



Romans - Chapter Ten

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Summary of Chapter Ten

The first four verses conclude Paul's argument from the previous chapter and he does so with an impassioned plea that the Jews may be saved from their ignorance of the righteousness of God, which their zeal for God's law has blinded them to.

In the next passage of vv.5-13, Paul cleverly combines his own interpretation of prophecies by Moses and Joel to demonstrate the contrast between the righteousness that is by faith and the righteousness that comes from the law. Paul is saying that it is not obedience to the law the Jews should have been striving for but obedience to God through the righteousness of faith. He then uses a well known scripture which states that everyone, i.e. all creation and therefore Gentile as well as Jew, who call upon the name of the Lord will come into and under God's saving grace.

Paul then again calls on the scriptures that had been in the possession of the Jews for many generations to show two things: firstly, that it was well documented that God was one and that he was the God of all, i.e. his promises to Abraham were for all who would turn to God; and, secondly, that the prophets had clearly shown that Israel would fail to understand these scriptures, and would therefore fall from grace for their dogmatic determination to blindly follow their own interpretation of the law.

Paul then underpins his argument by calling on all three major sections of the OT: the law (Deuteronomy Chapter 32); the writings (Psalm 19), and the prophets (Isaiah Chapter 65). The readers of this letter in Rome, whether Jew, proselyte or God-worshipper, who were clearly familiar with the OT scriptures would have been well aware of the significance of the way Paul was crafting his argument as this major section reaches its climax in Chapter 11.

There are three key points in the closing part of the sub-section, which started towards the end Chapter 9:

1. God had been faithful to the covenant promises by fulfilling what he had in mind all along, although Israel had misunderstood it.

2. Membership of the family of God is reckoned by faith alone, and thus Gentiles and believing Jews are equal in full membership. Unbelieving Jews have no part in the family of faith, even if they do try to claim it by birthright.
3. The Jews, including Paul before his conversion, were claiming covenant membership by having and keeping the law. That is why they had tripped over the stone of stumbling that was the Christ.

Jesus, as the Christ, was the main aim of the Law of Moses but most of Israel had failed to see this. This is a crucial point in all of Paul's letters and we need to focus on it if we are to understand this and many other things as well. Paul's prayer was that his countrymen would still turn to follow the Messiah, who is Jesus, and Paul now goes on to explain how that could happen.

¹ Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.

Romans 10:1

The thought flows on without break. Paul does not even need to specify who it is he is referring to. The thought of Israel missing the point of the law and repeating the same old mistake, with such distressing results causes the anguish of Paul the Jew to break surface again, as it did in Romans 9:1-3 <<I speak the truth in Christ – I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit – I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race>>. His concern for Israel is deeply rooted and engages his whole person. He makes entreaty to God on their behalf, no doubt in regular prayer as such, but also in the very character of his mission and message itself: <<first for the Jew, then for the Gentile>> (Romans 1:16). His earnest desire for them is summed up in one word: 'salvation'. Salvation is the issue throughout chapters 9-11.

Paul spoke out against the Jews yet continued to pray for them that they might realise the righteousness of faith above that of the law and therefore be saved from the wrath to come, for God did not want any to be lost: <<The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance>> (2 Peter 3:9). The unbelieving Jews were enemies to Paul yet he had the grace to give them good character as the truth would bear witness, just as we should bless those that curse us: <<Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at his word: "Your brothers who hate you, and exclude you because of my name, have said, 'Let the Lord be glorified, that we may see your joy!' Yet they will be put to shame>> (Isaiah 66:5), <<But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you>> (Luke 6:27-28), <<Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse>> (Romans 12:14), and: <<We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it>> (1 Corinthians 4:12). Even if the opponents actions counter this: <<They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God>> (John 16:2).

² For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.

Romans 10:2

With much the same solemnity with which he began this section, Paul testifies to something he still finds to be truly admirable about his fellow countrymen, i.e. their zeal for God, their ardour in the practice of their religion. There is nothing cheap or dismissive in Paul's attitude here, nothing of the caricature or antagonism which a convert often uses against his former

faith. There is nothing more hypocritical than a 'holier than thou' attitude from someone who has changed towards someone else who has not. The Jews' zeal and sincerity does not lead them to salvation, however, and that remains a deep concern and indeed source of grief for Paul. The broader principle is that many sincere, religious people are wrong in their beliefs, something the church of Jesus Christ has a duty to say to them in all humility and love.

The Jews had the law and were zealous for it but their zeal is not based on knowledge. They failed to understand the laws God had given them; instead they became so attached to traditions, ceremonies and their temple that they failed to recognise the Messiah even when he was among them, perhaps especially when he was among them, providing such wonderful teaching and performing mighty miracles to help open their blind eyes: <<Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?" Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains">> (John 9:39-41). Jesus' teaching was so opposed to their understanding of the law that they would have him crucified for supposed blasphemy rather than turning to God for their long-awaited salvation. The very hope of Israel God had promised through their 'heroes' Abraham and Moses. But as Jesus once said to them: <<If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me">> (John 5:46).

At the time of Paul's ministry the power and influence of the Zealots was on the rise. They demonstrated their zeal for the law and for Israel's purity as God's people by taking up arms against the Romans in a number of skirmishes that would end up in full scale revolt in the Jewish war of AD67-70, which would cost the lives of thousands of Jews and lead to the destruction of the temple, as prophesied by Jesus: <<As he was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!" "Do you see all these great buildings?" replied Jesus. "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down">> (Mark 13:1-2).

The Zealots held out to such heroes as Phinehas, who killed a rebellious Israelite in the very act of sexual immorality: <<The Lord said to Moses, "Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, has turned my anger away from the Israelites; for he was as zealous as I am for my honour among them, so that in my zeal I did not put an end to them. Therefore tell him I am making my covenant of peace with him. He and his descendants will have a covenant of a lasting priesthood, because he was zealous for the honour of his God and made atonement for the Israelites">> (Numbers 25:10-13), Elijah: <<Then Elijah commanded them, "Seize the prophets of Baal. Don't let anyone get away!" They seized them, and Elijah had them brought down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered them there">> (1 Kings 18:40 - ESV), and the Maccabæan leader Mattathias, a priest who rebelled against the authorities leading to the war of the Maccabees against the Seleucid Greeks, which gave the Jews a one hundred year period of autonomy (164-63BC) for the first time in 400 years, which lasted until the Roman leader Pompey invaded. Their next period of autonomy commenced in AD1948.

Paul himself would at one time have been numbered among the Zealots before he encountered the Risen Lord Jesus, as Paul confirms with his own words: <<as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless">> (Philippians 3:6), and, when speaking to the Jewish crowd in Jerusalem: <<I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison">> (Acts 22:3-4).

³ Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

Romans 10:3

Unless the implication be lost on his readers, Paul goes on to explain. His reasoning might well have caused many of the first listeners to start with surprise. The Jews as a whole, surely, more than any other people, could be said to know God's saving power. They celebrated the righteousness of God accounted to Abraham in particular: <<Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness>> (Genesis 15:6); they rejoiced in the election of grace of Israel as God's chosen people: <<But God said to him, "Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned">> (Genesis 21:12), <<The Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger">> (Genesis 25:23), and once again in these words: <<And the Lord said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion">> (Exodus 33:19); they knew the same use of the concept in psalmist and through Isaiah, i.e. righteousness of God, which probably shaped Paul's understanding of it. Even the pagans at large knew something of the power and nature of God: <<The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened">> (Romans 1:18-21).

What Paul is alluding to is that many Jews did not believe in Christ because they failed to submit to God's righteousness, and instead, attempted to be righteous before God on the basis of their own works. On the contrast of the two ways to righteousness: <<Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them." Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit">> (Galatians 3:7-14).

They did not understand God's righteousness, or his total abhorrence of sin, otherwise they would have realised they could never attain justification by their works of the law but only by faith in what Jesus was proclaiming, the Gospel of grace and truth.

They had also attained a righteousness of their own through their traditions: <<Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things">> (Philippians 3:19). This can be particularly levelled at the Pharisees and the teachers of the law: <<Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men – robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector">> (Luke 18:10-11), but many ordinary Jews and some of their leaders, who were brought up on the law, were privileged to hear Jesus teach and to witness his miraculous works, yet they feared the Pharisees: <<His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue">> (John 9:22), and chose to follow them instead. They

relied on the ceremonial law for salvation yet Jesus had brought it to an end: <<Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was>> (2 Corinthians 3:7), and: <<Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith>> (Galatians 3:23-24), but only for anyone who believes. For the rest, there is now but a void.

They did not submit to God's righteousness. This last clause describes both the consequence of Israel's ignorance and a further expression of it. It was not that they had misunderstood righteousness by understanding it in terms of the law, by understanding that the covenant relation with God required obedience. Not at all, God's righteousness can only be received in humble subjection, the creature recognising its total dependence on the Creator. Israel had indeed recognised the need for obedience to the law, but unfortunately had so misunderstood what that obedience entailed that their zealous obedience had actually become disobedience, zeal attested more by sword than by love of neighbour. By pursuing obedience at the level of the flesh: <<the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so>> (Romans 8:7), in terms of ethnic and particular rituals, they showed their misunderstanding of God's righteousness; and, irony of ironies, by seeking to establish righteousness as something peculiarly theirs, they were actually putting themselves outside God's righteousness, resisting rather than receiving the saving grace of God.

⁴ Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

Romans 10:4

Paul gives a further reason explaining Israel's lack of knowledge and ignorance of God's righteousness, and provides a transition to the next phase of the argument.

End probably includes the idea of both goal and termination. The Mosaic Law has reached its goal in Christ, i.e. it looked forward to and anticipated him, and the law is no longer binding upon Christians because the old covenant has ended. Since Christ is the goal and end of the law, through its fulfilment, righteousness belongs to all who trust in Christ.

The point is that, whatever good reasons Israel had for its misunderstanding of the law and of righteousness, it is precisely these reasons that have been ended by Christ. This is what believers generally have found, that God's righteousness is now to be known apart from the law, is open to all simply on the grounds of faith, Jew and Gentile alike, i.e. everyone who believes: <<But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference>> (Romans 3:21-22).

Since v.4 has been such an important verse in the history of interpreting Paul's theology it is perhaps worth adding two further observations:

1. Paul's thought here is to be understood chiefly in terms of his salvation history perspective. Christ is the end of the law refers to the once for all transition in God's saving purpose effected by the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. It does not denote a timeless sequence which subsequent generations may expect to find constantly repeated in their own lives, as though everyone had to go through a law phase before coming to Christ. However true that may be of any number of particular individuals, it is not what Paul had in mind: <<The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord>> (Romans 5:20-21). And even if we find the note of fulfilment ringing more loudly in the word end than has been suggested so far, the

dominant note is still that of salvation history, i.e. Christ as the end of one stage of God's dealings with Israel as such and the introduction of a new stage, the climax of his purpose from the beginning.

2. In view of so much misunderstanding of Paul's theology of the law, it should be stressed that Paul neither says that the law as such has been brought to an end in Christ; how could he in the light of such assertions as: <<Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law>> (Romans 3:31), <<in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit>> (Romans 8:4), and: <<but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it>> (Romans 9:31)? Nor does he imply that the law was seen as a way of earning or meriting righteousness. That interpretation would not only give a picture of Judaism hard to square with what we know of Judaism contemporary with Paul from other sources, it would also fall foul of Paul's careful distinction between law and works of the law, expressed most clearly in Romans 3:27 <<Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith>>, and in Romans 9:31-32 <<but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone" >>.

As the context makes clear, it is not the law as such which ceased with the new era brought in by Christ, but the law seen as a way of proving righteousness, of documenting God's special regard for Israel, of marking Israel out from the other nations, the law understood in terms of works. The era of Israel's exclusive prerogative is ended; the role of the law as a badge of election is over and done. Christ has come, and with his coming the original purpose and promise of God can now be seen to extend to all nations, in accordance with its original terms, still to the Jew first but to the Gentile as well, and all alike solely in terms of the faith by which our spiritual father Abraham was justified in the beginning.

V.b.i.2 Romans 10:5-13 - The fulfilment of the covenant

Having reintroduced the idea of two eras, one characterised in terms of the law, the other in terms of faith, with Christ marking and effecting the transition, Paul proceeds to document and to reinforce it with scriptural justification.

Today, we accept that God's chosen people, i.e. the Jews, have lost their privileges, their status in the world, their priesthood, their ceremonial rituals, their temple and their holy city is no longer their own possession. Instead, God has planted his catholic church across the whole world, establishing whole catholic, Christian nations, at least for part of history, and therefore it may be difficult for us to comprehend just how big an issue this was and just how miraculous those living at the time would see the fundamental change in God's overt blessing. It was a true mystery of God.

⁵ Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: "The man who does these things will live by them."

Romans 10:5

At the start of this section Paul is referring to an attitude to the law and to righteousness which he saw to be both typical of his own people and to be now rendered out of date by Christ. Paul quotes Leviticus 18:5 regarding the righteousness that is by the law, to show that those who keep the law will attain life. This attitude, now obsolete through Christ, at least had some justification in the old era, as Moses shows. Paul seems to understand the passage in its most obvious sense, that keeping the statutes and ordinances of the law was the way of living appropriate to the covenant, which the covenant required. Moses did not say, and Paul clearly does not understand him to say, that keeping the law was a means of earning or gaining life in

the future: <<Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law>> (Galatians 3:21), and: <<I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death>> (Romans 7:10). Rather the law prescribes the life which is to be lived by the covenant people: <<See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright – but the righteous will live by his faith>> (Habakkuk 2:4). The life sustained by God is life in accordance with the regulations and institutions of the law. But as Paul has already shown, life will not come in this way since all violate the law, refer back to Romans 1:18-3:20.

This quote shows that God's law is perfect and that for righteousness to be obtained through the workings of the law then the whole law had to be kept in full obedience, something no one other than Jesus had ever achieved, even great men like Moses, Samuel, David, Solomon, or their priests came nowhere near to achieving this: <<The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them">> (Galatians 3:12). It could be seen that the great strictness and terror of the covenant of works given by the law would be more likely to lead people to Christ and to the Gospel of grace: <<For my yoke is easy and my burden is light>> (Matthew 11:30). But the Jews stuck to the works of the law as a way to justification and salvation, which in itself was hard but, due to the traditions introduced over time, had become impossible.

⁶ But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷ "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming:

Romans 10:6-8

In contrast Paul puts forward another 'speaker', not Christ, but the righteousness that is by faith. The contrast seems deliberate, since Paul would regard Moses as the author of the second quotation as well as of the first. Paul must therefore intend to identify the old era with Moses, not unnaturally, since the law and Moses would be an obvious correlation in his thought, see 2 Corinthians Chapter 3.

In vv.6-8, Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30:12-14 to show the contrast between the righteousness that is by faith and the righteousness that comes from the law. The righteousness based on faith reinterprets the OT statements and sees them now fulfilled in Christ. This is the result of the circumcised heart that enables obedience. Paul quotes from these verses to show that the Jews already had the message of faith through the scriptures. Paul shows that Moses reveals much more of Christ and shows that the way to salvation will not be hard at all for those who have faith in Messiah when he comes. Nor do we have to go searching, for the kingdom is within those who come to Jesus: <<nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you>> (Luke 17:21), the word is in their mouths: <<"As for me, this is my covenant with them," says the Lord. "My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and forever," says the Lord>> (Isaiah 59:21), and the law written on their hearts: <<"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people>> (Jeremiah 31:33).

The antithesis between law and faith at this point is of course not to be pressed too far. Paul neither confines the law to the old era nor believes that faith only becomes possible with the new era. It is a characterisation of the two eras he is striving for, not a definition, far less a complete description. In reality Leviticus Chapter 18 and Deuteronomy Chapter 30 are correlative and not antithetical at all, and is meant to encourage the keeping of the law, but

Paul makes a striking change to the meaning of the second text by omitting the final few words. Deuteronomy 30:14 should in fact read: <<No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it>>, whereas Paul quotes only: <<The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart>>. But what is more surprising still is the way in which Paul's interpretation of the passage seems to change its sense completely, where Deuteronomy speaks of the commandment as being neither too far away nor too hard, Paul interprets it of Christ: 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down) "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead); and where Deuteronomy refers to the commandment when it speaks of the word, Paul interprets it of the Gospel: "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming.

However, the contrast between Deuteronomy's original meaning and Paul's interpretation of it is not so sharp as at first appears and it has already been noted in the antithesis implied in vv.5-6, so it can be concluded there is no need to ascend into heaven to bring Christ down to earth, for God has already sent him into the world. Nor should anyone think they must bring Christ up from the realm of the dead, for God has already raised Christ from the dead, and he now lives forever, never to face death again; defeating the sting of death for all time. What God requires is not superhuman works but faith in the Gospel Paul preaches.

⁹ That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

Romans 10:9-10

If you confess with your mouth does not mean that a spoken affirmation of one's faith is a 'work' that merits justification, but such confession does give outward evidence of inward faith, and often confirms that faith to the speaker himself. So we can see just how easy God has made it for all to come to faith, which is the key component, for through faith we have to accept Jesus as Lord, profess him both with our hearts and with our mouths that he is Lord over our lives, that he is sovereign and to renounce all others, including the attractions of the worldly flesh, but have only him as Lord. To ask for the forgiveness of sins, whether deeds, thoughts or inaction, to accept that Jesus died for our individual sins but was raised again to life through the power of God's Holy spirit, and continues to live forever, and to lay ourselves open to receive the Holy Spirit into our hearts.

That God raised him from the dead. Paul does not mean that people need to believe only this individual event with no understanding of Christ's death, but rather they need to believe in the resurrection along with the whole complex of truth connected with it, particularly Jesus' sin-bearing death in mankind's place, followed by his resurrection that showed God the Father's approval of Christ's work; see comments made on Romans 4:25.

With your heart that you believe. Saving faith is not mere intellectual agreement but deep inward trust in Christ at the core of one's being.

¹¹ As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

Romans 10:11

That the thrust of Paul's thought is still directed toward exposing and explaining his fellow countrymen's misunderstanding of their own scripture is confirmed by the way he rounds off the present paragraph. Paul again cites Isaiah 28:16, as he did in Romans 9:33, to emphasise that trusting in Christ and not works of righteousness, is the pathway to salvation. Trust can be

translated as faith and has the same intended meaning that we encounter in Deuteronomy Chapter 30.

The mutual applicability of both passages to Christ no doubt served for Paul as confirmation that he was interpreting both correctly. The one alteration Paul makes is significant. He changes 'the one' to anyone at the beginning. Thereby he universalises what, in its narrower context, had primary reference to Israel, just as in v.10 he generalised the truth expressed by Deuteronomy 30:14. In neither case would Paul think the procedure illegitimate, simply because it is a firmly rooted conviction on Paul's part that the privileges, initially given to the Israelites: <<the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen>> (Romans 9:4-5), including the giving of the law, always had the nations as a whole in view. It is a new and climactic stage of God's purpose, achieved in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, which has brought that wider purpose into focus and triggered off its universal implementation.

Paul's use of scripture in this way may throw up a couple of issues for us to consider. The first is that we should not be unduly concerned that Paul uses scripture in this way. He was after all a Pharisaic Jew, rigorously trained in the law by Gamaliel and he had also received divine revelation and instruction into how to interpret scripture and the Gospel message. The second point is to warn, however, that most of us should not try to emulate this to make our own point unless we too receive such divine revelation or have been specifically gifted in such in-depth bible teaching which few have.

Shame here refers to the end-time humiliation that those judged on the last day will experience when they are sent to hell.

This is such an easy thing when we consider the eternal rewards. We give God our souls by believing with our hearts and our bodies by confessing with our mouths: <<and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father>> (Philippians 2:11). If we do this with all sincerity, but not forgetting that God knows the secrets of the heart: <<would not God have discovered it, since he knows the secrets of the heart?>> (Psalm 44:21), we will be saved. To this end, Paul quotes Isaiah 28:16 here in v.11.

¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³ for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Romans 10:12-13

The implication of the added 'anyone' in v.11 is spelled out in the sequence of three explanatory clauses.

There is no difference between Jew and Gentile. The assertion so simply made would be astonishing to any members of the Roman church congregations less familiar with the basic assertions of the Gentile mission: <<For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink>> (1 Corinthians 12:13), and: <<There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus>> (Galatians 3:28). The distinction between Greek and barbarian has been rendered less widely applicable by the spread of Hellenism, but the distinction between Jew and Gentile was still basic to Jewish thought. And for all that Paul had emphasised 'to Gentile as well as Jew' earlier in the letter, he had still emphasised the priority of the Jews: <<I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile>> (Romans 1:16), and: <<There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honour and peace for everyone who does good:

first for the Jew, then for the Gentile>> (Romans 2:9-10), and confirmed their special privileges under the covenant: <<What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God>> (Romans 3:1-2). What Paul is asserting is that he who first gave his covenant grace to Israel alone has now broadened it out to include anyone, and on the same terms: faith; what was always called for by the law, faith from the heart in the one who gave the covenant, can now be re-expressed as faith in the one through whose resurrection and exaltation God has broadened out the same covenant. In terms of historic privilege, Israel is still distinctive. In terms of the righteousness of God open to anyone, there is now no difference between Jew and Greek.

God bestows his saving riches on all, both Jews and Gentiles, who call on him — for, as Paul quotes from Joel 2:32, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Starting both clauses with for might also have caused some surprise, for Paul seems deliberately to merge the role of Jesus as Lord with that of God himself. In calling Christ Lord of all he echoes, no doubt deliberately, the argument used earlier: <<Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith>> (Romans 3:29-30). If Jews believe God is one, then he must be God of Gentiles as well as Jews; so if Christ is Lord of all, he is Lord of both Jew and Gentile. Moreover, he speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ as one who richly blesses all who call on him, where the most obvious connotation is of calling in prayer or entreaty on a divinity who might be expected to provide help from his abundant resources. Paul would hardly be unaware of how frequently the scriptures speak of calling upon the name of the Lord, e.g. <<Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done>> (1 Chronicles 16:8), <<I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD>> (Psalm 116.13), and: <<I called on your name, O LORD, from the depths of the pit>> (Lamentations 3:55), as well as the Joel 2:32 reference Paul uses here.

Deuteronomy Chapters 28-30 were written near to the end of Moses' life and hence his esteemed leadership of Israel, which he had held for 40 years or so from the time of the Exodus from Egypt, through the wilderness years to arrive at the borders of the Promised Land. These were chapters that the Jews of Paul's day, who were now under the yoke of foreign oppression and had been for much of the past 500 years, took particular interest in studying, for they were scriptures which tell the story of what is going to happen to Israel in the days to come. If Israel were to keep God's commandments, God promises blessings; if they do not, he warns of curses to come, and the worst of all the curses is that the Jewish nation will be driven out of the Promised Land to be scattered among the other nations of the world. Only a remnant of those who went into Babylonian exile, a few people who had been allowed to remain in the land, and a small remnant that had returned over the years from various lands, now lived in a small part of it, but did not possess the Promised Land. That is what Deuteronomy Chapters 28-29 are all about.

But then Deuteronomy Chapter 30 has a fresh promise to which God commits himself. After Israel is sent into exile they will not be abandoned; for God promises that if they turn back to him, even while in exile, he will once again restore them. Most specifically, he promises to transform them, to change their hearts so that they can at least keep his law the way he had always intended them to. It won't be a matter of people needing to climb up to heaven to get at the law; they won't have to go across the sea to find it. It will come and find them! Then the exile will be over; the curse will be undone; Israel will be saved.

All this may seem a bit obscure to the reader until we remember that Paul is still struggling with the question as to how unbelieving Jews will come to recognise that these scriptures are being fulfilled in his current generation. The answer to his own desire and prayer is threefold:

1. God has unveiled his salvation, a single way for all people as vv.11-13 make clear;
2. God has brought it near to them, as indeed to everybody, in a new way, for which different types of obedience to the original law become irrelevant;
3. All who openly acknowledge Jesus as Lord, and believe in their hearts that God raised him from the dead, are thereby wearing the badge which declares, in the present, that they are those whom God will save, vindicate and declare to be his people in the future.

This is where Paul's famous doctrine of justification by faith meets several of the other main themes in his thinking and writing. In order to make the connection between the Gospel of Jesus and the promises of Deuteronomy, Paul quotes two other texts: Isaiah 28:16 and Joel 2:32.

What Paul has done here is expounded an essentially OT doctrine of salvation, composed his own variation on it, and shown that it has been fulfilled in Jesus the Christ. Israel has been longing for salvation; God has provided it as promised to them from the beginning. The Jews have to do just two things to be saved: believe in Jesus as their promised Messiah; and accept they must share him with everyone else.

V.b.i.3 Romans 10:14-21 - The call to the world, and the failure of Israel

It is becoming steadily clearer that Paul's intention is to explain the rejection of the Gospel by Israel, as rooted in their failure to understand their own law and their own scriptures. The bulk of his fellow Jews have misunderstood the law of righteousness in terms of works; they have focused too much on the level of outward actions and national customs, and had failed to appreciate what obedience from the heart involves; and most of all they have failed to see how scripture pointed to the Messiah as one whose resurrection and exaltation effects the end of the old era of Israel's exclusive privilege and the beginning of the wider extension of God's saving purpose; an eschatological end that God always had in view from the first promise to Abraham and indeed the disobedience of Adam. But why the misunderstanding and rejection by the majority of Israel of what seems so obvious to Paul himself? Why is Israel not calling on the Lord for salvation as encouraged to do so by Joel? Paul has already hinted at a deeper and more profound answer in Romans 9:14-23. But evidently he is not yet ready to develop that hint to a fuller statement. However, there is an alternative explanation which demands at least a brief treatment. And to this he now turns, almost as though he hesitates to clear the ground of alternative explanations, to make it all the more convincing that the explanation of Israel's failure must lie ultimately within the purpose of God.

Jew and Gentile stand in equality before God: <<Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all>> (Colossians 3:11). He does not accept one because he is a Jew and reject the other because he is a Greek, but he accepts either or both according to the terms of the Gospel of Christ. Despite the privileges he had given to Israel in terms of them having the covenant promises and the law, which they could not keep and received due punishment, God remains a faithful Father to all mankind, showing no favour or discrimination in the family of his children. For our part, to have his favours, all we have to do is enquire of him or make our plea to him: <<This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Once again I will yield to the plea of the house of Israel and do this for them: I will make their people as numerous as sheep>> (Ezekiel 36:37).

Verses 14-15 will show the need for the Gospel to be proclaimed and taught as widely and as frequently as possible. The Jews were angry with Paul that he took the Gospel to the Gentles and yet his style was always to go to the Jews first and only when they had rejected him did he turn to the Gentiles. Paul all but dismisses the argument looked at before on predetermination by concurring with the prophet Joel and noting that: <<And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved>> (Joel 2:32a), as with all the other requirements for salvation the key to this is prayer; and the appropriateness of talking of God's riches toward mankind is

hardly unfamiliar to him: <<Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realising that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?>> (Romans 2:4), and: <<What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory>> (Romans 9:23). The most striking of all is the way in which he cites Joel 2:32, evidently with the full intention of referring it to the Lord Jesus. This hope and promise held out in Joel with reference to the God of Israel, Paul refers without any apparent qualm to the exalted Christ, as did Peter at Pentecost (Acts 2:16-22).

The point Paul is making is not a Christological one; rather it is a salvation history point. At its simplest, he is stressing the complete continuity between God's purpose, through his covenant with Israel, and the climax of that purpose in Christ. The remnant of Judah, who according to Joel will be saved, are once again to be identified as those who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus. But there is more involved in Paul's thought than that, for it is precisely through the exaltation of Christ, to his right hand, that God can now be seen to exercise his lordship as a lordship overall, Gentile as well as Jew; for in fact it is through Christ's exaltation that God has extended his effective lordship and covenanted authority to all nations; a point Paul might easily draw from the combination of: <<The Lord says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet">> (Psalm 110:1), and: <<You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet>> (Psalm 8:6), which was already well established in primitive Christian apologetic, particularly in Paul's thinking: <<For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he "has put everything under his feet." Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ>> (1 Corinthians 15:25-27). Now that God has acted in and through Christ to bring in the final stage of his purpose for all mankind, the Jew can no longer claim special rights of access to God which were unavailable to the uncircumcised Gentiles, but must recognise that God has so disposed himself that access is hence forth through Christ. Paul does not shrink from the boldness of his conclusions. It is not simply that the extension of God's grace to all has ended Israel's special covenant privileges as privileges enjoyed by Jews alone. It is also that God, who showed himself to be concerned for all mankind in raising Christ from the dead and exalting him to his right hand, cannot now be understood or recognised other than in terms of this Christ. In committing himself to act so decisively in and through Christ, he obliged men and women to recognise God in Christ, and to address themselves to God through Christ. Thus it is now through this Christ that all will be saved, share in the final wholeness of God's fulfilled purpose for the world, and that anyone (see v.11) includes Jew as well as Gentile. This is the seriousness of Israel's plight so long as it continues to reject the Gospel. To reject the word of faith is to reject its own covenant as now transposed into universal terms by Christ; to turn our back on Christ is to refrain from making that appeal to God in and through Christ by which salvation comes, the salvation for which Paul prayed in v.1.

¹⁴ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵ And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Romans 10:14-15

How, then? With a series of rhetorical questions, Paul considers the chain of events necessary for a person to be saved. Verse 14 is linked to v.13 with the word call.

The logic of these verses is clear:

1. People will call on Jesus to save them only if they believe he can do so.
2. Belief in Christ cannot exist without knowledge about him.
3. One hears about Christ only when someone proclaims the saving message.
4. The message about Christ will not be proclaimed unless someone is sent by God to do so.

That is why Paul was so urgent about spreading the Gospel to the ends of the earth, for he believed that the only way to be saved was to hear and believe in the Gospel. See comments made on Romans 1:19-20. Paul is not talking here about OT believers who looked forward to Christ, such as Abraham and David in Chapter 4, nor is he talking about infants who die in infancy. Since salvation comes only from hearing the Gospel, the feet of those who bring the message about Christ are beautiful (Isaiah 52:7), probably because the feet carry the messengers to their destinations, i.e. it is not their aesthetic appearance but the purpose of the feet that is important in this text.

In order for the Gospel to be proclaimed and understood then someone must be sent to do so, and God does this: <<He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field">> (Luke 10:2). But frequently he relies on those he gifts and calls to this ministry, to then identify and equip others to be sent out in order to continue the work.

The quote from Isaiah 52:7 is very similar to the verse found in Nahum 1:15 <<Look, there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaims peace! Celebrate your festivals, O Judah, and fulfil your vows. No more will the wicked invade you; they will be completely destroyed>>, which talks of glad tidings for those to be delivered from Babylon, now it looks to those who will be delivered into the kingdom of God through Christ Jesus. It speaks of a Gospel of peace, the arrival of which was first proclaimed to us by the angels in Luke 2:14 <<"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests">>. The beautiful feet of Christ were washed by the tears of a sinful woman in Luke 7:37-38 <<When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them>>, and as he sent them forth to bring good news to the world, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples: <<After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him>> (John 13:5). The feet of those who bring the good news, i.e. Christ's disciples, are to have beautiful feet, i.e. beautiful lives and conversation, and we are to love and respect them for that: <<Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other>> (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

¹⁶ But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?"

Romans 10:16

Hearing the Gospel is necessary for salvation, but hearing it is not enough: people must also respond to it with personal trust. Isaiah prophesies that not all who hear it will believe. In the context of Romans Chapters 9-11, Paul is thinking especially of the Jews who did not believe it.

Not all the Israelites accepted the good news. Paul's immediate reaction to the Isaiah quotation is to recall that not all have obeyed the Gospel call, the first time in this section that he has brought himself to express Israel's failure so bluntly. Only some Jews have given the

response of faith to the Gospel, just as Isaiah had predicted. This sudden interjection reveals that the thought of the remnant, and the anguished puzzle of why all of Israel has not believed the good news of Christ, is still uppermost in Paul's mind. This remains even more of a puzzle for Paul when he shows them that not only did their own scriptures show quite clearly from the beginning what God's plan for all creation was, i.e. it was not just for the Jew, but Paul also shows that from the same scriptures, God has shown that he knew Israel would not understand them!

The Gospel is not only to be known, understood and believed, it is to be obeyed, but few, either Jew or Gentile, do fully accept it as foretold by Isaiah: <<Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?>> (Isaiah 53:1). When it is accepted, it must be accepted as the word of God, just as the OT scriptures were accepted by the Jews: <<And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe>> (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

¹⁷ Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

Romans 10:17

Paul now sums up the argument thus far. One can come to faith only through hearing the Gospel, and the specific message that must be heard is the word of Christ, that is, the good news about Jesus Christ as the crucified and risen Saviour. Paul's conviction remains that faith in Christ is the obedience the law now calls for.

A key aspect of the Gospel message is that salvation is by faith, for he that comes to God in prayer must believe in him whom he makes the supplications to: <<But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name>> (John 20:31), and: <<And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him>> (Hebrews 11:6).

The rhetorical chain of vv.14-15 most naturally invited a possible explanation of Israel's unbelief in terms of their not having heard, or of their not having the preachers sent to them. And that indeed is the way Paul develops the point in v.18. He could have reverted to the chain of questions by asking, 'Why have they not believed? Have they not heard?' But instead he uses the link word 'message', or report in some translations, given to him in Isaiah 53:1, to summarise the progression leading to faith in a way which also draws in the earlier exposition of Deuteronomy 30:11-14: 'So then faith comes from (hearing) the report, and hearing (the report) through the (preached) word of Christ'. 'The word of Christ' is 'the report' of 'the preachers', 'the Gospel', 'the word of faith', which directs faith to Christ.

¹⁸ But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did:

"Their voice has gone out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world."

¹⁹ Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says,

"I will make you envious by those who are not a nation;
I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding."

Romans 10:18-19

Did they not hear the message probably refers to the Jewish people, see v.1 and vv.19-20. Paul quotes Psalm 19:4, where King David refers, of course, to the testimony of the heavens to the

glory of their creator. But the fact that the passage speaks of the revelatory testimony at all is sufficient to enable Paul to apply it as a special revelation, i.e. the proclamation of the Gospel, to emphasise that the Jews have heard the good news because the Gospel has gone even to the ends of the world, i.e. to the Gentiles. Israel should have understood from the prophecy given through Moses: <<They made me jealous by what is no god and angered me with their worthless idols. I will make them envious by those who are not a people; I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding>> (Deuteronomy 32:21), that the Gentiles would believe. In Deuteronomy 32:21, Moses' song had spoken of God's response to Israel's unfaithfulness: <<"I will hide my face from them," he said, "and see what their end will be; for they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful>> (Deuteronomy 32:20), in particularly striking terms - God would provoke his wayward sons to jealousy over a people that is not a nation; he would make them angry over a foolish nation. The future tenses encouraged the readers of Paul's day to treat the passage as a prophecy, and to see in the phrase not a nation as a reference to other nations of later days, e.g. the Philistines, Samaritans, Assyrians, Babylonians, etc. Paul refers to the current situation, either because he thinks the first claim to fulfilment of such a prophecy has to be eschatological; that is, it refers to the end period or the new age; or because he sees in Deuteronomy 32:21 prophecy of a recurring pattern in God's dealings with his people. Either way, Israel ought to have seen in the positive response of the Gentiles to the Gospel of Christ Jesus a fulfilment of Deuteronomy 32:21, not to mention Hosea 1:10 and 2:23; refer back to Romans 9:25-26.

What is still more significant about Deuteronomy 32:21 for Paul is that it also provides him with a clear indication of how God intends to resolve the so distressing riddle of Israel's failure to believe. He will provoke them to jealousy. This is a first hint of the full resolution Paul will shortly unveil: <<Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring! I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches>> (Romans 11:11-16).

But Paul would not leave it at that. For it is not simply that Israel has heard the word of faith, but failed to grasp the connection between the law and Christ, which it provided; not simply that Israel's misunderstanding of the law has caused most of Paul's fellow Jews to mishear the Gospel. It is also a fact that Israel has ignored so many of its own scriptures, which are now being fulfilled in Israel's rejection and the Gentile nation's acceptance of the word of faith. They should have known what to expect. So they are doubly without excuse. They have heard the Gospel, and they should have grasped the significance of such scriptures as Paul now uses here.

The Gospel was then being taken into all the earth, had already reached the heart of the Roman Empire and was being taken further to reach many other parts, even Britain in the centuries to come. This world-wide proclamation of the Gospel was alluded to by David in Psalm 19:4. As Romans 15:20-24 indicates, the word had probably not gone out, at least in any significant or structured way, to areas in the south western parts of the Empire and the Jews living in those areas may not have heard the Gospel, but in general, many had and the trend was clearly one of rejection.

The Jews knew the Gentiles would be given the word of God: <<They made me jealous by what is no god and angered me with their worthless idols. I will make them envious by those who are not a people; I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding>> (Deuteronomy 32:21), but it had been given to them first: <<When God

raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways>> (Acts 3:26).

The introduction of Psalm 19 may have come as a surprise to indicate that God's hidden yet powerful message had gone out into the entire world, and that the Gentiles had a revelation of God. Thus the Gentile world does indeed know of its creator and, in principle at least, of the rescue of creation through the Gospel. But this only makes it more poignant, more puzzling, that Israel itself has not believed the Gospel.

God made the basic promises of salvation to Israel; Israel clung on to them, often in the belief that they were for their nation and nobody else. But, as Paul has stressed on many occasions, the promises were intended to work through Israel for the benefit of the rest of the world. What will happen, then, when God acts through Christ to fulfil his original intention even though Israel itself clings to its own misinterpretation of the promises and, like the older brother in Jesus' parable, stays away from the party? First consider these words from the NT.

Many Jews and Gentiles did not receive it when it was given to them, and it is to their own destruction they did not do so. And when the Prodigal Gentiles did accept the message then their older brother, the Jews, envied and resented their welcome home party: <<Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'">> (Luke 15:25-30), <<When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying>> (Acts 13:45), <<But the Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd>> (Acts 17:5), <<When the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God at Berea, they went there too, agitating the crowds and stirring them up>> (Acts 17:13), and: <<The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, "Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!">> (Acts 22:22).

The answer is Israel will be jealous, because, as Paul said: <<What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it>> (Romans 9:30-31), Gentiles will be inheriting the promises while Israel, the promise bearers, are missing out on them. The Gentiles are a non-nation in terms of the covenant: <<and, "It will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God'">> (Romans 9:26), and: <<remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world>> (Ephesians 2:12), and they are 'foolish' because they lack the wisdom God has made available to Israel in the law: <<if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth>> (Romans 2:19-20). But God will call precisely this people to arouse Israel to jealousy and anger. This will seem like bad news but in the next chapter Paul will turn that around.

²⁰ And Isaiah boldly says,

“I was found by those who did not seek me;
I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me.”

²¹ But concerning Israel he says,

“All day long I have held out my hands
to a disobedient and obstinate people.”

Romans 10:20-21

Paul's favourite prophet, Isaiah, also gives him another text whose significance Israel ought to have recognised - Isaiah 65:1-2, in which, Isaiah speaks boldly and clearly of the rejection by God of his own countrymen, while sending the light of the Gospel to the Gentiles, even though they did not ask for it nor sought God beforehand. However, there is hope for those Jews who are bold enough to also hear this message. The prophecy of Isaiah 65:1 has been fulfilled in that the Gentiles, who did not seek after God, have now experienced God's saving promises. Israel, on the other hand, has fulfilled the words of Isaiah 65:2. The passage as a whole probably had Israel itself in view originally, but as its wording went, it could be understood as a reference to those that have rebelled against and disobeyed the Gospel message. Still, God extends his hands to them, inviting them to be saved.

On the one hand, God predestines some to be saved. On the other hand, God still longs for all to be saved: Elsewhere, Paul writes: <<who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth>> (1 Timothy 2:4). Evangelistic prayer for all people is rooted in the fact that God desires all people to be saved. In his letter to Timothy at least and perhaps here also, it appears that Paul is countering an exclusivist tendency in the false teachers, or at least their downplaying of the importance of evangelising the Gentiles, along with their emphasis on the Jewish law. This statement figures prominently in theological disagreements over the extent of the atonement. It cannot be read as suggesting that everyone will be saved, i.e. universalism, because the rest of the letter to Timothy makes it clear that some will not be saved. Does that mean God desires something, i.e. all people being saved, that he cannot fulfil? Both Arminian and Calvinist theologians respond that God desires something more than universal salvation. Arminians hold that God's greater desire is to preserve genuine human freedom, which is necessary for genuine love, and therefore he must allow that some may choose to reject his offer of salvation. Calvinists hold that God's greater desire is to display the full range of his glory: <<What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath — prepared for destruction? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory>> (Romans 9:22-23), which results in election depending upon the freedom of his mercy and not upon human choice: <<For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: “I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden>> (Romans 9:15-18). However one understands the extent of the atonement, this passage clearly teaches the free and universal offer of the Gospel to every single human being; God's desires shows that this offer is a bona fide expression of God's good will.

God has stated a similar sentiment elsewhere. For example, <<Say to them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?’>> (Ezekiel 33:11), where clearly the prophet is relaying God's desire for his

chosen people to follow the statutes that God had given them, especially the first commandment.

The message was given to them with outstretched hands, i.e. held out my hands, as with Paul in Acts 26:1 <<Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defence>>, Solomon indicates that it can be a futile gesture: <<But since you rejected me when I called and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand>> (Proverbs 1:24), although not so with Christ as his hands were stretched out and nailed to a tree!

Imagine being the chosen people of the one creator God, and then turning your back when he came calling and stretching out his hands to offer you the very thing you had been waiting for all along. Yet this is what Isaiah saw Israel doing: refusing to believe, and indeed contradicting God, disagreeing with his word; just as now, in Paul's experience, they were speaking against the new word of the Gospel. Jesus had also spoken of just this situation in the Parable of the Great Banquet: <<When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God." Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' " But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.' " Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.' " Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.' " The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.' " "Sir," the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.' " Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet'" >> (Luke 14:15-24).

Although it may seem impossible to understand how both of these statements that God predestines some to be saved and desires all who call on the name of the Lord to be saved are true, the Bible teaches both, and one should not use either truth to deny the other. All of it is done in accordance with the will of God.

The Father chooses Christians in his Son, Christ Jesus, and this took place in eternity past, before the foundation of the world. This indicates, for all eternity, the Father has had the role of leading and directing among the persons of the Trinity, i.e. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. However, it does not indicate any hierarchical structure within the God Head for all are equally God.

God's election of Christians entails his predestining them to something significant, i.e. to adoption as sons, including both male and female believers. Hence, election and predestination in this context refer to God's decision to save someone. God's predestination gives his people tremendous comfort, for they know that all who come to Christ do so through God's enabling grace and appointment.

Since God is outside of time, eternity is not constrained by time either. For God everything is simultaneous and not linear - everything is laid out before him, it just is. Therefore, there is a tension between free will and predestination but not a contradiction.

Tom Wright ends this chapter by stating: 'Of course the story doesn't end there. Paul has set up the problem in its starkest terms, ready for the next chapter, in which he will tackle it from a fresh angle. But we would do well to stop and ponder the strange path by which the Gospel first made its way into the world, humbling the proud and lifting up the lowly. Is that what happens with the preaching of the Gospel today? If not, why not?'