

LESSON 9

ISRAEL'S PLACE IN GOD'S PLAN

Romans 9:1-11:36

Introduction

It appears on the surface that in Paul's identification of the Law with the dominion of sin and death he had rejected God's Covenant with His Chosen People and had become a traitor to the Jewish nation. Paul had shown that the Law is the means of condemnation and separation from God rather than the means of righteousness and acceptance by God. The Law which showed man his responsibility in the covenant relationship to God actually became a servant of sin and death. Paul's understanding and teaching concerning the Law was in direct opposition to that of the Pharisees who were ardent followers of it and represented the highest echelon of Judaism.

The religion of Judaism was identified with the nation. Judaism understood that God's promise was made to a race of people who were the Chosen People. The fact they were blood descendants of Abraham assured their acceptance by God. Other nations were excluded because the Covenant was interpreted to be only with Abraham's descendants. God had a purpose and plan in choosing the Israelites as His people, but Judaism had misinterpreted God's purpose for His Chosen People. Rather than making the name of God known to Gentile nations and becoming a blessing to them, Judaism required Gentile people to submit to Jewish national customs. Proselyte Gentiles, however, could not be fully accepted into the Jewish nation to stand equally with blood descendants of Abraham.

Paul felt the necessity of discussing God's plan for His Chosen People whose whole history was a preparation for Christ (Gal. 3). Since Christ and the Apostles offered the Gospel first to the Jews, it is evident that they continued to be a vital part of God's plan. In Romans 2:1-3:20, Paul had shown the Jewish need of the Gospel offered by Christ. Christ, the Son of the Chosen People according to the flesh, was part of God's plan for them, but He was rejected by them. In spite of the rejection of Christ, who was a suffering servant Messiah instead of a victorious political Messiah, God in His sovereignty is able to accomplish His purpose. Paul undertook to set forth how God would work out His plan in spite of the rejection of Christ by the Jews.

Paul's teaching concerning the Law apparently rejected God's Covenant with His C _____ People.

Is this statement true or false?

Paul's teaching concerning the Law was in direct opposition to the Pharisees' interpretation of the Law. _____

(Chosen, true)

Judaism had misinterpreted God's purpose for His _____.

(Chosen People)

Did Paul reject God's plan for His Chosen People? _____ (yes or no)

The Jews continued to be a vital part of God's _____.

In spite of the Jews' rejection of Christ, God in His sovereignty is able to accomplish His _____.

(no, plan, purpose)

Paul claimed that the Gospel which he preached was no innovation. To support his statement, it was necessary for him to show how the Gospel grew out of the Old Testament and how the the Israelites would relate to the Gospel. The Old Testament is clear in specifying the descendants of Abraham as the Chosen People of God. Paul's doctrine of God's sovereignty holds that God's plan involving the Chosen People would be worked out. If Christ is part of God's plan and the Jewish people who rejected Christ were also a part of that plan, how could the two be correlated? How can God's choice of Israel be reconciled to the fact that the nation into which the Messiah had been born rejected Him?

The problem Paul dealt with was very complex. Its complexity required answers from various perspectives. Paul's main emphasis was on the sovereignty of God working out His plan in the history of Israel.

The question Paul confronted was very urgent since a Jewish minority continued in the Church at Rome. Perhaps the Church there had been predominantly Jewish until the expulsion from Rome of the Jews by the emperor Claudius in A. D. 49. The tension which existed between Gentiles and Jews could not be kept out of churches where both groups existed. The proper attitude of both Jews and Gentiles depended on the right understanding of God's plan for Israel.

God's Selection of Israel

Romans 9:1-29

Israel's privileges (9:1-5)

Perhaps Paul's strong emphasis on righteousness by faith rather than by Law, which gave the Gentiles equal access to God with the Jews, was interpreted by the Jews as Paul's rejection of his own people. As the Chosen People, Israelites had felt assured of their acceptance with God. Paul had denied that belief and had shown that Israel must become righteous by faith just as Gentiles. Paul bound himself with a solemn oath to the truth that he experienced unceasing anguish of heart for his Israelite kinsmen (v. 1). He had not rejected them nor betrayed them because of his apostleship to the Gentiles. He experienced anguish of heart because his own people had failed to accept the salvation proclaimed in the Gospel (v. 2). His prayer, which expressed his willingness to become anathema (accursed) for his own race, does not typify anger or envy of them but a deep love (v. 3). He spoke of them as "brethren", a term usually reserved for fellow Christians.

The key question Paul dealt with in Romans 9-11 is:

How can God's choice of Israel be reconciled to the fact that the nation into which the Messiah had been born _____ him?

(rejected)

On what did the proper attitude of both Jews and Gentiles depend? _____

(the right understanding of God's plan for Israel)

Paul's Christian doctrine of grace did not deny that Israel was God's Chosen Nation and had been given advantages. He did disagree in his understanding of the purpose of Israel's privileges. He acknowledged seven advantages which had been bestowed upon Israel (vv. 4-5). To refer to them as "Israelites" signified that they were the Chosen People of the Covenant. (1) Their special relationship to God is described as "sonship" (adoption): "And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me" (Exod. 4:22-23). (2) As Israelites they received "the glory", God's presence symbolized by the cloud which covered the Tent of Meeting: "And the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Exod. 40:34). (3) They were also recipients of the covenants. Since the word is plural, it probably refers to the old Covenant given at Sinai and the new one announced by Jeremiah (cf. 31:31-34) and inaugurated by Christ (I Cor. 11:25).¹ (4) Paul admitted that "the giving of the law" was a benefit to Israel. (5) The Israelites also had the ceremonial worship of the Temple ("the service of God") and the (6) "promises" made to Abraham and his descendants. God had promised to David that his throne and kingdom would be established forever (2 Sam. 7:13). (7) The Israelites could claim the Patriarchs whom they held in high esteem as their ancestors. They were of supreme importance since Christ came from them, according to the flesh, to fulfil the promise made to them (v.5).

The latter part of verse 5 has been interpreted in various ways. The Authorized Version, the ASV, the RSV (margin), and the NEB (margin) translate the phrase literally: "Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever". Paul did not ordinarily use the title 'God' for Jesus. He was usually spoken of as the Son of God and the Lord. 'Lord' was the term used to translate Yahweh, the personal name of God, when the Old Testament was translated into Greek. F. F. Bruce supports this view. He states that the Messiah, "as concerning the flesh" (His human descent), came of a long line of Israelite ancestors, but with regard to His eternal being, He is "God over all, blessed forever".² Some scholars prefer to follow the RSV and the NEB translations: "God who is over all be blessed forever". The punctuation and translation make the last phrase a doxology rather than a statement of the divinity of Christ.

¹T. W. Manson, "Romans" in Peake's Commentary on the Bible (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1962), p. 947.

²F. F. Bruce, Romans, p. 186.

Seven advantages of the Israelites are:

1. _____
2. God's _____
3. the _____
4. the _____
5. ceremonial worship of the _____
6. God's _____
7. the _____

(Sonship, presence, covenants, Law, Temple, promises, Patriarchs)

In Romans 9:5, Paul seems to have stated that Jesus is "God _____."

(blessed forever)

The true Israelites (9:6-13)

Israel's hope was based on God's Covenant. Before entering the Promised Land, Moses approached God on Mount Sinai and he was given these words from Yahweh: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bear you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine" (Exod. 19:4-5). Israel agreed to Yahweh's requirements; therefore, the Decalogue (ten words or ten commandments) was given to set forth God's requirements for obedience. Israel concluded that keeping the Law gave assurance that she was secure as God's nation. Paul pointed out that Israel failed to keep the Law; therefore, she was not actually righteous and had no assurance of acceptance with God. Has God's Word to His people failed because the people have not achieved righteousness through the Law? (cf. v. 6)

Jeremiah had spoken of the New Covenant in which God's Law would be written in the hearts of His people (Jer. 31:31ff.). It would enable the people to know the Lord through an experience of forgiveness and in a personal way. Paul had shown how God's Word has not failed but has been fulfilled through faith in Christ.

Paul's discussion is based on his beliefs that (1) God's promise to Israel cannot fail; (2) the promise is fulfilled in Christ; (3) most of Israel has rejected Christ; (4) but God will yet fulfil His promise through a present remnant in Israel, believing Gentiles, and a final restoration of Israel.³ The first two points appear contradictory to what actually was happening. The majority of the Israelites were rejecting Christ in whom the promise to them was to be fulfilled. Paul answered the apparent problem by pointing out that not all who descended from Jacob (Israel) were true Israelites (v. 6). The promise had been made to Abraham and to his children, but not all the descendants of Abraham were the true seed of promise. Ishmael was a descendant of Abraham's flesh just as much as Isaac, but he was not included in Israel; therefore, God's promise and covenant could not have been to all the fleshly descendants of Abraham (v.8). God's promise to Abraham required faith. Abraham had to have faith that God would give a son to Sarah before the promise that he would become the father of a great nation could be fulfilled (v. 9).

³Dale Moody, Romans, p.228.

List Paul's basic beliefs as recorded in Romans 9:6-13.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Jews might object that Ishmael was the son of a maidservant and not equal to Isaac. Paul turned next to the children of Isaac and Rebecca for an illustration (v. 10). Jacob and Esau were twins. If either had the advantage, it would have been Esau who was the first-born. Before their birth, God had elected Jacob; therefore, the election could not have been based on work or merit (v. 11). The selection was based on God's sovereignty and not on heritage or merit. The statement, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (v. 13), probably meant "I preferred Jacob to Esau." Esau was identified with the hated Edomites, and no Jew would claim that the Edomites were God's Chosen People. Nevertheless, Esau and the Edomites were as much the descendants of Abraham according to the flesh as the Israelites. True Israelites are not all of the fleshly descendants of Abraham—only those selected by Yahweh. God's selection is not determined by blood descendancy but by faith.

God's sovereignty in choosing (9:14-29)

A defence of God's justice in his choice (vv. 14-18).—The objection could arise that God was unjust in choosing Jacob and rejecting Esau. Paul could have pointed out that if God's justice alone is considered, neither Esau nor Jacob would have been chosen. Instead, he chose to follow Israel's salvation history for illustrations; thus he moved on to Moses. God's statement to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (v. 15), is based on Exodus 33:19. God's mercy and justice originate in His own will and are not based on the desires or accomplishments of men (v. 16). "If God does not reveal the principles on which He makes His choice, that is no reason why His justice should be called in question."⁴ God's freedom to act according to His own will was not limited to Israel; it included Pharaoh. Pharaoh's resistance to God's will became the occasion for the display of His power in the Exodus event. Yahweh's overruling of Pharaoh's determined action was the occasion for other nations to take notice of Israel's God (v. 17).

Paul's emphasis on God's mercy overshadows his emphasis on God's justice. God's sovereign will determines whether He expresses mercy or hardens (v. 18). He chose to harden Pharaoh's heart. Exodus points out that at times the hardening of Pharaoh's heart was attributed to God but at other times to Pharaoh himself. Moody states that God's word to

⁴F. F. Bruce, Romans, p. 188.

Are these statements true or false?

According to Paul, all who descended from Abraham were true Israelites. _____

God's selection of true Israelites was determined by faith. _____

(false, true)

God's mercy and justice originate in His own _____ and are not based on the desires or _____ of men (9:16).

(will, accomplishments)

Pharaoh through Moses had the same effect as the Law which brings to consciousness sin which is already there.⁵ God's word to Pharaoh brought out a hardness of the heart already present.

A defence of God's freedom in His choice (vv. 19-29).—The next question of Paul's opponent was whether God could hold man accountable since he cannot resist God's will. If man loses his freedom in election, how can God hold him accountable? Paul answered that the creature has no right to call the Creator into question (v. 20). Instead of defending the freedom and responsibility of man, Paul turned to a defence of the freedom and mercy of God.

God as Creator is compared to a potter whose own will determines what vessel he will make out of a lump of clay. The potter has the freedom to make one vessel for beauty and another for menial use (v. 21). Paul's application of the illustration in verse 22 is difficult to interpret. Some branches of Calvinism have concluded that God predestinates vessels of wrath to condemnation and vessels of mercy to eternal life. An alternate and preferred interpretation of the verse is set forth by Moffatt's translation: "What if God, though desirous to display his anger and show his might, has tolerated most patiently the objects of his anger, ripe and ready to be destroyed?" "The vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" could also be translated by the Greek middle instead of the passive voice: "Vessels of wrath having made (fitted) themselves for destruction". God patiently endures the vessels of wrath which have made themselves the objects of His wrath.

God has made Himself new "vessels of mercy" of those Jews who have come to faith and of the numerous Gentiles who have received Christ (vv. 23-24). By rejecting Christ, some Jews have made themselves vessels of wrath. By receiving Christ, other Jews have become "vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory" (v. 23). Paul quoted the prophet Hosea to support his point. Hosea, out of mercy and love, was willing to accept two illegitimate children by his wife as his own. The experience revealed to him that God would do the same for Israel. Paul applied the Scripture to the Gentiles (v. 26)

Contrary to the Jewish belief that they are automatically accepted as God's children because they are descendants of Abraham, Paul stated that they have become vessels of God's wrath. John the Baptist had given a similar teaching in wanting the people to flee from the wrath to come: "Begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our

⁵Dale Moody, Romans, p. 230.

What was Paul's answer in 9:20 to the question, How could God hold man accountable since he cannot resist God's will? _____

(The creature has no right to call the Creator into question.)

Who are God's new "vessels of mercy"? _____

(Jews who have come to faith and Gentiles who have received Christ)

father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Luke 3:8). Paul had stated previously that "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children" (vv.6-7). He returned to that theme and gave further evidence from Isaiah: "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved" (v.27; cf. Isa. 10:22-23). God had promised Abraham that his seed would be as the sand of the sea, but because of Israel's unfaithfulness and sin only a few would be spared from captivity and God's condemnation (v.28).

Instead of defending God's failure to keep His promise to Abraham, Paul emphasized the mercy of God (v.29). Not even a remnant would have survived and Israel would have become like Sodom and Gomorrah if God's mercy had not shortened His wrath.

The Reason for Israel's Failure

Romans 9:30-10:21

Israel sought righteousness by the Law (9:30-10:4)

After discussing the problem of God's plan from the standpoint of divine election, Paul considered it from the point of view of human responsibility. Although the sovereign God is supreme in authority over man in history, His dealings with man involve the relationship of God's initiative and man's response. God does not override human freedom and force man to submit to the divine plan and accept His grace. The human will must respond to God's plan, thereby making man responsible for his actions.

Although the Jews did not think the Gentiles were accepted by God because they did not keep the Law, Paul pointed out their righteousness had been attained through faith (v.30). The Jews who attempted to establish righteousness through their own efforts by keeping the Law failed to achieve righteousness because they did not keep it (v.31). Although they claimed to keep the Law, Paul showed in Romans 2:1-3:20 that the Jews actually were breaking the Law. A hypocrite is one who claims to do something which he is actually not doing. While condemning Gentiles for failing to keep the Law, Jews deceitfully boasted of that which they were not doing.

Paul pointed out that the Jewish failure was not lack of sincerity but lack of ability to do what

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Paul emphasized the _____ of God in 9:29.

(mercy)

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Israel failed to attain God's promise because she attempted to establish _____ through the Law instead of through _____.

(righteousness, faith)

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the Law commanded. The works of creaturely and sinful man (dependence on self for achievement) always fall short of the glory of God. Acceptance with God must be through faith and not works (v. 32). While trusting in their own ability to live righteously according to the Law, the Jews rejected Christ who was the medium of God's provision for righteousness (v. 33). Righteousness by faith is no human achievement; it is provided by God and it makes possible for man to become through faith that which he is unable to achieve through effort. Human pride causes man to depend on what he is able to accomplish; therefore, divine righteousness provided through Christ becomes a stumbling stone (v. 32). To build a beautiful and sturdy wall, the mason looks for stones of the right size and shape. Often he stumbles over the very stone he needs but fails to choose it. Righteousness through Christ by faith is exactly what each man needs because of his sin, but he often stumbles over it and is injured by that which is designed to help him. To reject Christ's gift of righteousness is to fall and to be condemned (v. 33). Those who choose Christ's gift of righteousness through faith will not be disappointed nor put to shame.

In 10:1, Paul began to address Christian "brethren". Previous to this verse, he had spoken of his relation to the Jews. He assured his Christian brethren that he would not cease to pray for Israel's salvation (v. 1). Three facts about the Jews caused him to continue to pray for them:

1. They had a zeal for God (v. 2). Moody notes that zeal without knowledge is fanaticism, but zeal with knowledge is genuine enthusiasm.⁶ Perhaps Paul recalled his own fanaticism for the Law and ancestral traditions before his conversion.
2. They sought to establish their own righteousness (v. 3). The Jews were convinced that the Law was given to guide them to accomplish their own righteousness. Ignorance of God's righteousness and refusal to recognize one's failure result in greater zeal to establish self-righteousness.
3. Christ is the means for fulfilling the Law (v. 4). In Romans 7, Paul pointed out that the Law is good and the inner man wants to keep it, but the carnal man does the things which the inner man hates. When the resurrected and indwelling Christ controls one's life, the carnal man does not have his way and the Law is fulfilled.

⁶Dale Moody, Romans, p. 234.

Israel trusted in her own ability to live righteously instead of accepting Christ's

Romans 9:33 teaches that just as the mason stumbles over the very _____ he needs, so the Jews had rejected _____ who was God's provision for their _____.

(righteousness, stone, Christ, needs)

God has provided for man's righteousness (10:5-13)

As previously noted in Galatians, Paul pointed out that whoever depends on the Law for righteousness cannot receive righteousness through faith (Gal. 3:12). He also reminded the Galatians that "cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. 3:10). In contrast to self-attained righteousness, man does not have to go in search of Christ (vv. 6-7). The concept is based on Moses' farewell exhortation in Deuteronomy 30:11-14. Moses informed the people that the Commandments were neither hidden from them nor far off. They were not in heaven, requiring that one must ascend to heaven to bring them down, nor beyond the sea. The Word or Commandments were near, even in their mouths and in their hearts, that they might do them. Likewise, righteousness by faith did not have to be prepared. Christ had descended already from heaven in the Incarnation, He had died for their sins and entered into the abyss, and He had been resurrected from the dead (v. 7). Righteousness by faith was prepared already by God and is available immediately. It is as close as a person's lips which are willing to confess that Jesus is Lord and a person's heart that is willing to believe that God raised Him from the dead (vv. 8-9). The word of faith which Paul preached was the death and resurrection of Christ, the means by which righteousness by faith was prepared. 'Words' emphasize that the events (Gospel) should be proclaimed.

Confession with the mouth and belief in the heart are not merely external. For the Christian to confess the man Jesus as Lord means that he recognizes Jesus as his own Lord. A lord has control over the lives of his followers. To believe in the resurrection is more than assent to a doctrinal proposition. It means to trust one's life and being to the fact of the resurrection. Existence takes on a new centre of reference, a new relationship, and a new ruler over life. "Jesus is Lord" is the briefest form of the creed based on the death and resurrection of Christ. It should be remembered that 'Lord' was the Greek word used to translate the word 'Yahweh'.

Confession and belief are not to be separated: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (v. 10).

Paul spoke of salvation as future: "Thou shalt be saved" (v. 9). He did not mean that salvation is not a present reality. Believers who are already justified by faith in Christ will be delivered in the Day of Judgement. When the Day comes, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame" (v. 11—RSV). Righteousness by faith excludes neither Jew

Righteousness is prepared already by _____ and is as available or near as a person's willingness to _____ and to _____.

(God, confess, believe)

To confess means to recognize _____ as one's own _____.

To believe means to _____ one's life and being to the fact of the _____.

(Jesus, Lord, trust, resurrection)

nor Gentile (v. 12). Whoever turns from self-accomplishment to Jesus and calls upon Him as Lord will be saved (v. 13).

Israel is responsible for rejecting God's plan (10:14-21)

The four questions of this section are in the form of sorites—the predicate of one clause becomes the logical subject of the next. Paul's opponent, either real or imaginary, objected that men will not call upon a lord in whom they have not believed (v. 14). It is impossible for one to believe in a lord of whom they have never heard and there must be a preacher for them to hear. Ultimately the responsibility for the failure of the Jews to believe is God's because He has not sent a preacher (v. 15). The opponent implied that had the Jews known of God's righteousness through Christ, they would have called upon His name and been saved.

Paul agreed with this line of reasoning that men will not believe in him of whom they have never heard, but he could not agree that Israel had never heard (v. 16). Paul quoted Isaiah 52:7 and 53:1 to support his position that Israel had heard but had not heeded. Isaiah had anticipated that those who heard the message from the Lord would be astonished and would not believe it. Those who heard the Gospel of righteousness by faith would also have difficulty believing what they heard. However, faith is the proper response and is dependent on the message which is preached.

Since Israel had heard but had not heeded, her rejection was not the fault of God but of Israel. Paul showed that the Gospel of faith existed before Isaiah. In fact, the message of faith was preached to Abraham (cf. Gal. 3:8). The Old Testament contains a witness to Christ which is the "preaching of Christ" or the "word of God" (v. 17). Since the Old Testament gives witness to Christ, the Jews have no excuse for failing to believe in Him and for rejecting God's plan.

The opportunity to hear God's message was not limited to Israel, but the Gospel has been proclaimed in the whole order of creation (Ps. 19:4). Paul stated in the first chapter that the Gentiles could know something of the invisible God through visible creation. Israel had greater responsibility for her rejection because she confronted God not only in creation but also in the Covenant and in Christ. Nevertheless, all men are responsible for their sins, for they have not lived up to their knowledge about God.

Define sorites. _____

(The predicate of one clause becomes the logical subject of the next.)

Are these statements true or false?

Paul agreed that Israel had never heard.

Paul said Israel had heard but not heeded.

(false, true)

Since Israel had heard and not heeded, her rejection was not the fault of _____ but of _____.

(God, Israel)

Israel could not claim that she heard but did not understand (v.19). The Gentiles, whose knowledge was much more limited than Israel's, understood and responded by faith. God's manifestation of Himself to Gentiles who did not seek Him was sufficient for them to respond to Him (v.20). The fact that the Gentiles responded with such little knowledge reveals that Israel had no excuse for not understanding and for rejecting Christ. God implores his rebellious people continuously (v.21).

The Remnant of Israel

Romans 11:1-10

A remnant continues by God's grace (11:1-6)

Paul anticipated that his readers might have concluded that God had rejected His people with whom He had entered into the Covenant (v.1). Such a conclusion would mean that God's purpose had been defeated. Paul himself was evidence that God had not rejected the Israelites who had not rejected His plan (v.1). Paul was a descendant of Abraham and a member of the tribe of Benjamin. Benjamin had been loyal to Judah, the tribe of David, when the ten northern tribes withdrew under Jeroboam. The existence of a believing remnant was proof that God had not rejected those whom He foreknew and loved (v.2). Those who draw such a conclusion are mistaken like Elijah who thought that he was the only remaining faithful prophet to Yahweh (v.3). Elijah was mistaken for God had seven thousand men who had not turned to Baal (v.4).

For God to reject His people would have been contradictory to His promise in the Old Testament. In Samuel's farewell address to Israel, the promise was made that "the Lord will not cast away his people for his great name's sake" (1 Sam. 12:22—RSV). The psalmist gave a similar statement (94:14).

Although God's Covenant had been with the nation as a whole, it became obvious to the prophets Isaiah and Micah that not all the people would be faithful to Yahweh. Instead of concluding that God's promise and Covenant were annulled because of the unfaithfulness of the majority of the people, these prophets saw that God would work His plan out with a faithful remnant (cf. Isa. 1:9; 10:20-22; Mic. 2:12; 5:3).

Paul as a representative of the remnant was no more alone than Elijah. Many Jews had believed in Christ and represented the faithful elect (v.5). God's purpose continues to be based on His grace and it will not fail. Election is of grace—God's undeserved

Israel could not claim that she heard but did not understand because the Gentiles, whose knowledge was much more limited, understood and _____ by _____.

(responded, faith)

What evidence or proof is there that God has not rejected those whom he foreknew and loved? _____

(a believing remnant of which Paul was a representative)

accomplishment (v.5). The remnant which Paul represented was composed of those who by faith had received God's gift of grace through Christ. Jews who continued to depend on works were excluded from the election of grace (v.6). Grace is what God does for those who do not deserve it; therefore, it would cease to be grace if man earned it (v.6). The latter part of verse 6 in the Authorized Version is not part of the original text (cf. NEB).

Why the majority of Israel failed (11:7-10)

The elect were able to obtain God's promise but most of Israel failed (v.7). The majority refused to heed what they heard; therefore, they were hardened. Their error came at the point of rejecting Christ as the Messiah and as the means of providing righteousness by grace. "To harden" means to become insensitive. Paul had experienced an uneasy conscience which rebelled against God when he participated in the stoning of Stephen. Perhaps within his heart, he knew that Stephen was speaking words of truth, but to agree with Stephen meant that he must admit his past error. When a person becomes convicted of his wrong but does not repent, he is hardened. God sends the Spirit of conviction which becomes a Spirit of stupor if rebellion continues (v.8). For a person to continue in rebellion to the point of hardening, his eyes become incapable of seeing and his ears of hearing what is being said.

In quoting Psalm 69:22-23, Paul supported his argument with another Scripture. The Jewish ceremonial feast gave the false assurance to those who participated in it that they were accepted by God. As such, it became a snare or trap for Israel. While continuing to observe their ceremonies, the Jews had rejected Jesus the Son of God. They had become enslaved to the Law and in their blindness could not see the reality of the Son of God.

The Inclusion of Gentiles

Romans 11:11-24

Israel's failure becomes the Gentiles' opportunity (11:11-16)

Paul had affirmed in 8:28 that God is able to bring good out of evil for those who love Him. Israel's rejection and fall were not purposeless (v.11). It was through her rejection that salvation was taken to the Gentiles. On numerous occasions during Paul's missionary journeys, he first went to the Jews but when they refused to accept Christ he turned to the Gentiles. The Gentiles responded and received

While the remnant obtained God's promise, most of Israel did not because they rejected Christ as the _____ and as the means of providing _____ by grace.

(Messiah, righteousness)

Through Israel's _____, salvation was taken to the _____.

(rejection, Gentiles)

God's blessing. Paul believed that when the Jews saw the blessings which God bestowed upon the believing Gentiles, they would be moved to reconsider Christ and would submit to Him by faith (v.11).

Paul reasoned that if a blessing could come from Israel's sin, her obedience and full inclusion would result in indescribable good (v.12). From the time the promise was first given to Abraham, God intended that the Gentiles would be included. God had chosen and blessed Israel in order that she in turn could make known to the world the power and goodness of Yahweh. God's purpose for Israel was accomplished even though Israel failed. Christ, an Israelite according to the flesh, made available God's grace to believing Gentiles. The failure of Jews to accept Christ led to greater opportunity for the Gentiles to know Him and to respond by faith. Paul implied that the rejection of the Israelites was temporary since their full inclusion would come about in the future (v.12).

Although the Gentiles had come to a superior position in the Roman Church at the time Paul wrote, they were not to become proud. The fall of the Israelites was temporary, and Paul believed that their jealousy of the Gentile benefits in Christ would contribute to their salvation (v.14). Response of the Jews growing out of jealousy of the Gentile believers would mean that Paul, the missionary to the Gentiles, would have had a part in the salvation of some of the Jews.

Paul repeated the contrasting parallel that if their rejection meant reconciliation of the world (Gentiles), then their acceptance would mean "life from the dead" (v.15). Paul's optimism concerning the conversion of Jews was based on the principles set forth in Numbers 15:17-21. The Israelites offered God a cake from the dough of the first-ground flour. The presentation of one cake or a portion of dough to God made the whole lump holy. The conversion of a few Jews indicated that the larger body would be sanctified or brought into the realm of God's people. The metaphor of the root sanctifying the branches may have had reference to Abraham (v.16). Since the branches depend on the root, whatever happens to the root affects the branches. The holiness of Abraham would affect all Israel; however, it is necessary for each Israelite to believe in order to be saved.

Is this statement true or false?

Paul believed the Gentiles' response to God's blessings would drive the Jews further away. _____ (Compare your answer to the text.)

The metaphor of the dough comes from the teaching in Numbers 15:17-21 that the presentation of a portion of the dough to _____ made the whole lump _____.

The metaphor of the root represented the holiness of _____ which would affect all _____—the branches.

(God, holy, Abraham, Israel)

The olive tree illustrates Gentile inclusion (11:17-24)

Paul continued the metaphor of the root sanctifying the branches as a warning against Gentile pride. The Gentiles were wild branches which had been grafted into the tree in order to become partakers of the root of the fatness of the olive tree (v.17). The fact that the Gentiles had come to a superior place in God's Kingdom because of faith should not make them proud. Paul reminded them that they were dependent on the nation of Israel, the tree, since the Saviour had come through her (v.18). Secondly, he reminded them that Jewish branches had been broken off in order that the wild Gentile branches could be grafted into it (v.19). The Israelites were broken off because of unbelief (v.20). The Gentiles were not grafted into it because of their superiority or righteousness but because of their faith. Since faith includes a recognition of unworthiness and a renunciation of sinfulness, the Gentiles should stand in awe instead of becoming proud. Thirdly, Gentiles should not become proud because they had no assurance that God would spare them since He did not spare the natural branches (v.21). A proud person tends to trust in himself. God deals severely with those who trust in themselves, but He is kind to those who trust in Him. There is no hope, peace, nor security for man apart from faith. Fourthly, Paul reminded the Gentiles that Jewish rejection would not be permanent if the Jews did not persist in their unbelief (v.23). God had the power to graft them in again if they turned to Him in faith. If the Gentiles, the wild olive branches, could be grafted into a cultivated olive tree, it was certainly possible that the natural branches, the Jews, could be grafted back into their own olive tree (v.24).

God's Final Plan for Israel

Romans 11:25-32

In order for the Gentiles to avoid conceit, it was necessary for them to understand God's mystery (v.25). The Gentiles had not understood God's purpose for the Jews. God has not forsaken His promise to Israel, but a hardening had come upon part of Israel temporarily for the sake of the Gentiles. The partial blindness of Israel meant opportunity for the Gentiles. When the full number of Gentiles had entered the Kingdom, "so all Israel shall be saved" (v.26). What Paul meant by the words "and so all Israel will be saved" has led to much disagreement.

Some scholars translate "and so" as "in like manner". This translation leads to the interpretation that all Israel will be saved the same way as Gentiles, that is, by faith. Others emphasize that the context

Paul also used the root to warn the Gentiles against _____. They were referred to as wild _____ grafted into the tree—Israel—in order to be partakers of the root.

Four reasons the Gentiles should not become proud are:

1. They were dependent on _____ for their _____.
2. They were grafted into the tree because of their _____ and not their superiority or _____.
3. Since God did not spare the natural branches, God would not spare the Gentiles if they trusted in themselves.
4. Jewish rejection would not be permanent if the _____ did not persist in their _____.

(pride, branches, Israel, salvation, faith, righteousness, Jews, unbelief)

supports the view that Israel's fullness follows the fullness of the Gentiles. The problem arises over the meaning of "all Israel". In Chapter 9, Paul had shown that not every descendant of Abraham is included in Israel. He pointed out that "they are not all Israel, which are [descended] of Israel" (9:6). The children of the promise are counted for the seed (9:8). The promise was established through Abraham's faith. Men are accepted by God not because of their own efforts but on the basis of His purpose according to His election and call (9:11). His chosen are not Jews alone but also Gentiles (9:24). In 4:11, Paul pointed out that Abraham is the father of all who believe whether circumcised or uncircumcised. His descendants are those who follow him in faith and not those who claim the obedience of the Law. The true Israelites are both Jews and Gentiles who have been called by God and have responded by faith.

"All Israel" was probably those Jews who had been chosen by God's grace as His people. Paul was not setting forth the universal salvation of all men nor of every Israelite according to the flesh which would have contradicted his statements in Romans 9. "All Israel" referred to those who fulfilled God's purpose through faith. They were saved through the Deliverer who came from Zion. The New Covenant of Jeremiah would be established by the removal of their sins (v.27). Paul's primary point was that God was not yet finished with Israel.

Paul gave a summary statement in verses 28-32. In the mysterious working of God's plan, the Jews were the enemies of God with regard to Christ because they rejected Him. But their rejection was for the benefit of the Gentiles. With regard to God's election of Abraham and his descendants, the Israelites continued to be beloved, and they have a place in God's purpose (v.28). In His sovereignty, God is not required to revoke His call and gifts (v.29). He can bring to pass His purpose without infringing on human freedom even though man chooses to reject Him. Jewish rejection of God's purpose in Christ had openly manifested their disobedience and need of mercy (vv. 30-31). The Gentiles were once disobedient and received mercy, and Jews who had been disobedient also would receive mercy in the future. God's mercy and forgiveness were not bestowed on them apart from faith, but disobedient Gentiles responded to God by faith and received His mercy; therefore, Paul concluded that the same would happen to the Israelites. His conclusion is that all men are disobedient and must look to God's mercy for redemption (v.32). This conclusion is consistent with his doctrine of sin in Romans 1-3.

One possible interpretation of "so all Israel shall be saved" is _____

(Compare your answer with the text. See beginning of this paragraph on pg. 152.)

Another possible interpretation of "all Israel" is those _____ who had been chosen by God's _____ as His people, but not the unbelieving _____.

(Jews, grace, Jews)

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. Why did Paul include a discussion of God's plan for the Jews in Romans? _____

2. What doctrine of God did Paul emphasize in Romans 9-11? _____

3. What is the key question Paul dealt with in Romans 9-11? _____

4. Name seven advantages of the Israelites. _____

5. What is the doctrinal significance in Romans 9:5? _____

6. On what basic beliefs is Romans 9:6-13 based? _____

7. Who are the true Israelites according to Romans 9:6, 8, 15, and 23-24? _____

8. How did Paul answer the objection that God cannot hold man accountable since man cannot resist God's will? _____

9. Why did Israel fail to attain God's promise? _____

10. Interpret Romans 9:33. _____

11. How available is the righteousness which God has provided for man? _____

12. Explain Romans 10:9-10. _____

13. How did Paul answer the objection that Israel had not known of God's righteousness through Christ? _____

14. Why could Israel not claim that she had heard but had not understood? _____

15. What evidence is there that God had not rejected those whom he foreknew and loved? _____

16. How did God bring good out of the evil of Israel's rejection and fall? _____

17. What effect did Paul believe the response of the Gentiles would have upon the Jews? _____

18. Explain the metaphors of the dough and the root. _____

19. Give three reasons Gentiles should not become proud. _____

20. Explain "so all Israel shall be saved". _____

Supplementary activity (Level 2):

1. Read pages 88-105 in The Epistle to the Romans by Hunter.
2. According to Hunter, what three lines did Paul's solution follow?
3. What did Paul assert about God's sovereignty?
4. What conditions must be fulfilled before a man can call on Christ as Saviour?
5. Has God rejected His people Israel, thus laying aside His promise?

Advanced activity (Level 3):

1. Read pages 181-224 in The Epistle of Paul to the Romans by Bruce.
2. Why was the question of God's plan for the Jews important to the Roman Church?
3. Give Bruce's outline of Paul's answer to the problem of Israel's unbelief.
4. What arguments did Paul use to show that God's plan to bless Abraham's descendants (the promise) had not been abrogated?
5. How does Romans 10:14-21 relate to the problem of Jewish unbelief?
6. In Romans 11:1, how did Paul answer the question, "Hath God cast away his people?"
7. Interpret Romans 11:26.

Seminar Discussion

1. What problem was raised by Paul's position of righteousness by faith and God's plan through the ages with regard to Israel?
2. What is God's sovereignty and what did Paul assert about it?
3. What were the advantages of the Jews?
4. What caused Israel's downfall?
5. How did Israel's fall contribute to the salvation of Gentiles?
6. Why was it important that the Gentiles in the Roman Church not become proud?
7. What is God's future plan for the Jews?
8. Did God reject Israel and thus lay aside His promise?
9. Interpret Romans 11:26.