

The Epistle to the Romans

Part 1

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[00:00:01] My exercise this evening is to say something about what Paul writes in these three chapters, 9, 10 and 11 of his letter to the Romans.

We know that in most of Paul's letters we have doctrine, not all of them, but most of them we have doctrine and this is followed by exhortation.

It's good to receive the teaching of God, but we need to put it into practice as well. Paul reminded us of that this afternoon.

In the letter to the Romans we have the Gospel presented to us, the Gospel of God's salvation.

We had that very clearly in the first verse we read. For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. [00:01:08] In the first part of Romans, up to chapter 5 verse 11, Paul concentrates on the matter of being saved from our sins and God's judgment for them.

The prime word we get in this section is the word justification, we need justification, we need to be made right with God.

And then from verse 12 of chapter 5 through to chapter 8 we get the thought of salvation from sin, the power of sin, the principle of sin we heard about this afternoon in our lives, that which causes us to commit sins. I think we've all gone through the experience when we came to know the Lord Jesus, how wonderful it was to know that our sins had been dealt with, that we weren't going to suffer God's judgment. [00:02:01] The Lord Jesus had borne that judgment upon the cross, we were on our way to heaven. But it's not long before we discover that we start doing things that we thought we had been saved from.

The very sins that the Lord Jesus dealt with on the cross, they're recurring in our lives. Why? Because of that flesh that we heard of this afternoon. And so in these chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8, Paul shows to us the wonderful delivering power of what the Lord Jesus had done.

And the wonderful answer is not to try and overcome this power of sin in our lives by our own strength.

Surely we've already recognised that we're helpless to do that. We had to come to the Lord Jesus to be saved from the fruit of that sin. [00:03:02] And so too, there's help from outside for dealing with the root, and that's the Holy Spirit himself.

You remember that in chapter 7, we have the man who keeps saying, me and I. But in chapter 8, we hear constantly of the Spirit of God who indwells every believer and enables him to overcome, or her, to overcome the power of sin in our lives.

And then from chapter 12 onwards, we get the practical exhortation of the letter, don't we? We get the thought of presenting our body, a living sacrifice.

Those first two verses of chapter 12, I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, in view of the grace, the goodness of God to you in Christ, that ye present your bodies. It's a practical thought, that's why the word body is used there. Living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. [00:04:09] And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. But in between chapters 8 and 12, of course we get chapters 9, 10 and 11. And perhaps we wonder sometimes when we read them, why does the Apostle Paul put them there? Well, it's an indication of why it's good for young ones, particularly, but also for us older ones, to get to know the teaching of Paul's letter to the Romans.

I once knew a brother, he's now with the Lord, he used to say, and I'm sure most of you older ones here know this expression as well, a good Roman can go anywhere. And what did he mean by that? Well, what he meant by that was, was that if you understood the teaching of Paul in Romans, [00:05:10] it would equip you to go elsewhere in the New Testament and understand what is being taught there as well. There's an expression, *kivis Romana sum*, that's Latin, and it means, I am a Roman.

And in the days of the Roman Empire, someone who could say, I am a Roman, could ask for the protection of Rome wherever he was in the Empire and be fairly confident of getting it.

And so it is when we are good Romans spiritually, if we can understand God's word in Romans, and don't for one moment think that I'm saying I'm a good Roman, perhaps you'll be able to judge that after the end of this meeting, but it's good to know that when we've got the teaching of Romans clearer in our minds, [00:06:09] with the help of the Holy Spirit, it will help us to go into other parts of the scripture and get the help we need, like the Roman citizen needed help when he ran into difficulties in different parts of the Empire. So just remember those Latin words, because it brings home to us the usefulness of this book. And why do I say that? Because as well as presenting the foundational truths of justification and deliverance, that we've heard a bit about already this afternoon, though in the types of the Red Sea and the crossing of the Jordan, it also presents to us the practical truths that we find from chapter 12 onwards, and then in these chapters 9, 10 and 11, it presents to us some dispensational teaching. So you're getting a range of teaching in Paul's letter to the Romans, which is very foundational, very helpful in setting us off in understanding God's word. [00:07:11] We often say to people who first inquire about salvation, read John's gospel. And perhaps we should say to those who've just trusted the Lord Jesus, as well as doing that, read Paul's letter to the Romans. And we would encourage the young men and sisters here to start reading Romans.

I must admit that I have a tendency to go over time, so I'm going to immediately speed on to what we

read in chapter 9, although hopefully we'll come back to some of those earlier verses that we read from chapters 1 and chapter 3. One of the criticisms that could have been made about what we read in chapter 1, verse 16 was, well, if there's no difference, if this gospel is going out to the Jew and to the Gentile, then does that mean that God has given up on Israel? [00:08:08] After all, he made some very special promises to Israel. Let's just read one of them, Deuteronomy chapter 7.

Deuteronomy chapter 7, in verse 6, God says, For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God. The Lord thy God has chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people. For ye were the fewest of all people. But because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. [00:09:08] A special people, peculiar people.

And God had set his love upon them.

And if we thought for one moment that what Paul is teaching in Romans, indicated that God was now no longer treating Israel in that way, in his purposes.

Then we might wonder, well can we depend upon his word in regard to what Paul has written in this letter? If he's going to break it in regard to the people of Israel, how can we be sure of it now that we're hearing it in the form of this gospel which Paul is writing about in this letter to the Romans? And what of God's love? He said he set his love upon them. Has he just given up on his love?

After all, though righteousness is the prominent thought in Romans, [00:10:01] the very fact that God has revealed a righteousness which is according to him, it's his righteousness because our righteousness cannot meet God's holy standards, shows his love for us, doesn't it? Shows his desire to bring us to himself.

So in a way, it's not just Paul answering the objections of Jewish people who might say, well you're going against everything that God said in the Old Testament about Israel. It's a question of assuring us, of confirming to us, that there's no question of God going back on his word or going back on his love. And that's a wonderful assurance for us, we who are Gentiles as well.

In these early verses of Romans, chapter 9, we see the love of the Apostle for his countrymen, for his nation, for his kinsmen according to the flesh. [00:11:01] And surely the very fact that the Apostle to the Gentiles speaks in this way is another indication of God's continuing love for his people.

He wants to bless them. Look at those words the Apostle uses. He says, in verse 3, I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren.

Have I ever had a love for my kinsmen like that?

I think it was something that came into Paul's heart in a moment. That's how he felt. It's like Moses. Blot me out of thy book, he could say. It wasn't their settled thought.

And after all, Paul has only just written in chapter 8, if you look at the end of that chapter, that nothing shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. But it shows the love of Paul for the

people of Israel.

[00:12:02] And in itself is confirmation of what he's going to teach in the remaining part of these chapters.

But sadly the Lord Jesus had come to Israel, he had come to his own things, and his own people had received him not.

And as a consequence of that, they were losing the enjoyment of the things that God had given them. Look at those things in verse 4.

They were losing them.

They were losing them because they had rejected their Messiah. And he is the one who crowns those things. Look at that list that goes on into verse 5. Whose are the fathers, and of whom is concern in the flesh? Christ came. That is the crown, in fact, of the blessing that God gave his earthly people, that Christ, the Messiah, would come from them, humanly speaking. Who is over all God, blessed forever. Amen. [00:13:03] He's the touchstone. Where do we stand with regard to the Lord Jesus Christ? If we've repented from our sins and believed on him as our Saviour, then we're in the flow of God's blessing and we shall never be lost. But the people of Israel as a nation had rejected the one who had been long promised as their Deliverer, as their Saviour. How sad.

And consequently, that was why they were in the position they were. That was why Paul had this grief, this uninterrupted pain in regard to them, because of their spiritual condition. But did it mean that God's word failed? No. In the next few verses, he shows that not all are Israel that are of Israel. Not all of them, simply because they were, humanly speaking, Israelites, were spiritually, were really Israelites. [00:14:01] And that's why the nation as a whole had turned its back on the Lord Jesus. That's why when they saw him, in all his moral beauty, they will have to confess in a future day that when they saw him, there was no beauty in him that they should desire. Their hearts weren't touched by the Lord Jesus.

There wasn't a living link with God.

And Paul shows them that to simply base everything upon their natural connection with Abraham, was a great mistake.

He shows them that God had said that in Isaac, verse 7, shall thy seed be called. God had made a choice.

A choice between Ishmael, the first son of Abraham, and Isaac.

[00:15:07] If we were going to claim that our blessing depended on the fact that we were descendants of Abraham, physically, then Ishmael would have to be included.

And you could argue that Ishmael should be the one and not Isaac. Working on that basis, the people of Israel were actually excluding themselves. And then he gives the example, doesn't he, of Jacob and Esau.

Here were two twins in the womb of their mother.

And before they were born, before they had done good or anything worthless, God said, the greater shall serve the less.

And this is proving that God is moving according to his sovereign will. And one thing we can learn from chapter 9 is that God is sovereign. [00:16:04] He chooses. He decides.

We live in a world where we're very used now to hearing about man's rights.

Human rights. I've got rights.

And yet, you know, you'll look through the Bible and you won't find much about human rights in the Bible. None of us have got any rights before God. None of us at all. I'm not, of course, advocating that we should act in an uncivilized way to each other. But what I'm saying is that when it comes down to the matter of how we stand before God, none of us have got any rights.

And it's only when we acknowledge that that we can come into blessing. And that's what the people of Israel had to do. You know, there was a man who met with the Lord Jesus early on in the book of John.

[00:17:01] And the Lord Jesus called him an Israelite indeed, truly an Israelite. You know who I'm speaking about. Nathanael, also called Bartholomew, one of the Lord's disciples. Yes, he was a true Israelite.

He was spiritually an Israelite.

Why can we say that? Because when the Lord Jesus revealed himself to him, he said, Thou art the Christ. Thou art the King of Israel. The Lord Jesus is the touchstone.

Now let's make some applications to ourselves. If this was important for Israel to receive the Lord Jesus when he came, then it's absolutely important still for us to receive the Lord Jesus, to acknowledge him. And we're going to see that in a moment as we go through these chapters. Sometimes people have had a difficulty with verse 13.

As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but he thought, have I hated. Yes, but have you ever thought where those words come in the scripture?

[00:18:06] Paul is quoting from the last book of the Old Testament, the book of Malachi. As a result of God's dealings with these two men, the choice he made at the beginning is vindicated.

Esau was a man literally after the flesh.

And Jacob was a man who though too a sinner, a supplanter, a man who had deceived his own father, and was to have to learn that bitter lesson of being deceived himself by his own sons, eventually came to the point where he was broken, where he wrestled with God.

God touched the sinew of his thigh and he had to cling to God. He had to acknowledge that he could

not bargain with God as he tried to do early in his life. [00:19:04] He had to rely upon God for all his blessings. And at the end of his life, he is a worshipper on his staff, and able to bless his sons.

A man who finished well because he finished with God. But Esau didn't.

And so we see in the next few verses that there's no unrighteousness with God.

God acts according to his sovereign will.

Verse 15, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. You know when those words were said? Just after Israel sinned in relation to the golden calf at Sinai. They had said all that the Lord says we will do. And before the very law had been delivered to them by Moses, [00:20:03] they had broken the first of the ten commands. And what's God's response in relation to them? It's mercy.

Just as we sang in our first hymn, See mercy, mercy from on high, Descend to rebels doomed to die.

They should have been judged immediately.

But God says I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

But there are those who go against God, and continue to go against God.

And we have an example of that in Pharaoh, the very person we were speaking about this afternoon. Verse 17.

A man who hardened himself. You can read about it in Exodus chapter 5. He said, who is this Jehovah that I should do as he says? I'm paraphrasing.

[00:21:02] Then you read in chapter 7.

When he says that, it says, as God said he would.

And you can see that the hardening of heart started with Pharaoh himself.

He was set against God in his own heart. And as he continued that course, then God exercised his right to harden his heart still further, as a sign to us all.

And as we read those verses from Exodus, about what happened to Pharaoh, is it not a warning to us, that here was one who, despite God's long suffering with him, continued on his course, and ended up at the bottom of the Red Sea.

If there's anyone here who hasn't trusted the Lord Jesus as your Saviour, don't continue on that course of rejecting Him. Turn to Him now. Believe on the Lord Jesus. [00:22:01] You need to be saved.

It's amazing that these verses... No, it's not amazing.

It's not really amazing. But it is amazing that these verses, in these chapters which speak so much about God's sovereignty, His election, His choice, also prompt us, prompt the Apostle Paul, as we'll see soon, to announce the Gospel.

To say to people, Come unto me.

Come unto the Lord Jesus. Be saved.

Don't stand away from God. Turn to Him now.

The election of God proves that all of us, left to our own devices, would never come to God.

If it wasn't for the election, none would be saved.

All would be lost.

The fact that God has to choose to save shows that we are all...

We are all worthless.

[00:23:02] We are all rebellious in His sight.

And that's why it says in that verse, which I moved over to get to verse 17, So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.

And then in these verses that follow, we get the image, don't we, of the potter. That is an image of God forming the vessel.

The vessel often a picture of the man. But notice that in verse 22, and this is where we read, What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction?

Yes, vessels of wrath.

What a solemn thought.

Those going on to a lost eternity. [00:24:03] But it doesn't say that God fitted them.

It says they are fitted to destruction. How has that happened?

Well, we may see an illustration of it in the second chapter of this very letter.

Chapter 2.

Chapter 2 is where Paul deals with the moral person.

Is he acceptable to God?

And we find, no, he's not. He's not acceptable to God.

He's no better than the completely amoral person that we get in chapter 1. And nor is the Jew.

He's not acceptable to God.

And nor is the Jew any better than him.

That's in the second half of chapter 2. But we'll just take this example of the moral person. [00:25:01]
Verse 3 of chapter 2.

And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? They despise God's patience, God's longsuffering. They despise it. They think it's weakness on God's part. Here never act.

I can get away with it. I can be a hypocrite and I'll never have to face the consequences for it. Verse 5.

But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. This is an example of one who's fitted to destruction.

All that end up in that awful place, [00:26:01] the lake of fire, will be there on their own responsibility because they have not responded to the gospel of God.

But in verse 23, that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had aforeprepared unto glory. Yes, God has a desire to make known the riches of His glory. What wonderful words.

On the vessels of mercy. Those of us who have no claim on the Lord would have simply come to Him in repentance and faith.

And we learn that He had prepared this for us before even the worlds began.

You know, I've told this story many times. Well, it's not a story. It's a kind of image.

And I'm sorry if you've heard it before from me or perhaps another brother. But my mother always used to say this to me.

It's like coming to a door and you see on the door [00:27:02] whosoever believeth.

Those wonderful words of John chapter 3, verse 16. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

So whosoever is available to everyone. What you do, you exercise faith in what God says, you turn the handle, you go through the door, you're saved.

And you look back and you see there's another notice on the door on the other side of it when you're safely inside and it says chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Those two things, God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, they go along as parallel lines. We can't bring them together in our minds. It's impossible.

They're like the lines on a railway track, the two rails. If you were to stand there on the railway track, don't do this. [00:28:01] But if you were to do this, you would see that if you looked into the horizon, they join. Where you are, they're completely separate and you can walk a little further and they'll still be the same width. I used to know the width between two railway tracks but I don't now.

Between two rails of a railway track, but I don't now. But they're always that same width, fortunately. They're always separate. They're two lines.

And we can't compromise that. Man's responsibility, God's sovereignty.

Whereas in the little image I've just explained to you, there's an illusion that they come together. In God, the two things do come together. He is able to reconcile these two things perfectly in a way that is beyond our comprehension. Our responsibility is to believe on the Lord Jesus as our saviour. And so Paul concludes, verse 24, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. [00:29:03] And so Paul is showing that if ultimately it comes down to recognising that we've got no claims on God, as we saw in those verses, in Deuteronomy 7, it wasn't because of any special credible thing, creditable thing, about the people of Israel that God chose them. They were the smallest. They weren't better than any other nation. He just set his love upon them. If we owe that there's nothing in us that causes us to deserve God's blessing, then we can just come to him. And it doesn't matter, Jew or Gentile, we can just come to him for blessing. And so we see that although God's ways change from time to time across the centuries and the millennia of history, his basic principle is always the same.

And we read those verses from Hosea, where Paul uses the words of Hosea to really describe the position of the Jew in verse 25 [00:30:05] and the position of the Gentile in verse 26. And we haven't got enough time to go into that in more detail, but perhaps you would like to read those remaining verses of the chapter when you have an opportunity.

But in chapter 10, Paul moves on in his discussion of this subject, and it seems to me, as he's considered the wonderful opening up of the grace of God to every sinner, that it warms his heart. Instead of having to speak about great heaviness and continual sorrow, he says in verse 1, In fact, you could translate this delight. Why? Well, as we're going to see later in this chapter, the very fact that Israel have rejected this way of salvation as we get at the end of chapter 9, though we haven't had enough time to go into it, yet there's still an opportunity to preach to them, [00:31:04] as to the Gentile, the wonderful grace of God. God doesn't close up his offer of love and salvation.

Even though these people have gone about seeking to be right with God on their own terms.

No, you can't be right with God on your own terms. There's nothing we can do to make ourselves right with God. The law demands that we do. The law demands righteousness on our part. But as we read in chapter 3, there's none righteous, no, not one. So it's impossible for us to be right with God on the basis of the law. We simply have to come on the basis of God's free offer of salvation, where he doesn't expect from us our righteousness, but he gives us his righteousness. And because of that, we

are accepted in the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 4, here we see the Lord Jesus is the touchstone again. [00:32:03] For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.

And then in these verses that follow, Paul goes back to Deuteronomy chapter 30.

And this has been sometimes felt a strange application of these words in Deuteronomy.

But of course Paul is dealing with Jewish objectors. People who might say, well, this doesn't seem to accord with anything that I thought was true of what God says in the law. But if you go to Deuteronomy chapter 30, you'll see what God says to the people in regard to their situation when one day they find themselves exiled from the land, no longer in the land. We read about how they went into the land, the land that God had promised them. But a time would come when they would be outside the land because of their disobedience to God. There will be no opportunity for them to keep the law [00:33:03] in the way they had done when they had been in the land of promise. What would they do then? And in chapter 30 of Deuteronomy, you get these words.

Though we're running slightly over time, let me just give you these words. And then you can compare them with what Paul writes in chapter 10. And God says in verse 11 of chapter 30 of Deuteronomy.

For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven that thou shouldest say, who shall go up for us to heaven and bring it unto us that we may hear it and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea that thou shouldest say, who shall go over the sea for us and bring it unto us that we may hear it and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee in thy mouth and in thy heart that thou mayest do it. See I have set before thee this day life and good and death and evil. [00:34:06] The people would have to give up the idea of hearing something can do it in order to try and be right with God. They would simply have to just cast themselves upon God. And it's this principle that Paul takes up in chapter 10 of his letter to the Romans.

He says that don't say in thine heart, verse 6, who shall ascend into heaven.

That is to bring Christ down from above. Don't think that you've got to find a saviour from heaven and bring him down.

Why? He's already come. And then who shall descend into the deep? That is to bring up Christ again from the dead. Don't think that someone's got to go down into the place of judgment for you.

No, because the Lord Jesus has already done that and God has raised him out from among the dead. [00:35:06] What Paul is saying is that the work has already been done for you. And therefore in these words he says the word is nigh thee even in thy mouth and in thy heart. That is the word of faith which we preach relying upon what God has said. And though he doesn't mention the death of the Lord Jesus specifically in these verses we might say, might we, that really and truly it's already been presented to them in chapters 1 to 8 in this letter. But if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from the dead thou shalt be saved.

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Really he's stressing the importance of putting our mouth where our heart is.

[00:36:06] Of saying yes, I believe what God said, I'm going to say it, I'm going to confess it, I'm going to make the Lord Jesus my Lord. God has raised him from among the dead, I make him my Lord. The Lord Jesus is the touchstone, the Lord Jesus is the answer. Without him there is no hope for us. We must confess him as Lord, the one who's in control of everything, the one to whom I belong, my master. I believe in him.

At the end of chapter 9 it said that the nation as a whole had stumbled at the stumbling stone. Who was the stumbling stone? For them, sadly, it was the Lord Jesus himself. Though he had been the stone upon whom God said they would find salvation. Now Paul is saying, look, you've got to trust him, you've got to make him your Lord. [00:37:04] Why? Because God has delighted in raising him out from among the dead and exalting him at his right hand. When you confess him as Lord, you say God's right. He has done everything for the glory of God and consequently everything for my blessing.

With the heart man believeth unto righteousness. Christ has done it all. He who went down below my sins, right right down, down deeper than any of us could go.

We have that in hymn 46.

Deeper far than thought can reach. He went down at Calvary, underneath the load of my sin.

Where is he now? He's at the right hand of God. Isn't that an assurance for you and me that our sins have been dealt with? Well, show him, confess it, make him your Lord.

[00:38:01] It's a wonderful encouragement to us Christians. But it's a wonderful encouragement to anyone who hasn't trusted the Lord Jesus. There's no one else who can do this for you but the Lord himself. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. And then we've got it, I've missed it, verse 12. There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek. For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

And then Paul goes on to speak about the wonderful privilege of preaching the gospel. Oh, that I had a greater sense of the privilege of preaching the gospel. We haven't got enough time to go into these words but just read them later on. They show to us what a privilege it is to preach. You can see now why Paul went to Jerusalem, can't you? Even though his brethren by the Holy Spirit told him not to. You get a feeling why Paul did it. He was so convinced that the gospel would really move the hearts of his brethren. That they would trust the Lord Jesus and that's what he wanted. [00:39:03] Yes, his feet.

We sometimes criticise him for what he did. But surely the feet of the apostle Paul were beautiful. As he trod his life through this world to the prison cell where he spent his last years.

And then chapter 11.

At the end of chapter 10 it says, All day long have I stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people. Yes, although we can say things about the apostle Paul, we can only say them because he was in the flow, in the line of his master. He was in the spirit of his master. He was only like this because the Lord Jesus is like this, because God is like this. God is holding out his hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people through his servants.

You get that, don't you? With the apostle Paul's writing in Corinthians where he says, [00:40:02] as it were, God beseeching through us, be reconciled with God. Have you ever thought of that? God beseeching you to be reconciled to him.

And so we might think, well, with God being like that and them still as a nation turning their back on him, really, there's really not much chance for them at all, is there? God must close the door to them completely.

But he says, hath God cast away his people? God forbid.

Don't think it. May it not be.

And he gives three reasons why God hasn't done that. The first reason is this. Him, the apostle Paul, he was the worst of the lot. He called himself a chief of sinners, didn't he? And yet God had chosen him. God had made him a minister of the gospel.

It's amazing.

Of all people, the Paul is the one, as Saul, who stands for the attitude of the nation. [00:41:02] But God had saved him.

God had made him his gospel preacher. And then, too, the example of Elijah. Elijah thought he was on his own. There's a contrast here, isn't there, between Elijah and Moses. Moses could say, block me out of the book.

Sadly, and I don't criticise him because I'm sure Elijah was a greater man than I am, but Elijah, sadly, he turned against the people.

You know the verses, verses 3 and 4.

But God had reserved.

And there is an election among the people of Israel even today. Those who've trusted the Lord Jesus as their saviour. And it's wonderful to find them in verse 5. A remnant according to the election of grace. And it's an indication that God's word is still having its effect in the hearts, even of his earthly people who, as a whole, have turned against him. [00:42:05] But we read from verse 7 downwards, didn't we, of what the nation has experienced.

And it is sad to think of the way in which, as a whole, the nation, throughout the 2,000 years since the Lord Jesus suffered and died on Calvary's cross, have never turned to him. Have never, it seems, ever thought that the vicissitudes that they've been through in those centuries are down to the fact that they've crucified their Messiah. You see what they've suffered.

What they suffered in the last century. And there's never ever a hint that they think, perhaps it was because we did wrong when we crucified Jesus. Never ever, never ever does the thought ever appear in the writings of people who represent that nation. [00:43:02] And so we see, sadly, that these verses have been fulfilled.

But Paul goes on to say, have they stumbled, verse 11, that they should fall? God forbid.

But rather, through their stumbling, God has been enabled to offer his salvation to the Gentiles.

We have come into blessing through what has happened. There's a richness that's come to us through his wonderful grace.

It's like Joseph, that bough that went over the wall. The Lord Jesus, the blessings, the fruits of what he's done have come over that middle wall of partition and have resulted in our blessing too.

And the Apostle says, I magnify my office as the Apostle to the Gentiles because by doing so, showing to my Jewish brethren how much blessing Gentiles are enjoying today [00:44:07] through receiving the Gospel, I might provoke some, some. You see, some. He's given up on the thought that the nation, at the moment, is going to come into blessing. It's some. But he wants some, as many as possible, to come to know the Lord Jesus. And so he shows how he's able to preach such good things of salvation to the Gentile in order that those of his own people who hear it might receive it. Because he knows that if the casting away of them, verse 15, be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead? You know, there has been much blessing in this world because of Christianity. I just want to say these words. We're living in a country which has given up Christianity. [00:45:01] And when this country, when this country recognized Christianity, when this country submitted to the Bible, even though many of those who made our laws didn't believe on the Lord Jesus, when this country acknowledged that Christianity was the faith to have, it did experience much blessing. Even those who weren't Christians experienced blessing.

But as this country has gone back on that, has turned its back on the Gospel, so we see around us, don't we? All of us. We can't fool ourselves.

We see our own country breaking up before our eyes.

Families, communities, all these things are beginning to go to pieces.

[00:46:08] It's directly related to the way in which this country has turned its back on Christ. And that's true of the whole Western world to one extent or another. And it's important to understand this because when Paul here talks about the olive tree, he's not talking about the church as some Christians have it. The idea of branches being broken out and other branches being put in their place is totally alien to the presentation of the truth of the church as we get it in his other writings where he presents it as a body, the body of Christ.

This olive tree is speaking about the blessings on earth that come from knowing the Lord Jesus and giving him his place.

And we are in a situation where Paul speaks here of those who are boasting, [00:47:02] boasting to the extent that they're saying they don't need God, they know better than God. And counting their heritage, their Christian heritage as nothing. And what will the result of that be? God will stop his blessing towards the Gentile.

The fullness of the Gentile, that just doesn't mean the gospel going out to everyone as it does at the moment in most countries. But all the wonderful richness of blessing that comes with it, when that

fullness comes to an end, then God will take up his earthly people again. And all Israel will be saved.

Not then just some, but the whole nation at that time. Once it's gone through the sufferings of the day of Jacob's trouble. And when all have realized their awful crime in crucifying the Lord Jesus. [00:48:01] And as we get it in Zechariah, every family mourns apart. They will enter into God's blessing as one whole nation. And enjoy the place that God meant them to have. When he chose them to be his special earthly people.

But that's the only way in which they're going to come into blessing. When they do what each one of us here who's trusted the Lord Jesus have done. When we've confessed that we're sinners. And we've believed upon the Lord Jesus as our saviour. And so in these verses, I've only really, as we say, scratched the surface. And perhaps not very well.

But we see in these verses the way in which God's offer of grace to Jew and to Gentile, making no difference. All may come, does not in any way cut across his wonderful desires with regard to the people of Israel.

[00:49:04] Let us keep humble.

Let us remember how we have come into blessing because the people of Israel turned against the Lord Jesus. God didn't shut up his heart to us when he saw his own chosen earthly people rejecting his son. No, the gospel went out to us too. You can read about it in the book of Acts. Let us be humble.

Let us remember that we are only in this place out of God's wonderful mercy.

And that's why I read those closing verses in chapter 16. Why did I read them?

Well, because in this chapter, if you look at all the names, you'll find that most of the names end with US. Which means that they were Romans. They were Gentiles.

These greetings are for Gentiles. And today the church is primarily Gentiles. [00:50:01] But there's two people at least here who were Jews, born Jews, but have trusted the Lord Jesus as their saviour. Priscilla and Aquila.

Greek Priscilla and Aquila. Here are the election of grace at this time.

Aquila and Priscilla.

Jews who have trusted the Lord Jesus. And what does it say?

My helpers in Christ Jesus. Who have for my life laid down their own neck. Not necks. Neck.

Unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Yes, that's the right spirit to have. A spirit of humility.

To recognise that we have come into a blessing we never deserved. But which has come out to us, flooded out to us, through God's wonderful mercy and grace. May we rejoice in it and seek to live it

out in our lives as Aquila and Priscilla did. Shall we sing hymn 141?

[00:51:02] In deep eternal counsel before the world was made, before its deep foundations on nothingness were laid, God purposed us for blessing and chose us in his Son to him to be conformed when here our course was run.

Hymn 141.