23. (Read.)

HE is the foundation upon which all of the purposes of God rest. Since he is "holy," that is, fully acceptable

to God, is it not our relationship to Him which makes us "holy" too--saved, clean, acceptable to God?

Does not God put His elect into Christ? And is this not for individuals, "life from the dead," since HE is "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25)?

The Jews sin has been their rejection of Christ; their only hope is to return to Him, which they will finally do according to Zechariah 12:10,

And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

So our hope for the future is not in what God has done in the lives of His people in the past, but in CHRIST!

Concl: Is it any wonder that Paul was excited and full of confidence?

And notice all of the ways in which he spoke of salvation in these verses:

- 1) "Salvation" (v. 11).
- 2) "Riches" (v. 12).
- 3) "Save" (v. 14).
- 4) "Reconciling" (v. 15).
- 5) "Life from the dead" (v. 15).
- 6) "Holy" (v. 16).

What a ministry we have to the whole world--the world of Jews and Gentiles! Let us magnify and glory in our ministry, too. Works do not produce such blessings; they are only to be found in CHRIST.

THE GOODNESS AND SEVERITY OF GOD
Romans 11:17-24

Intro: In the sixteenth verse of Romans 11 (which we considered last Sunday), the Apostle Paul introduced two illustrations--the illustration of a harvest, and that of a tree with its branches. In the passage which follows, our text for this service, he followed through on the tree illustration. In fact, he spoke of two trees, two olive trees, a good tree and a wild tree!

In speaking of these trees he referred to branches on the good tree which were broken off, and then of branches from the wild tree which were grafted into the good tree. The branches obviously represent people. The main point of the passage is that Paul was speaking to the branches of the wild olive tree, warning them not to be proud, or they might be cut off and the original branches be grafted in to their own tree.

What does all of this mean? The context gives us some help.

Paul was speaking of two main groups: Israel, and the Gentiles. He had been speaking of them as they are related to the purpose of God in salvation. The good tree, with its root, Christ, represents that purpose of salvation, with Israelites pictured as the original branches.

The death of Christ marked the climax of 1500 years in which Israel had rebelled against God, against His prophets, and, finally, against His Christ. Consequently "some" (v. 17) of them were "broken off." A new work had started among the Gentiles. They, being branches of the wild tree, were grafted into the good tree. That is the way things stood as Paul wrote this Epistle, and that is the way things stand today.

Are we to interpret this as meaning that it is possible for a person, once saved, to lose his salvation? Obviously not. The Word of God does not teach that. In fact, Paul has taught just exactly the opposite in this Epistle. Cf. Romans 8.

What we do have here is a portrayal of the work of God as it appears in the world to men! The statement that we need to go back to is the one we had in the latter part of Romans 9:6, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." This means that in relation to the work of God in the Old Testament, and in the Gospels, we would be making a serious mistake to think that every Jew was a true child of God. They claimed to be. And they were thought to be, by themselves as well as by the Gentile world. But not all of them were!

Today we have a similar situation with the Gentiles, although it is not as all-inclusive as it formerly was with the Jews.

But we can say this: Not every person who claims to be a Christian, is a Christian. Or we could say, Not every person who claims to be in the church, is in the church. God is now dealing with the Gentiles world as He had not done before, but the same thing could happen to them which happened to the Jews and the Jews could be grafted in again.

So we are not dealing here just with those who are truly saved, but with the purpose of God as it applied to the Jews and then to the Gentiles at different times.

So Paul was writing here to the Gentiles to whom God had turned in His dealings, many of whom professed to have turned to the Lord, but Paul writes on a sober note, warning them of what could happen to them, too.

Let us examine the text. We have three points:

- 1) A WARNING TO THE GENTILES, in vv. 17-21.
- 2) AN EXHORTATION FOR THE GENTILES, in v. 22.
- 3) INSTRUCTION ABOUT THE JEWS, in vv. 23, 24.

I. A WARNING TO THE GENTILES (Rom. 11:17-21).

One writer has this to say about the two trees, the good olive tree and the wild olive tree. First, about the good tree:

. . . one of the most durable, productive,
and valuable of the productions of the earth
(Hodge, p. 368)

Then he says that the wild olive tree was used to represent the Gentiles because it was

one of the most worthless of trees, to express
the degradation of their state, considered as
estranged from God.

So what we have here is a picture of grace--the Gentiles grafted into the good olive tree to partake of "the root and fatness of the olive tree," that is, of the good tree! Here, at least, is the possibility that they might benefit from the rich and abundant spiritual blessings that are to be derived from Christ!

This is where the warning comes in, in vv. 18-21. See it at the beginning of v. 18, and again at the end of v. 20. How God hates human pride! And it is further evidence of the corruption of our nature, whether we are Jews or Gentiles, to see how this is evident even when we are considering our relationship to God! We are always inclined to feel that God has seen something special in us, and that that is why He has been so good to us! The Gentiles were inclined to feel that God had turned to them because they were better than the Jews.

What does it mean to "boast"?

It means to ridicule. It means that you feel that the root is benefiting from you, instead of, as is actually the case, you are benefiting from the root, from Christ!

What does it mean to "be . . . highminded"?

It means that they were not to lay claim to special honors. They were not to be conceited, to think that everyone else was looking at them with honor. It means that they were not to think that the Jews should pity themselves because they were not Gentiles.

What does it mean to "fear"?

This is the only positive command given to the Gentiles.

It means that they were to "fear" GOD! They were to thank God for what He had done for them. They were to worship HIM! They were to see that they were the recipients of pure grace, and that they could suffer the same cutting off which the Jews had experienced if they did not humble themselves and give all of the glory to God.

Let us take these warnings to heart. If you have these feelings of pride and of self-satisfaction in your heart, it could well mean that you are deceived about your own relationship with God!

But let us go on to . . .

II. THE EXHORTATION FOR THE GENTILES (Rom. 11:22).

What did the Gentiles need to do?

They needed to get their eyes off of themselves, and off of the Jews, and on to GOD!

What did they need to learn about God?

First, about His "goodness."

One authority on the Greek language says that this means, The very kindness (. . . the kindly quality) of God is trying to lead . . . thee to a right-about face, a change of mind and attitude . . . instead of a complacent self-satisfaction and pride of race and privilege (Robertson on Rom. 2:4, IV, p. 335).

Cf. the word in Romans 2:4.

What about "severity"?

This means that there are times when God can be very abrupt. when HE cuts men off, as Thayer says (p. 69), "precipitous like a cliff."

God is good, and "GOD is love" (1 John 4:8, 16), but God is also severe at times.

Cf. Proverbs 6:12-15,

- 12 A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth.
- 13 He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers;
- 14 Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord.
- 15 Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy.

Note also Proverbs 29:1,

He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

Be sure that you notice the words "suddenly" and "without remedy"!

God had been severe to Israel, good to the Gentiles. But he could be severe to the Gentiles too if they did not continue in His goodness.

Paul was not only teaching depravity in this passage, but here he was teaching perseverance. Perseverance is not only a necessity; it is an evidence of true faith.

Look at the ministry in the early church. Cf. Acts 11:23; 13:43; 14:22. Notice also what Paul wrote in Colossians 1:21-23.

What does it mean to continue? Does it mean just going to church on Sunday morning? It means that, but not "just" that. It means that you are seeking the Lord every day in the week. It means that you are looking to Him for guidance and strength every day. It means that you are living for His glory. And it does mean that you seek the fellowship of the Lord's people daily if possible. One of the misconceptions that people have today is that they can get enough fellowship with the Lord's people by only being with them once a week, and sometimes not even that often.

Being a Christian is not a one-day-a-week business; it is a life--twenty-four hours of every day!

If there is not this perseverance in your life, perhaps you need to take a good look into your heart!

The last point that we have in our text is a hopeful word of

III. INSTRUCTION ABOUT THE JEWS (Rom. 11:23, 24).

Here Paul again directs their attention to GOD. " . . .
God is able . . ."

What God can do He will do? He is going to deal with Israel again! And, it is far more likely that He would turn back to Israel than it was that He would ever have opened the door of salvation to the Gentiles. The Jews are "the natural branches."

Concl: From all of this, what should we learn in addition to the lessons that we have already seen?

First, we need to be amazed at the grace of God, that it would ever have been extended to us, the Gentiles, who are branches of the wild, worthless, olive tree.

Secondly, we need to see the ever-present danger, the disastrous consequences, of pride.

We all need to be reading the book of Proverbs continually. Cf. Prov. 11:2,

When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.

See Prov. 13:10,

Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.

Or, Prov. 16:18,

Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Finally, our text brings out several needs which we all have. I do not have time to deal with them, but I do want to mention them:

- 1) The need for faith.
- 2) The need for humility.
- 3) The need for godly fear. Cf. Heb. 12:28, 29.
- 4) The need to understand that there are two contrasting parts to the nature of God: His goodness and His severity.
- 5) The need to persevere, to continue, or, in the words of our Lord in John 15, the need to "abide."
- 6) The need to hope for those who seem to have been cut off. We need to exhort them to believe.

WHAT IS AHEAD FOR ISRAEL?

Romans 11:25-32

Intro: Last year at Easter time we were just beginning the study of the book of Romans in our morning service. At that time I broke into the schedule of going through the book verse by verse to speak on the resurrection of Christ in the book of Romans. This year I decided to continue on with our consideration of this great Epistle. For those of you who are visiting with us, this will give you an opportunity to see what we are doing each week.

We believe that the Lord has called His Church to preach His Word, the Bible. We believe that He wants us to teach all of it, and to teach it book by book, chapter by chapter, and verse by verse. We believe that this is what He blesses.

We also believe that, when the Word of God is taught, the people of God will learn that the work of God is God-centered, not man-centered. We believe that the Lord is sovereignly accomplishing His purposes in the world. We believe that He works through His Word, that it is through hearing of Jesus Christ and His redemptive work on the Cross that lives are changed through the forgiveness of sins. Our Lord made it very clear when He was here on earth that all of the Scriptures speak of Him. He is them of the Bible. And so it is very difficult to go very far in the teaching of Scripture without coming to the subject that is being proclaimed throughout the world today: the death and the resurrection of Christ. You will see that we have it in the verses of Romans 11 that we are considering today in this service.

What have we learned from Romans this past year?

We have learned that, in this Epistle, the Apostle Paul who wrote it, has given us the most complete teaching about salvation that is to be found in all of Scripture.

Coming as far as the 11th chapter, we have also learned that Paul has done two things, thus far. He has explained for us the content of the Gospel in the first 8 chapters. Secondly, in chapters 9-11 he has discussed the ministry of the Gospel. Let me explain what I mean by that.

Before Christ came, and even while He was here on earth, His work, the work of God, was primarily with the people of Israel. But after Christ died, was raised again, and went back to the Father, a remarkable change took place: the Gospel began to go to the Gentiles of the whole world as it had never gone before. And this was according to God's plan. See Acts 1:8 and Romans 1:16, 17.

This had raised one very important question which Paul had to

deal with. It was this: Is God through with the Jew? Has the door of salvation been closed to the Jew?

The answer is: No, He is not through with the Jew. Even now some Jews are being saved, but the day is coming when there will be a mighty movement of God among the people of Israel.

That is where we have come in our text for today. Paul is really summarizing what he had been saying throughout these 3 chapters, 9-11, and so this is a good place for you to see what his message has been.

So, the first thing that we need to note in verse 25 is . . .

I. ISRAEL'S PRESENT CONDITION (Rom. 11:25).

Here it is: " . . . blindness in part is happened to Israel."

Before we see what this means, notice that Paul calls this a "mystery." What did he mean by using this term? Did he mean that there is something very mysterious about what is going on with Israel, something very hard, if not impossible, to figure out?

Well, yes and no!

No, it is not impossible to know because God has stated it right here in the Bible. The word "mystery" means that this is a secret that God has not made known before, but now He has made it known. You will find the word used a number of times in the NT and it always has this idea--a secret which God has revealed.

Cf. Ephesians 3:3, 5.

But, yes, it is difficult to understand, it is impossible to understand, unless God sees fit to reveal to us what He has revealed in Scripture.

Cf. 1 Cor. 2:7-12.

Therefore, as I speak today, remember that you must depend upon the Lord, not upon me, to give you understanding in the Scriptures. He is the One Who, by His Holy Spirit, will give each one of us the ability to comprehend what is before us in this passage of Scripture.

But what does this mean, " . . . blindness in part is happened to Israel"?

It means that God has deliberately withheld from most of the people of Israel the ability to understand the Word of God.

They may be a brilliant people in many other ways, but not where the Scriptures are concerned. Here they are blind! They are mentally dull, incapable of understanding the truth of God concerning salvation. This applies to the nation generally.

But now notice the word, "in part."

This means that there will be some Jews even today who will come to the knowledge of Christ and of salvation. Most of the Jews have been judicially blinded by God, but not all of them. So here and there you do find that God is opening the truth of salvation to certain Jews, but there is by no means any mass movement of salvation among the Jews, nor will there be at the present time.

But, is this condition going to be permanent? Let us see what our text has to say about

II. ISRAEL'S FUTURE (Rom. 11:25, 26a).

There is a time limit which God has set upon this present condition of Israel. Listen to it: ". . . until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved."

This also requires some explanation. As I speak, pray that the Lord will enable you to understand.

"The fulness of the Gentiles" means two things:

- 1) It speaks of the time when the full number of Gentiles whom God intends to save, will be saved--not just a particular number known only to God, but particular people whom God has appointed for salvation.

In other words, God is not working haphazardly (as most people think), but God is working according to His own eternal plan.

And so this term also means a second thing:

- 2) It means that God's present purpose for this present, special, world-wide ministry to the Gentiles will be fulfilled.

What will happen then?

Look at verse 26. "And so all Israel shall be saved . . ."

Does this mean that every Jew at that time will recognize and accept Christ as his Saviour? No. We learned in Romans 9:6 that when God speaks of Israel He has in mind, as is the case with the Gentiles, certain ones within the nation--His elect people. All of them will be saved, and it will mean a mighty turning to the Lord.

But when will this happen?

Look at our text again--at verse 26: " . . . as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob"--which is a quotation from Isaiah 59:20, 21.

"The Deliverer" is Jesus Christ. When Paul wrote these words, Christ had already come the first time. Therefore, it has to refer to His second coming!

So the greatest time of salvation for Israel is yet ahead. The Jews do have a future in the plan and purpose of God, a glorious future.

But how can we be sure? At this point the Apostle Paul gave

III. A FOURFOLD GUARANTEE (Rom. 11:26-32).

And the first is . . .

A. From Old Testament Scripture (Rom. 11:26, 27).

This is a combination of Isaiah 59:20, 21 and Isaiah 27:9.

Note the words, "as it is written." This means, It stands written. It means that the Word of God cannot be broken. This is God's "covenant," His promised agreement, with His people.

God stands behind His Word. Be sure of that! Unfulfilled Scripture is so certain that you can consider it fulfilled.

Secondly,

B. From divine election (Rom. 11:28).

C. From God's immutability (Rom. 11:29).

This means that God not does change, nor does He change His mind.

"The gifts" are the blessings He bestows when a person is saved. Salvation is a gift. Cf. Eph. 2:8, 9. See also Rom. 9:4, 5 as it applies to Israel.

"The calling" speak of the way people are drawn to Christ. They are called, and, when they are called, they come.

But all of this is "without repentance," that is, God will not change His mind. He is not even sorry about

what He planned long ago to do. If He had to do it over, He would do the same thing again. He would not take back any blessing already given, nor would He fail to give any gift in the future which He had planned to give. And this, in spite of the fact that both Jews and Gentiles are totally unworthy of the salvation of God. This is what it means that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

But there is one other part to the GUARANTEE.

D. From God's mercy (Rom. 11:30-32).

Verse 30 has to do with the Gentiles.

Verse 31 has to do with the Jews.

God has an unchangeable purpose for both. It has to be by mercy because neither deserves it, neither wants it, neither knows that he needs it!

To add to the difficulty we have the statement of verse 32. "Concluded" means

to shut up on all sides, . . . to deliver one up to the power of a person or thing that he is completely shut in, as it were, without means of escape (Thayer, p. 593).

Another writer has said,

. . . this is the nearest approach made in the N. T. to putting the sin of man into a direct and positive relation to the act and purpose of God (Denney in the Expos. Gk. Test., II, 685).

This simply means that one reason people are not being saved is because God has imprisoned men in their unbelief and disobedience.

This word "concluded" is used in Luke 5:6 of the disciples enclosing "a great multitude of fishes" in their nets. God has imprisoned men in their sin, and they will not get out until He lets them out.

Still another writer has said,

In brief, God is the judge; the law is the law of God; the sentence denounced is condemnation from God; the curse inflicted is the curse of God; the wrath wherewith men are punished is the wrath of God; he that finds a ransom is God: and therefore it is properly and strictly he to whom sinners are prisoners and captives (Owen, Vol. 12, p. 516).

But this is where we come to the good part. This is

where we learn that all is not hopeless. This is where the message of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ becomes so extremely important. God has shut us up in our sins until we recognize Him who is called in verse 26, "the Deliverer"!

Who is He?

He is Jesus Christ. It is He Who died on the Cross 2,000 years to set sinners free--free from the power and from the penalty of their sins. It is He Who was raised again as evidence that His work was finished, and that God had accepted what He had done. He is the living Saviour and Redeemer. He continues to set men free. Apart from Him all men are hopelessly bound and in bondage to sin and to all of its consequences in time and for eternity.

Concl: Is your faith in Him? Are you trusting in His sacrificial death on the Cross for your salvation? Do you believe that what He did on the Cross was what God required to free you, and that that was all that was required? Throw away your good ideas about yourself. They are not true. Throw away the good works you have been doing to please God. They are worthless. Come to God today with your faith in Christ. He is "the Deliverer." Without Him you will continue to be held in the prisonhouse of sin, and God will not give you deliverance until you come to Christ.

Is it any wonder that Paul concluded this section with a doxology? We will consider it in detail, the Lord willing, next Sunday, but let me read it for you as I close. (Read Rom. 11:33-36.)

THE GLORY OF OUR GREAT GOD
Romans 11:33-36

Intro: In these verses we see the effect of the truth of salvation upon the heart of the Apostle Paul. Several things stand out:

- 1) How glorious this salvation is.
- 2) How incomprehensible God is in His wisdom and His ways.
- 3) The fact that salvation is all of God.
- 4) That the people of God have no other choice except to praise and adore and worship our great God.

Back in 1864, on the 29th of May, almost 119 years ago, Charles Haddon Spurgeon was preaching on the last verse of our text, verse 36, and this is what he had to say. It applies to all four of these verses:

My text consists almost entirely of monosyllables, but it contains the loftiest of sublimities. Such a tremendous weight of meaning is concentrated here, that an archangel's eloquence would fail to convey its teaching in all its glory to any finite minds, even if seaphs were his hearers. I will affirm that there is no man living who can preach from my text a sermon worthy of it; nay, that among all the sacred orators and the eloquent pleaders for God, there never did live and never will live, a man capable of reaching the height of the great argument contained in these few simple words. I utterly despair of success, and will not therefore make an attempt to work out the infinite glory of this sentence. Our great God alone can expound this verse, for he only knows himself, and he only can worthily set forth his own perfections. Yet I am comforted by this reflection that, may be, in answer to our prayers, God himself may preach from this text this morning in our hearts; if not through the words of the speaker, yet by that still small voice to which the believer's ear is so well accustomed. If thus he shall condescend to favour us, our hearts shall be lifted up in his ways (Vol. 10, p. 301).

If this were true of one verse, what would Spurgeon have said about these four verses? His comments would have had to be four times stronger!

What do we have here?

I want to consider these verses with you under four headings:

- I. Paul's Delight -- in verse 33.
- II. Paul's Demonstration, i.e., by which I mean, how he proved what he said in verse 33. This is found in verses 34, 35.

III. Paul's Doctrine -- in the first part of verse 36.

IV. Paul's Devotion -- in the latter part of verse 37.

These last two points I have borrowed from Spurgeon because they were the divisions he made when he preached on Romans 11:36.

I. PAUL'S DELIGHT (Rom. 11:33).

There is a great deal of support among those who have studied the Greek text of this verse to translate it this way,

O the depth of the riches, and of the wisdom, and of the knowledge of God . . .

thus making three things, not just two, which filled the Apostle with amazement and joy as he contemplated their "inexhaustible abundance" (Thayer, p. 92).

Paul meant that there was such an immense amount of the riches of God and the wisdom of God and the knowledge of God that it was impossible to measure it all.

What did he have in mind by these three words, and how are they related to the latter part of the verse, " . . . how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out"?

By "the riches" he must have been referring to what he said back in Romans 2:4,

Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

These are the riches of God's goodness, His grace, His mercy, in dealing with guilty, hell-deserving sinners!

In distinguishing between "wisdom" and "knowledge" I have plenty of authority for saying that:

- 1) "Wisdom" has to do with the formation of the redemptive plan,
- 2) "Knowledge" has to do with the details as to how that plan was to be carried out!

The same distinction can be made in the latter part of the verse where we have the words "judgments" and "ways":

- 1) "Judgments" has to do with the decisions that God made in planning salvation, that is, how sinners will be saved, what would be included in salvation, and even who would be saved.
- 2) "Ways" points to how He will get it all done.

Perhaps we could liken it to all that goes into the construction of a building, such as the new buildings we have downtown:

- 1) There has to be an architect to draw up the plans in detail.

- 2) There has to be a contractor who will take those plans and build the building.

What Paul is saying here is that God is both the architect of salvation, and the contractor Who is seeing that the work is done according to the plans. God planned salvation. He determined what it would be, who would be saved, how it would be received, how long it would last, and everything else about it. God is the Architect!

But He is also the Contractor Who is seeing to it that the work is done in accordance with the plan.

Paul said two things here about it all:

- 1) It is so great, so amazing, that it can never be measured. God's grace can never be exhausted.
- 2) It is "past finding out." This means that it is impossible to trace the ways of God, to explain them, to comprehend them the way men would like to do.

This means that, if you think you know what God saves this person and does not save that person, you do not know as much as you think you know, because nobody can figure this out!

Charles Hodge once wrote:

We can only wonder and adore. We can never understand. And it is well that it is so. What can be understood must be limited. What is fully comprehended no longer exercises, excites, or enlarges. It is because God is infinite in his being, and incomprehensible in his judgments and in his ways, that he is an inexhaustible source of knowledge and blessedness (Romans, p. 378).

We can see the facts, the details, but we cannot know the reasons behind all that is involved in salvation.

What about the proof of such statements?

II. PAUL'S DEMONSTRATION (Rom. 11:34, 35).

There are two OT passages he referred to here.

- A. In verse 34 he quoted Isaiah 40:13.

He referred to this verse also in 1 Corinthians 2:16.

The same two ideas are here that were repeated in verse 33.

1. "The mind of the Lord" has to do with what God ordained to be done, and the reasons behind them. Who knows the way God thinks, and the reasons

behind what He has done? Who knows, e.g., why He accepted Jacob but rejected Esau? If you think you know, you are only kidding yourself?

2. "Who hath been his counsellor?"

Who told God how to do what He wanted to do?

Did Adam help him? Did Abraham? Did Moses? Did anybody else -- even an angel? NO! God did it all!

Now look at verse 35.

B. In verse 35 he was referring to Job 41:11 -- the words of God Himself.

The point is, Even though God planned it all, and is responsible for seeing that the work is done, was it man who gave God the idea? Did man approach God and request that God doing something about saving men? Or did man do something that made God his debtor so that God owed man salvation? Does man give to God, or does God give to man? Which is it?

We all know the answers to these questions, do we not? God had the idea. God drew up the plans. God is seeing to it that the plans are being carried out! Man had nothing to do with it.

This all leads us to . . .

III. PAUL'S DOCTRINE: "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things" (Rom. 11:36a).

This statement is a study in prepositions: " . . . of . . . through . . . to . . ." The "all things" here in this context means "all things" that have to do with our salvation.

Here is the doctrine of salvation as simply as it can be stated:

- 1) "Of him" means that means that it all originated with Him, not with man, nor with angels. God is the Author, the Source, the only Cause.
- 2) "Through him" means that He is the Instrument by Whom the work of salvation is being accomplished. He may use His servants, but they are helpless and their work is meaningless unless God is using them.
- 3) "To him" means that God is the One for Whom all salvation is being carried out. It is for His glory. Man has no share in that glory.

God is the Author, the Means, and the End.

And I am talking about all of the aspects of salvation:

- 1) Justification.
- 2) Sanctification.
- 3) Glorification.

All of these are " . . . of . . . through . . . and to him."

Hodge expressed it this way:

Here are the doctrines of grace; doctrines on which the pious in all ages and nations have rested their hopes of heaven . . . The leading principle of all is, that God is the source of all good; that in fallen man there is neither merit nor ability; that salvation, consequently, is all of grace, as well sanctification as pardon, as well election as eternal glory (p. 380). It is the tendency of all truth to exalt God, and to humble the creature; and it is the characteristic of true piety to feel that all good comes from God, and to desire that all glory should be given to God (p. 381).

I wish all of you could read Spurgeon's sermon on this verse. Among other things that he said about these three prepositions was that they

- 1) Show the absolute and total depravity of man.
- 2) Demonstrate the necessity for the grace of God--efficacious, effectual, irresistible. And he pointed out that it had to be God Who called man, and that God's call was absolutely the only reason that man would come to God.

But then he had this to say about

- 3) Particular redemption, which he also felt was implied in these verses.

Some insist upon it that men are redeemed not because Christ died, but because they are willing to give efficacy to the blood of Christ. He died for everybody according to their theory. Why, then, are not all men saved? Because all men will not believe? That is to say that believing is necessary in order to make the blood of Christ efficacious for redemption. Now we hold that to be a great lie. We believe the very contrary, namely, that the blood of Christ has in itself the power to redeem, and that it does redeem, and that faith does not give efficacy to the blood, but is only the proof that the blood has redeemed that man. Hence we hold that Christ did not redeem every man, but only redeemed those men who will ultimately attain unto eternal life. We do not believe that he redeemed the damned; we do not believe that he poured out his life blood for souls already in hell. We never can imagine that Christ suffered in the room and stead of all men, and that then afterwards these same men have to

suffer for themselves, that in fact Christ pays their debts, and then God makes them pay their debts over again. We think that the doctrine that men by their wills give efficacy to the blood of Christ is derogatory to the Lord Jesus, and we rather hold to this that he laid down his life for his sheep, and that his laying down his life for the sheep involved and secured the salvation of every one of them. We believe this because we hold that "of him, and through him, and to him are all things (Vol. 10, p. 309).

Do you begin to see how much is involved in these 12 words?
 "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things."

What remains?

IV. PAUL'S DEVOTION (Rom. 11:36b): "To whom," to God, be glory for ever. Amen."

Or to translate it literally, Unto Him the glory unto the ages. Amen.

"Praise God from Whom all blessings flow."

The praise for all that has to do with our salvation belongs to God--its blueprint, its execution, and its outcome! And we need to praise Him constantly, vocally, publicly, individually, corporately, and eternally!

To take any credit to yourself for your willingness to be saved, for your ability to believe or to repent, is to rob God of glory which belongs only to Him.

Concl: But is there any other help that we get from this passage.

Sanday and Headlam point this out:

We may notice that this description of the Divine wisdom represents not so much the conclusion of the argument as the assumption that underlies it. It is because we believe in the infinite character of the Divine power and love that we are able to argue that if in one case unexpectedly and wonderfully his action has been justified, therefore in other cases we may await the result, resting in confidence on his wisdom (Romans, p. 339).

This helps us in our trials, in our service, and prepares the way for the practical section of the Epistle which follows. ;