

Notes on Romans 11
November 1, 2004

VI. DISPENSATION (9:1-11:36).

- A. Paul's Burden for Israel (9:1-5).**
- B. Paul's Vindication of God (9:6-33).**
- C. Paul's Defense of the Gospel (10:1-21).**
- D. God's Faithfulness to Israel (11:1-32).**
 - 1. God's Rejection of Israel - Partial: the Remnant (11:1-10).**
 - 2. God's Rejection of Israel - Temporary: the Gentiles (11:11-16).**
 - 3. God's Rejection of Israel - Ended (11:17-32).**
- E. Paul's Doxology (11:33-36).**

We have now come to:

- D. God's Faithfulness to Israel (11:1-32).**
 - 1. God's Rejection of Israel - Partial: the Remnant (11:1-10).**

I have borrowed two words from Godet's outline on Romans 11, "Partial" and "Temporary." I couldn't improve on those two words, and that is the reason I have used them.

Verse 1

What Paul had so strongly affirmed in chapter 10, that God has in this dispensation turned in grace to the Gentile world, and was saving Gentiles, does this mean that God has "cast away His people," that is, the people of Israel? This would mean that there is no future for the nation Israel, but, even more than that, it would mean *that from that point on no Jew would be saved!* This draws from the Apostle Paul a very strong denial. In the Greek it is, *μη γένοιτο*. Paul used this expression ten times in Romans. See 3:4, 6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11. A more correct translation would be, *let it not be*. The KJ translators have translated it, "God forbid," to show that Paul was not only responding to that which is false, but to that which is impious [the emphasis is on the first syllable], or even blasphemous. He meant that you could never think such a thing about God, and that it is a sin to do so.

And then Paul went on to say that he was an example that God was still saving Jews! The "I" is emphatic. If, in turning to the Gentiles, God was saying that He was through with the nation, then Paul would not have been saved. But he had been saved, and so he was living proof that God was still saving Jews. And, in addition, it meant that God had not forsaken His purposes for the nation Israel. This surely ought to silence the talk of those who say that God is finished dealing with Jews and the nation of Israel. Such talk is the ultimate of anti-Semitism. God was not for the present dealing with the Jews like He had up to the time of Christ, but just as Gentiles were saved in OT times while God was dealing primarily with the Jews, so now that He had turned to the Gentiles, He was not forsaking the Jews.

Even our key verses of the epistle, Romans 1:16 and 17, teach that it is still true that Jews are being saved. To say that the key verses say that we need to go to the Jews before we go to the Gentiles, is another false interpretation of Scripture. Historically it went to the Jew first, as we learn from the OT, but then following the coming of Christ, and as a result of the Jews' rejection of Christ as a nation, the door has been opened for a special time when God is calling Gentiles to Himself. But Paul was "an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin," living proof that [go on to verse 2]

Verses 2-4

“God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew.”

Let me spend some time speaking about that verb, “foreknew,” because it is usually misunderstood by those who do not understand the sovereignty of God in salvation.

Most Christians, true Christians, believe that God is omniscient, that is, that He knows all things. He has known the end of all things from the beginning. He is never surprised when certain people are saved. He knows who is going to be saved, not because He has known ahead of time what they are going to do (that would make man the one who decides who is going to be saved and who is not going to be saved) – no, He knows who is going to be saved because He has chosen every person who ever has been saved or who ever will be saved. The Apostle Peter spoke of the people of God as “elect according to the foreknowledge of God” (1 Pet. 1:2). So foreknowledge with God is not just what He knows that men will do, and that He knows it ahead of time, *but it means that He has predetermined by His own divine election who will be saved!*

And so God not only knows ahead who is going to be saved, but foreknowledge means that He has *determined* who is going to be saved by His sovereign decree. Actually, even for God to foreknow anything, makes it certain, because it is impossible for God to be wrong. But to give us even further confidence in what God is doing in salvation, He has sovereignly chosen and called those whom He has ordained for salvation from the foundation of the world.

Back in Romans 8, verse 29, Paul used the word “foreknew.” And it follows Romans 8:28 where Paul wrote that God works all things together for good, but then he added those for whom it is true, and he stated it two ways:

- 1) “To them that love God.”
- 2) “To them who are the called according to His purpose.”

Those two expressions include every believer. We all love God or we wouldn’t be saved, but we are also “the called” ones.

With regard to salvation, the Bible speaks of two kinds of calls which come from God. There is the general call, and that is where we read, “Whosoever will let him come . . .” But then there is the effectual call. That is when God deals with individuals whom He has chosen, calling them to Himself. When this happens, then we come, as Saul of Tarsus did on the road to Damascus. We can urge people to come to Christ, but they only come when in their hearts they realize that God is calling them.

Paul then cited an illustration from the life of Elijah who thought that God was no longer working with the Jews and that he was the sole survivor of the people of God in Israel. Cf. 1 Kings 19:10, 14, and 18. There were seven thousand in Israel who had not worshiped Baal, but had remained true to God. It is a good reminder to us that God is always doing more than we perceive that He is doing. We look at the professing church today and see so much that we know is not pleasing to the Lord. And because the people who are involved in such activities are usually in large groups, we think that they represent the work of the Lord in our day. But that is never the case. It wasn’t so in Israel, nor is it in the church today. The Lord has many more who are true to Him and true to His Word than we know, or than we believe there are. That ought to be encouraging to us.

In verse 5 the Apostle Paul made the application to the day in which he was living. Notice the words, “at this present time.”

Paul had mentioned the “remnant” in 9:27, the only other time he used the word “remnant” in this epistle. What is “the remnant”?

That word always makes me think of my mother, and the sowing that she did. She always had material left over which she called *remnants*. That is what “the remnant” of Israel is. They are the survivors, that group within the nation who know God, and love Him, and are true to Him. They are the elect within the nation. Although Paul did not use the word “remnant” in the last two verses of Romans 2, yet he was talking about the remnant in Israel, those who are the true Jews, not just by blood, but by divine election and the new birth. That is why Paul added, “according to the election of grace.”

It has never been the intention of the Lord to save all Jews, anymore than it has been the purpose of God to save all Gentiles. Among both groups, which is to say among all of the people of the world, God has His elect, those whom He has chosen for salvation. But it is an “election of grace.” This means that God was not obligated to save anyone, but according to His grace He has determined to save those whom He has chosen. But when you bring this “election of grace” down to individuals who have been saved, or are being saved today, or will in the future be saved, *no one has been saved by anything meritorious which God has seen in them*. Those whom He has chosen to save are just as worthy of eternal judgment as anyone else, but God, for reasons known only to Himself, has chosen some among the condemned to be saved.

And so let me add another point as far as the grace of God is concerned. Grace means, in addition to the fact that in salvation I am receiving what I do not deserve, yet at the same time we need always to remember that grace means that I will never get what I deserve to get: eternal judgment. We may have trouble accepting the truth of the grace of God, but since God is God, and salvation is of God, we need to remember three things:

- 1) He would have been perfectly righteous if He had decided to save nobody.
- 2) He also would have been perfectly righteous if He had decided to save everyone.

But the third point that I am going to make, is the one that the Lord’s people usually have trouble with. It is this:

- 3) We must also realize that God is perfectly righteous if He determines to save some, but not all.

I sometimes illustrate it this way: If I see a little child on a winter day, out in the cold, and I buy a pair of shoes for that child, I am not to be condemned because I don’t buy a pair of shoes for every little child who is in the same condition. God has thrown the door of salvation open to everyone, and that is why we have in the Gospel verses like John 3:16. Or Revelation 22:17:

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

But we learned back in Romans 3:11 that “there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.” And so since God has determined to save some, He chose, He calls, and He draws. In John 6:44 we have our Lord’s own words telling us that “no man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.” I didn’t come to the Lord of my own free will, and neither did you. By nature we willed not to be saved. But God had other plans for us. He chose us in eternity past. He called us in different ways, but always with His Word. But we still would not come. And so he drew us, and then we came!

Now in verse 6 Paul went on to explain the meaning of grace.

Verse 6

Now if God saves us by grace, then it can’t be of works. If it were possible for me to do works sufficient for my salvation, then God is obligated to save me. Salvation then becomes a reward for what I have done. If that is true, then grace is not grace because grace means that salvation is an undeserved gift. Cf. Eph. 2:8-9.

The latter part of verse 6 is not in the best MSS, but it certainly is true that if salvation is of works, then it can’t

be of grace for the very reason I have explained. So salvation cannot be of grace and also of works because to the extent that I do some work to obtain salvation, It can't be by grace; it can't be a gift. If I work for it, then I am rewarded by God for what I have done, and at least a part of the glory is mine.

Verse 7

And so Paul asked, "What then?" This means, in the light of the truth regarding salvation, what has happened? It had to be said that as far as Israel as a whole nation is concerned, they had not obtained what they were seeking. What were they seeking? They were seeking acceptance with God. The tense of the verb, a present, indicates real persistence in seeking acceptance with God, and the verb would indicate also that, as Paul wrote, the search was still going on.

But how were they seeking it? They were seeking it by works. But it never can be obtained in that way. Has the purpose of God failed then? No. Why? Because "the election hath obtained it." The word that Paul used here, "election" (ἐκλογή) instead of "the elect" (ἐκλεκτός) puts the emphasis upon God's work of choosing instead of on the people whom He has chosen. So the glory goes to God, not to those whom He has chosen. And the point is, not that they will at some time in the future get it, but that they have it now! This is God's efficacious grace! Who are "the rest"? They are the remainder of the nation who have not been chosen. What has happened to them? They are "blinded," or *hardened*. Godet says that this is "to deprive an organ of its natural sensibility" (p. 395). The next three verses of the text explain what this actually means (present), or has meant (in the past). And so we are to understand that just as God has chosen some, He has blinded others. And yet every person stands responsible to God for their reaction to the Gospel. Sanday and Headlam say in their commentary (ICC, p. 314),

The idea is . . . that a covering has grown over the heart, making men incapable of receiving any new teaching however good, and making them oblivious of the wrong they were doing.

So the non-elect can work feverishly and tirelessly, thinking that they are doing the right thing, and that they are going to be successful, while all of the time thinking that success lies ahead. The Lord was referring to people like this as He concluded His Sermon on the Mount. Let me read to you what He said:

21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matt. 7:21-23).

In our text, notice that our translators have indicated by the parentheses, that the last three words of verse 8 complete the idea that Paul was expressing here in verse 7: that those whom God hath not chosen are "blinded . . . unto this day."

But we can't tell by looking at people whether they are elect or non-elect. And so we give the Gospel to everyone, knowing as our Lord said, that "all that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). We know that it is not true that world is full of people who want to be saved, but can't, but the world is full of people who are not even slightly interested in the Gospel of the grace of God. They may be religious, even very religious, but they are not interested in what God, and only God, can do for them, but in what they can do for God.

At this point the Apostle Paul did what we have seen him do before many times: he confirmed from the OT the teaching that he was giving in his NT epistles. And we need to remember that his quotation of OT Scriptures is just as inspired as were the same words when given in the OT. Let us notice what they are.

Verse 8

The quotation in this verse is from Deuteronomy 29:4 and Isaiah 29:10. Deuteronomy 29:4 says, “Yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.” If you turn to Deut. 29 and read from the first verse, you will see that Moses, in delivering this final message to the people of Israel, was telling them in verse 4 that God had not given them “a heart to perceive,” or “eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.” This was because of their repeated rebellions against the Lord. God had performed all kinds of miracles in caring for them, but they looked upon it all just as a matter of course. They had not profited from “the table” that God had repeatedly spread before them in their deliverance from Egypt and in their journey toward Canaan.

This finds a parallel in America today. Most people are completely oblivious to the blessings that God has bestowed upon us as a nation. And so they don’t give God the glory. Instead they take the glory to themselves. But the truth is that people will not see it unless the Lord opens their eyes, hearts, and ears. The school district that is not allowing their students to be thankful for God, is an illustration of how normally intelligent people can be totally ignorant of spiritual realities.

So in quoting from Deuteronomy and from Isaiah’s prophecy, the Apostle Paul was showing that such ignorance has characterized the history of Israel from its beginning.

But it will be helpful for us to read the context of the other passage to which Paul was referring, Isaiah 29:10, so please turn to Isaiah 29 and follow in your Bibles while I read verses 9 through 14. **(Read.)**

You can see that what Paul wrote here, is not a direct quotation, but what we might call a commentary on what Isaiah wrote. You and I do not have the right to say that our commentary on Scripture is to be received on a par with the Scriptures, but Paul was writing under the direction of the Holy Spirit just like Isaiah was. So we can accept Paul’s words in Romans 11:8 as we can Isaiah’s word in Isaiah 29:10.

But since we are studying Romans at the present time, and not Isaiah, let us focus our attention on Romans 11:8.

Paul applies what Isaiah said about the eyes to both the eyes and the heart, although we can see in Isaiah 29:13 that in that verse Isaiah did mention the heart. And we all know that we don’t have to look very far before we see much evidence in the people around us of spiritual blindness and spiritual deafness. We are all born this way – blind to the truth and unable to really hear the message of the Bible. But just as the Lord opened the eyes of the blind when He was here on earth, and opened the ears of the deaf, so this is what He has done for those of us who are saved. God has enabled us to understand and to receive the truth of His Word. Seeing and hearing means understanding and receiving. The blind in our Lord’s day did not give themselves sight, nor did the deaf enable themselves to suddenly hear. They came to the Lord, *and He did for them what they could not do for themselves. He enabled them to hear, and He enabled others to see!*

One of the great tragedies in the professing church today is that this is a basic truth which a lot of preachers do not understand. I had lunch with one of our men yesterday and he told me about a church in the Portland area that had had a godly Pastor whom God had used for the blessing of hundreds, and perhaps thousands of people. But the Lord took him to heaven. He was followed by a man who came to church looking like he was going to some sports event, and he would even dismiss the people at the close of the service without prayer. Evidently the new pastor thinks that he knows more about how the Lord is going to bless than what he can learn from the Bible. And there are a lot of men speaking from the pulpits of our country just like him. They are trying to be

“cool.” They are trying to make people feel that they are regular guys, and their object is to make people “feel good.” Lucille and I have visited a church when we have been on vacation, and the last time we were there (and it probably will be the last time) from the pastor’s appearance in the pulpit I wouldn’t have been a bit surprised to learn that his shirt was his pajama top!

What ought to be the main ingredients of a true NT ministry? This is not a problem to find out if people, and even pastors, will take their guidance from the Word of God? Let me give you the three things to look for in a true NT ministry:

1) The pastor’s main concern is for his own personal holiness of character and of living. Instead of putting on sport shirts and blue jeans, we need to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” as Paul will tell us when we get to the end of Romans 13.

The second and third essentials of a true NT ministry are given to us in Acts 6. The work in Jerusalem had grown in a most amazing way following the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. Three thousand people were saved in one day. This is not the claim of some modern day evangelist, but it is the record given to us by the Holy Spirit. But with the increase of people who needed to be cared for, what was the concern of the apostles? They saw that if they did not get some help, they would be drawn away from what their main work was. And so you will find if we you read the opening verses of Acts 6 that the apostles considered their work to be (and here are the second and third points):

2) Prayer, and

3) The ministry of the Word.

The more we depend upon ourselves and the gadgets that are available today, the less we are going to pray, and the less time we are going to give to the ministry of the Word. I don’t believe that anyone is truly saved apart from the direct application of God’s Word by the Holy Spirit to his, or her, heart. If pastors want their people to be holy, they must be holy. If they want their people to pray, they must pray (and pray continually). And if we want our people to live by the Word of God and to love it, then it had better be true of us that when people come to hear us, that they hear the Word which we love. The essentials of a true NT ministry are holiness of life, prayer, and the Word. Nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else, will bring the blessing of the Lord. God is the One Who has blinded people, and has stopped up their ears, and closed their hearts. And if they are going to see and hear and understand, it has to be in God’s way, not ours.

Let us move on to verses 9 and 10. We can take them together because they are from the same place: Psalm 69, verses 22 and 23. (Read.) The first quotation here in verse 8 is from Moses in Deuteronomy 29:4 combined with Isaiah 29:10; the one we have in verses 9 and 10 is from the Holy Spirit through David in Psalm 69:22, 23. David mentioned “a snare” and “a trap”; Paul added “a stumblingblock, and a recompense unto them.” But we must remember that both men were speaking by the Holy Spirit, and so Paul’s statement here in Romans 11 must be accepted as being equally authoritative with David’s in Psalm 69. Paul’s additions can be considered as a commentary on Psalm 69.

Verse 9

How many of you are familiar with the word *imprecatory*? It is an adjective which can often be used to describe some of David’s Psalms. An imprecatory Psalm is a Psalm in which the psalmist is praying for God’s judgment upon evildoers, especially upon those who should have helped him, but instead who added to his misery. Psalm 69 is, at least in part, an imprecatory Psalm. And it involved more than just the two verses which Paul was quoting here in Romans 11. **Let me read to you verses 20 through 28.**

In addition to being an imprecatory Psalm, we need to recognize that it is also a Messianic Psalm. To be sure it speaks of difficulties that David was having, but David’s troubles were prophetic of the even greater sufferings

of his greatest Son according to the flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ. “Their table” was an expression of the marvelous way God had provided for Israel as a nation. Psalm 23:5a would apply here where David said, “Thou preparest me a table in the presence of mine enemies.” Concerning our Lord, you will remember that when He and His disciples were in Samaria, and the disciples had gone into the city to get food, returning they found the Lord talking with the Samaritan woman. They were surprised at this, but when they urged the Lord to eat, He said to them, “I have meat to eat that ye know not of” (John 4:32). So with Israel, with David, and with our Lord, God had always been faithful to them, but in the case of Israel in particular, they had failed to see in God’s provision for them physically, evidence of His goodness to them, and proof also of His desire to provide for them spiritually. If we can’t see the goodness of the Lord in His provision for us physically, it is certain that we won’t see His goodness in providing for us spiritually. The very fact that people can sit down to a meal without bowing their heads and their hearts in thanksgiving to God, is evidence that they don’t recognize that the food before them is evidence of God’s goodness toward them physically and evidence of His desire to meet their every need.

So what was intended to be a blessing, becomes a curse, not by any failure in God, but because of the sin and the unbelief of man. But here, the emphasis is upon Israel’s rejection of their Messiah.

But continuing on with verse 9 (and its quotation of Psalm 69:22). David just used two words, “snare” and “trap,” but Paul evidently enlarged upon them to emphasize the extent of God’s judgment upon Israel, but also to elaborate on what David’s words actually meant.

The story of the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt and their journey from Egypt to Canaan, is full of instances in which the Lord was preparing the table, supplying the needs, for the children of Israel. But in their rebellion against the Lord the people of Israel were blinded to the goodness of the Lord, and what should have been a great encouragement to them became “a snare,” and “a trap,” and “a stumblingblock, and a recompense unto them.” What do these four words mean?

- 1) “A snare” – Thayer said that this was a kind of a trap set for birds which caught them without warning. So the blessings that God had poured out on his people constituted a “snare” for them because of their rebellious hearts. What should have been a blessing to them, a constant blessing, trapped them and brought them into deadly peril.
- 2) “A trap” – Two words for a trap (this, and the one before under 1 above) emphasized the accuracy of what David was praying. This kind of trap was evidently used for trapping wild beasts. So it indicated that even the most prominent among the people of God, those who were looked upon as being strong, would be snared by their spiritual blindness and deafness.
- 3) “A stumblingblock” – That which should have drawn them to the Lord, and filled their hearts with gratitude toward Him for His faithful care and protection, became the cause of their destruction. You may remember what the Apostle Paul said to the Corinthians about this in his first letter to them. His words are found in 1 Cor. 1:23-24:

23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;
24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

Cf. also Rom. 9:30-33. The big stumblingstone to the nation Israel, has been Christ.

- 4) “A recompense” – This means that the judgments which God brought upon them were entirely just. They were reaping what they had sowed. God was repaying them for their sinful behavior. Their deafness and their blindness could have been cured by the Lord, but in their rebellion they did not ask Him to help them. They might repent briefly after a time of judgement, but soon after they would return to the old ways.

These words are taken from a prayer of David against the people of Israel. And this would indicate that David

felt that God was justified in His harshest dealings with Israel. The prayer is continued in verse 10.

Verse 10

The rebellion of the children of Israel was so constant and so intense that David prayed that it would even increase. He was thinking in terms of what the nation deserved – so that they would never see! “And bow down their back away.” This is the result of any rebellion against God. The burden of sin upon the rebel is *backbreaking!* No person ever comes out ahead by rebellion. Often when we insist on having our own way, God grants our request. But the result is never what we think it is going to be. It is never good, but always bad and to be regretted. Take the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15. Judas is an example also. The cost of rebellion against God is high, and, in some cases, high for all eternity!

So here we have the cause behind God’s rejection of His people, Israel, as a nation. As we look at Israel today we see a pitiful example of a nation that turned its back upon the Lord at the time of our Lord’s first coming into the world. Today it is a nation seeking its own way, sovereignly preserved, but due for even greater suffering in the days ahead.

But even with God’s judgment presently upon Israel as a nation, it is only partial. And the reason for saying it is partial, is found in verses 4 and 5 of our chapter. It is in the “remnant”! Elijah lived in a dark, dark day in Israel’s history. And he felt that he was the lone survivor of those who really loved the Lord and who walked with Him. *But he was mistaken. God had reserved for Himself seven thousand in Israel who had not turned to Baal worship.* And right at the beginning of this chapter Paul declared that God had not cast away His people permanently, and the proof was that Paul himself, a Jew, had been drawn to Christ, and saved.

But with the beginning of verse 11 we come to the second division of our chapter:

2. God’s Rejection of Israel – Temporary: the Gentiles (Rom. 11:11-16).

So the big question which Paul by the Holy Spirit is answering in chapter 11 has to do with the question: Is there a future for Israel, or have the Jewish people sinned away their place in the plans and purposes of God?

Well, we know that Jews are still being saved, and the Apostle Paul was Exhibit #1. And if we read the book of Acts we see that probably more people were saved on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 than during the entire ministry of our Lord while He was here on earth. When the Lord spoke to His disciples just before His ascension back to the Father, He told His disciples to begin their ministry in Jerusalem, and on out into all Judea, and on into Samaria. And now we come to what Paul had to say about that here in Romans 11.

Verse 11.

He introduces the question, “Have they stumbled that they should fall?” The question seems to suggest that it still may be possible for individual Jews to be saved, but what about the nation Israel?

I think that it is important to note that in verse 7 the Apostle Paul began speaking specifically of the nation, Israel. And Paul immediately followed that with singular pronouns, meaning that he was speaking of the nation as a whole. And then, even though in verses 8, 9, and 10 he used the plurals pronouns (them, they, their), yet the context seems to indicate that he has the whole nation in mind. “Have they stumbled that they should fall?” Does God have plans for the nation Israel that are yet to be fulfilled? The Apostle Paul believed that He did, and he indicated that any other idea would be a contradiction of the very nature of God. “God forbid.” *Let it not be! It is inconceivable that God would do such a thing.* Let us always remember that the failure of men,

whether Jew or Gentile, never can nullify the purposes of God. If God can forget His promises to Israel, what is to keep Him from forgetting His promises to the Church? Consider that Paul wrote to Timothy in his second epistle to him: “If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. 2:13).

We see in the book of Acts how the door was gradually opened to the Gentiles, beginning with Peter going to the house of Cornelius in Acts 10, but seen very clearly in the ministry of the Apostle Paul who carried the Gospel to all corners of the Roman Empire, and ultimately to Rome itself. The book of Acts begins in Jerusalem, but then to the uttermost parts of the earth as the Gospel has been taken up to the present time.

What, then, is God’s purpose in setting aside Israel as a nation at the present time? It was twofold:

- 1) It was as we have seen in Scripture, to open wide the door of salvation to the Gentiles.
- 2) To provoke Israel to jealousy, and so to bring them back.

But this suggests another problem. If God turns back to Israel, what is going to happen to the Gentiles? Will the Gentiles then fall away? This is a question that ought to be of vital interest to the Church, the body of Christ. There are Jews in the body of Christ, just as there were Gentiles who became proselytes of the Jews. But the Church, the body of Christ, is predominantly Gentile. What is the answer?

Verse 12

The last line of verse 11 intimates that there will be a restoration of the nation Israel. Now, in this verse, the Apostle Paul clearly teaches that it will. The “fall” of the Jews had led to “the riches of the world,” and “the diminishing” of Israel had led to “the riches of the Gentiles,” showing what he meant by referring first to “the world,” is an example of Hebrew writing where two statements are made which mean the same thing, but they are said for emphasis and to make the meaning very clear.

So the point is that if the Gentile world has profited from the fall of Israel, then for God to turn back to Israel to bring that nation to its fulness, we have one of Paul’s favorite expressions with regard to the Gospel, “how much more their fulness”!

The word “diminishing” with reference to Israel implies anything but a total departure from Israel; it indicates a change in emphasis, the fewer Jews will be saved, but more Gentiles. The word “fulness,” which is the Greek word *πλήρωμα*, according to Godet (p. 401), has but one fundamental signification . . . It always denotes: that with which an empty space is fulfilled.” God’s plan from the very beginning (see Gen. 12:3) has not been just the salvation of the Jews *or* the salvation of the Gentiles, but the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles. And so finally both objectives will be brought together. So in the future we can expect to see greater numbers of Jews turning to the Lord.

All of this means that the Gentiles have nothing to fear from the restoration of Israel. In fact, greater blessing for Israel will result also in greater blessing for the Gentiles. Even Moses understood this great truth. Haldane pointed his readers to Deut. 32:43:

43 Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people.

Verse 13

Then Paul, writing to a predominantly Gentile church, the church at Rome, and in agreement with his calling, addressed the Gentiles, repeating what he had said to alleviate any fears they might have, magnified, or glorified his “office.” The word translated “office” in the Greek text is *διακονίαν*. Paul was speaking of the parti-

cular calling that he had from the Lord. Thayer (p. 137) says that this word has reference to the ministry “of those who execute the commands of others.” And we see this in what the Lord told Ananias in Damascus when he had been told to go to Saul of Tarsus. The Lord’s words to Ananias, or part of them, are given in Acts 9:15-16:

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

What an amazing situation this is – a Jew, who formerly hated Christians, and felt very much the same way about Gentiles, is miraculously transformed, and sent by God, to reach Gentiles for the purpose of preaching the Gospel to them that they might be saved! And all of this is in complete agreement and fulfillment of the eternal plan of God for Jews and for Gentiles. Cf. Gen. 12:3.

For Paul to say that he *magnified* his office, or calling, shows that he delighted in the ministry for which the Lord had saved him and called him to do. *And he carried it out until he saw the Gospel spread throughout the entire Roman Empire!*

But what was it that he wanted to say to them? What did he want them to understand? Look with me at verse 14.

Verse 14

Far from giving up on the salvation of Jews, or deserting them in favor of the Gentiles, it was Paul’s hope that somehow the Spirit of God would use his ministry to the Gentiles to stir up a feeling of jealousy among the Jews, and that God would use that to make the Jews more receptive to the Gospel message. And often when Paul went to a new city to preach the Gospel, he began by going to the synagogue to preach the Gospel there. In the words, “provoke to emulation,” Paul was using the same verb that he had used back in verse 11.

With reference to the Jews, notice that Paul did not say that he hoped to save *all of them*, but “some of them.” The “some” would be the elect Paul had spoken of in verse 5 of our chapter. He expected to see more Gentiles saved than Jews, but he still expected to see “some” Jews turn to Christ. And he did!

Verse 15

This verse is a repetition of what Paul had written in verse 12. Paul was not dealing here with just how this will be done, or when, but that it will happen. The preaching of the Gospel has always been difficult. It was difficult in OT times. It was difficult when our Lord was here on earth. It was difficult when the Church began, and it is difficult today. But a day of great acceptance of the Gospel is coming, both among Gentiles and among Jews. Part of this may be before the Church, the body of Christ, is raptured, but it will certainly be seen following the Great Tribulation when the Lord returns to earth to reign. It will truly be “life from the dead.” Haldane refers to it as a time of “unexampled blessing both to Jews and Gentiles” (p. 534). This will come with the reign of Christ upon the earth. But even then now all Jews, nor all Gentiles, will be saved. But God will complete the calling of His elect from among the Jews and the Gentiles so that all of His elect from both groups will be saved. God’s purposes in salvation will be fully accomplished. All of this will be a clear indication of the goodness of God, the grace of God, the love of God, the power of God, and the wisdom and knowledge of God which Paul exalts in the last four verses of our chapter.

Speaking of “the reconciling of the world,” Trench says on page 292 of his *Synonyms of the New Testament*, that God has “laid aside His holy anger against our sin, and received us into favor, a reconciliation effected for us once for all by Christ upon His Cross.” And we know that it is not because either the Jews or the Gentiles

deserve such blessing, but it is given to undeserving sinners, which we all are, because of the love and grace of God and of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 16

Here Paul used two illustrations to show in a third way that there is a future for Israel. The first was the salvation of Paul (11:1). The second was the remnant (11:5). And now we come to two illustrations, one from the Law, and the other from nature, which give us a third reason for believing that there is still a future for the nation Israel. Paul was thinking about Israel as he gave these illustrations.

From Jeremiah 2:2 and 3 it seems that “the firstfruit” must be those who were saved in OT times. This is what the verses in Jeremiah tell us:

2 Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.

3 Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the firstfruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD (Jer. 2:2-3).

And it would seem then that “the lump” is the whole nation of Israel. And “holiness” is probably used here in its primary meaning with reference to Israel, that it was *set apart* from all other nations and *set apart to* and *for* God. So the elect tell us something of great importance about the whole nation.

In the second illustration about the root and the branches, it seems that the root would refer to Abraham, and the branches, like the firstfruit, to the elect within the nation. And in the next section of this chapter beginning with verse 17 and going down through verse 32, Paul began in the seventeenth verse to speak of the branches of Israel, and the wild branches of the Gentiles which were grafted in to the tree. All who are saved, whether Jews or Gentiles, are the seed of Abraham. The elect among the Jews are the natural branches; the elect among the Gentiles are those branches which have been grafted in to the tree and its root.

What is there of practical importance for us today to be found in this chapter thus far?

- 1) We learn what a serious thing it is to turn away from the Lord, and to reject His Word.
 - 2) We have another great lesson in the faithfulness of the Lord. He is working all things out according to His will, and no man, or group of men, not even a nation, can nullify the purposes of God.
 - 3) It is very true that God works all things together for good, as we learned in Romans 8:28.
- And there are undoubtedly other lessons, but these are the major ones.

So verses 11 through 16 definitely show that God’s rejection of Israel is *temporary*. But now we move on to the third main division in Romans 11.

3. God’s Rejection of Israel – Ended (Rom. 11:17-32).

Paul had already touched upon this in verses 11 through 16, but now he deals with it in greater detail. And first we have a solemn warning to the Gentiles.

Verse 17

We need to recognize that in this passage the Apostle Paul was addressing Gentiles as a group as well as Jews as a group. Notice that, in speaking of the Jews, he said, “And if some of the branches be broken off.” He has already shown that some Jews were being saved, *e.g.*, the Apostle Paul, and other Jews who were of the elect. But some in the nation had been “cast away.” That is, they were not going to be saved. But it is also true that

God was not then dealing with the nation of Israel as He had in OT times. The emphasis upon Israel continued into and through the ministry of our Lord on earth. In proof of that we have our Lord's words recorded for us in Matthew 10:5-6:

5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

This continued on into the book of Acts and the ministry of Paul and Barnabas. The real turning point came when Paul and Barnabas were in Antioch of Pisidia which was one of the town in Galatia. The Lord did a mighty work there, but it was there also that there was intense opposition from "the Jews," *i.e.*, the leaders of Israel, the scribes and Pharisees. They sought to undermine the ministry of Paul and Barnabas. We read about it in Acts 13. Listen to the way Luke described it:

44 And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost (Acts 13:44-52).

This did not mean that Paul never preached to the Jews again, but it was a real turning point in his ministry toward the Gentiles. Remember his words back a few verses in Rom. 11:13.

"Thou" here in verse 17 is a reference to the Gentiles. Hodge says that this is "one of the most worthless of trees, to express the degradation of their state, considered as estranged from God" (p. 368). Normally the shoot of a good tree would be grafted into a wild olive tree, but here it is just the opposite: the bad was grafted into the good! So there was nothing good about the Gentiles which caused the Lord to turn to them. Naturally both Jews and Gentiles were totally unworthy of salvation. God was dealing with them according to His will, His eternal plan. But the Gentiles being grafted into the good olive tree. That is, they were made partakes of the promise made to Abraham to partake of "the root and fatness of the olive tree." This speaks of an abundance, a root and a tree that was sufficient to sustain all of the branches.

Verse 18

It always seems, even in our relationship with God, that whether we are Jews or Gentiles, we are always inclined toward pride. And it is impossible for a person to be proud without belittling others. We as believers in Christ need to be extremely careful about this, and to judge pride in our own lives whenever it shows its ugly head. As I have said, we are all unworthy of salvation because we are all sinners. If God gave any of us, Jews or Gentiles, what we deserve, He would have nothing to do with any of us.

What Paul said here was that the Gentiles were not to boast *against* the Jews. "Boast against" is the verb. Lit. it means *to boast down*. And Paul meant that they were not to do it now, nor tomorrow, nor ever! This is behavior which totally unbecoming to anyone who is experiencing the blessing of the Lord. We are never to

leave any room for pride. Pride in this instance would give the impression that the Gentile branches were sustaining the root, when just the opposite was true.

But the Gentiles did not let go of their pride easily as we see in verse 18.

Verse 19

They would at least say that the Jews were broken off so that the Gentiles could take their place by being grafted in. The Gentiles were not saying that it had always been the plan of God that salvation would include Gentiles. God told Abraham that “in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). However, in making this statement (an aorist passive), the Gentiles were indicating that they did not graft themselves in, but they were put there by God. Branches don’t cut themselves off, neither can a branch from one tree graft itself into another tree. So, regardless of how you consider this situation, the Gentiles had no reason to be boastful that God had turned toward them.

One thing that the Gentiles were inclined to forget was that salvation came to them through the Jews, it did not go from the Gentiles to the Jews. God gave His promise to Abraham. It continued to be proclaimed through Jewish prophets. Even our Savior was a Jew. And Paul and Barnabas were Jews. So Gentiles have every reason to be thankful for the Jews, and grieved that many Jews rejected the Gospel. Instead of boasting them down, we need to be praying them up!

But what was the real truth about the branches of Israel being broken off, and the Gentiles grafted in? The answer is given to us in verse 20.

Verse 20

“Well” is translated in the NASB, “Quite right.” That is, there is an element of truth in what the Gentiles were saying, but it was not the complete truth. The full truth was that they were “broken off” because of unbelief. And those of the Gentiles who were standing, were standing by faith.

At this point we need to go back to read the last verses of Romans 9. I will begin reading with verse 22 and read down to the end of the chapter. **(Read Rom. 9:22-33).**

Now what was Israel’s unbelief (as Paul called it here in Rom. 11:20)? Their unbelief was that they sought it by works, not faith, even though it was the works of the Law. Nobody has ever been saved by obeying the Law. We can’t produce a single person who was saved by obeying the Law. The Law condemns; it does not save. It is very clear that during our Lord’s ministry, the Jews (the religious leaders of the Jewish people), believed that salvation was dependent upon who you are (a Jew), and what you do, which had almost completely deteriorated to observing the Sabbath Day.

The Gentiles, on the other hand, were responding in large numbers to Paul’s preaching of salvation by grace through faith. And they stood as a people before God by faith. But this was no reason for them to be “high-minded.” Instead, it should make them fear.

A person who is “highminded,” is a person who has a great opinion of himself. He is arrogant. He is in love with himself. I heard two well-known Bible teachers described by one who knew them both, as “super egos.” If that is true, it certainly should not be.

Geoffrey Wilson, in his excellent but brief commentary on Romans, made this statement to help us see what Paul was saying:

It should be noted that Paul does not represent fear as an emotion which is incompatible with the exercise of faith, for those who truly trust God also have learned wholly to distrust themselves. Self-confidence and confidence in God are polar opposites. On more than one occasion the apostle puts forward the fear of failure as a proper stimulant to Christian endeavor . . .

Here are the verses he mentioned:

- 1) 1 Cor. 2:3 - "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling."
- 2) Eph. 6:5 - "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ."
- 3) Phil. 2:12 - "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, workout your own salvation with fear and trembling."
- 4) Heb. 4:1 - "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."
- 5) 1 Pet. 1:17 - "And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."

What kind of fear is this? I think we have an excellent answer to that question in those two verses which I believe Dr. Lockwood found music to fit them, and we have them as insert C in our Trinity Hymnal:

In the sweet fear of Jesus, Let me begin each day,
Fearful lest I should grieve Him, Fearful lest I should stray;
Fearful lest earthly longings ever my heart should share,
Taking the throne of Jesus, Placing an idol there.

In the sweet fear of Jesus, Let me begin each day,
Serving or resting, always Under His gentle sway;
All that I say, directed, All that I plan conceived,
With the remembrance present: Jesus must not be grieved.

If you haven't memorized those two verses, you ought to. And then repeat them often, not only at the beginning of each day, but throughout the day. This is the sense in which we need to fear the Lord. You will remember that Solomon said that this is the starting point of all true wisdom. Christians ought to be characterized as people who fear the Lord.

Verse 21

This is why we need to fear. As Gentiles we need to realize that Jews have more going for them than Gentiles do. And so Gentiles need to realize that there is even more possibility that they will be cut off than there was for the Jews. Paul was not saying here that if a person is saved, he can lose his salvation. He was speaking to Gentiles as a group about Jews as a group. There should be no such thing as antisemitism in the world. The Jews today as a people are far from the Lord, and they may have some characteristics and habits that are offensive to us. But we need to remember that they still are a special people to God, and we are instructed to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee" (Psa. 122:6).

The words, "take heed," is another expression for *fear*.

Verse 22

“Behold” is always a word to pay attention to something of great importance. Turning from both Jews and Gentiles, Paul was ready to give a lesson in theology. Here he was directing our attention to God!

He points out that there are two sides to God’s nature. He is good, and He is severe. He is love, but He is also righteous and will not tolerate evil. People who think that they can do whatever they want to do without any consequences, only think that because they are spiritually dead. Just because they don’t believe in God, doesn’t mean that there is no God. Or, just because He doesn’t strike them dead even though they do what they know is wrong repeatedly, doesn’t mean that they won’t face the judgment of God, possibly here, but surely hereafter. Bishop Trench, in his *Synonyms of the New Testament*, says that God by nature is gracious and love and that there is an absence at such times of that which harsh and austere. But at other times, when His will is being violated, He will cut off, be abrupt, condemn, and bring judgment. The Greek word for “severity” is a word which describes “a precipitous cliff” (Thayer, p. 69). Men tempt God, and tempt Him, and tempt Him, and suddenly for them it is like falling off of a steep cliff. Just yesterday morning I read Proverbs 29 like many of you did. The very first verse says, “He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”

The price of Israel’s rejection of Christ, their Messiah, has been very, very high. And yet our country, knowing Israel’s history, is walking the same path that leads to destruction. There is a steep cliff ahead, and we need to warn people of what is most certainly to come.

God has extended His goodness to us. Every blessing that the Gentile world has enjoyed, has come from God. The Gentile world has been blessed with the preaching of the Gospel. As we learned in Romans 1, although the Bible was not given originally to Gentiles, yet God has placed in our hearts a consciousness of His existence, and a sense of right and wrong. But, in addition, we have the Word of God in our language. The experience of Israel ought to be a lesson to us. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, speaking of Israel’s past history,

11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall (1 Cor. 10:11-12).

But the next verse gives a word of hope for Israel. Now to prepare us for the conclusion of this part of the chapter leading up to Paul’s doxology, let me point out that verses 23 and 24 tell us what God *can do*, verses 25-27 tell us what He *will do*, and verses 28-32 tell us *why*. It is all amazing account of the sovereignty of God in the fulfillment of His work of redemption as it includes both Jews and Gentiles according to His original plan established before the world was.

Verse 23

Verse 22 has to do with the character of God; verse 23 has to do with the power of God. It is one of a number of verses in the Bible which tell us what God is able to do.

The word of hope is this. If the Jews depart from their unbelief, their rebellion against God, and their desire to substitute works for faith, and turn in faith to God, “God is able to graft them in again.” They can’t do it, but God can. And as Paul tells us before this chapter is concluded, God not only is able to do it, but He is going to do it. And He will not only graft them in, but before that He will convict them of their sin, then draw them to His Son, and save them. Zechariah truly prophesied in Zechariah 12:9-10,

9 And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

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.

And this is what the Apostle Paul went on to explain in verse 24 and following.

Verse 24

Paul loved that expression, “much more,” or as we have it in this verse, “how much more.” Cf. Rom. 5:9, 10, 15, 17, 20; 11:12, and here in 11:24.

So Paul’s argument is, if God could cut off a branch from a wild olive tree, and graft it contrary to nature into a good olive tree, then certainly, even “much more,” can He graft the natural branches back into their own olive tree. It is not what the natural branches can do for themselves, but it is what God does for them as He did before with the branches from the wild olive tree.

Paul was not trying to show that the Jew is naturally worthy of salvation while the Gentile is not. But he was showing that it is more to be expected that the Jews would again be included than it is to think that the Gentiles ever would be included.

So in verses 23 and 24 Paul tells us *what God can do*. In verses 25 through 27 he tells us *what God will do*.

Verse 25

We seem to be running into this word “mystery” quite frequently lately. On Sunday morning we considered together “the mystery of godliness.” On Sunday night, a “mystery” related to the coming of the Lord in 1 Cor. 15:51. And here we have it again. Turn over to 1 Cor. 2, and you will see it again in verse 7. It is a secret that God kept to Himself until His time came to reveal it. The fact that it is a revelation is confirmed in verse 10 of 1 Cor. 2. So it is not something that had previously been revealed, at least in some cases, its details (and in other cases not at all, but it is something, a truth, a purpose that God ordained “before the world began,” but which He did not reveal fully, or not at all, until after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul did not want them to be ignorant of the mystery that he was about to write about, truth which obviously had to be revealed to Paul by the Holy Spirit. And here is an important point: ignorance of the truth leads to pride! But it is also true, as Geoffrey Wilson wrote in his commentary on Romans: “Spiritual ignorance is dispelled only by divine revelation” (p. 193).

Paul said, “lest ye be wise in your own conceits.” The rendering in the NASB is, “Lest you be wise in your own estimation.” Remember the previous warnings against pride. See verses 18 and 20. Whether we have Jewish blood or Gentile blood in our veins, we all have a problem with pride. And it can even enter into our relationship with God. I heard Robert Shuler say on TV last Sunday that the real meaning of Christmas is that Christ came “to restore human dignity.” He was talking about self-esteem and self-confidence, and the like. The Lord didn’t need to do that because we already have far too much pride. Those words of a humanist like Shuler indicate a total blindness to what man’s present condition is, and what his primary need really is.

What is going on today? As I have tried to bring out in my outline of this chapter, God partially, but only for a time, has *hardened*, but only partially and temporarily “until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” When God’s purpose with the Gentile nations is completed, then He will turn again to deal with Israel in a way similar to the way He worked with them in OT times and up until the ascension of Christ. That does not mean that Gentiles will not be saved after that, but simply that God has a plan for the Gentile nations just as He does

with Israel, and He has planned how He is going to fulfill His purposes with both.

Verse 26

“And so all Israel shall be saved.” This is taken by many expositors to mean that every Jew is going to be saved at that time, that every Jew who lives at that time will be saved. But “all Israel” has been explained to us before. See Romans 9:6 ff. Salvation is always and only of the elect. And even verse 28 confirms this. It means that there is a time coming when God again will deal with Jews as He has in the past. This will start during the Great Tribulation and carry over into the Millennial reign of Christ on earth. The fact, not the time, is confirmed by the verses Paul quoted at the end of verse 26: Isaiah 59:20-21. This is what these verses say:

20 And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD.

21 As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever (Isa. 59:20-21).

Verse 27

Lenski felt that this verse was taken from Isa. 27:9. This harkens back to the Abrahamic covenant, and is continued in the new covenant. Cf. also Jer.31:31-34, esp. verse 34b where the Lord spoke to Jeremiah about the forgiveness of Israel's sins. He said, “For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” Lenski made this comment: “The heart of the covenant which God made with Jacob (Israel) is this taking away of sins” (p. 731).

Verse 28

After telling us *what God will do*, from this verse on to verse 32 Paul explains why God does what He will do.

With reference to the Gospel and salvation, they have become enemies, blinded, hardened, rejectors of the Gospel, but this opened the way for the Gospel to go to the Gentiles. However, this does not mean that God has no further purpose for the Jew, and for the nation of Israel. But because of the promise of salvation God made to the fathers', *i.e.*, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the patriarchs, the elect still are elect, and God will without doubt bring them to salvation.

The thought is continued in verse 29.

Verse 29

On “the gifts,” see Romans 9:4 and 5. The “calling of God” must refer primarily to His call of Abraham and his seed. They are absolutely “without repentance.” That is, God is not going to take them back. He is not going to cancel them. God doesn't do business that way. Man's unfaithfulness never nullifies the faithfulness of God – never! Remember 2 Timothy 2:13. “The Lord is faithful” (2 Thess. 3:3). Cf. Heb. 10:23, “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised.” God never regrets any promise that He has made, nor does He regret that He made the promises to the people to whom He made them. We often regret our promises, but God never does!

What security there is here for all Jewish and Gentile believers! And what an encouragement this ought to be to us to pray for backsliden believers as well as for people we know and love who are not trusting in Christ.

In verses 30 through 32 the Apostle Paul continues with the same emphasis. And not the prominence of the word “mercy” in all three of these verses.

Verse 30

Here Paul is speaking of the Gentiles and to them, *i.e.*, Gentile believers. In times past, and this is probably a reference not only to the individual Gentile, but to God’s dealing with the Gentiles when the focus was upon Israel. Yet now when Israel rejected the Messiah, and the door was opened to the Gentiles, it spelled “mercy” for the Gentiles.

There are two words that we all use very frequently, words which are found often in the Bible, that we need to define as well as to distinguished between them. One is the word “mercy” which we have here in verses 30, 31, and 32. The other is the word “grace.” And this word is found in this chapter also, in verses 5 and 6. Paul also used it frequently in Romans 5. See verses 2, 15,17, 20, 21.

Mercy also finds its way into this book. In addition to the verses we are currently considering, see verses 15, 16, 18, 23.

We know that both of these words are involved in our salvation – the grace of God, and the mercy of God. Ephesians 2:8 tells us that it is “by grace through faith” that we are saved. In Titus Paul wrote about “the grace of God that bringeth salvation” (Tit. 2:11), but then in Titus 3:5 he said that it was “according to his mercy He saved us.” What is the difference, or is there a difference?

The answer to that question is that while they are very similar, yet there is a difference. Archbishop Trench, who was born in 1807 and died in 1886. He taught New Testament Greek in Oxford University’s King’s College for many years, and was a conservative high-churchman, according to one of his biographers, “of the best type. He wrote a book called, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, which was published by Cambridge in 1854. You all undoubtedly know what a synonym is, but just so we will all know, let me give you the dictionary definition. Synonyms are “two or more words of the same language having the same or nearly the same essential meaning.” Two words in the Greek language that fall into that category and “grace” and “mercy.” And the Bible would certainly be an important source of help in explaining these words by the way they are used in the Scriptures.

Archbishop Trench says in his *Synonyms* that a simple way of remembering the difference between these salvation words is that grace has to do with guilt, but that mercy has to do with misery. And both of them have to do with sin. The Greek word for grace is χάρις, pronounced *karis*, sometimes spelled *charis*. The greek word for “mercy” is ἔλεος, pronounced *eleos*. In the copy of Trench’s book that I have, he has five pages devoted to these two words, but I just want to read most of one of those pages to you because they give such a good description of these words. And you will see from his description that he really understood the truth of salvation. Listen to what he wrote:

In the Divine mind, and in the order of our salvation as conceived therein, the ἔλεος precedes the χάρις. God so *loved* the world with a pitying love (here in was the ἔλεος), that He *gave* His only begotten Son (herein the χάρις), that the world through Him might be saved . . . But in the order of the manifestation of God’s purposes of salvation the grace must go before the mercy, the χάρις must go before and make way for the ἔλεος. It is true that the same persons are the subjects of both, being at once the guilty and the miserable; yet the righteousness of God, which it is quite as necessary should be maintained as His love, demands that the guilt should be done away, before the mercy can be assuages; only the forgiven are blessed. He must pardon, before He can heal; men must be justified before they can be sanctified. And as the righteousness of God absolutely and in itself requires this, so no less that

righteousness as it has expressed itself in the more constitution of man, linking as it thee has done misery with guilt, and making the first the inseparable companion of the second. From this it follows that in each of the apostolic salutations where these words occur, χάρις precedes ἔλεος (1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4; 2 John 3; . . .); nor could the order have been reversed. Χάρις on the same grounds precedes ἐπιήνη (1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; and often) (p. 171).

I would only add to Trench's words here what he also mentioned in his article on these two words that both are gifts from God for which we have no part to pay, nor does God expect it. And both cases we receive the very opposite from what we deserve because of our sins.

And so here in verse 30 Paul was saying that we Gentiles who did not believe God in the past, have now obtained mercy through the unbelief of the Jew.

Verse 31

This verse is about the Jews. It was the purpose of God that through the mercy in salvation that God has extended to the Gentiles, the Jews might be provoked to jealousy (see verse 11) so that they would turn to Christ to receive mercy from Him.

Verse 32

So, as we come to the conclusion of what Paul had to say about the salvation of Jews and Gentiles, it is clear that both groups are guilty of sin, and under the judgment of God, with nothing to commend either group to God. And so their only hope is in the love and mercy and tender compassion of a holy God. But as Trench brought out, it was through the death of our Savior that our sins were atoned for. Consequently God has extended the call of salvation to all, but we all are so hardened in our sins that God not only has to call, but He has mercy upon those whom He chooses to have mercy. And He graciously draws His elect to Himself, never to turn any of them away.

And this point the Apostle Paul was obviously overwhelmed by the grace and mercy of God, and how God in His infinite wisdom had an eternal plan for reaching both Jews and Gentiles, that He bursts out in his heart and through the pen of Tertius (see 16:22) with praise and adoration to the God of our salvation.

And so we come to:

E. Paul's Doxology (11:33-36).

Verse 33

In Psalm 113:2 and 3 we have these two wonderful verses:

2 Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore.

3 From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD's name is to be praised.

The Apostle Paul sent this word to the believers at Ephesus:

20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:20).

If we were to literally fulfill these words, and we should, we would never do anything else. But neither the Psalmist nor the Apostle Paul were that unreasonable as to expect we would never do anything but praise and thank and worship the Lord. What they meant was this was the spirit in which we are to live. No matter what happens in our lives, there is always something, and often many *some things* for which we can and should praise

the Lord. And this leads me to ask, “What have you praised the Lord for today?” And I also need to ask, “What have *I* praised the Lord for today?” As you sit here in this class, and as I stand before you, what are we in our hearts giving thanks to the Lord for? Were our first words in prayer this morning, words of praise? And will our last words before we go to sleep tonight, be words of thanksgiving? I confess to you that I have a lot to learn about this. We can always find things to complain about, and we are born experts in that. It takes us a long time to get our babies to smile at us, but they are born crying because they are unhappy about something.

Psalm 113 begins with the words, “Praise the Lord.” And it ends with the words, “Praise the Lord.” How easy it is to read over those verses without ever thinking about praising the Lord.

Paul, in coming to the end of the doctrinal part of his letter to the church at Rome, found himself praising the Lord. His heart was overwhelmed with the truth of the Gospel. Barnes, in his commentary on Romans, in commenting upon the word “riches” here in verse 32, had this to say:

The word denotes the abundant blessings and mercies which had been conferred on sinful people by the gospel. These were vast and wonderful. The pardon of sin; the atonement; the hope of heaven; the peace of the gospel; all bestowed on the sinful, the poor, the wretched, and the dying; all bespeak the great mercy and rich grace of God. So every pardoned sinner may still exclaim. The grace of God which pardons him is felt to be indeed wonderful, and past comprehension. It is beyond the power of language to express; and all that the Christian can do, is to follow the example of the apostle, and sit down in profound admiration of the rich grace of God.

Above everything else we need to be thankful for our Lord Jesus Christ, the gift of God, and the Gospel which has been provided for us. He got to this point in dictating his letter to Tertius (see Rom. 16:22), and his heart was overwhelmed to the point that he had to offer his praise to God. I hope that the truth we have learned in studying Romans has had the same effect upon us.

Paul’s words here are not many, but they are worth memorizing and making our own. Let’s see what he had to say to his fellow-believers in the church at Rome.

Some MSS of the NT indicate that verse 33 ought to read, “O the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God” – so that he was marveling at three things, and not just two. “Depth” ought to remind us of the vastness of an ocean. It speaks of that which is really incomprehensible in the fullest sense of the word. It is that which is unfathomable and unsearchable. We can never reach the bottom of these great truths.

What did Paul mean by “riches”? Right here in Romans see 2:4; 9:23; 11:12. But see also Eph. 1:7, 18; Col. 2:2.

What did he mean by “wisdom”? Here is probably refers to the glory of the Gospel, God’s plan of salvation. It includes, as we have seen God’s way of justifying sinners, then sanctifying them, and ultimately glorifying them. And all of this being provided for Jews and Gentiles alike in all generations.

But then how does the word “knowledge” apply? We can think of the possibility, theoretically, that God would provide this wonderful salvation, but that nobody would want it. The Bible tells us that “there is none that seeketh after God.” We know that is true, not only because it is in the Word, but because we know how people in the world feel about the Gospel. In my younger days I used to hear missionaries appealing for young people to go to the foreign mission field by saying that people in all of the nations of the earth are waiting to hear the Gospel. But I learned later that that was not true. Foreigners don’t want the Gospel any more than Americans want the Gospel.

So what has God done? This is His knowledge. He not only knew what acceptance with God required, the

death of a perfect substitute, but He chose those whom He was going to save. He sent the Holy Spirit into the world to make sure that they heard the Gospel, that they were convicted of their sinful and lost condition. But that same Holy Spirit would draw the elect to Christ, cause them to be born again, and grant them faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

God did not waste the work of His Son. And throughout human history we have seen, and are seeing, God's work of salvation upon undeserving sinners. It is all by grace, a gift, not by works. And we are commissioned to take the Gospel to the whole world, not knowing who will be saved, but knowing that some, even many, will be saved.

And the way God goes about this, and the people that He saved, just cannot be fully understood. We cannot understand how two people will listen to the same message of salvation; one will be brought under deep conviction of sin, and seek the Savior; the other will go away untouched by the Gospel. Or how a person may reject the Gospel for years, and then ultimately be saved. Just about the time we think that we have the Lord figured out, then He does something that we have never even considered.

Verse 34

Verse 33 has to do with God and His great and glorious Gospel, making sure that Christ did not die in vain. But in this verse and verse 35 we look at man. Three times Paul asks "Who . . .?"

The questions in this verse are taken from Isaiah 40:13 and 14. Let me read those verses for you:

13 Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him?

14 With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding? (Isa. 40:13-14).

Paul asked a very similar question which we find in 1 Corinthians 2:16:

16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

Barnes has an excellent comment on this verse and these questions:

It is designed to express the infinite wisdom and knowledge of God, by affirming that no being could teach him, or counsel him. Earthly monarchs have counsellors of state, whom they may consult in times of perplexity or danger. But God has no such council. He sits alone; nor does he call in any or all of his creatures to advise him. All created beings are not qualified to contribute anything to enlighten or to direct him. It is also designed to silence all opposition to his plans, and to hush all murmurings. The apostle had proved that this was the plan of God. However mysterious and inscrutable it might appear to the Jew or the Gentile, yet it was his duty to submit to God, and to confide in his wisdom, though he was not able to trace the reason of his doings.

The Scriptures make it clear that our salvation *in its entirety* was all planned before the foundation of the world and so it was before there were any human beings to give God advice. We often think that we know of ways that are better than God's, but they never are, and never could be!

Remember that we are expected to answer the questions that we find in the Bible. But make sure that you are answering them correctly.

Verse 35

What is the answer to this question? No one! None of us, and no one else, *ever* took the first step in our rela-

tionship with God. It always and only starts with God.

There is a hymn in our Trinity Hymnal which expresses this truth in a very wonderful way. We don't know who wrote the words, but it was written in the early 1900's. And it's a hymn that really needs to be in every hymnal. But sometimes we don't really pay attention to the words of a hymnal until we read them without the music. Listen to the words of this hymn. It is #397 in our hymnal:

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

Thou didst reach forth Thy hand and mine enfold;
I walked and sank not on the storm-vexed sea,
'Twas not so much that I on Thee took hold,
As Thou, dear Lord, on me.

I find, I walk, I love, but, O the whole
Of love is but my answer, Lord, to Thee;
For Thou wert long beforehand with my soul,
Always Thou lovest me.

So no man has ever done something for God, so that God has been obligated to save him. That would be salvation by works. But salvation is by grace. *Nobody has ever deserved salvation. We deserve hell.* So God was not rewarding us for something we have done when He saved us. If He had rewarded us, He would have condemned us eternally. But instead of giving us what we deserved, if we are saved, He gave us what we could never deserve, never earn, never pay for.

And now we come to this wonderful last verse of the doctrinal section of Romans, a verse which give us the Gospel "in a nutshell." That phrase is often used of John 3:16, but it is true also of Romans 11:36.

Verse 36

This is what salvation is. It is:

- 1) It is "of Him, ἐξ αὐτοῦ.
- 2) "And through Him," καὶ δ' αὐτοῦ,
- 3) "And to Him, καὶ εἰς αὐτοῦ, are all things, τὰ πάντα.

This means concerning salvation that God is its Source, God is its Power, God is its Goal. From start to finish salvation is all of God, for His glory *forever*.

And then Paul added, "Amen," *so be it!* Paul wanted us all to leave it like that, and his prayer was that it would be fully realized in the experience of all of the elect.

But we are not finished with the epistle at the end of this chapter. We now have come to the practical section of the epistle. Now we walk by faith, and by God's grace through Whom we are saved, we seek to be conform to the likeness of Christ. But it is important that we have the truth of salvation firmly fixed in our minds and hearts as we now learn how the Lord wants us to live.