



The Epistle to the Romans

Lesson Number 35



ISRAEL IS NOT TOTALLY REJECTED

11:1 I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. ² God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, ³ "LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life"? ⁴ But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." ⁵ Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. ⁶ And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work. ⁷ What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. ⁸ Just as it is written: "God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see And ears that they should not hear, To this very day." ⁹ And David says: "Let their table become a snare and a trap, A stumbling block and a recompense to them. ¹⁰ Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their back always." (Romans 11:1-10 ^{NKJV})

INTRODUCTION

The nation of Israel is the subject of a remarkable amount of revelation. Beginning with the twelfth chapter of Genesis, the focus of Divine attention is centered on Abraham and his offspring. The Word of God never leaves that focus. Jesus Christ Himself, together with those who are in Him, are the

grandest expression of that concentration.

From the creation of man until the calling of Abraham (then, Abram), approximately 2,100 years passed – about one third of all of time, through the current year of 2001. During that time, as confirmed by various archeological digs, a

significant number of things occurred.

- 3600 Sumerian city-states were in existence.
- 3500 Cuneiform writing system was developed by the Sumerians.
- 3378 The SED Festivals had their origin in Egypt.

The Spirit substantiates to our hearts that Israel has not been totally rejected. Hope remains.--by Given O. Blakely

LESSON OUTLINE

- I. TELLING THE TRUTH (9:1a)
- II. THE WITNESS OF THE CONSCIENCE (91b)
- III. THE COMPULSION OF GODLY CONCERN (9:2)
- IV. THEN CAPACITY OF A HEART IN FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST (9:3)
- V. THE ISRAELITES (9:4a)
- VI. REMARKABLE ADVANTAGES (9:4b-5)

- ❑ 3300 MENES united Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt.
- ❑ 3100 BARAT founded the first Phoenician dynasty. The first Egyptian dynasty was founded.
- ❑ 2686 The third Egyptian dynasty was founded by NEBKA.
- ❑ 2613 The fourth Egyptian dynasty was founded by SNEFERU.
- ❑ 2589 CHEOPS (KHUFU) ruled Egypt for 23 years.
- ❑ 2570 The Great Pyramid of CHEOPS was built at Gizeh in Egypt.
- ❑ 2500 The Hurrians, originating in Armenia, moved into the Near Eastern area, settling in the Euphrates Valley.
- ❑ 2494 The fifth Egyptian dynasty was founded by USERKAF.
- ❑ 2425 The cult of OSIRIS spread over Egypt.
- ❑ 2400 Babylon was ruled by SUMU-ABI.
- ❑ 2344 The Hebrew date of the Deluge, as well as the Chinese date in their "Epoch of Fu-Hi", Babylonian and Egyptian records.
- ❑ 2341 The sixth Egyptian dynasty was founded by TETI.
- ❑ 2286 China was ruled by Emperor YAOU. 6
- ❑ 2285 Babylon was invaded by KUDUR-NANKHUNDI of Elam.
- ❑ 2267 The city of Tyre was built.
- ❑ 2264 The Akkadian Empire was founded by SARGON of Agade.
- ❑ 2250 Babylon was ruled for 55 years by HAMMURABI I.
- ❑ 2181 The seventh Egyptian dynasty was founded by NEFERKARE the Younger.
- ❑ 2180 The Semitic empire of Akkad was overcome by the Guti

- invasion.
- ❑ 2173 The eighth Egyptian dynasty was founded by WADJKARE PEPYSONBE.
- ❑ 2160 The ninth Egyptian dynasty was founded.
- ❑ 2133 The tenth Egyptian dynasty was founded.
- ❑ 2130 The eleventh Egyptian dynasty was founded by MENTUHOTEP.
- ❑ 2060 The third dynasty of Ur was founded.
- ❑ 2020 Mari became independent from Ur
- ❑ 1991 The twelfth Egyptian dynasty was founded by AMMENEMES I.

..... Taken from Ushers Chronology

None of these events are mentioned in Scripture because they had no direct bearing upon the eternal purpose of God. **In a way, they were all incidental.**

PRIOR TO THE FLOOD

Some passing references are made to certain cultures prior to the flood. Cain dwelt in the "land of Nod," and there "built a city" (Gen 4:16-17). Those with expertise in key areas lived in those early times. Tent dwellers and those who handled cattle were present (Gen 4:20). There were those who were adept with musical instruments (Gen 4:21). Craftsmen in bronze and iron existed (Gen 4:22). Men are said to have "multiplied on the face of the earth" (Gen 6:1). "Mighty men," and "men of renown" sprang up throughout the world (Gen 6:4).

AFTER THE FLOOD

By the time of Noah, in the earth's 1536th year, it "was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence" (Gen 6:11). In the flood, "all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died" (Gen 7:21).

Nothing in Scripture remotely suggests that the earth's population at that time

was small. The whole of humanity was so corrupt its only distinction before God was that "all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth" (Gen 6:12), and "the earth is filled with violence through them" (Gen 6:13). The remains of many of the civilizations destroyed in the flood have been discovered. They were remarkably advanced, as attested by many of their works, from tools to cities.

Noah's sons, Ham, Shem, and Japheth, were the progenitors of the "coastland," or "maritime," nations (Gen 10:5). "Languages, lands, and nations" came from them (Gen 10:20). Nimrod formed a "kingdom" (Gen 10:10). Egypt is mentioned as in existence for some time when Abraham headed for Canaan (Gen 12:10-14).

SCRIPTURAL THRUST

Even though socially and politically advanced nations existed prior to Israel, no extended commentary is given of them in Scripture. The rise and development of Egypt is not the focus of Scripture. The impressive empires of Babylon, the Medo-Persians, Greeks, and Romans, are all given very little space in revelation. Even then, they are only mentioned in their relationship to the purpose and people of God. Apart from that, they have no true relevance.

When it comes to nations, God's focus has always been upon the Jews. They are the only ones to whom He gave His righteous law. All of His prophets were primarily for them, testifying to other nations only occasionally, and never primarily. His promises were given to them, and the blessing of the world was to be through them. The vast bulk of Scripture was given to them and

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pertained to them. The details of their history are provided, together with the impact they had upon God. His dealings with them were extensive and prolonged.

It is difficult for me to comprehend how any honest person can read the Scriptures and conclude that God has forgotten the Jews. Indeed, the Holy Spirit is establishing to our hearts in this very passage that nothing can be further from the truth. Because of his closeness to the Lord, Paul is constrained to pray for their salvation (10:1). That, of course, would be the height of absurdity if they had been summarily written off. It is true, there were some generations of the Jews that were cut off. In fact, God told Jeremiah not to pray for the Jewish generation of his day (Jer 7:16; 11:14; 14:11). No such injunction, however, has ever been given concerning the entirety of this nation. God never directed any Apostle to admonish the church NOT to pray for the Jews – even though there have been times when such direction was given to others (Ezek 14:14)! If they had “sinned unto death,” so to speak, all prayer for them would be futile (1 John

leads us to consider this people as a whole. Ponder what He directed Paul to say.

- ❑ With the confirming witness of the Holy Spirit, Paul had great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart over Israel (9:1-2).
- ❑ He was willing to wish himself accursed from Christ for them (9:3).
- ❑ The adoption, glory, covenants, giving of the law, service of God, promises, fathers, and ancestry of Christ belong to them (9:4-5).
- ❑ They were the national womb within which the elect were found (9:6-8).
- ❑ God will have mercy upon whoever He wills (9:15).
- ❑ Salvation is not of him who runs, or of him who wills, but of God who shows mercy (9:16).
- ❑ Concerning Israel, God promised, “*in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God*” (9:26).
- ❑ Isaiah prophesied, “*Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: for He will finish the work, and*

Although men should be able to conclude this from the undeniable emphasis given to them in Scripture, together with the Divine commitments concerning them, flesh is prone to flawed thinking.

The importance of Israel in the grand scheme of things demands that we have a fruitful understanding of them. If we imagine they are utterly hopeless, how will we be able to account for the salvation of the Gentiles, who plummeted even lower than nature allows (Rom 1:26)? If the Lord has completely rejected Israel because they did not believe, how will we be able to explain the Gentiles attaining righteousness, when they sought it not?

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

The matter of God's sovereignty, or absolute independence from the government of others, has already been introduced.

- ❑ God **causes** everything to work together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. “*And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose*”^{NASB} (Rom 8:28).
- ❑ The aim of salvation is traced back to His determination. “*For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified*”^{NKJV} (Rom 8:29-30).
- ❑ God's determination concerning Jacob and Esau was made before they were born. “*And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, *Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated*” (Rom 9:10-13).*
- ❑ Those who experience the mercy and compassion of God do so because of His will. “*For He saith to Moses, I will have*

The reasoning of this chapter is to be seen through the background of chapters nine and ten. After substantiating that the Gospel announces a righteousness that comes from God through faith, the Spirit has confirmed that all men sorely need that righteousness.

5:16). But God has given no such directive, and woe be to that presumptuous person who leaves the people of God thinking He has!

THE BACKGROUND: ROMANS 9-10

The reasoning of this chapter is to be seen through the background of chapters nine and ten. After substantiating that the Gospel announces a righteousness that comes from God through faith, the Spirit has confirmed that all men sorely need that righteousness (chapters 1-3). This includes the Israelites, Paul's “*kinsmen according to the flesh*” (9:32). Beginning with chapter nine, the Spirit

cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth” (9:27-28).

- ❑ Isaiah declared Israel had **not** been destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah, who could never again rise (9:29).
- ❑ Paul's heart's desire and prayer for Israel is that they would be saved (10:1).
- ❑ The Gospel of Christ is God's power unto salvation “to the Jew **FIRST**” (Rom 1:16; 10:14-16).

The Spirit will now establish not only the reasonability of Israel being saved, but the surety of it.

mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom 9:15-16).

- God raised Pharaoh up to display His power in him. "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show My power in thee, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth" (Rom 9:17).
- God has the power to shape people as He desires. "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?" (Rom 9:21-24)
- In strict accord with His purpose, God terminates His works in righteousness. "For He will finish the

work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth" (Rom 9:28).

- God Himself placed Jesus in the world as the Stone – a Foundation Stone for some, and a Stumblingstone for others. "As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed." (Rom 9:33).
- The Lord has provoked Israel to anger

them that sought Me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me" (Rom 10:20).

Whatever one may choose to believe about these affirmations, it cannot be denied that they declare the working of the Lord. They are **not** a declaration of what men did, but what the Lord did! He did these things in spite of the opposition of Satan and the condition of men. All of nature declared that they could not be

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through the Gentiles. "But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you" (Rom 10:19).

- God made Himself known to the Gentiles who did not seek after Him or His righteousness. "But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of

done, yet they were! That is what the Sovereignty of God involves.

Now the Spirit will show how Divine determinations are being brought to bear upon the Israelites. The arguments set before us are powerful, and are designed to bring glory to our God. They are not intended to support man's theology.

HAS GOD CAST AWAY HIS PEOPLE?

^{41:1a} ***I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not!***" Other versions read, "I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be!"^{NASB} "I ask then: Did God reject His people? By no means!"^{NIV} "What I am saying is this: is it possible that God abandoned His people? Out of the question!"^{NJB} "So I say, Has God put His people on one side? Let there be no such thought"^{BBE}

CAST AWAY

To "cast away" is to discard, with no prospect of the status changing. It means to push aside, or reject. It means to get rid of something that is useless and unpleasant, to remove, or throw into the scrap heap. The renown lexicographer, Thayer, says of the word used here, "(1) to

thrust away, push away, repel, 2) to thrust away from one's self, to drive away from one's self, 2a) repudiate, reject, refuse."

This is a status Paul the Apostle feared, and zealously sought to avoid. Therefore he made his body his slave instead of serving it, lest, after preaching to others, he himself should be rejected, or cast away (1 Cor 9:27).

The question is whether or not God has pushed the Israelites away from Himself, never to look toward them again. Has God's covenant with Abraham been abrogated? Are the Jews now utterly hopeless, like the Gentiles were before them? Are the promises made to them no longer applicable to them? Have the Gentiles taken their place? Is that what

God has done?

It should not surprise you that no small number of self-acclaimed teachers say that God has, in fact, totally rejected the Jews. However, we have no regard for them or their flawed words. Rather we will hear what the Lord has said on the matter.

Their House Left Desolate

When Jesus lamented over Jerusalem, He declared He "often" would have gathered its children together under His protective wing. However, they refused, or "would not." Therefore, He said, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." What a saddening announcement! Yet, our Lord did not end there, but left the door of hope open. "For I say unto you, Ye

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shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt 37-39). Luke limited the time of desolation with these words, "until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Luke 13:35).

Nothing in our Lord's words suggest this judgment was permanent. In fact, everything about it suggests a future change in status.

Jerusalem Trodden by the Gentiles

Toward the close of His ministry, Jesus spoke very specifically concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, the end of the world, and His own coming. In those words He included the following concerning the holy city. "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24). The word "until" draws a line of demarcation that cannot be denied.

Rather than unlearned Gentile teachers declaring that God has "cast away" Israel, they should be considering the implications of "the times of the Gentiles" being fulfilled. Some, unwilling to allow the Word of the Lord to shape their thinking, affirm that the fulfillment of the times of the Gentiles is actually the end of the world. Such a postulate, of course, requires an extraordinary imagination. That would make "the day of salvation" a Gentile day, which it is nowhere declared to be. It would also negate the Gospel as the power of God unto salvation to "the Jew first." It would

also make the heart's desire and prayer of Paul for his kinsmen nonsensical.

HIS PEOPLE

The phrase "His people" does not refer to the church, as will be clearly established in the following verses. And, if "His people" does not refer to the church, the only other possibility is Israel. No less than eighty-four times, the Holy Spirit refers to Israel as "His people." No less

eliminating the Israelites, Jesus broke down the middle wall of partition between them and the Gentiles (Eph 2:11-15).

CERTAINLY NOT!

Has God "cast away His people?" Certainly not! God forbid! ^{KJV} May it never be! ^{NASB} By no means! ^{NIV} Far be the thought! ^{DARBY} Let there be no such thought! ^{BBE} Let it not be! ^{YLT} Of course not! ^{NAB} Out of the question! ^{NJB} **The**

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than nine times. They are called "His people Israel" (Judges 11:23; 1 Sam 27:12; 2 Sam 5:12; 1 Kgs 8:56,59; 1 Chron 14:2; 2 Chron 7:10). They are referred to as "a people of inheritance" (Deut 4:20; "the Lord's portion" and "the lot of His inheritance" (Deut 32:9).

God is referred to as "the God of Israel" no less than 203 times! Zacharias' great prophecy of the day of salvation also referred to God in this way (Lk 1:68).

Rather than believing Gentiles replacing the Jews, they are referred to as having been made "fellowheirs" with them (Eph 3:6). This compares with their former status of "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel." Rather than

Spirit does not allow such an absurd conclusion! It is out of place in heavenly places. It is out of order among the sons of men! The mind of the Spirit will not lead men to such a conclusion!

Even though the Spirit has spoken with such firmness, yet multitudes of professed preachers and teachers continue to affirm God **has** cast off "His people." But they are wrong – seriously wrong! In this text, the Holy Spirit will reason extensively on this matter. Paul will aggressively confront the notion that God has cast away Israel, showing from every vantage point how utterly false it is. Men may allow for contrary views on this matter, but God does not! When God has spoken, men must keep silence.

PAUL IS AN EXAMPLE

^{11:1b} **For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.** Before proceeding further, the Apostle presents himself as proof that God has not "cast away His people."

SOME HAVE BEEN CAST AWAY

Keep in mind, there are groups of personalities that **have** been "cast away." Not the least of these is the devil and his angels, for whom the lake of fire is

reserved (Matt 25:41). Not a single one of them has been retrieved! None of their number have been excluded from the curse. Sodom and Gomorrah are another example, who "suffered the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7). None of their number were salvaged. If one imagines that Lot was an exception, let them consider that he was really not a citizen of Sodom, but a "sojourner" (Gen 19:9). The Amalekites are another example, whose

remembrance God blotted from the face of the earth (Ex 17:14; Deut 25:19).

The presence of a remnant proves the whole has not been cast away! Paul will now cite himself as an example of the point being made. He will develop this at length, justifying his heart's desire and prayer for Israel.

AN ISRAELITE

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If Israel has been cast away as a whole, Paul could not have been saved – to say nothing of the other twelve Apostles. He was an Israelite – and he IS talking about his “kinsmen according to the flesh” (9:3). Paul was not a proselyte, or a convert to Judaism. He is not speaking of himself in the spiritual sense, although he was of that spiritual number (2:29; 9:6). By saying “Israelite,” Paul means he was descended from Jacob, or Israel. He also refers to this fact in Second Corinthians: “Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I” (11:22). He also referred to himself as “of the stock of Israel,” and a “Hebrew of the Hebrews” (Phil 3:5).

SEED OF ABRAHAM

In particular, this is the fleshly seed of Abraham, for Paul is confirming that such seed has not been “cast away” by God. He also confessed, “Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I” (2 Cor 11:22). Before his accusers he acknowledged, “I am a man which am a Jew” (Acts 21:39; 22:3). He referred to the Israelites as “mine own nation” (Acts 26:4). All of this was stated in confirmation that his fleshly lineage could be traced back to Abraham.

TRIBE OF BENJAMIN

It is true that some spiritual application could be made of the words “Israelite” and “seed of Abraham.”

Confirming this is not the thrust of his argument, Paul traces his lineage back to the “tribe of Benjamin.” He also refers to this tribal descent in Philippians 3:5.

The tribe of Benjamin only holds distinction in the fleshly lineage of Abraham. It was a very little tribe, and was nearly destroyed in the time of the Judges (Judges 20-21). Christ, as you know, was of the tribe of Judah, not of Benjamin (Heb 7:14). Thus, the salvation of a member of the tribe of Benjamin proves God has “not cast away His people.” This is beyond all controversy! Paul himself was living proof of that, and thus reminds of his own salvation.

GOD HAS NOT CAST AWAY THOSE HE FOREKNEW

“^{2a} *God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew.*” The Spirit will now establish the Sovereignty of God in relation to Israel. He was not caught off guard by the unbelief of the Israelites, nor was He moved into a course of action that contradicted His first and eternal purpose.

In this statement, the Spirit is allowing for the judgment of God against the nation of Israel, and the appointed desolation of their house. However, He is also showing the rejection of the ancient people was not total, nor were they moved beyond the boundary of hope, as was Sodom and the children of Amalek.

GOD HAS NOT

Again, the affirmation is made, “God has not cast away His people!” Having already cited himself as sterling example, the Spirit now moves Paul to be even

more particular.

In order for God to “cast away” the Israelites, He would have to nullify His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen 12:7; 15:5,18; 17:7; 26:3; 35:12). The marvelous promises He gave through the prophets would also need to be abrogated (Isa 1:25-27; Jer 3:18; 31:31-34; Ezek 37:16-22; Hos 2:14-23; Mal 3:4).

WHOM HE FOREKNEW

The matter of God’s foreknowledge was introduced in chapter eight. It is a driving principle in His great salvation. “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren” (8:29). **What form of reasoning would justify the conclusion that some among the decadent Gentiles were foreknown, but none among the Israelites? What**

Divine affirmation will lead one to believe there was line of demarcation in Israel’s history after which God foreknew no more people among them?

The Spirit will now elaborate upon this line of reasoning, showing that there remains a remnant among the Israelites. He will confirm that their present condition does not differ from former times. **The presence of a remnant validates the fact that God has NOT cast away “His people.”** There can be no “remnant” among a people that have been totally rejected!

In the most simplistic terms, we are to understand that God’s choice of Abraham and his seed was undergirded by His foreknowledge. Not only did He see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He also saw those of succeeding generations whom He would conform to the image of His Son.

THE WORD TO ELIJAH

“^{2b} *Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, ³ ‘LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life’? ⁴ But what does the*

divine response say to him? ‘I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.’”

The Spirit now summons a Scriptural incident for our consideration. The point

He is making is that things are not what they seem to be to the flesh. **Seemingly hopeless times do not confirm Divine abandonment!** If men are insistent upon formulating theologies, they should be based upon the Word of God. They should also be seen in the various incidents of

Scripture, and justified by the sayings of God. Remember, this line of reasoning is proving that God *“has **not** cast away His people”*— those He has foreknown among the Israelites.

DO YOU NOT KNOW?

“Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah . . .” One of the great tragedies of our time is the Scriptural illiteracy that dominates the professed church. It has occasioned the spreading of many erroneous and harmful views, not the least of which is the casting away of Israel.

Among other things, this confirms the absolute centrality of Scripture in spiritual reasoning. While it may seem very apparent that this is the case, it is not at all acknowledged in the humanly structured religious thinking of our times. It is not unusual to find *Christian* teachers basing their thinking upon statistics, psychological principles, linguistic expertise, and other forms of human wisdom. Many a discouraged soul regularly hears sermons, and other forms of religious communication, that are solely based upon things not found in Scripture. However, the Holy Spirit will not allow such reasoning. Thinking that is not based upon Scripture is flawed to core. It makes no difference how wise it may appear, if it is not categorically supported by Scripture, it is not to be preached, and it is not to become a foundation for thought or reason. **A contemporary message that puts Scripture into the background is too modern.**

ELIJAH PLEADS AGAINST ISRAEL

“ . . . how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, ³ LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life?” Here is a memorable occasion from the life of one of the singular people of all time. Elijah had just confronted the prophets of Baal in a contest of contests. The purpose was to make known the real God. The times were not the best. The prophet had just passed through a long famine. Wicked Jezebel had *“cut off the prophets of the LORD,”* although

“Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water” (1 Kgs 18:4).

After many days, Elijah confronted Ahab, charging him with troubling Israel with his iniquitous acts, forsaking the commandments of the Lord, and following the idol Baalim. Elijah told Ahab to gather all Israel together, with 450 prophets of Baal, and 400 “prophets of the groves, which ate at Jezebel’s table.” They met on Mount Carmel. The record is found in the eighteenth chapter of First Kings. The outcome of it all was that God was shown to be God, and Baal a dumb god of stone. Elijah personally slew the prophets of

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Baal by the brook Kishon.

Word of the prophet’s exploits got back to Jezebel, and her wickedness erupted. She send this word to Elijah. *“So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time”* (1 Kgs 19:2). Upon hearing this threat, Elijah *“arose and ran for his life,”*^{NKJV} heading for Beersheba (19:3).

After going a day’s journey into the wilderness, prophet of God sat under a juniper tree *“and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers”* (19:4). Some foolish teachers have derided Elijah, charging him with being weak and running at the threat of a mere woman. One might as well fault Paul for *“despairing of life,”* and having *“fears”* within (2 Cor 1:8; 7:5). Rather than rebuking the prophet, the Lord sent an

angel to him, who prepared a special meal for him and sent him on his way to *“Horeb the mount of God”* (19:8). It was there, while in a cave, that Elijah *“made intercession against Israel.”* The account is found in First Kings 19:10.

Our text states that Elijah pled with God *“against Israel.”* Other versions read, *“maketh intercession against Israel,”*^{KJV} *“appealed to God against Israel,”*^{NIV} and *“says words to God against Israel.”*^{BBE} Here are his words. *“I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away”* (19:10). He repeats these exact words again in verse 14. Formerly, when Elijah had challenged the prophets of Baal, he said *“unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal’s prophets are four hundred and fifty men”* (18:22). No one stood with him against the prophets of Baal. At that time, he stood alone. Now, Elijah reminds the Lord of that grievous circumstance.

Notice, Elijah does not speak in a railing manner against Israel. He does not plead with God to destroy them, or even to punish them. What he does do, however, is suggest that the whole of the nation was defiled, and he alone remained. And, it surely appeared to be that way. However, there was more to the circumstance than was seen by Elijah.

THE DIVINE RESPONSE

“But what does the Divine response say to him?” God does not ignore wrong assessments! If He did not with the mighty prophet Elijah, you may be sure He will not with the pretentious theologians of our day.

Ungodliness was prevailing throughout the land. The prophets of God were being slain (1 Kgs 18:4). The altar of the Lord had been torn down, for Elijah had to personally repair it before he could offer a sacrifice to God in the presence of Baal’s prophets (1 Kgs 18:30). But that was not all that had happened. God was

still at work in the land!

We are apprized that Obadiah had taken a hundred holy prophets, hiding them in two groups of fifty in a cave, and sustaining them with bread and water (18:4). Now the Lord reveals an even larger number of men who had not yielded to the worship of Baal.

I HAVE RESERVED FOR MYSELF

"I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." This reference is found in 1 Kings 19:18, which reads, *"Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him."*

This was something the Lord Himself did: *"I have left,"* or *"reserved."* **This was a work of God, not the recognition of**

the work of men! The presence of these men is traced to the activity of the Lord. You cannot account for them in any other way. In fact, the Spirit will found an argument upon this circumstance.

The fact that all of Israel appeared to be totally reprobate by no means suggested that it was. We know of at least 100 prophets that were preserved, and seven thousand persons who refused to abandon God in favor of Baal. This was NOT the result of a statistical analysis. It was a revelation.

Do not miss the significance of this text! Here was a situation unknown to one of the mightiest of all prophets. It was during a time when the people of God were ruled by wicked people: Ahab and Jezebel. The worship of God was not apparent. The prophets of God were not

visible or vocal. The altars of the Lord had been torn down, and the people had launched no effort to repair them. Yet, in the midst of all of this, one godly man found one hundred prophets of God, hiding and sustaining them. Further, God had left seventy times more righteous people than there were prophets, reserving them for Himself.

The Relevance of This Occasion

Men must not be hasty to write off the Israelites, imagining that because a godly remnant is not perceived among them, none exists. The sophists who reason that Israel has been cut off must hear the word of the Lord to Elijah, ponder it, and repent of their ways. Here the mind and ways of the Lord are revealed. This text fairly shouts to men, demanding that they refrain from making judgments that conflict with revelation.

THE ELECTION OF GRACE

"⁵ Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace." Other versions read, *"In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice."*^{NASB} *"So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace."*^{NIV} *"In the same way, then, in our own time,*

His people." There is no room in the Divine vocabulary or purpose for such a thought or expression. Therefore, those who say such things are entirely out of order. Their speech is out of synch with both the Word and purpose of the Almighty.

On a practical note, if God does not

proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge"^{NIV} (Rom 3:4).

We ARE dealing with the sayings of God here. In particular, *"the answer of God"* to Elijah, and the word of the Spirit regarding that answer. I find it exceedingly difficult to understand how men can so blatantly contradict these words, but they do. Of course, that is one of the reasons this strong line of reasoning is being brought to our attention by the Holy Spirit.

AT THIS PRESENT TIME

This expression is not limited to the period during which Paul was writing. Nor, indeed, is the expression *"this present time"* a strange one. It is mentioned two other times (Luke 18:30; Rom 8:18). While it does refer to the immediate time – i.e., right now – it is not intended to mean a fixed point in time. Its use in Scripture lends itself to the idea of ANY point in time. It is as though the Spirit embalms these words in holy writ in order that every generation might read them and apply them to its own time. That is how Jesus used the words. *"Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or*

The fact that all of Israel appeared to be totally reprobate by no means suggested that it was. We know of at least 100 prophets that were preserved, and seven thousand persons who refused to abandon God in favor of Baal. This was NOT the result of a statistical analysis. It was a revelation.

there is a remnant, set aside by grace."^{NJB}

These words confirm that the incident with Elijah revealed a Divine principle, or manner of working. It was not an isolated incident, but indicative of the way in which the Lord moves among people – in particular how He works with Israel. The Spirit has already refused to allow the words or thought that God has *"cast away*

allow for such expressions, neither must we. **The people of God must refuse to allow men to teach that God has abandoned Israel, when He affirms He has not.** It is not a light matter, or a mere matter of opinion. God has spoken on this subject, and no person who contradicts Him will be excused. It is still true, *"Let God be true, and every man a liar. As it is written: 'So that you may be*

The Spirit substantiates to our hearts that Israel has not been totally rejected. Hope remains.--by Given O. Blakely

wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in **this present time**, and in the world to come life everlasting" (Luke 18:29-30). It is also how Paul used the expression in chapter eight of this book. "For I reckon that the sufferings of **this present time** are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (8:18). Neither of these passages remotely suggest that there will ever be a time in this world when the revealed benefits will cease to be. Jesus, for example, did not suggest that a time was coming when the person abandoning all for the sake of the Kingdom of God would no longer receive manifold more in this world, and eternal life in the world to come. Nor, indeed, did Paul intimate that some future period of time would occur in this world when the sufferings being experienced would transcend the glory to be revealed in us.

By the same token, our text does not suggest that the stated condition would cease to be at some future date. Some, failing to see this, acknowledge that a remnant did exist in Paul's day. They affirm, however, that commensurate with the destruction of Jerusalem, the Israelites were summarily cut off, with no hope of recovery. The text before us violently throws that bit of theological nonsense down to the ground, where it belongs!

A REMNANT

The presence of a remnant proves the preservation of the people. Where there is no remnant, there is no people. However, where a remnant exists, a people exist. That is precisely the meaning of Isaiah's words, "Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah" (Isa 1:9). This very passage was mentioned earlier, in chapter nine, together with the promise that a remnant of Israel would be saved. "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: for He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and been made like unto

Gomorrah" (9:27-29).

Our text makes this affirmation: "there is a remnant!" **However, you can have no remnant among a people who have been totally rejected, like Sodom and Gomorrah.** In fact, the "remnant" is often counted as the whole, being the reason for its preservation. It was so in Elijah's day, and it is so "at this present time."

Throughout the history of Israel,

Were it not for the remnant, there actually could be no new covenant. Both prophets and Apostles declare the new covenant is made "with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah" (Jer 31:31; Heb 8:8). Nowhere is it affirmed that this promise was abrogated and the new covenant made with another people – nowhere! **It is the presence of the "remnant" that has allowed for the righteous fulfillment of that promise.**

What is more, the church is NEVER

Throughout the history of Israel, God spoke of a "remnant" within it – a residue that would be blessed. Frequently hope for the people was founded upon the presence of a "remnant."

God spoke of a "remnant" within it – a residue that would be blessed. Frequently hope for the people was founded upon the presence of a "remnant." Ponder these references.

- "The remnant of Israel" (Isa 10:20-21; Jer 6:9; 31:7; Ezek 11:13; Mic 2:12; Zeph 2:13)
- "The remnant of His people" (Isa 11:11,16)
- "The remnant of my flock" (Jer 23:3)
- "the remnant of the house of Israel" (Isa 46:3)
- "The remnant in Judah" (Jer 40:15)
- "the remnant of Judah" (Jer 43:5; 44:12,14,28)
- "The remnant of the house of Judah" (Zeph 2:7)
- "The remnant of Joseph" (Amos 5:15)
- "The remnant of Jacob" (Micah 5:7-8)
- "The remnant of His heritage" (Micah 7:18)
- "The remnant of My people" (Zeph 2:9)
- "The remnant of this people" (Zech 8:12).

These expressions are acquainting us with the ways of the Lord. This is how He works. It is how He has preserved the nation of Israel without condoning its unbelief. This is what allowed the Lord to severely punish Israel without utterly destroying it.

referred to as the "remnant" of Israel. There IS a remnant within the church; i.e., "the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 12:17). Even that reference can be considered a reference to Israel. At any rate, the church itself is never called a "remnant."

THE ELECTION OF GRACE

"... there is a remnant according to the election of grace." Other versions read, "according to God's gracious choice," ^{NASB} "chosen by grace," ^{NIV} "marked out by the selection of grace," ^{BBE} "God's kindness in choosing them," ^{NLT} and "set aside by grace." ^{NJB}

The Spirit now accounts for the presence of the remnant among the Israelites. **It is strictly a Divine prerogative, as in the time of Elijah.** The word "election" comes from ἐκλογήν, and means "a choosing out, selection, election." This word, in this precise form, is used five times in Scripture.

- "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth" (Rom 9:11).
- "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom 11:5).

- “As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes” (Rom 11:28).
- “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of [by ^{NKJV}] God” (1 Thess 1:4).
- “Therefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall” (2 Pet 1:10).

The word “election” is never used to describe the choice of men. It is strictly a Divine prerogative, and is used in that way with no exceptions. To confirm this is the case, the Spirit nails the matter down by saying it is “the election of grace.”

The presence of the remnant, therefore, is traced to the gracious and benevolent choice of God. I acknowledge that this does not readily fit into certain theological molds. However, the Spirit is not defending the theological stances developed by men, and neither can we. **The declarations of Scripture are not to be filtered through our understanding. Rather, they are to be the basis for forming our understanding!** Those who have a higher regard for human understanding than for Divine affirmation are occupying dangerous ground. **God will not overlook man’s insolence, particularly when He has extended Himself to make His ways known.** There is no reason to question what this text has declared. Nor, indeed, is there reason to view it as inconsequential. There is every reason to embrace it and join Paul in a prayer for Israel’s salvation.

LIGHT IN DARKNESS

If one judges by appearance, which Jesus forbids (John 7:24), Israel looks hopeless. Indeed, from one perspective, Paul’s assessment of them remains true: “*the Jews: who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God,*

so far as to say no person of an honest and good heart will dare to contend that making Scripture logical to fallen men is a responsibility with which we are charged. It is the declaration, or preaching, of the Word that is our aim. It is the objective of men to believe that

The responsibility of men does not include weaving texts of Scripture into a theological tapestry that is palatable to the human intellect and meets with the approval of self-acclaimed theologians.

and are contrary to all men” (1 Thess 2:15). But that is not the whole of the story, and Paul did not intend for it to be.

In the very midst of this morass of guilt and defilement, “*there is a remnant according to the election of grace.*” It is a matter of Divine choice. That choice has been motivated by His grace. **It exists in spite of the circumstances, not because of them.** You may rest assured God has not acted in contradiction of any aspect of His character, or any portion of His revelation. But that is not the point of this text. It is correctly assumed that whatever God does is righteous and, beyond any doubt, holy.

The responsibility of men does not include weaving texts of Scripture into a theological tapestry that is palatable to the human intellect and meets with the approval of self-acclaimed theologians. Any person who would contend that such is the case has only betrayed their unbelief and ignorance. **In fact, I will go**

Word, without wavering..

I have taken the time to say these things because of the nature of this text. Divine reasoning is based upon these affirmations. The prayer for Israel’s salvation is solidly justified by them. In them, the focus is placed upon God Himself, thereby igniting hope and strengthening faith. **We cannot afford to be wrong about such texts!** Expressions like “*there IS,*” and “*ACCORDING to*” make this clear.

INVOLVED IN DENIAL

In order to affirm that Israel has been written off, and is irrecoverable, several things must be denied. **First**, the fact that God foreknows some among them must be denied. **Second**, that God CAN choose a remnant among them must be denied. **Third**, that there IS a remnant among them must be denied. **Fourth**, that God has NOT cast away His people must be denied. Those are most serious denials!

THE CONFLICT OF GRACE AND WORKS

“⁶ **And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.**” This is an unusually strong affirmation!

Here is a passage that has caused no small controversy among professed believers. This circumstance is not the result of honest searching, but is evidence

of the working of the “*wicked one.*” This verse is not a mere theological tenet. Rather, it is an explanation that justifies God’s choice of a remnant and the consequent preservation of Israel. No child of God can afford to be confused about statements like this. **If Divine reasoning and purpose are supported by such statements, then failing to comprehend them causes what is revealed to become**

mysterious and unknowable. Who is the person that can hope to find advantages in such a situation?

A FOUNDATIONAL STATEMENT

Men have long sought to mingle the works of men and the grace of God. Finely tuned views have been developed that appear to have accomplished this admixture – at least to the satisfaction of those “*understanding neither what they*

say, nor whereof they affirm” (1 Tim 1:7).

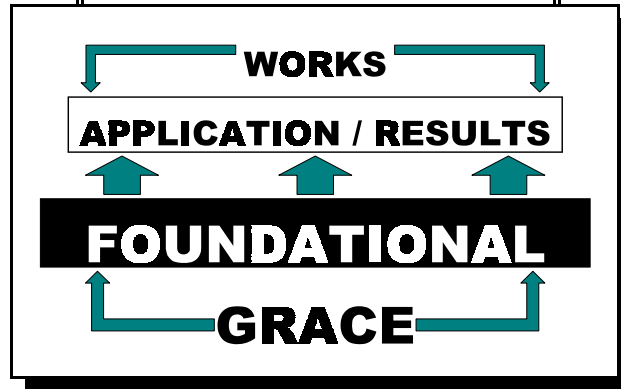
It should be evident to you that this text does not allow for the combining of “works” and “grace.” They are clearly declared to be antithetical, or contrary, to each other. The subject being developed by the Spirit will not allow “works” and “grace” to be joined together. The presence of one cancels out the validity of the other. “Grace” and “works” simply cannot coexist in this matter. It is therefore utterly futile to attempt to forge such a unity.

The Spirit is developing a foundational view – something upon which all valid response is based. **When it comes to the matter of foundations, man’s work is never a factor.** Faith rests upon foundations, and therefore nothing of man can be in them. Here we are dealing with causes, not effects – and **causes are always traced back to God.** Of Him alone it is written, “*For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen*” (Rom 11:36). And again, “*And all things are of God*” (2 Cor 5:18). When it comes to the foundation, or basis, of salvation, “*Salvation is of the LORD*” from beginning to end (Jonah 2:9). That is precisely the intention of the following ascriptions given to Jesus. “*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty*” (Rev 1:8). And again, “*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last*” (Rev 22:13).

Because of this, it is out of order to force the role of “good works” into this text. **The expression “good works” is used sixteen in the Scriptures, and NEVER in a bad sense** (Matt 5:16; John 10:32; Acts 9:36; Rom 13:3; Eph 2:10; 1 Tim 2:10; 5:10,25; 6:18; 2 Tim 3:17; Tit 2:7,14; 3:8). **All of those references, with no exception, deal with the effect of salvation, never its cause!**

To take these passages and attempt to wed them to our text only pushes the truth beyond our grasp. Such attempts do not clarify “the election of grace,” but

only serve to obscure it. **Such explanations are not from God, and they do not serve His purpose or assist His people.**



The Spirit will now take us down to the foundation of Divine working. He will explain to us WHY God does what He does, and WHY there is hope for Israel. He will account for the presence of a remnant at “this present time.” For those with ears to hear, His explanation will also account for their own salvation, which will bring glory to God and great joy and satisfaction to their hearts.

IF BY GRACE

“... if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace.” **See, grace cannot coexist with works at the foundational level.** Either a remnant exists because of God’s grace, or because of man’s works – but it cannot be because of both. It must be one or the other. Other versions read, “*But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.*”^{NASB} “*And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.*”^{NIV}

Grace presumes the absence of satisfactory works. That absence is the very reason for the necessity of grace. The kindness of God is not found in recognizing the goodness of man, which, in the first place does not even exist (Rom 3:12). Rather, it is revealed in His benevolent provision for man in spite of the absence of such goodness.

If God’s choices are based upon His

grace (i.e., “the election of grace”), then we need not look to the worthiness of the chosen ones as the cause for that choice. It is therefore absurd to say that Israel has been totally rejected because of their works. This is not mere conjecture, for God has spoken most precisely to this point.

It Is A Matter of Revelation

“*Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; the LORD of hosts is His name: if those ordinances depart from before Me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me for ever. Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD*” (Jer 31:35-37).

It is difficult to conceive of a more precise and powerful statement of Divine intent. It clearly accents the grace of God, else Israel would have been totally rejected “for all they have done.” Rather, however, than this being the case, the Lord calls upon us to consider the stability and consistency of the creation. Are there any doubts about the creations absolute consistency? He then affirms that His commitment to Israel is even more firm than that!

A Remnant and Total Rejection Cannot Exist Simultaneously

This is a marvelous picture of the statement of our text: “... if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace.” The “election of grace” is not possible if Israel has been completely rejected because of what they have done. This in no way ignores their unbelief. Nor, indeed, does it exclude the necessity of hearing and believing the Gospel of Christ.

What About the Gentiles?

If God has, in fact, abrogated all of promises to the Jews **because of what they have done**, how can we account for the acceptance of the Gentiles? They

spurned the revelation of nature (Rom 1:19-20) and the testimony of their conscience (Rom 2:15). They changed the glory of God into an image like unto man, birds, beasts, and creeping things (Rom 1:23). They changed the truth of God into a lie, worshiping and serving the creature rather than the Creator (Rom 1:25). They were not thankful (Rom 1:21), and refused to retain God in their knowledge (Rom 1:28). They knew the judgment of God, yet continued in their iniquity, approving others immersed in sin (Rom 1:32).

If you speak of being rejected, what of the Gentiles? God *“also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves”* (Rom 1:24). He *“gave them up unto vile affections”* (Rom 1:26). He even *“gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient”* (Rom 1:28).

Yet, who is the person who will affirm the Gentile world was totally rejected by God? Let them step forth and do their best to defend such an imagination! **The grace of God reached them in spite of what they did!** They were not received because of their works, but because of His grace. How else can you account for the marvelous description of their acceptance. *“The Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith”* (Rom 9:30). And again, *“I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me”* (Rom 10:20).

There you have the acceptance of the Gentiles on the precise basis of our text: *“if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace.”* Let no person imagine this privilege has been formally withdrawn from the Israelites!

IF IT IS OF WORKS

“ . . . if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.” If the righteousness of God is conferred upon men because of what they have done, it cannot be received through grace! It is not that such a condition is

improbable. **It is impossible!** When the works of men enter into the foundational equation, defilement spreads throughout, and grace is at once obviated!

Foreshadowed Under the Law

The truth of this statement was foreshadowed under the Law – namely, that man’s work cannot have a part in the foundation of salvation. In the building of an altar to Himself, the Lord was very specific. Nothing fashioned by man could be a part of the altar itself. Thus it was written, *“And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it”* (Ex 20:25). Later, Moses reviewed this for the people. *“And there shalt thou build an altar unto the LORD thy God, an altar of stones: thou shalt not lift up any iron tool upon them. Thou shalt build the altar of the LORD thy God of whole stones: and thou shalt offer burnt offerings thereon unto the LORD thy God”* (Deut 27:5-6). When they came into the land of Canaan, Joshua once again stated this

(Heb 13:10). Just as human works would defile the ancient altar of sacrifice, so they contaminate the salvation of God, nullifying the grace of God. Of course, this is even more precisely stated in Galatians 5:4. *“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.”*

Thus, after all arguments for the mingling of grace and works have been heard, let the Lord have the final word on the matter. He is not ambiguous about it. *“And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.”*^{NKJV}

Foreknowledge and Works

Among other things, this confirms that God’s foreknowledge was not of men’s works, else works and grace would have been blended. This is a critical distinction to be seen! If those foreknown by God were those He saw would be obedient, then salvation is necessarily by works. In such a case, God was motivated

There you have the acceptance of the Gentiles on the precise basis of our text: “if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace.” Let no person imagine this privilege has been formally withdrawn from the Israelites!

requirement. *“As Moses the servant of the LORD commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of whole stones, over which no man hath lift up any iron: and they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings”* (Josh 8:31).

This prohibition was given in anticipation of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus *“with eternal glory”* (2 Tim 2:10). Nothing of man can be found on the altar of God – the *“altar”* from which we *“eat,”* enjoying the benefits of salvation

by men, which is precisely what salvation by works is.

However, Scripture represents men as being drawn, motivated, and changed, by God Himself. This is a consistent representation, and cannot effectively be negated. **Divine foreknowledge blends with grace, not with works.** The works of men are precisely what requires the grace of God. It is **HIS** works that are the focus of foreknowledge, not the works of men (Acts 15:18). A shout of praise should rise from us all because of it!

THE EXPLANATION

“⁷ What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded.⁸ Just as it is written: ‘God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see And ears that they should not hear, To this very day.’⁹ And David says: ‘Let their table become a snare and a trap, A stumbling block and a recompense to them.’¹⁰ Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their back always.’”

Those who are satisfied with simplistic and juvenile explanations of Scripture will certainly find no solace in this passage! Of course, there is nothing at all simplistic about salvation, even though grace has placed it within our reach.

Here we will see that both insight and blindness are from God. God can give eyes to see, or eyes **not** to see! He can cause the spirit of man to be alert and illuminated, or He can put it to sleep. This, of course, is what the Spirit affirms, and there is no room for questioning these realities. Their affirmation accounts for the present blindness of Israel. They also explain why they still **can be** illuminated. Armed with an understanding of these things, a godly person can expectantly entertain a heart’s desire and fervent prayer for Israel, that they might be saved. A failure to perceive this might very well eventuate in a fulfilment of this very text within the objector.

ISRAEL HAS NOT OBTAINED

“What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained. . . .”^{NASB} This has already been affirmed. *“But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness”* (Rom 9:31). Now the Spirit nails it into our hearts and consciences.

Only Two Ways to be Righteous
Keeping the Law

The subject at hand is the obtaining of righteousness. **There are only two ways to be righteous.** The first is to fully measure up to the requirements of God’s holy, spiritual, and good Law. Such a righteousness is the result of keeping all of the commandments all of the time (Deut 5:29).

In order to confirm this was an impossible task, God chose a nation through whom this could be shown. He provided them with all of the incentives required, both blessings and curses. He gave them all of the details of that Law in written form. He also allotted a sufficient

Those who are satisfied with simplistic and juvenile explanations of Scripture will certainly find no solace in this passage! Of course, there is nothing at all simplistic about salvation, even though grace has placed it within our reach.

period of time for that righteousness to be developed – no less than 1,500 years.

At the conclusion of that period, the pronouncement was made: *“What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain.”^{NIV}* The idea is that they did not obtain it on their own, or through their own efforts – another way of saying, *“not of works.”* **Righteousness was sought, but it was not obtained!** Why not? From a previously stated perspective, because it was not sought by faith (Rom 9:32). Righteousness through the Law is not possible. The edict has gone forth from the Throne, *“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight”* (Rom 3:20). And again, *“for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified”* (Gal 2:16). Further, *“if righteousness come by the law, then*

Christ is dead in vain” (Gal 2:21). **The book is closed on this matter.**

Imputed Righteousness

The other means of obtaining righteousness is to have it imputed, or credited, to you. What is more, this must be God’s own righteousness. It cannot be imaginary or fictitious. This is the righteousness that is announced in the Gospel (Rom 1:17). It is also the righteousness of which Israel was ignorant (Rom 10:3). The result, *“Israel has not obtained what it seeks.”* They could not measure up to the righteousness of the Law, and they were ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God.

THE ELECT HAVE OBTAINED IT

“. . . but those who were chosen obtained it”^{NASB} Other versions read, *“the election hath obtained it,”^{KJV}* *“the elect have obtained it,”^{NKJV}* *“but the elect did,”^{NIV}* *“those of the selection got it,”^{BBE}* *“the chosen did obtain,”^{YLT}* *“the ones God has chosen,”^{NLT}* and *“those who were chosen found it.”^{NJB}*

A Brief Word

Before proceeding further, I would like to make a cursory observation about *“the elect,”* or *“the election.”* The concept of election itself is not the result of human reasoning, but of Divine revelation. In fact, I am persuaded such a lofty concept could not even be imagined by man. The fact that **God chooses** is taught with remarkable clarity and abundance in His Word (Deut 7:6; Deut 18:5; 21:5; 1 Chron 29:1; Neh 9:7; Rom 16:13; 1 Cor 1:27-28; Eph 1:4; 2 Thess 2:13-14; 2 Tim 2:4; James 2:5; 1 Pet 2:9). **In our text, the words “the elect” refer to those whom God has chosen.** It is not necessary to join these words to all manner of human explanations. Taken as they are, they blend perfectly with everything God has said regarding Himself and His offspring, humanity. They are not in conflict with the truth, even though they do contradict the traditions of men. It is comely for the

people of God to accept them as they are stated. If this is not done, they will have no edifying or comforting power for us.

These are words *“taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words”*^{NASB} (1 Cor 2:13). This is how the Spirit explains the presence of righteous people within an unrighteous nation. He accounts for their righteousness by saying they were *“elect,”* chosen and picked out by God. Men may not prefer to say it this way, but this is how the Spirit says it. For some, this is exceedingly difficult to receive, but God **will be “justified in all of His sayings”** (Rom 32:4), of which this is one. The explanation is not only stated correctly, it is articulated precisely! It is our business to receive it as it is said, thrusting from us any conflicting form of reasoning.

Subjectively, *“the elect”* were within the nation of Israel. There were *“Israelites indeed”* (John 1:47), Jews *“inwardly”* (Rom 2:29a), and circumcised in *“heart”* (Rom 2:29b). They, and they alone, obtained the righteousness of God! The first of record was the progenitor of the nation, our father Abraham (Gen 15:6). There were also David, the holy prophets, Zecharias and Elizabeth, Simeon, Anna, John the Baptist, the twelve Apostles, the 3,000 who believed on that memorable day of Pentecost, Paul, Timothy, Titus . . . etc. They were all Jews, but it only proved to be an advantage for them when they believed.

“The elect” were a “remnant,” like the 7,000 whom God reserved for Himself in the days of Elijah the prophet. All the angels that fell perished, but all of Israel did not! All of Sodom suffered the vengeance of eternal fire, but Israel did not.

God did not destroy the nation because the bulk of them did not obtain his righteousness. This should not surprise us. You have a precise parallel in Israel obtaining Canaan. The mass of the people who received the promise, were not allowed to realize it. In fact, they were

excluded. Yet, as with our text, the elect *“obtained it”* (Num 14:26-31; 26:55; 32:11-12).

If God was willing to spare Sodom for the sake of ten righteous souls, will He blot out Israel among whom were infinitely more than ten righteous? The very thought that He would such a thing, betrays a fundamental ignorance of the nature of God and the glory of His promises.

The word “elect” includes the concept of Divine intervention. Salvation is the consequence of God’s work, not man’s. While men are surely involved in the process – hearing, believing, and obeying – it is the work of God that produces the result.

An Emphasis In “Elect”

The word *“elect”* includes the concept of Divine intervention. Salvation is the consequence of God’s work, not man’s. While men are surely involved in the process – hearing, believing, and obeying – it is the work of God that produces the result. If He did not send the Word to us, we would never have heard (Rom 10:15). If He did not open our hearts, we would not have believed (Acts 16:14). If He did not make us alive, we would forever have remained dead (Eph 2:1,5). He is the One who put us into Christ, making Him to become our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor 1:30). Jesus *“made”* us free (Rom 8:36; Gal 5:1). God *“made us accepted”* (Eph 1:6). He *“made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”* (Eph 2:6). It is the Father who has *“qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light”* (Col 1:12). He, and He alone, has *“washed,” “sanctified,”* and *“justified”* us (1 Cor 6:11). There is no question about this among believers.

The word *“elect”* throws the spotlight upon the Lord, where it should be. It accounts for the attainment of righteousness by declaring what **He** has done. No child of God should be offended with this emphasis. It is one which the Lord Himself has chosen.

Without becoming distracted, it would be well to remind you that Divine election does not eliminate human responsibility. In fact, it even imposes responsibility upon men. It is written to those who *“have obtained like precious faith,” “give diligence to make your calling and election sure”* (2 Pet 1:1,10).

THE REST WERE BLINDED

“. . . and the rest were hardened [blinded^{KJV}].”^{NASB} Prior to this, the failure of the Israelites to obtain righteousness was traced to at least two factors.

- They sought it not by faith (9:32).
- They were ignorant of the righteousness of God (10:3).

Now an even higher reason is adduced: *“the rest were blinded.”*^{KJV/NKJV} Later versions read *“hardened.”* The blindness of reference pertains to the heart, so that a person is rendered incapable of understanding. More was involved in this than the Israelites closing their minds. They were *“blinded,”* or *“hardened,”* by God. This will be abundantly confirmed in verses 8-10.

In a sense, the same thing happened to *“the rest”* of Israel that took place among the Gentiles. Though surrounded by all manner of evidence concerning the Living God, the Gentiles were given over to *“uncleanness,” “vile affections,”* and *“a reprobate mind”* (1:24.26.28). In other words, God did not intervene, opening their eyes and hearts. God *“blinds”* men by simply withholding understanding, as He did the ostrich when He *“deprived her of wisdom, neither hath He imparted to her understanding”* (Job 39:17).

This is a form of Divine judgment. As I am given to understand it, spiritual blindness is never imposed on those of tender heart, or who are seeking the

truth. However, we must recognize that holy and godly people have, in the past, desired to understand mysteries of the Kingdom, yet were not allowed to do so. As it is written, *“For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them”* (Matt 13:17). In their case, defective hearts were not the issue. Rather, it was not the appropriate time for such understanding to be obtained.

There are people who cannot believe because God has blinded them. *“Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory, and spake of Him”* (John 12:39-41).

This is precisely what happened to *“the rest,”* that is, those who were not *“the elect.”* In the end, we will find their hearts were neither honest nor good. **As such, God would not allow them to see His saving truth, else He would have been obliged to convert and heal them.** That, of course, is precisely what He says. Only God is able to identify *“the rest,”* and we do not well to attempt to make such judgments.

Notice, the Spirit divides the Israelites into two groups, *“the elect”* and *“the rest.”* That is the same sort of division mentioned in the ninth chapter. *“For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel”* (9:6). One body of people, yet it was comprised of two separate groups.

In a sense, Israel is also a threshing floor upon which both wheat and chaff are found (Matt 3:12). Like fish, they were all enclosed in the net of Divine Sovereignty, yet some were good and some were bad (Matt 13:47-48). They are a sort of miniature cosmos.

Actually, the same classifications can

be applied to the world, and even of the professed church. There are *“the elect,”* and *“the rest.”* **In both cases, the action of God was the deciding factor.**

A RESTORATION QUOTATION

I have been identified with the Restoration Movement for over fifty years.

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As of 2001, forty-eight of those years have been spent in focused and continual labors for the Lord. As a rule, the subject covered in this section of Romans is studiously avoided by modern members of this movement. However, that stance is not the one historically taken by those associated with it. I am taking the liberty of sharing a quotation taken from Moses Lard’s commentary on Romans. While not an exhaustive work, it did provide a typically accepted overview of Romans within the movement. His commentary is generally held in high regard among members of The Restoration Movement. The following are brother Lard’s remarks on the first part of Romans eleven.

“Paul concluded chapter ten with a quotation from Isaiah describing the nation of Israel as “a disobedient and contrary people.” Paul begins chapter eleven by giving several examples to show that despite this rebellion God has not totally rejected His people (1-6). What God has done, however, is harden the hearts of the rebellious Israelites (7-10). But the outcome of this “hardening” led to salvation coming to the Gentiles, which in turn God was using to provoke Israel to jealousy in an attempt to win them back to Him. This is also why Paul magnified

his ministry to the Gentiles, hoping to save some of his countrymen by provoking them to jealousy (11-15).”
MOSES LARD’S COMMENTARY ON ROMANS

Although such comments are not a sufficient reason to shape our thinking, it is important to know that sound perspectives are given to saints of every age. The truth of God is never novel, and always pertinent. **Wherever hearts are supple in the hands of the Lord, similar conclusions will be reached concerning difficult passages of Scripture.** That, of course, is due to Divine influence, just as surely as a failure to see the truth is the result of Divine judgment.

The Spirit will now elaborate upon this truth, showing that it has been demonstrated in the past.

GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR

“. . . just as it is written, “GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY.” ^{NASB} Other versions read, *“God gave them a spirit of slumber,”* ^{KJV} *“God gave them a sluggish spirit,”* ^{NRSV} *“God hath given them the spirit of insensibility,”* ^{DOUAY-RHEIMS} *“God has put them into a deep sleep,”* ^{NLT} and *“God has infused them with a spirit of lethargy.”* ^{NJB} I give these various translations to confirm the absolute absence of any vagueness of expression. The Spirit speaks *“expressly.”*

Isaiah’s Prophecy

The quotation is taken from Isaiah 29:10-12. *“For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath He covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned.”*

A Spirit of Stupor

This was a judgment poured out upon Israel. Because they had chosen to maintain a religious shell without substance, **God rendered them incapable of knowing the truth.** They were honoring Him with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him. For this reason, He caused the wisdom of their wise men to fail, so that they became totally ignorant of the very truth they sought to teach. Here is how the Lord said it through Isaiah. *“The Lord says: ‘These people come near to Me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. Their worship of Me is made up only of rules taught by men. Therefore once more I will astound these people with wonder upon wonder; the wisdom of the wise will perish, the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish’”*^{NIV} (Isa 29:13-14). They were *“blinded!”*

An Application

The remarkable parallel to our times is so evident it is staggering! The regulatory approach to serving God has actually brought His judgment upon the people. This is why the wisdom of the wise has failed, and the intelligence of the intelligent has vanished. With all of the purported experts in the professed church, it is in worse shape than it has ever been. The shawl of death is draped over it, and the reproach of spiritual ignorance fills its halls. And why so? **Because God will not allow such people to know and handle His sanctifying truth!** They will not be able to benefit from it, or realize its fulfillment within them!

God will neither convert nor heal those bent away from Him. He has shown this to be the case in Israel of old. Those who refused to believe were not allowed to enter the promised land! Further, because a spirit of stupor was poured out upon them, it made no sense to them to believe. In such a case, the promises of God seemed foolish, inaccessible, and contrary to sound thought. Thus, they rejected them.

So it is with *“the rest”* whom God has *“blinded”* or *“hardened.”* **They are**

controlled by spiritual ignorance and cannot profit from the Gospel.

Eyes and Ears

Natural capacities are not enough to bring conversion and healing! Ordinarily, men are naturally endowed with a degree of intelligence – the ability to comprehend and understand. However, these abilities are not sufficient to save the soul. They cannot take hold of the Gospel, or open the mysteries of redemption.

When it comes to the things of God, special capacities must be received. The *“things of the Spirit of God”* cannot be received by *“the natural man.”* In fact, they do not make sense to the person who is not born again – who does not have spiritual capacities. Thus it is written, *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can*

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he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor 2:14).

Our text describes these spiritual capacities as *“eyes”* that can see and *“ears”* that can hear. These come from the Lord, who makes them *“both”* (Prov 20:12). *“The rest were blinded”* by God withholding these spiritual capacities. He did, however, give them *“eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear.”* That is how the Lord *“blinded”* them; i.e., by withholding the ability to understand, and **imposing capacities incapable of understanding.**

It is possible to so provoke the Lord that He will not grant the ability to hear and understand His word. The knowledge of this should provoke hearty repentance and a fervent quest to receive the love of the truth -- for unless it is received, it is not possible to be saved. As it is written, *“Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness”* (2 Thess 2:9-12).

DAVID’S TESTIMONY

This perspective is so vital to the salvation of the soul, that the Spirit continues to elaborate on it. *“And David says, ‘LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP, AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM. LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT, AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER.’”*^{NASB} This language is so strong it captures the minds of those who ponder it!

The quotation is taken from the sixty-ninth Psalm, which is a Messianic Psalm. The laments of the suffering Christ are articulated in language that stirs the heart. *“Because for Thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered My face. I am become a stranger unto My brethren, and an alien unto My mother’s children. For the zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon Me”* (vs 7-9). These statements are expressly said to relate to the Lord Jesus (John 2:14-17; Rom 15:3). The Psalm continues, *“Reproach hath broken My heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave Me also gall for my meat; and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink”* (vs 20-21). These sayings are also related to the Lord Jesus, particularly as He

suffered for us (Matt 26:37; Mk 14:37,38; Matt 27:34,48).

The picture is that of Israel's rejection of their Christ! The result of that rejection is stated in David's next words, which are quoted in our text. *"Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake"* (vs 22-23). **Those who imagine there are no penalties for rejecting the Lord Jesus** – particularly while holding to a "form of godliness" (2 Tim 3:5) – **need to seriously ponder this text.**

Their Table Becomes a Snare

"Their table" stands for the means through which God sustained the people of Israel – **the revelation of His law and will.** It was given to them to bring certain advantages, namely to define sin and show how utterly helpless they were to avoid it. As it is written, *"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin"* (Rom 3:19-20). In this way, the Law was a *"schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith"* (Gal 3:24). The Law was, in this sense, *"their table."* However, this is not how it served *"the rest"* who were *"blinded."*

"Their table" actually became the means of their stumbling. **It became a "snare and a trap" to them – a means by which they were caught by and confined in sin!** Their religion thus became the means through which they fell and were blinded to the truth of God! The point here is that this did not simply occur by chance. It was a judgment from God. It was God's reaction to their hard and calloused hearts.

If this is an explanation of the condition of *"the rest"* of the Israelites

who did not attain unto righteousness, does it not also clarify the times in which we live? **Could it be that the spiritual obtuseness that dominates much of Christendom is actually a judgment from God for their lack of love for the truth?** Could it be that religion has actually become the occasion for falling and being ensnared and entrapped by sin?

It was religion that caused the Jews to crucify Jesus! It was religion that provoked the early persecution of believers. It was religion that brought on the stoning of Stephen and the persecution of and opposition to Paul. For

It was religion that caused the Jews to crucify Jesus! It was religion that provoked the early persecution of believers. It was religion that brought on the stoning of Stephen and the persecution of and opposition to Paul. For those instigating these oppositions, "their table" had become a "snare and a trap."

those instigating these oppositions, *"their table"* had become a *"snare and a trap."*

God will not allow living waters to flow from a dead church! To do so would be to dishonor His own name. If Israel lost the battle when sin was found in its camp (Joshua 7), are there any so naive as to think God will give victory to the church while sin is found in it? A form of godliness that denies the power thereof will not be used to dignify the truth or expound the Gospel of Christ. Rather, such will become a *"stumblingblock,"* never a foundation stone.

Let Their Eyes Be Darkened

When *"eyes"* are *"darkened,"* men become incapable of understanding the things of God – particularly the means by which we are made righteous. On one occasion, Elymas the sorcerer withstood

the preaching of Paul, seeking to turn a local official *"from the faith."* Paul, however, *"filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, 'O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.'*" It is written that *"immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand"* (Acts 13:8-11). **His eyes were darkened!**

This is what happened to *"the rest"* who were *"blinded."* They became incapable of seeing the truth of God – not by chance, but by Divine judgment! Elymas did not become blind because of an infection, or some debilitating disease. **His was a blindness of judgment, imposed upon him by the Living God.**

"Let their eyes be darkened" is the opposite of *"Let there be light."* Both are brought on by God, and neither can be induced without Him. Neither one can be simulated or fabricated. In this case, even the wisdom of the religious authorities dried up, becoming vain and useless. *"The wisdom of their wise men,"* and *"the understanding of their prudent men"* were cursed by God, and thus they withered, becoming fruitless. **Their eyes were "darkened."**

To put it another way, God said, ***"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"*** (1 Cor 1:19-20). In such a state, it is utterly impossible to know the things of God – i.e., to comprehend them and gain advantages from them.

If it is true that spiritual blindness exists in the professed church, it is true that the judgment of God is upon it. God has deprived its leaders of wisdom. That is why they do not know. He has said, *"Let their eyes be darkened!"* The ONLY

solution to the dilemma is to fervently seek the Lord. Then, and only then, will He be found. As it is written, *“And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart”* (Jer 29:13).

Bend Their Backs Forever

The Psalm from which this is quoted says *“make their loins continually to shake”* (Psa 69:23b). Our text says, *“bow down their back always,”* or *“bend their backs forever.”*^{NASB}

Both expressions refer to the same experience – **that of an unbearable burden.** It is so heavy the loins, or muscular center of the body, tremble or convulse. It is also so heavy that the back is bent forward, the person being unable to stand erect.

In this experience, the individual is brought to realize his own lack of strength. What he is required to carry is more than can be borne. In particular, the very religion placed upon the Jews – the Law of commandments contained in ordinances – was more than they could bear. The yoke of the Law was not easy, and its burden was not light – not for *“the rest.”* Only Jesus can bring true relief! Only His yoke is easy!

It is very true that men like David found great delight in the Law. *“O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day”* (Psa 119:97). Jeremiah expressed similar joy. *“Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called*

It is still true: the very truth bringing delight to *“the elect,”* is an unbearable burden to *“the rest.”* While both may be in the same group, they are of radically differing orders. One is blessed, and one is being judged. One can understand, and one cannot. To one, true religion is found

It is still true: the very truth bringing delight to “the elect,” is an unbearable burden to “the rest.” While both may be in the same group, they are of radically differing orders. One is blessed, and one is being judged. One can understand, and one cannot.

by thy name, O LORD God of hosts” (Jer 15:16). However, these were *“the elect,”* and thus found delight and relief in the good word of God. *“The rest,”* however, *“were blinded.”* The very table which brought nourishment to *“the elect”* became a trap and a stumblingstone to them. What delighted David was a sorrowful burden to them. They were blinded!

to be delightful and liberating. To *“the rest,”* it is a burden grievous to be borne. In nearly every church and religious setting, these two classes remain: *“the elect,”* and *“the rest.”* To which class do you belong? If you believe the report, and are living by faith, you belong to the latter – *“the rest.”*

CONCLUSION

There are many factors that are brought together in the salvation of an individual. Many of them have to do with the activities of people themselves.

- The Gospel of Christ is preached (Rom 10:14-15).
- That Gospel is heard with a degree of discernment (Rom 10:17).
- The record of God’s Son is believed (1 John 5:10).
- There is a repentance from sin and a turning to the Lord (Acts 2:38).
- The convicted one calls upon the name of the Lord (Acts 2:21; Rom 10:13).
- There is a public confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt 16:16-18; Rom 10:9-10).
- The believer is baptized into Christ, dying, buried, and raised with Him (Rom 6:4-17).
- A walk in the newness of life begins (Rom 6:4).

These are marvelous realities, **but they are not the only realities.** While all of them are tied to the salvation of the soul, **none of them are the basis, or foundation, of salvation!** There are Divine involvements that guarantee the effectiveness of these things.

- The Lord sent the Word that is preached or published (Psa 68:11; 107:20; Acts 10:36).
- The Father draws people to the Son (John 6:44,65)
- The Lord sends the preachers, or ministers, through whom we believe (Rom 10:15; 1 Cor 3:5).
- The Lord opens men’s hearts so they can respond appropriately to the Gospel (Acts 16:14).
- We believe through God’s grace (Acts 18:27; 1 Tim 1:14).
- The Lord gives repentance (Acts 5:31;

- 2 Tim 2:25; Acts 3:26; 11:18).
- Men cannot say Jesus is Lord except through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:3).
- Through the Spirit we are baptized into one body (1 Cor 2:13).
- God puts us into Christ (1 Cor 1:30).
- God makes us righteous (2 Cor 5:21).
- God raised us from death in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1-5).
- God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4).
- The Lord works in us both to will and to do of His own good pleasure (Phil 2:13).
- We are being changed from glory unto glory by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:18).
- God is able to keep us from falling (Jude 24).

The most prominent factors about salvation are those accomplished by God! In the end, the saved from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, will

shout, *“Salvation belongeth unto the LORD”* (Psa 3:8), and *“Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb”* (Rev 7:10; 19:1). In the holy conclave of the saved, none will be pointing to themselves, or even to those through whom they believed. All eyes will be upon the Lord, and all glory will go to Him! **His involvement in our salvation will be perceived as the most prominent and effective factor.**

This is precisely the point that is being made in this chapter. Since salvation is of God, and is effected through His power and wisdom, the salvation of the Jews is not beyond possibility.

Their salvation will require no more Divine working than the salvation of the Gentiles – for that matter, than your own salvation! The Gentiles had nothing to recommend them to God! They had rejected the revelation given to them. The fact that it was comparatively crude to what was given to Israel only accents why it should have been received.

Add to this the many commitments God has made to Israel, and the fact that in them, God was incapable of lying. Now you have every reason to pray that Israel will be saved! You are in fellowship with the Lord Himself when you do so.

A BRIEF SUMMARY

- ❑ God has NOT cast away His people, as He twice affirms in our text (11:1,2).
- ❑ Paul himself is proof that Israel has not been totally rejected (11:1).
- ❑ That God reserves a remnant among the ancient people is confirmed by the events of Elijah’s time (11:3-4).
- ❑ The preservation of the remnant is God’s own work. The presence of the remnant cannot be confirmed by appearance, and can only be accounted for by God’s intervention (11:4).
- ❑ At the present time, there is still a remnant among Israel (11:5a).
- ❑ The remnant is there because of God’s gracious choice (11:5b).
- ❑ On the foundational level, grace and works cannot mix (11:6).
- ❑ Those who were elected obtained the righteousness God provides (11:7a).
- ❑ *“The rest”* were blinded by God, given a spirit of stupor so they could not

believe (11:7b).

- ❑ In their blindness, their table—the means through which they were to be sustained—became a snare to them (11:8-10).

THE FOLLY OF INDIFFERENCE

There is a vital lesson to be learned in this text. Those who are indifferent to the Gospel of Christ place themselves in a most jeopardous situation. The same God who opens the eyes of men can shut them, pouring out the spirit of deep sleep upon them. He can render men incapable of believing, as confirmed after the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (John 12:39).

ENTIRE GENERATIONS

There have been entire generations that have suffered this kind of judgment from God. This is a sobering reality to consider. It also promotes humility. One such generation lived when Jesus *“dwelt among us.”* Jesus said of that generation, *“The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with **this generation**, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with **this generation**, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here”* (Matt 12:41-42).

When Jesus spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem He said, *“Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon **this generation**. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate”* (Matt 23:36-38).

Again, He said of the people of His time, *“Why doth **this generation** seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto **this generation**”* (Mark 8:12). And again, *“That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of **this generation**; from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished*

*between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of **this generation**”* (Lk 11:50-51). And again, *“But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of **this generation**”* (Lk 17:25).

Yet, Some Believed – A Remnant!

Although, as a whole, that generation rejected Christ, yet the rejection was not total. The twelve Apostles, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, Mary Magdelene, other devout women, the woman at the well of Samaria, Simeon, Anna, Elizabeth, and an unnamed group who were waiting for redemption, came out of that very generation. Three thousand souls turned to the Lord on the day of Pentecost from that very generation. Shortly after that, five thousand more men were delivered from that generation. **There was a remnant!**

There Is Still a Remnant

There is still a remnant according to the election of grace! Yes, there are generations such as our own, where the knowledge of God is sparse and lifeless religious professionals appear to be in dominance. However, God has not abdicated the throne. He is still working among men through the Gospel of His Son, taking out of a godless generation a people for His own name (Acts 15:14).

In the Days of the Judges

As far back as the time of the Judges, this very condition was chronicled. *“And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose **another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel**”* (Judges 2:10). During that time *“the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim.”* They *“forsook the God of their fathers,”* serving *“Baal and Ashtaroth”* (2:11-13).

It was during that very time that God raised up a righteous remnant, calling them *“the Judges”* (2:16-18). Men like Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Gideon, and finally Samuel, surfaced during those despicable times. God also raised up a righteous woman (Debra), making her the only woman judge in history – and all during spiritually decadent times. **There has always been a remnant!**

LIFT UP YOUR EYES

It is the persuasion of many godly people that we are living in spiritually impoverished times. These are times when God has sent a famine of hearing the Word of God upon the land, in accord with the prophecy of Amos (Amos 8:11-13). It can be a discouraging time if a proper understanding is not possessed.

Just as in the times of the Judges, the

Babylonian captivity, and the days of the Lord Jesus, there remains a remnant according to the election of grace. That remnant is not only among the Jews, though they is the principle subject of our text. It also exists among the Gentiles, as it did in the city of Corinth when everything appeared hopeless. Of that Gentile city, the Lord Jesus said to Paul, *“Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am*

with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city” (Acts 18:9-10).

See, *“There is a remnant according to the election of grace!”* That means there is hope for you and your ministry, just as surely as there was for Paul and his ministry!

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 6/1/2001. Continuing in our overview of the book of Romans, we will be covering verses 11-36 of the eleventh chapter. The theme will be, **“THE REJECTION THAT IS NOT FINAL.”** There is a Divine strategy in operation. It is strictly governed by the Son of God, and is sure to be fulfilled. As we will see, the Israelites are included in the Divine agenda. The knowledge of this is a source of edification, building up the soul, kindling hope, and devastating pride. Our meeting will convene at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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A place where believers can meet, fellowship, be edified, and express themselves.

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