

# Romans 9-11

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## I. Introduction

1. In Romans 9-11 Paul treats one of the most bewildering problems that faced the early church – the problem of the Jews.

A. They were God's chosen people; they had a unique role in God's plan; yet when God's son came into this world the Jews rejected and crucified him.

B. Paul's purpose in these chapters is to explain this tragic paradox.

2. Paul was the perfect person to write about this problem. Why?

A. Because – although he was the apostle to the Gentiles – Paul was to the end of his life proudly, stubbornly, and unalterably a Jew.

B. In 2 Cor. 11:22 he wrote “Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I.”

a) When he claimed to be a *Hebrew* he was saying that unlike many Jews who had forgotten their native language in favor of Greek, he still spoke Hebrew.

b) When he claimed to be an *Israelite* he was claiming to be a member of the nation that had first received the covenants from God.

c) When he claimed to be of the *seed of Abraham* he was claiming absolute racial purity.

C. He made similar claims in Philippians 3:4-6 and Romans 11:1 where he also reminded his readers that he was of the tribe of *Benjamin*. Why was this important?

a) It was from Benjamin that the first king of Israel came.

b) Benjamin and Judah were the only two tribes that stood true to Rehoboam when the kingdom split.

c) Benjamin was the only son of Jacob that was born in the land of promise.

d) When Israel went to battle, the tribe of Benjamin held the post of honor (Judges 5:14; Hosea 5:8).

D. Paul was not just an Israelite; he was of the *aristocracy* of Israel.

a) Indeed, he was a Pharisee. (Phil. 3:5; Acts 23:6). (His fellow Pharisees even rose to his support in Acts 23.)

E. No Jewish critic of Paul could ever criticize his Jewishness.

a) No one could say that Paul abandoned Judaism because he did not understand it or because he had not fully experienced it.

b) No one could say that Paul misunderstood Judaism or knew it only from the outside.

c) Like an insider who writes a tell-tale memoir he knew Judaism inside and out and gained instant respect (in that regard) from his critics.

3. But Paul does not write this section out of anger toward his fellow Jews; he writes it out of heartbreak.

4. He also never denies that the Jews played a unique role in God's plan of bringing the Messiah to the world.

5. Why did Paul write these chapters?

A. He is returning to questions he raised briefly earlier in the book. Here he will consider them in detail.

B. God made promises to physical Jews, yet according to Paul's teaching the bulk of physical Jews were unblessed.

C. The problem Paul faces is to reconcile God's faithfulness to those whom he gave promises when the bulk of them were cut off from those blessings.

D. These chapters are a defense of God's faithfulness.

## II. Chapter 9

<sup>1</sup> I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, <sup>2</sup> that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. <sup>3</sup> For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh,

1. Paul prefaces his remarks by saying that he is speaking the truth in Christ.

A. Paul often uses the phrase “I am speaking the truth... I am not lying.” See, for example, 2 Cor. 11:31, 2 Cor. 12:6, Gal. 1:20, and 1 Tim. 2:7.

B. This statement, of course, does not mean that Paul is not speaking the truth elsewhere! This expression is simply intended to show the depth of Paul’s feelings about this subject. This problem really struck home for the apostle Paul.

2. Paul makes it clear from the start that he loves the Jewish people.

A. He is not a renegade that is dissatisfied with his heritage and is seeking to defame it.

B. He is living with the pain of watching his own people live apart from their Messiah when they could so easily be enjoying God’s promises.

3. But look at what Paul is saying here! He is telling the Jews that they are lost without Jesus Christ. How could someone so intolerant be characterized as loving?

A. If he really loved them, wouldn’t he tell them what they wanted to hear? Paul has made them unhappy – doesn’t that automatically imply that Paul has been unloving? No.

B. Paul loves the Jews, and thus he is telling them the truth about their condition. If you truly love someone the **worst** thing you can do is to make them think they are right with God when they are not.

C. Most people don’t want to go to a doctor who tells them just what they want to hear – they want a doctor who gives them an accurate diagnosis and tells them how to fix the problem. And yet what kind of preacher do most people want?

4. The depth of Paul’s love and concern is expressed by the phrase “*for I could wish.*”

A. The tense in the Greek indicates that Paul had often felt this way and in fact continued to feel this way. He had not simply had this thought once and then quickly dismissed it.

B. This section is even more meaningful when we remember that Paul at one time intensely persecuted the church and even caused some Jewish Christians to blaspheme. He now would be accursed himself if he could only undo the damage that he had once caused.

5. This section reminds us of Moses who like Paul felt so strongly about his people that he wished to be cut off for their sake. Recall Exodus 32:30–32 where we read:

On the morrow Moses said to the people, ‘You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.’ So Moses returned to the Lord and said, ‘Alas, this people have sinned a great sin; they have made for themselves gods of gold. But now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.’

A. Paul, like Moses, was trying to deliver his people from their slavery and bondage.

B. Of course, it was Jesus rather than either Moses or Paul who really became a substitute.

a) In Rom. 8:32 we read that God gave his son up for us all—Jesus was our substitute.

b) (2 Corinthians 5:21 “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”)

6. Note from verse 3 of chapter 9 that Paul is speaking here of his kinsmen according to the *flesh*. We need to keep this important contextual clue in mind as we continue our study.

<sup>4</sup> who are Israelites, to whom *pertain* the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; <sup>5</sup> of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

7. In this section Paul lists the advantages of the Jews – and they did have many advantages.

A. But with great advantage, comes great responsibility. (Luke 12:48 “For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required.”)

8. What were those advantages?

A. Paul’s kinsmen were *Israelites*; that is, they were descendants of Abraham and Jacob.

a) The name Israel was a name of distinction and Paul used it here to recall their unique place in history. It is used many times in the New Testament as a title of honor.

B. The '*adoption*' that Paul speaks of refers to God's choice of Israel as a people for His own possession.

a) Recall Deut. 14:2 where we read:

For you are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth.

b) Paul, as in Isaiah 51:1, is saying to the Jews, "Consider the rock from which you were hewn." They had been chosen by God. What an incredible honor!

C. The *glory* that Paul recalls refers to is the glory of God that was manifested through Israel's deliverance from Egypt.

a) The Greek term used here for glory indicates the divine radiance; what has been called the visible manifestation of the invisible God.

D. Paul speaks of the *covenants* (plural) instead of the covenant (singular).

a) To deduce what covenants Paul has in mind we need to recall that he is speaking to physical Jews—his kinsmen according to the flesh. Thus he must be referring to the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Aaronic, and Davidic covenants.

E. 'The giving of the law' recalls Mount Sinai, which is considered by the Jews to be the central event in Jewish history.

F. The 'worship' or 'service of God' speaks of the whole sacrificial and priestly system of Israel.

a) Hebrews speaks of the first tabernacle as having "ordinances of divine service" (9:1) and of priests who "serve" the copy (8:5) and "serve" the earthly tabernacle (13:10).

b) It was Israel's privilege to serve God in ways that no other nation could. For much of the world's history, the proper object and character of true worship had been revealed only to the Jews.

G. The '*promises*' recall the Messianic promises of the prophets. From the first such promise in Gen. 3:15 to the last in Mal. 3:1 all had been fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

H. The *'patriarchs'* or *'fathers'* were Jews; they were not Gentiles. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were part of Israel's heritage.

a) Paul is listing the honors of Israel and the list is neither short nor unimpressive.

I. Finally, Paul reminds the Jews that the Messiah came out of the Jewish race.

a) There is a definite article before 'Christ.' Paul is saying that *the* Messiah is Jewish according to the flesh.

b) Here Paul reaches the pinnacle of all the Jewish privileges—when God chose to enter the world, he did so as a Jew!

9. Despite some modern translations (most notably the RSV), the doxology (hymn of praise to God) in verse 5 is not directed toward God the Father but toward God the Son.

A. To say otherwise is to wrest Paul's grand conclusion directly from its context.

B. The NKJV translation of verse 5 is correct: "Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen."

C. As you know, the RSV has problems with the deity of Christ. (At least one of the translators for the RSV did not believe in the deity of Christ.) The RSV has: "to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed for ever. Amen." That translation should be rejected for several reasons:

a) The fact that in the preceding clause Paul has commented on Christ's human nature makes it reasonable to believe that he would now say something about his divine nature.

b) The rendering, "Let God be blessed forever" would be a doxology in honor of God. It is Paul's custom in such doxologies to include in a preceding line a reference to God. He does this in Rom. 1:25, Gal. 1:4–5, 2 Cor. 11:31, and 2 Tim. 4:18. He does not do so here.

c) It would seem unusual that Paul would insert a doxology to God after complaining about Israel's unbelief. It would be like a missionary writing back to a congregation and saying "Even though the people I am teaching have many advantages there have been very few conversions. Praise the Lord!"

10. In reviewing these unique blessings, Paul is seemingly making his problem more difficult.

A. How could such a privileged people be cut off from the promises of God? Was God faithless to his promises? Had his promises come to nothing?

<sup>6</sup> But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel,

11. Paul insists of course that the word of God has not failed.

A. Right away we can see the direction that Paul is taking in his answer. He begins with a lesson on 'selection' or 'election.'

B. That they are not all Israel who are of Israel implies that there is a part of Israel that is Israel.

C. Note that Paul is not discussing Gentiles at all at this point. (That is, the true Israel in verse 6 is not a figure for the Church. The context for verse 6 is found in verse 3 – Paul is still concerned about his countrymen *according to the flesh*.)

D. Paul wants us to know that within physical Israel there are physical Israelites who are Israelites indeed.

12. How, though, does this distinction deal with the problem?

A. Paul insists that the word of God has not failed. But if God's promises had been made to physical Jews and not all of the physical Jews were blessed, then wasn't God faithless?

B. Paul's answer is that only a faithful Jew is a real Jew. The unblessed Jews are not really Jews! They have the flesh but not the faith. They are children only of the flesh, just like Ishmael.

13. Paul insists that although the blessings were offered to all physical Jews they were appropriated by faith.

A. Those who were intended to inherit the promises were faithful Jews. The real heir of the promises to the Jews is a faithful physical Jew.

14. Note the parallel between this explanation and the situation of the entire world with respect to Christ's promises.

A. 1 John 2:1 says that Christ is the expiation for the sins of the whole world. 1 Timothy 4:10 says that Jesus is the savior of all men, especially of

those who believe. 2 Peter 2:1 implies that Christ purchased everyone at his death.

B. Thus, Christ died for all and offers salvation to all but only those who appropriate that promise through faith will actually inherit the blessing.

C. Is God faithless because few will find the narrow way and be saved? No! The promise of salvation is conditioned on faith.

D. If there is no condition then 2 Peter 3:9 (God does not wish that any should perish) and 1 Timothy 2:4 (God desires all men to be saved) logically imply that all men will be saved.

E. Does man have to do anything to be saved? Peter was asked that very question in Acts 2:37 and provided the answer in Acts 2:38. Does man then earn his salvation through his own actions. No! Paul answers that question in Ephesians 2:8–9.

15. There are four (and only four) options that are open to us:

A. Here are our four options:

a) God made promises to all of Jacob's descendants and those promises were unconditional.

b) God made promises to all of Jacob's descendants and those promises were conditional.

c) God made promises to some of Jacob's descendants and those promises were unconditional.

d) God made promises to some of Jacob's descendants and those promises were conditional.

B. Number 1 is out because it would mean that no Jew could ever be lost and the Bible gives many examples of Jews that were lost.

a) In fact, Paul's very problem is to explain why so many Jews are lost! Since Paul's day countless Jews have died without Christ and hence, according to Acts 4:12, have been lost.

C. Number 3 and Number 4 contradict Romans 9:4–5, which clearly teaches that the promises were extended to all physical Jews.

a) Peter in Acts 3 and Paul in Acts 13 both treat faithless Jews as having had the promises extended to them.

D. Number 2 is the only remaining option.



a) Further, it makes sense of all the evidence. It explains why the millions of unblessed Jews pose a problem (they had the promises extended to them) and further it explains the way out of the problem (those promises were conditional).

<sup>7</sup> nor are *they* all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called."

16. Verse 6 must have startled the Jews.

A. Particularly when they realized that Paul, a Jewish aristocrat, was saying that before he found Christ he wasn't really a Jew at all.

B. Verse 7 did not make them feel any better.

17. Here Paul reminds the Jews that they are not the only seed of Abraham.

A. If the blessings and honor rested solely on physical kinship with Abraham, Ishmael and all of the Arabs would be equal heirs of those blessings.

B. But scripture teaches that such is not the case.

a) God chose Isaac and rejected Ishmael as the chosen line.

b) In fact, in Genesis 22:2, 12 God refers to Isaac as Abraham's **only** son.

18. Although the Jews would be glad to hear that the Arabs are not heirs, Paul is reminding them that the consequence of the Arab's position is that kinship with Abraham does not alone guarantee blessings.

A. Paul is proving to the Jews using their own scriptures that their fleshly connection is not enough to guarantee blessing.

<sup>8</sup> That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. <sup>9</sup> For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son."

19. Isaac was more than Abraham's physical child; he was a child of promise.

A. God chose Isaac over Ishmael before either was even born.

B. The child that was to be Abraham's true seed would be a child of promise and this promise was made in Genesis 15 prior to the birth of either Ishmael or Isaac.

C. Isaac was God's idea. The whole history of Israel began with God's promises and kindness.

20. The eternal salvation of Isaac and Ishmael is not the point here at all. What is the point?

A. Paul had just listed many advantages enjoyed by the Jews. Paul's point here is that the Jews had not received those blessings due to their own merit. Instead, they had received these blessings because God chose them to receive them.

B. The Jews were the chosen people --- and God did the choosing. Paul is not saying that these choices by God were that some would be saved and some would be lost. Indeed, the whole point here is that the majority of these chosen people are lost people!

21. Calvinists read these verses and conclude that God chooses some to eternal salvation and some to eternal damnation before they are even born – but that sort of idea was the very thing that Paul was refuting here!

A. God's choice of the Jews did not mean that the Jews were okay apart from Christ.

B. These choices are depicted almost as arbitrary – God chose one son over another son before either was born. The implication is that it could have easily gone the other way.

C. But for one choice by God long ago, the roles of the Arabs and the Jews would have been reversed! Is that the foundation these Jews are resting on?

D. The Jews were God's chosen people, and they were resting on that relationship as a firm foundation.

E. Paul is knocking that prop out from under them and pointing them instead to the true foundation – a relationship with Jesus Christ.

<sup>10</sup> And not only *this*, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac <sup>11</sup> (for *the children* not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), <sup>12</sup> it was said to her, "The older shall serve the

younger.”<sup>13</sup> As it is written, “Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.”

22. The same issues that arose with Ishmael and Isaac also arose with Esau and Jacob.

A. Esau and Jacob were both sons of Isaac, and Esau, not Jacob, was the firstborn, yet God chose Jacob over Esau. God chose between two people from the same family—he rejected one and chose the other.

a) The Jews who may have initially been shocked by this idea of selection are now getting a Bible full of it!

b) The Jews might have explained Ishmael away as being illegitimate, but that would not work here. Esau and Jacob were both legitimate sons of Isaac.

23. “But wait,” the Jews say, “Esau was rejected because he sold his birthright.”

A. Wrong, Paul responds. Jacob was chosen while both were still in the womb. In Genesis 25:23 we read:

Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples, born of you, shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger.

B. That is, the choice was made before the children were born—before they had done anything good or bad. Why? So the purpose of election might continue.

C. That is, God wanted to cut away the ground of any Jew who claimed that his relationship with God was based on merit or law-keeping.

D. The very factors being discussed are those the Jews claimed as the ground of their special relationship with God: flesh and law.

a) They have now learned that neither fleshly connection nor moral performance is the basis of their blessing.

b) They weren't the issues when Isaac was chosen over Ishmael, they weren't the issues when Jacob was chosen over Esau, and they aren't the issues now.

c) No Jew can demand a blessing from God because of his fleshly connection or moral performance.

24. Note that when God speaks of Jacob and Esau in Genesis 25:23 he speaks about them as nations and not as individuals.

A. So while the choice was made between individuals, God regarded it as a choice between nations. Not only does the text say this, but history tells us this as well.

B. As far as the individuals went, the elder did **not** serve the younger.

a) In Genesis 27 Jacob fled to Laban because Esau was trying to kill him.

b) In Genesis 32 Jacob is scared to death of Esau and sends his family ahead to soften him up.

c) In Genesis 33:3 Jacob bowed to the ground seven times when Esau approached.

C. Thus the elder serving the younger must refer to the nations that Jacob and Esau represented.

25. Next Paul quotes Malachi 1:2–3 where God says “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

A. The context in Malachi clearly indicates that God is speaking to nations and not individuals.

B. Some look at Malachi 1:2–3, assume it speaks of individuals, and then claim that Jacob was predestined to be saved and Esau predestined to be lost prior to their birth. Yet this view doesn’t hold water!

C. In Hebrews 11:20 we see that Isaac by faith invoked future blessings on **both** Jacob and Esau. So whatever we say of Esau (and hence of all his descendants) we **cannot** say he was an eternally damned, God-hated man prior to his birth.

D. Further, if God hated Esau prior to his birth (as Calvinists believe) then God hated him without cause since Esau had not yet done anything good or bad. Why did Jesus indict the Jews in John 15:23–25? Because they hated him without a cause.

26. God had made a distinction between children of the same father and different mothers. He had made a distinction between children of the same father and same mother—even before they were born.

A. Paul’s purpose here is to convince the Jews that they cannot rest on their position as God’s chosen people.

B. Those who wrench predestination from these verses should keep the context and Paul's purpose in mind.

C. The selection Paul has in mind involves the covenants of promise and not the offer of salvation in Christ.

D. This is also clear from Ephesians 2:12 where we find that the Gentiles were strangers to the covenants of promise yet could still accept the offer of eternal salvation.

27. The next objection that Paul deals with is that to some God's choices may seem unfair.

A. All that Paul has said is contrary to the traditional way that a Jew looked at things—earning power must count for something with God.

B. Esau must have earned his rejection and Jacob must have earned his acceptance. Otherwise, how could God avoid a charge of partiality? Let's see how Paul responds to that one...

<sup>14</sup> What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! <sup>15</sup> For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." <sup>16</sup> So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

28. Paul's first point is to remind his readers that God was merciful to the Israelites even though they did not deserve that mercy.

A. Deut. 9:4–29 makes that point very clear. (Verse 6: "Your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness." Verse 24: "You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you.")

B. Paul's quote from Exodus 33:16 stresses the quality of mercy as distinct from (but not opposed to) the quality of justice.

29. God's mercy does not make him unjust.

A. God is not compelled to extend mercy to anyone. If he chooses to do so, he does it.

B. The Jews felt that God was obligated to them. Paul is saying that He is not. (Paul is also implying that if the Jews knew the scriptures they would realize that He is not.)

C. Mercy is a result of God's free and sovereign will and not a result of man's will or performance. No man deserves or merits the mercy of God. If mercy is deserved, then how is it mercy?

<sup>17</sup> For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." <sup>18</sup> Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

30. In this passage from Exodus 9:16 God makes it clear that Pharaoh had served God's purpose in refusing to let the Israelites leave Egypt. What was that purpose?

A. Pharaoh allowed God to demonstrate His power to the entire earth. God used a wicked man to manifest His power.

B. But why did God choose this particular Pharaoh and not his father or his son? Because God has the sovereign right to do whatever he wants to do!

a) David in Psalm 115:3 reminds us that God does whatever he pleases.

b) Now we need to be careful here.

(1) 1 Timothy 2:4 tells us that God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." So if God wants all men to be saved and if God does whatever he pleases, then why aren't all men saved?

(2) The answer is that God does whatever he pleases, but what he pleases will never violate His nature.

(3) For example, God cannot lie. (Hebrews 6:18) So, it will never please God to tell a lie.

(4) God desires that all men be saved. Thus, it pleased Him to provide a plan by which all men could be saved. But it could not please God to choose some people to be lost before they are even born. Why? Because that action by God would cause His statement in 1 Timothy 2:4 to be a lie.

31. What then does it mean when it says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart?

A. First, let's recall the setting for this story.

a) Moses was not conducting a Bible study with Pharaoh when God suddenly rushed in and hardened Pharaoh's heart.

- b) Pharaoh had arrayed himself against God right from the start—in fact, he considered himself to be a god.
- c) Nowhere in the Bible is there a single example of God hardening the heart of someone who is seeking him. To those people God says “Seek and ye shall find.” (Matthew 7:7)
- d) God hardens only those who have actively chosen to reject him.
- e) In 2 Thess. 2:11 we read that God sent on some a strong delusion that they would believe a lie. To whom did he send this delusion? He sent it to those who had refused to believe the truth but instead had pleasure in unrighteousness.
- f) Pharaoh was not seeking the truth when God hardened his heart; Pharaoh was standing in opposition to the plan of God.

32. But *how* does God harden someone’s heart?

- A. First, this hardening is part of God’s judicial work—it is directed only at those who have refused to do God’s will.
- B. The result of this hardening is that people become increasingly insensitive to God’s word.
- C. The hardened person moves further and further away from God. How is this accomplished? God deliberately forces a person to choose even though he knows that the person will choose what is wrong.
- D. In Exodus 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1; 10:20; 10:27; 11:10; 14:4; 14:8; 14:17 God said that he hardened Pharaoh’s heart. What does this mean?
  - a) First, was God the *only* cause of Pharaoh’s hardened heart? No. In Exodus 8:32; 9:34 and 1 Samuel 6:6 we see that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Further, in Exodus 7:22 it is implied that Pharaoh’s magicians also contributed to the hardness of his heart.
  - b) What did God do to harden Pharaoh’s heart? God hardened his heart by making demands that Pharaoh rejected! Similarly, we contribute to the hardening of men’s hearts when we teach people the gospel and they reject the message.
  - c) How did the magicians harden Pharaoh’s heart? They imitated some of the plagues and made Pharaoh think that the plagues were not God’s doing.
- E. Without God’s demands we cannot harden our hearts against him.

a) When he makes a demand he gives us a choice; we can accept his demand or harden our heart against his demand.

b) In either case, the choice is ours – but God's approach to us initiated the choice and hence it is right to say (if we reject him) that he hardened our heart.

33. Does God harden the hearts of believers? Absolutely not!

A. In 2 Corinthians 3:12-16 Paul says that the unbelieving Jews are hardened when they read the old law apart from Christ, but when they turn to Christ the hardness is removed.

B. In Hebrews 3:13 we read that we are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, and in Hebrews 3:15 and 4:7 we are instructed not to harden our own hearts.

34. Is there something mysterious in God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart? Does he harden people today? Are the Jews being restrained from believing because God has hardened their hearts and will not let them believe? No, to all three questions.

A. We harden our hearts when we choose the world over God and we become increasingly hardened every time we make that choice.

B. God's only contribution to the hardness of our heart is the demands he makes upon us. Without the demands there would be no hardness of heart against him.

C. When Pharaoh rejected God, God did not back off. Instead, God *increased* the demands that he was making on Pharaoh.

D. In that sense, God hardened Pharaoh's heart even further. God's part in the hardening was to force Pharaoh to make a choice; Pharaoh's part was to make the wrong choice.

E. God knew that Pharaoh would rebel against his requests and, by God's continued asking, Pharaoh was driven deeper into rebellion. Yet the choice was his at each step, and each step God demonstrated his power to the world.

F. Pharaoh served God by his disobedience just as much as Moses served God by his obedience. Is this just? Of course! It is well within God's right to demand obedience of any man—even if God knows ahead of time that that man will choose to disobey.

35. What is the message to the Jews?



A. Pharaoh served God's purposes but was justly condemned for his rebellion. The faithless Jews who also served God's purpose are in the same boat.

B. Paul next deals with a possible objection to his argument – how can God blame someone whom He has hardened?

C. As we continue, let's recall the context of this whole discussion: Paul is defending the faithfulness of God. How can it be that God is faithful to his promises if ALL of the Jews received the promised but the MAJORITY of the Jews failed to receive those promised blessings?

<sup>19</sup> You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" <sup>20</sup> But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" <sup>21</sup> Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? <sup>22</sup> What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, <sup>23</sup> and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, <sup>24</sup> even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

36. Paul thus asks in verse 19: Why does God find fault with those he has hardened—can they resist his will?

A. First, as we saw, God's only part in the hardening of the Jews was to make demands that the Jews rejected. They became more and more hardened as God continued to make more and more demands. At any point they could have turned and obeyed God, but they did not. It is not God's desire that any should perish. (2 Peter 3:9 and 1 Timothy 2:4).

B. Second, God has often used evil men to fulfill His own purposes. Does that mean he caused or wanted them to be evil? Certainly not! They were evil and God simply recognized that fact and used them as he saw fit.

C. Would anyone really say that God is unable to use one of his rebellious creatures for his own purposes? Such a view would be ludicrous and that is how Paul treats it. Can a pot say to the potter: "Why have you made me this way?" or "Why are you using me for this purpose?"

D. Consider the example of Joseph's brothers in the book of Genesis. Did they do something evil? Yes. Did God use their evil action for something good? Yes.

a) In Genesis 50:19–20 Joseph said to his brothers that “You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.”

E. In Isaiah 10 the Assyrians did the will of God for their own purposes and were held accountable for it. Just because God is capable of working His own will out of the rebellion of man is no ground for excusing that rebellion.

37. But what about those vessels in verse 22 that were made for destruction? Isn't Paul teaching that they were predestined for damnation prior to their birth? No.

A. First, note in verse 22 that Paul says that God had endured those vessels with longsuffering. What is the purpose of God's longsuffering?

a) **(2 Peter 3:9)** “The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

b) **(Romans 2:4)** Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

c) If these vessels were damned to Hell beyond all hope from birth (as some teach), then why was God being longsuffering toward them? Certainly one reason was so that God could use them to show His power. But another reason was to lead them to repentance!

d) Paul is talking to these very same people in 2:4, where he says that God's longsuffering is to lead them to repentance. Has he changed his mind here in Chapter 9?

B. Second, the phrase “made [or prepared] for destruction” in verse 22 is not a good translation; a better translation is “fitted for destruction.”

a) *God* did not make these vessels fit for destruction; they made themselves fit for destruction when they chose to rebel against God.

b) The vessels fit for destruction can repent and become vessels of honor. How do we know that? Paul tells us in 2 Timothy.

c) In 2 Timothy 2:20–21 we read:

Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some unto honor, and some unto dishonor. <u>If a man therefore purge himself from these</u> , he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, meet for the master's use, prepared for every good work.
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d) Man determines whether he is a vessel for honor or dishonor; he alone is responsible.

e) This is not a new idea – Jeremiah said the same thing. In Jeremiah 18:6-8 we read:

<sup>6</sup> "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?" says the LORD. "Look, as the clay *is* in the potter's hand, so *are* you in My hand, O house of Israel! <sup>7</sup> "The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy *it*, <sup>8</sup> "if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it.

f) Remember -- It is not God's desire that any should perish. (2 Peter 3:9 and 1 Timothy 2:4). That statement would be a lie if God had individually predestined some people to eternal damnation prior to their birth.

g) Also, as we saw last week the promises to the Jews were extended to all Jews. If the promises had instead been extended to only some of the Jews, then these chapters could have been shortened considerably! Paul could simply have said those Jews never received the blessings because they weren't promised any blessings to begin with!

### 38. But what about those in verse 24 who are called by God?

A. Aren't these chosen or elected people predestined for salvation prior to their birth? After all, in verse 11 we saw that Jacob was chosen over Esau before either child was born.

B. First, as we saw last week, the choice of Jacob over Esau did not mean that Jacob was saved and Esau was lost. The choice was of one nation over another – not one son over another. Also, Isaac blessed both of his sons, not just one.

C. Second, just because some of God's choices were made prior to birth does not logically imply that every choice made by God is prior to birth.

a) Let's look at the two primary places where Paul uses this idea of election.

(1) **Romans 9:11** "(for *the children* not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls)"

(2) **Romans 11:5-6** "Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. <sup>6</sup> And if by grace, then it

is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if *it is* of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.”

b) Did you notice a theme? Paul’s point in each instance is to show that the choice was not based on the works of man. He supported that theme in two different ways.

(1) First, he supported it by pointing to examples in which the choice was made prior to birth – Isaac and Ishmael; Jacob and Esau. If the choice was made before birth, then how could it depend on works?

(2) Second, he supported it by pointing to examples in which the choice was made on the basis of grace. If the choice is based on grace, then how can it be based on works?

(3) From these examples we learn something very important: Not every choice made by God is made on the same basis. We just saw two different bases.

c) Well what about this second group? Weren’t they faithful because they were called? No! They were called because they were faithful.

(1) Paul describes them as the election of grace. And how did they obtain that grace?

(2) **Romans 5:1-2** “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

(3) See also **Romans 4:16** “Therefore *it is of faith* that *it might be* according to grace”

(4) **The elect in Romans 11 could not have been elected prior to their birth because they are the election of grace – and they entered that grace by faith.**

(5) As Paul says, no one can rely on a record of good works prior to their birth – but neither can anyone rely on their *faithfulness* prior to their birth.

(6) One entered the *Old* Covenant by a physical birth, but that was *not* God’s plan for the New Covenant.

(a) **Jeremiah 31:34** “No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD.”

(b) All of those under the New Covenant would know the Lord. Why? Because they would not enter the New Covenant until they

knew him, unlike the Old Covenant in which people were born into the Covenant and *then* had to learn about God.

D. The vessels of mercy are those that are elected or chosen from among the Jews. (Recall from verse 6 that they are not all Israel that are of Israel.)

<sup>25</sup> As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved." <sup>26</sup> "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God."

39. The issue here is whether this passage from Hosea speak of only the Jews or does it include the Gentiles as well.

A. I think verses 25–26 are properly applied to the Jews alone for several reasons:

a) Hosea had the Jews in mind.

b) The point of Paul's discussion here is to show the Jews that they, like the Gentiles, are in need of God's mercy.

(1) Everyone knew that the Gentiles needed mercy, but did the Jews need mercy? They were God's chosen people. They had all of those advantages. Could they really need mercy? Paul is telling them that they do.

c) The prophecies that follow from Isaiah clearly deal only with the Jews.

d) The salvation of Gentiles is considered in verse 30 but only after Paul makes his point about the Jewish need for mercy.

e) Although most English translations obscure it, verse 25 actually begins with an "also," which suggests that Paul is giving additional evidence rather than proving what he said in verse 24 about the Gentiles. That is, verses 25–26 provide additional evidence that the Jews stand in need of God's mercy.

f) The Old Testament never equates the Gentiles with "his people." They are "no people" in Deut. 32:21, and they are told to rejoice with "his people" in Deut. 32:43, but they are not called "his people."

B. If Paul is applying the quote from Hosea to the Gentiles, it certainly does not present any particular problem; it just doesn't fit in well with the context.

- a) Paul is not looking to the Old Testament here to find the Gentile's salvation; he is looking there to find the Jews' need for mercy.
- b) Everyone knew that the Gentiles needed mercy and that the Old Testament taught that they would obtain that mercy. What Paul's audience needed to understand was that they (the Jews) also needed God's mercy.
- c) The arrogance that Paul is battling is the same arrogance that Jesus encountered in John 8:33 where the Jews told him "We are descendants of Abraham, and have never been in bondage to any one. How is it that you say, 'You will be made free.'" They thought they had no need for a savior! Paul is reminding them that they do.
- d) This is the most difficult type of person to approach with the gospel.

(1) Why should someone obey the gospel when he feels he has no need for a savior.

(2) The Jews thought that they were fine—they had the law, they were Abraham's children, they were God's chosen people. Paul had to convince them that they needed something—they needed a savior.

(3) We face a similar problem today. The Jews of Paul's day and our modern society have something in common.

(a) Neither group thinks that it needs a savior. The Jews didn't need a savior because of their relation to Abraham and their Law. Modern society no longer needs a savior because it has done away with sin.

(b) How should we treat such an attitude? Let's see how Paul dealt with it. In Romans 1–3 Paul had one goal: he convinced both Jew and Gentile that they were lost in their sins without Jesus Christ.

(c) In Romans 3:23 Paul concludes that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Why did Paul put this at the beginning of his letter? **Because he knew that men would not believe the good news until they believed the bad news.** No one will seek a savior until they feel the need to be saved from something.

(d) Why does it sometimes seem today that the gospel has lost its appeal in our society? The answer is that we are preaching the good news to people who don't believe the bad news that they are lost.

<sup>27</sup> Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, The remnant will be saved. <sup>28</sup> For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, Be-

cause the LORD will make a short work upon the earth." <sup>29</sup> And as Isaiah said before: "Unless the LORD of Sabaoth had left us a seed, We would have become like Sodom, And we would have been made like Gomorrah."

40. Here Paul continues to make his point that God's blessings are not enjoyed by all Jews but instead are enjoyed by objects of his mercy that are called out of the Jews.

A. Paul's point here is that this doctrine is not new. Isaiah had spoken about a remnant many years earlier.

41. This first quote is from Isaiah 10:22.

A. Israel had appealed to Assyria for help and in doing so had despised God. God then brought Assyria against Israel as a punishment, but a remnant was saved.

B. Paul is saying that again Israel has despised God by rejecting his son, but again a remnant will be saved.

42. The second quote is from Isaiah 1:9.

A. This one is even more instructive. Why did God put up with Israel's repeated disobedience? Why didn't they end up like Sodom and Gomorrah? Because of the elect! Because of the remnant!

B. Israel had to survive so that God's process of election could continue.

<sup>30</sup> What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; <sup>31</sup> but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. <sup>32</sup> Why? Because *they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone.* <sup>33</sup> As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

43. After listening to Paul's arguments, the Jews next complain that again it does not seem fair that the Gentiles have received the blessings while most of the Jews have not. After all the Jews had been serving God all these years and the Gentiles had not.

A. There seems to be a veiled allusion here to Isaiah 65:1 where God said "I am found of them that sought me not."

a) The background for that statement is found in Isaiah 64 where Israel accepts part of the blame but suggest that part of their problem has been God himself.

b) He used to show himself (64:1–2) even when they weren't looking for him (64:3). But now, they say, he has hidden himself from them (64:7) and that is why no one looks for him.

c) But Isaiah 65:1 makes the point that God has **not** been hard to find. In fact, so easy is he to find that he is found by people who weren't looking for him.

d) No, the Jews can't blame their severance from God on His refusal to be found.

e) **It is not God's fault that the majority of the Jews are lost** – and this is a very important to remember as we get closer to Chapter 11. God has not been preventing the Jews from converting so that they can play some special role at the end of the world. If he were, then it would be his fault that they had not received the promised blessings!

44. Paul next says that the reason the Jews didn't find what they were looking for was because they refused to accept themselves as objects of mercy and come to God through faith.

A. Of course, we can't conclude that no Gentile, at any time, ever sought a right relationship with God any more than we are to conclude that no Israelite ever attained to righteousness by faith. The contrast here is on a national scale.

B. As a whole, Israel had always been a religious nation with the Messianic promises extended to them and with the Law revealed to them.

C. The Gentiles, on the whole, were a people to whom the law and the promises had not been revealed.

D. The people who put great stress on righteousness and following after God had found themselves outside of God while the Gentiles were in.

45. The righteousness that Paul has been stressing throughout the entire book of Romans is righteousness by faith.

A. Paul says that this righteousness has now been attained by a people who were not seeking righteousness through law.

B. And the people who on the whole and all along were pursuing righteousness that upholds the law had failed to attain to this righteousness by faith.



C. What did Israel seek? Righteousness or a law of righteousness? Verse 31 says they sought a *law* of righteousness. Righteousness itself was not their goal. They wanted a system of law that could make them righteous. That, as Paul will tell us, is why they stumbled at the idea that righteousness could be found apart from the law.

46. What did the Jews stumble over?

A. Paul here weaves together two scriptures that have the same basic meaning—Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16.

a) In both of these texts we're told of an Israel that wouldn't trust in God. They sought to save themselves by their trust in their own covenants with Assyria and Egypt.

b) Israel appealed to their own ingenuity, foreign militarism, alliances, and tributes. The only thing they did *not* trust in or appeal to was God.

c) They thought God was all right when it came to "churchy" things but when it came to real life he wasn't to be trusted. They stumbled over him when they refused to trust in him.

B. When God manifested himself in Christ the spirit of the Jew was no different.

a) To save themselves, the Jews made a covenant with death (Acts 2:23; John 11:47–50) and used Roman power in an attempt to gain their ends.

b) Christ was an offence to them, they stumbled over him.

(1) **1 Peter 2:6–8** "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." <sup>7</sup> Therefore, to you who believe, *He is* precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone," <sup>8</sup> and "A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed."

c) Throughout their history God had told them again and again that they should trust in Him only, but they did not.

d) Paul says that now Christ is the foundation on which they must place their trust, but just as Israel had often rejected God, they were now rejecting Christ. Instead of trusting in him, the unbelieving Jews trusted in themselves.

e) They refused to accept their place as objects of mercy. Why? Because of hardness, pride, and legalism. In Chapter 10 Paul will rip away all of their excuses for continuing outside of Christ.

### III. Chapter 10

1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. <sup>2</sup> For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

#### 1. Again we see that Paul does not hate his people.

A. Indeed, he knows how they feel because he once felt that way himself. He does not want them to be lost; he wants them to be saved.

B. Were the Jews sincere? Yes. Did the Jews have a zeal for God? Yes. Were the Jews lost? Yes.

C. Here we see sincere people with a zeal for God who have not found him. To listen to some among us today, you would not think such a thing was possible. Can sincere people with a zeal for God be lost? Paul says they can.

D. But Paul wants the Jews to be saved, and he will explain how they can be saved.

#### 2. People can be divided into four groups.

A. Those with a zeal for God, but with no knowledge.

a) The faithless Jews were in this category.

b) **Hosea 4:6** My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.

c) What you don't know can kill you!

B. Those with no zeal for God, but with knowledge.

a) Mark Twain once described someone in this group as "a solemn, unsmiling, sanctimonious old iceberg who looked like he was waiting for a vacancy on the Trinity."

C. Those with no zeal for God, and with no knowledge.

a) This is no doubt the largest category.

b) As Ambrose Bierce observed, this group follows the teachings of Christ in so far as they are not inconsistent with a life of sin.

D. Those with a zeal for God, and with knowledge.

a) This, of course, is the category to be in. We in the church must have knowledge, but we must also have a zeal for God.

<sup>3</sup> For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

3. The Jews prided themselves on their knowledge about God but Paul says they lack knowledge.

A. What knowledge did they lack? They were deeply ignorant in one important area—they were ignorant of their own need.

B. They were ignorant of the one path to God. Instead they sought to establish their own path to God through their own moral performance. They sought salvation without Jesus.

C. Paul reminds them that justification through faith is not a new doctrine but was taught in the Old Testament. Nowhere has God told man that he can be justified through his own moral performance—unless that moral performance is flawless. The Jews stumbled at this and were lost.

a) **Galatians 3:10-14** For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed *is* everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." <sup>11</sup> But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God *is* evident, for "the just shall live by faith." <sup>12</sup> Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them." <sup>13</sup> Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree"), <sup>14</sup> that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

<sup>4</sup> For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

4. The word "for" at the beginning of this verse shows that it is intended to explain the previous verses. In what sense is Christ the end of the law? There are several possibilities:

A. Christ is the end of the law in that he is what the law pointed toward. In Galatians 3:24 Paul said that the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.

B. Christ is the end of the law in that he produced what the law was seeking—righteous men.

C. Christ was the end of the law in that he fulfilled perfectly what the law demanded.

D. But note that Paul says that Christ is the end of the law **for the believer**. For the believer the law is terminated—he is freed from it in the sense that he can be righteous without meeting all of the law's demands.

a) In Romans 7:6 Paul wrote "But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we are slaves not under the old written code but in the new life of the spirit."

b) Who freed the Jews from the law? Jesus did—he was the end of the law (as a way of justification) to those who believed in him.

c) I think that it is this sense that Paul has in mind since it fits best with the context (but the other possibilities listed above are certainly true as well).

<sup>5</sup> For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them."

5. Paul has just finished contrasting what the unbelievers had been trying to do with what the believers had succeeded in doing. Those who obtained righteousness were those who did not seek it on their own but instead sought it through faith in Christ.

A. The quote that Paul is referring to here is found in Lev. 18:5, but Paul turns it against the legalistic Jews. Paul has already reminded them that they have not kept the law perfectly and Paul now uses this verse to remind them that justification through the law is possible only if they keep it perfectly.

B. Thus, Paul tells them that the law is a yoke that they are unable to bear. Of course, Christ's yoke by comparison is easy.

a) **Matthew 11:28-30** Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> "For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light."

<sup>6</sup> But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' " (that is, to bring Christ down *from above*)  
<sup>7</sup> or, " 'Who will descend into the abyss?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

6. These verses are given in contrast to verse 5.

A. What did Paul say in verse 5? That justification through the law would require a flawless life. That is, faith would be excluded and justification would be earned. Here Paul tells us the task required for justification through faith.

B. In these verses Paul personifies righteousness—he lets righteousness itself answer the question. What does righteousness say? What is required for justification through faith?

a) First, you do not have to do the impossible as you do for justification by law. You do not have to go up to heaven and plead with Christ to come down—he has already done that. You also don't have to go down and raise him from the dead—that too has already happened.

b) **Whereas men must do all of the hard work under justification by law, God does the hard work under justification through faith!**

c) To seek a righteousness on your own is to act as though Jesus never came and died and rose again—it is to act as if you did not need his sacrifice.

C. What is required for justification through faith? Paul tells us that next.

<p><sup>8</sup> But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): <sup>9</sup> that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.</p>
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7. Of course, Paul has more in mind here than a mere confession with the mouth.

A. Jesus said in Matt. 7:21–22 that not everyone who said unto him "Lord, Lord" would enter the kingdom of heaven. This passage is stressing that justification comes to the *believer* rather than to the *earner*.

**B. These verses do not contrast faith with obedience (as if such a thing were possible) but instead contrast faith and earning as a means for justification.**

C. Read Hebrews 11. By faith Abel **offered**. By faith Abraham **obeyed**. By faith Moses **refused**. What follows faith? Action. What can we say about faith without action? It is dead. (See James 2:17.)

D. In Matt. 21:32 Jesus said that the publicans and the harlots believed John. What was the sign of their belief? Baptism. Could it have been said that they believed John if they had not been baptized by him? No.

E. In Hebrews 11:30 we are told that “by faith the walls of Jericho fell down.” Did the Israelites have faith? Yes. When did the walls fall down? After that faith was manifested through works.

<sup>11</sup> For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” <sup>12</sup> For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.

8. But, the Jews ask, why should we believe that justification can be obtained through faith apart from law? Paul’s answer is that the Bible says it can.

A. The quote here from Isaiah 28:16 contrasts those who trust in God for their deliverance with those who try to deliver themselves. The stress here is on faith, and faith is not a racial issue—it is required of Jew and Gentile alike.

B. This is not just good news for the Gentiles, but it is also good news for the Jews. The Jews have not been rejected because of their race, they have been rejected for their lack of faith and their unbelief. All they need to do to share in the blessings is to turn to God in faith.

<sup>13</sup> For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.”

9. This quote is from Joel 2:32 and stresses that to be saved one must express his need for God.

A. The Jews felt they had no need for God—or at least they lived as if they had no need for God. (This is true of anyone who tries to justify himself through his own works. Justification is through faith.)

B. This cry is the cry of one who realizes his inability to save himself. This is the cry of someone in need.

C. But the Jews were Abraham’s children. They had the law. They had never been in bondage to anyone (or so they said). Were they really in need of something?

10. Verse 13 is often used by the “faith only” crowd to argue that baptism is not essential for salvation. But what is baptism if it is not an expression of man’s need for God?

A. What did Ananias say to Paul in Acts 22:16? “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

a) When was Paul saved? Well he was still in his sins up until this point.

b) When did Paul call on the name of the Lord? On the road to Damascus? No. While he prayed in Damascus? No. He called on the name of the Lord at his baptism. That was when he expressed his need for God's mercy.

B. The phrase "faith only" occurs exactly one time in the Bible, in James 2:24.

a) And does that verse say we are saved by faith only? No. It says just the opposite! ("You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.")

b) I am not sure how James could have stated it any more clearly, and yet most of the denominational world teaches salvation by faith only, rejecting baptism as some sort of a "work."

<sup>14</sup> How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? <sup>15</sup> And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!"

11. Calvinists have trouble when they get to these verses. How can someone be predestined for salvation prior to birth if they must first hear the gospel before they can be saved?

A. Apparently God not only operates on people's hearts separate and apart from the word, but he operates on their television remote controls so that they will hear the gospel.

a) If God operates apart from the word to bring people to Christ then why are preachers needed at all? What can they do that God cannot do infinitely better?

b) And yet Paul says that preachers are required. Without preachers no one will hear the gospel, and without the gospel no one can be saved.

c) Calvinists have the same problem with one of their very favorite passages.

(1) **John 6:44** <sup>44</sup> 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.

(2) Well that sure sounds like God draws people apart from the word, doesn't it? Keep reading...

(3) <sup>45</sup> It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

(4) John says that same thing that Paul says – God draws men to Christ by the proclamation of the gospel.

B. God does not strike someone's heart and operate on him apart from the gospel as some suggest.

C. The same is true for us. No one can come to Christ without Christ first being proclaimed to that person. We can live godly lives before people all



day but we are not going to lead those people to salvation until we proclaim Christ to them.

D. God not only provided Christ, but he also provided the messengers to spread the good news about Christ.

a) The Jews have absolutely no excuse for missing out on the blessings. God has provided the savior and the messengers to spread the news about the savior. God wants all men to be saved. God does not want anyone to be lost.

b) God is not trying to hide the good news—even though it sometimes seems that **we** are.

## 12. These messengers bring good news.

A. In Nahum and Isaiah we read of men who stood on the mountains around Jerusalem and shouted to the people that their enemies had been defeated. Here Paul quotes Isaiah 52:7. Now, as then, God's messengers are spreading the news of deliverance.

<sup>16</sup> But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?"

13. But still the Jews had not all believed. (In fact, most had not believed.) Doesn't this mean that God must not have wanted them to be saved after all? Or doesn't it mean that the message is not as clear as Paul would have us to believe? Not at all.

A. Although the Jews were hardened, as we have seen God hardens only unbelievers. He never hardens believers. (In fact, a believer can't be hardened since we are hardened when we *reject* God's demands.)

B. The Jews are responsible for their failure to obtain the blessings. They are responsible for their own unbelief.

C. Further, that the majority is lost is not something new. Isaiah talked about it in Isaiah 53:1. It was true in the days of the prophets and, as they foretold, it was true in the days of Paul.

a) God's people have been in the majority only two times in history—at creation and after the flood. Can we determine the truth by voting on it? If that were true then God would be out-voted every time! God's truth is absolute and is not effected by what men think about it.

b) We should never be discouraged by our small numbers – God is on our side!

<sup>17</sup> So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

14. The Jews had rejected the teaching of the prophets and the teaching of Christ because of their faithless hardened hearts.

A. Note that faith comes by hearing – not by seeing. The Bible *contrasts* faith with sight (2 Cor. 5:17). One day, faith will be replaced by sight.

B. For a *trusting* heart, hearing is enough to bring faith. The Jews, however, wanted signs. They did not believe the word of Christ. The reason they were unblessed is that they rejected the message that God had sent.

<sup>18</sup> But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: "Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world." <sup>19</sup> But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: "I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation." <sup>20</sup> But Isaiah is very bold and says: "I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me." <sup>21</sup> But to Israel he says: "All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people."

15. No Jew can now say that this is the first he has heard about all of this.

A. Paul insists that, as in Psalm 19:3–4, the good news has been preached to all. The Jews knew the prophets and all of the prophets had pointed directly toward Christ.

B. Even Moses in Deut. 32:21 had spoken of a day when the Gentiles would be blessed and the Jews would be jealous.

C. Isaiah 65:1 had spoken of a day when those who weren't seeking God would find Him. Paul has been making his case by appealing to the Old Testament scriptures. Could any Jew steeped in the scriptures claim ignorance? God had held out his hands all day to the Jews yet they had rejected him. (See Isaiah 65:2.)

D. God had not been hiding. He was not hard to find. The Jews did not lack preaching or revelation—they lacked faith and trust.

16. But has God then cast off his people? To answer that question we must first ask "Who are his people?" Paul will answer both of these questions in Chapter 11.

A. But before we move to Chapter 11 we need to briefly review a dangerous false doctrine that is based on part on a misinterpretation of Romans 11.

#### IV. Premillennialism

1. Does it matter what we believe about premillennialism? Or is just a matter of opinion about what will happen at the end of the world? Does it make any difference for the here and now? Let's listen as the leading premillennialist, John Walvoord, answers that question:

“If premillennialism is only a dispute about what will happen in a future age which is quite removed from present issues, that is one thing. If, however, premillennialism is a system of interpretation which involves the meaning and significance of the entire Bible, defines the meaning and course of the present age, determines the present purpose of God, and gives both material and method to theology, that is something else. It is the growing realization that premillennialism is more than a dispute about Revelation 20. It is not too much to say that millennialism is a determining factor in Biblical interpretation of comparable importance to the doctrines of verbal inspiration, the deity of Christ, substitutionary atonement, and bodily resurrection.”

2. It does make a difference what we believe about this subject. The premillennialist doctrine has consequences that run counter to the very heart of the gospel.

3. This doctrine, which is very closely tied with Calvinism, permeates most of the denominational world.

A. But truth is not determined by majority vote. Indeed, as Mark Twain said, when you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is probably time to change sides.

B. We owe a great debt to Foy E. Wallace for keeping it out of the Lord's church. Foy Wallace (then the editor of the Gospel Advocate) debated Charles Neal (minister of the Main Street Church of Christ in Winchester, Kentucky) in 1933 about the 1000 year reign. He was largely responsible for keeping that false doctrine from infiltrating the church.

C. We don't see many debates in the church these days, but we do see a lot of unrefuted unscriptural nonsense. I wonder if those two things are somehow related...

D. Debates are considered unloving today – but if we aren't careful we are going to love some people right into Hell. We need to take God's word seriously, and we need to stand up and defend it against false teachers.

#### 4. Error #1: THE RESTORATION OF THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD

A. Premillennialists teach that the Levitical priesthood is going to be restored during the millennium. This view arises from a misinterpretation of Ezekiel 44. The role of the Levitical priests was to offer the sacrifices for sin that were demanded by the Law of Moses.

B. Jesus' perfect sacrifice put these people out of business permanently (Hebrews 10:12, 18).

C. The Levitical system was imperfect, weak, and useless (Hebrews 7:11, 18) and was set aside by Jesus Christ (Hebrews 7:18).

D. The coming of reality in Jesus Christ meant that the shadow of the Levitical system was removed forever. (Premillennialists say that all of the shadows will return.)

E. Further, Jesus could not be a priest if the Levitical system were still functioning.

a) Under the Law of Moses (Numbers 18), only Aaron's sons could be priests. The Law of Moses and the Levitical system cannot be separated—one cannot exist without the other (Hebrews 7:12).

b) In addition, the old and new covenants cannot coexist (Romans 7:1–6). The first covenant was taken away so that the second could be established (Hebrews 10:9–10). Jesus cannot be priest on earth under the Levitical system (Hebrews 8:4).

#### 5. Error #2: THE RESTORATION OF THE SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM

A. Premillennialists teach that bloody sacrifices for sin will be restored during the millennium. This view arises from a misinterpretation of Ezekiel 43–45 and Zechariah 14.

B. Animal sacrifices were never able to cleanse the soul. They simply shadowed the coming sacrifice that would provide true cleansing.

C. Jesus' sacrifice was all sufficient. His perfect once-for-all sacrifice meant that future sacrifices were unnecessary (Hebrews 10:17–18).

D. Those who have remission of sin have no further need of sacrifice.

E. The premillennial view undermines the sufficiency of Christ's sacrificial atonement. Paul wrote in Galatians 2:21 that "if justification were through the Law, then Christ died to no purpose."

#### 6. Error #3: THE NEW COVENANT IS NOT IN FORCE NOW

A. Premillennialists teach that the new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31ff is not yet in force and that it will not come into force until the millennium. Walvoord says that the new covenant applies only to Israel and has no relation with this present age. What does the Bible say?

a) In Luke 22:20 Jesus says “this cup is the new covenant in my blood.”

b) In Hebrews 9:15 we read that Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant.

c) In 2 Corinthians 3:5–6 Paul writes that “our sufficiency is from God; who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant.”

B. The problem of sin is the motivation behind both covenants. The new covenant provides forgiveness through the blood of Christ. Walvoord claims that Christ’s blood produced two new covenants.

C. The new covenant of Jeremiah 31 is the covenant that we are under today. This covenant provides salvation and forgiveness through the blood of Christ and there is no need for any other covenant.

D. Premillennialists have trouble explaining the need for their theories. Either Christ is all sufficient or he is not. If he is then why do we need the restoration of the Old Testament shadows?

## 7. Error #4: JESUS IS NOT PRESENTLY RULING OVER ISRAEL

A. Premillennialists deny the complete Lordship of Jesus. They insist he is not presently ruling over Israel. Walvoord and Lindsey both claim that although Jesus has the right to rule the earth, he is not exercising that authority at this time. For proof they point to the mess that the world is in.

B. This argument parallels that of Epicurus who argued that God could not be both good and all powerful. (If God wills evil then he is not good. If God does not will evil then he is not all powerful since evil exists.)

C. Although we in the church no doubt would never say that Jesus is not presently reigning as king, we have sung it.

a) One of the songs in our song book (#577) that we have sung on more than one occasion includes the line: “king of all kings and lord of all lords you will be.” Will be? That’s what it says.

b) Walvoord writes: “It is clear that at the present time Christ is not in any literal sense reigning over the kingdom of David.”

c) Walvoord no doubt would have no trouble with that song – but we should have a lot of trouble with that song.

D. What does the Bible say?

a) Psalm 29:10 reminds us that God ruled at the time of the flood even though the world was in a mess at the time.

b) Paul told the Ephesians in Ephesians 1:21 that Jesus is “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion” in this age.

c) Acts 2:36 says that Jesus is Lord over Israel.

d) In Revelation 2:26–27 Jesus claims to have already been given the authority over nations that was prophesied in Psalm 2:8–9.

e) In Revelation 1:5 we see that Jesus is the ruler of the kings of the earth.

f) Psalm 110 depicts Jesus as sitting at God’s right hand and ruling in the midst of his enemies. (This passage is quoted many times in the New Testament as having been already fulfilled.)

(1) What does Walvoord say? He claims that although Psalm 110:1 and Psalm 110:4 have been fulfilled, the remaining verses in Psalm 110 have not been fulfilled.

8. Israel plays a major role in every premillennial scenario – and there are many such scenarios.

A. History has already discredited quite a few of them! It is interesting to watch them change as their proponents are proven again and again to be false prophets.

B. Here is a general outline of what most involve:

a) Jesus came to establish a visible rule on earth.

b) The Jews did not accept Christ so the offer to rule was withdrawn.

c) The establishment of the kingdom was postponed until his return.

d) The church was established for the interim period. The church is a parenthesis in history and is not a fulfillment of any Old Testament prophecy. The church is a mistake! (This is always a part of premillennialism. They downplay the importance of the church—the body of Christ!)

- e) The church age will end with a “rapture” in which all believers will meet Christ in the air. This is the first stage of the second advent.
- f) During the next seven years, the antichrist will rule the earth, the Jews will be restored to Palestine, the temple will be rebuilt, and the sacrificial system will be reinstated. Those saved during this time are called tribulation saints.
- g) The antichrist will break a covenant with the Jews after 3½ years and a terrible persecution will follow.
- h) After another 3½ years Christ will appear a third time, defeat the antichrist, and rule on earth for 1000 years.

C. Hal Lindsey’s scenario of the end is even more imaginative:

- a) For 3½ years Satan will rule the world through a Jewish antichrist in Rome.
- b) The Jews will be allowed to rebuild the temple.
- c) Many Jews will be converted and a worldwide evangelism program will be undertaken by 144,000 Jewish preachers.
- d) After 3½ years the antichrist will set up his own image in the newly rebuilt Jewish temple.
- e) World War III will break out.
- f) Egypt will invade Israel.
- g) The Soviet Union will invade the Middle East and trample both Egypt and Israel.
- h) The Roman dictator will invade Israel.
- i) Rome will launch a nuclear attack against Russian forces in Israel.
- j) 200,000,000 Chinese troops will march on Palestine to battle the Roman army.
- k) The battle of Armageddon will begin and lead to worldwide destruction.
- l) Jesus will return to reign on earth for 1000 years.

D. If Mr. Lindsey’s scenario seems a little dated, we are not the only ones to notice. Lindsey recently released a new book with an updated post-Cold War schedule of events.

## 9. Why does any of this matter?

- A. Premillennialism runs counter to the very heart of the gospel. It belittles Christ, it belittles His sacrifice, and it belittles His church.
- B. It also teaches that there is a large group of people we don't need to preach to because they are under some special plan.
- C. The "Left Behind" series is a series of religious fictional books that are bestsellers today. People are interested in the end times. We need to know what the Bible says on that subject. Also, we need to know what premillennialism is all about, and we need to be able to refute it.

## 10. How is this related to Romans 9-11?

- A. Many of their false ideas about Israel come from Paul's discussions in these chapters, especially Chapter 11.
- B. What, after all, did Paul mean in 11:26 when he said "and so all Israel will be saved"? Let's find out...

## V. Chapter 11

### 1. Were all of God's promises then just empty words? Did God cause the Jews to stumble just to be able to cast them off?

- A. Not at all, Paul insists. He is a Jew and he has inherited the promises.
- B. The real Israel has always been less than the entire nation and this real Israel is presently inheriting the promises.
- C. It was the unbelieving Jews that were hardened and even this hardening need not be permanent.
- D. But the Gentiles should not act superior because they have been allowed in and many of the Jews have been rejected. The Jews were rejected for lack of faith and the same could happen to the Gentiles.
- E. A major theme of the entire book of Romans is that we are all – Jew and Gentile alike – in the same boat. We have all sinned, and we all need Jesus Christ to cleanse us from those sins. There is one plan of salvation.

<p>1 I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.</p>
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### 2. Has God rejected (or cast off) his people? Not at all!



A. Some have said yes but only temporarily. Others have answered yes, permanently.

B. But Paul says God forbid—he has never cast off his people! Those Jews who have been rejected were not his people.

C. Paul was a Jew, so if God had cast off all of the Jews then Paul would have been cast off—but he wasn't.

D. Indeed, if God had been looking for a reason to cast of the Jews, Paul would have been a perfect candidate for being cast off since he had persecuted the church. Thus, if Paul could find the blessings then any Jew could.

<sup>2</sup> God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, <sup>3</sup> "LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life"? <sup>4</sup> But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." <sup>5</sup> Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. <sup>6</sup> And if by grace, then *it is* no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if *it is* of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.

### 3. Notice how Paul keeps going back to the Bible to make his points.

A. Perhaps we should take the hint and make sure that we too have chapter and verse to back up what we say. Paul was writing under inspiration and yet he nevertheless cited the other scriptures to prove his points. Some of our pulpits are filled with men who – speaking apart from inspiration – fail to refer to Scripture but instead speak with their own authority.

### 4. Why does Paul quote Elijah here?

A. He quotes Elijah in order to settle the question "Who are God's people?"

a) Elijah had claimed that he was the only child of God that was left. God denied that.

b) But God did **not** say that there were millions like Elijah—he said there were only 7000. (See 1 Kings 19:18.)

c) These 7000 were God's; the rest were Baal's. God had a remnant that was true to him. This group was the true Israel in the days of Elijah. They were the elect—the children of faith—of which Paul now speaks.

d) The fact that a multitude of Jews were lost in Paul's day was no more strange than the multitude that was lost in the days of Elijah. The fact that a small number was saved is no more strange than the small number that was saved in the days of Elijah.

e) Of course, the same is also true for the Gentiles – a majority are lost. (But that is not the problem that Paul is dealing with here.)

B. What about today?

a) Jesus answered that question in Matthew 7.

(1) **Matthew 7:14** <sup>14</sup> Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

b) Few will be saved. Many will be lost. In fact, that many will be lost is what prompted Paul to write these chapters in the first place! That is the problem he is grappling with.

c) We have no trouble saying that baptism is essential for salvation, and yet we seem to have all the trouble in the world saying that unbaptized people are lost.

(1) Yet once we have said that baptism is essential, we have already said that unbaptized people are lost. That is what "essential" means.

(2) To say otherwise is like living in the town where all the children are above average. If only few are saved, then many are lost.

d) What should our attitude be about this?

(1) First, we like Paul should be filled with sorrow and concern for those who are lost. We should do all we can to proclaim the gospel to them.

(2) Second, we should heed Jesus' response to the question will only few be saved:

(a) **Luke 13:23-24** Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, <sup>24</sup> Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

(3) That is, we must make absolutely certain that we are part of the few. The good news is that we can be absolutely certain.

5. God never cast away his people; not at any time. God is never faithless to his promises.

- A. There is no need to restore Israel in the end time because the true Israel has never been cast away or lost.
- B. Paul is saying “God has not cast off his people because his people are the remnant that is saved.” Those who are unblessed are not his people—he has not cast them off.
- C. Did those who were blessed earn that blessing? No, it was a gift of God’s grace to those who trusted in him.

6. What do others say? Some say that the remnant is a mere token of what God will do one day. They say that one day he will fulfill his promises to the nation of Israel as a whole.

- A. We will consider this viewpoint in more detail later, but let’s consider one point now. This so-called solution does not solve Paul’s problem! Paul’s problem was to explain the multitude of Jews that were unblessed in his day. Saying that a multitude will be saved 2000 years from now does nothing to answer Paul’s present problem.
- B. We will return to this point when we get to verse 26.

<sup>7</sup> What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded.

7. The word “sought” in the Greek is a present, active, indicative verb indicating that the Jews were presently seeking this even while Paul was writing.

- A. What was Israel seeking? In Acts 26:6–8 Paul said “And now I stand here on trial for hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day.” The Jews were seeking the promised Messianic blessings of peace and joy and victory over their enemies.
- B. Had any of the Israelites obtained what they were seeking? YES! The elect obtained it. The chosen remnant obtained it. The faithful Jews obtained it.
- C. Have God’s promises to Israel been fulfilled? Paul says yes. What Israel was promised, the faithful remnant received.

8. Now, if you can tell me what the faithful remnant received, I will tell you what Israel was seeking.

A. Did the remnant receive a parcel of land in Palestine? No, and thus that is not what they were seeking.

B. What did the remnant receive? They obtained salvation and deliverance from sin through Jesus Christ.

C. One premillennial commentary on Romans makes absolutely no comment about verse 7. I wonder why that is?

9. What about those who did not receive the blessings? They were hardened.

A. As we have already seen, God does not harden believers. The Jews who were hardened were unbelievers.

B. Those faithless Jews who rejected Christ had been (as we read in Acts 3:23) cut off from among the people. They were faithless and hence not heirs of the promises.

C. God did not cast off his people when he rejected the faithless Jews because the faithless Jews were not his people—they had been cut off from among his people.

D. I think Jesus had this hardening in mind in John 15:22–24 where he said:

If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates me hates my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.

E. Jesus made demands of the faithless Jews that they rejected. They hardened their hearts further every time they rejected the words of Christ.

F. Jesus says, “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin.” Could Jesus then be blamed for their unbelief? Not at all. The Jews were also free to come to him and obey his word; they simply would not.

G. In Matthew 23:37–38 Jesus said:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate.

H. Did Jesus harden believing Jews so they would reject him? Of course not! He wanted to gather them together under his wings. What then was the problem? The Jews would not come to him. It was their own fault.

<sup>8</sup> Just as it is written: "God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see And ears that they should not hear, To this very day." <sup>9</sup> And David says: "Let their table become a snare and a trap, A stumbling block and a recompense to them. <sup>10</sup> Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their back always."

10. These quotations are from Isaiah 29:10 and Psalm 69:22–23.

A. To whom did God give this spirit of stupor? Who was caught in this snare and trap? The answer is the unbelieving, faithless Jews who rejected his son. Did he give this spirit of stupor to the faithful Jews who were seeking his son? Not at all.

11. Now while the initial hardening of the Jews was due to their rejection of Christ's word as he said in John 15, the hardening spoken of here seems to be at a higher level.

A. God is now looking at the already hardened, faithless Jews and he decides to harden them further. Why? This hardening seems to be part of God's judicial work.

B. He is going to use these faithless Jews for his own purposes just like he used Pharaoh for his own purposes.

C. Should this bother us? No.

a) God only hardens those who have rejected him. He does not harden those who are seeking him. On the contrary, he says that those who are truly seeking him will find him. As Paul has already told the Jews, God is not hard to find.

b) We must admit that God has the right to ask someone to make the right choices even when he knows that person will make the wrong choices. He has the right to use the wicked to fulfill his own purposes. God used the Jewish rejection as a means to bless the entire world. Did God know the Jews would reject Christ? Yes, he did.

c) The prophets spoke of Christ's rejection by the Jews long before it occurred. In addition, they had rejected everyone else that had been sent to them. Did God cause them to reject Christ? The initial rejection was done on their own and thus they were responsible for the

wrong path that they took. Once they were on that road, God hardened them further so that his purposes could be fulfilled.

D. In summary, God only hardens unbelievers. He never hardens believers. Those who are hardened are still responsible for their choices. God is not responsible for their rebellion.

a) One way that God hardens people is by forcing them to make a choice when he knows they will make the wrong choice. Sometimes, God also hardens unbelievers so that their rebellion will be recognized by all.

b) At no time does God override man's free will. He merely makes sure that those who are seeking what is false and actively rejecting the truth will find what they are looking for.

E. While "hardening" is a difficult concept, it is easier to understand when we keep other passages in mind.

a) God desires that all be saved (1 Tim. 2:4) and he is unwilling that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9). Did you catch that last one? **It is not God's will that anyone will perish.** That verse is easy to understand.

<p><sup>11</sup> I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation <i>has come</i> to the Gentiles.</p>
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12. First, what does Paul mean when he says that the Jews have not stumbled so as to fall?

A. Had the hardened Jews fallen? Yes. Verse 22 says that they have fallen.

B. Remember the context. Paul is saying that God's hardening of the Jews did not mean that he didn't want them to be saved. (Paul is answering the very question that any reasonable person would ask after reading verses 8–10!)

C. Remember it is not God's will that any should perish—and this includes the faithless Jews. God, however, used the faithlessness of the Jews to accomplish something good—he blessed the world through the death of Christ which resulted from the Jewish trespass and rejection.

13. Keep in mind that the word "fall" here refers to eternal damnation.

A. Some today teach that God hardened these people but will make it up to them in a few thousand years when God brings an entire generation of Jews

back to Christ and they all live happily ever after in Palestine. Would such have made it all up to you if you were one of those who was eternally damned due to unbelief?

14. God has done everything he could to save the unbelieving Jew.

A. He sent them prophets to prepare them. He sent his son to convince them. He sent preachers to spread the gospel. Even now, Paul says that the salvation of the Gentiles was designed to make the Jews jealous of the Gentiles who were enjoying the Jewish blessings and thus bring them back to God.

B. Paul insists that God had taken every possible step to save the Jews. What remains for God to do? According to Paul, nothing. According to some today, God must still gather a generation of the Jews together and bring them to Christ.

C. The truth of the matter is that **God owes the unbelieving Jew absolutely nothing**. If the faithless Jews never turn to God (on a national scale or otherwise) no one can point a finger at God and say you didn't do enough or you weren't faithful to your promises.

D. Of course, neither does he owe the unbelieving faithless Gentiles anything more. He has done His part. We need to do *our* part by turning to him in trusting faithful obedience. There is one plan of salvation – and it applies to both Jew and Gentile alike.

<p><sup>12</sup> Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!</p>
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15. The Jewish rejection of Christ and their subsequent hardening meant riches for the Gentiles.

A. God used the wickedness of the faithless Jews to fulfill his own purposes of bringing blessings to the world through his Son – blessings for both Jew and Gentile alike.

16. What does “fullness” or “full inclusion” mean?

A. Whatever it means, it cannot mean that every Jew who ever lived will be saved because there are numerous examples in the Bible of faithless, wicked Jews who died in their sins.

a) In fact, Paul is writing these chapters to explain why God is faithful even though the majority of the Jews are lost.

B. The term “fullness” is **not** a numerical term.

a) Some teach that in the future the same number of Jews will be saved as were hardened – not the same people, just the same number.

C. The context can help us out here. Note that the “full inclusion” or “fullness” is contrasted with their fall and their failure.

a) Paul is saying that if their defeat (their loss) brought such blessings, what could we say about their victory—it must bring even more blessings!

b) The blessing of the Jews would mean that **all** (both Jew and Gentile) would be blessed.

<sup>13</sup> For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, <sup>14</sup> if by any means I may provoke to jealousy *those who are my flesh* and save some of them.

17. The Roman church was made up of both Gentiles and Jews. So far, Paul has been primarily talking to the Jews. He now addresses some remarks specifically toward the Gentiles.

A. As we will see, some of the Gentiles were arrogantly suggesting that God had rejected the Jews in favor of them and that they were now God’s chosen people.

B. That is, they were falling in to the same self-justifying traps in which Paul had just accused the Jews of trusting.

C. Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. Paul here “magnifies” that position because he knows that by teaching the Gentiles he will also cause some of the Jews to turn and be saved.

18. Notice that Paul says that *some* (but not necessarily all) of the Jews will turn and be saved.

A. Paul does not seem to share the optimism that others have about *all* of the Jews one day being saved.

<sup>15</sup> For if their being cast away *is* the reconciling of the world, what *will* their acceptance *be* but life from the dead?

19. First, the word “will” – which indicates to some a predictive prophecy – is **not** in the Greek.



A. Paul is contrasting what their rejection means with what their acceptance *would* mean (if it occurred). He is not predicting that it will occur, but he hopes that it will occur.

20. Paul continues here with his same theme: If the world was blessed through the rejection of Jesus Christ by the faithless Jews, then how much more will the world be blessed if those faithless Jews now turn to Christ.

A. Remember that Paul (starting in verse 13) is now talking to the Gentiles.

a) He wants them to know that God has not rejected the Jews because they were Jews; he has rejected them because they were faithless—and the same thing could happen to the Gentiles.

B. God has **not** said “No more Jews. I will now only deal with Gentiles.”

a) The only thing standing between faithless Jews and blessing is their unbelief and that is also true for faithless Gentiles.

b) Again, a primary theme of the entire book is that the Jews and Gentiles are in the same boat. Both groups are lost in their sins apart from Jesus Christ.

c) Premillennial commentators do everything they can do to put the Jews and the Gentiles in separate boats – the very thing that Paul was arguing against.

21. What does Paul mean when he says their acceptance will mean life from the dead?

A. Premillennialists teach that the resurrection will occur after the Jews turn to Jesus on a national scale.

a) But does that fit in with Paul’s argument? Remember the context!

B. Paul is speaking here to Gentiles who thought God had permanently rejected the Jews in favor of them.

a) Paul is saying that when a formerly faithless Jew turns to Christ it is like that Jew was raised from death to life.

C. Although that is true for any Christian, it seems particularly true for the unbelieving Jew.

a) Think of the radical change experienced by such a person (and think of Paul’s own example!).

b) Such a Jew now loves what he formerly hated. He now hates what he formerly loved. He is now accepted by the very God against whom he had been hardened.

D. How else can we describe the change from Saul to Paul except by a change from death to life? How else can we describe his radical transformation?

<sup>16</sup> For if the firstfruit *is* holy, the lump *is* also holy; and if the root *is* holy, so are the branches.

22. The illustration that Paul uses here is from Numbers 15:17–21.

A. When God brought the Israelites into the promised land to eat the bread of the land, they were instructed to offer unto him an offering of that bread.

B. This firstfruit of the bread guaranteed that God would continue to provide bread and its offering released the rest of the bread for ordinary consumption. The dedication of the part implied the dedication of the whole.

C. The first fruits of the dough and the root most likely represent Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The whole lump and the branches would then denote their descendants.

D. To say the Jews were holy means they were set apart to serve God.

a) Paul never denied that the Jews had a special position. Indeed, he had earlier in the book listed their many advantages. But those advantages did not guarantee blessings. The only path to blessings was through Jesus Christ.

b) The Gentiles were saying that the Jews no longer had these advantages. Paul denies this and by this illustration he reinforces his point that the Jews have not been cut off simply because they are Jews.

c) Indeed, if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were approved by God then any Jew can be approved by God. To say that God had rejected all of the Jews simply because they were Jews would mean that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had also been rejected.

E. Some think that the first fruits here refer to the first Jewish converts. This may be true but doesn't seem to fit as well with the context.

a) Paul, we recall, is trying to convince the Gentiles that the Jews have not been rejected by God because of their race. They have been rejected by God because of their lack of faith—something that could also happen to the Gentiles.

<sup>17</sup> And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, <sup>18</sup> do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, *remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.*

23. Paul now begins to develop the figure of the tree that he first mentioned in verse 16.

- A. As in verse 16, the root of this tree denotes the patriarchs; those to whom the promises were first made.
- B. The branches of the tree denote the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who were offered the promises on the condition of faith.
- C. Those branches that were broken off denote the faithless Jews who were cut off from among the people. They are the sons of the kingdom who, in Matt. 8:12, Jesus said would be thrown into outer darkness.
- D. The branches that were grafted in denote the Gentiles who had obtained the blessings through faith. These are the ones who Paul said in Eph. 2:13 had been brought near in the blood of Christ. They were now enjoying promises that had been initially offered to the Jews.

24. Paul's point is the same point he has been making in the preceding verses.

- A. He wants to convince the Gentiles that they should not be filled with pride over their new found status. They were not to despise the Jews.
- B. As Jesus said in John 4:22, salvation is from the Jews. Indeed, the Gentiles were branches that had been grafted in; they were not natural branches like the Jews.
  - a) If a natural branch could be removed for lack of faith, how much more easily could a grafted branch be removed?

25. Thus, the olive tree denotes those who had appropriated the promises through faith.

- A. Those Jews who rejected Christ had been cut off from the tree. Those Gentiles who had accepted Christ had been grafted in.
- B. (But was there room for both on one tree? Verse 23–24 will answer this question.)

<sup>19</sup> You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." <sup>20</sup> Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. <sup>21</sup> For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either.

26. Apparently there was quite a rift between the Jews and the Gentiles in the Roman church.

A. Romans 14–15 seems to support this. The Gentiles were passing judgment on the Jews who still kept some of the old law regarding food and special days.

B. Some of the Gentiles thought that Jews had been cast off for the sole reason of letting in the Gentiles as if there were only a set number of people who could be saved. (Now who do we know that teaches that?)

C. But this is not what happened as Paul has already said. The Jews who were cut off were faithless Jews. If they turned to Christ then they too could enjoy the blessings along with the faithful Gentiles. Remember, God wants everyone to be saved. Heaven does not have a membership limit.

27. The Jews were rejected because of their arrogant pride and faithlessness. The Gentiles can be rejected for the same reason.

A. If God did not spare the natural branches, then he certainly won't hesitate to cut off the grafted branches.

B. Can one lose one's salvation? Of course! What else could it mean to be grafted in and then to be cut off?

28. Although the Jews are called "natural branches" that does not mean that God is under any obligation to bless them if they are faithless.

A. According to Paul the natural branches could be cut off.

B. But aren't all of the Jews the sons of the covenant? Yes! But even that doesn't mean they must be blessed in their faithlessness.

a) In Acts 3:25 Peter tells his listeners that they are sons of the covenant yet in verse 15 he reminds them that they killed the Author of Life and need to repent.

b) Yes, the Jews had a special place in God's plan, but that special position did not unconditionally guarantee their salvation. They had advantages, but they were not *saving* advantages.

<sup>22</sup> Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in *His* goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.

29. Nowhere in the Bible is there a clearer statement that one can fall from God's grace.

A. The Gentiles to whom Paul is now speaking have been grafted into the tree and are enjoying the promised blessings of salvation from sin. However, they will be cut off, Paul promises, if they fail to continue in God's goodness.

B. How could that happen? They entered God's goodness when they obeyed the gospel through faith. Thus, they will fall from that kindness if they become faithless. Then they will experience not goodness but severity.

30. As Paul says, we should all note the goodness (or kindness) and severity of God.

A. Today many see God as a "God without wrath bringing men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministry of a Christ without a cross."

B. In the words of one, they offer a feel good faith and a hot tub religion offering froth and folly without pain or gain.

C. Hell is a real place and those who choose to reject Christ and disobey God will one day find themselves there.

a) But could a loving God send people to Hell? The real question is could a loving God fail to send people to Hell if they rejected him and were faithless.

b) If there is a path to God apart from Jesus Christ then Jesus died for no reason. If the Hindus and the Muslims are saved apart from Jesus, then Jesus' death on the cross was unnecessary. What would that tell us about how loving God is? If there is a path to God apart from Jesus, it would have been news to Jesus. He said that no man could come to the Father except by him. (John 14:6)

c) Would God be holy if he did not stand against evil? Would God be righteous if he did not condemn unrighteousness?

d) Those who end up in Hell will have no cause to blame God.

(1) Harold Brown has said that "Hell is the enduring monument to the freedom of the human will."

e) Men choose the paths that they take—only one path leads to God. Men make their own choices.

(1) C. S. Lewis said that there are two types of people in the world: those who say to God “Your will be done” and those to whom God will one day say “Your will be done.”

f) As Paul suggests, we should always keep in mind both the severity and kindness of God.

g) Jesus was often severe in the gospels. Read, for example, Matthew 23, which has been described as the rolling thunder of God’s wrath.

(1) Do you want to know how God feels about hypocrisy and faithlessness? Look at how Jesus feels about it. Remember, in God there is no Christ-unlikeness.

<sup>23</sup> And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. <sup>24</sup> For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural *branches*, be grafted into their own olive tree?

31. Paul is telling the Gentiles that no one has been cut off permanently in the sense that they have no hope.

A. The faithless Jews were cut off because of their lack of faith. If they return to God in faith then God will accept them. Again, Paul is emphasizing that the issue is one of faith and not of race.

B. Those in verse 23 that had been cut off and could be grafted back in were those that Paul said earlier had been hardened by God. Question: What had to happen before they could be grafted back in? Did God need to remove the hardening? No.

a) Paul says that **they** had to leave their state of unbelief. It was something **they** had to do—not God. God had already done everything that was needed on his part.

b) Further, Paul says that this grafting back in will occur **if** (rather than **when**) the Jews return to God.

C. Does it sound to you like Paul was predicting a national scale conversion of the Jews?

a) Remember verse 14. There Paul said that it was his hope that he could save **some** of the Jews. Let's keep these verses in mind as we head toward verse 26 where we will read that "**all** Israel will be saved."

32. Paul here is again rebuking the arrogant Gentiles who thought that God had rejected the Jews in favor of themselves.

A. Paul reminds them that if they – who did **not** have all the Jewish privileges – could be grafted in to the promises, then the faithless Jews could certainly be grafted back in as well.

B. Paul reminds the Gentiles that this olive tree belongs to the Jews. They were the ones to whom the promises were first directed. They forfeited those promises when they rejected God and became faithless, but they could be grafted back in.

<sup>25</sup> For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

33. Although this is a difficult passage, we can determine its meaning if we remember its context and consider its purpose.

A. What is its purpose? *Paul tells us* in the first half of the verse: He wants to make sure that the Gentiles do not become conceited over the fact that they have obtained the promises and the Jews have not.

B. Paul first reminds us that part of Israel has been hardened (or blinded).

a) What part? The part that is not the true Israel, the part that rejected Christ. That is the group of hardened Jews that Paul has been talking about for three chapters.

b) The remnant received the blessings and the rest were hardened. Those who were hardened were those who did not accept the promises on faith.

C. Paul tells us here though that a hardening or blindness has come upon part of Israel **until** the **fullness** of the Gentiles has come in. What does "until" mean here? What is the "fullness" of the Gentiles?

a) Well, some teach that the Jews have been kept from believing in Christ until some predetermined number of Gentiles has been saved. When all of the Gentiles that God wants to save are saved then God

will remove the hardening and all of the faithless Jews will rush to Christ. But does this make sense? No.

b) First, as we have seen, the Jews are to blame for rejecting Christ; God is not to blame. No Jew can blame God for his or her own disbelief.

c) Second, there is not some fixed number of people that God wants to save. He makes it very clear that he wants to save everyone and is not willing that any should perish.

d) How many Gentiles does God want to save? Well, how many Gentiles are there? The answers are the same!

e) Thus, without yet being sure what the passage means, we now know at least one thing that it does not mean.

34. A hardening or blindness has come upon part of Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles come in.

A. The word “until” is used in two basic ways.

a) Sometimes it denotes something with a duration that then ends; that is, something happens **until** something else happens and then the first thing stops happening.

(1) “I will teach until the bell rings.”

(2) If this is the way that Paul is using the word “until”, then he is saying that a hardening has occurred and it will last until the Gentile fullness and then the hardening will stop. This may be what Paul means.

b) However, there is another way that the word “until” can be used. Sometimes “until” does **not** imply a change in circumstances when the event under consideration occurs.

(1) A teacher leaves her classroom and tells the students, “Stay in here until I get back.” Can they leave the room when she gets back?

(2) For another example, in Romans 5:13 Paul said that sin was in the world **until** the law came. This does not mean, however, that sin vanished when the Law of Moses arrived. He is just letting us know that it was there **before** the Law of Moses.

(3) In Acts 7:17–18 we read that the people in Egypt grew and multiplied **until** there arose a king who knew not Joseph. That does not mean that they quit multiplying when this king showed up.



(4) Of course, there are many other examples, but I think the point is clear. Namely, it is possible to interpret this passage in such a way that the hardening does **not** come to an end when the Gentile fullness occurs.

B. What about the “fullness” of the Gentiles?

a) First, I don’t think it has anything to do with a number or quantity of the Gentiles despite some modern translations that render it “full number”.

b) Recall what we said about verse 12. The “full inclusion” there did *not* denote a number. It was used instead to contrast the failure and loss of the faithless Jews with their status if they turned to God. That is, it contrasted loss with fullness.

(1) In verse 11, Paul contrasts the Jewish fall with the Gentile salvation. In the first part of verse 12, Paul contrasts the Jewish fall with the riches obtained by the world. In the middle of verse 12, Paul contrasts the Jewish failure with the Gentiles’ riches. At the end of verse 12, Paul contrasts the failure of the Jews with their fullness.

c) What is Paul contrasting here? He is contrasting Jewish hardness with Gentile fullness.

d) What then does the “fullness” mean? The Greek word is *pleroma* and it does *not* necessarily denote number.

(1) Paul uses the word in Romans 15:29 to describe the fullness of the blessing of Christ; again, number is not in view.

(2) In fact, the same word is used in Romans 13:10 where Paul says that love is the fulfilling of the law; it fills it, it completes it.

(3) The insertion of number (as in “full number” in some translations) into this verse is not warranted by the context or by Paul’s use of the word elsewhere.

e) What then is Paul saying?

(1) He is reminding the Gentiles that the hardness of the Jews allowed the Gentiles to receive the fullness of God’s blessings.

(2) He is not saying that the hardness would end when those blessings were received because obviously it had not. Gentiles were blessed and the Jews remained hardened.

f) Could “until” mean that the hardening ceased when the Gentiles received the fullness of the promises?

(1) Possibly. If it does, then it refers to the second hardening that we talked about in verses 7–10.

(2) Perhaps, God removed this judicial hardening of the faithless Jews when the Gentiles received the blessings. Remember, however, that the Jews who God hardened had already hardened themselves against him.

(3) Just because God removed this second hardening does not mean that Jews would remove their own self-inflicted hardening. There is nothing here to indicate that a national scale conversion of the Jews will ever occur.

**g) The hardening of the Jews did not make them unbelievers; the Jews were hardened because they were already unbelievers.**

<p><sup>26</sup> And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; <sup>27</sup> For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins."</p>
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35. The Jews were complaining and the Gentiles were boasting. Paul had told the Jews that they had no right to complain, and he had told the Gentiles that they had no right to boast. Here he sums up his argument.

A. Why can't the Jews complain? Why can't the Gentiles boast? **The answer to each question is the same! All Israel will be saved.**

B. Which Israel does Paul have in mind here?

a) He is talking about the true, faithful Israel that he has been discussing all along. That group is the true Israel. That group is saved. The other Jews are not the true Israel. The faithless Jews are lost.

(1) (Romans 9:6) "For they are not all Israel who are of Israel."

b) The faithless Jews cannot say that God has rejected Israel. Why? Because ALL of the TRUE ISRAEL has been saved.

c) The Gentiles cannot say that God has rejected the Jews. Why? Because ALL of the TRUE ISRAEL has been saved.

36. Here is what Paul is saying:

A. If the faithless Jews turn to Christ, then they will be saved.

B. In this way, every single faithful Jew (the true Israel) will be saved according to the prophecy in Isaiah 59.

C. The Gentiles should be assured that God did not reject any of his people to let the Gentiles in.

D. The Jews who had been cast off are not without hope. They are simply like the Gentiles were before they came to Christ.

E. A faithless Jew who accepts Christ will become a real child of Abraham and, as part of the elect, will find acceptance by God in accordance with Isaiah's prophecy. (In John 8:39 Jesus told the faithless Jews that Abraham was **not** their father.)

37. Now doesn't that fit well with the context of the passage and the problem that Paul was dealing with?

A. But doesn't Paul teach that there is a day coming when the Jews on a national scale will turn to Christ and be saved?

B. Much of the denominational world thinks that God must bring the Jews to Christ on a national scale in order to be faithful to his promises to Abraham.

C. The most popular theory about this verse is that "all Israel" indicates the mass of Jews living on earth in the "end-time." The full number of elect Gentiles will be gathered in. Afterward the mass of the Jews—Israel on a large scale—will be saved. This will happen just previous to, or at the very moment of, Christ's return.

D. Let's consider some of the many problems with such an interpretation:

a) The Greek word for "And so" does not mean "then" or "after that." The rendering "Then all Israel will be saved" is wrong. In none of the other occurrences of this word in Romans, or anywhere else in the New Testament, does this word have that meaning. It means "so", "in this manner", or "thus."

b) This theory also fails to do justice to the word "all" in "all Israel." Does not "all Israel" sound very strange as a description of the (comparatively) tiny fraction of Jews who will still be living on earth just before, or at the moment of, Christ's return? What about all of the Jews in the preceding generations who died without Christ? Was God faithless to them?

c) The context clearly indicates that in writing about the salvation of Israelites and Gentiles, Paul is not limiting his thoughts to what will take place in the future. He very definitely includes what was happening then. See especially verses 30, 31 and note the phrase "**you** were."

d) Would it not be strange for God to single out for a very special favor—nothing less than salvation full and free—exactly that generation of Jews that will have hardened its heart against the testimony of the longest train of Christian witnesses, a train extending all the way from the days of Christ’s sojourn on earth—in fact, in a sense, all the way from Abraham—to the end of the world?

e) The reader has not been prepared for the idea of a mass conversion of Israelites. All along Paul stresses the very opposite, namely, the salvation, in any age (past, present, future) of a remnant. If Romans 11:26 actually teaches a mass conversion of Jews, would it not seem as if Paul is saying, “Forget what I told you previously”?

f) How could the passage from Isaiah 59:20–21 not occur until the end of the world when Peter in Acts 3:26 said that it occurred during the first century? God was turning the Jews from their wickedness in the first century through Peter’s proclamation of the gospel.

E. What is the truth about this passage?

a) Although God made a promise to every descendant of Jacob those promises were conditioned on faith. To be Jacob’s heir one must be a believer.

b) Faithless Israelites have never been considered a part of God’s chosen people. The prophets had said this over and over, so it was nothing new.

c) Even Moses in Deut. 18:19 said that God would hold accountable those who did not hearken unto Jesus’ words.

d) There is an elect within Israel the nation that is based upon faith. Those elect are the real Israel. Those elect are the real children of Abraham. Those elect are the people from whom the faithless Jews were cut off. Those elect are the ones whom God foreknew and who have not been cast off. Those elect are the Israel who have **all** been saved.

<p><sup>28</sup> Concerning the gospel <i>they</i> are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election <i>they</i> are beloved for the sake of the fathers. <sup>29</sup> For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.</p>
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38. In this passage, Paul is considering the paradox of the Jews.

A. In one sense they were the enemies of God and in another sense they were beloved by God. No group typified this paradox more than those Jews

who initially rejected Christ but later came to him in faith. Paul himself was a member of this group!

B. This was the group that Peter preached to in Acts 2 and who upon recognizing their guilt, repented and were baptized.

- a) Their rejection of Christ had brought God's blessings to the entire world.
- b) Their acceptance of Christ had brought them into the election; they became part of the true Israel to whom the promises were first given.

C. In fact, even the *faithless* Jews were paradoxical. Although they were enemies of God in that they rejected Christ and his gospel, no one could deny (as Paul had already asserted) that the Jews had a special place in the plan of God.

- a) Paul has earlier listed the many advantages of the Jews—faithful and faithless alike. In this sense every Jew was beloved for the sake of their forefathers to whom the promises had originally been given. Now, however, they found themselves as enemies of God.

D. That hostility however cannot separate them from the advantages that Paul had listed earlier.

- a) Even as enemies they were still physical descendants of Abraham, they still had the law, they still had the prophets, they still had the covenants, and they were still members of the race through which the Messiah had entered the world. God's gifts and God's call are irrevocable.
- b) The Jews had many advantages and those advantages remained even in their faithlessness, but those advantages did not guarantee blessings. (When Paul listed the advantages in Chapter 9 he was talking about **faithless** Jews.)
- c) God's promises to the patriarchs have **not** be revoked. God has completely fulfilled them with the remnant that has turned to Christ in faith.

<sup>30</sup> For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, <sup>31</sup> even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. <sup>32</sup> For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.

39. Paul's grand conclusion is that the Gentiles and the Jews are in the same boat.

A. Every difference between the Jews and the Gentiles with regard to their salvation has been removed in Christ. The Gentiles started off in disobedience but have now received mercy. The Jews became disobedient, and through that disobedience caused blessings to be brought to the world, but they are now able to receive mercy as well.

B. There is nothing in verse 30 that indicates that every Gentile will be saved. Similarly, there is nothing in verse 31 that indicates that every Jew will be saved. What Paul is saying is what he said earlier:

a) All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. All are in need of God's mercy. All, Jew and Gentile alike, have been disobedient.

C. Not every Jew rejected Christ, but those under discussion here are the ones who did reject Christ. Their disobedience allowed God's mercy to be extended to the Gentiles.

D. God's mercy to the Gentiles is also intended to bring mercy to the Jews as Paul explained in verses 13–14. (It was Paul's hope that faithless Jews who became jealous of the blessings being enjoyed by the Gentiles would turn to Christ and be saved as well.)

E. Again we see how God uses man's wickedness for His own good purposes. He used disobedience as a means to extend mercy to all. Did God cause the disobedience? Of course not! He merely used it to bring about something good. As we read in John 3:17, God did not send Christ to condemn the world but to save the world.

<sup>33</sup> Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! <sup>34</sup> "For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?" <sup>35</sup> "Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?" <sup>36</sup> For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

40. Paul ends his comments regarding the Jewish problem with a hymn of praise to God's wisdom and knowledge that is pieced together from several passages in the Old Testament.

A. God had granted Paul a glimpse into his plan and Paul was left in wonder and awe. Who are we to question the plan of God? Who are we to complain that God is not fair? Who are we to say that God cannot hold us accountable for our sin? Have we given something to God that put him in our debt? Can

we read his mind? God consults no man. We don't know his plans unless he reveals them to us. No one can appear before God with pretensions.

B. We are all in need of God's mercy, we are all in the same boat—and that is the theme of these three chapters.