

## Paul's Letter to the Romans:



THE PINNACLE OF  
CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

### And So All Israel Will Be Saved...

#### Romans 11:11-36

We come today to the end of our present study of Romans and I for one, more than likely the only one, am sad to see it go. Paul's great theological treatise on the glory of the doctrine of justification always ministers to and strengthens my soul and if properly taught also strengthens the soul of God's people. I have done the best I could in that regard. There is something about contemplating God's great work of redemption that just springboards a Christian into a life of obedience, and it does that not by means of compulsion but from gratitude.

It seems to me that Romans, the Epistle to the Romans, provides a wonderful impetus to study theology. Now I had hoped to get to chapter twelve today and I intended to be particularly clever and to note for you that chapter twelve is the beginning of the ethical section of Romans. Here's what I mean by that.

Chapters 1-11 contain Paul's theological understanding of the gospel. It can be subdivided and I have done that along the way but basically it is about the gospel: why we need the gospel, how the gospel is applied to believers, implications of the gospel for the life of faith, and Israel and the gospel. Chapters 12-15 contain Paul's ethical instructions and chapter 16 contains a lengthy list of greetings and goodbyes.

Anyway, I intended to remind you that there has been no practical application of Paul's teaching or no ethical application of his teaching up until now and that that fact might indeed be useful for to remember in the pursuit of our own holiness and sanctification.<sup>1</sup> I had intended to entitle this lesson, **"For Those Still Wanting A List"**. You see Paul doesn't really get to anything like a full-blown list until he gets to chapter 12.

When he gets to chapter twelve, he starts a long list of ethical applications but then, even then, he starts off with a reminder of God's wondrous mercy in the gospel.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 12:1**...Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship.

You see for Paul the basis of ethical behavior is not fear of hell, not hope of heaven or even hope of reward. For Paul, the basis for ethical behavior is what Christ has already done. Paul would say this, **"It's not what you or I can do to somehow get into His good favor. We are already in Christ. We are already in His favor. And since that is true, how are you going to live now?"**

There is a great story about a young man that once went up to Luther and said to him, **"You know Dr. Luther, by the gospel you preach, I can live any way I want."**

**"That's right!"** said Luther. **"Now how do you want to live?"**

That's a wondrous truth, I think.

And we ought to have seen that truth coming in Romans 6. You will remember there, I hope, that Paul issued his first command in Romans and yet it was not really a command in the usual sense. You see Paul's command was for his readers to begin to think theologically. In view of these truths, think like this. The way he actually says it is like this.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 6:11**...In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Do you see what I mean? We are to be gospel men and women. We are to let the truth of our redemption in Christ simply ooze out of every pore of our life. That will motivate us to gratitude and gratitude is, I think, the only enduring stimulus to holiness we have.

I come from a tradition that was heavy on the motivational side of holiness but they got it all wrong. It wasn't the least bit common for a man to stand in the pulpit and preach for hours on the vileness of movies, dancing, rock and roll and mixed bathing and you know some of things are wicked and we ought to be careful how we get connected to them. But a list in and of itself is no proper motivation to holiness. In fact, a list can be a deceitful thing because we can convince ourselves that if we check each of these items of our list we have holiness nailed down perfectly. But that is not the way of biblical Christianity at all. In fact, biblical Christianity always drives us back to Christ. Whenever we apply ourselves to do the law, we grow frustrated and discouraged and we turn our face toward Christ and we take our consolation there and think to ourselves, **"You know He has done that for me."** So we reapply ourselves to live in righteous gratitude before Him. So we set about to do that and fail and we see our failure and we turn to Christ again. And so it goes with us repeating the

process all over again, plodding through the Christian life making only incremental advances all our days. That is biblical Christianity. The Christian life is not a thing like rocketry where we blast through the upper atmosphere into a realm of holiness and complete sanctification. It's not like that at all. It's like a long and winding staircase. We take a step and rest awhile and then get up and go on again, ever driven, ever plodding along because of the knowledge of what Christ has accomplished on our behalf.

Chapter 12, verse one does much the same kind of thing. I mean any verse that tells us to present our bodies a living sacrifice in view of God's mercy is asking us first to think of God's mercy. Isn't that right?

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 12:1**...Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship.

Now what is the mercy that Paul is asking us to consider? The mercy that Paul wanted the Romans to consider was the great justifying work of the Lord Jesus. He believed that if they understood the great work of justification and all that Christ had wrought on their behalf they could not help but be affected.<sup>3</sup>

I think when your heart grows cold, when you heart grows cold to the idea of obedience and holiness...the only way out of that is to ponder your sin and then to ponder what Christ has done to bear the burden of your sin. I think when a person does that they will keep their heart warm and that's important, don't you think? It's so easy to rock along in the Christian life and to become indolent and indifferent to what Christ has actually accomplished. Let me say it this way, "**Do you realize you are at peace with God?**" You don't have to do anything to be at peace with God. If you are trusting in Christ, you are at peace with God right

now. You are at peace with God and God will guard you through this life and into His presence in eternity. All is well. Now, brothers and sisters if that doesn't move you to gratitude you may need to reach over and check and see if there is any spiritual pulse there at all. That is the glory of the Christian faith.

And you know, as one of your pastors, I have tried to ask you to do the same. You see, brothers and sisters, our safety is not in the mile wide, inch deep, hot button topics of this present evil age. Our hope, our comfort is in the deep. And by the "**deep**" I mean the wondrous love of God displayed in our salvation and in the glorious doctrine of justification.

So when you return to Romans in your devotional studies put in in chapter 1 or chapter 3 or chapter 5 or chapter 7 or 8. Don't put in at chapter twelve. Don't put in at chapter twelve unless you have firmly implanted in your mind the glory of the doctrine of justification and all that Christ has accomplished for you because that's the fuel that will fuel the engine of gratitude that will allow us to press along in perseverance in our quest for holiness and sanctification. Without that kind of gratitude I guarantee you, you will only have one result; you will be disappointed, frustrated and heartbroken. But as you look to Christ and all that He has wrought for you your heart will be warmed with gratitude and that will keep you going when times are really, really, really dark.

Chapter twelve is right and proper for you to read but it is pointless unless you have the foundation laid to apply it and that foundation is in chapters 1-11.

Now in chapters nine through eleven, we have seen over the last few weeks that Paul has really been answering this question. **"Can the promises of God really be trusted if He made all those wondrous promises to the Old Testament**

**saints and yet the Jews do not currently believe? Are His promises trustworthy? And if they were not trustworthy with regard to the Jews are they trustworthy with regard to us?"**

Paul answered that question by saying, **"Yes the promises of God are trustworthy. There was always and elect remnant of God."**

Now what I would like for you to do is turn in your Bible to Romans 11:11 and we'll put in there. I am reading from Romans 11:11.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 11:11**...Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery?

He is, of course, talking about the nation of Israel here. He is asking, **"Did the nation of Israel stumble so as to fall beyond recovery?"** And we have his answer in the very next verse.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 11:11**...Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious.

That's a remarkable verse don't you think? His point is simply this, **"It is true that the nation of Israel has by and large rejected the Messiah and then the gospel was turned to the Gentiles and in God's wise plan the reason for that was to make Israel envious or as the KJV has it 'jealous'.**

Now does that seem unusual to you that Paul would make that point, that the salvation of the Gentiles or their being drawn close to God would be used by God to make the Jewish nation envious or jealous? Well that is Paul's point and we discussed it at length that last week, so let's move on now to verse twelve where Paul is going to draw a wonderful conclusion.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 11:12**...But if their transgression means riches for the world...(And here's what he means by that, **"If their rejection of the gospel means that the rest of the world winds up being blessed"**)...and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!

And here's his point, **"If their rejection of the gospel moved the gospel over into the Gentile world and brought them into the faith, imagine what would happen if the Jewish people were to believe and the whole realm of the elect Jewish nation were to come forth and exercise faith in Christ."** And that really is going to be the topic he is going to discuss in the rest of chapter eleven and I need to take a minute and briefly explain to you why there are those that see a problem with that.

You see there are really two ways to understand the nation of Israel (Of course, I am only talking about views within the reformed faith here). Historically, there have been two views in the reformed world concerning the nation of Israel. The first view says that God is through altogether with Israel, that individual Jews may be saved along the way and incorporated in the church but that God is otherwise completely through with the nation of Israel. **In other words, the church has replaced Israel.** That is the historical view held by men of the Reformation, men like Calvin. And it is the preferred view of the Reformation.<sup>4</sup>

But there is a newer group of Reformed commentators in the world today starting really with Charles Hodge and leading on to men like James Montgomery Boice and R.C. Sproul that say, **"I am not so sure about that. I am not so sure that God is altogether through with the nation of Israel. It seems to me,"** all three of those men, Boice, Sproul and Hodge, would say is, **"that God is saying there may indeed be something out there in the future for Israel."**

Now they are careful about defining what that means but what they do see in chapter eleven and I want to be very clear about this, is the idea of hope for the nation of Israel. Now, it is not all that remarkable that Boice and Sproul should hold that view. After all they are contemporaries of our day; they can look on the television and see that there is a nation of Israel. No, the remarkable man in that group is Charles Hodge. He is remarkable because he came to that view seventy-five years before there was a nation of Israel. Hodge's point was that in chapter eleven Paul seems to be saying there is some great hope of revival in the future for national, ethnic Israel in which they will be drawn to the gospel.<sup>5</sup>

Now understanding that those are the two great Reformed views concerning the nation of Israel, you will be able to follow me as I go through the text and allude to one view or the other. One view says, **"No future for Israel at all"** and the other says, **"Maybe a future for Israel, maybe a wondrous future for Israel."**

Now both views are in the Reformed tradition. All right then, let's look at the next verse starting in verse thirteen.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 11:13**...I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry <sup>14</sup> in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them.

Now that is a remarkable verse and what Paul is basically saying is this, **"I make a big deal out of being the Apostle to the Gentiles. I talk about it everywhere I go. I don't ever let. Up. I am relentless in talking about this wondrous grace God has given me to take the gospel to the Gentiles and the reason I do that is because I want some of my Jewish brothers to come to faith and I think this will move them, will get to them and they will respond in faith and that's my heart's desire."**

Now look at verse fifteen.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 11:15**...For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

I think it is obvious that verse fifteen is parallel to verse twelve. Both seem to be saying that if rejection led to one thing what a wonder it would be if they came back to life. Of course, it seems to be a clear allusion to that great Old Testament passage, Ezekiel 37 where the dry bones come back to life.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Ezekiel 37:1**...The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones.

Now look at verse 16.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 11:16**...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.

Now what he is talking about here is the bread made for the altar, the bread of Presence placed in the tabernacle or temple. He is making the point that if a portion of that lump or dough is pulled apart and baked and taken into the temple and that that portion is holy and consecrated, then the whole lump of dough out of which that portion came is also holy or consecrated. If the individual loaves or cakes that came out of that are holy doesn't that mean that the whole lump out of which that came is holy or set apart.

Then he draws the same conclusion regarding a tree. If the root of a tree is holy then so are the branches. Now here's what it doesn't mean. It doesn't mean that if part of that lump of dough is converted or redeemed or Christian that that entire lump of dough is converted or saved or Christian. What it does mean, I

think, is that God cares deeply about the Jewish people. Here's his point, "the patriarchs the first fruits that came out of the dough of the people of Israel were precious or holy to God and because of that all of the people of Israel are precious or important to God. They are holy, separate, set apart but it doesn't mean that they are all converted.<sup>6</sup>

Really and truly this is the covenantal perspective. That is, if God's true people are in a body of people, in a community of faith, then God cares about the whole community. The in verse 17, he turns again to the Gentiles.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 11:17**...If some of the branches have been broken off, (and by that he means unbelieving Jews) and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root,<sup>18</sup> do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you.

Now Paul is using here the analogy of the olive tree. He wants us to imagine there is an olive tree with branches coming radiating out from its trunk. The roots of this tree are the patriarchs. Now imagine that some of the branches of that tree did not believe in Christ, that is that they are unbelieving Jews and because they are unbelieving they are broken off from the body of that tree.

Then Paul wants us to imagine that there is another tree, a wild scraggly olive tree that produces no fruit, is all together useless and is made up of exclusively of Gentiles. Now what Paul says happened is that some of these wild branches believed and when they did they were cut off from this scraggly Gentile tree and were grafted into this tree making up the people of God. That is, they were grafted in where the branches were broken off.

That's the image or figure that Paul employs to explain the state of Gentile believers. Do you see his point? Now here's the fun thing about this idea. This almost never happens in the world of horticulture. No, usually it happens the other way around. If you know anything about pecan trees, or apple trees, or pear trees, you know that grafts go the other way, from the domesticated tree to the wild tree. You never take wild branches and graft them into a tame tree. You take tame branches and graft them into a wild tree. The reason you do that is because you want fruit, you want good fruit and the branch determines the fruit not the tree.

I know something about this. I have a native or wild pecan tree in my front yard that I planted some thirty years ago. It's a big tree now and it produces lots of pecans but they are just about inedible. They are small and hard and bitter. Now the way most people deal with that is to graft paper shell pecan tree branches into their wild trees and the end result is a hardy tree with wonderful fruit.

But Paul's description of Gentile inclusion into the people of God is just the opposite of that. Now that has led some commentaries to the brink of insanity. C.H. Dodd in particular, I think, was troubled by Paul's illustration here. He writes this:

Suppose says Paul that the branches of an olive tree have been broken off, and that shoots of wild olive have been grafted into the stock in their place. Apparently he supposed that in that case the grafts would bear true olives; at any rate, they would share the rich growth of the olive-stem. But the gardener has kept the broken branches by him, and, when the new grafts have '**taken,**' he grafts the old olive branches upon the stock once more. A truly remarkable horticultural experiment! Paul had the limitations of the town-bred man.<sup>7</sup>

What Dodd is saying is that Paul is dead wrong to use the illustration. What he is saying is that Paul doesn't know anything about plants and that he truly gummed up this illustration of Gentile inclusion into the people of God. What he is saying is that Paul didn't know what he was talking about. But in 1905, Sir William Ramsey wrote a book in which he described an ancient horticultural practice that is fairly enlightening. He said that it was a custom in ancient Israel and that it is a custom there still today, to stimulate tired old olive trees, tired old tame olive trees, by grafting wild olive branches into them. Ramsey said that such a process reinvigorates the tree. Apparently, Paul knew more about horticulture than C.H. Dodd thought he did. That's why I like what C.K. Barrett writes in his commentary.

The conclusion sometimes drawn that he was a townsman unfamiliar with country life and agricultural practices is therefore absurd. He is speaking not of nature but of grace, and his metaphor takes its origin not in husbandry but in theological and historical fact. Whether, or how far, in this it resembles or differs from the gospel parables is a question, which cannot be handled here. Paul at least is not deducing theology from natural processes.<sup>8</sup>

Anyway, here's Paul's point. There is this people of God founded upon the patriarchs and when the Messiah came and the Israelites rejected the Messiah God cut those branches off and He went and found wild branches of wild olive trees and cut them off and brought them over and grafted them into the people of God. That is how we ought to view the people of God. There is one people of God. Do you see what I mean?

The wild-eyed Gentiles have been grafted into the believing Jewish people. That's why we have affection for the patriarchs for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That is why we have affection for Daniel and David and Joseph and all of the

great saints of the Old Testament. Our affection is not because we are related to them or because we are of their blood but rather because we have been grafted into that people.

Paul is saying this for an important reason and you can see the reason down in verse nineteen.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 11:19**...You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." <sup>20</sup> Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. <sup>21</sup> For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.

Here's his point, **"Don't become puffed up and conceited like the Jewish people and say, 'Now I am a part of the people of God so I don't have to have faith.' Because if you don't have faith you'll be cut out just like they were cut out."**

That's his point. He's not pressing the illustration too far. He's not making this illustration walk on all fours. When I was in seminary and they were teaching us about parables and teaching parables they used to say, **"Don't walk the dog,"** which was a technical way of saying, **"Don't try to flesh out every single detail of the parable. Remember a parable usually only has one point."**

You see if you press the point too far, you make the parable or the illustration address issues it was never intended to address and that same warning needs to be applied here. All he is trying to say, **"Look the Jewish unbelievers were cut off and you were grafted in so how on earth can you become conceited and look down on the Jews?"** In other words, **"Be grateful and be thankful and stay in the faith or you Gentiles will be cut off as well. Just because you are**

**attached now, doesn't mean you will stay attached. Be faithful and be humble."** That's his point.

Now look at verse 22. It's a remarkable verse.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 11:22**...Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. <sup>23</sup> And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

Isn't that a marvelous picture? He's saying God cut off these dead limbs and cast them aside and they dried up and shriveled and died but if they will believe, if they will come to faith, God is able to take those branches and graft them right back into the people of God and they flourish and be fruitful.

And you know C.H. Dodd would say, **"Ah, you can't graft dried up dead branches back in again. It does injustice to the figure or illustration Paul is using?"**

My response to that is, **"Just shut up; Paul is not lecturing on horticulture."** The picture is this remarkable work of God in which He can graft people in an out depending upon whether or not they are people of faith. Paul is just wondering how we Gentiles can be conceited in light of that great truth,

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 11:24**...After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!

Here's what he is saying, **"The Jews, the nation of Israel, belong, ought to belong with the people of God. That is their natural place. And it can happen**

**again. All they have to do is believe. God can graft them in again. He is not going to graft them in apart from Christ but He can graft them back into the people of God."**

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 11:25...** I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. <sup>26</sup> And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "**The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.** <sup>27</sup> **And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.**"

The questions in these verses revolve around those three little words: "all", "Israel" and "saved". What do they mean?

Well, "**saved**" is the easiest one to deal with. The word "**saved**" means to possess the benefits of faith in Christ, to be "**redeemed**," to be delivered from the "**wrath that is to come**".

The word "**all**" is the next easiest word to deal with. The context here necessitates that it mean "**the overall group**" and not each and every individual. He is not saying that every single Israelite will be saved.<sup>9</sup> I don't believe that he is a universalist or anything like that. No, he is saying that the whole of Israel, the overall corporate group...the vast majority of Israel will be saved.

That leads, of course, to the final phrase, "**Israel**". What does Paul mean when he says, "**Israel**." Well the older commentators like Calvin would say that he means the elect of the Jews and Gentiles together. That's Israel or another way to say it is, "**That's spiritual Israel**." But the newer commentators like Hodge, Boice and Sproul would say that he is talking about the nation of Israel, that is, ethnic

Israel. So what I want to do this morning is take a moment and show you why they hold that view. To do that, I need you to look back to verse 25.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 11:25...** I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.

Who's he talking to here? Well, we know from verse 13 that he is talking to the Gentiles.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 11:13...**I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry...

What does he want them to avoid? Well, he wants them to avoid becoming conceited or **"puffed up."**

Now what does he mean by "Israel" in verse 25?

Well, since he contrasts **"Israel"** with the **"the Gentiles,"** Israel must refer to the ethnic Jews or national **"Israel."** If that is the case, then Paul is saying something like this, **"Look here you Gentiles, I don't want you to be uninformed and I certainly don't want you to become puffed up. The Jews have experienced a hardening but that is only until the whole number of the Gentiles have been incorporated into the people of God."**

And if that is the case, that is that Paul means the ethnic Jews when he refers to Israel in verse 25, then what does Israel mean in verse 26 when he says...

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 11:26...** And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: **"The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob"**

Now I suppose he could have been talking about “**ethnic Jews**” in verse 25 and then switched to talk about “**spiritual Israel**” in verse 26. But the question is, really is, how likely would he have been to have done that. No, I don’t think it is likely at all. Now I freely admit that earlier in Romans Paul made the point that there is a spiritual Israel.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 2:28**...A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. <sup>29</sup> No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 9:6**...It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.

But I think when he uses the term “**Israel**” to refer to ethnic Israel in verse 25 and then uses the same term in verse 26 without qualifying it one way or another, you almost have to accept that it will have the same meaning in both places.<sup>10</sup> When you do that all you are doing is interpreting the passage letting the immediate context guide you.<sup>11</sup> And that is the point of Sproul, Boice and Hodge.<sup>12</sup>

Now if you view the passage that way, what it says is something like this, “**As it stands right now ethnic Israel is hardened and they are hardened until all of the Gentiles that make up God’s elect are brought in and then at that point that will bring about the salvation of a vast array of Jews.**”

Now I have to add that is not the way Father Calvin viewed the passage. Still, I am not torn here; I am with Hodge, Sproul and Boice on this one. I think they are right. To me the immediate context demands that Paul be speaking about Israel

and it's national revival or salvation. That doesn't mean I am a premillennialist. I do not believe there will be a millennial kingdom like you see in *Left Behind* and things like that. Still, I see no reason why there could not be a great revival after God has saved the elect among the Gentiles in which He turns back again to the Jews and draws a great and glorious number to Himself in a marvelous and magnificent way. And I hope that's true.

Well, our time is limited so let's push on. Look at verse 28.

**NIV Romans 11:28...** As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs,

You see God loves the seed of Abraham. He loves the spiritual seed of Abraham and has redeemed them and set them apart for Himself. But He loves the physical seed of Abraham as well and He loves them because of Abraham. Now why is that?

**NIV Romans 11:29...** for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.

Then there are these two wondrous verses in verses 30 and 31.

**NIV Romans 11:30...** Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, <sup>31</sup> so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. <sup>32</sup> For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

He's not teaching universalism here. What he means is that he has bound all men from every tribe tongue and nation over to disobedience that he might indeed save men from every tribe tongue and nation. Then he gives this great and wonderful summary and I think you can enter into Paul's spirit here.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 11:33**...Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! <sup>34</sup> **"Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"** <sup>35</sup> **"Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?"** <sup>36</sup> For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

And his point is simple and easy to understand even though the NIV clouds the issue by making "riches" to equal "wisdom and knowledge." Actually, riches stands alone here. It is the depth of His riches and the depths of His wisdom and knowledge. And that raises the question, **"What does Paul mean by riches?"** I think he means the riches of God's mercy, kindness and love in saving His people, in justifying them and reconciling them to Himself.<sup>13</sup> So you see Paul comes to this great conclusion at the end of chapter eleven and then at the start of chapter twelve he is going to say, **"Now in view of all this, present you bodies a living sacrifice."**

He's going to say, **"Since God has done this great and glorious thing for you in saving you and justifying you before Himself ought not that effect the way we live? Oughtn't we to live like that's true?"**

So you can see, Paul comes full circle wrapping up the beauty and the glory of Christ's great justifying work and applying to believers by reminding them that they ought to live in gratitude before God simply because of what Christ has accomplished.

Now just let me conclude by making a few commentary recommendations. I want to make these recommendations in terms of what might be most helpful to you. I have a lot of commentaries on Romans but these are the one's I think might be most helpful.

First, I would recommend Douglas Moo's Commentary on Romans. It is from the New International Commentary on the New Testament series and is published by Eerdmans. It's pretty expensive, probably \$50 or \$60. But it is the most comprehensive, most readable, most user-friendly technical commentary I have run across in a long time. It is simply a treasure.

Second I would recommend John Stott's Commentary on Romans published by InterVarsity. It is less technical than Moo's and is of medium length and price, probably \$20-\$25, but it is very well done and very readable like everything else by Stott.

Thirdly, I would recommend F.F. Bruce's Commentary on Romans in the Tyndale series. It is very short and very inexpensive. If money is an issue buy this one, probably \$10 or so.

Fourthly, Charles Hodge's Commentary on Romans especially in the edited version by Crossways Books is delightful and inexpensive, around \$15.

Fifthly, I would recommend a couple of sets. One by James Montgomery Boice which is four volumes long (\$15-\$20 a volume) and one by Martyn Lloyd Jones which is, I'm not sure, probably ten volumes or so. Both men are great heroes of the faith and both of the sets are transcribed sermons so they are eminently readable. Both are pretty expensive, especially the Lloyd Jones' set (\$25 a volume). But both are worth every penny.

Sixthly, Charles Cranfield's commentary in the ICC series is very good. It is a two-volume set. But it is pretty academic and is very, very expensive (\$80). Still, if you can afford, it's definitely worth having.

Seventhly, I would recommend both C.K. Barrett's and Leon Morris' commentaries although to a lesser degree. I would not recommend Barth's Commentary on Romans though it is internationally and historically acclaimed and though I have quoted from it several times. I think it is largely unmanageable for most laymen, perhaps even most pastors. Nor do I recommend C.H. Dodd. He makes my blood pressure skyrocket with his penchant to be shocking or demeaning toward Paul. But I would recommend W.G.T. Shedd though it is expensive and hard to find and I would recommend James Dunn though I found him much less helpful than Moo and Cranfield. John Murray is good but not as well written as Moo or Stott and Kent Hughes is all right though not academic enough to suit my tastes.

Finally, I really enjoyed Barnhouse's four-volume set (Boice refers to them constantly, probably because he followed Barnhouse at Tenth Street) and I like the Romans Outline by Steele and Thomas. I also greatly appreciated John Piper's sermons on Romans, which are available on the Internet at the Desiring God Ministries website and I found the study material by Dan Wallace and others at the Net Bible site to be especially helpful. Also I have to say I have been truly appreciative to the folks at Arlington Presbyterian for their encouragement in this series and for their rapt attention during the lessons. It definitely proves that the people of God never grow tired of hearing about the mercy of God and the love of God in the wondrous act of redemption by the Son of God.

May His name be praised forever and ever, Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* in the New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 744. “In the final section of the body of the letter, Paul shifts his focus from instruction to exhortation, from the “indicative” to the “imperative.”

<sup>2</sup> F.F. Bruce, *Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Tyndale Press, 1963), 225. “Doctrine is never taught in the Bible simply that it may be known, it is taught in order that it may be translated into practice.”

<sup>3</sup> C.K. Barrett, *Romans: The Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1957), 230. “It is pointed out in most commentaries that a major division of the epistle falls between chs. xi and xii; chs. i-xi form the dogmatic part of the epistle, chs. xii and xiii (or xii-xv) the ethical. There is, of course, a measure of truth in this observation; but it is a serious mistake to treat the two parts of the epistle as distinct from each other. Paul’s dogmatic teaching is misunderstood if it is not seen to require ethical action, and his ethical teaching cannot be grasped if it is not recognized that it rests at every point upon the dogmatics. So far from its being a contradiction of the doctrine of justification by faith (good works returning, as it were, by a back door after their formal expulsion), it is best understood as an exposition of the obedience which is an essential element in faith (i.5) and of the gratitude which redeemed and justified man is bound to feel towards the merciful God.”

<sup>4</sup> John Calvin, *Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 437. “Many understand this of the Jewish people, as though Paul had said, that religion would again be restored among them as before: but I extend the word Israel to all the people of God, according to this meaning, — ‘When the Gentiles shall come in, the Jews also shall return from their defection to the obedience of faith; and thus shall be completed the salvation of the whole Israel of God, which must be gathered from both; and yet in such a way that the Jews shall obtain the first place, being as it were the first-born in God’s family.’”

<sup>5</sup> Charles Hodge, *Romans* from the Crossway Classic Series edited by Alister McGrath and J.I. Packer, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossways Books, 1993), 333-5.

<sup>6</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther’s works, vol. 25: Lectures on Romans* edited by J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann (Fortress Press: Philadelphia, 1972; reprinted 1999), In the corollary the Scholia on 11:26-27. “Hence this one rule applies regarding the interpretation of Scripture,<sup>9</sup> namely, that it speaks at the same time about the good and the wicked who exist in the one mystical body—for thus the Jewish people are a “holy mass” because of the elect, but “broken branches” because of the lost; thus they are a “fulfilling” and a “lessening”; likewise they are “enemies because of the Gentiles” and at the same time “the well-beloved because of the fathers”—the Scripture speaking all the time about the same people because of the diversity found among them. This sounds as if the apostle wished the same people to be considered both his personal friends and personal enemies, while he still distinguishes between persons, but asserts that they belong to the same mass.”

<sup>7</sup> C.H. Dodd, *The Epistle to the Romans* in the Moffatt NT Commentary Series (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932; reprinted 1947), 179-180.

<sup>8</sup> Barrett, 217.

<sup>9</sup> Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1988; reprint, 1994), 420. "...does not mean each and every Israelite without exception; the term refers to the nation as a whole."

<sup>10</sup> Hodge, 336. "...here must mean the Jewish people **and all Israel** the whole nation.

<sup>11</sup> John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans (NIC)* 2 vols. in one (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968; reprint 1980), vol. 2, 96. "'And so' with which verse 26 begins indicates that the proposition about to be stated is either one parallel to or one that flows from the revelation enunciated in the preceding verse. It means 'and accordingly', continuing the thought of what precedes or drawing out its implications. 'All Israel shall be saved' is the proposition thus involved. It should be apparent from both the proximate and less proximate contexts in this portion of the epistle that it is exegetically impossible to give to 'Israel' in this verse any other denotation than that which belongs to the term throughout this chapter. There is the sustained contrast between Israel and the Gentiles, as has been demonstrated in the exposition preceding. What other denotation could be given to Israel in the preceding verse? It is of ethnic Israel Paul is speaking and Israel could not possibly include Gentiles. In that event the preceding verse would be reduced to absurdity and since vs. 26 is a parallel or correlative statement the denotation of 'Israel' must be the same as inverse 25." See also C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans: Volume 2, Commentary on Romans 9-16 and Essays* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979; reprint, 1981), 576. Cranfield makes the same point as Murray.

<sup>12</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Romans Volume 3: God and History, Romans 9-11* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), 1382.

<sup>13</sup> John Stott, *Romans: God's Good News For the World*, (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 309-10. Stott sees parallelism throughout the section. His discussion is very good.