

# Romans 9 To 11

## Unreforming Reformed Theology's Interpretation of A Hard To Be Understood Passage Of Scripture

For adherents to Reformed Theology, chapters 9 to 11 in the book of Romans is one of those “gotcha” passages of Scripture. They point to particular statements within these chapters and think that Dispensationalists are stumped by them, unable to offer a viable interpretation which rebuts their arguments for Reformed Theology and proves that Scripture really does teach Dispensationalism.

On the contrary, a literal exposition of Romans 9 to 11 does indeed support Dispensational Theology and not Reformed Theology. It is the intent of this and some following articles to unreform the interpretation of these chapters and provide a Dispensational understanding of what God has said in these words.

## ROMANS 9:1-5 Establishing The Context

### Introduction

Picture a spring, a wire coil with elastic qualities that causes it to retract when expanded. Springs come in many different sizes and shapes and they are used in a variety of ways. How the spring you are thinking of is used depends upon its context. A spring of similar size and shape may be used for several different purposes, but when you see it in its context you can identify its specific application. It may be a spring from an engine of an automobile, or a spring from a retractable pen. The context of the spring defines its use.

Many commentators treat Romans chapters 9 to 11 as parenthetical in the book of Romans. They treat them as if they are not directly linked to the rest of the book. At the very least, they say there is now a change in the train of thought. But as the context of the spring helps us understand its purpose, so the context of Romans 9 to 11 makes the content easier to understand.

### THE CONTEXT OF THE JEW IN THE BOOK OF ROMANS

#### 1. Paul's heart goes out to the Israelites.

Paul refers to the Jews as *my kinsmen according to the flesh* (Romans 1:3). As such, he has great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart because he wishes he could be accursed from Christ on behalf of his brethren, so that they could enjoy the fruit of true faith in Christ (vs 2-3). This, he says, is affirmed by his conscience in the Holy Spirit (vs 1).

Kinsmen or not, why would Paul have such a strong sentiment toward the Jews if their tenure as the people of God has been permanently terminated? Is he offering merely a lament for what is utterly lost, or is he offering a sentiment toward that which has actual potential – the actual redemption of Israelite souls?

## 2. The Jew is not a new subject in the book of Romans.

Consider the references to the Jews Paul has made in the discussion of faith, faithlessness and justification by faith in the beginning chapters of the book of Romans.

- 1:16 - *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*
- 2:12 - *For as many as have sinned without law [Gentiles] shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law [Jews] shall be judge by the law.*
- 2:17 - *Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast in God.*
- 2:21 - *Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?*
- 2:22 - *Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery?*
- 2:23 - *Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?*
- 2:28 - *For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:*
- 2:29 - *But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.*
- 3:1 - *What advantage then hath the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcisions?*
- 3:2 - *Much every way; chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.*
- 4:1 - *What shall we say then that Abraham our father as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?*
- 4:9 - *Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also?*
- 4:13 - *For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.*

The above list is a sampling of references to the Jews which are made in the first four chapters of the Book of Romans. When Paul directs his attention to the Jew in chapter 9, it is not as an aside or as a parenthetical statement unconnected to what has been previously discussed, but it is in direct connection with all that has been talked about up to that point. The point that Paul has been making from the very beginning of the book is this: just being a Jew is not the thing that saves you. Salvation is universally applied to both Jew and Gentile – based on faith. This is true not to the exclusion of either, but to the inclusion of both.

## THE ESTABLISHING OF THE CONTEXT OF CHAPTERS NINE TO ELEVEN

### 1. To Whom Pertaineth

Paul says in verses 4 and 5 that his kinsmen are Israelites and to them pertaineth a list of wonderful spiritual realities. (The word “pertaineth” is implied and thus inserted in the text in italics.) This list consists of

*the adoption,  
and the glory,  
and the covenants,  
and the giving of the law,  
and the service of God,  
and the promises;  
Whose are the fathers,  
and of whom as concerning the flesh  
Christ came,  
who is over all,  
God blessed for ever.  
Amen.*

### 2. Why This List Of Things?

Because they see these chapters at best as only loosely connected to the rest of the book of Romans, the commentators tend to interpret this list of things from their Old Testament contextual usage. For example, many interpret the glory to refer to the Shekinah glory found in the tabernacle and in Solomon’s temple. The adoption they tend to relate to Israel’s being the firstborn of God in relation to His choosing Israel above other nations – *And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn* (Exodus 4:22). A firstborn is obviously not adopted, so to support their contention they refer to passages like Deuteronomy 14:1 where it says of Israel, *Ye are the children of the LORD your God...* But the word “children” means “son, grandson, male child (singular) children (plural referring to male and female children together.) There is no element of the concept of adoption in either of the Hebrew words used for firstborn or children. So, how is it that Israel is adopted?

What if the terms in the Romans 9 list are not referring to the way they were used in Old Testament contexts, but to the way they have been used in the context of the Book of Romans? Would that give us a different perspective on the things listed here as pertaining to Israel? Let us examine the items in this list in this light and see what we find.

#### 1. The Adoption

The term “adoption” is never used in the Old Testament, either in Hebrew, in the Greek translation of the Septuagint, or in the English translation. This is our first hint that this entire list is to be interpreted from a Romans context rather than from an Old Testament context.

Adoption is used five times in the New Testament.

Romans 8:15 - *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

Romans 8:23 - *And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within our selves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

Romans 9:4 - *Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption....*

Galatians 4:5 - *To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*

Ephesians 1:5 - *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.*

The statement regarding adoption in Romans 8:23 defines the concept of spiritual adoption as relating to glorification and not to salvation. The adoption is the redemption of our body. This is supported by the statement in Ephesians 1:5 where adoption is related to predestination which is also a term connected to glorification and not salvation according to Romans 8:29 – *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

Romans 8:15 is in the same context of Romans 8:23 and leads into that statement about glorification. Galatians 4:5 refers to the adoption being applied to those who were under the law and who have been redeemed by the Son of God who came in the fulness of time. Galatians 4:5-7 then contains a progression of thought including

the adoption making them sons,  
as sons, receiving the Spirit  
(making them part of the church)  
and if a son,  
then an heir of God through Christ.

Interestingly, Peter relates the inheritance in Christ to the concept of glorification. In 1 Peter 1:3-5, he says the inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled, fadeth not away, and is reserved in heaven.

Every use of the word adoption outside of Romans 9:4 can be shown to relate to the glorification of those who are in Christ, whether they be Gentiles or Jews. So, when we come to Romans 9:4, which occurs only 20 verses or 17 sentences following the definitive statement on adoption as relating to glorification, what reason is there not to believe that Romans 9:4 is telling us that glorification in Christ pertains to Israel? In fact, what Paul is saying is that the Gospel of Christ is very relevant to Israelites for salvation and all its benefits are just as applicable to Israel as they are to the Gentiles.

## 2. Glory

Glory is also a subject addressed in the book of Romans. Romans 3:23 states, *For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.* This announces the absence of glory in human life because of sin. However, in the previous chapter, glory is presented as a benefit of salvation – for both Jews and Gentiles:

Romans 2:7-10: *To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:*

In Romans 9:23-24, a similar reference is made regarding glory – *And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?*

In the context of these references within the book of Romans, glory is related to adoption in that in the adoption, to wit the redemption of our body, a believer is adorned with glory. Romans 8:18 says, *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* The references in chapters 2 and 9 clearly tell us that this glory is available to both Gentiles and Jews. So once again, in Romans 9:4, we are being told that the benefit of adoption (glorification) is something that certainly is available to Israelites who come to Christ.

### 3. The Covenants

Now here someone may say, our understanding of the reference to the covenants must come from an Old Testament context. However, the covenants are also referenced in the book of Romans through the extensive mention of circumcision. Romans 4:11 says – *And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised....* Circumcision was the sign of the covenants God made to Israel through Abraham. *And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised....and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant (Genesis 17:9-13).*

The word “circumcision” is used 15 times in Romans chapters 2 to 4. In Romans 2:29, circumcision is said to be that of the heart – a clear reference to the new covenant in which God promised to put his laws in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-33). This new covenant appears to have an application to the believers of the New Testament – the church – as Hebrews 8:10-13 makes a connection between the new covenant and the finished work of Christ in redeeming mankind.

Romans 9:4, in clarifying that the covenants pertain to Israel, is thus a statement that Israel in no way has been removed from the picture of redemption and its benefits. The covenants – particularly the new covenant – is not exclusive to a new group that displaces Israel, but the covenants inextricably relate to Israel.

### 4. The Giving Of The Law

The law is also a common subject in the book of Romans. In fact, in chapters 1 to 8, there are at least 70 references to the law. Romans 3:27 clarifies that there is no boasting in the law and 3:22 clarifies that the righteousness of God is by faith of Jesus Christ. It is not, however, that the law has no relevance to salvation, because 8:4 explains that the righteousness of the law can be fulfilled in the life of a believer, one who walks in the Spirit. Thus, 7:22 says, *For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.*

Romans 9:31 and 32 then describe the real problem Israelites had in seeing the proper application of the law fulfilled in them. These verses say, *But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.*

Thus, the reference to the giving of the Law in Romans 9:4, in the context of the references to the law in the book of Romans, serves to clarify that the fulfillment of the righteousness of the

law still pertains to Israel and is something that can be experienced by Israelites who seek it by faith.

## 5. The Service Of God

The word used for service here is neither the word for deacon (diakonos – Romans 16:1) nor the word for slave (doulos – Romans 1:1). Rather, it is the word “latreia,” which has more of the sense of a priestly function in worshiping God. This word is used a total of five times in the New Testament – twice in Hebrew 9 where it makes reference to the priests accomplishing the service of God in the tabernacle, once in John 16:2 where Jesus refers to those who erroneously think they are doing the service of God by killing his disciples, and twice in the book of Romans – 9:4 and 12:1.

Israel had been given the great privilege of serving God through sacrifices, but according to the book of Romans, their sacrifices were empty and worthless: *For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God* (Romans 10:3).

But, the service of believers in Christ has the potential of real substance. Romans 12:1 says our reasonable service is to present our bodies as living sacrifices, holy, and acceptable to God. This reasonable service is our “latreia,” the substantive sacrificial service to God that applies to Israelites in Romans 9:4, if they will believe in Christ.

## 6. The Promises

The promises God made to and through Israel were not just temporal, but also were spiritual in nature. The Gospel of Christ was promised by the prophets (Romans 1:2). The promise that Abraham should be the heir of the world was not made *to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith* (Romans 4:13). The intent from the beginning was that the promises be extended to Gentiles as well as to Jews through faith (Romans 4:16). Abraham’s realization of the promises was based upon his faith, for *He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness* (Romans 4:20-22).

The promises pertain to Israel, not just because they are Israelites, but because the promises pertain to all who believe, both Jews and Gentiles. The point is that Israel is not excluded from the promises just because the church has come into existence. The promises are not transferred to a different group of people. They still pertain to Israel just as they always have, because the original intent of the promises was for them to apply to both Jews and Gentiles – that is to any one in either group who would believe in Christ.

## 7. Whose Are The Fathers

This is not a reference to the fleshly fathers of the Israelites but to their fathers of faith. Romans 4:1 asked the question, *What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?* The answer is that Abraham found that righteousness comes by faith and not by birth. Abraham found that God imputes righteousness based on faith and not based on the works of the law (Romans 4:2-6). The result was that Abraham became the father of all who

believed, including both Jews and Gentiles (Romans 4:11). Isaac is also referred to in Romans as one of the fathers (Romans 9:10). In that context, Romans 9:6-13, God is making the point that salvation comes by faith and not by works, and Isaac in the context is placed on the side of faith.

Certainly the fathers pertain to Israel, but Romans 9:4 is not a reference to Israel's advantage by its earthly fathers, but rather a reference to Israel's connection to fathers of faith, by which faith the true righteousness of the law can be fulfilled in them.

#### 8. Of Whom As Concerning The Flesh Christ Came

Christ, the one by whom the adoption is made possible, the one by whom glory will be granted in the resurrection, the one by whom the covenants are fulfilled, the one by whom the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, the one through whom we are able to render our service to God, the one by whom the promises of God are fulfilled, and the one in whom the fathers of faith had placed all their hope and faith, pertains to Israel. Romans 1:3 says, *Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.* It was in that flesh that Christ condemned sin (Romans 8:3). And it was in that flesh that God delivered up His Son for us all (Romans 8:32).

Jesus Christ was brought to earth through human flesh in the context of the nation of Israel, not just to provide Israel with an earthly kingdom, but to provide all mankind with an eternal destiny. But Christ's coming in the flesh through the nation of Israel shows an inextricable relationship between the Messiah and the people of His earthly birth. Christ is of Israel. Christ thus pertains to Israel. And Israel is very much a part of Christ's plan.

### Conclusion

Paul gives us this list to establish the context of the rest of the material he is about to give us in Romans 9 to 11. His point is that it is not birth or law keeping that makes you a saved person. Faith is the key. And this is true as much for Israel as it is for the Gentiles of this world.

God does not think in terms of one or the other, but throughout the book of Romans he makes the point that He thinks in terms of both – and. He is writing this letter to a church in a Gentile city. There are many Gentile believers in the church at Rome. He does not want them to exclude Israel in their thinking. So, He includes the material in chapters 9 to 11 to show that Israel still has a part in God's plan.

Israel has not been set aside. This is a major contention of adherents to Reformed Theology. They insist that the Church displaces the nation of Israel and becomes by extension a spiritual Israel that reaps the fulfillment of all the promises made to that nation in the Old Testament. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, Romans 11:1 says, *I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.* As we continue in this study in Romans 9 to 11, what God has in store for Israel will be part of the point we will make in our unreforming of the interpretation of the passage.



# Romans 9:6-13

## Why Did God Include Me?

### Introduction

We now come face to face with the word “election.” Romans 9:11 says, *For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.* Translated from the word corresponding to Strong’s number 1589 (eklogay), election means “the act of picking out, choosing.” Think back to the playground where children choose teams for the recess game. Usually two are determined as captains, and they take turns selecting the children they desire to have on their teams. The significance of this is not just the process of choosing, but also the basis of the choices being made. Each chooses the best players they can so their team has a better chance of winning.

The use of the word “election” in the Bible tells us that God makes a choice. Ephesians 1:4 says it explicitly (using the verb form of eklogay), *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world....* But what is God’s choice based upon? Does He have no basis for the choice, selecting people merely at random? Is it a purely unconditional election, or does God have a basis for His selecting of human beings to be included in the household of the saved?

### Was The Word Of God Not Effective For Israel?

#### 1. Paul laments that Israel is not saved.

Paul’s desire was that Israel be saved (Romans 10:1). But he was so concerned about the spiritual poverty of his brethren and of their hardness of heart toward the gospel that he expressed a willingness to be accursed from Christ on their behalf (vs. 3).

#### 2. Why was Israel not saved?

Was there any legitimate reason for the Israelites not to be saved? Had the truth of the gospel been withheld from them, or had the preaching of the Word of God been ineffective in their hearts? On the contrary, Paul says in Romans 9:6, it is *not as though the Word of God hath taken none effect.* All the things listed in verses 4 and 5 pertain to Israel – the redemption of believers’ bodies (adoption), glorification in Christ at the time of the adoption (glory), the ultimate writing of God’s laws on the heart of believers (the Covenants), the fulfilling of the righteousness of the law for those who seek it by faith (the giving of the law), the priesthood of believers (the service of God), the promises which are extended to all who believe including both Israelites and Gentiles, the fathers of faith – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the coming of Christ in the flesh, the One by whom the adoption is made possible. The gospel was effective enough to make all these things available to Israel.

But, even though these things pertain to Israel, Israelites were failing to partake of them



because they were not saved. So, was the Word of God no good in touching the lives of the Israelites? Romans 10:17 says that faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Israel's problem was not that the Word of God was not effective in presenting them with the opportunity to believe, but it was that they did not pursue faith in responding to the Word of God. Romans 9:32 says that they did not attain unto righteousness *because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law*. Consequently, *they stumbled at the stumblingstone*, which in verse 33 is identified as Jesus Christ, the *rock of offence*. Rather than pursue faith, they *went about to establish their own righteousness* (Romans 10:33), not submitting themselves to God's righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ. This was exactly like the heathen who became vain in their imaginations (Romans 1:21), who when they knew God, refused to glorify Him as God, and who let their hearts be filled with the darkness of foolishness. Yet faith was as close to them as it could possibly be, because Romans 9:33 concludes, *whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed*.

### **Not Every Israelite is a True Israelite.**

In the nation of Israel, some were called Israelites by virtue of their physical birth and others were granted the special designation of the children of God. Romans 9:25 quotes from Hosea 2:23. Verse 26 quotes from Hosea 1:10. The context of these Old Testament statements affirms that God is talking about Israelites and not Gentiles when He says that He will call them His people when they previously were not His people. The concept of God "calling" people His children is important to make note of. There are two connotations to the word "call." One is "to invite," and the other is "to name." The word "call" or "called" in the book of Romans refers to those who are named the children of God, or saints. For example, in Romans 1:6 and 7, the called of Jesus Christ and those called to be saints are those who having placed their faith in Jesus Christ are named saints. We know this because the word "called" in these verses is an adjective, not a verb, and because this is consistent with the statement in Romans 9:26 where Paul says *they shall be called the children of the living God*. In the same sense, in Romans 8:30, those whom God predestinated, He also called (that is, named the children of God). So in Romans 9:25-26, God only calls, (names) a remnant out of all Israel to be His children.

It was not that the Word of God was ineffective in the hearts of all the Israelites; nor was it that not every Israelite chose to believe. Romans 9:6 says, *Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel*. Rather, according to verse 27 (quoting Isaiah 10:22), only a remnant will be saved out of Israel – *...though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved*. Only some will be called (named) the children of God.

This, however, is what raises the question as to how participation in the remnant is determined, and this is the matter of the election which God is about to explain in Romans 9:7-13.

#### **1. Example Number One – Isaac versus Ishmael**

Not all the descendants of Abraham are called (named) children of God (Romans 9:7) – *Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but In Isaac shall thy seed be called* [named]. Thus, the only ones who will be named children will be from the descendants of Isaac.

At this point, God makes a distinction between the saved and the unsaved by calling (naming) them the children of the flesh and the children of the promise. This designation is illustrated by the difference between the children of Ishmael and the children of Isaac. (verses 8 and 9) – *That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will*

*I come and Sarah shall have a son.* He wants us to think of the circumstances in which both Ishmael and Isaac were born. Ishmael was born as a result of an indulgence of the flesh which happened because Abraham failed to trust in the promise of God. On the other hand, Isaac was born purely as a result of the promise of God, Abraham ultimately yielding in faith to the promise. Thus, he *against hope believed in hope... and being not weak in faith...he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving God the glory* (Romans 4:18-20).

It is through this that we learn that those who are called (named) the children of the promise are those who have faith. Romans 4:13 says, *For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.* In fact, according to Romans 4:14, if faith is made void by the inheriting of salvation through the law, the promise is *made of none effect* – or rendered totally irrelevant. In other words, if a person can be named the child of God by the works of the law through his flesh, not only does faith mean nothing, but the promise means nothing as well. But to the contrary, Romans 9:16 says that it is all of faith, *that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed, [AND NOTE], not to that only which is of the law [Jews], but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all* – that is, all of us Jews and Gentiles who believe (Romans 9:11, *that he might be the father of all them that believe*).

It is therefore the people of faith who are called (named) the children of God, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. Romans 9:8 says that it is the children of the promise (which is by faith) who are counted for the seed. Romans 9:24 says, *Even us, whom he hath called [named], not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.* In Romans 9:25-26, God says He is going to call (name) His people out of those who were not His people. And Romans 9:30-32 explains that many Gentiles will be named the children of God while many Israelites will not be named the children of God because the Gentiles attained unto *the righteousness which is of faith* (verse 30), while the Israelites *sought it not by faith* (verse 32).

Participation in the remnant is not, therefore, a result of an unconditional election, but rather, it is determined by the faith of the individual. God observes the presence of faith or the absence of faith in individuals, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, and chooses to name only the believers children of God. This is the point He is making when He says in Romans 9:8 that only *the children of the promise are counted for the seed*. The children of the promise are those who believe as Abraham believed, and whose faith is counted for righteousness as Abraham's faith was counted for righteousness (Romans 4:3).

## **2. Example Number Two – Jacob verses Esau**

In the second example, God approaches the same subject from a bit different direction. In the first example above, he makes the point that people are named the children of God because of their faith. In this example, he reinforces that point and then makes the additional point that people cannot be named the children of God based on their works.

In Romans 9:10, He makes note of Rebecca bearing twins by Isaac. In verse 12, He references His choice that the elder of the two should serve the younger one. In verse 13, He states His reason – *As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.* If it would not be for verse 11 in the middle of this, we might be left with a different understanding. But in verse 11, God says that Jacob was not chosen because he had done good, and He also states that Esau was not hated because he had done bad. The choice between them was made before they had the opportunity to do good or evil – *For the children being not yet born, neither, having done any good, or evil.* Yet, it is important to note that they were both sinners in the womb because of what they

inherited from Adam. No one would argue that they were chosen because of a nature of sinlessness. Psalm 51:5 would apply to both Jacob and Esau as much as to David where he said, *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

God's point in Romans 9:11 is that He never calls anyone a child of God on the basis of works. But please note that His point is twofold. He also never refuses to call someone a child of God on the basis of works. This is not God's standard. God's choice of Jacob over Esau, the younger over the elder, was rooted in God's purpose according to election, which purpose is not related to the works of the individual, but is related to the act by which He calls (names) people the children of God.

As we have learned above, God calls, or gives people the name "children of God" based on their faith. In the context of Romans chapters 9 to 11, God says, *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth* (Romans 10:4). He also says, *...The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith...* (Romans 10:8). This last statement comes from Deuteronomy 30:14-20 where faith and choice were put together for the nation of Israel in the beginning of their covenant with God as a nation.

Deuteronomy 30:14-20  
(with comments)

**15** *But **the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart,***

[which is identified in Romans 10:8 as the word of faith]

*that thou mayest do it. See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil;*

[These are the choices God has set before Israel.]

**16** *In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.*

**17** *But if thine heart turn away,*

[A choice Israel has the freedom to make]

*so that thou wilt not hear,*

[which according to Romans 10:17 is the opposite of faith, since faith comes by hearing – hence the refusal to hear is a refusal to believe]

*but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them;*

[so that they chose to believe an alternative to God, just as Adam and Eve did in the garden]

**18** *I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it.*

**19** *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: **therefore choose** life, that both thou and thy seed may live:*

**20** *That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou*

*mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.*

God's choice to name people the children of God is rooted in the people's choice to believe. It has always been this way, and He makes this abundantly clear in Romans chapter 10.

10:9 - believe in thine heart  
10:10 - with the heart man believeth unto...  
10:11 - whosoever believeth on him  
10:12 - unto all that call upon him  
10:13 - whosoever shall call upon the name  
10:14 - how then shall they call on him in whom they  
have not believed  
10:16 - who hath believed?  
10:17 - faith cometh by hearing

Between Jacob and Esau, which one believed God and which one turned his heart away from Him? We find the answer in the book of Hebrews. In Hebrews 11:21, we are told that Jacob is a man who acted by faith. But in Hebrews 12:16, we are told that Esau was a profane man who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright rather than trust in God.

From Romans 9:11, God wants us to understand why He loved Jacob rather than Esau. His choice was not based on the works of either man, since the choice was made before either of them had an opportunity to do any works. Rather, His choice was rooted in His purpose for election, the basis upon which He chooses to call someone a child of God – the faith of the individual. In His foreknowledge, God knew that Jacob would believe and Esau would not. On this basis, God loved Jacob rather than Esau. As Romans 8:29-30 explains, those whom God foreknew he called – naming them the children of God, because in foreknowing their faith, He justified them and predestined them to be glorified.

### Conclusion

God did not include any Israelite simply because they were born an Israelite. God did not include me simply because I was born into a Christian home. God did not exclude any Israelite solely because their works were not sufficient. God does not exclude anyone today solely on the basis of their works. From the very foundation of the world, God chose within Himself to give a name to every person who would choose to believe in Him. That name is "child of God." There is a condition to being elected to bear that name. The condition is faith. It is impossible to please God without faith (Hebrews 11:6). All the works you have, good or bad, are nothing without faith.

Why did God exclude so many Israelites? Romans 9:30-33 tells us why.

*30 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.*

*31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.*

*32 Wherefore? **Because they sought it not by faith**, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;*

*33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and **whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.***

I am so thankful that God included me. But why did He include me? I have no merit which qualifies me to bear the name child of God. Jesus Christ alone is the Righteous One who satisfied God for all my sin. All I have done is believe in Him and trust His work on my behalf. Jesus' work is enough to satisfy God, and my faith in His work is enough to be included in the election and to be called a child of God.

If God went to such an effort to deal with sin, why would He then apply the efficacy of that sacrifice only to those whom He randomly chooses through an unconditional election? And if faith is something that comes only after God has chosen the individual, why make an issue out of Israel not seeking the righteousness of God by faith? The whosoever of faith is at the very heart of God's election process. He gives us the privilege to believe and chooses us because we take advantage of that privilege. He did not have to offer us the opportunity to believe. He did not offer the fallen angels this privilege. But He has offered it to us and has chosen to apply the name child of God only to those who take advantage of it.

Have you believed in Christ and trusted what He did for you in bearing your sins in His body on the tree? On the cross, Jesus shed His sinless blood, satisfying the righteousness demands of God regarding man's sin. He then voluntarily died and powerfully arose from the dead conquering the last enemy, death itself. The wonderful value of the gospel of Christ is that whosoever believes this truth will be included in those whom God has chosen to bear the name child of God. Again, I ask, have you believed? Then confess with your mouth your faith unto God, and you will be included among the children of God. 📖

## **Romans 9:14-18**

### **What Did He Know**

### **And When Did He Know It?**

The first thing God did in this section of Scripture was to establish the context. He did that in Romans 9:1-5, showing that all the things He had talked about in the chapters preceding this section pertained to Israel as much as they did to Gentiles.

Then in verses 6-13, God explained why He included Jacob and not Esau, or why He included some and not others. He said that only *the children of the promise are counted for the seed* (verse 8); and we learned from chapter four that the children of the promise are those who believe just like Abraham believed, for Abraham, the one to whom the promises were given, is the father of all who have faith (Romans 4:13-20).

But in stating in Romans 9:11-13 that God loved Jacob and hated Esau before they had done any good or evil, He raised some questions which He answers in the next section, verse 14-33. The three questions He addresses are as follows:

1. *Is there unrighteousness with God?* (Verse 14)
2. *Why doth He yet find fault?* (Verse 19)
3. *What shall we then say?* (Verse 30)

The three questions are directly related to one another and it is necessary to combine the answers to them to have one complete thought.

#### **Is There Unrighteousness With God?**

##### **1. God's Prerogative**

It is God's prerogative to bestow mercy and compassion on whom He will. He said as much to Moses (verse 15) *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.* [God said this to Moses in the context of Moses' request to see first hand the glory of God (Exodus 33:19).] In light of this we understand that God is the one who activates the gifts of grace and mercy when they are applied to human beings. He says in verse 16, *So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.*

John 1:12-13 agrees with this and explains that when a person receives Christ, God grants the power (authority) to become a son of God. This authority is not granted *of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God* alone! Only God has the authority to flip the switch to turn on regeneration. Out faith does not flip the switch and turn on regeneration. According to Ephesians 2:8-9, we are saved by grace, meaning that grace is the means of our salvation. It then says that we are saved through faith, which indicates that faith is merely the avenue of receiving salvation, not the means. As Ephesians 2:5 says, God is the one who quickens us. By grace He gives and through faith we are privileged to receive.

## 2. The Illustration of Pharaoh

To illustrate His prerogative, God refers to His dealings with Pharaoh. He had told Moses that He would harden Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 4:21). And that is precisely what He did (Exodus 7:13). But the question we must ask in order to understand this matter is whether or not God hardened Pharaoh's heart against Pharaoh's will. Given the choice, would Pharaoh have done anything differently?

Several times we are told that Pharaoh hardened his own heart as in Exodus 8:15 and 8:32. So which way was it? Did God impose a hardened heart upon Pharaoh by divine decree, or did Pharaoh harden his own heart by his own choice? Pharaoh's hardened heart is also called sin. Exodus 9:34 says, *...he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants*. If hardening his heart was sin and God imposed this hardening of his heart upon Pharaoh, then it could be reasoned that it was God's fault that Pharaoh sinned. But something seems very wrong about such a thought.

Some help may come from comparing this situation to another in which God is given credit for something someone else did. In 2 Samuel 24:1, God is said to have moved David to number Israel. But in 1 Chronicles 21:1, Satan is the one who provoked David to number Israel. How can it be that both are given credit? Which one directly influenced David to do this thing against God's will – God or Satan? Were both of them involved? It must be that God ultimately receives credit for everything that happens because He is sovereign and nothing can happen without His allowing it to happen. That does not mean, however, that God is the cause of the thing. Satan moved David to number the people against God's will, but God allowed it and decided to use the situation for His purpose. Thus it may be said that God was involved because of His sovereign oversight of the matter, but not because He personally motivated David to sin.

Likewise, when God is said to have hardened Pharaoh's heart, it was not causative but permissive. It is the same thing as in Romans 1:24,26, and 28. There it is stated that God gave up people to uncleanness, vile affections, and a reprobate mind. But God did not cause these things to occur. It was the lusts of their own heart, changes from the natural use that burned in their lust one toward another, and the fact that they themselves did not like to retain God in their knowledge to which God gave them up. Similarly, God may be said to have hardened Pharaoh's heart in that Pharaoh was inclined to a hard heart by his own volition and God simply left him go to it, using it to the advantage of His Divine purpose in the lives of His people, Israel. Romans 9:22 says that God endures with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. In other words, in His Sovereignty, God allows the unrepentant sinner to practice his wicked ways for some considerable time until He finally cuts them off.

In God's Divine prerogative, He gets to choose to whom He will show mercy and to whom He will not. In the case of Pharaoh, God chose not to show mercy because of Pharaoh's inclination toward a hardened heart. On the other hand, in the case of Abraham (with whom Pharaoh may be contrasted in the book of Romans), God chose to show mercy because of Abraham's inclination

toward faith. Abraham's faith was not caused by God after He chose Abraham, but Abraham's faith, which God foreknew before the foundation of the world, was the basis of His choosing Abraham. As 2 Thessalonians 2:13 says, ...*God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth*. It was God's foreknowledge of those who would believe the truth that formed the basis for God's choice of Abraham and of all the elect.

The fact that God knew beforehand that Abraham would believe and Pharaoh would harden his heart does not impose upon the course of human history. God's foreknowledge does not deny anyone a personal choice. If you are to receive mercy from God, you must choose to believe now! When you believe, God will flip the switch to regeneration because He promised, *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*. (Romans 10:13). And, according to Romans 10:14, those who call are the ones who believe because they have heard.

There is no unrighteousness in God. God has done nothing wrong. There is perfect justification for the choices He makes – giving up to hardness of heart those who are unrepentant and showing mercy to those who choose to believe.

### **3. The Foreknowledge of God**

What did God know? Nehemiah gives us an answer to this question in Nehemiah 9:7-10. There we are told in verse 7 that God chose Abram. In verse 8, God found Abram's heart faithful and thus made a covenant with him. In verse 9, God heard the cry of the Israelites in their affliction in Egypt and in verse 10 He showed signs and wonders upon Pharaoh because He knew that Pharaoh and the Egyptians dealt proudly against His people.

But when did God know this? Did He know it only when He observed it happening? Acts 15:18 declares, *known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world*. Indeed nothing surprises God. He has always known everything that He would ever do. Isaiah 46:9-10 agrees where God testifies, *Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done....* God is not surprised and informed as things unfold in human history.

The foreknowledge of God is an aspect of His Sovereignty. God knew before the world began that Abraham would be faithful. God knew before the world began that Pharaoh would act proudly and harden his heart against Him. In Exodus 5:2 Pharaoh said, *Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go*. But in Exodus 18:11, Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, declared, *Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they [the Egyptians] dealt proudly he was above them*. God was above Pharaoh in that God possesses the Divine prerogative to give or withhold either wrath or mercy according to His own choosing. Pharaoh had no intention of submitting to God and refused to hear what God had to say to him through Moses. In Exodus 8:19 we are told that his own advisors tried to tell him that the plagues were the finger of God, but Pharaoh would not hearken unto them. Without hearing there can be no faith, and without faith there can be no mercy. Knowing beforehand that Pharaoh would not hear nor believe but with a closed mind would harden his heart, God chose to give up Pharaoh to his hardness and his unbelief. According to Romans 9:15-18, Pharaoh remains forever a testimony to the Divine prerogative. God gets to decide who receives mercy and who does not, and based on what He knows, He chooses to bestow mercy on those who believe and to bestow wrath on those who refuse to believe.



## Why Doth He Yet Find Fault?

### 1. The Question

In Romans chapter 9, Paul's intent is to make a case for Israel being divided between those who are saved and those who are not: as he states on 9:6, *they are not all Israel, which are of Israel*. So, he separates them into two groups: the children of the flesh are represented by Ishmael and the children of promise are represented by Isaac (verses 7-8), and those whom He hated are represented by Esau and those whom He loved are represented by Jacob (vs. 10-13). He defends this division with the point of the Divine prerogative (vs. 14-18).

But throughout the book of Romans Paul has been arguing that all men are sinful.

Romans 2:12 - *...as many as have sinned without law...as many as have sinned in the law....*

Romans 3:9 - *we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin.*

Romans 3:19 - *...all the world may become guilty before God*

Romans 3:23 - *...all have sinned*

Romans 5:12 - *...so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned.*

So now he asks, how can man be deemed guilty if everyone is doing exactly what the decree of the Sovereign God requires? *For*, in Romans 9:19, *who hath resisted his will?* Can Pharaoh be faulted for a hard heart if God is the cause of the hard heart? Can any Israelite be justifiably excluded from the elect if all he is doing is submitting to the will of God?

Before we look at the answer, note the related question in Romans 9:30-33. In paraphrase, why is some of Israel not saved? After all, they followed the law of righteousness.

### 2. The Answer

In answer to the question, *Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?*, Paul addresses those who reply against God: *Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?* (Verse 20). The objection is that God is wrong for finding fault if no one resists his will, but does only according to His Divine decree. Abraham believes because God has told him to believe. Pharaoh hardens his heart because God has told him to harden his heart. Israel followed the law of righteousness because God told them to follow the law of righteousness. So why does God find fault with anyone? The objection contains a secondary question in verse 20, *why hast thou made me thus?* If I am an Israelite and I have followed the law of righteousness, why does God find fault with me? It is not fair that I am lost. Let Him withhold His mercy from a Gentile like Pharaoh, but not from an Israelite!

Yet even within Israel there are two groups as outlined in verses 21 through 28. In verse 21 we are told that there is only one lump of clay (which is true whether you apply this to the whole human race, or just to Israel), but from that same lump of clay is fashioned one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour. In verses 22 and 23 the vessels of mercy and the vessels of wrath are distinguished. The vessels of mercy are those afore prepared to glory and the vessels of wrath are those fitted to destruction. In verse 24 He says that the vessels afore prepared to glory include both Jews and Gentiles, which in verses 25-26 are called children. In verse 27, a remnant is saved out of the total number of the children of Israel. And in verse 29, He explains that if there had not been a remnant saved out of the total number of the children of Israel, then all of Israel would have ended up like Sodom and Gomorrah.

Now here is the reason for the two groups: verse 30, *what shall we say then?* The group

of the saved includes Gentiles who did not follow after righteousness (verse 30). The group of the lost includes Jews who did follow the law of righteousness (verse 31). *Wherefore*, or why? (verse 32). Because Israel did not follow (verse 31 – *they sought it not*) the law of righteousness **by faith!** And the Gentiles did seek it by faith (verse 30). The great “because” in salvation is not here stated to be the divine unconditional election at random of some to be saved leaving the rest to be lost without a choice, but rather, the great “because” of salvation is here stated to be faith.

So why does God yet find fault? Verse 33 says that there is a rock of offense, a stumbling stone laid in Zion. That rock of offense is Jesus Christ. *Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed* and consequently, whosoever does not believe on Him shall be ashamed. The operative factor, the active ingredient, the deciding matter is faith or lack of faith in Jesus Christ, and that as a matter of personal choice. God finds fault because of unbelief. The fault is the failure to believe on Jesus Christ.

### Conclusion

In Romans 8:29, God foreknew those who would believe and predestined them *to be conformed to the image of his Son*. In Romans 9:23, these are the same ones He *afore prepared unto glory*. But He also foreknew those who would not believe and according to Romans 9:22 fitted them to destruction.

God is not unrighteous in His selection of those who will be saved. God has not chosen without a justifiable basis. There is a because. The because is faith. Neither is God unrighteous in His not selecting others to be saved. Here again there is a because, a just basis for His rejection of these. The because is their stumbling over the rock of offense, Jesus Christ, and refusing, or at least failing to believe on Him.

So are you part of the elect? If you have of your own will believed on Jesus Christ and trusted Him and Him alone for your salvation, then welcome to the family of the elect.

## **Romans 10:1-11**

# **The Make-Believe Religion of the Ignorant**

Neil came in the back door and entered the kitchen. Viola was standing at the sink washing dishes.

Viola said, "What have you been doing?"

Neil responded, "I've been to the moon."

"Oh!" exclaimed Viola, "What did you do on the moon?"

Neil answered, "I went exploring and picked up some rocks. See!" Neil showed Viola the rocks he had picked up on the moon.

Neil was 8 years old.

Viola was his mother. Viola thought to herself, "What an imagination that boy has."

We accept imaginary stories like that from children as cute play. But if the conversation is among adults rather than with a child, and the subject is going to heaven rather than going to the moon, the imaginations of make-believe religious fantasies are not cute. They are dangerous and destructive.

Israel did not attain to the law of righteousness (Romans 9:31) because they did not seek it by faith (verse 32). What they did instead was to go about *to establish their own righteousness* (Romans 10:3) through the imaginations of their religious fantasies. This short fall on Israel's part aroused great passion in Paul's heart toward his Jewish brethren.

### **PAUL'S DESIRE**

The desire of Paul's heart was that Israel might be saved (Romans 10:1): *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.* He considered the door of

possibility still to be open for the Israelites to be saved. And so he prayed to God for this to happen.

## ISRAEL'S SHORT-FALL

### 1. They had a zeal of God.

The word “zeal” as it is used in Romans 10:2 means “excitement, fervor of spirit, a passion in embracing, pursuing, or defending anything. Paul said that he was willing to go on record that Israel had a zeal of God. There was a remarkable passion among the Israelites to be identified as worshipers of God. In their history they had worshiped idols. But there was always an element that took pride in a show of attention to the God of Israel. And since the Babylonian captivity, He is the only God of which they had given notice.

### 2. But they were ignorant.

But Paul noted that their zeal was *not according to knowledge*. Their passion for God was rooted either in the wrong information, or in a vacuum of total ignorance. There was precedent for this in their history. In Isaiah 58:2, God testified regarding Israel's passion toward Him, *Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.* But something was terribly wrong in that context. God refused to take notice of their approach unto Him. The Israelites wondered at this and were baffled that God would not accept their worship. God's reply explained, *Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen?* (Isaiah 58:3b - 5a). In the terms of Romans 10:3, Israel was ignorant of God's righteousness and had gone about to establish their own righteousness. The fast in which they were participating in Isaiah 58 was not what God had prescribed for them, it was something they had made up themselves and then offered it to God, expecting Him to accept it simply because they offered it to Him. They were very passionate about what they were doing, but they were passionately wrong because they were totally ignorant about what was right in God's eyes.

### 3. And what was worse was that their ignorance was by choice!

There was no excuse, of course, for this ignorance. The knowledge they needed was available to them as Romans 10:8 says, *But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach.* Compare this with Deuteronomy 30:14 and following. Having said in verse 14 that *the word is very nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it*, God then presses them to make a choice in responding to His Word. In verse 15 He says, *See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil.* In verse 16, He reiterates the command to love the LORD, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and statutes and judgments. In verse 17, He warns them against turning their heart away unto other gods. In verse 19, He specifies that it is their choice as to which they will do, *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore **choose** life, that both thou and thy seed may live.*

God had instructed them through His Word as to what His righteousness was, but they had *not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God* (Romans 10:3). They chose rather to establish their own righteousness. It does not make much sense. If you have the truth available to you, why would you make up something else? For example, if you are assigned a book report on a particular book, do you read the book and report on what you have read, or do you not read

the book and make up your own story, submitting your made up story as the assigned report? Surely, the teacher would not be impressed if you offered something you made up in place of the real thing; and God is not impressed when humans substitute their own made up version of faith and worship for God's declared truth in His Word.

## THE TRUTH

Israel had not been compelled by some Divine imposition to worship Him in righteousness. Neither had they been left to follow some whimsical human imagination because they omitted from the elective process. Israel had been making conscious choices throughout their generations to establish their own righteousness rather than submit to the righteousness of God. That same choice had been made by Paul's generation of Israelites, but the Holy Spirit led Paul to write that the door was still open for Israel to reverse their unfortunate choice and still seek the righteousness of God. So he draws a contrast for them between the righteousness which is of the law and the righteousness which is of faith.

### 1. The righteousness which is of the law.

*For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them* (Romans 10:5). This statement comes from Leviticus 18:5, *Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD.* A little help in understanding the intent of this statement comes from a reference to it in Galatians 3:12, which says, *And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.* Then we might add to this James 2:10 that takes it another step by saying, *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.* James 2:10 is taken from another Old Testament statement found in Deuteronomy 28:58, *If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD; Then... the consequences will be catastrophic!*

In other words, the righteousness which is of the law requires that all the law be obeyed flawlessly without even the smallest exception. Once one violation of the law is committed no matter how minute, the whole thing is ruined, because perfect obedience can never be recovered after disobedience has occurred. Anyone who imagines that they can approach God and be accepted by Him through the means of their own obedience to any prescribed law, whether Divine or human, is fooling himself.

### 2. The Righteousness which is of faith.

On the other hand, there is the righteousness which is of faith. Paul implores us not to make this matter complicated. He says in Romans 10:6-7 regarding the righteousness which is of faith, *Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (That is to bring Christ down from above:) Or, who shall descend into the deep? (That is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)* The expression is taken from Deuteronomy 30:11-13. In verse 11 God says, *For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off.* God declares that this should not be difficult to understand because there is nothing secret or mysterious about it. It is very plain and simple. In verse 12 He says, *It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it.* And in verse 13 He gives the other part, *Neither is it beyond the sea that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it?* The image is taken from an expression used in ancient Jewish times when a woman wanted to be released from their engagement. He would say to her, "Here is a penny. If you can take this penny to heaven or if you can take this penny

across the ocean, you can get out of being engaged to me.” It was a manner of saying that getting out of the engagement would be extremely difficult, if not impossible. God says in Deuteronomy 30:12-13, *It is **NOT** in heaven...**NEITHER** is it beyond the sea.* So Paul says in Romans 10:6-7, *Say **NOT** in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven?...Or who shall descend into the deep [the sea or ocean].* In other words, this is **NOT** complicated. In fact, as God says in Deuteronomy 30:14, *But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it,* so Paul says in Romans 10:8, *But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach.*

In Deuteronomy 30:15-19, God lays out the choice that the people of Israel are to make. They have the commandment to love the LORD and keep His commandment. He set before them life and death, blessing and cursing. It was therefore up to them to **CHOOSE** life or suffer the consequences for choosing death. In Romans 10:9-11, Paul uses the matter of faith as the exercise of choice available to the Israelites. He said, here is the word of faith that is nigh thee, *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed* (Isaiah 28:16, 45:17, 49:23).

The parallel between these two passages of Scripture, Deuteronomy 30 and Romans 10, shows that Paul understood faith to be the choice God had set before the Israelites. They had not attained to the righteousness of the law because they had not sought it by faith (Romans 9:31-32). It was not a complicated matter. You did not have to ascend into heaven or cross the ocean to figure it out. The word is as near as it can be, in your mouth and in your heart. All you have to do is choose to believe it.

### 3. The Simplicity of Faith

Faith really is a very simple thing. Paul noted earlier in the book of Romans that faith is not a work (Romans 4:5 - *But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.* Thus faith is the opposite of working. It is accepted by God in place of the works of righteousness which we cannot produce on our own.) Indeed, faith is not a work as some would propose who deny that faith is a choice. But faith is just that, a choice. A person chooses to believe the gospel of Christ. There is no work on the part of the believer in making this choice. Rather, his choice is to trust completely, absolutely, and unreservedly the work Christ did on his behalf and to trust that Christ's work is all the work that needs to be done. According to the text in Romans 10:9-10, faith involves two things: the mouth and the heart. With the heart a person believes that God has raised Christ from the dead, implying that He believes Christ died for his sins which necessitates His resurrection. With the mouth confession is made of what the heart has believed. In believing, the person is then granted the righteousness of Christ, as noted in Romans 3:21-22, *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference.* Note that according to Romans 3:22, the choice of faith is extended unto all, but the righteousness of God in Christ is only placed upon all who believe.

### Conclusion

Remember Neil from the beginning of this article?

Neil comes into the kitchen again. This time, a lady named Janet is there. Janet says, "Where have you been, Neil?"

Neil answers, "I've been to the moon."  
Janet asks, "What did you do there?"  
Neil responds, "I went exploring, and picked up some rocks."

This is a likely conversation between Neil Armstrong, an astronaut who actually walked on the moon, and his wife Janet. These two conversations, the first between Neil and his mother and the second between Neil and his wife, illustrate that there is a wrong way and a right way to get to the moon. In the first conversation, Neil Armstrong is presented as speaking from his imagination to his mother Viola. Through his imagination as a child, he could visualize himself in his play as being on the moon and picking up rocks, but he was not actually on the moon. It was only pretend and pretend is not reality. However, when he became an astronaut, he was able to enter into a real spaceship and actually go to the moon. A fantastic imagination did not get him there, it took a real spaceship to do so.

Likewise, there is a wrong way and a right way to get to heaven. Imaginary fairy tales of establishing our own righteousness will not get us there, but entrance into a real vessel, Jesus Christ the Saviour, will get us there. *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth* (Romans 10:4). Faith is all that is required to get into Christ. The word of faith is as near to us as it can get. God has made it available to each and every one of us. For faith, we will be told in Romans 10:17, comes by hearing the Word of God.

And so, God has set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore choose life by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Romans 10:13). Calling upon the name of the Lord is the exercising of your choice to believe. So exercise your choice. Make that call. Believe today. 📖

## **Romans 10:12-21**

### **God's Five Step Program**

Did you ever buy something that needed to be assembled? Instructions for such assembly are usually laid out in a booklet containing the steps that should be followed in order to assemble the object – step 1, step 2, etc. There is a reason the steps are laid out as they are. If you do not do things in the correct order, something will not fit together as it should and you will then have to back up and disassemble some things so that you can correct the error, or else you will have a flawed assembly.

God identifies His desired objective for all mankind in Romans 10:12-13 that all men, Jews and Gentiles alike, call upon the name of the Lord and be saved - *For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

In verses 14-15, He also outlines the necessary steps in order for men to be able to call upon the name of the Lord - send, preach, hear, believe, and call. This is God's five step program for salvation directed to all mankind. If it is not followed correctly, the desired result of salvation will never be achieved.

#### **CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD**

Calling on the Name of the Lord is a statement God uses to describe the act by which a

person cries out to God in repentance and faith in order to receive Christ and be saved. It is a statement used both in the New Testament and in the Old Testament. For example, David used the statement in Psalm 116:13 in direct relationship to salvation - *I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD*. Joel also used the statement in prophecy regarding the tribulation period - *And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance...*(Joel 2:32).

Looking into the Book of Revelation, we find that not everyone who faces the wrath of God will be willing to call upon His name and receive deliverance. In Revelation chapter six, as God's wrath begins to intensify on earth, men hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains and in verse 16 of that chapter they are recorded as saying, *Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb*. Revelation 9:20-21 describes those who survive the horrors of wrath administered through some fearsome beasts, yet absolutely refuse to repent.

But God desires to hear the cry of anyone who will repent of his sins and call upon His name to be delivered from the eternal wrath of the lake of fire. So He declares here in Romans 10:12, *There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek*. Both have exactly the same opportunity to be saved, *for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him*. So according to Romans 10:13, *whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved* - whether he be Jew or Gentile.

### **THE PREREQUISITE STEPS**

The rhetorical questions of Romans 10:14-15 which follow the open invitation of verses 12 and 13 indicate the prerequisite nature of the steps outlined in the questions.

How shall they call without believing?

How shall they believe without hearing?

How shall they hear with preaching?

How shall they preach without being sent?

#### **1. Step One: Someone has to be sent.**

Romans 10:15 asks, *And how shall they preach except they be sent?* Preaching the Gospel that produces faith in the hearing is a Divine commission. Jeremiah 7:25 describes this commissioning as something God has been doing for a very long time - *Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them*. In a continuance of this in the New Testament, God sent John the Baptist (John 1:6 - *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John*). He also sent His own Son Jesus (John 5:36-37 - *But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.*) And then Jesus sent His disciples (John 20:21 - *Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*) This commission continues with us today in the Great Commission issued by the Head of the church - *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature* (Mark 16:15).



## 2. The Sent One Must Preach.

The idea of being sent is that the sent one is carrying a message from the one who has sent them. So it is in the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. The message we preach is not our own message, but His message to the world which we are commissioned to convey. Paul made this point very clear in the first chapter of Galatians where he said, *But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ* (verses 11-12).

Romans 10:15 says, *How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!* Taken from Isaiah chapter 52, this was a statement of the Messiah who also says in connection to this, *Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I* (Isaiah 52:6).

The intent of preaching the gospel is that those who hear know that God has spoken, not just a human being. The message is His message, and the preaching of the message should be done in such a way as to clearly point to the Person from whom the message originates.

If we preach just another human message, it will not have the results God intends, because faith only comes from hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). So the warning is given in 1 Corinthians regarding the substance of our preaching. We are to *preach Christ crucified* (1 Corinthians 1:23), *not with excellency of speech or of wisdom* (1 Corinthians 2:1), *nor with enticing words of man's wisdom* (1 Corinthians 2:4), *but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power* (1 Corinthians 2:4b): *that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God* (1 Corinthians 2:5). And it is *the preaching of the cross that is the power of God unto salvation* (1 Corinthians 1:18).

## 3. The Message That Is Preached Must be Heard

Romans 10:14 says, *and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?* Hearing in this case is equivalent to knowing and understanding. In the following verses, some additional questions are asked that explains this: verse 18, *Have they not heard?...*verse 19, *Did not Israel know?* The hearing that brings faith to the heart is not that of a passive bystander upon whose ears the sound waves of the Gospel just happen to breeze by. The hearing that brings faith is that of a conscious listener who thoughtfully considers the truth being expounded. The listener must be a participant in the preaching process as one who has chosen to listen and one who desires to hear.

It must also be stated that hearing the truth of the Word of God is superior to religious experience. Jesus dealt with this in Luke 16 in the context of the rich man's desperation in the place of torment. He thought that someone returned from the dead would be enough to convince his brothers to believe. But Jesus said, *If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead* (Luke 16:31). Substituting religious experience for the preaching of truth has been a perpetual problem in the church. The Scriptures are clear, however. The spiritual law is very precise – faith comes by hearing and the hearing that produces faith comes by the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

## 4. What Is Heard Must Then Be Believed.

Romans 10:14 says again, *how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And*

*how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?* As a conscious listener thoughtfully considers the truth being expounded in preaching, the next step is for him to willingly submit to the demands of that truth. This is the step of faith. Having heard, and thus knowing the Word of God that is preached, the hearer must first agree that the Word is true (this is believing – John 19:35), and then he must have confidence that it works (this is trusting – Ephesians 1:13), and then he must obey what the Word demands (this is the evidence that professed faith is real – James 2:17-18).

## **5. The Believing Person Must Call On The Name Of The Lord.**

Romans 10:13 says, *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* Verse 9 explains, *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* Salvation is never imposed upon anyone against his will. The individual who would be saved must receive Christ (John 1:12) as an act of his own volition. So calling upon the name of the Lord is the declaration of the will of the individual that they receive Christ and the salvation that He has provided.

### **WHY DID THIS FIVE STEP PROGRAM NOT WORK FOR ISRAEL?**

Did Israel not hear? Yes they did. *Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world* (Romans 10:18). Did Israel not know? (Romans 10:19). They knew well enough what the prophets had preached, but they were *a disobedient and gainsaying people* (verse 21) which refused to believe, trust, and obey the Word of God. The sound waves of the Word of God passed over their ear drums, but they stopped their own spiritual ears and refused to believe. As Isaiah 53:1 says, *Who hath believed our report?* Isaiah was sent (Isaiah 6:8-9). Isaiah preached the word (Isaiah 53:1 “our report”). But it was not believed because Israel refused to listen.

In Romans 10:18, the answer to the question, *Have they not heard?* is a quotation of Psalm 19:4, *their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.* By this we are to understand that the message of the Word of God started with the declaration of the heavens, *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork* (Psalm 19:1); and was followed by the law (Psalm 19:7-9), giving Israel every advantage in matters of faith: as Romans 3:1-2 says, *What advantage then hath the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.*

God was determined that Israel would have every opportunity possible to know His Word and respond in faith to it. Romans 10:19 quotes from Deuteronomy 32:21, *I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.* God was not passive regarding Israel's disbelief, but actively took drastic measures to provoke them to faith. Ezekiel describes some of these drastic measures:

*Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you and I will destroy your high places. And your altars shall be desolated, and your images shall be broken: and I will cast down your slain men before your idols. And I will lay the dead carcasses of the children of Israel before their idols; and I will scatter your bones round about your altars. In all your dwelling places the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and cease, and your images may be cut down and your works may be abolished. And the slain shall fall in the midst of you, and **YE SHALL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD** (Ezekiel 7:3-7).*

In the meantime, the Gentiles who were not seeking God at all responded well to the

preaching of the Word of God. Romans 10:20 quotes from Isaiah 65:1-2: *I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.* Consider Nineveh. Nineveh was a massive Assyrian City-State that was wicked and deserving of nothing but the judgment of God. Jonah was sent there to confront them with their sin and inform them of their pending judgment. Jonah did not want to go and fled the will of God because he knew that God was a merciful God and if the people repented, God would save them. Jonah did not want to see the Gentile people of Nineveh receive the salvation of the LORD, especially when so many Israelites were unbelievers. Jonah's actions perfectly illustrate the jealousy which God sought to use to provoke more of the Israelites to hear the Word and believe.

But Israel still did not get it. So God says in Romans 10:21, quoting from Isaiah 65:2, *All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.* God so thorough provided Israel with every opportunity to believe that they were completely without excuse (Romans 1:20b).

### Conclusion

What we are to learn from all of this is that faith is a choice. The fact is that someone was sent, someone preached, and therefore the Word is nigh thee (Romans 10:8). The Word that was preached was the word of faith. And the Word of faith is the word of choice.

*Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness had not attained to the law of righteousness...Because they sought it not by faith* (Romans 9:31-32).

But it is not necessary for you to fail like Israel did. If you have heard the Word of God, if you have thoughtfully considered the truth of the Word of God, it is your privilege to believe it, to trust it, and to obey it. Just call on the name of the Lord and thou shalt be saved! It is your choice.



## Romans 11:1-10

# When You Set The Table, You Eat The Meal, Unless...

What would you think of a cook that would not eat his own prepared food? He cooks it, he sets it on the table, he invites you to eat it, but he himself refuses even to taste it. Would you eat food if the person who prepared it refused to eat it?

Instead of the preparing of a meal, think of the things we set in motion in our lives, such as the words we say, the facial expressions we direct toward others, the actions of our lives, the attitudes we portray. Now ask yourself, would you want to partake of those things if someone else was dishing them out to you?

God has set a rule before us that goes something like this – if you set the table, then you eat the meal. In Matthew 6:12 and 14-15 it comes out like this: *And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors....For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* This same principle explains God's statements in Romans 1:24, 26, and 28 where He gives men up to uncleanness and vile affections, and over to a reprobate mind. When men set the table with the wickedness they have prepared in the imagination of their minds, God says, they must eat the meal they have prepared.

## **The Remnant**

### **1. So has God cast away His people?**

In light of all that has been said in the previous chapters, Paul now poses the question, *Hath God cast away his people?* Has God unfairly or unjustly or arbitrarily banned Israel from eating at His table? Is this why Israel is not saved? (Compare Romans 9:1-5 and 10:1.) The answer is obviously no, because Paul is an Israelite and Paul is eating at God's table: *God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin* (Romans 11:1).

### **2. God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew.**

According to Romans 8:29-30, God pre-destined those whom He foreknew to be conformed to the image of Christ. This predestination involves calling them – that is naming or designating them the children of God, justifying them – that is declaring them to be righteous on the basis of the faith they exercise in place of the righteousness they do not have and cannot obtain on their own, and glorifying them – that is promising them the redemption of the body.

### **3. There is a remnant.**

Just as Elijah thought he was the only surviving believer in his day (1 Kings 19:10,14), so it may have seemed that there were no believing Jews in Paul's day. *Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? How he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life* (Romans 11:2b-3). But, just as there was a remnant of believing Jews in Elijah's day (1 Kings 19:18), so there is a remnant of believing Jews in Paul's day. *But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even*

*so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace* (Romans 11:4-5).

### **4. And, the remnant is according to the election of grace.**

Election means that God chooses those who get saved. Grace means that His choice is based on His grace as opposed to man's works. Romans 11:6 says, *And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.*

Remember that according to Romans 9:6-13 God did not choose Jacob because he did good. Neither did God reject Esau because he did bad. Both were inheritors of sin. But according to Romans 9:8, Jacob was of the promise while Esau was of the flesh. Remember also that according to Romans 4:13-16, the promise is of faith. *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by*

*grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all (Romans 4:16).* And finally, remember that according to Ephesians 2:8 we are saved **by** grace **through** faith. Grace is the means by which God makes salvation available to us and faith is the vessel by which we are able to receive it.

Reformed Theology declares that man is unable to choose to believe and therefore God must make the choice for him. It teaches that God chooses some to believe and the rest He leaves to remain in unbelief for eternity. Adherents to this theology propose that there is no basis for who is chosen and who is not. It is done, they say, without respect of person and without a consideration of merit. The only conclusion one can draw from this is that God's selection of the elect is entirely random. If you happen to be part of the divine lottery, you get to believe and if not, too bad.

The truth is that to say the election is of grace is to say that God chooses to grant the gift of salvation to those who choose to believe and that He does not grant the gift of salvation to those who choose not to believe. When Abraham believed God, his faith was counted for righteousness (Romans 4:3). So it is that God imputes righteousness to the account of any and every person who chooses to believe (Romans 4:5). In Romans 4, the same Greek word is translated as count, impute, and reckon. The word means "to place into the account of". When a person believes the gospel, calls upon the name of the Lord, and by faith willingly receives Christ as His Savior, God places His own righteousness into the account of the believing person thereby declaring him to be just in His eyes. God's grace is the means by which this transaction can take place. So it is that Romans 4:5-6 says, *But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.* Romans 4:16 adds, *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace....*

The grace of God makes it possible for you to eat at God's table rather than at the table you have prepared yourself. If you are willing to admit that the meal of life you have personally prepared is a total flop, and if you are willing to believe that the only good meal available is the one God has prepared for you, He will let you throw away your meal and partake of His.

### **The Rest of the Israelites**

#### **The majority of the Israelites are not sitting at the table of the Lord.**

*What then? (Romans 11:7-8) Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded...unto this day!* Romans 11:8 then quotes from

Isaiah 6:9 declaring that *God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear.*

But why did God give them the spirit of slumber? Paul explains by quoting from David in Psalm 69:22, *Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompence unto them* (Romans 11:9). God says that they set their own table and therefore they must eat their own meal, because they refuse to come to the table that God had prepared for them. Way back at Mt. Sinai, God told them this would happen. In Deuteronomy 28:62 He said, *And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude.* In the same verse He explains why: *because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the LORD thy God.* Please note, they **would not**. It was an act of their own will. And note, by their own will they refuse to obey **the voice**

of the Lord. Romans 10:17 makes it clear that faith comes by hearing the Word of God and Romans 9:32 makes it clear that Israel sought it not by faith. When Israel by their own will refused to listen to the Words of God being proclaimed by His very own voice, God followed His own rule and gave Israel over to the devices of their unbelief – a spirit of slumber, eyes that see not, and ears that hear not. He did not choose this for them. He only gave them what they chose for themselves.

### **Conclusion**

All mankind is the same before God; there is no respect of persons with Him. Anyone, Israelite or Gentile alike, who prepares himself a life-meal consisting of anger, lust, hatred, idolatry, selfishness, pride, wickedness, and such like, and then thinks he is going to show up at God's table and eat, has another thing coming. God says, if you want to come to my table, show me faith or you can just go eat your own meal and suffer all of the consequences that go with it.

God wants to see in a man that he trusts God's cooking and not his own. And to the person who believes, God's grace will be abundantly and eternally applied.

## **Romans 11:11-32 The Come Back Kid**

Some people are in the spotlight of the news all the time. Others enjoy the proverbial "15 minutes of fame." They hit the headlines for a short time and then they are gone, and those who

previously were headline news are once again back on the front page.

For a long time, Israel had been front page news. But now, the church has captured the headlines. Will this be permanent, or will Israel return to the front page again? Romans 11:11 asks, *Have they stumbled that they should fall?* Is this the end for Israel?

Proponents of Reformed Theology believe that the beginning of the church was the end for the physical nation of Israel. The church, they say, is Israel by extension and there is no future for the nation of Israel as it was in the future plans of God. What we are about to see in this text, however, is exactly the opposite of that. The purpose of the church is not to displace and eliminate the nation of Israel, but to provoke it to jealousy and ultimately bring about its revival. As it says in Romans 11:15, *For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the reconciling of them be, but life from the dead?*

### **The Gentiles Benefit From Israel's Fall**

#### **1. Israel fell and the Gentiles were saved.**

Romans 11:11 says, *...through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles.* According to verse 12, the fall of Israel is the riches of the world and the diminishing of them has turned into the riches of the Gentiles. In other words, Israel's lack of faith has precipitated God's opening the door of faith directly to the Gentiles without them having to come through Israel in order to have access to it.

#### **2. But this has been allowed as a means to provoke Israelites to seek the Lord.**

Paul explains, *For I speak to you Gentiles inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh [Jews], and might save some of them.* The salvation of Israelites will also be to the blessing and advantage of the Gentiles, *for if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; **how much more their fulness?***

#### **2. This is illustrated.**

God uses a tree, its root, and its branches to illustrate what He is talking about. He says there is a root (verse 16) and the root is holy. There are branches connected to the root (verse 16) and these are also holy. Or, at least they are supposed to be holy because of their connection to the root. Some of the branches are broken off, however, obviously because they are not holy (verse 17). These severed branches represent unsaved Israelites. Verses 19 and 20 explain that they were broken off because of unbelief. Other branches have been grafted into the root. According to verse 17, these are wild olive branches which represent the Gentiles. And according to verses 19-20, they were grafted in because of their faith.

### **The Gentiles Should Not Boast**

#### **1. The branches are not the root.**

The wild olive branches which are grafted in are admonished not to boast about their new position (verse 18), *Boast not against the branches.* They might be tempted to boast (verse 19), *Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.* But the grafted

branches must remember with gratefulness why they have been granted this new position (verse 20), *Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith.* And they must remember with humility what that new position is (verse 18), *But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.* They are just grafted branches. They are not the root. The root goes back to Abraham (Romans 4:11 and 16) *that he might be the father of all them that believe.* But the Gentiles by national heritage have no direct connection to Abraham. It is only by grafting that they have any connection at all.

The church should not boast of its standing before God as though it was the originator of faith and as though the faith of Abraham and the Israelites is irrelevant. We Gentiles particularly must consider this a great privilege to be grafted in to the root by faith as naturalized citizens in the Kingdom of God.

## **2. This position can be revoked.**

The warning is issued that the grafted branches can be broken off just as easily as the natural branches were. Verse 21 says, *For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.* Verse 22 explains further that if the church does not continue in the goodness of God, it too can be cut off just as the natural branches of Israel were broken off in verse 17.

In fact, the natural branches could be re-grafted *if they abide not still in unbelief...for God is able to graft them in again* (verse 23). The logic follows that if God is able to graft branches from a wild olive tree into the root, how much more would He be able to graft in natural branches into its own olive tree (verse 24). This is precisely what will happen. Israel's unbelief is only temporary (verse 25), *for blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles become in,* at which time Israel will be reinstated to favor with God. Reformed theology denies this altogether. It says that there is no future revival of the nation of Israel in the program of God. Yet here the Scripture clearly states that Israel's being broken off of the root is only until the fulness of the Gentiles at which time (verse 26-27) *all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.*

This means that there will be a time when the church will be cut off. Usually, we Christians see the Rapture as a time of great triumph when the church has accomplished its mission on earth, the Body of Christ is completed, and we are caught up to the Savior with great fanfare because of how well we have done. Instead, the language of Romans chapter 11 suggests that the church will fall into unbelief and be cut off from the grace of God. In such a context, the Rapture is the rescue of the remnant of true believers out of the larger visible church which has fallen into unbelief and is ready to be discarded by God.

## **Conclusion**

Let us not boast of our position in Christ. We are no better than wild olive branches. The only difference is that the church has the dispensation of grace to be grafted into the root by faith because of the mercy of God (verse 30). And certainly, let us not be against those of the nation of Israel which are the natural branches. It is true that by their unbelief we have benefitted with the privilege to be included. But let the church beware the plaque of unbelief which will ultimately reverse the whole situation and elevate the Israelites once again by the mercy of God as the fruitful branches of the root by faith (verse 31).



**Romans 11:33-36**  
**The Object of Our Faith**

Imagine that you have been given the job of making up a new game. You must figure out all the rules and determine how someone will win. Games are fun. But let us turn this thought to something more serious. Let us say you have been given the job of making up a new religion. The responsibility is very similar to that of making up a new game. You must figure out all the rules and determine how someone will win – or get to go to heaven.

Actually, a lot of people have already tried this. According to Romans 1:21-26, they became vain in their imaginations, rejecting the reality of God. They professed themselves to be wise; they changed the glory of God into the image of things that God made; they changed the truth of God into a lie, and they changed the rules, allowing themselves to do everything that God had prescribed as wrong.

There is a fundamental problem with all man made religions, however. No one ever wins. No one ever gets to heaven in any of those man made religions.

The truth is, there is no truth without the glory of the uncorruptible God (Romans 1:23). When you depart from the glory of God, you fall short (Romans 3:23). This is the essence of sin. But when you acknowledge the glory of God, this is the beginning of faith (Hebrews 11:6), believing that **HE** is! So, it is fitting as the discussion of the theology of faith draws to a close that we are reminded about the GLORY OF GOD.

## **The Undefinable Glory of God**

### **1. Its Components.**

The glory of God consists of four things (Romans 11:33), *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!* Knowledge speaks of what He knows. Wisdom is what He knows to do with what He knows. Judgements are the decisions He makes. Ways are the courses of action He takes.

### **2. The Nature of These Components.**

First there are the riches of His wisdom and knowledge. This speaks of their abundance. To say there is depth to these riches is to describe them as if they filled the volume of a bottomless sea. How deep is the ocean? So deep that man cannot go there. If he tried, he would be crushed by the pressure of the weight of all that mass of water above him. That is how much wisdom and knowledge God has – it totally overwhelms men and crushes his ability to comprehend it.

Then there is the unsearchableness of His judgments, and how His ways are past finding out. The glory of God is beyond our comprehension. We will never figure it out.

## **The Human Perspective of God's Glory**

### **1. For who hath known the mind of the LORD? (Romans 11:34)**

God's thoughts are not our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9). *Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:11).*

### **2. Or who hath been His counselor? (Romans 11:34)**

Maybe we could advise God? Maybe we could help God figure out what He wants to do? Or, in that colloquial expression of our day – NOT!

**3. Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?**  
(Romans 11:35)

To give first is to place the recipient under obligation to respond. God is the initiator. He gave to us first. We are the obliged responders. As 1 John 4:19 explains, *We love Him, because He first loved us.*

We are like fish living in an aquarium. That little fish is confined to the water in the glass box. It has no idea what it is like to be a man. It is totally dependant upon the person who feeds it, and can only respond in gratefulness by eating and enjoying the benefits of its owner's grace. So it is with us as men. God gives us an abundance by His grace. All we can do is respond with thanksgiving. This is the means by which we acknowledge the glory of God.

### **The Scope of God's Glory**

**1. All things are of Him.** (Romans 11:36)

All things came out of God. He is the Creator. Before He created, there was nothing but Himself. In creation, He brought all things into existence out of Himself.

**2. All things are through Him.** (Romans 11:36)

He is the means by which everything operates. Everything that transpires goes through Him and He allows it or disallows it according to His Sovereign will.

**3. All things are to Him.** (Romans 11:36)

He is the focal point of all things. He is the object of attention. Everything and everyone faces Him – so that TO HIM BE GLORY! FOR EVER! AMEN!

### **Conclusion**

This glorious God made a plan whereby men might win Heaven.

### **The Plan**

**1. God will do all the work.**

Christ did all the work that needs to be done (Romans 5:6-10). God the Father was totally satisfied by the work Christ did (Romans 3:24-25).

**2. We do not do any work.**

To him that worketh not is the prize of victory granted (Romans 4:2,4,5).

**3. All we do is believe and trust in what Christ has done for us.**

*But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is*

*counted for righteousness* (Romans 4:5). The righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ is offered unto all, but it is placed only upon all them that believe. (Romans 3:21-22)

#### **4. If you try to make your own way without faith, you lose.**

Israel sought it not by faith and did not attain to righteousness (Romans 9:32). This was because they sought it by making their own way of righteousness (Romans 10:3).

#### **5. But if you choose to forsake your own way and trust wholly in God's way, you are granted the victory!**

The Gentiles followed not righteousness, but believed and received the prize! (Romans 9:30).

Who else could have thought up such a marvelous plan other than this glorious God? How grateful we ought to be!

### **Addendum**

Romans Chapters 9-11 do not teach that God chose some to be saved and left the rest to be lost. It does not teach that the nation of Israel comes to an end never to be revived again because it has been displaced by the church which becomes a "spiritualized" version of Israel. These are the tenets of Reformed theology. But in spite of their attempts to use these three chapters to support their claims, the preceding exposition of these chapters clearly shows that they are wrong.

The nation of Israel will be grafted in again when they see the one whom they have pierced and bow before Him as their King (Zechariah 12:10; John 19:37). The literal promises to Israel in the Old Testament will be fulfilled. Christ will reign for ever as their King in the land given to Abraham.

Faith is a choice. Faith comes first and then comes regeneration. Reformed Theology says that regeneration comes first and then you believe. But Abraham believed God and then righteousness was imputed to his account (Romans 4:3). And this same privilege is granted to all who will choose to believe. The offer is presented unto all, and salvation is bestowed upon all that believe (Romans 3:22).

There is no need for you to live with the uncertainty of whether or not Christ died for you. You do not need to fret over whether or not He has chosen you to be saved or left you to be lost. God is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9). Christ died for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). God the Father was totally satisfied regarding your sins (1 John 2:2 and Romans 2:25). God decided before He ever created anything or anyone in this world that He would elect to save all those that chose to believe and trust in His Son Jesus Christ. The saved are elect according to the foreknowledge of God (1 Peter 1:2). He foreknew who would believe and decided that was who He would grant the gifts of justification and glorification (Romans 8:30). Those who chose to trust in Christ would be predestined to be conformed to His image for eternity (Romans 8:29).

Just as He set the choice before Israel, and they sought it not by faith, so each of us has the choice to make. Will we trust what Christ has done to satisfy God the Father regarding our sin, or will we try to satisfy God ourselves as Israel did.

God could have done it very differently. He could have denied us the choice altogether as He did the fallen angels. He could have included everyone in His grace in some amazing unknown way. But this is His plan, to include those who choose to believe.

Have you made this choice. Jesus Christ totally satisfied God for your sin. All you need to do is trust wholly in what Jesus Christ has done for you and you can be grafted into the root. You can have the victory of eternal life just for the believing. As Abraham believed God and for his faith righteousness was imputed to his account, so if you will believe, the righteousness of salvation will be imputed to yours. Believe today and be saved! 📖