

# ISRAEL

The general theme of the Book of Romans is the revelation of the righteousness of God (1:17). All men, both Jews and Gentiles, stand in the need of divine righteousness. All are morally guilty before the just God of the universe because all are “under sin” --under its penalty, power, and effects (3:9-19). All manifest their enslavement to sin by their rejection of truth that God has revealed in the created world, in the image of God within man, and in the Holy Scriptures (1:18-3:20).

All men, both Jews and Gentiles, cannot do anything to merit the righteousness of God. Rather, all must admit their moral guilt and condemned state before God. When that confession occurs, then sinners are in a position to hear the good news - the gospel wherein Christ satisfied the righteous demands of God for sin through His redemptive death on the cross and His victorious resurrection from the dead (1:16; 3:21-31). Any person, either Jew or Gentile, can receive the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ. After a believing sinner has received the righteousness of God, he can be justified, or declared to be righteous by God (3:21-5:21).

In the first eight chapters of Romans, the Jewish apostle Paul argued that we believing sinners can trust God through Jesus Christ for deliverance from the penalty of sin (justification), for victory over the power of our sinful disposition (sanctification), and for ultimate liberation from the effects of sin demonstrated in our mortal, corruptible bodies (glorification).

In the next three chapters (9-11), Paul relates the redemptive program of God for believers to His covenant promises to the nation of Israel. The main issue is this question -- How can we believers trust God to complete His redemptive plan for us when He has not yet finished his covenant program for Israel? Can there be an eventual loss of salvation through our personal moral failure and unbelief? Has Israel lost its promised future?

The “gifts and calling of God are without repentance” (11:29). No genuine believer will ever lose the divine gift of salvation and righteousness received by faith in Christ. Nothing will ever sever him “from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (9:38-39). In like manner, God will complete every unconditional promise to the real Israel because Israel is “beloved for the fathers’ sakes” (11:28). Eternal security for the believer is inseparably connected to the

assured future of Israel. To deny one truth is to deny the other, to affirm one means to affirm the other.

## PART I- ISRAEL: BLESSED YET UNSAVED (Romans 9:1-5)

### C ONCERN FOR ISRAEL'S SALVATION (9:1-3)

Paul was an Israelite (11:1; Philippians. 3:5). He loved his people, Israel. But he also had a heavy emotional and spiritual burden for the nation. He shared his concern: "...I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, by kinsmen according to the flesh" (9:2-3). Paul thought that he was in a right relationship with God before he placed his trust in Jesus Christ as his Messiah and Saviour, but he was mistaken. By the grace of God, he was convicted of his unbelief and experienced spiritual conversion.

He knew that the great majority of the Jewish people was like he was before his genuine birth into the family of God. He knew that the Jewish people were trying to satisfy the righteous demands of God through their own self-righteous demands of God through their own self-righteous efforts. They were religiously zealous, but apart from biblical understanding (10:23). Thus, Paul prayed that Israel "might be saved" (10:1).

In fact, Paul asserted that he would be willing to spend eternity in hell if his loss of salvation would result in the total salvation of Israel. Paul's wish was sincere; yet hypothetical. No believer can lose his righteous standing before God. And, no believer can bear the eternal condemnation of another person, and certainly not of an entire nation. Paul's disclosure, however, revealed his passionate love for his people.

To affirm the authenticity of his concern, Paul gave three exclamations for his truthfulness: (1) "I say the truth in Christ"; (2) "I lie not"; (3) "my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit" (9:1). Paul knew that his readers would have difficulty in accepting his spiritual concern for Israel. He used the best language possible to manifest that his inner feelings were completely free of deceit and falsehood.

## THE PRIVILEGES OF ISRAEL (9:4-5)

Israel is a distinctive nation. God gave them special advantages. Paul listed nine.

First, the people are known as “Israelites” (9:4). They take their name from one of the three patriarchs, namely Jacob. God changed the name of Jacob to Israel (Genesis 32:28). Thus, the name was divinely given. The names of the twelve sons of Jacob thus became the names for the twelve tribes of Israel.

Second, Israel possesses “the adoption” (9:4). God told Moses to return to Egypt and to say before Pharaoh: “Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn” (Exodus 4:22). Adoption is a legal term. God legally put Israel into the privilege of covenant sonship. As the legal firstborn son among the nations of the earth, Israel was to serve as the theocratic nation through whom God would administer His royal dominion over all of the nations.

Third, Israel had “the glory” (9:4). This term refers to the manifested presence of God. God revealed His local presence to Israel by the “pillar of a cloud” during the day and “a pillar of fire” during the night (Exodus 13:21-22; 16:10). The two pillars led Israel during their wilderness wanderings. Later, the glory of the Lord filled Solomon’s temple (1 Kings 8:11).

Fourth, God established unconditional covenants with Israel (9:4). God said to Abraham: “And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:2-3). The Abrahamic covenant, latter reiterated to him (Genesis 13:14-17; 15:18-21; 17:1-8), gave to his physical descendants, specifically the nation of Israel, the eternal ownership of the land between the Euphrates River and the river of Egypt.

God also gave to the nation the Palestinian covenant (Deuteronomy 30:1-10), the Davidic covenant (2 Samuel 7:4-17), and the New covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-37; Ezek. 36:22-32).

Fifth, God gave to Israel “the law” (9:4). At Sinai, God delivered those regulations which would govern the moral, civil, and religious life of the nation (Exodus 19:1-20:26; Deuteronomy 5:1-33).

Sixth, Israel enjoyed the privilege of religious “service” toward God (9:4). The complex system of animal, bird, grain, and drink offerings and sacrifices could only be conducted by the high priest, the priests, and the Levites through the divinely given order at the prescribed time and place.

Seventh, God gave “the promises” of the coming Messiah-Redeemer to Israel (9:4). The Saviour was to be human (Genesis 3:15), a descendant of Abraham

(Genesis 12:1-3), of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10), a greater son of David (2 Samuel 7:4-17), and also divine (Psalm 110:1).

*Eighth, God constantly identified Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (9:5).* (Exodus. 3:6) These fathers, known as the patriarchs, establish the covenant relationship between God, the heavenly Father, and the people of Israel.

*Ninth, Israel produced the Saviour of both the nation and the families of the earth (9:5).* That Redeemer is none other than Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh. Paul wrote: “...of whom (Israel) as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever” (9:5). Jesus Christ is the promised “son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1). The Messiah had to be both divine and human. He had to be one person with two natures, divine and human. Israel was privileged to be the nation through which God would superintend the human ancestry of the Messiah.

In spite of these privileges, Israel needed to be saved. All peoples need to receive the righteousness of God which comes only through faith in the saving God (Genesis 15:6; Habakkuk 2:4).

## PART II- ISRAEL: ELECT OR NON-ELECT (ROMANS 9:6-13)

**D**oes God always keep His word? Yes, He does. Then why does Israel not experience the reality of the covenant promises which God made to her? Why is Israel still in a state of unbelief?

### TWO FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES (9:6)

*First, God always keeps His word (9:6a).* Paul wrote: “But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect” (9:1a). No promise of God has ever failed. God is both omniscient and omnipotent. He is sovereign. No person can frustrate His divine purpose.

God said concerning Himself: “I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure” (Isaiah 46:9-10). Later, He added: “Indeed I have spoken it: I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it” (Isaiah 46:11).

Whenever we analyze history and prophecy, we must never conclude that God's word has been in error. God will fulfill every unconditional promise He has made to Israel and to the Church.

*Second, all of the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob do not constitute the genuine Israel (9:6b).* Paul wrote: “For they are not all Israel who are of Israel” (9:6). The phrase “who are of Israel” refers to those people who can trace their family ancestry to the patriarchs of the nation. Mere ethnic identification with Abraham is not a sufficient basis to receive all of the covenant promises given to Abraham.

Earlier in the epistle, Paul wrote: “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew who is one inwardly: and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God” (Romans 2:28-29).

Christ affirmed that His critics were the descendants of Abraham, but He denied that they were the real children of Abraham (John 8:37-39). In fact, He asserted that their father was the devil (John 8:44).

These descriptions by Paul and Christ are consistent with the history of Israel. Should the wicked, idolatrous kings of Israel and Judah be recognized as the true Israel who would receive both the spiritual and materialistic blessings of the covenant promises? Certainly not! In the Old Testament era, there was a vast difference between the true Jewish believer and the apostate, idolatrous Jewish unbeliever.

## TWO KEY ILLUSTRATIONS (9:7-13)

*First, Ishmael or Isaac (9:7-9).* The first child born to Abraham was actually Ishmael whose mother was Hagar (Genesis 16:1-16). However, God had determined that the rightful heir to the Abrahamic Covenant promises would be Isaac, born of Sarah, the lawful wife.

Paul thus observed: “nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham: but, In Isaac your seed shall be called. That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. For this is the word of promise: At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son” (9:7-9).

Ishmael had a genetic, ethnic connection to Abraham, but that fact did not establish him to be the sole heir or even one of the heirs. He was actually a “child of the flesh.” He was the product of the merger of Abraham's faith and human effort, prompted by Sarah and the submission of Hagar. In a spiritual sense, he was born out of faith and works.

Paul used the historical birth accounts of Ishmael and Isaac to form a spiritual allegory (Galatians 4:19-31). His conclusion was that it is impossible to be born of two mothers at the same time. Sarah represented the promise received by faith alone in the provision and power of God. Hagar symbolized the self-produced works produced by a legalistic conformity to the Mosaic Law.

The Scriptures teach that we receive the righteousness of God by faith apart from physical ancestry and legalistic obedience. It was so with Abraham. He “believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). Earlier in this epistle, Paul wrote: “For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith” (Romans 4:13).

Isaac was the child of promise received by faith alone through the proper mother, namely Sarah. On the other hand, Ishmael was the child of the flesh. Both sons were physically related to Abraham, but only Isaac received the covenant blessing.

*Second, Esau or Jacob (9:10-13).* Isaac and Rebecca had twin sons, the elder Esau and the younger Jacob. God, however, chose Jacob to be the heir of the covenant promises earlier given to Abraham and Isaac. Esau, who became the father of the Edomites, thus stood outside of the “true Israel” even though he was a physical descendant of both Abraham and Isaac.

Paul wrote: “And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, 'The older shall serve the younger.' As it is written, ‘Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated’” (9:10-13).

God's choice was based upon His sovereign elective will. He chose before the boys were born. He chose before they had done any good or evil works.

## CONCLUSION

God's word has come to pass. His covenant promises are always kept to those whom He has chosen. The covenant promises, therefore, were given to elect Israel or to those Israelites whom God chose to salvation. The elect are known because they are the ones who believe the promises of God. They receive the righteousness of God by faith, even as Abraham did.

Non-elect Israel is composed of those who can trace their genetic ancestry to Abraham but who, like Ishmael and Esau, are not children of promise. They were not chosen by God to receive the promises. They manifested their lack of faith by their persecution of the divinely chosen heirs.



## PART III - HARD QUESTIONS AND DIFFICULT ANSWERS (Romans 9:14-24)

**G**od chose Jacob rather than Esau (9:10-13). God selected Isaac rather than Ishmael (9:7-9). God covenanted with Abraham to be the father of the elect nation of Israel (9:4-5). Historical and theological truth has demonstrated that God, out of His sovereign purpose, has chosen some to salvation, but not others. In anticipation of objection to this divine action, Paul asked two rhetorical questions.

### IS GOD UNJUST? (9:14-18)

Paul wrote: “What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God” (9:14)? His answer was clear: “Certainly not!” God is just in His being, and He always acts justly. Through His redemptive death on the cross, Jesus Christ satisfied the righteous demands of God for the penalty of sin. On that basis, God can remain just and justify anyone who places his faith in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:25-26). If Christ had not died, then God in His justice would have condemned all men because all men are under sin (Romans 3:9). God's elective purpose, rather, manifests His mercy and grace. Paul then quoted a statement that God made to Moses: “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion?” (9:15; cf. Exodus 33:19). Divine mercy and compassion are expressions of God's sovereign choice. No person deserves divine mercy, and no person can do anything to merit it. Paul added: “So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy” (9:16). God is under no obligation to show mercy to anyone. Neither human desire (“him who wills”) nor human effort (“him who runs”) moves Him to select. God acts; He does not react. His redemptive choice is unconditional.

Paul then quoted a statement made by God to the Egyptian Pharaoh: “Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the land.” (9:17; cf. Exodus 9:16). God elevated a sinful person out from a fallen human race and idolatrous nation to the position of the highest ruler in Egypt and in the Middle East. Pharaoh had the opportunity to glorify God and to bless the covenant nation of Israel, but he refused

to do so. God knew about this rejection, and said to Pharaoh through Moses: “As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go?” (Exodus 9:17) God then manifested His power by pouring out His plagues of wrath against the Egyptians, by delivering Israel out of her bondage, and by causing other nations to know that the God of Israel was the one and only true God of the universe (Joshua 2:8-14).

Paul then concluded his argument: “Therefore hath He (God) mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth” (9:18). All humans deserve the wrathful judgment of God. Whenever God wills to have mercy on an undeserving sinner, that sovereign action reveals His redemptive grace. Rahab, the harlot of Jericho, experienced that merciful touch. On the other hand, God can will to harden a sinner who deserves divine wrath. For example, Pharaoh expressed his moral rebellion and lost human condition when he hardened his own heart in the face of the displays of divine power (Exodus 8:15,19,32). Thus, when God willed to harden Pharaoh (Exodus 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27), God simply confirmed Pharaoh in his unbelief and allowed him to suffer the consequences of his sinful choices.

### IS GOD UNFAIR? (9:19-24)

Paul put it this way: “Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?” (9:19)? At issue here is the execution of the divine will, and the human perception of that execution. Paul anticipated a human protest against the actions of God's sovereign will--the election of some to salvation and the hardening of others to retribution. In either case, the critics would claim that God's will was being carried out.

Paul's reply was direct: “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?” (9:20) The contrasts are obvious: between man and God, between the creature and the creator, and between the clay and the potter. God is God; thus He can will to do anything that He pleases. Man is man; thus he cannot dictate to God what the Almighty can or cannot do. Another question followed: “Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour” (9:21)? All humans constitute the clay. They are of the same lump. They all belong to a fallen human race. They are all under sin--unrighteous, guilty, and deserving of eternal wrath (Romans 3:9,10,19). If God chooses to shape a sinner into a son of God, a vessel for honor, He has that prerogative. If God chooses to shape a sinner into a vessel for dishonor, He also has that prerogative. In the first illustration, the sinner gets what he does not deserve; in the second, the

sinner gets that he deserves. God can receive praise from both the saved person and the unsaved person. Both salvation and judgment bring glory to Him. The Psalmist said: “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee” (Psalm 76:10).

Paul then raised this lengthy question: “What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: 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?” (9:22-24)?

All unsaved men, the vessels of wrath, are prepared for destruction in that destruction is the necessary consequence of sin. Earlier Paul wrote: “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). God does not predestine a morally neutral person to condemnation. However, He has determined that sinners will pay for their sin and their rejection of divine truth. God manifests His longsuffering toward sinners in that He puts up with their rebellion throughout their earthly experiences. On the other hand, the saved are the vessels of mercy, the ones who will share in the eternal glory of Christ. Both Jews and Gentiles, being human and fallen, deserve divine wrath. However, in His mercy, God has called both Jews and Gentiles to Himself through justifying faith in Jesus Christ. God is the Saviour of all who believe; God is also the Judge of all who reject.

## PART IV - ISRAEL: NATION OR REMNANT? (Romans 9:25-33)

**I**n this section, Paul demonstrates that only the believing remnant within the nation of Israel constituted the real covenant people. The basis of their spiritual acceptance before God is the same as that for believing Gentiles. Thus, the genuine family of God in this dispensation is made up of believing Jews and believing Gentiles who together are formed into one body, the true church (Ephesians 2:11-22). Both believing Jews and believing Gentiles are divinely called (9:24), the “vessels of mercy which (God) had prepared beforehand for glory” (9:23).

### PREDICTION OF THE REMNANT (9:25-29)

Paul selected three portions of Old Testament prophecy to show that “they are not all Israel which are of Israel” (9:6). The first passage is from Hosea and the next two are from Isaiah.

Hosea ministered at the time of the divided kingdom, during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and also during the reign of Jeroboam, king of Israel. God directed Hosea to marry Gomer so that his marriage would symbolize the spiritual adultery of the land (Hosea 1:23). To this union, three children were born: Jezreel, Lo-Ruhamah, and Lo-Ammi (Hosea 2:4-8). The meanings of the children's names depicted God's relationship to Israel. Jezreel meant “scattered,” Lo-Ruhamah meant “no mercy,” and Lo-Ammi meant “not my people.” God said that He would bring an end to the northern kingdom of Israel (Hosea 1:4), that He would no longer have mercy on the house of Israel (Hosea 1:6), that Israel would no longer be His people (Hosea 1:9), and that He would no longer be their God (Hosea 1:9). These prophecies were fulfilled when the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. and scattered many of its inhabitants.

Paul used this historical background to show the spiritual truth that God would take His people out of those who previously were not His people. This reality could only be applied to the believing remnant within Israel and in an extended way to believing Gentiles. Both groups were once unsaved, but through divine grace and human repentant-faith, both have become His people.

Here is the quotation from Hosea: “I will call them My people, which were not My people. And her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, You are not My people, there they shall be called the children of the living God” (Romans 9:25-26; cf. Hosea 2:20; 2:23).

Whereas Hosea basically ministered to the northern kingdom of Israel, Isaiah primarily declared his messages to the southern kingdom of Judah (Isaiah 1:1). He described the nation thusly: “Ah, sinful nation, A people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, They have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward” (Isaiah 1:4). God subsequently judged His people by allowing the Babylonians to destroy the southern kingdom in 586 B.C.

In the midst of his predictions of judgment, Isaiah declared this message of hope: “Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness: Because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth” (Romans 9:27-28 cf. Isaiah 10:22-23). The contrast is between the sand of the sea (the great number of racial Jews) and the remnant (the small number of believing Jews who will experience the righteousness of God.)

Isaiah then praised the gracious preservation of Israel by God: “Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah” (Romans 9:27-28 cf. Isaiah 1:9). The two wicked cities of the Jordan plain suffered total permanent destruction in the days of Abraham and Lot. Nothing remained and no one survived.

God, however, did not judge the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah in like manner. In his sovereign grace, He preserved a “seed.” That seed goes beyond the obvious survival of physical Jewry to the divine calling of a believing remnant within Israel. Later on, Paul will argue: “Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace (Romans 11:5).

## **BASIS FOR THE REMNANT (9:30-33)**

The approach to God is the same for both the Gentile and the Jew. The means of securing a righteous standing before the God of holiness has always been the same for Israel and all other nations. It is the procedure which Abraham followed: “And he (Abraham) believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). Abraham knew that he could not do anything to merit the imputation of divine righteousness. Rather, as a guilty undeserving sinner, he

placed his trust in Jehovah-God who alone could save and forgive him. Abraham received the gracious gift of a righteous standing before he was circumcised and before the law was given to Moses.

In this age, both Gentiles and the remnant within Israel have come to God on the same basis-unconditional faith in God part from human effort. Paul knew that truth, and thus argued: “What shall we say then?” (Romans 9:30). The contrast is now between believing Gentiles and unbelieving Jews. Why is it true in this present dispensation that more Gentiles are saved than Jews? From Abraham to Jesus Christ, that situation was reversed. In the Old Testament era, there were more righteous, saved Jews than Gentiles. What makes the difference? Two reasons are given.

First, the gentiles received the righteousness of God by faith in total dependence upon the gracious provision of God (9:30-32). Israel, however, sought to gain divine righteousness through outward conformity to the Law of Moses in total dependence upon the ability of self to do so.

Paul wrote: “That Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. 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 works of the law” (Romans 9:30-32). Israel had the advantage of receiving the law of Moses directly from God (Romans 3:1-2; 9:4). God never gave the Law so that men would try to keep it in order gain salvation. God gave the Law to show men how holy He is and how unrighteous men are. The Law was designed to create a conviction of moral inadequacy with man. In its moral blindness and hardness, Israel refused to acknowledge their insufficiency.

Second, Israel stumbled over the provision of the divine human Messiah who alone could save them (9:33). Paul wrote: “For they stumbled at that stumbling stone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense: and whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed” (Romans 9:32-33 cf. Psalm 118:22). In their attempt to work for their salvation, Israel tripped over the provision of the Messiah to do that work for them. To the child of God today, whether Jew or Gentile, Peter can say: “Unto you therefore which believe He is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, The stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner” (I Peter 2:7).

## PART V - ISRAEL: RIGHTEOUS BUT UNSAVED (ROMANS 10:1-13)

**P**aul loved his people, the nation of Israel. He had a burden for them. Earlier, he confessed that he had “great sorrow and continual grief” in his heart over the nation (9:3). He now expressed his “heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel” (10:1). He wanted his Gentile “brethren” in the family of God to see the longing of his heart (10:1; 11:13). He wanted them also to agonize in prayer for his beloved nation.

### ISRAEL'S SPIRITUAL CONDITION (10:1-3)

Paul described the spiritual condition of Israel in five ways.

*First, Israel was unsaved (10:1).* The apostle's prayer was “that they may be saved.” Both Jews and Gentiles are “all under sin” if they have not received God's gracious provision of redemption through Jesus Christ (3:23).

*Second, Israel had “a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge” (10:2).* She was sincere in her religious devotion, but she was sincerely wrong. The nation actually reflected Paul's past spiritual condition. Paul gave this testimony before the Jews in Jerusalem: “I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day” (Acts 22:3). Paul's zeal for God, Israel, and the Mosaic Law caused him to persecute Christians and to vote for their deaths (Acts 22:4; 26:9-11). He further stated: “And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers” (Gal. 1:14).

*Third, Israel was “ignorant of God's righteousness” (10:3a).* They were ignorant of the fact that the Old Testament taught that men received the imputed righteousness of God by faith apart from the work of the law (Romans 3:20-22; cf. Genesis 15:6; Heb. 4:2). They were ignorant of the magnitude of God's gracious provision of redemption. They were ignorant, not because they were not told, but because they chose not to learn. When Paul analyzed his faulty zeal, he confessed: “Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained

mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief” (I Tim. 1:13). In like manner, Israel's ignorance manifested her lack of faith.

Fourth, Israel was “seeking to establish their own righteousness” (10:3b). Human pride and self-sufficiency provide the basis of a self-produced righteousness. Again, Israel was ignorant of Isaiah's clear statement: “But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousness are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). Can any person, by his own attempts, create a righteous standing whereby God will sense an obligation to receive him? Absolutely not.

Fifth, Israel had “not submitted to the righteousness of God” (10:3c). To be saved, one must be humble not proud. God's plan for man to receive His righteousness calls for man to trust what God has provided and done. We submit to the righteousness of God when we humbly accept by faith God's gracious gift of forgiveness and redemption. In faith, we admit that we cannot do anything to merit His favor.

Israel, however, refused to repent in spite of the appeals of both John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. Christ Himself said to Jerusalem, the personification of the Jewish people: “How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (Matthew 23:37). Christ pronounced judgment upon the cities of Galilee because they refused to repent (Matthew 11:20).

## RIGHTEOUSNESS: OF LAW OR OF FAITH? (10:4-13)

In this section, Paul put forth seven characteristics of the faith which appropriates the righteousness of God.

First, faith achieves the desired end of the law (10:4). Paul wrote: “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth” (10:4). Christ was the object to whom the Law pointed. There was no power in the Law to produce the necessary righteous standing before God. The Law revealed the moral inadequacy of man. The “law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Gal. 3:24). The “righteousness of the law” is found within those individuals who walk according to the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:4).

Second, faith does not assist God in the making of His provision of salvation (10:5-7). The righteousness of the law begins and ends with the attitude and actions of man. Paul quoted Moses: “which if a man do, he shall live in them” (10:5; cf. Leviticus 18:5). In legalism, man alone bears the responsibility for the provision of his own salvation.



In contrast, the righteousness of faith affirms that only God can provide salvation and prescribe the means by which one can obtain it. Paul then freely quoted from Moses to show that the land of Canaan was given to Israel by divine promise and provision, not by the self-produced righteousness of the nation (see Deuteronomy 9:4-6; 30:12-14). In fact, Moses reminded them: “Understand, therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people” (Deuteronomy 9:6). Israel gained the land by obedient faith in God's promise and enablement. In like manner, genuine faith does not cause God to provide and apply salvation; rather, it humbly accepts Him whom God has provided as the Saviour of the world.

*Third, faith accepts the proclaimed word of salvation (10:8).* As they anticipated entrance into Canaan, the nation heard the words of Moses (Deuteronomy 30:14). The message of obedient faith was both available and accessible to them. They had no excuse for not knowing. Paul then equated that truth with “the word of faith which we preach.” Saving faith in Jesus Christ is inseparably joined to historical truth and genuine interpretation and application of that truth. Faith has substance and content. It has direction. And it must be declared to those who need to hear.

*Fourth, only faith in Jesus Christ secures personal salvation (10:9-10).* What must a person do to be saved. Listen to Paul's declaration: “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” (10:9-10). Confession and belief are soteriological Siamese twins. The heart and mouth complement each other. Christ said: “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matthew 12:34). There is no hint in this passage that a person could conceivably believe without confession or confess without believing. In genuine salvation, a person confesses what he believes and he believes what he confesses.

*Fifth, faith is confident (10:11).* The Scripture says: “Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” (10:11; cf. 9:33; Isaiah 28:16). Christ is the cornerstone which the builders rejected. Genuine faith is proud to name the name of Christ. It is never embarrassed. It will be eternally and completely accepted by the Father. Nothing will be able to take away the confidence of a child of God who has put his complete trust in Jesus Christ rather than in his futile attempts at self-righteousness.

*Sixth, faith is the one means for all (10:12).* Paul wrote: “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” (10:12). God has only one provision of salvation--found in

His Son Jesus Christ and in His redemptive death and resurrection. And He has only one means for all-both Jew and Gentile--to come to Him (see Romans 3:22-23).

*Seventh, faith means to call upon Jehovah-God for salvation (10:13).* Paul now quoted from the Old Testament prophet Joel: “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the LORD shall be delivered” (Joel 2:32). The name of God stands for all that He is (His essence) and all that He does (His acts). God alone is the redeeming God. God alone is the covenant-keeping God. God alone keeps His promise.

## VI - ISRAEL: REJECTION OR ELECTION (ROMANS 10:14-11:6)

**G**od will save all, both Jew and Gentile, who call upon Him. In salvation, there is no discrimination (10:12-13). God is rich toward both groups of the human race.

### REJECTION OF THE GOSPEL BY THE NATION OF ISRAEL (10:14-21)

Unfortunately, Israel rejected God's gracious offer of salvation. Neither the majority nor a large minority received the righteousness of God by faith. Paul proved this evaluation by a series of logical, rhetorical questions with answers taken from the Old Testament.

*First, Israel received the missionary message (10:14,15).* In a series of four questions, Paul presented the cause-effect sequence in true gospel proclamation: "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (10:14-15).

Paul followed the progression of effect back to cause: calling-believing-hearing-proclaiming-sending (by God, obviously). Warren Wiersbe stated: "This passage is often used as the basis for the church's missionary program, and rightly so, but its first application is to the nation of Israel" (The Bible Exposition commentary, I, 548). The context supports his conclusion. Paul then quoted a passage which is found in two Old Testament books: "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things" (10:15). In Nahum 1:15, the good news was the announcement that God would destroy Nineveh and the Assyrian Empire. In Isaiah 52:7, the verse anticipated the regathering of Israel to her land and the reign of the messiah. In Paul's application of the principle, the good news was the offer of righteousness and judicial peace through faith in Christ.

*Second, Israel did not obey the gospel (10:16).* To obey the gospel and to believe the gospel are equivalent phrases. God has commanded all to repent (Acts 17:30). Paul commended the Roman believers: "But God be thanked, that ye were servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you (Romans 6:17).

Paul quoted Isaiah to prove that Israel did not believe: “Lord, who hath believed our report?” (10:16 Isaiah 53:1). The apostle John applied this verse to Israel who rejected the evidence of Christ’s miracles (John 12:37-41). This verse from Isaiah opens up the greatest messianic chapter in the entire Old Testament. Philip demonstrated to the Ethiopian eunuch that the person mentioned in Isaiah 53 was the Jewish messiah; namely Jesus Christ (Acts 8:30-35).

*Third, Israel heard the truth (10:17,18).* It is clear that saving “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (10:17). The question was obvious: “But I say, have they not heard?” (10:18). The answer was direct: “Yes verily” (10:18). To prove his answer, Paul quoted from Psalm 19: “Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world” (10:18; cf. Psalm 19:4). That Psalm shows that God has revealed truth about Himself in the world of nature (19:6). This truth, called general revelation, is available to all men everywhere. In addition, the Psalm points to truth that God has revealed in the Law; namely the Old Testament (Psalm 19:7-11). This truth, called special revelation, was entrusted to the nation of Israel. Israel had an advantage over the Gentiles in that it possessed “the oracles of God” (Romans 3:2). To Israel of His day, Jesus Christ said: “Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39).

*Fourth, Israel knew the truth (10:19,20).* Paul asked: “But I say, did Israel not know?” (10:19). The answer expected is that they did know. To prove his point, Paul quoted from the Torah, written by Moses: “I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you” (cf. Deuteronomy 32:21). Israel was the nation which knew that the righteousness of God came by faith. The Gentiles constituted a non-nation which did not have this understanding. Regardless, the Gentiles believed, and Israel did not. God sovereignly purposed to use this response to stir up non-repentant Israel.

Furthermore, Paul supported his conclusion with a reference to Isaiah: “I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me” (10:20; cf. Isaiah 65:1). The Gentiles neither sought God or asked for Him, yet God, in His merciful grace, saved them.

*Fifth, Israel did not respond to God’s invitation (10:21).* Paul wrote, quoting again from the prophet Isaiah: “But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people” (10:21; cf. Isaiah 65:2). The “day” refers to the ongoing offer of salvation: “Thus saith the Lord: In an acceptable time I have heard thee, and in a day of salvation I have helped thee” (Isaiah 49:8). Paul quoted that verse, then added: “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation” (II Corinthians 6:2; emphasis mine).

Throughout the history of Israel, God extended His hands in salvation to them, but they remained “disobedient and contrary.” Christ Himself lamented: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (Matthew 23:37).

### ELECTION OF THE REMNANT BY GOD (11:1-6)

Paul then gave this challenging question: “I say then, hath God cast away His people?” (11:1). Has God permanently and totally rejected Israel to the extent that He will no longer keep His covenant promises to her? Has He withdrawn His offer of righteousness by faith in the Messiah to every individual Jew? Has He turned exclusively to the Gentiles in this age? The answer to all of those questions is a firm **NO**; Certainly not! (11:1).

*First, Paul gave two illustrations to show that God has always had a believing remnant within Israel in spite of her national unbelief (11:1-4).* Paul cited himself as a believing Jew in this present age: “For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin” (11:1). The apostle did not surrender His Jewishness when he became a believer in Jesus Christ. He was proud of his racial and religious ancestry (cf. Philippians 3:4-6).

Paul then affirmed this key doctrinal statement: “God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew” (11:2). All believers are chosen or “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father” (I Peter 1:2). All foreknown, chosen believers are likewise predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ, called, justified, and glorified (Romans 8:29-30). In eternity past, God sovereignly knew us as His own distinctive people even before He worked out His redemptive purpose in time in our individual lives.

In like manner, God knew Israel as His beloved, chosen, covenant nation even before He promised Abraham or redeemed Israel of her Egyptian bondage (Deuteronomy 7:6-10). Thus, both elect Israel and elect believers, both Jewish and Gentile, can be confident that God will never cast them away.

The second illustration shows that there were 7,000 believers within the idolatrous northern kingdom of Israel even though Elijah thought that he was the only one (11:2-4).

*Second, Paul then argued that God had a believing remnant within Israel in the present age (11:5,6).* “Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace” (11:5). Within the church, the body of Christ

God has bonded believing Jew and believing Gentile into one entity. God is saving Jews today, even though the nation as a whole has rejected Jesus Christ.

This election is out of divine grace, totally undeserved by anyone. Paul said: “And if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace, otherwise work is no longer work” (11:6). Neither Jew nor Gentile can do religious works to gain the righteousness of God. Salvation is a free gift, based upon trust in the giver of that gift, not a reward for meritorious effort.

## PART VII - THE REJECTION OF ISRAEL AND THE ACCEPTANCE OF GENTILES (Romans 11:7-24)

**I**n this section, Paul contrasted the divine rejection of unsaved Israel with the divine acceptance of Gentiles. He also continued the difference between the saved remnant within Israel and the unsaved majority of Jews in this present age. In so doing, the apostle described Israel's spiritual condition in four ways.

### ISRAEL HAS BEEN BLINDED OR HARDENED (11:7-10)

The nation, as a whole, “hath not obtained that which he seeketh for” (11:7). It sought the full blessings of God through the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 12:1-3), but it did not obtain them because it sought them on the basis of self-produced righteousness. However, “the elect” within the nation obtained the spiritual blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant because those Jews received the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ alone. In contrast, “the rest were blinded” (11:7), because they rejected Jesus Christ as their promised Messiah.

To support his presentation of the spiritual blindness of Israel, Paul referred to three passages from the Old Testament (11:8; cf. Deuteronomy 29:3-4; Isaiah 29:10; and 11:9-10; cf. Psalm 69:22-23). The first two show that hardening involves spiritual drowsiness, blindness, and deafness. God hardened the nation because of its hypocrisy. That reason can be seen in these words from Isaiah, quoted later by Jesus Christ and applied to His ministry: “Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:” (Isaiah. 29:13; cf. Matthew 15:7-9).

The third passage shows that the divine provision for Israel (“their table”) became a basis of judgement for the nation because it did not respond in faith and thanksgiving to God. Their advantage increased their moral accountability. Their rejection of Christ at His first advent caused their back to be bowed under the weight of their guilt and national punishment.

The blindness of Israel in this present age simply continued the blindness of the nation in the Old Testament era.

## ISRAEL HAS STUMBLER AND FALLE (11:11-14)

Paul then asked this rhetorical question: “I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall” (11:11)? The question implies a negative answer, and the apostle responded with his own cry of protest: **“God forbid!”** When Israel rejected Jesus Christ as its Messiah, did it suffer a permanent, irreversible fall? Did God replace Israel with the church in His creative, redemptive purpose? Are all of the covenant promises given to Israel being spiritually fulfilled in the church? All of the answers to those questions are **NO!** God is not through with His ancient covenant people. But, in His wisdom and sovereign power, God can use the fall of Israel to accomplish His ultimate purpose.

*First, the rejection of Christ by Israel led to His crucifixion and resurrection, the very basis for “salvation to the Gentiles” (11:11).* God said to Abraham: “And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). That spiritual blessing is a provision for both Jews and Gentiles. In this present age, more Gentiles than Jews have received the blessings of divine forgiveness and imputed righteousness.

*Second, God can use the salvation of Gentiles to “provoke Israel to jealousy” (11:11).* Isn't it strange that Gentiles can know more about the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob than the actual physical descendants of the patriarchs?

*Third, God will enrich the world in the future through the “fulness” of Israel's blessings (11:12).* Paul wrote: “Now 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?” (11:12) Paul anticipated a greater spiritual blessing for the Gentiles in the future, because he knew that God would one day fulfill all of His promises to the nation of Israel. That future day will occur when Christ returns to establish the Davidic, millennial kingdom on the earth.

*Fourth, Paul, an apostle and a Jew, knew that his major ministry was to the Gentiles (11:13).* Nevertheless, he wanted to use the salvation of Gentiles as a means to bring jealousy to the Jews and to “save some of them” in this age (11:14). The few Jews who are saved in this age constitute “the elect” within Israel and are part of the true church, the spiritual body of Christ.

## ISRAEL HAS BEEN CAST AWAY (11:15)

Paul wrote: “For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the death?”(11:15) At the cross,



“God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them” (2 Corinthians 5:19). The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ introduced a new era in God's creative--redemptive plan: “the fulness of the Gentiles” (11:25). The church, although composed of both believing Jews and Gentiles, has a majority membership of Gentiles (Acts 15: 14-18).

The casting away of Israel is temporary, however. A day will come when God will accept the nation. When Christ returns to the earth, “all Israel will be saved” (11:26). At that time, God will raise the righteous dead of the Old Testament period (Daniel 12:2-3).

### **ISRAEL HAS BEEN BROKEN OFF (11:16-24)**

Israel enjoys a distinctive, sanctified position before God. According to the law of the heave offering (Num. 15:17-21) the presentation of the firstfruit meant that the entire lump belonged to God. According to the Feast of Firstfruits (Leviticus 23:9-14), God sanctifies the whole when He accepts the part.

Using these analogies, Paul probably identified the lump and the branches with the entire nation of Israel (11:16). The firstfruit and the root probably refer to Abraham, the father of Israel, as the first one to receive the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 12:1-3).

In the Old Testament period, the olive tree was often a symbol of Israel (Jeremiah 11:16-17; Hosea 14:4-6). In this context, the olive tree seems to represent all of the blessings contained within the Abrahamic covenant. Many Jews, representing the natural branches because of their physical relationship to Abraham and the other patriarchs, were “broken off” because of their unbelief (11:17; 19-20). In contrast, the saved Gentiles, as symbolized by the branches of the wild olive tree, were grafted into the cultivated olive tree because of their faith in Jesus Christ (11:17,20). The Gentiles became “and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree” in that they entered into the spiritual blessings of the Abrahamic covenant extended to all of the families of the earth (11:17; cf. Genesis 12:3).

The breaking off of the natural branches (Israel) and the grafting in of the wild branches (Gentiles) occurs only during the present church age, an intercalation in God's prophetic program for Israel (Daniel 9:24-27; 16:18). For Israel, the spiritual dilemma is only partial because Jews are being saved in this age of Gentile spiritual blessing. For Israel, it is also temporary because God will graft the natural branches back into the cultivated olive tree when Christ returns to the earth.

Paul argued that Israel only needs to believe in order to be restored to national and spiritual blessing. He wrote: “And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again.” (11:23). Later, he added: “...how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?” (11:24)

Thus, Israel's present spiritual condition is partial and temporary. Israel will be restored to complete and permanent blessings after the present era of Gentile salvation has run its course. Israel will be saved when the promised Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, returns to the earth.

## PART VIII - THE FUTURE SALVATION OF ISRAEL (Romans 11:25-36)

**I**srael's future is bright, not bleak. In fact, her tomorrow will be far more glorious than her past. In this final section of the three-chapter exposition of the divine program for Israel, Paul exalted God for His manifestation of His gracious wisdom.

### ISRAEL'S BLINDNESS (11:25)

Paul wrote: "For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in" (11:25). This present age is the church age (Matthew 16:18). It is a mystery in that it was not revealed in past ages. It is an intercalation into God's prophetic program for Israel (Daniel 9:24-27). It is an insertion between the first 69 weeks and the seventieth week, as described by Daniel.

This present church age is also called "the fullness of the Gentiles." It is the time when God has "visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name" (Acts 15:14). Christ is presently building His church, made up of believing Jews and believing Gentiles, merged into one spiritual body (Ephesians 2:11-22). Although Jewish believers composed the majority in the early days (see the Book of Acts), they are now a small minority within the 2000 year development of the true church. The "fulness of the Gentiles" will end when the last Gentile is saved in this present age and the church will be raptured into the presence of Christ (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

In this age, Israel's blindness is partial ("in part") because some Jews have believed in Jesus Christ as their Messiah. Her blindness is also temporal (note the time word "until") in that it will end at the rapture and in the subsequent seven-year period, the fulfillment of Daniel's seventieth week (Daniel 9:24-26), climaxed by the return of Jesus Christ to the earth.

### ISRAEL'S MESSIAH (11:26,27)

After this church age, Israel will be saved by the coming of her promised Saviour. Paul wrote: “And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (11:26). Israel will not find political or spiritual deliverance within her own efforts or from outside nations. Her help will come from a single Person, namely the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ.

This Old Testament quotation (Isaiah 59:20-21) complements other predictions of the coming Messiah. Jehovah God said: “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication, then they will look on Me whom they pierced” (Zechariah 12:10). In that day, the Messiah will destroy the political foes of Israel (Zechariah 14:1-4). Christ Himself said that Jerusalem would remain desolate until she sees Him and shouts: “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord” (Matthew 23:39).

Paul earlier said that “they are not all Israel who are of Israel” (Romans 9:6). All Israel, thus, will be saved in that the elect, saved Jews within ethnic Israel will compose the true Israel who will be delivered when Christ returns to the earth. Ezekiel declared that God would purge out the rebels within Israel before He would redeem and restore Israel to the land (Ezekiel 20:34-38).

When Christ returns, He will forgive the sins of Israel as He bestows the blessings of the New Covenant upon His covenant people (11:27; cf. Jeremiah 31:31-37).

### ISRAEL'S LOVE (11:28,29)

Paul made this distinction between Israel's practice and her position: “Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers” (11:28).

In this present age, Israel as a whole has opposed the outreach of the gospel into the Gentile world. In that sense, Israel has been an enemy to the gospel. Paul personally was evidence of that truth because he “persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it” (Galatians 1:13). Paul gave this indictment of his Jewish opponents: They “. . . Killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins” (I Thessalonians 2:15-16). If any people deserved to forfeit the blessings of God because of their hostile rejection of the gospel, it was the Jewish people.

However, God's future salvation of Israel is not based upon her past or present unbelief. Rather, God has chosen Israel to be His distinctive covenant people because He has set His love upon her through His unconditional promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Moses wrote: "For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the Lord loves you and because He would keep the oath which he swore to your fathers" (Deuteronomy 7:6-8).

God always keeps His word. He is faithful to His promises. As Paul wrote: "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (11:29). God does not give, and later take back. The future salvation of elect, ethnic Israel is as secure as the immutability of God (Numbers 23:19; Malachi 3:6).

### ISRAEL'S MERCY (11:30-32)

Saved Gentiles "were once disobedient to God" in their unsaved days (11:30). At that time, they were "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12).

The Gentiles, however, obtained divine mercy through the disobedience of Israel (11:30). Israel, the builders, rejected the stone, namely Jesus Christ (Matthew 21:42). As a result, the crucifixion and subsequent resurrection of Christ became the chief cornerstone, the foundation stone for the building of the true church in which Gentile believers compose the majority.

God will use the mercy given to Gentile believers to bring mercy upon Israel (11:31). The reason is clear: "For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all" (11:32). This divine principle is also clear: Through human disobedience God can manifest His divine mercy. Out of love and grace, God withholds from men, both Jews and Gentiles, what they deserve. Earlier, God said: "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy" (Romans 9:15; cf. Exodus 33:19).

God thus will sovereignly use the salvation of Gentiles in this present church age to bring about the salvation of Israel in the seven-year period prior to the return of Christ to the earth (Daniel 9:24-27)

### ISRAEL'S GOD (11:33)

In praise and worship, Paul exclaimed: “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out” (11:33)! Only God could purpose and complete such a complex, paradoxical program for both Israel and the Church. Only He could work in and through the action of Men, both good and evil, to accomplish His ultimate goal--His own glory and the blessing of His people. No creature could improve upon God’s eternal counsel (11:34-35).

God alone deserves all the glory for the present salvation of Jews and Gentiles within the true Church and for the future salvation of His covenant people, Israel. Paul appropriately ended this section: “For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen” (11:36).

**AMEN AND AMEN**