



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Romans 11:28-30

"The Divine Purpose of the Ages"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] For the Scripture reading we're turning this morning to Ephesians chapter 3 and reading a few verses here, although this will not be the basis for the message. We're reading this particular section because of its relationship to the message. So will you turn with me to Ephesians chapter 3, and I want to read verse 1 through verse 13 for our Scripture reading.

The apostle is explaining something of his ministry as apostle of the Gentiles and something also of the newness of the people of God in this particular age. He has just stated in verse 15 of chapter 2 that God has made in him of two, one new man of both Jews and Gentiles, so making peace. Now, in chapter 3 in verse 1 the apostle writes,

"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and

prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel."

Now, that is the mystery of which the apostle speaks. It is not the church that the apostle calls the mystery. It is the relationship of Jew and Gentiles in the present age in the church, that is the secret about which he speaks. That relationship was a relationship that was not made known in the Old Testament as it is now. And the apostle is underlining that particular point. Today, Gentiles are fellowheirs of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel. Now he goes on to say,

"Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."

It's really overpowering to think that God should through the church, through the oneness of Jew and Gentile in the body and the possession of the same promises, the same heirs of the truth of God; God should enlighten the principalities and powers, the angelic beings about us through the church. That is really an astounding thing. And Paul calls that in verse 11, " According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." Will you notice the 11th verse where he says, "the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord?" Literally, "the purpose of the ages."

Well, that's what we want to talk about from Romans 11 primarily in a few moments after we have a word of prayer and sing another hymn. Let's bow together now and address our petition to the Lord.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the unfolding of the divine purpose of the ages, for revealing to us some of the significant things that Thou hast been doing, and art doing, and will continue to do until the consummation is reached. We give Thee thanks and praise for this beautiful day for all of the blessings of life that have come to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. We ask Thy blessing Lord on the ministry of the whole body of Christ wherever they may be. We pray that there may be an effective presentation of the Lord Jesus and of the ministry through the apostle and through the preachers and teachers of the word today. We ask for faithfulness and fidelity also to the written word of God as the message is proclaimed.

We give Thee thanks for this country in which we live and we pray for our President and for all who are associated with him in government. We pray for the United States of America and its place among the nations of the world. May it be characterized, Lord, by things that reflect upon the sovereign power and mercy of our great triune God. We're grateful for the way Thou hast put Thy hand of blessing upon some of the ministries of the chapel. We pray that it may continue to be upon them and that the radio ministry and the tape ministry and the Bible teaching ministries may experience Thy blessing.

We pray for those who are in difficult circumstances physically and mentally, and we commit them to Thee. And we pray, O God, Thy blessing upon them. May the requests that have been given to us for our consideration in prayer be answered in a way that will most glorify Thy name. We pray for those who have need, we especially commit them to Thee, those who are ill and bereaved and sick and troubled, Lord minister to

them and show Thyself to be the sovereign and merciful God of this universe and of the people of God.

We thank Thee for this time together, for this beautiful day, for the opportunity of meeting, hearing the word of God, singing hymns in Thanksgiving and praise. May Thy hand be upon us through the remainder of this meeting. And we also ask, Lord, that our evening may be a true period of worship and praise and thanksgiving. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Well, I'm looking forward to the day when we will be able to sing that last stanza, "When he shall come with trumpet sound, oh then I shall in him be found." Now, I've been trying to get audiences to do that for almost forty years, and I have not succeeded. It really is a terrible thing. All of you young people out in the audience, you have your life's goals, and you hope that by the time you reach my age you will have accomplished your goals. And here I've been trying for forty years to get people to say, "When he shall come with trumpet sound, oh then I shall in him be found." And they're still saying, "Oh may I then in him be found." To get people from "Oh may I," which is a legitimate aspiration for some people, to say "Oh then I shall in him be found" is to move from an uncertain kind of assurance an aspiration to a sense of true assurance, because of what Christ has done. And I'm afraid that when my few years, looking at it humanly they may not even be that long, when they come to an end I'm going to have to say I have failed. I have failed. I have tried, but I have failed. So ""When he shall come with trumpet sound, oh then I shall in him be found."

Now, that's what I sang up here, but I did not sing it out loud, because it would discourage all singing if you heard my mellifluous voice. You might even not want to sing, like people who hear a choir every Sunday morning and feel, "What's the use of my adding my voice and disturbing the beautiful harmony that we have just heard?" But for those of you who would like a little comfort, the Puritans, who certainly were outstanding

in so many ways, used to speak in the language of "Oh may I then in him be found."

Because they recognized there was a point in human nature at which we could not really be absolutely certain even of ourselves and the understanding of the word of God. Now, that's a rather sophisticated view, perhaps that's your view. And if so, then continue to sing, "Oh may I then in him be found," recognizing that because you're a member of the human race and because you have inability to turn to God, and because your mind is blinded and your will is rebellious and your emotions are corrupt that you cannot be sure of yourself. Maybe that's what you've been thinking. If that's so and you have reached that stage of sophistication in biblical doctrine, well then maybe I haven't failed after all.

Now, we have been talking, for the benefit of those of you who are here this morning and have not been attending, at what I have called the eight most important Christian truths. Now, that is not stated with any sense of dogmatism. Because as a matter of fact I started out by saying I want to speak on the seven most important and decided that I should add one that I had overlooked. Next week we will look at the last of our topic, eternal judgment. And that was the one I added, I had overlooked that.

Now, we might have different ideas about what are the most important Christian truths, but I think anyone who has read the Bible very much would grant that the ones that we have been talking about are extremely important; general revelation or divine revelation in the word of God, in Scripture, divine creation, the fall of man and human inability. Hardly anything could be more important than that for preparation for responding to the gospel of Christ. Divine redemption by covenantal representation; now, I had never heard a sermon on that, and to this day I have never heard a sermon except the ones that I had preached on that particular topic. It's the kind of topic that preachers today, since it's not very popular to speak in that kind of language, avoid. Divine redemption by a covenantal representative, and to my mind that's extremely important because in a sense it sums up all of the Bible, the way in which we have fallen in Adam, the way in which we rise again in the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ; our

covenantal representative, oh how important that is. Human salvation by sovereign grace, and we sought to make plain what sovereign grace really is.

Every Christian believes in sovereignty, the sovereignty of God, but when you ask them to define sovereignty of God, then we discover that we really don't believe in the same thing even in the Christian family. We talked about the divine means for receiving divine blessing, or personal faith. And this morning, the divine purpose of the ages.

Now, obviously in thirty-five or forty minutes, we cannot deal with the entire program of the ages. I have picked out a passage in Romans 11, specifically verse 28 through 32 in which the apostle gives us some important words on the divine purpose of the ages. We saw in Ephesians chapter 3 he used the term "the eternal purpose" or the purpose of the ages. Well, here we have something of that purpose of the ages enlarged and expanded in Paul's thinking. Now, let me say at the beginning that it is an absolute essential for anyone reading or understanding and living Scripture to know something of the divine purpose of the ages. In fact, we could reason that that was probably true just from human life in general. We all know the importance of knowing plans for whatever we may be involved in. A general, for example, who enters into a battle without a battle plan is likely to be defeated; battle plans are important for military men. And even so in so inconsequential an endeavor as playing a football game. All of the coaches of successful teams approach their games with game plans. They have thought previous to the game the way in which they're going to play the game. The way in which they can exploit their opponent's weaknesses and also use to the greatest advantage their own strengths and so they seek to play according to a plan; they know if they have a plan they're much more likely to succeed. Even in such a mundane but important endeavor as cooking a meal. It is important for a cook to have recipes and a meal plan. And in teaching the word of God all teachers who've been instructed in teaching know about lesson plans. They must prepare lesson plans in order to teach effectively.

Well, when we come to the Bible it is not surprising to read that God has a purpose of the ages. To put it in the language that we have been speaking about he has a game plan. He has a battle plan. There is a lesson plan unfolded in Scripture. And there are recipes that he is following in order to carry out his overall purpose. The Bible contains then this divine plan. It is a plan that is characterized by a beginning, as plans are ordinarily characterized by. It is characterized by unfolding stages, as that plan is developed. And then as most plan contain, the Bible plan of the ages contains a climactic conclusion that is set out for us in the last two chapters of the Bible. In fact, looking at Genesis 1 and 2 where the divine revelation begins to set forth what God is doing and comparing it with the last two chapters of the Book of Revelation, we see that in one measure at least, the Lord is seeking to undue the things that have been done by men and restore men to something of the simplicity and beauty and holiness of man before the fall raised further by virtue of the redemptive of Jesus Christ into a higher level of blessedness.

Romans 11, in my opinion, is probably Paul's greatest concentrated contribution to God's purpose of the ages. And its heart is found in the relationship that exists between the nation Israel and the nations of the Gentiles. Let me just review for about two minutes what Paul is doing in this particularly context. Remember he finished the eight chapters that begin this book by in a sense giving us a picture of an elect group of people who have been justified by the sovereign grace of the Lord Jesus obtained through the merits of his finished work on Calvary's cross.

Now, Paul had a great deal to do with Jewish readers and listeners to him, because he was a Jew and he had grown up in that background. He was a member of the tribe of Benjamin, and a Hebrew of the Hebrews. He often discussed the things of the word of God with his Hebrew brethren. He knew that as he unfolded the gospel at the end of chapter 8 there would be an immediate question, "Paul, you have unfolded, you say, and immediate plan of salvation and an elect people of God have arisen in

humanity, but Israel is surprisingly missing. Now, we must conclude that either you are preaching the truth and the whole Old Testament is wrong, because the Old Testament plainly predicts a future for the nation Israel. Or the Old Testament is right," for them it was just the Scriptures, they didn't have the New Testament at this time. "The Scriptures are right and you are preaching a false gospel and Jesus Christ who is the one about whom you are preaching is clearly an imposter."

Now, Paul knew that he must answer that question, and so he devotes Romans 9, 10, and 11 to the answer to that question. And in Romans 9, 10, and 11 he says we must remember that God is a God who exercises mercy upon whom whoever he wishes to exercise mercy. We must also remember that he is a God who hardens whomever he wishes to harden. He is a sovereign God. Sovereignty means essentially that God is a God who has supremacy. I think all Christians when they use the term sovereignty of God; they say in essence, God is supreme. But sovereignty means more than that. It means that he is absolutely independent, that he carries out his particular will out of his own independent power and authority. And further, it means that he has optional power. That is, he may exercise his power as he wishes.

Now, there are people who will grant that God can elect people at his optional power. But they do not like to think that he has optional power to reprobate people. In other words, they think that he must do these things and conform to human ideas of what is justice. Now, if we do that, of course, what we do is reduce God to a being who operates according to human justice. Then it's a rather strange contradiction that we are involved in, because we know that the Bible teaches that we are saved by grace, but according to this particular theory, that God does not have optional power, we are really saved by justice. And if we're saved by justice, by God's just dealings, if that's the basis of our salvation, then there's no point in our rendering thanks to God for his mercy.

Now, the Bible plainly says that we render thanks to God for his mercy and grace. So it's quite clear that the Bible is constructed around the definition of sovereignty that I

have just given, that is that God is a God who is supreme. He is a God who is independent. And he is a God who possesses optional power. So Paul unfolds that in Romans 9. He says in Romans 9 he has authority to elect and he has authority to reprobate. And he says furthermore, you as Jewish people, you must remember that the Old Testament Scriptures set forth just such a God, because in the Old Testament and Paul goes into the details of it. He's just talking about the Bible. If he were here we would say, "I'm just telling you what the Bible teaches." It says, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." In other words, Ishmael is passed by but Isaac is the elect seed. And then when Jacob and Esau come along the Bible says, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Jacob is the elect of Israel, and the successor in the possession of the promises concerning the Redeemer to come, and Esau is passed by. That rests in the sovereign power of God.

And so in Romans chapter 9 and those verses that have to do with that and those that follow he says that God does according to his will and what his will is is the determination of what is right. We are fallen men. We do not understand what is right and what is wrong. But the Scripture reveal that God acts according to these principles and those things by which he acts are the true insights into what is right and what is wrong. God's will is that which is right and that which is wrong. In other words, as he expresses himself by that which pleases him, as he expresses himself by that which displeases him, that is the principle of right and wrong.

Now, I know that in our world we don't believe that. We think there are objective principles of justice and righteousness by which God must necessarily do his work. He must conform to them, but that is to overthrow the sovereignty of the Lord God. Go ahead and admit that you don't have ultimate knowledge and then you will find that in the Scriptures you will be much more comfortable with the things that are set out in the word of God. Now, someone might say at this point, "Well what about human responsibility?" Well, I would answer that person and say, "Look did you read Romans

chapter 10. The apostle goes on after saying those things in Romans 9 and in Romans 10 sets forth in great detail human responsibility. Men are responsible at the same time that God is sovereign. We must not confuse these things. He is sovereign and men are responsible. And I think Romans 10 is an excellent answer to that question.

Coming to Romans 11, through the question still arises, has God cast away his people? And so Paul in Romans 11 makes two points. He says first of all, look, the rejection of Israel is not total. There is a remnant at the present time. Look at the 5th verse. The apostle states in Romans 11:5, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." There have always been Jewish believers in the Lord Jesus Christ from the days of the apostles when the whole church at one point was thoroughly Jewish. You see, Christianity as we know it, as the church, the particular age from Pentecost on, began as a Jewish church and there have always been such believers. And even at the present time there are such believers. Paul calls them in Galatians the Israel of God, those who have truly believed. Here he calls them the remnant, and this remnant according to the election of grace, or what we would call today Jews for Jesus. In other words, there have always been Jews for Jesus down through the years. So the rejection of Israel is not total, but then beginning at verse 11 and the remainder of the argumentative section of Romans 11, the apostle points out that the rejection of people is not final.

There is coming a day when God is going to fulfill the ancient covenant promises made to the nation. Now, that is something of a summary of what the apostle states here. It reaches its climax in verse 26, "And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer." Now, you'll notice as we come to the end of chapter 11 that two key words appear. One is the word mystery, because Paul is writing about things that have been made clear to him as an apostle of the Gentiles. There's nothing wrong with people at significant stages of the unfolding of the divine plan entering into a fresh understanding of what God is doing, and Paul is one of those

favored individuals appointed by the Lord God as apostle to the Gentiles and given and insight, as he said in Ephesians, to this mystery. The other word is the word mercy, because in the salvation of any soul, and particularly in the salvation of Israel as a whole, God exhibits his mercy. Grace is God's favor for the guilty. Mercy is his favor for the miserable. So Israel shall experience the mercy of God.

I have a friend who is a preacher of the gospel of Christ. He was once pastor of a church in New York City and he had a Scottish woman who was his maid. Now, she came just once a week to clean up the manse. He was not married. I'm sure it must have been a job. She came and the manse was located just opposite from the school. And she had a couple of children and she would on Wednesdays she would come, she would clean up the house, and then at lunch time she would go over and get her children out of the school and they would sit down at the table for a meal which she also prepared on that day. And my friend said that on every Wednesday when she came and as they sat down at the table she would look over at the kids that she got from school and she would say, "Eat up, it's on the pastor, we don't have to pay for it today." Now, that may have been due to the fact that she was a Scottish extraction. When I went over to Scotland I found out that the Scots don't think of themselves as being tight. They think only of certain Scots, and so they make jokes over there about Aberdonians, that is people who come from Aberdeen. They are the true Scots. Well, she must have been an Aberdonian, because she said, "Eat up, it's on the Pastor. We don't have to pay for it today."

Well, my friend heard that Wednesday after Wednesday and finally he said one day, "Look, you know, you sit down at the meal every Wednesday and you say, 'Eat up, it's on the Pastor. We don't have to pay for it today.' And you make me think of a verse of Scripture from Ephesians, 'But God who is rich in mercy for his great love, wherewith he loved us.' Because of his mercy he said, and this he said to the lady and her children. He said, "Today we can say 'Eat up. It's on the Lord. We don't have to pay for it.'" Well,

that's the kind of mercy that God has exercised to us or toward us through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, the apostle, and I'm just going to touch on a few high points and then say a few words about verse 28 through verse 32. You'll notice in verse 25 through verse 27 he says that God is going to exercise mercy toward the nation Israel in the future.

Individuals are in the background, the nation and the nations are in the foreground. So he writes in verse 25, "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved."

Now, I just mention two things, because we've gone over this in more detail in the series on Romans. Notice first of all, that he says "blindness" or the Greek text has hardness, hardness in part has happened to Israel. He does not say hardness has happened to all Israel. He says hardness in part as happened to Israel. Limited hardness in the present day, limited in what way? Well, limited in extent. That is, there are at the present time Jews for Jesus, they make up the remnant, they are the Israel of God. They are with us still. So the hardness of heart is limited in extent. It is also limited in duration. As he goes on to say, "And so all Israel shall be saved." Now, that doesn't mean every single individual Israelite. That means just what the phrase "all Israel" means to people who read the Bible. If you go back and read the Old Testament and passages like 1 Kings chapter 12, 2 Chronicles chapter 12, Daniel chapter 9, you will see that the term "all Israel" means not every single individual Israelite. It means the nation as a whole. IN each of those passages I referred to, reference is made to all Israel, but the context will show plainly that not every single individual Israelite is meant by the expression "all Israel."

In fact, the rabbis knew that too. They spoke of the term "all Israel" in that same way. For example, in one of the rabbinic tractates, Sanhedrin 10:1 we read these words, "All Israel has portion in the age to come." Now, that might seem as if they were saying

that every Israelite will be saved. But the context goes on to point out in the very same context in which that expression is found all the different kinds and classifications of Israelites that will not have a portion; adulterers, and fornicators, and murderers and so forth are mentioned in the context. And so all Israel is a term that means the nation as a whole. People have often stumbled over this and said, "You mean every single individual Israelite is going to be saved?" That's the superficial kind of reading of the Bible that we are trying to deliver people from. But oh, what a difficult task it is. What a difficult task it is, because if you don't read the Bible you will fall into all kinds of traps like that.

But now, let's look on at verse 28 through verse 32 in which Paul kind of recapitulates everything that he said in the preceding verses in this chapter. And in two balanced sentences Paul gives us insight into what God is doing in the age of the Old Testament and the age of the New Testament. Now, I want to show you just briefly how you ought to read the Bible. I don't expect anybody in this place, oh maybe two or three I hope, oh God give two or three the insight to read the Bible carefully. But I want to show you how you ought to read the Bible. Notice verse 28 through verse 32. And I'm going to tell you ahead of time what it says, and then we're going to take a look at it, so that when you go back you will at least be able to see what I'm talking about. The apostle is writing very carefully. He's not just scribbling notes and publishing them without re-doing them. He's being very careful. And he sets forth two balanced sentences. Verse 28 and verse 29 is the first and then verse 30 through verse 32 the second. These two balanced sentences each have a pair of antithetical clauses, clauses opposed to one another.

Notice verse 28, "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes." Now, when he says "they are enemies" he's talking about Israel; and "your" he's talking about the Gentiles, because later he has said in this passage that he's talking about Gentiles. He's the apostle to the Gentiles. So he says, "As concerning the gospel, they," the Jews, "are enemies for your sakes." Now, the antithetical clause, "but as touching the

election, they are beloved on account of the father's." That is, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob to whom he gave those unconditional promises.

Now, verse 29 is a sentence by way of explanation. How can you say that they are beloved on account of the fathers? By the way, this shows again that election is the product of divine love; love, election, unconditional salvation. Verse 29 begins with a little word "for" "For the gifts and calling of God are not to be regretted." When God gives a gift it is unconditional. When he determines that something is going to pass, it will come to pass. So two antithetical clauses, followed by a clause of explanation.

Now, the same thing follows except in a little more detail, verse 30 through verse 32. Look at verse 30, "For as ye," Gentiles, "in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their," Jewish, "unbelief." That's one clause. Now, the antithesis, "Even so have these also now," that is these Jews, "now not believed, that through your mercy," the mercy shown to you today, "they also may obtain mercy." Now, I won't talk about the use of the adverb now, which may be genuine, if it is now obtain mercy it means that the end of this age, as the age draws to its end and the coming of the Lord takes place. So here we have here again two antithetical clauses. "Ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: Even so have these also now not believed that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy."

And now the following clause or sentence of explanation, "For," verse 32, see how carefully Paul is writing? "For God hath concluded them all." What is "them all?" Jews and Gentiles, Jews and Gentiles. "He has concluded them all." The word, by the way, was used of putting people in prison. It was used in the description of the apostles themselves when they fished and they put fish in their net. Concluded, shut them up, so God has shut up men in prison "in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." Every single person? No, no, we don't believe in universalism and the Bible doesn't teach universalism, as we shall see next week. Obviously the "all" here is all kinds of people, not everybody without exception, everybody without distinction, that is Jews and

Gentiles. The context makes plain. So God has concluded them all in unbelief that he might have mercy upon all, Jews and Gentiles. Paul's talking about nations and the nation, individuals are there but they're in the background in Romans 11.

Now, we have just about eight minutes officially, and I want to show you what Paul is saying in a more explanatory way. What he is doing is saying this. The end of the road for Israel and the end of the road for the Gentiles is God's mercy. The end of the road for the nation is God's mercy. The end of the road for the Gentiles is God's mercy. The end of the road for all nations, the nation and the nations is God's mercy, and it leads through disobedience on the part of both Israel and the nations. Because you cannot understand mercy if you do not know what it is to be in disobedience.

Now, there are four steps in Paul's plan. I'll just state them; they should be plain to you. First of all, he says the Gentiles had a period of disobedience. It was in the old covenant days. There in Genesis chapter 1 through verse 11 Gentiles were shown to be disobedient. Now, that disobedience persisted, of course, through the time of Israel's rejection, but Gentile disobedience characterized the past. But in Genesis chapter 12 a remarkable change occurred in God's dealings with men. He laid his hand upon one man, Abraham, and he called Abraham out of his Gentiledom in Ur of the Chaldees and gave him unconditional promises which would ultimately lead through his chosen descendants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and so on to one person, the God-man the Lord Jesus Christ, the seed of Abraham. So from Genesis chapter 12 all the way through the Old Testament and on through the period of the gospels, for that age does not end until the time when Jesus hangs on the cross and says, "It is finished," and the veil of the temple is rent in twain from top to bottom. God was dealing specifically with Israel. Israel elect, but Israel ends their period of time in disobedience.

Paul writes about them in Romans 11. He says in verse 12, "Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles." And verse 15, "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world," and so

on. So he acknowledges that Israel as a whole has been cast aside, because of disobedience. So there was Gentile disobedience and Israel's election, and Israel's disobedience, and now the third step of the plan is in operation, and that is Gentile election. For he goes on to say, "For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief." So Gentiles today, Paul says, are experiencing the mercy of God on account of the disobedience of the nation Israel. So as Paul looks at history then, there was a period of Gentile disobedience, Israel's election, Israel's period of time ends in rejection of the mercy of God and the Messiah.

God turns to the Gentiles who were disobedient now in marvelous grace elects the Gentile body and as he looks into the future he doesn't tell us all that is going to transpire, but he warns Gentiles in chapter 11. He says look, verse 22, "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again." He uses the illustration of the olive tree. Israel the natural branches cut off, unnatural branches grafted in, and he said, "Look if unnatural branches can be grafted in contrary to nature, how much more reasonable is it to expect that the natural branches may be grafted in again." And what he says is logical, he says is scriptural in verse 25 through verse 27 because he says, "Israel shall be saved: as it is the Scriptures say, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." And so, Gentile election shall end in disobedience. Unfortunately my friend, that is transpiring today. As you look out over the Christian church the Christian church is largely characterized by disobedience to the word of God. There are evangelical churches here and there where the word of God is preached, and even in the evangelical churches an even smaller number that are proclaiming the sovereign grace and mercy of God. And the vast number of professing Christian churches have passed into the same kind of

disobedience to the word of God and the revelation of God as transpired in the history of the nation Israel in Old Testament times.

Now, what about the future? Well, Paul has a solution he derived from the Scriptures. He says look in Deuteronomy 32 God said, when Israel disobeyed God he would send them to the four corners of the earth. But he said also he would make them jealous by that which was not a nation. And so, building upon that the Apostle Paul says in the future as a result of Gentiles salvation Israel shall be provoked to jealousy and shall turn again to the Lord God and be delivered and saved, and as a result of that, there will be Gentile blessing that will be so great that it will be like life from the dead. That's what he says in verse 15 when he says, "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" It is has always been and it still is my Christian friend, God's plan to bless the whole world through Israel. Through the Lord Jesus Christ and through those of his own ethnic race and origin who are believers in the sovereign mercy and grace of God. That glorious future still exists before us. We move toward that. So we have Gentile disobedience, Israel's election and then disobedience. We have had in the age of which we are a part, from the age of Pentecost on, Gentiles pressing into the church of God, what we could call Gentile election. We are seeing that fade into Gentile disobedience. We look forward to the future with anticipation as God, in his sovereign grace, moves, makes Israel jealous by those who are believers among the Gentiles, brings them to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. And through them and their head, the Lord Jesus Christ, blesses the whole world and Gentiles and Jews as bodies shall learn the important truth expressed in verse 32, that God has concluded all men in unbelief that he might have mercy upon all.

I love those marvelous words of John Allen who said, "I deserve to be damned. I deserved to be in hell. But God interfered." That is what we shall all learn whether Jews or Gentiles, that we are saved because of the sovereign grace of God who interfered and brought us to himself. When I studied Hebrew one of my teachers was a Hebrew

Christian, Dr. Charles Feinberg. He's still living, still preaching the word of God, has two sons who are on the faculty of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Chicago, one of them a former pupil of mine. Isn't that interesting, I was taught by Paul Feinberg's father, and then I was Paul Feinberg's teacher. And now ever now and then he writes something and teaches me, too. And John his brother is also on the faculty there. They are part of the Israel of God. They are part of the remnant, they are Jews for Jesus. And Dr. Feinberg in one of his books he makes the comment that his old Hebrew professor told him when he was a Hebrew studying Hebrew for the rabbinate. That his Hebrew told him rather sadly, "You know, we do not have a present tense in biblical Hebrew." He said, "We have a past tense and we have a future tense, but we have no present tense." Now, there are ways, of course, in which the present may be expressed, but there is no special tense that can be called a present tense.

As a matter of fact, in Modern Hebrew, when Modern Hebrew is used today in the land of Palestine, they don't have any present tense either, except they use the present participle and use it with a pronoun. And for example if they say, "I am calling you" they say literally something like, "I am one who is calling you," but it not a verb tense. It's the use of the participle. So the Hebrew professor said, our history is like our verbs, we have a past and we have a future, but we don't have any present. And one thinks of what Hosea wrote when he said at a certain period of time, inclusive of this present time, there will be no sacrifice, there will be no ephod, there will be no priesthood, but the future is glorious. And as a result of the glorious future of Israel, the future is glorious for those who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, Paul concludes the chapter with some marvelous words of wisdom and glory expressive of the supremacy and sovereignty and optional power of God. And my Christian friend, and my non-Christian friend in the audience, let me say this to you, that you can sing those marvelous words of aspiration and worship when you have come to understand what Paul has set forth in Romans chapter 11. If Paul is so caught up with all

of this, we learn and learn who God is and what he can do, when we learn what has excited Paul. May God in his marvelous grace enable you to truly understand of him, through him, under him are all things: to whom be glory for ever."

If you're here in the audience and you've never believed in the Lord Jesus the promised seed who has come and who is coming again, we invite you as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ to acknowledge your lost condition, your need of mercy, and may God in your heart deep down within at this very moment say "Come." And may God enable you to respond, "I come. I acknowledge my lost condition. I acknowledge my need of mercy. I'm guilty and I come and I turn away from my trust in everything else, my church, my good works, my education, my culture, whatever it may be, and I rest upon what Christ alone has done, his finished work." May God enable you to receive him as your own personal Savior. Get into the game plan and be a part of it for the glory of God. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are indeed grateful to Thee for these marvelous words. We know, Lord, we could not possibly plumb the depths of the things that express the supremacy, the independence, and the optional power of our sovereign God. But we worship Thee. We desire, Lord, to know Thee better, and to serve Thee more fruitfully. And to those who may be here without Christ, oh God, touch their hearts right at this very moment, may they turn from themselves and their guilt and sin to Christ and his forgiveness. For Jesus' sake. Amen.