



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Romans 11:25-27

"The Salvation of Israel"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The Scripture reading this morning is rather brief, Romans 11:25-27. We are continuing the exposition of this section of the Epistle to the Romans, and these verses are somewhat more important than some of the preceding ones, it seems. And so we are devoting our entire consideration this morning to them; Romans 11, verse 25 through verse 27. Just one word by way of the context, the apostle has been speaking about the finality and totality of Israel's rejection. And now, in these verses, he will prophesy that Israel has a future. He has just given us the illustration of the olive tree, representative of the promises made to the fathers. He has spoken about how the natural branches have been cut off, and the unnatural branches cut in contrary to nature, contrary to horticulture. And he has made the point that if unnatural branches have been grafted into an olive tree contrary to nature, it's much more logical to expect, much more reasonable to expect that the natural branches will be grafted in again into their own olive tree.

And now, in verse 25 he continues by saying, "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that hardness," the word blindness in the Authorized Version is better rendered hardness. "That hardness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is

my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

[Prayer removed from audio.]

[Message] We are approaching the conclusion of our study of Romans 9-11, and I hope that the technicality of it has not been too much for you. One of the greatest of the expositors of the Bible was Alexander McLaren. Mr. McLaren has written a series of volumes called *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, which are and have been a great help to expositors of the word of God, because of the unusual insights that are found in them. Mr. McLaren was acquainted with the philosophies of his day, but he was not a person who hung on the skirts of any philosopher, no matter how distinguished or how well-disposed to the Christian faith they might be. He knew the philosophies, but he knew their place. He loved to tell the story, and he told it with great gusto, of the old verger of St. Mary's Church in Oxford, the famous church, the university church, in which the Bampton Lectures are given. Who said to a party of visiting tourists, "I've heard every sermon and every lecture given in this 'ere church for the past forty years, and thank God I'm a Christian still."

[Laughter] So I hope that even though we have discussed some things that have been rather technical through Romans 11; that your faith has managed to hold fast in the midst of the difficulties.

Our subject for today is "The Salvation of Israel" or "And So All Israel Shall Be Saved." And the importance of it deserved, I think, a fairly detailed treatment. G. C. Berkouwer, one of the best-known of the systematic theologians of the 20th century, an amillennialist, who does not believe, Professor Berkouwer has retired, does not believe that Israel is to have an ethnic future, and does not believe that the Lord Jesus will reign over the earth for a thousand years. Contains nevertheless a separate chapter on Israel in his book, *The Return of the Lord*, and gives two reasons for it. He says renewed attention should be given to Israel due to the "tragic outbursts of anti-Semitism in our time." And then, particularly on account of the rise of the Jewish state in Palestine; I think the rise of

the Jewish state in Palestine is occasion, sufficient occasion for treating again the subject of Israel according to the Scriptures.

The Apostle Paul, in Romans 9, 10, and 11 treats that question. He does it in the form of a theodicy, a theodicy, a vindication of God according to principles of righteousness and justice. What Paul has been saying, essentially is this, God is sovereign, and he elects whom he wills. That's the topic of Romans chapter 9. He wants to explain to any Hebrew who is reading his gospel account in the Epistle to the Romans why it is that the Christian church has arisen, and there are so few Israelites in that company. Now we should not forget, of course, that the Christian church began as a Jewish church. For on the day of Pentecost, the great mass of the people were not Gentiles but were Jews. But from that, as time developed, and Israel the nation did not respond to the gospel, there came a mighty influx of Gentiles, so that even in the Apostle Paul's day Israel had become a minority among the people of God. And so the question was raised, is this really the teaching of the Bible? A teaching in which Israel has become a minority.

Well, Paul says God is sovereign and he elects whom he wills. And if you will read the Old Testament history, you will see that God made selection all along in distinguishing grace. In Isaac, not in Ishmael was the divine seed to be called. Esau was rejected; Jacob was loved. And so on down through the years. In fact, the apostle says the history of the Old Testament is a history of a remnant. And there is a remnant in the present day.

But Romans 9 does not give us all the truth. God is sovereign, and he does elect whom he wills. But that's not the whole truth. Israel's own disobedience led to her downfall. All men are sinners, and Israel is a sinful nation. And being sinners, no one deserves to be saved. Israel did not deserve to be saved. Israel's own disobedience led to her downfall. And so, after stressing the sovereignty of God, the apostle stresses the responsibility of man. We are responsible, because of our sin. If God should have saved not one individual he would be perfectly just in that act. Let us never forget that. And if he should pass me and select someone next to me, he is perfectly just, for we both are sinners and both deserve eternal judgment. But Paul says, as he begins chapter 11, in

effect, that's not the whole truth or the last truth either. And here he discovers Israel's fall, pointing out that it is not total. Even in ancient times there was a remnant according to the election of grace. In the apostle's day, in the 5th verse of this 11th chapter, the apostle has written, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." He means a remnant of Israelite believers in the Christian church.

Incidentally, there has always been such a remnant of Jewish believers in Jesus Christ in the Christian church down through the centuries. That's not the last word Paul says. Their fall is a fall, but it is not a total fall. And now, in the latter part of chapter 11, he will point out that it is not a final fall. For Israel has an ethnic future.

His illustration of the olive tree, which we looked at two weeks ago, is I think, very clear and very useful in presenting the apostle's teaching. He told us about an olive tree, and he spoke about that olive tree as being a tree in which the natural branches were cut off and unnatural branches grafted in. The olive tree, representative of the Abrahamic promises. In the chapters he mentions the promises made to the fathers or for the fathers' sake. The olive tree which represents the Messianic, Abrahamic promises taught that fall of Israel in the cutting off of the natural branches. It taught also Gentile blessing in the grafting in of unnatural branches into that olive tree, so that they partook of the root of the fatness of the olive tree.

But also, the apostle goes on to point out that the olive tree illustration teaches the probability of the reception of Israel again into blessing of God. Listen to what he says in verse 23 and 24, "And they also," that is the nation Israel, "if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again." Again as a nation, so he says it is possible that they be grafted in again. But in verse 24 he says, not only is it possible but is it reasonable to say that it is probably, "For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more," This is a logical argument, a logical argument, a fortiori argument. "How much more shall these, who are the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?" In other words, we may logically expect, if natural branches are

cut off, and unnatural branches grafted in contrary to principles of horticulture, that the natural branches may be grafted in again. "How much more," particularly since it is their own olive tree. So the apostle has said in effect, that what is now possible to faith, probable because it is reasonable, rational to expect it from the standpoint of logic. What is possible, what is probable is actually prophesied in the Scriptures. That's what he will say now explicitly.

We turn then to the salvation of Israel, and the apostle's first point, which he makes in verse 25, is that Israel has suffered judicial hardening. "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." Now, I must admonish us, as we read this, to remember that individuals lie in the background. The nation and the nations lie in the foreground of Paul's thinking. He's thinking of individuals, but primarily he's thinking of the nation Israel and the Gentiles, or the nations. Now, bear that in mind, because it will help us in understanding the passage to keep that before us.

The apostle first warns against a self-righteous pride. He's already touched on that, because his illustration of the olive tree was designed to warn the Gentiles. You see, even in Paul's day, Gentiles were already getting the impression that God was merciful, and gracious, and kind to them, and therefore there was something in them, perhaps, that made God go out in his magnificent grace to them. That's always the case. We are lost individuals apart from the gospel, but even after we are saved there is the remnant of the old nature within us. That's why Christians are not immediately transformed into saints, though they may be called saints in the Scriptures. That's why we still do things that displease the Lord. It is characteristic of Christians to become proud and arrogant in the possession of the promises of God, which they have come to understand.

And even at that time Paul had to warn the Gentiles. He said in verse 17, "And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee." Just remember that, you are the recipient of

grace. "Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in." Stress on the "I" in the original text. "Well," Paul says, "because of unbelief they were broken off and you stand by faith. Be not highminded, but fear." That's something good for all of us to remember. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," the apostle said to Christians. So it's good for us to remember constantly that we stand by grace. And to never get the impression that there is anything in us naturally that God was obligated to respond to and save us. We are saved by grace. Don't forget that.

"Well, I would not have you to be ignorant brethren." Josh Billings said, "The trouble with most folks isn't so much their ignorance, as knowing so many things that ain't so." Well, there are a lot of people like that. I don't want you to be ignorant brethren. I have said this before, and those of you that have heard it, you'll have to pardon me. This is your moment for relaxation. I have good preacher friend from the state of Michigan. He is a very, very capable man. He has had several large churches in his ministry and has one right now. He's also got a very, very amusing sense of humor. I heard him once in a conference in which we were both preachers saying, "But I would not have you to be ignorant brethren," this characteristic statement of the apostle to say, "I wouldn't mind being one of the grace brethren, one of the Mennonite brethren, one of the united brethren in Christ, or even the Plymouth brethren, but one kind of brethren I don't want to be is the ignorant brethren." [Laughter] "I would not have you to be ignorant brethren." Well, I don't want you to be that either, and Paul did not want us to also.

"I would not have you to be ignorant brethren of this mystery. What does he mean when he says "this mystery," this secret? Now, some have suggested that all he means is that the elect shall be saved. That is that blindness has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved, means nothing more than that the elect shall be saved. Well, that's not a mystery, that's not a divine secret in the true sense. There's hardly anything that is clearer from the apostle's writing than that the elect shall be saved. There must be something more to the point when Paul says, "I don't want you to be ignorant of this secret," this divine secrets, "lest ye should be

wise in your own conceits." I think that what he means is explained by the "that" clause. That hardness, in part, has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. The time, the meshing of the time of the salvation of the nation and the salvation of the nations, and how this is all to be worked out in the thousands of years of human history is the secret. In other words, we may put it in a simple statement, by simply saying that the mystery is the divine program of the salvation of the nations in its various steps, that's the mystery, it would seem.

Now, the hardening is described in the 25th verse. That hardening, in part, has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. The hardening that the apostle attributes to the nation Israel is limited, he says, in two ways. And I think this rather sums up the chapter. First of all, it is in part. Now, he does not mean intensively in part, as if to say that Israel not as totally depraved as others. He doesn't mean that. He doesn't say that Israel has only been partially pardoned in the sense that an Israelite who abides in unbelief is not as dead in sin as a Gentile. No the "in part" is not to be taken with the hardening, so much as it is to "happened." It has happened in part to Israel. In other words, it is extensive, not intensive. What he is saying is, not every Israelite has been totally hardened, like all have been totally hardened; and like the Gentiles were hardened. He's just saying that the hardening is not complete. There are some who have been saved out of their total depravity and brought to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, he's saying the same thing that he said in verse 5 again, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." The hardening is only in part. In verse 17 he said, "If some of the branches be broken off," not all of the branches. In other words, there are still Israelite branches in their own olive tree. So the hardening, then, is limited, first of all, by the fact that it is in part. It is a partial hardening.

But second, it is limited in time. It is temporary. It is limited in duration. Blindness or hardness, in part, has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. A great deal of discussion has taken place over the meaning of the clause which begins with until, that temporal clause. I don't have time to say anything about it in a message like this on a Sunday morning, to an

audience in which we have some very, very well-taught Bible students. And then some who may not have been exposed to a great deal of Bible teaching. Let me just simply say this, that it seems to me that when he says, "Hardness in part has happened to Israel until the full number of the Gentiles be come in," that he is suggesting that this is a temporary hardening, and that as soon as the fullness of the Gentiles be come in, there is going to be a change in God's dealing with the nation Israel. I think that is the meaning of "until" clauses, ones that begin with this particular conjunction that introduces this clause, and I think that it can be demonstrated from a number of places.

For example, just to give one place, in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, we are told that in the Lord's Supper, we proclaim the Lord's death "till he come." Well, the indications one would gain from that is to the effect that when the Lord comes there will no longer be the proclamation of the death of Christ in the Lord's Supper. So likewise, here, hardness has happened to Israel in part, until the full number of the Gentiles be come in. The full implication of that is that when the full number of the Gentiles has come in, there will be a relaxation of the judicial hardening of the nation Israel and all Israel shall be saved. So it would appear to me then that what the apostle is saying is simply this; that we are living in the day of the judicial hardening of the nation Israel. It is in part, but it is also temporary. This is one of the things, of course, that Israel has failed to understand. And it is also the effect of the fact that she failed to understand the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a wonderful little story that Guy King tells in one of his books. In it he says that King George V, on a certain day; he was a very beloved British monarch in relatively modern times. And he had determined that he was going to visit a hospital in which there were a number of children. And word was, of course, sent that his majesty proposed to make this informal visit. And the sisters in the hospital went around telling all of the children that the king was going to come that day for a visit. And they were all excited, and one little boy particularly was so excited he hardly knew what to do, waiting for the king. Well, during the afternoon, there were a number of people who came in to visit. Then about four o'clock there was quite a party of people who came in. One

gentleman was a very kind gentleman. He came by each of the beds and patted the children on the head, said some words of comfort to them, touched their hands.

And then after that party left and others came in. And finally the time came to be put to bed, and the little boy who was so excited was bitterly disappointed and he said, "Sister, the King hasn't come." And she said, "But sonny, don't you remember that kind gentleman who came and patted your head and spoke so nicely to you. And you responded to him so, and loved him so." He said, "Well, yes." "Well that was the king," she said. The eyes opened wide in wonderment, and his small brow puckered in wonderment in bewilderment as he said, "But sister, he hadn't his crown on." Well, that was the difficulty with Israel. What they were expecting was a king who would bring them political victory and restore them to the place of sovereignty over the nations. But when the king came, he didn't have his crown on. The Old Testament Scripture said not only that the Lord Jesus was to come and enter into the glories of the Messianic king, but the Old Testament said very plainly that the king was to suffer first. So the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that should follow, but they were the things that the Old Testament had set forth. So when he came, Israel looked for a king and forgot that the Old Testament said that he must suffer, and he must suffer first. Well, he didn't have his crown on. "But wait," Mr. King says, "hath he diadem as monarch that his brown adorns, yea a crown in very surety, but of thorns." He came with a crown, but it was a crown of thorns.

The culmination of Israel's hardening is given in the last clause of verse 25. Several questions again meet us here. "Until," well, we've talked about that. That suggests that an end persists and will take place when, after the full number of Gentiles be come in, the hardening of Israel will be relaxed. What is meant by "the fullness of the Gentiles?" Well, that probably means, as many of the teachers have pointed out, the full completed number. So hardening has happened to Israel, in part, until the full completed number of the Gentiles should enter in. Metaphorically, enter into the olive tree and possess the blessings of the olive tree and the Abrahamic covenant. Be a fellow partaker of the fat root of the olive tree. Enjoy the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant, the

Davidic covenant, and the new covenant; the full completed number entering into the community of the people of God signified by the olive tree.

What this really means then is the salvation of the Gentiles, the full number of the Gentiles be come in. Now, that I think is a very important expression. We have one that is rather similar to it in Luke chapter 21, in verse 4, but we must be careful to distinguish them. There the Lord Jesus, in the Lukan account of the Olivet discourse, says that "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." We must not confuse those statements. "The times of the Gentiles" is a prophetic term that has to do with the period of time from Nebuchadnezzar to the Second Advent of Christ. Jerusalem shall be trodden down of Gentiles until the times of Gentile world government are over. We are living in the times of the Gentiles. Jerusalem and the temple area is in the hands of a foreign power. That's really the characteristic feature of the rule of the nations in the land even today. Though Israel is in the land, she does not yet have the place where the temple was set. So "the times of the Gentiles" is a prophetic term. "The full number of the Gentiles" is a soteriological term, a salvation term. It has to do with the salvation of the Gentiles in the present age.

Now then, having said that, the apostle moves on, in the first clause of verse 26, to speak of the salvation of Israel; the enemies of Israel, and there are enemies of Israel today. There have been down through the centuries, enemies of Israel, are inclined to say the words of the Psalmist. They have said, "Come let us cut them off from being a nation that the name of Israel be no more in remembrance." Over and over and over again in 1981, the powers of the Near East make that same statement; Saudi Arabia, Syria, *et cetera*, one after the other. "We are going to push Israel into the sea. We are going to cut their name off so that they are no longer a nation." That is not a new thing. That's an old thing. The Psalmist writes, "They've said, come let's cut them off from being a nation that the name of Israel be no more in remembrance." It is one of the many indications of the inspiration of the word of God. But God says in the Scriptures, "Thus saith the Lord, who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, who

divedeth the seas when it waves roar. The Lord of hosts is his name." Twice the prophet gives that in order to let you know emphatically who is speaking, "The Lord of hosts is his name. If those ordinances depart from before me, the sun and the moon, if they depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me forever." So as long as there is a sun in heaven and a moon in heaven, you can be sure that there is a nation Israel. And God has his hand upon them for future purposes.

"And so, all Israel shall be saved." What's meant by the expression, "and so?" And thus, oh I wish it were possible to deal in some detail with this. These words mean literally, "and thus." In recent years, Dutch commentators have been responsible for a rather new interpretation of Romans 11. Generally speaking, these men are amillennialists who do not believe in an ethnic future for Israel. And so they struggle over the teaching of the Scriptures. Like anyone else, they are influenced by their presuppositions. I'm influenced by mine; you're influenced by yours; they're influenced by theirs. They don't like the idea of an ethnic future for Israel. They like to think that the term Israel is a term that includes Gentiles, and simply means, "The people of God." And so, in an endeavor to handle texts like this, they frequently come up with differing interpretations. It is the view of these interpreters, I mention Professor Berkouwer, Professor Herman Ridderbos, two men that I respect very highly in other matters particularly; William Henderson, whose commentaries are sold in our bookstore, sold in most Christian book stores, commentaries that are very, very useful in many ways. But these men all have one thing in common. They all are influenced by the Dutch. This interpretation arose in Holland. Someone said, concerning covenant theology, that the covenants were made in Holland, not in heaven. [Laughter] And it was an attempt to point out that covenant theology in its construction, as they constructed it, was not necessarily a biblical system. I think the Bible is covenantally structured, but not quite like the covenants of covenant theology.

At any rate, these men have said that this "and so all Israel shall be saved" is to be understood in a slightly different manner. It is to be translated in this manner, and then one is to look back at the context, which is always good advice, and see in what manner all Israel to be saved. And

as they read the preceding context, what it means is simply that by Gentile provocation between the first coming and second coming, a little stream of Jewish believers shall take place. And as the age progresses from the first advent to the Second Advent, small numbers of Israelites shall be saved as a remnant. And in this way, all Israel shall be saved. And we're not really to look for a future, worldwide ethnic conversion of Israel. So Israel has no ethnic future. The only future they have is the future that individual Israelites have by believing in Jesus Christ in the age between the first and the second coming of Christ. So we look forward to no great worldwide ethnic conversion of Israel in the future.

Now, that is to many a very appealing interpretation, but unfortunately for it, there are some difficulties that I do not think it can handle; in the first place, the "and so." They give us good advice. We should look at the context, "and so all Israel shall be saved." But the preceding context is most closely related, not to the salvation of Israel as it is to the salvation of the Gentiles. He has just said, "Hardening in part has happened to Israel until the full number of the Gentiles be brought in. And so, by the bringing in of the full number of the Gentiles all Israel shall be saved. What is meant is not what our Dutch friends mean, but rather, by the total salvation of the Gentiles, when that has been completed, Israel shall have been brought to jealousy and to return to the Lord. "And so all Israel shall be saved" is the provocation by the full number of the Gentiles which will lead to Israel's salvation.

Furthermore, in the context that precedes the time element of the full number of the Gentiles and also of Israel's salvation is future, not present. Let me read a few verses, verse 12, "Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness?" Verse 15, "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?" One might argue I think unsuccessfully, that that is a reference to the present, but what shall we do with verse 23 and 24? "And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again." For God is able to graft them in again. Now, that is a future reference. And

furthermore, it is a national reference. He is speaking of Israel as a nation. God is able to graft them in again, the same way in which they were grafted in previously, which was as a nation. So he is able to graft them in again. "For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree" As a nation, not as a trickle of individuals; as a nation.

Now, there are a number of other reasons, but I don't have time to speak of them. I think that that interpretation, ultimately, is unintelligible and to my mind unacceptable in spite of the fact that I do respect highly the individuals who have offered it as a recent solution to the question from the standpoint of amillennialism. The cited texts that the apostle uses in just a moment are texts that refer to the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they buttress the claim that what the apostle is speaking about is a future national conversion of the nation Israel. I take that "and so" in the same way that they take it. "And so," that is, in this manner all Israel shall be saved. That is, by the provocation to jealousy through Gentile salvation all Israel shall be saved. What God is doing by the salvation of Gentiles today is stirring, inciting Israel as a nation to faith, and ultimately his purposes shall be accomplished. When the full number of the Gentiles come sin, Israel provoked to jealousy, will turn again to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now he says, "All Israel shall be saved." And some have wondered about that. Does that mean that every single Israelite is going to be saved? I don't think so. In the first place, let's make plain one thing, today Israelites are lost, as Gentiles are lost. As Gentiles are saved through faith in Jesus Christ, so Israelites may be saved through faith in Jesus Christ. And only through faith in Jesus Christ, just as Gentiles may be saved only by faith in Jesus Christ.

Does this mean, however, or then, that all Israel, every single individual Israelite shall be saved? No, no, it does not mean that. I know the words could mean that, of course, and so all Israel shall be saved. But one must remember that in terms such as this, they must be related to the context. Again, I don't have time except to mention the texts, but if you were to look at 1 Kings chapter 12, verse 1; 2 Chronicles chapter 12, verse 1 through verse 5; Daniel chapter 9, verse 11, you

would see that the expression "all Israel" is a technical term. And it refers to Israel as a whole, Israel as a nation. So it's a technical expression that means the nation Israel; all Israel, the nation as a whole. The clue is the rejection of Jesus Christ. When the Lord Jesus Christ was rejected, did Israel reject Christ? Yes. But did every individual Israelite? No. But we say Israel rejected Christ. They did it as a nation, but not every individual. So when all Israel shall be saved, not every individual Israel shall be saved. The Bible speaks of many who will be judged during the time of the tribulation and lost because of unbelief. But the nation as a whole, its leadership, and the great mass of the people, just like those who rejected Christ. They shall be grafted in again as a nation into their own olive tree.

The Mishnah tractate, *Sanhedrin* at chapter 10, paragraph one says, "All Israel has a share in the world to come," and then it goes on to say there are some exceptions. And the exceptions are the Sadducees, the Heretics, the magicians, the licentious, and a long list of others. But all Israelites shall have a share in the world to come. So "all Israel" is a term that means the nation as a whole.

So "all Israel" shall be saved. What does he mean when he says, "And all Israel," what is meant by "Israel?" Now John Calvin is a man, of course, one of the mightiest of intellects of the entire Christian era. Even Arminians would have to grant that. It would be difficult for them, but they would grant it. Those that were open-minded at all would have to grant that John Calvin is one of the mightiest of intellects of the Christian era. He has influenced our western civilization as much as any other single individual. Calvin is a man whose commentaries, and his *Institutes*, and his other works, well I read with a great deal of profit, but I don't read them as if they were inspired. He has made mistakes in interpretation. And so, when a man says he's a Calvinist, he doesn't mean that he follows all of Calvin's teaching, but simply that he believes that essentially what is known by that term is biblical.

Calvin referred to this passage and he said that Israel here does not mean nation Israel, ethnic Israel, but it simply means spiritual Israel. That is, the church composed of both Jews and Gentiles. And so, all Israel shall be saved. That's not a mystery either, that all of the elect, whether

they be Israel or whether they be Gentiles shall be saved. But unfortunately in this case, the great Reformation interpreter did not bother to consider, I think, seriously enough the usage of the term Israel. The term Israel, as you know, occurs often in the Old Testament, and often in the New Testament. Not once is the term Israel ever used of anything other than ethnic Israel. Now, I know what you're thinking. If you're wise, and we have wise people in Believers Chapel, you're thinking, "Well then, Dr. Johnson how is it possible for a great man like Calvin, in the light of what you've just said, that it never refers to anything other than ethnic Israel, to make such a simple mistake?" Well, I must also qualify what I said by this, when I said there is not a single place, I don't mean that there are not places where there is some debate. But I will say this, so far as I know, there are only three passages over which there is any debate at all. In other words, those who hold that Israel includes Gentiles are clinging desperately to three passages, and that's all. And I don't have time to talk about them. We've already talked about one, Romans 9:6, and pointed out that when Paul says "Not all who are of Israel are Israel," he's not talking about Gentiles. He's simply saying some Israelites are believers, and some are not believers. The true Israel is the true believing Israel.

Someone, after I spoke this morning, got me as I went out the back door after the message and said, "Dr. Johnson, where is that passage that says, "The Israel of God." I said, "Well, that [is] Galatians chapter 6, in verse 16." "But," he said, "isn't that a possible place?" I said, "No it's not. In that passage Paul is, in Galatians, simply saying, the Israel of God are those true believing Israelites, ethnic in nature, who have not fallen pray to the teaching of the Judaisers. They are the Israel of God. Today we have Israelites in the church of Jesus Christ. They are the Israel of God. And the other passage is Romans chapter 2, verse 28 and 29; you read it yourself, and I'm sure that you will come to the conviction that all Israel must mean simply ethnic Israel.

Furthermore, the term occurs eleven times in Romans 9, 10, and 11, and even my good friend Professor Berkouwer admits that in only this place is there a possibility that it means anything other than Israel. And he, himself, says it means Israel through this section; 9, 10, and 11. So John Calvin, the mentor of Professor Berkouwer, the mentor in some ways of me, did not understand this

passage. When he says, "And so all Israel shall be saved," he means the nation Israel, ethnic Israel, Israel as a nation shall be saved. Someone says, "Ah," like Adolf Harnack. You know, Gentiles have made some very, very foolish statements. I don't blame many Jewish people for being upset with the Christian church, if they heard only these statements. I wish they would hear more of what believing Christians say. If they did, they may pay more attention to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Adolph Harnack, a very influential man, one of the great minds of liberal Protestantism said as he came to this passage, which he didn't like, he said, "The Jew in himself was still too strong." And so he had to write, "And so all Israel shall be saved." And Luther, a man whom I admire greatly, a man who really came by the grace of God to a brilliant understanding of justification by faith, and all of us in this room are influenced by Luther, but Luther said, "A Jew, or Jewish heart, is so wood-stone-iron-devil-hardened that it can in no way be turned." Now, that was a foolish wild statement for Luther to make who came to a knowledge of justification by faith from a Jew, the Apostle Paul. No wonder that some Jewish people have been upset with the foolish things said by some of our Protestant interpreters.

Well, our time is up, I must simply call your attention to the fact that after Paul has said, "And so all Israel shall be saved." He says, "It is as it is written in the Scriptures." In fact, "and so," may be correlative with "it is written." I don't take that interpretation, but it is a possible one. "And thus all Israel shall be saved, just as it is written." And then he cites three, he blends passages together; really I think three of them from Isaiah chapter 59, Isaiah chapter 27, probably Psalm 14 and verse 7. These passages are blended together in a picture of the coming redeemer at his second advent. But the important thing I want to leave with you is this, this free blending of Old Testament passages allude to the three unconditional covenants. There is an allusion here, in verse 26 to the Davidic covenant, in the statement "the deliverer shall come out of Zion." There is an allusion to the Abrahamic covenant in the first statement of verse 27, "For this is my covenant unto them," words taken ultimately from Genesis chapter 17 verse 4, through Isaiah 59. For Isaiah leans on Genesis 17, verse 4.

And then an allusion to the new covenant when he says, "When I shall take away their sins," so he has blended together the Davidic covenant, the Abrahamic covenant, and the three great unconditional covenants, in which God has pledged, by his own fidelity to bring them to pass. And that is Israel shall have a land; Abraham shall have a seed; David shall have a throne and kingdom, and the forgiveness of sins shall be understood and received by the nation as a whole. So logic, biblical logic, prophecy, and we could add, perhaps, now history, since 4:30, May 14, 1948 we have Israel in history, all seem to combine to affirm the restoration of Israel as a nation. You'll notice that it is all traced, ultimately, to the deliverer. It all returns to the saving work, ultimately, of the Lord Jesus Christ in his first coming, where he laid the basis for the forgiveness of sins. And in his second coming at his advent when he shall bring order into this chaotic universe, bringing Israel to her place of salvation and inaugurate his reign over this inherited earth.

If you were to travel to Werden, Germany, on the church there you would notice high up on the church, a lamb that has been engraved on the front of it. And if you were to ask the people, "How did that take place? What lies back of it?" They would say, "Well it goes back many centuries to the construction of this building. A workman who was working on that building, he lost his grip, and fell from great height, and as he fell down among the bricks and the other things that were down below as they were constructing the building, he landed and was able to get up and walk away because there was a little lamb that was wandering around among the bricks and stone, and he happened to land right on the back of the lamb, which was crushed to death. But he himself got up, and in gratitude he engraved on the front of that church a little lamb reminding him of the fact that he owed his life to a lamb.

Christian owes their lives to the Lamb of God who bore the judgment of God that we might have the forgiveness of sins. If you are here this morning and you have never believed in Christ, we invited you, as we always do, come to him. Don't leave this auditorium without the forgiveness of sins that comes through Jesus Christ.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for the privilege of the proclamation of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the fidelity of our great God to his promises. And so we look forward to the demonstration of the faithfulness of God in the conversion of Gentiles...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]