

Romans 9-11

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Study Notes

Abbreviations

BAGD	Walter Bauer. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament</i>
GGBB	Daniel B Wallace. <i>Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics</i>
LEK	Cleon L. Rogers Jr. & Cleon L. Rogers III. <i>The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament</i>
NET	<i>New English Translation</i>
tn	Technical note (syntax, lexical intrusions, grammar, semantics, manuscripts, etc.).
sn	Study note (historical reference, archeological insights, etc.).

Questions for Romans 9:1-33.

The following notes intend to address the issues in this chapter.

1. (Rom 9-11) Rom 9-11 is introduced by Rom 8:35-39. Q. If nothing can separate us from the love of God, what happened to Israel? They are certainly separated from God's love! What is Paul saying?
2. Why does Paul go into this lengthy dissertation about Israel? Imagine yourself as a Jew in the first century; the Messiah has supposedly come, but the Kingdom of God has not been established. How would you reconcile this with, say, Isaiah 9:6?
3. (9:1) Q. What does the experience of marrying your conscience to the Holy Spirit look like, feel like, taste like?
4. (9:1-4) Q. Why is Paul so upset? And are the possessions listed in verse 4 at risk?
5. (9:6, 27) Q. Why only a remnant?
6. (9:6) Q. Why is the integrity of Scripture being questioned? What went wrong?
7. (9:7-18) Q. What role does the lineage of Abraham play in the "plan of God" (v 11)?
8. (9:15, 18) Q. Do these verses teach that God is indiscriminate or arbitrary?
9. (9:16) Q. Is verse 16 talking about individual salvation, or is it talking about the election of Israel? If it's talking about individual salvation, is it teaching that man has no part to play in his own eternal destiny?
10. (9:17) Q. What actually happened with Pharaoh? Was Pharaoh God's puppet?
11. (9:20) Q. Verse 20 quotes a complaint: "*Why did You make me like this?*" Who's talking, a believer or an unbeliever, and at what point in time would this conversation take place? Is this significant?
12. (9:21-23) Q. Is the "Potter" governed by moral criteria, or are His choices arbitrary? Is Calvin correct when he writes:

When God prefers some to others, choosing some and passing others by, the difference does not depend on human dignity or indignity...If what I teach is true, that those who perish are destined to death by the eternal good pleasure of God, though the reason does not appear [*repentance and faith have nothing to do with God's decision*], then they are not found, but made worthy of destruction...the eternal predestination of God, by which before the fall of Adam He decreed what should take place concerning the whole human race and every individual, was fixed and determined...God chose out of the condemned race of Adam those whom He pleased and reprobated whom He willed... (E.P. 8:5)

13. (9:30-33) Q. What is the difference between *works-righteousness* and *faith-righteousness*? What went wrong with the Jew? Didn't God expect them to follow the Law? How do you identify works-righteousness?
 14. (9:32-33) Q. Why did God put a stumbling block before Israel? What is the stumbling block, and what is God after?
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PERSONAL STUDY NOTES:

- Romans 9:1-29 An Israel within Israel: The Remnant
- Romans 9:30-10:21 The Gospel of the Messiah - for all people
- Romans 11:1-36 Israel's Present Circumstance and Hope

Introductory Comments

Interpretation: We are expected to interpret Rom 9-11 by using what we've already been told in Rom 1-8. Everything Paul previously taught in Rom 1-8 is intended as a lens for focusing on the rest of the letter, especially chapters 9-11. Paul is "rolling out the carpet" of God's plan, as it were. Here's a quick tour:

Romans 1 deals with people who were born and died before Christ came.

Romans 2 deals those who have never heard God's word.

Romans 3 deals with the fallen state of all people.

Romans 4 introduces salvation by faith.

Romans 5 spells out God's basis for saving sinners.

Romans 6 shows what receiving Christ looks like.

Romans 7 explains the process of sanctification.

Romans 8 is the picture of a mature, Spirit filled believer.

Romans 9 explains the birth of Israel and the Messiah's family origins.

Romans 10-11 addresses the relationship of the church with history.

Because Paul is painting the big picture for his readers, it is always important to keep context in mind when reading Romans. This section (especially chapter 9) is difficult.

"Rom 9:1-11:36. These three chapters are among the most difficult and disputed in Paul's Letter to the Romans. One area of difficulty is the relationship between Israel and the Church, especially concerning the nature and extent of Israel's election." (NET Bible, ¹sn)

Romans 9-11, is where Christians divide between two broad theological models: *Dispensational Theology* (Israel is God's elect nation), and *Covenant Theology* (The church has replaced Israel in God's plan).

Translation: The following translation is my own. It is intentionally "wooden," and not meant to compete with or replace standard translations. It is my working text only, and it changes constantly as I am not trying to produce a polished work.

Context: Rom 9-11 is written against a rich background of Old Testament passages. There are approximately 64 OT quotations, references, allusions and applications in Romans 9-11. Paul is reviewing the substance of God's plan (9:11)

Allusions and quotes from the OT in Romans 9-11

9:3	Ex 32:32	10:5	Lev 18:5
9:4	Ex 4:22; Dt 7:6; 14:1-2	10:6-8	Dt 9:4; 30:12-14
9:5	Ps 41:13	10:11	Is 28:16
9:6	Num 23:19	10:13	Joel 2:32
9:7	Gn 21:12	10:15	Is 52:7; Na 1:15
9:9	Gn 18:10, 14	10:16	Is 53:1
9:10	Gn 25:21	10:18	Ps 19:4
9:12	Gn 25:23	10:20	Is 65:1
9:13	Mal 1:2-3	10:21	Is 65:2
9:14	Dt 32:4	11:2	1 Sam 12:22; Ps 94:14
9:15	Ex 33:19	11:3	1 Kngs 19:10, 14
9:17	Ex 9:16	11:4	1 Kngs 19:18
9:18	Ex 4:12; 7:3; 9:12; 14:4, 17	11:8	Dt 29:4; Is 29:10
9:20	Is 29:16; 45:9	11:9-10	Ps 69:22-23; 35:8
9:21	Jer 18:6	11:11	Dt:32:21
9:22	Jer 50:25	11:16	Num 15:17-21; Neh 10:37; Eze 44:30
9:25	Ho 2:23		
9:26	Ho 1:10	11:26-27	Is 59:20-21; Ps 14:7
9:27-28	Is 10:22-23	11:27	Is 27:9; Jer 31:33-34
9:29	Is 1:9	11:33	Is 45:15; 55:8
9:31	Wsd 2:11 (Apocrypha)	11:34	Is 40:13; Job 15:8; Jer
9:32	Is 8:14	23:18	
9:33	Is 28:16	11:35	Job 41:11

Theme: One of the major themes of Romans 9-11 concerns the remnant. *Only a remnant will be saved* (cf. Rom 9:6, 27; 11:3-6). As a background comment on the remnant theme, Rom 9:27-28 quotes Is 10:22-23. Isaiah was a statesman, an advisor to the kings of Judah. He is known as the prophet of the remnant, and named his two sons to reflect his prophecies about coming judgment and restoration. *Mahershalalhashbaz* means “The spoil speeds; the prey hastes,” and reflects a conviction that Assyria would invade Syria and Israel (734 B.C.). Isaiah’s second son, *Sherajashub*, means “A remnant shall return,” and reflects Isaiah’s belief in the survival and conversion of a faithful remnant in Israel (cf. Is 1:9; 7:3; 8:1, 4; 10:20-23). Keeping the remnant theme in mind helps with interpretation.

9:1 *I am speaking the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifying to me in the Holy Spirit*

¹tn “my conscience testifying...” Genitive Absolutives. Semantics: Causal or Temporal participles, *Because* or *While* my conscience bears witness.

Q. What is the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the conscience? Is there a tool in this verse that helps assess a person’s honesty and integrity?

A. Being objective about ourselves - seeing ourselves as we really are - is one of our greatest challenges. The deceived do not know they are deceived. The conscience and the Holy Spirit team up against this danger for the believer.

Paul is concerned that the Roman Jews may believe rumors that he is not sincere concerning Israel. He was widely represented by his enemies as a traitor to the Jewish state and accused of setting the Law of Moses aside because of his outreach to Gentile nations.

9:2 *that my pain is great, and [there is] unceasing sorrow in my heart.*

¹tn Lit. “*the pain to me...*” is “*my pain.*” Dative of possession.

Q. Why is Paul so upset (Compare Rom 10:1)? Is Israel’s rejection of Christ a genuine tragedy? Can one who is chosen, as was the case with Israel, really reject God’s sovereign choice by resisting His will? Is the election of God resistable?

A. Yes! With this question we enter the world of controversy: Arminianism versus Calvinism.

Comments by a the Calvinist: William McDonald.

McDonald’s introductory comments to Romans 9-11 are designed to give him license to both affirm and deny freewill. As a Calvinist, he teaches that God chose individuals for salvation before the creation of the world, and that this choosing is not based on a person’s faith. On the other hand, he asserts human responsibility and culpability in decision-making. He admits the contradiction, but claims it is biblically based! I have never been able to accept this. All of McDonald’s notes on Romans 9-11 are included in an appendix. A few quotes follow:

How can God choose individuals to belong to Himself and at the same time make a *bona fide* offer of salvation to all people everywhere? How can we reconcile these two truths? The fact is, that we cannot. To the human mind they are in conflict. But the Bible teaches both doctrines, and so we should believe them...(1715)

Some have tried to reconcile sovereign election and human responsibility by saying that God foreknew who would trust the Savior and those are the ones He elected to be saved. They base this on Romans 8:29 (“whom He foreknew He also predestined”) and 1 Peter 1:2 (“elect according to the foreknowledge of God”). But this overlooks the fact that God’s foreknowledge is *determinative*. It is not just that He knows in advance

who will trust the Savior, but that He *predetermines* this result by drawing certain individuals to Himself. (1715)

McDonald is simplistic on the definition of foreknowledge. The primary meaning is “to know in advance, to know beforehand,” and secondarily “to foreordain” (BAGD). In other words, both concepts are included. God knew who would trust the Savior *and* He determines the course of history. His sovereignty is what created freewill, and His plan requires it be granted. McDonald continues:

Although God chooses some men to be saved, He never chooses anyone to be damned. To put it another way, though the Bible teaches election, it never teaches divine reprobation. But someone may object, “If God elects some to blessing, then He necessarily elects others to destruction.” But that is not true! (1715)

Yes, it is true! This is dishonest scholarship, and smacks of dogmatism. What’s at stake? The “Good News” suddenly becomes “Bad News” - very bad news - so bad that John 3:16 gets turned on its head. We would be forced to conclude that *God did NOT so love the world!* McDonald continues.

The whole human race was doomed to destruction by its own sin and not by any arbitrary decree of God. If God allowed everyone to go to hell - and He could justly have done that - people would be getting exactly what they deserved. The question is, “Does the sovereign Lord have a right to stoop down and select a handful of otherwise doomed people to be a bride for His Son?” The answer, of course, is that He does. (1715)

Here we have an interesting twist on McDonald’s version of Calvinism. He writes that God could send everyone to hell and still be just, because that is what we deserve. That is, he claims men have enough freewill to sin, but not enough to say, “I’m sorry.” What’s that about? Here is Calvinism exposed. It boils down to this: “*God stoops down and picks up a handful of otherwise doomed people and gives them as a bride to His Son.*” Really?! One handful, out of billions! One handful goes to heaven, and the rest are sent to an eternal hell, never having had an opportunity to get right with God.

Certainly God could do this, but such a “god” would not look like Jesus. It’s important to keep this picture of Calvinism in mind as we go through McDonald’s interpretation of Romans 9-11. This is the main stuff of Calvinism. There is no hope whatsoever for the vast majority of the human race *and* God intentionally planned it that way. In other words, Calvinism is next to the worst possible news the world can get. If Calvinism is true, then God hates nearly everyone He created. The only worse news would be that God hates everyone. This is why Calvinism cannot be true.

9:3 *For I was praying that I myself might be accursed from Christ on behalf of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,*

¹tn “*For I was praying*” may be taken as an idiomatic imperfect, “I was on the point of wishing.” The implied condition is “if this could save my fellow Jews.” (NET Bible)

Rom 9:3 establishes Paul’s sincere love for Israel.

Q. Why couldn’t God answer Paul’s prayer?

A. Because salvation involves faith as an act of freewill, and one person cannot believe for another.

Q. Does Paul love Israel more than God does! Or is Paul’s will contrary to God’s will?

A. No. Paul is expressing God’s heart. God loves Israel infinitely more than Paul does. Also, God actually *did* what Paul only desired to do - He gave His life for Israel.

9:4 *...who are Israelites, of whom [is] the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the worship, and the promises,*

In vv 4-5 the nation of Israel is directly connected to a list of eight privileges:

Adoption (Israel is an elect nation!)	Glory (“God’s own presence”)
Covenants (Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic)	Law (Scripture, government)
Worship (the Temple)	Promises (Messianic hope & Kingdom)*
Patriarchs (Abraham, Issac, Jacob...v 5)	Messiah (God over all - v 5)

**The promises* refer to what God told Abraham, including the land promise and the blessings on all families of the earth.

9:5 *...of whom (are)] the fathers, and from whom [is] the Christ (insofar as the flesh is concerned); the One being God over all, blessed into the ages. Amen.*

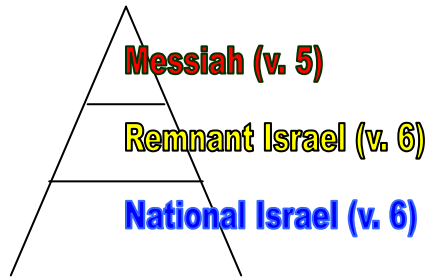
¹tn “*the flesh*” The article is used as an adverbial accusative to strongly emphasize the limitation: “*insofar as the physical is concerned.*”

²tn “*the One being*” is a substantive participle used to emphasize quality. In this case, the quality emphasized is that Jesus is God. The NIV translates, *Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.* The NET Bible includes the following technical note in support of this translation.

Or “the Christ, who is over all, God blessed forever,” or “the Messiah. God who is over all be blessed forever!” or “the Messiah who is over all. God be blessed forever!” The translational difficulty here is not text-critical in nature, but is a problem of punctuation. Since the genre of these opening verses of Romans 9 is a lament, it is probably best to take this as an affirmation of Christ’s deity (as the text renders it).

Although the other renderings are possible, to see a note of praise to God at the end of this section seems strangely out of place. But for Paul to bring his lament to a crescendo (that is to say, his kinsmen had rejected *God* come in the flesh), thereby deepening his anguish, is wholly appropriate. (NET Bible)

There are three players in vv. 5-6 that explain what Paul is talking about. This establishes a well-defined context for interpreting the rest of the chapter. These three players [i.e., the Messiah (v. 5), Remnant Israel (v. 6), and National Israel (v. 6)] can be arranged as a pyramid.



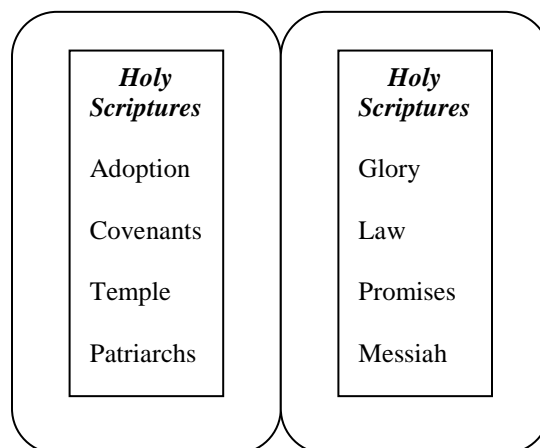
9:6 *But (it is) not as though the Word of God has fallen out. For not all these from Israel [are] Israel;*

¹tn “(it is) not as though” translates a negative relative pronoun as an idiom. Lit. “Such (is) not (that).”

²tn “Has fallen out” The Greek word means “to fall out, to fall from its place; that is, perished and become of no effect.”

Q. If the Kingdom of God is not going to be established at this time due to Israel’s apostasy, then we have an apparent problem: The Scripture appears inaccurate. Is this the case?

A. Paul says no, and explains that God’s promises to Israel are only intended for believers - the *remnant*.

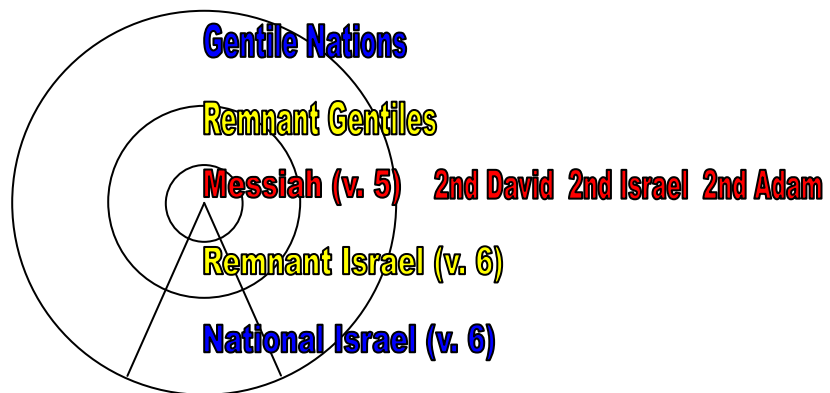


Disobedient Jews committed a classic error. They identified the physical unconditional election of their nation, with the spiritual conditional election of individuals. There is an Israel *within* Israel. Or, as the next verse reads, “*Not all of Abraham’s descendants are children of the promise*” (v 7). Paul is narrowing the field. He continues his answer through Romans 11. (A similar question was addressed previously in Romans 2:28-3:3.)

I’ve prepared a graphic that illustrates Paul’s argument (see below). As mentioned earlier, Isaiah is the O.T. prophet of the *remnant*. Franz Delitzsch, an 18th century Messianic Rabbi, comments on Isaiah’s use of the remnant as it relates to the Messiah and the nation of Israel.

The coming **Savior**...appears as the embodied idea of Israel, i.e. as its truth and reality embodied in one person. The idea of “the servant of Jehovah” assumed, to speak figuratively, the form of a pyramid. The base was **Israel as a whole**; the central section was that **Israel which was not merely Israel** according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit also; the apex is the person of the Mediator of salvation springing out of Israel. And the last of the three is regarded (1) as the center of the circle of the promised kingdom - *the second David*; (2) the center of the people of salvation - *the second Israel*; [Mt 2:15] (3) the center of the circle of the human race - *the second Adam*. (Isaiah, Vol. II, 174ff)

I’ve illustrated this concept by using concentric circles (cf. vv. 24, 30).



Regarding the *remnant*, McDonald writes:

(Paul) goes on to show that God has always had a sovereign election process based upon a promise...(1716)

McDonald implies here that God has predetermined from before the foundation of the world that a small and particular group of people would be saved, apart from any reference to faith or freewill. The statement, “sovereign election process,” colors the interpretation of Romans 9 by painting the picture that “God does it all.” Faith and repentance are camouflaged. Rather, what we think Paul means is this: “God has always conditioned His promises with faith,

saved. John the Baptist (Matt 3:8-9) was real clear about this not being the case. Ishmael, and all the rest of Abraham's children, did have the opportunity to get saved, but this was not their birthright. Here the phrase *children of God* is synonymous with *children of the promise*. The *children of the promise* are the physical descendants of Isaac.

Q. What is the "promise" (singular)?

A. The context is about Abraham, so this is a reference to the Abrahamic covenant. "*Children of the promise*" are Israelites as traced through Isaac and Jacob.

9:9 *For this is the word of promise, "According to this time I will come and there will be a son to Sarah."*

The "promise" in v 9 is traced through the miraculous birth of Isaac. Sarah has a son.

9:10 *And not only this, but Rebecca also (had a similar experience) conceiving from one man, Isaac our father.*

¹tn "Rebecca" Perhaps best to be taken as a nominative absolute providing the introduction to what is stated in verses 11 and 12.

²tn "conceiving" Lit. "having sexual intercourse." The participle and noun are translated idiomatically.

The promise continues to unfold in the miraculous pregnancy of Rebecca - twins!

9:11 *For not yet having been born, nor practicing anything good or bad (in order that the plan of God might remain according to selection,*

¹tn "having been born...practicing" Genitive absolutes.

²tn "that the plan of God might remain according to selection" LEK notes, "This is in accord with the teaching of the Pharisees concerning predestination." This assumes much more than is said. As mentioned earlier, God's plan is predetermined, but individual selection to salvation (though foreknown) is not.

³tn "might remain" (present active subjunctive) The present tense emphasizes continual remaining. The idea is that God will see His plan all the way through to the end.

"God's plan." There is no other plan. This is the only one, and God is not changing it as He goes. Jacob is a miracle-child, created by God specifically for the creation of the nation of Israel. Jacob is a custom fit. He is the only one who qualifies as a descendant of Abraham concerning the covenants. Paul adds, "*For not yet having been born, nor practicing anything good or evil...*" This is certainly not saying good and evil are unimportant to God. Paul's point is that God is carrying out His plan regardless of what men do. God chose Jacob, not because Jacob was better than Esau (or anyone else), but because Jacob was to

be in the Messianic line. This verse is often used by Calvinists to prove that individual salvation is not based on freewill. McDonald himself admits this view misses the context in his commentary on Rom 9:13:

This passage refers to *earthly blessings*, and not to eternal life. God's hatred of Edom doesn't mean that individual Edomites *can't* be saved, any more than His love of Israel means that individual Jews *don't* need to be saved. (1717)

I agree with McDonald's statement. Paul is not talking about salvation to eternal life. The context is about God's plan (His blueprints). He is creating a nation from which will arise the Messiah. This distinction resolves the confusion between God's historical plan, and how people are saved as individuals. God's historical plan is a "God-makes-it-happen" program, and He uses both believers and unbelievers as required.

9:12 *not from works, but from the One who calls), it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger";*

¹tn "the One who calls" Substantive participle.

²tn "The older will serve the younger" Lit. "The greater will serve the lesser." The two comparatives are used in reference to age.

"Not from works, but of Him who calls" God chose Jacob because He made Jacob for this exact place in His plan. Jacob's behavior (which was not always commendable) had nothing to do with God's decision. Jacob is an important "link in the chain" leading to the Messiah. God's plan includes Jacob, but is not about Jacob. The plan is about the Messiah (v 5).

Q. Why twins? If Jacob's birth was a miracle, then so was Esau's! Why did God make Esau?

A. I can only guess. Perhaps Esau was born to distract Isaac. Isaac clearly favored Esau, the hunter-gatherer. He did this in spite of what the angel told Rebecca about the older serving the younger. That is, Isaac intended to give the birthright to Esau. In contrast, Rebecca raised Jacob to embrace spiritual values. There appears to have been a danger that Isaac would not give the proper spiritual emphasis to Jacob.

9:13 *Just as it is written, "I have loved Jacob, and I have hated Esau."*

"Loved Jacob...hated Esau" This text refers to the nations of Israel and Edom (Mal 1:2-3). (Recall that Jacob was renamed *Israel* in Gen 32:28.) The Hebrew idiom means "I prefer Jacob to Esau" (LEK). That is, "I have chosen Jacob instead of Esau." The phrase "God loved Jacob" (Mal 1:2-3) means God loved Israel. His reason? Israel is His national "son," his miracle nation. It was from Israel that His true Son, the Messiah, would come.

Jacob's family tree is not better than that of other men. It just happens to be the one God chose. God is looking through Jacob - *down through time* - to the birth of the Messiah (Matt 1:1-16; Luke 3:23-38).

LEK presents this option:

“The Heb. idiom means, ‘I prefer Jacob to Esau’ (Mal 1:2-3), but Paul may again have taken the word literally (Barrett, Cranfield, et al).”

Is taking the word “hate” literally really an option? God created Esau through a miraculous birth. Did He do this so He would have someone to hate? It is difficult for me to understand why anyone would want to believe this. McDonald's comment on this text is something of a theological stutter. He sees the problem, but does not know how to resolve it. He both affirms and denies God's personal hatred for Esau.

Although it is true that the quotation from Malachi 1:2, 3 describes God's dealings with nations rather than individuals, it is used to support His sovereign right to choose individuals as well.

The words **Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated** must be understood in the light of the sovereign decree of God that stated, **The older shall serve the younger**. The preference for Jacob is interpreted as an act of love, whereas bypassing Esau is seen as hatred *by comparison*. It is not that God hated Esau with a harsh, vindictive animosity, but only that He loved Esau less than Jacob, as seen by His sovereign selection of Jacob.

This passage refers to *earthly blessings*, and not to eternal life. God's hatred of Edom doesn't mean that individual Edomites *can't* be saved, anymore than His love of Israel means that individual Jews *don't* need to be saved. (Note also that Esau *did* receive some earthly blessings, as he himself testified in Gen 33:9.) (p. 1717)

I think McDonald gets the meaning correct at the end of his statement. This means Jacob does not automatically go to heaven, and Esau does not automatically go to hell. However, some claim this verse means exactly that, that these two had no say in their eternal destiny (and by implication, neither does anyone else)! I would say this passage is not addressing this question. God is simply executing His plan and Esau is not in the Messianic line. Salvation, or the want of it, is not being discussed. Furthermore, if salvation were the issue, then there would be an irreconcilable conflict with the main theme of Romans: *A man is justified by faith*.

9:14 *What, therefore, shall we say? There is not unrighteousness with God, is there? May it never be!*

Q. Therefore, what shall we say about God's selection of Jacob? Is God unfair because He did not pick the Edomites or the Arabs to carry out His plan?

A. No! "*May it never be!*" God can choose whomever He wants. The Messiah can only have one genealogy. God had to pick someone, and He picked Jacob. He could have brought the Messiah from the nation of Edom, or from Egypt, but He did not. He chose Israel. I have a saying that illustrates the point: "*Not every American gets to live in the White House.*"

9:15 *For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I should have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I should have compassion."*

tn "*to show mercy*" means, "to have compassion on someone in need, and to seek to help." "*to show compassion*" means, "to be inwardly moved to deep compassion." The first of these words expresses the compassion of the heart, the second the manifestation of that feeling.

"*I will have mercy...*" The context is the carrying out of God's plan. Verse 15 should be interpreted by the two examples found on either side: Jacob & Pharaoh. God is executing His plan perfectly. The OT reference is to Ex 33:19, where the context (vv. 12-19) is speaking about God's choosing Israel (as it is in Rom 9:15). In the NIV Student Bible there is a note that catches the meaning:

[Ex] 33:3 WHY THE JEWS?

This remarkable scene shows Moses pleading with God not to abandon the Jews, his chosen people. Eventually, God did agree to lead them on (33:17). Why were the Jews chosen? Why not some other race? When the Bible touches on the question at all, it gives no comprehensive answer. Usually, the reply boils down to something like this, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy" (33:19). God reserves the right to choose whomever he wants.

Point: Rom 9:15 is not talking about individual salvation and reprobation. It's talking about God's choice of nations. This is important, because many understand Paul to be talking about individual election, and their destiny in heaven or hell.

However, even if Paul was talking about individuals, to believe that God simply picks who He wants for no given reason is to ignore what he's been saying for eight chapters. For example, if we complained to Paul, "So...God just saves or condemns who He wants, regardless of man's decisions!" I would expect to hear him respond with, "Haven't you been paying attention! How could I have been more clear? God's mercy is only available through faith in Jesus Christ." God set the criteria concerning who gets, and who does not get mercy.

NOTE: There is a principle I've adopted that speaks to God's character: Gen 18:25 (Rom 3:4; Ps 116:11). How does God decide who gets mercy and compassion? Is He indiscriminate or arbitrary? Are His reasons known? If so, what are they? (cf. Romans 1-8.) The lesson here is that there is no mercy, compassion or love apart from Christ. Though God is love, those without faith will never experience God this way.

9:16 *Consequently, therefore, (it is) not the one who wills, nor the one who runs, but of God who is merciful.*

tn "*the one who wills*" (present active participle - genitive). This is a substantive participle. The present describes an ongoing activity. The genitive could be an objective genitive of a word ("mercy") to be supplied (Cranfield), or it could be genitive of source, "God's mercy does not have as its source human effort." The two words ("willing" and "running") indicate human striving and may reflect the symbol of an athletic contest and sum up the totality of man's capacity. LEK

"Not the one who wills, nor the one who runs..." God does not choose people on the basis of human strengths, talents or effort. If that is what He's after He would have created more talented and athletic people. Competition and ambition are not promotional principles in the Kingdom of God. As always, the only response that win's God's mercy is *faith* (which includes a repentant heart).

Paul's Point: We don't decide what part we will play in God's plan (the one who wills), and assignments are not handed out competitively (the one who runs). Consequently, God's plan is not controlled by us. This concept helps me resolve some personal issues. In the past I've said, "I never expected my life to turn out like this." This verse teaches that God's will is not about fulfilling my expectations, and that true faith embraces God's will.

9:17 *For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very thing I raised you up, so that I might display in you My power, and so that My name might be declared in all the earth."*

The NET Bible includes the following study note, pointing out that in the text (Ex 9:16) Moses is told what to tell Pharaoh.

Paul uses a typical rabbinic formula here in which the OT scriptures are figuratively portrayed as speaking *to Pharaoh*. What he means is that the scripture he cites refers (or can be applied) to Pharaoh. (NET Bible)

Paul uses Pharaoh as an example of someone who did not get God's mercy. "*I raised you up*" - The word is used of God calling up actors on the stage of history. (LEK)

There is an important pattern in God's dealing with Pharaoh, which all readers of his story would know. Follow these texts:

- Ex 3:19 (God's foreknowledge - He knew beforehand that Pharaoh would harden his heart)
- Ex 8:15 & 32 (Pharaoh's free-will - Pharaoh hardens his heart)
- Ex 9:12; 10:1, 20 & 14:8 (God's response - God hardens Pharaoh's heart).

Is Pharaoh at fault? Yes. Could it have been different for Pharaoh? Could he have obeyed? Yes. However, God knew beforehand that he would not. This is straightforward and easy to understand. This same principle can be applied to the whole human race.

9:18 *Consequently, therefore, He is merciful (on) whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills.*

I have formed a couple of proverbs to help explain this verse:

*"Don't mess with God's blueprints. God hardens those who do."
"Honor the Master Architect and He will escort you to heaven."*

Again, if God is acting apart from faith (man's volitional choice), then we have a major problem in Scripture. We have unconditional particular double-predestination. John Calvin is well known for this:

When God prefers some to others, choosing some and passing others by, the difference does not depend on human dignity or indignity...If what I teach is true, that those who perish are destined to death by the eternal good pleasure of God, though the reason does not appear [*repentance and faith have nothing to do with God's choosing*], then they are not found, but made worthy of destruction...the eternal predestination of God, by which before the fall of Adam He decreed what should take place concerning the whole human race and every individual, was fixed and determined...God chose out of the condemned race of Adam those whom He pleased and reprobated whom He willed... (E.P. 8:5)

9:19 *Therefore, you will say to me, “Why, then, does He still find fault? For who has stood against His will?”*

Q. Is it unfair for God to harden those who resist His light and love?

A. No. Look at Pharaoh. Was God fair with Pharaoh? I can hear Pharaoh saying some such excuse to God at the judgment!

“Why does He still find fault?” This raises an important point: God truly holds people guilty for unbelief. *He does find fault.* Why? Because these folks really are responsible for turning from God. When they do, He may impose His will on them with a negative twist (cf. Rom 1:24-25). In the end, there are only two kinds of people: 1) Those who voluntarily put God’s will above their own, and 2) Those who put their own will first.

This verse seems to teach that we have freewill only to the degree that volition accomplishes God’s purposes. God is interested in my choices, but such choices have limited power.

Brother Lawrence has a maxim which I think applies:

*That our only business is to love and delight ourselves in God.
That we ought, once for all, heartily to put our whole trust in God, and
make a total surrender of ourselves to Him, secure that He will not
deceive us.*

9:20 *O man, on the contrary, who are you, the one talking back to God? The thing formed shall not say to the One having formed it, “Why did you make me thus?”*

¹tn *“the one talking back”* Reciprocal action is expressed by the preposition compound.

²tn *“the one having formed it”* (aorist active participle) The aorist is used to show the action is logically antecedent to the action of the main verb.

Q. *“Why did you make me like this?”* Who’s talking? Believers or unbelievers? What is the answer to this question?

A. Unbelievers. God conforms all those who put faith in Him into the image of Christ, but makes unbelievers into whatever best serves His plan. Believers certainly do not complain about being made into the image of Christ!

9:21 *Does not the potter have authority over the clay to make from the same lump, on the one hand, this vessel for honor and, on the other hand, that for dishonor.*

¹tn *“to make”* Epexegetical infinitive is used to explain the authority.

²sn Corinth, where Paul wrote the epistle of Romans, was a city known for its pottery (cf. 2 Cor 4:7).

Let's talk about Rom 9:21-23. What is God's criteria? You are a formless lump of clay when you come into the world. What will God do with you? This text teaches that God has the right to override your will in a negative way, or to honor you with grace. Either way, He will change you. Believers end up looking like Jesus, and unbelievers end up looking like the lies they follow.

Q. Are there examples in Romans 1-8 that support this interpretation?

A. Yes. "*On the one hand, this vessel for honor*" is the work of Rom 8:29; "*on the other hand, that vessel for dishonor*" is the work of Rom 1:24ff.

Q. What gives God the right to do this?

A. God writes the rules, and the rule is "*The just shall live by faith.*" Faith, or the want of it, changes everything.

9:22 *And (what) if God, desiring to display His anger and to make known His power bore with much longsuffering vessels of wrath having been prepared for destruction.*

¹tn "*desiring*" (present active participle) The present is used to describe an ongoing activity.

²tn "*to display*" Complementary infinitive to the main verb.

³tn "*having been prepared*" (perfect passive participle) The perfect emphasizes the state or condition. It is passive (GGBB, 417-18), not middle (Cranfield).

In my opinion, an important element in interpreting vv 22-23 is to see the phrases, "*vessels of wrath prepared for destruction*" and "*vessels of mercy, previously prepared for glory*" as referencing God's work in people's lives on earth. That is, the preparation for good or ill takes place in this life, as God and men interact with one another over who gets to be in charge.

Q. Why does God patiently restrain Himself, and how does this notion help answer the problem of evil?

A. God restrains Himself (postponing final judgment), because there are yet people coming to Christ. He endures the unbelievers for the sake of believers. I often wonder how God can stand the state of affairs on earth. V 22 speaks to this. Why does He let it go on? Because there are other believers, some not yet born. For example, He puts up with the unbelieving grandparents because He knows they will have a granddaughter that will turn to Him - God wants that granddaughter.

9:23 *And that He might make known the riches of His glory on vessels of mercy, which He prepared for glory.*

tn “He prepared” The preposition compound is temporal indicating antecedent action.

Q. Does this verse help explain sanctification?

A. “*Prepared beforehand for glory*” is the reason behind sanctification. This is what sanctification does; it prepares believers for glory. The preparation starts after conversion (not before the foundation of the world), and continues throughout the earthly life of the believer. Sanctification is concurrent with faith.

As God prepares believers for glory through faith, likewise He prepares unbelievers for judgment (based on their response to His love and light). This implies the experience in heaven or hell will be different for each person.

9:24 *Even us whom He has called, not only from the Jews, but also from the Gentiles?*

¹tn “even us whom...” The relative pronoun is attracted to the gender of the personal pronoun. More literally, it would be, “(Among) whom also He called you.”

²sn See the Remnant diagram of concentric circles under Rom 9:6.

9:25 *As also He says in Hosea, “I shall call those not My people, My people, and she having not been loved, having been loved.”*

The context of Hosea 2:23 refers to Israelites. Paul applies the text, in principle, to both Jews and Gentiles.

9:26 *“And it shall be in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ there they shall be called sons of the living God.”*

The context of Hosea 1:10 refers to Israelites. Paul applies the text, in principle, to both Jews and Gentiles.

9:27 *And Isaiah cries out on behalf of Israel, “If the number of the sons of Israel should be as the sand of the sea - the remnant shall be saved.”*

Historically, Is 10:22-23 (Rom 9:27-28) is speaking about the Babylonian invasion of Palestine and Israel’s subsequent exile. God judged Israel for unbelief. The nation was deported, and only a remnant was allowed to return. Paul draws an application from this text against Israel for rejecting the Messiah.

In the fullness of time (Gal 4:4), God forced Israel off the fence of indecision. He did this by executing the Scripture “*quickly and completely*” through the

coming of Messiah. As I understand it, about 10% of the Jews in the greater Jerusalem area were Christians in 70 A.D. (over 100,000).

Q. Why only a remnant (Is 10:22)? This question should bother you. Is Christianity only true on paper? Jesus died for the whole world, yet only a small percentage realize it.

A. Compare Matt 7:13-14; 1 Kings 19:18. This concept puts extraordinary worth on the church, His Bride. God allows unbelievers and sin to increase for the sake of adding to the believing remnant.

9:28 *“For the Lord will execute the Word, finishing (it) and cutting (it) short on the earth.”*

tn *“finishing it”* The field of meaning is, “to bring to an end, to complete, to finish, to consummate.” The preposition compound is perfective.

The NET Bible provides the following technical notes:

This verse is very difficult to understand, so there is a longer reading that attempts to clarify the meaning. The addition reads, “For he will execute his sentence completely and quickly in righteousness, because the Lord will do it quickly on the earth.” The shorter reading is found only in Alexandrian mss (146 1* A B 1739 *et pauci*), while the longer reading is found in both Western and Byzantine mss (1² D F G Y Byz 33 lat). The longer reading follows Isa 10:22-23 LXX verbatim, while Paul in the previous verse quoted the LXX loosely. This suggests the addition was made by a copyist trying to make sense out of a difficult passage rather than by the author himself.

There is a wordplay in Greek (in both the LXX and here) on the phrase translated “completely and quickly” (suntelw’n kaiV suntevmwn, suntelwn kai suntemwn). These participles are translated as adverbs for smoothness; a more literal (and more cumbersome) rendering would be: “The Lord will act by closing the account [or completing the sentence], and by cutting short the time.” The interpretation of this text is notoriously difficult. Cf. BAGD, s.v. suntevmnw 792.

9:29 *And just as Isaiah previously said, “Except the Lord of Sabaoth left a seed to us, we would have become as Sodom, and we would have been likened as Gomorrah.”*

tn *If the Lord of Hosts did not leave us a seed”* Used as a 2nd class conditional clause, which is contrary to fact; “*If the Lord did not...though, in fact, He did.*”

“just as Isaiah previously said” is a reference to Isaiah’s prophecy, and comes from Is 1:9 (which is *previous* to Is 10:22-23 cited in Rom 9:27-28).

In response to Israel's unbelief, God could have abandoned the nation. However, He did not. "*Seed*" refers to physical Israelites, citizens of the nation. (This is the opposite problem of Israel becoming like the sand of the sea! v. 27) The miracle of Israel is that she is not extinct.

9:30 *Therefore, what shall we say? That Gentiles, those not pursuing righteousness, attained righteousness - the righteousness of faith.*

tn The Greek for "*obtained*" also means "*made it their own,*" or "*attained.*"

This is me. I was not looking for righteousness. It was after I was confronted by God that righteousness became an issue. I had answers before I had questions.

9:31 *And Israel, while pursuing a law of righteousness, into that law they did not arrive.*

Q. An important question in Romans is, "What went wrong with the Jew?" This verse says they were *pursuing a law of righteousness!* God Himself had given them this Law. What happened? Or, more specifically, what is the difference between *faith-righteousness* and *works-righteousness*? How can we illustrate this to bring out the difference?

A. Try this: The difference between *faith* and *works* is as great as the difference between your *spouse* and your *boss*. A boss hires an employee to do certain tasks (e.g. show up for work on time, wear clean clothes, keep properly groomed, use professional speech and manners, etc.). If an employee shows up late for work - guess what? That employee might be sent home to think about how badly he or she wants the job. What about marriage? Is it like this? I will marry you if you agree to

- Take out the garbage
- Prepare dinner on time
- Keep the house vacuumed, etc.
- I don't care if you talk to me, or love me, or work on our relationship, just get all these chores done.

This appears to be a very common approach to salvation: "*Appease the Deity!*" As though there is some spiritual checklist that needs to be completed and signed off to ensure one's ticket is validated for heaven. I've designed a proverb to go with this.

God is seeking a Bride, not a quota of employees.

God has His employees. They are the angels. He will not marry an angel (though I did. Ha!) In the O.T. this is the difference between the Shema (Deut 6:4) and the Ten Commandments. (cf. Mt 22:34-40)

9:32 *“Why? Because (they sought righteousness) not from faith, but as from works.” They tripped over the stone of stumbling.*

The Jew believed that living a righteous life could be measured by works. In contrast, faith measures righteousness by loving God.

9:33 *As it has been written, “Look, I place in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, and the one who believes on Him shall not be ashamed.”*

In Isaiah 28:16, God warned Israel concerning what He intended to do! He gave His plan away through prophecy. Those who took Him seriously eventually understood what Is 28:16 meant.

Q. Why would God purposely put a stumbling block before people? What does it accomplish? What is He after? Didn't Jesus say, “Woe to him who causes one of these little ones to stumble?” Why did God do this to Israel?

A. God put a stumbling stone in Jerusalem to separate the “employees” from the Bride. Or, to put it another way: To separate those who love themselves from those who love God. It is a test. Pass or fail.

Q. In what ways was Jesus a “*stone of stumbling and a rock of offense?*”

A. He attacked religious tradition and mechanical obedience. He exposed religious form as hollow and heartless.

Lesson: Israel took their election by God for granted. They were wrong. Is there a stone of stumbling for Gentiles? If so, what does it look like? What is the test for us? What does the “Jesus” you believe in really look like?

Romans 10:1-21

10:1 *Brothers, the good will of my heart and prayer to God on their behalf (is) for salvation.*

Do prayers for another person's salvation make a difference? That is, should we pray for the lost? Is it God's will that they be saved? Is it Paul's will that they be saved?

10:2 *For I testify for them that they have a godly zeal, but not according to insightful knowledge.*

¹tn “zeal” followed by the objective genitive, “zeal for God.”

²tn “they have” Durative present.

³tn “*knowledge*” The meaning is “accurate knowledge.” The preposition compound is directive. The NASV translates as “enlightened.”

Q. “They have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened” (NASV). Describe the difference between “zeal for God” and “faith” (cf. 9:32). What is this “enlightened knowledge?” How can we get it? If the Jew - who had Scripture - missed this, what about us? These Jews are the same people as in verse 1, they are zealous for God, yet they’re not saved! Is it possible to be religious - to have the right religion - yet not be right with God?

A. Apparently.

10:3 *For being ignorant with respect to the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted to the righteousness of God.*

¹tn “*seeking to establish*” (present active participle) “to seek, to search for, to try to,” used with the infinitive. The present participle emphasizes the continuing search, and indicates a deliberate and sustained intention, reflecting their zeal. LEK

²tn “*to establish*” (aorist active infinitive) “to cause to stand, to establish.” It means to cause to stand erect as a monument raised, not to God’s glory, but to their own. Complementary infinitive to the main verb.

³tn “*their own*” “own, individual, mine.” It indicates their own uprightness sought by deeds of the Law. LEK

⁴tn “*submitted*” “to put oneself under orders.”

Q. What is the difference between “*seeking to establish one’s own righteousness*” and seeking to live a holy life by faith (“*submitting to God’s righteousness*”)?

A. First, we can never establish our own righteousness. See if you can make a list of self-righteous deeds by examining the outward trappings of the Jews. How did they justify themselves to God? Here is a start:

- Vestments/uniforms
- Formalized structure (educational degrees, schools)
- Traditions
- Theological systems
- Books (Commentaries, etc.)
- Missions
- Hierarchy of spiritual leadership
- Tithing
- Prayer books
- Belief in inerrancy

Q. What is “*The righteousness of God?*” How come *faith* grants it? Obviously, faith does not make us righteous - only the blood of Christ can do this, but

faith is counted (reckoned) to us for righteousness by God. What is it about faith that does this? Do you think the “works-righteous” Jew would say he has no faith?

A. “Faith” is when we ask God to conform us to His will. It is trusting Him to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Faith is one of those pregnant terms with an embedded meaning. For example, Wallace writes:

The [syntactical] evidence suggests that, in Luke’s usage, saving faith *includes* repentance. In those texts which speak simply of faith, a “theological shorthand” seems to be employed...Thus, for Luke, conversion is not a two-step process, but one step, faith - but the kind of faith that includes repentance. (GGBB, 289)

Q. Put yourself in Israel - 3,000 years ago, just before David becomes King. Your Bible is the Pentateuch (Gen-Deut; no Pslams, no major or minor prophets, etc.). What does God expect from you? Where is the “righteousness of God” in the Pentateuch?

A. Faith is expressed through love for God. (Cf. Dt 6:5; Matt 22:34-40). How could they have missed this?

10:4 *For Christ is the completion of the Law, resulting in righteousness to everyone who believes.*

tn “to everyone who *believes*” Substantive participle used to emphasize a quality. The singular emphasizes the individual nature of the belief. Dative of advantage.

Q. What does it mean when Paul writes that “*Christ is the end of the Law?*”

A. The Greek word *telos* could mean Christ is the *goal* [i.e. fulfilment] of the Law, not temporally, but directly and teleologically. Or it could mean Christ is the *end* of the Law temporally. Or it could be a combination of both meanings. (LEK) How you take *telos* will influence your interpretation. I translate this as, “*Christ is the fulfillment of the Law,*” meaning the Law is no longer needed, its purpose being met in Jesus. Christ fulfilled the Law for us. He performed it, and is the end of our need to fulfill it perfectly ourselves. His death is a perpetual Day of Atonement for us. We go to Him instead of the Temple. We repent/confess instead of shedding blood. We strive to love God and walk by the Spirit.

Q. What “*Law*” is Paul talking about?

- Levitical Law - the ritualistic Law of the Temple (Lev 18:5 in Rm 10:5)
- Israel’s social/legal code (government)
- Ten Commandments (basic morality), or

- The entire Old Testament (The Law & the Prophets)

A. The Levitical Law is definitely included, and is the most obvious (Hebrews).

Q. What about the social/moral/legal law? Is it OK to get a tattoo? How about eating a baby goat boiled in its mother's milk? Or, mixing fabrics in clothing? Is adultery now OK? Murder? Covetousness? How do you deal with these issues and the Law? Do we follow the Ten Commandments?

A. A person does not go to hell for breaking the ten commandments, because this implies keeping them gets one to heaven. The ten commandments, like all law, has been designed to reveal our hearts. If you've been trying to be righteous by keeping the Law, stop it! Jesus fulfilled the Law for you. Your part is to become His disciple.

When Jesus was crucified the entire Levitical system became obsolete, and in 70 AD the Roman army destroyed the Temple. It is as though God said, "*The tutor (i.e. Law) has been laid off! Now what are you going to do?*"

10:5 *For Moses writes with respect to the righteousness of the Law, The man who does these things shall live by them."*

¹tn "writes" Historical present, used to describe a past action more vividly.

²tn "who does" (aorist active participle) Substantive participle. The aorist participle emphasizes the logically antecedent action to the main verb ("*shall live*").

Notice that the Law does have a "*righteousness*" of its own, a defined list of divine expectations. The Law is truly righteous in itself, but it's a righteousness that man can't live up to. However, if we love God, He will help us work through our failures. He provides atonement and propitiation, plus the power to resist sin when we avail ourselves of His help.

The standards in of the Law would forever keep Israel a culturally isolated people (i.e. food, clothing, ceremony, holidays, etc.). This distinction was important up to, and including, the earthly ministry of the Messiah, and it remains important through the Millenium. Israel must maintain her distinctiveness. The Law keeps Israel distinct and separate culturally and ethnically, but the Law is not required for righteousness. Israel remains zealous for her heritage as represented in the Law. In support of this concept, prophecies regarding Israel as a nation cannot be fulfilled if Israel ceases to be a nation.

Romans 10:5 is the description of a person who lives out of a book (Lev 18:5). When this person has a decision to make they go to the Rule Book. The Man of Faith goes directly to God.

Q. What would happen to your relationship with God if the Bible was permanently removed from your life? Who, in Romans, does this situation describe?

A. Abraham. Paul addressed this earlier in Rom 7:6. Can you describe your life without the Bible (not that the Bible itself disappears, but *your* Bible disappears). What would it look like? Maybe this is one of the reasons Christian groups down through time developed many different, even strange, beliefs.

10:6-7 (6) *But the righteousness of faith speaks like this, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who shall go up into heaven?’” That is, to bring the Messiah down. (7) Or, “Who shall go down into the abyss?” That is, to bring up the Messiah from the dead.*

¹tn “Do not say” Aorist active subjunction with the negative is used as a prohibition to forbid the beginning of an action.

²tn “to bring down...to bring up” Aorist active infinitive used to express purpose.

Read Deuteronomy 30:1-20. This chapter gets at Paul’s point by setting the context of the passage he cites.

I think the dilemma presented here is this: *“If the Law is no longer the rule of life, then how can we make decisions about life? We need someone to tell us what to do. If not the Law, then give us the Messiah.”* Paul’s response is: *“Well, guess what? You’ve got the Messiah.”*

Q. Why does faith not talk like this?

A. Because faith is about trusting God to lead us. Paul has already introduced this in Rom 7:6; 8:13-14.

This wording is difficult for me to follow. I think this OT scripture must have taken on a life of its own, and developed an idiom-like meaning. Let me summarize what I think Romans 10:6-8 means:

Do not say, “I need to go to heaven to find the Messiah,” or “I need to go into the abyss to find the Messiah.” The Messiah is closer than you think - only a confession away.

If I am correct, Paul is not *interpreting* Dt 30:12-14. He’s making an *application* of a well-known principle. (Paul’s quotation is a loose rendering of the LXX, it is not an exact quote. Paul does this often.) Remember, there is only one correct *interpretation* of Scripture (which we may or may not discover), but there are many *applications*. What we have here is an *application*. We are stuck with interpreting the application of an interpretation. That is never easy!

As a way of bringing out Paul's meaning, I am reminded of a scene in the Wizard of Oz. It is a conversation between the good witch and Dorothy, where Dorothy is trying to get home to Kansas.

The good witch says something like, *"You could have always returned to Kansas, Dorothy. Just click your red ruby slippers together and make home the desire of your heart."*

*I wanna go home
I wanna go home
I wanna go home*

Or, if Paul was talking to Dorothy, he might say, *"You could have always come to God, Dorothy. Simply put your trust in Him and make His will the desire of your heart."*

Paul's Point: For *faith*, look no further than your own heart.

10:8 *But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart." That is, the word of faith which we are preaching.*

tn "word of faith" Objective genitive, it is the gospel message concerning faith. LEK

Q. How simple faith?

A. The Greek for *word* (rhama) means, *"what is said, saying; event, happening."* It is used in contrast with *"for Moses writes"* in v 5. It is as though Paul said, *"The act of faith is not difficult, you don't have to go find it, you don't even have to read it. It is near you, in your mouth and in your heart."* It is not a matter of more knowledge, rather it is about the decision to trust Christ. The difference Paul draws is between following a written code and following a Savior.

10:9-10 Introductory comments:

Q. One question that has always bothered me is this: How can a person's destiny depend on my obedience to share the Gospel? Seems unfair. What if I don't do my part?

A. I do not have a complete answer for this. However, Romans 10:9-10 may not be an admonition to preach indiscriminately. The sending of preachers is supernatural (Matt 9:37-38), and the *"they that hear"* are those who *"believe."* Paul's Macedonian vision is a great example of preachers being sent to the right people. Also, the story of how the Spirit of Jesus prevented Paul from preaching in Northern Galatia illustrates that the "Romans 10:9-10 type-

of-preaching” may be talking about God-led service only. If this is correct, then we should pray, *“Lord, use me. Show me who to give the Good News to.”*

10:9 *That if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord (YHWH), and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.*

¹tn *“If...”* Used with the subjunctive in a 3rd class conditional clause assuming the probability of the condition.

²sn *“confess”* The term means, “to agree, to confess, to proclaim.” As a judicial term, the word indicates the binding and public declaration which settles a relationship with legal force. LEK

Q. What is the meaning of “Lord” in v 9?

A. It’s who Jesus is that’s important. In this text Jesus is YHWH. (Paul is writing with the OT in the background.) “The confession is the acknowledgment that Jesus shares the name and the nature, the holiness, the authority, power, majesty, and eternity of the One and only true God.” LEK

Q. Do we confess the FACT of His Lordship, or our COMMITMENT to His Lordship?

A. This brings up the difference between “Easy Believism” and “Lordship Salvation.” Lordship salvation equates *discipleship* with being a *Christian*. The two terms are synonymous. “Easy believism” teaches that discipleship is optional, that you can have Jesus as Savior, but not have Him as Lord. This is a theological “hinge.” Your interpretation of Scripture and your walk with God will be impacted by what you believe. It is a true “Y” in the road of sanctification.

Q. Why is it important to believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead? Why didn’t Paul say, “If you believe that Jesus died for your sins on the cross you shall be saved?”

A. This is theological shorthand for the Gospel. Paul mentions the resurrection as an indicator for the rest of the message.

10:10 *For it is believed with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and it is confessed with the mouth, resulting in salvation*

This verse shows us what God is after: An act of the heart, followed by an act of the will.

10:11 *For the Scripture says, “Every one who believes in Him shall not be ashamed.”*

This verse contains a quote from Is 28:16, the “stumbling stone” passage mentioned earlier in 9:33.

10:12 *For there is no difference - Jew and Greek - for (He is) the same Lord of all, being rich toward all those calling on Him.*

tn “call on” Present, middle (deponent), participle. Middle, “to call upon for aid,” often used in calling on a Deity. BAGD

Q. “*There is no difference*” in regard to what?

A. Righteousness by Faith.

10:13 *For everyone (whoever) should call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

tn “everyone who should call” Subjunctive with the indefinite relative clause, “whoever,” “all who call.”

Q. Does “everyone” mean “everyone?” Is this offer of salvation by faith available for all people? That is, was the faith Abraham had available to emperor Nero, Judas Iscariot, and Alexander the Silversmith?

A. This is another theological “hinge.” Your answer will affect everything, even your concept of what God Himself is like.

10:14 *How then may they call on (One) in whom they have not believed? And how may they believe Him of whom they have not heard? And how may they hear without one preaching?*

¹tn “may they call...may they believe...may they hear” These are deliberative subjunctives used in rhetorical questions. Paul wants them to think about what he’s saying.

²tn “one preaching” Substantive participle used to indicate a necessary trait. LEK

Paraphrased: “*How can someone call on a person they do not know exists? And how can they know He exists if they don’t get the right information? And how can they get the right information, unless someone who knows decides to show them?*”

Try reversing this text: *Preaching* means hearing, *hearing* means believing, *believing* means *calling on Jesus*.

Q. Is preaching a pre-requisite for salvation according to this verse (and v 17)? It looks like it to me, but this poses a tough question: Must people hear the Gospel to be saved? One help, though not a solution, is that Bibles and tracts have replaced preachers in part. At least in America. The meaning of this passage is modified by the invention of the printing press (1644). My own life is

a good example. I started my journey by reading the Gospel of Matthew. However, it was a preacher by the name of Mel Tari that brought me to that significant turning point. A book cannot pray for you, lay hands on you, anoint you with oil, or baptize you. Preachers do these things. So then, missionaries are not optional to the Great Commission. Having a “good heart” is not enough to bring salvation.

V 18 seems to run in the opposite direction of Vv 14-15, 17. See v 18 for an explanation.

10:15 *And how may they preach unless they should be sent? As it is written, “How pleasant (are) the feet of those preaching good news of good things.”*

¹tn “*may they preach,*” “*should be sent*” Deliberative subjunctives.

²tn “*pleasant*” Originally, seasonable, ripe, timely; then beautiful, fair, lovely, pleasant. BAGD

³tn “*those preaching*” Substantive participle to describe a durative trait.

Q. Who sends preachers to preach? What are the prerequisites? (cf. Nah 1:15; Is 52:7)

A. See Lk 10:2; Matt 9:38. Also, 1 Thess 2:1-11, especially v 4.

The Gospel means good news! If what you hear being preached is not good news, then it is not the Gospel. The Gospel is the message of hope - hope for a lost world, hope for forgiveness, hope for heaven, and a future unlike the past.

The good news is given in vv 9-13. This must be true at face value.

10:16 *But not all have obeyed the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our report?”*

¹tn “*has believed*” Constative aorist used to describe the state of Israel’s belief.

²sn “*Obeyed*” - “to listen to, to obey in the sense of giving credence to.” The word implies the idea of voluntary submission. LEK

“*Not all have obeyed the good news.*” Historically, this has always been the case (cf. Is 53:1). Actually, in my experience, I would say, “*Most have not obeyed the Gospel.*” This text tells us what kind of a response we should generally expect when presenting the Gospel.

10:17 *Consequently, faith (is) from hearing, and hearing (is) through the word of Christ.*

¹tn “word of Christ” Objective genitive or genitive of content. The message which has Christ as its object or content. LEK

²tn “word” (Gr, rhama) “that which is spoken.”

What is “the Word of Christ?” Here are some options:

- Matt - John (Red letter edition.)
- The New Testament (Requires an act of faith, especially regarding the authenticity of Paul.)
- The whole Bible (Requires an act of faith in God’s sovereignty. The Bible is His business.)
- Inspired teaching, preaching and conversation

There is an important application here: Preachers need to be led by the Spirit, and speak up for God. What about the rest of us?

10:18 *But I say, surely they have not heard? On the contrary, “Into all the earth their musical sound has gone out. And into the limits of the inhabited earth, their words.”*

tn “on the contrary” Used in questions expecting the answer “no.”

This verse answers the question, “What about those who have never heard?” That is, the accusation goes, there are people who have never been given the opportunity to put faith in God. Paul’s answer is that there is no one like this (cf. Rom 1:18).

Q. What exactly is this “sound” (their words) that has gone out into all the inhabited earth? And, who are “they?”

A. The Greek word refers to “sound, the vibration of a musical instrument.” There is something about creation that is divinely beautiful - music-like. Psalms 19:4 (look up the context). The point is that people must respond to the spiritual light God gives them if they expect God to give them more.

Lesson: If a person does not respond to the light of Psalm 19 (cf. Rom 1:18), they will not respond to the Gospel. If they reject the witness of general revelation, they will reject the witness of special revelation. If they reject God as Creator, they will reject God as Savior. God is not obligated to bring people the Gospel who reject Him at a less informed level.

10:19 *But I say, surely Israel did not know? First, Moses says, “I will provoke you to jealousy by (one) not a nation. By a nation without understanding I will anger you.”*

Q. What is it that Israel did not know?

A. They did not know the Gospel would look like it did.

Q. Why did God intentionally make Israel “angry!” What is He after?

A. God wants Israel to repent and to love Him. Therefore, His plan is to make them jealous, to get them to say, “Someone else is going to walk away with our prize if we don’t get right with God.” Gentiles are described as “a people without understanding.” We foreigners (who know less than nothing in the eyes of the Jews) are in love with their Messiah. This is something of a spiritual slap in the face to Israel.

The problem? Here is a people (Israel) who did not realize what they had in God. They did not appreciate the God who called them, and they were not in love with Him.

10:20 And Isaiah is very bold, and he says, “I was found by those not seeking Me, I became visible to those not asking for Me.”

tn “very bold” The preposition compound is perfective; that is, “to carry daring to its limit.”

Q. What’s “very bold” about what Isaiah said?

A. Isaiah was willing to take a great risk, to take his life in his hands, and speak the truth about Israel’s unfaithfulness to God. He knew this would rile them up. There is a reliable tradition that Isaiah was sawn in two for his preaching.

Q. How did Gentiles, who were not seeking God, find Him?

A. Christian Jews brought the Gospel to the Gentiles.

God must take the initiative in salvation. This verse describes my experience with God. One day when I was about 19, He just showed up.

The words “*I became visible*” is an interesting statement. In contrast to the Greeks and Romans, Israel had no “image” that they worshipped. They did not have an idol. YHWH was the invisible God, though Jesus changed all that.

10:21 But to Israel he says, “All day long I have reached out My hand to a disobedient and argumentative people.”

tn “disobedient and argumentative” Present active participle, “disobeying and arguing.”

“All day long I have reached out My hands to a disobedient and argumentative people...” What does this look like in real life? Can those opposed to God be

described as a *disobedient and argumentative people*? This text teaches us some things about God and man:

- God is patient;
- God is genuinely interested in our welfare (He's not pretending to care, He really is offering His love to the world);
- God actively seeks us by reaching out to us. (This looks different for each person. It is a custom conversation - one-on-one with God. Rom 1:18. Divine appointments, and coincidences, convictions of the Holy Spirit, consciousness of sin, etc.);
- God's will can be, and is, resisted by human will (God does not override human will);
- The problem is not a lack of, or too much, information, but a lack of the will to love God.

Romans 11:1-36

Study Notes (*In process*)

11:1 *Therefore, I say, God has not pushed away His people, has He? May it never be! For I also am an Israelite from the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.*

¹sn "*pushed away*" LEK: "Used in the LXX where the thought of God's rejection of Israel was entertained, but with the assurance that He has *not* or will not reject His people." (335) This is only a partial truth. God will not abandon the nation of Israel because of His promise to Abraham. However, He has rejected scores of individual Israelites.

²tn "*May it never be!*" Aorist, middle (deponent), optative. Used in the expression to strongly deny a false conclusion; "Certainly not!"

³tn "*to push away*" The word means, "to repel"; mid. "to push away from oneself," "to reject," "to repudiate."

Q. Is God through with Israel?

A. No! Paul says, "I am an Israelite, and He did not push me away!" God is not through with Israel, because the promise to Abraham is unconditional and is yet to be fulfilled. This text argues against covenant theology. Covenant theology has it backwards. Israel's remnant is not subsumed into the church, rather, the Gentile church is appended to the Israel of God. We join them, they don't join us.

11:2 *God did not push away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says about Elijah? As to how he pleaded with God against Israel,*

¹tn "*about Elijah*" Literally, "in Elijah"; a rabbinic method of quotation denoting "in the passage of Scripture which contains the history of Elijah." LEK

²tn “*he pleads*” Present, active, indicative. The historical present vividly describes the action as in progress.

“*Foreknew*” - “to know beforehand.” (LEK) Paul is thinking something like this, “Because we don’t have foreknowledge it’s easy to miss the big picture. This happened to Elijah (v. 3).” God’s plan for the nation of Israel is about the believing remnant, and there is always a remnant. This is what Elijah did not know. It’s easy - and popular - to romanticize Israel. Big mistake. Morally, they are no different than the Gentiles. The difference is in their national origins. Israel has a special calling.

11:3 *“Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have dug down your altars, and I am left alone, and they seek my soul.”*

Q. This verse describes persecution. If you lived in a culture that aggressively sought to wipe out Christianity - one that uses violence - and you thought you were the only believer left, how would you respond?

Q. Why would the Israelites want to erase YHWH from their culture?

A. The Law. They did not want to be told how to live.

11:4 *But what does the oracle say to him? “I have kept for myself 7,000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.”*

¹tn “*Oracle*”: The word emphasizes localization. If we understand the word correctly, Elijah went to a specific place and used a specific means to communicate with God.

²tn “*for Myself*” Reflexive pronoun. Dative of advantage or personal interest. “It emphasizes the thought that the remnant is preserved by God Himself for His own gracious purpose.” (Gifford, LEK) But this goes too far, by reading into the reflexive pronoun individual, particular election.

Q. Is there an application in the definition of “oracle” that relates to prayer? Is there something we can use in this verse?

Q. How is the remnant identified? What is the lesson here?

A. They are not idol worshippers. The remnant practices “Lordship” faith (i.e. a willingness to suffer persecution and obey God regardless of the consequences).

11:5 *Therefore, thus also, at the present time a remnant according to the election of grace has come into being.*

tn “*has come into being*” Perfect, active, indicative. Perfect indicates an original action (God’s choice of Israel) establishing a situation which still pertains. God’s original choice of Israel still holds true into the present time, precisely because it was an election of grace. LEK Again, this goes too far. The election of grace is based on those whom God foreknew (11:2).

Q. How is the “*selection of Grace*” made? Of works? No. For no known reason? No. What, then, is the reason?

A. Reformed theology makes the answer elusive - “only God knows.” Paul would probably say, “The answer is as obvious as your nose! Faith!” Just because the word “faith” is not used in v 5 does not mean we get to leave the concept out of our interpretation! “*The just shall live by faith*” is the major theme of Romans.

Q. Does this help explain why there is only a remnant? Where does the remnant come from?

A. Most people accept God, but only on their own terms. Only a few accept God on His own terms. These few are the remnant.

Q. Is McDonald right in his statement concerning the remnant? Is the remnant decided by divine decree, or human choice? (See his notes on vv 5-6).

Q. How was the selection of grace made in Elijah’s day (cf. V 4)?

A. It is based on Lordship, worship, and devotion to the One true God. The same criterion identified in v 4 applies to the selection of grace in v 5 (i.e. not bowing the knee to idols).

11:6 *And if by grace, no longer from works, since grace would no longer be grace.*

¹tn “If...” Introduces a 1st class conditional clause which assumes the reality of the condition.

²tn “by grace” Instrumental dative.

³tn “grace” Predicate nominative without the article stresses the character. “Grace ceases to show itself as that which according to its nature it is; it becomes what according to its essence it is not.” LEK

Q. Was *selection* “once-upon-a-time” by works? (i.e. Is this the meaning of “*No longer*”?)

A. Yes, in the sense of Rom 7:6 and 10:4. The “tutor” (Law) was an instructor of righteous works. Grace in Christ makes the sacrificial system obsolete. Under the Law sacrifices were required for the remission of sins. Under grace no sacrifices are required due to the cross. However, faith (including repentance) is required in both.

11:7 *What then? What Israel is seeking, this it did not attain, but the elect attained (it), and the rest were hardened.*

tn Ingressive Aorist: “they became hardened.” Theological Passive: “they were hardened by God.”

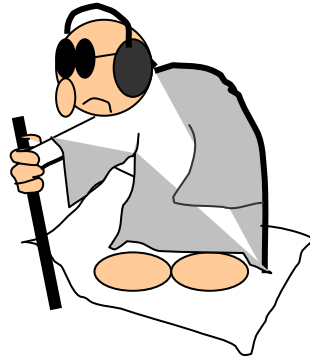
Q. “*What then?*” What happened that caused only a minority to believe in Christ, but the majority to reject Him?

A. “*That which Israel is seeking*” was righteousness, but from a “works” perspective (cf. 9:30-31; 10:3). These are the majority. In this verse they are “*the rest*” who God hardened. The hardening process is described in vv 8-10. “The elect” in this context are “believing Jews” (much like “7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal” in Elijah’s day).

11:8-10 (8) *As it is written, “God gave to them a spirit of deep sleep, eyes to not see, and ears to not hear, until the day which is today.”* (9) *Also David says, “Let their table be for a snare and for a net and for an offense and for a payback to them,* (10) *Let their eyes be darkened to not see, and let their back be bent over in everything.”*

tn “*the day which is today*” This is idiomatic for “*until this very day.*”

(Compare Deut 29:4; Is 29:10; Ps 69:22-23.)



- (V 7) “To harden, to cover with a thick skin, to harden by covering with a callous.” (Theological passive, “They were *hardened by God.*”)
- (V 8) “*Ears to not hear.*” Infinitive of result. God took away their understanding.
- (V 8) *Stupefaction*: Derived from the verb meaning “to strike or pick violently,” “to stun.” The Hebrew expression behind this denotes a spirit of deep sleep, and in Is 29:10 it denotes a state of spiritual insensibility. Genitive of description or subjective genitive, “a spirit which produces stupefaction.” It is as though God shot Israel with a stun gun, or put them on a potent drug.
- (V 9) *Table*: The original imagery is that a skin or cloth was spread out on the ground and the food placed upon it, but the cloth could entangle the feet of those eating if they suddenly sprang up at the approach of danger. LEK

- (V 8, 10) *Eyes to not see (v 8). Let their eyes be darkened to not see (v 10).* Infinitives of result. The thought is to make it so they do not or cannot see. (Ingressive Aorist, “to become dark.”)
- (V 10) *Let their back be bent over in everything.* “To bend together, to bow down,” as of captives whose backs were continually (constantly) bent under burdens. The idea is, “May their backs be always weak and feeble under the burden that they bear.” (Fitzmyer, 607)

Q. Why did God do this to Israel (Rom 11:7-10)?

A. It is a principle of faith: God always hardens those who resist His will. No one starts out “hardened.” It is a slow process.

Q. What kind of prayer is David praying?

A. This is called an imprecatory prayer. The term means, “to pray for or invoke evil, a curse, upon someone.”

Q. Should Christians pray this way?

A. I don’t think the N.T. supports this. What do you think justifies such prayers for David?

11:11 *Therefore, I say, they did not stumble in order that they should fall, did they? May it never be! But by their trespass salvation (came) to the Gentiles so as to provoke them to jealousy.*

¹tn “by their trespass” Instrumental dative or dative of cause.

²tn “to provoke to jealousy” Articular infinitive with “eis” used to express purpose, showing divine intention.

³tn A man who stumbles may recover himself, or he may fall completely. The word is used here of a completely irrevocable fall - “to fall and rise no more,” as the sprawling on one’s face puts a runner out of the race.

⁴tn “May it never be!” is “used in a construction emphatically denying a false conclusion.”

“*They did not stumble that they might fall.*” This is addressed to Israel’s national standing with God, not to individual Jews. The Jews who rejected Christ in the first century are long dead and gone. There is only judgment facing them: The White Throne judgment.

The semantics give us two choices: 1) purpose statement, “in order that,” or 2) result clause, “with the result that.” Is it God’s purpose and predetermined will that Israel stumble and fall away permanently; did God do all this (vv 8-10) with the intent and purpose of destroying these people? No! “*May it never be!*” The exact opposite is true. He did this to turn their hearts back. Have you ever put yourself in the place of a Jew? Here are these Gentiles saying to the Jews, “Your Messiah has come and He loves us!”

Q. Why did God harden Israel, and what does this mean concerning freewill? (vv 11-14.)

A. It means that God is genuinely trying to win Israel's heart without compromising their freedom of choice.

11:12 And if their trespass (is) wealth for the world, and their failure (is) wealth for the Gentiles, by how much more their fulness.

The trespass and failure of Israel was their rejection of the Messiah. Israel should be the nation bringing the Gospel to the world (cf. John 4:22). Instead, the church is doing this.

Q. What would have happened if Israel had accepted Christ?

A. The Kingdom of God would have been established (Cf. Acts 3:20). If Israel had accepted Jesus as their Savior, what would the Sanhedrin have done? They would have turned the Temple into a house of prayer (cf. Matt 21:13), opened the doors to the Holy of Holies for all to enter, and stopped blood sacrifice. This is the message of the book of Hebrews. It is the faith Christian Jews believed.

Q. What does "fulness" mean?

A. Perhaps it is the reverse of vv 8-10. Israel will no longer be spiritually blind, deaf, insensitive, and crippled. This verse implies Israel, as a nation, will one day accept Christ. (Cf. 11:24b.) "Fullness" is contrasted with "trespass." The "trespass" was the national rejection of Christ. Therefore, the "fulness" must be the national acceptance of Christ (via the remnant). Israel's restoration to God's intended plan will bring great blessing to the whole world.

11:13 Now to you Gentiles I speak. Inasmuch as I am an Apostle of the Gentiles, I glorify my ministry.

"Now I speak to you Gentiles." Paul speaks to Gentiles about Israel from v 13 to v 36. He explains what their attitude should be toward the Jews, and what they can expect God to do. Keeping this in mind helps interpret some tough concepts.

Q. Is Paul writing this portion of Romans to gentile Christians or gentile unbelievers?

A. Such a question would not usually be asked. However, the teaching of eternal security is at risk if one believes Paul is writing to Gentile believers. McDonald makes this point:

The apostle here addresses the **Gentiles** (11:13-24). Some think he is speaking to the Gentile Christians in Rome, but the passage demands a different audience - that is, the Gentile nations as such. It will greatly assist one to understand this passage if he sees Paul as speaking of Israel nationally and of **the Gentiles** as such. He is not speaking of the church of God; otherwise we face the possibility of the church's being cut off (11:22), and this is unscriptural.

This is another example of dishonest scholarship. The most natural reading of the text presents Paul as writing to Gentile Christians. The problem this creates for eternal security is fatal.

“Inasmuch, or On the basis of such,” Because Paul is an apostle to the Gentiles, and God is using the faith of the Gentiles to reach Israel, he glorifies his ministry. God sent Paul to the Gentiles, but this did not diminish God's love for Israel (9:4; 10:1).

Q. What does *“I glorify (or “magnify” NASV) my ministry”* mean?

A. Paul intends to make his ministry to the Gentiles as big and noticeable as possible. This is the quickest and most effective way of reaching Israel for Christ (which is on Paul's heart).

11:14 *If somehow I may provoke to jealousy my flesh, and will save some of them.*

tn *“If somehow...”* The use of the participle with purpose or aim is a kind of indirect discourse and indicates hesitant expectation.

Listen to how Paul talks! Whatever you believe about God, it should produce this evangelistic perspective. That is, Paul is trying to persuade the Jews. He is trying to save some of them.

Q. How does this text help us witness to the Jew?

A. We should tell them what their Messiah did for us, and how He's given us His love and mercy.

Q. Is Paul being disrespectful toward God's sovereignty? Is this persuasion real? Is this really what's happening? That is, are Jews changing their minds about Christ because of Paul's efforts?

A. This text helps define sovereignty. It was sovereignty that created choice. Sovereignty works with persuasive forces like jealousy and reason. Paul's hope is that some (individual Jews) will be saved, and acknowledge Jesus as their

Messiah. There is no hint here that he expects every single Jew will be saved (though that is clearly what he desires).

11:15 *For if their casting off is reconciliation for the world, what (will be) the reception, except life from the dead.*

At some point in the future, Israel, as a nation, will be restored to God. This implies a national turning. Whatever else this text means, it refers to a greatly improved situation for both Jews and Gentiles. The restoration of Israel initiates the restoration of all things.

Q. Was Israel's national restoration in 1948 this reception?

A. As amazing as 1948 is, it could not have been this. Israel is not restored to God, and so far their existence has produced little good news!

11:16 *Now if the first-portion (is) holy, also the lump. And if the root (is) holy, also the branches.*

Q. What does this mean?

A. "First portion" (i.e., the first portion offered to God) and "root" are parallel (as is "lump" and "branches"). I think this is referring to the legitimacy of the promises of God to Abraham, i.e. "First portion" may reference "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." The "lump" is the nation of Israel with all the attached promises of Rom 9:4. The "lump" is holy (i.e. the nation is "set apart")! The "branches" are holy (i.e. the branches are individual Jews, members of the elect nation, set apart)! Does this include every individual Jew? Yes. Does this mean all get a right-of-passage into the Kingdom of God? No (see v 17). For those who walk like Abraham, the promises/covenants that belong to the "root" extend to the branches (Rom 4:10-17). However, in the next verse many of the branches are cut off. This distinction becomes clear in Rom 11:28.

11:17 *And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were engrafted in them, and you became a co-partaker of the root of the fatness of the olive tree*

¹tn "If..." Indicative with "ei" in a 1st class conditional clause which assumes the reality of the condition.

²tn "were broken off" Theological passive.

Believing Gentiles piggy-back onto existing covenants between Israel and God. The "branches" that were broken off are individual Jews who have been severed from the privileges listed in Rom 9:4. The covenant with the nation is unconditional (because it was made to Abraham), whereas for the individual it is conditional (each person must "walk as Abraham walked," cf. Rom 4:11-12). The branches that were broken off are Jews who rejected Jesus as Messiah.

They are those who stumbled over the stumbling stone (Is 28:16). Those who have rejected Christ and are already dead will never be grafted in again.

It may be that believing Jews and Gentiles come together to form the true Israel of God (not *all* the branches of the olive tree are broken off, and not all the branches of the wild olive tree are grafted). Either this, or only the Jewish remnant is the true Israel of God. I'm still working on this.

11:18 *Do not boast over the branches. And if you boast, you do not bear the root, but the root you.*

tn *“Do (not) boast”* The preposition compound indicates an action unfavorable to its object. The present imperative with the negative indicates either stop an action in progress or do not make the action a habit.

“Do not boast over the branches” That is, do not say, “Look how we Gentiles are getting with the program. What’s the problem with Israel!” Without Israel, the conversion of Gentiles is meaningless. Conversion to what? Our entire heritage is Jewish, including Scripture, the Messiah, the Church, and all covenants and traditions.

Q. Is there any part of your faith where you are not indebted to Israel?

11:19 *Therefore, you will say, “The branches were broken off in order that I might be grafted in.”*

¹tn *“branches”* Without the article, the character is emphasized, “beings who had the character of branches.”

²tn The Gentiles are referenced by singular pronouns (“you” singular, v 18; “I”, v 19). This changes to the plural in verse 25.

Unbelieving Jews were broken off and believing Gentiles were grafted in. All this was by God’s design. However, this does not mean God intended Israel to reject Christ so as to turn His grace on the Gentiles. It was not God’s will that Israel should stumble! Gentiles are not more desirable to God than Jews. Therefore, we should not think there are racial connotations in this text. God, being a just judge, continues to work with both groups.

11:20 *Well enough! They were broken off for unbelief, and you have stood by faith. Do not think high things, but fear.*

tn *“for unbelief”* Dative of cause, “on account of their unbelief.”

Q. What is it that keeps the believing Gentiles from being broken off? A. Faith

Q. What does *“Do not be proud”* (Lit., *“Do not think high things”*) mean?

A. Unless I'm mistaken, the meaning is, "Don't think this can't happen to you!" This is the biblical position. A believer does have the assurance of salvation, but not the confidence taught in Once-Saved-Always-Saved (OSAS or eternal security).

Q. What is the nature of *fear* in verse 20? "Fear" what? (Paul is about to tell us, if you have not already guessed!)

A. Fear being broken off! (v. 21.) This means severed from the covenant, the loss of salvation.

11:21 *For if God did not spare the natural branches, perhaps neither will He spare you.*

tn "If God did not spare" Indicative in a 1st class conditional clause which views the condition as a reality.

One's theology must accommodate this verse! We are talking about individual branches which have been grafted that are now threatened with being broken off! Someone might say, "But I thought once you were grafted in, that's it, you're in for ever!" Not true. What is the threat? The answer is obvious, so obvious I won't bother to say. This is a death blow to the doctrine of OSAS. In his commentary notes, McDonald recognizes this problem. However, his belief in eternal security caused him to make unexpected interpretations.

This expression, **you stand by faith** [v 20], seems to indicate that Paul is speaking about true believers. But that is not necessarily the meaning. The only way in which the Gentiles stood **by faith** was that, comparatively speaking, they demonstrated more faith than the Jews did.

It must be constantly borne in mind that Paul is not speaking of the church or of individual believers. He is speaking about the Gentiles as such. Nothing can ever separate the Body of Christ from the Head, and nothing can separate a believer from the love of God, but the Gentile peoples can be removed from their present position of special privilege. (1726)

The text is clear: "*You stand by faith*" is speaking about true believers. A truth of salvation is that there is no guarantee against ourselves, no excuse or remedy for apostasy.

11:22 *Therefore, behold the kindness and severity of God. On the one hand, on those who fell, severity, but on the other hand, the kindness of God (is) on you, if you remain with the kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.*

tn “*severity*” The word comes from a verb meaning “to cut right off,” “to cut short” and emphasizes an unbending rigor.

Here is the God of heaven and hell, of *kindness* and *severity*. Notice the contingency on faith: “*continue with kindness*” (v 22), and “*do not be proud, but fear*” (v 20). This is another crystal clear text against OSAS.

Q. Why do men experience the severity of God? A. *They have fallen away from God’s kindness (grace).*

Q. How do we remain in “*kindness*”? A. Faith (v 20; 2:4.)

Q. What does it mean to be “cut off?” A. To come under God’s “*severity.*”

11:23 *And also those, if they do not remain in unbelief, will be grafted back in, for God is able to engraft them again.*

tn “*to engraft*” Complementary infinitive.

What is the lesson here? Is the lesson that God will reinstate apostates if they return to God in faith? I think so. This is good news for apostates. If you believe this, it will save you a lot of hopeless worry! The picture is of a person who falls away through unbelief after having been engrafted. (“*And those*” is plural, referring to individuals within Israel.) God can, and will, take them back (cf. The prodigal son).

Q. Is this talking about salvation?

A. Yes, at least I think so. If only the national cohesiveness of Israel is in view, then God’s foreknowledge and plan are imperfect. It would be as though God promised something to Abraham that He later changed His mind about. Such a view renders all of Scripture uncertain - including the forgiveness of sins and resurrection of the body.

The doctrine of eternal security is no more secure than this verse. If eternal security was true (and it is not), then Paul is being very careless in this polemic for the faith. That is, if Paul believed in the doctrines of Calvinism, he would never have talked like this.

11:24 *For if you were cut off from what according to nature is a wild olive tree, and against nature were engrafted into a cultivated olive tree, by how much more shall these, according to nature, be grafted back in to their own olive tree.*

Q. What does a “*wild olive tree*” look like?

A. I would say, “We were cut out of the world of chaos (philosophically, morally, religiously), and grafted into (joined to) the Kingdom of Light (answers, definitions, standards, faith, hope, and love).”

Q. Being grafted into the cultivated olive tree has its corollary: being cut out of the wild olive tree. What does it look like to be *cut out* before we are grafted in?

A. This is the domain of repentance.

11:25 *For I do not wish you to be ignorant, brothers, with regard to this mystery, in order that you might not be in the judgment of yourselves wise ones, because a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the gentiles comes in*

¹tn “to be ignorant” Complementary infinitive to the main verb.

²sn “fulness of the gentiles” It denotes the full number of the elect from among the nations.

³sn Mini-Theme: Be Humble. “Lest you be wise in yourselves” (v 25), “Do not be proud, but fear” (v 20b)

Q. What is “*this mystery?*”

A. The mystery is found in the answer to the question, “*Why doesn’t Israel get with the Messianic program?*” A partial hardening has happened to Israel, and it looks like Gentile believers are wiser, but this is not the case. Once Israel comes to Christ, Jesus will return to set up His Kingdom. This will not happen until Israel embraces Jesus as their Messiah (cf. Matt 23:39). Currently, the partial hardening is still in effect.

Q. Why partial?

A. Because the intent is to provoke Israel to jealousy, to win them over. This approach works well. This is especially true of the 18th century, when many rabbis turned to Christ. Scholars like Franz Delitsch and Alfred Edershiem are numbered among them.

I often wonder how it’s possible for men to believe some of the things men believe. This verse helps explain how that happens - spiritual blindness. In this passage, Paul explains that Gentiles are not intrinsically or spiritually superior to Jews. The reason for Israel’s present circumstance is that they are partially blind.

Q. If God removed the hardening would Israel turn to Christ?

A. Nationally speaking, no. They rejected Christ before the hardening process started. In fact, the hardening is simply a reinforcement of their unbelief in Jesus as the Messiah. God is handling this much like a farmer might handle a chicken-killing dog. He has “tied the dead hen around the dog’s neck.” (The “dead hen” represents Israel’s crucified Savior.) God did this because it is very difficult for Jews to admit they crucified their own Messiah.

Q. What is the “*fullness of the Gentiles?*”

A. My guess is that this refers to the time when all Gentiles that are going to be reached are reached. At this point, the “hardening” on Israel will be lifted. This implies a national revival for Israel at the end of the church age (cf. V 26). A supernatural softening of their hearts is in view here. This does not look possible now because their hearts are still hard.

11:26 *And so all Israel shall be saved. As it is written, “The deliverer shall come from Zion, He shall turn ungodliness from Jacob.”*

sn If “*all Israel*” is interpreted as referring to all believers (as the true Israel of God) and includes believers among the Gentiles (i.e., “*the fullness of the Gentiles,*” in v 25 leads to the “*all Israel*” in v 26), then the term “*Israel*” refers to two different groups of people within the same paragraph (i.e. the hardened nation of Israel in v 26, and the believing remnant of Gentiles and Jews in v 27). I find this interpretation hard to believe.

Q. What does Paul mean by “*All Israel will be saved?*”

A. Technically, it is not possible to get “*all Israel*” together, because most of “*Israel*” is dead and gone. So what does this verse mean?

There are two parts to this answer: the nation and the individual. This may be a reference to Israel being established as a national/political entity. That is, all the borders that God promised concerning the kingdom of Israel (Palestinian covenant) are drawn and Israel will be rescued from her enemies. Is this the possible meaning? Is this a picture of God dealing with the nation (individuals included only as members of the elect nation, as citizens)? This would mean that individual faith and repentance is another issue. V. 28 supports this view. See comments on the next question.

This interpretation touches on dispensational theology, the teaching that national Israel is the vehicle of the coming Kingdom. LEK agrees:

“*All Israel.* It refers to the forgiveness of the whole Jewish people or nation, the whole ethnic group in contrast to the saved remnant of Jews in Paul’s day and ours...The restoration of Israel scattered throughout the Diaspora was a common theme of Jewish expectation...” (338)

Therefore if “*Israel*,” as used here, refers to the elect nation, and those Jews living within it at the time of Christ’s return, then the sentence “*The deliverer will come from Zion*,” refers to the second coming of Christ.

Q. What does, “*He shall turn ungodliness from Jacob*” mean?

A. At the second coming, Jesus will judge and remove all unbelieving Jews from Israel, and forgive the remaining remnant personally and nationally.

11:27 “*And this (is) the covenant from Me to them, when I should forgive their sins.*”

Q. How should we interpret the temporal clause, “*When I shall forgive their sins?*”

A. This undoubtedly refers to the new covenant (LEK, cf. Jer 31:31), and at a minimum refers to forgiveness in the sense of the national the Day of Atonement (national forgiveness). This is in keeping with the context of a national deliverer (Cf. V 26; Is 59:20-21). Romans 11:28 supports this view. However, the new covenant is clearly about personal forgiveness as well, and this is why the second coming will bring judgment against unbelieving Israel and forgiveness for the remnant as national heirs of the Abrahamic covenant.

11:28 *On the one hand (they are) enemies according to the Gospel because of you, but on the other hand (they are) beloved according to the selection because of the fathers.*

tn “*because of you*” means “for your advantage.” (Barrett) The preposition with the accusative is extended to the final cause. However, the semantic blade cuts both ways. The causal clause can refer to unbelieving Jews who are enemies of the Gospel because they are prejudiced against the Gentiles. Perhaps both views are true.

There is a clear distinction in this verse between salvation for the nation, and salvation for the individual. “*Enemies*” individually (with respect to rejecting the Gospel); “*beloved*” corporately (with respect to being Abraham’s descendants). “It points to the rejection of Israel with which Paul is dealing throughout this chapter.” (LEK) This is very different from Israelites, such as Paul, coming to faith in Christ.

11:29 *For the gracious gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.*

tn “*irrevocable*” The field of meaning is, “not to be sorry afterward, not to be regretted, irrevocable of something one does not take back.” BAGD

Q. What does *irrevocable* mean in this context?

A. This verse reads like a spiritual axiom: *The free gifts and calling of God are irrevocable*. However, the context is the Abrahamic Covenant (cf. V 28, *“because of the fathers”*). God has not repented of, nor changed His mind about His gifts and calling regarding the nation of Israel. God did not make a mistake. He knows what He’s doing. His program is still in place and moving forward.

Q. Is v 29 a principle of faith to be applied liberally to our individual lives?

A. Yes. This is what God is like.

Q. Understandably, this text is sometimes used as a support text for belief in eternal security. Is it? Does this verse teach a believer cannot lose his or her salvation? Can *“irrevocable gifts and callings”* be tossed aside?

A. You decide. Be a thoughtful Berean (Acts 17:11)! However, keep in mind what is at stake.

11:30 *For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now you have received mercy by the disobedience of these*

¹tn *“by the disobedience of these”* Dative of cause.

²tn *“you have received mercy”* Theological passive.

Q. Would the Gospel have been preached to the Gentiles if Israel had accepted Jesus as their Messiah?

A. Yes! The work of the cross was universal (v 32). As John the Baptist said in John 1:29, *“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”* However, the presentation of the Gospel would have been much different. After the crucifixion God would probably have closed history. Christ would have returned as judge and set up the Kingdom with the believing remnant (this is what the Apostles were hoping for in Acts 1). Jesus would have reigned as King of the world. The Gentiles would have brought worship and gifts to Jerusalem’s King under these circumstances. However, this did not happen, and we entered the church age for 2,000 years.

Something bothers me about this text. I think it is this: Is this the only reason God offered the Gospel to the Gentiles - to make the Jews jealous! Isn’t there love in His heart for Gentiles as well? This is to misunderstand the text. The world would have been reached through Israel had Jerusalem accepted Christ. However, because they rejected Christ, God is using the church to reach the world. In God’s foreknowledge, this is what He saw, and planned accordingly.

11:31 *So also these (are) now disobedient to your mercy in order that they also might now receive mercy.*

Q. What is this talking about?

A. *“Thus, also, these have now disobeyed your mercy”* means Israel refused to accept God’s mercy which was freely given to the Gentiles. God foreknew this. Israel despised Gentiles. However, this process exposes hypocrisy and dishonesty, leading many Jews to repentance. Furthermore, God hardened Israel to make their hypocrisy more obvious. (Gentiles do not usually need such proof. We know we are corrupt!) The hope is that Israel will turn and receive the same mercy given to the Gentiles on the same terms - faith.

Check out the semantics of the two “nows”! The first “now” is a prerequisite for the second “now.” The first “now” is necessary if self-righteousness and hypocrisy is going to be exposed in those who have it. The second “now” is the happy result of what’s available once this discovery is made. The second “now” is contingent on the first “now.” Israel did not receive mercy before they were hardened (the first “now”), because it was in that state that they officially rejected Christ.

11:32 *For God consigned all to disobedience in order that He might show mercy to all.*

tn *“Consigned”* - “to shut together like a net.” *All* refers to all Gentiles and Israelites. It is a universal net!

No one can be saved for heaven until they first realize they are lost. The subjunctive is used: *“For God consigned all to disobedience [all Jews and Gentiles], in order that all might receive mercy (maybe they will, maybe they won’t).”* Clearly the offer of mercy to the world is universal. And if the offer is universal, then the opportunity for each person to make peace with God is real.

11:33 *O the depth of the wealth and wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable (are) His judgments and untraceable His ways*

¹tn *“O...”* Omega. It is used in exclamations expressing very strong emotion.

²tn *“untraceable”* Literally, “not to be tracked out, incomprehensible, inscrutable.” BAGD

Q. What is God’s plan working to accomplish?

A. Perfect unity between Jews and Gentiles in Christ.

Verse 33 can be paraphrased: *“Who could have ever imagined such a perfect plan? Who would have expected this?”*

Depth of wealth: Available grace, offered to all Jews and Gentiles. (cf. v 32)

Depth of wisdom: Exposing the self-righteousness of Israel by provoking them to jealousy, i.e. to win Israel by offending Israel.

Depth of knowledge: How well God knows the complex problems involved in winning men to Himself.

God's decisions are wise. They are designed to accomplish His will (viz. to legitimately win a Bride, yet be found altogether just).

God's strategy (plan) is a *surprise* on purpose. In fact, "surprise" is necessary for the plan to work. (The cross itself was a surprise. No one saw it coming except the prophets.) His ways bypass all of our expectations and excuses, and we find ourselves suddenly standing heart-to-heart with God. In this place a person's destiny is determined.

"How unsearchable are His judgments and how untraceable His ways." I think this means we do not know how God is working in a person's life. What we do know is this: He is at work and He does want *"everyone to receive mercy"* (v 32). This passage assures us that God is making judgments about men, and He does have a response plan that is potentially in every person's best interest.

11:34 *"For who has known the mind of the Lord. Or who became His co-counselor."*

Q. How close can we get to knowing the mind of the Lord?

A. We can learn quite a bit through Scripture and logging experience with the Holy Spirit.

Q. Who has advised God on how to carry out His plan? Who is His co-counselor?

A. No one! Now be honest: have you ever advised God on what He should do, and how He should answer your prayers? Have you ever asked Him why He doesn't answer your prayers like He should?

11:35 *"Or who previously gave to Him, and it will be reimbursed to him?"*

Who first gave to Him? If man could really be the first to do something for God, he would make God his debtor. (LEK)

This addresses the person who would say, "Look God! Look at all I've done for You! Just look at all the things I've given up, and all the money and time I've given to Your program. You owe me!" God might respond with, "Look at all the air I've made for you! Look at all the food I've given to keep you going. And look at what I've given up - My Son! I'm afraid you have our roles reversed. I don't owe you, you owe Me!"

11:36 *Because from Him and through Him and in Him (are) all things. To Him (be) glory forever. Amen.*

¹tn *through Him* “It refers to the government of mankind. Everything is executed only through Him” (LEK, 338). This interpretation is a total guess. The idea of sustainer seems to fit better.
²tn *“glory”* The term means, “honor, a good reputation.”

All things...

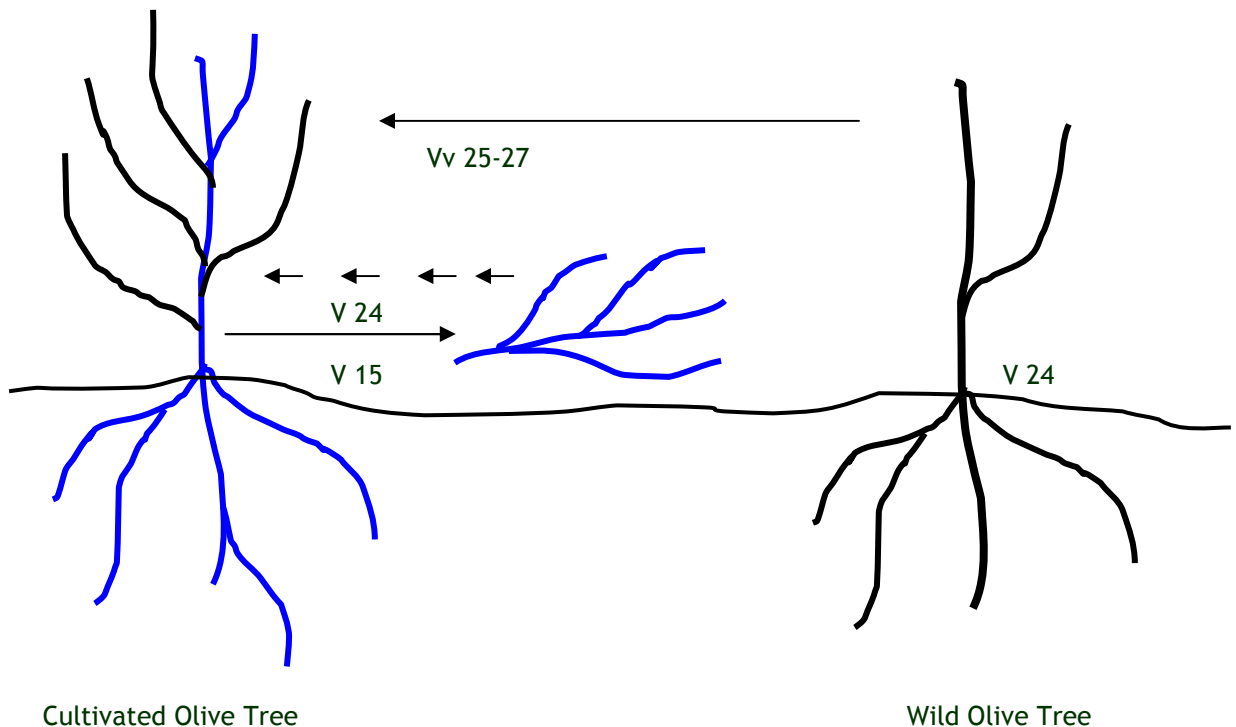
- *From Him* Creator (He made us)
- *Through Him* Sustainer (He holds us together)
- *In Him* Director (He’s carrying out His plan)

“To Him be the glory forever, Amen” Unending praise and worship belongs to God. “It refers to the enhancing of God’s glory and renown by praise, prayer, and thanksgiving.”

11:1-10

ISRAEL HARDENED

11:11-24 GENTILES ENGRAFTED



Romans 9-11 Illustrated

What happened to Israel historically (physical selection), happened within Israel spiritually (spiritual selection). The Jews were getting physical election mixed up with spiritual election.

Romans 9:1-29

An Israel within Israel: The Remnant (9:6, 27)

Romans 9:30-10:21

The Gospel of the Messiah - for all people (10:8, 14-15)

Romans 11:1-36

Israel's Present Circumstance and Hope (11:8-10; 16-20)

