



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Romans 15:7-13, 16

“Paul on the Preparation for the Messiah's Coming”

TRANSCRIPT

[Audio begins] Well, it's time for us to begin. Let's open our class this evening with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege that is always ours to turn to the word of God. We thank Thee that the Scriptures are our food. We thank Thee for the exhortations that are contained within them and particularly the one of our Lord that the word of God is that which we should be responsive to day by day. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," so our Lord said. We thank Thee for the instruction that it gives us enabling us to know the pathway that Thou wouldst have us to walk in the present. And we thank Thee for the view of the future that it contains with the confidence that it communicates to us, with the comfort that it gives to us. And we thank Thee that in all the experiences of life, Thou art sufficient for us through Thy word. We ask Thy blessing upon us this evening as we study together. And we pray Thy blessing upon the Footsteps Program at the same time. May the young people who are in there be continued to be brought up in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We commit our elders and deacons to Thee. We ask Thy blessing upon them and upon the ministry of Believers Chapel. We thank Thee for

Thy hand upon us to this point. We look forward to the future with confidence. And now, Lord, as we study together in this hour, may Thy presence be with us in illumination and understanding. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Well, this evening in the study that I'm going to try to give in the place of Dr. Daniel, we are going to take a look at the subject of Paul on the Preparation for the Messiah's Coming, and I want you to turn with me to Romans chapter 15, verse 7 through verse 13 for a Scripture reading, as well as verse 16. And we'll begin from that point. Romans chapter 15, verse 7 through verse 13, and then verse 16. The apostle writes, "Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers, and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, 'Therefore I will give praise to Thee among the Gentiles, and I will sing to Thy name.' And again he say, 'Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.' And again, 'Praise the Lord all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him.' And again Isaiah says, 'There shall come the root of Jesse, and he who arises to rule over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles hope.' Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (And then in the 16th verse, the apostle writes) "To be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, that my offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit."

It might be interesting, an interesting task, to compare Jesus and Paul as historical figures. In the main, to sum it up in a very simple way, they were two servants of God who lived in contrasting ages separated by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This

fact in itself has very important significance for the history of salvation and for the present age.

There are two descriptions of the two persons found in the same general context that strikingly portray the extent of the contrast between them. And they are in the passage that we have read just this evening. And I know that if you pondered it a moment, you would realize that that is true of this passage because in the 8th verse we read of the Lord Jesus, "For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers."

Now, that plainly tells us that the point of our Lord's ministry, the aim for which he was moving as he carried out his ministry was to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and further, that he was a servant of the circumcision, that is, that he was a servant of Judaism, that is, biblical Judaism. And so God had sent him on behalf of the faithfulness of God to his truth to confirm those promises given to Israel of old. Now, he goes on and says in the 9th verse, "And for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written."

Now in verse 15 and 16, the apostle writes of himself,

"But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, that my offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit."

So, the Lord Jesus is a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God. And Paul is a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. One is concerned with the promises made to the fathers, while the other is ministering as a priest the gospel of God directed toward the Gentiles. That raises the question that I want to try to survey simply in the time we

have this evening: To what extent does Paul discuss the age of preparation for the Messiah's coming?

And I'm going to give you an outline as I go along. And first of all in the outline, The Old Testament Promises in Paul, and I'm doing this as I have it before me. That's Roman I. And then Capital A: Their Nature and Origination. For the sake of brevity and simplicity, I want to seek to confine our comments to the Epistle to the Romans as much as possible. But it will not be possible to do it entirely.

The apostle's theology, we know, is derived largely from the Old Testament. He often says that. And if you look at the passage before us, you will see that that is true because he cites a number of passages here in addition to relating his ministry to the Old Testament. But he finds in the Old Testament, the historical origin of the Messianic promises. And I'd like to turn to a few of the passages now and ask you, if you have your bibles handy, that you'll turn back to Romans chapter, and we'll read a few verses beginning with the first verse of this chapter.

Having pointed out in verse 28 and 29 that "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God," he asks the question, "Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?"

Now you might think if you had listened to Paul in those preceding two chapters that a proper answer would be: There is no advantage for the Jew because it's only the Jewish believer who is to be blessed. And the Gentile believer is also promised blessing as well, so what difference can there be? And the question naturally arises because it just seems that there is no advantage for the Jew. What's the advantage of the Jew? What's the benefit of circumcision? And it really is a bit surprising to hear Paul say, "Great in every respect."

Now remember, the apostle is writing this from the standpoint of the new age, the present age, the age in which we have the Christian church. And so even in this age, the apostle says the Jew has an advantage that can be called "Great in every respect." And then he goes on to talk about specifically the promises. "First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God."

Now, suppose someone said at this point, But they did not believe those promises. They rejected them. They crucified the one of whom those promises spoke. Paul answers that as well. He says, "What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written."

So it's evident from this passage that the apostle regards those promises of the Old Testament as still valid. Now it is true, the generation in our Lord's day did crucify him. But the promises were unconditional promises given in the Old Testament, and thus, they must come to pass.

Turn to chapter 9 and verse 4 and verse 5 where the apostle now expresses how sorrowful he is over Jewish unbelief. And he states in verse 4 as he describes them,

"Who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Messiah according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever."

Now notice "to whom belongs the adoption as sons, the glory and the covenants and the giving the Law and the temple service and the promises."

So, it's evident from Romans chapter 9, and still Paul writing of the present time, that those great blessings that were promised the Nation Israel in the Old Testament still hold in spite of Israel's disobedience at the present time.

Now turn over to Galatians chapter 3 and verse 8, and then we'll read verse 16 and verse 29 as well. But Galatians 3:8, in another epistle somewhat similar to the Epistle to the Romans, in some ways Romans telling us what the gospel is, Galatians telling us what the gospel is not. And we read in the 8th verse, "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the good news beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All nations shall be blessed in you.'"

So again, the promises directed to Abraham are the fundamental promises. And while the Gentiles are included, the fundamental promises are made to Israel. Notice the 16th verse, "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'And to your seed,' that is, Christ." He is the ultimate seed. And don't forget, of course, that our Lord is an Israelite.

And then in verse 29 he goes on to say, "And if you belong to Christ, then are you Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise." In other words, what he is saying is what I have said a few times in recent years here, that if we're going to get salvation, we must get it through Abraham. Now that is the fundamental fact, I think, that these texts tell us. These special disclosures were given to Abraham and to Moses. In chapter 3 and verse 8 of Galatians we read, "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the good news beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All nations shall be blessed in you."

And then verse 15 through verse 20 says essentially the same thing except that Moses also is involved in this as we know.

"Brethren, (verse 15 of Galatians 3) I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is only a man's covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it. Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ. What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later,

does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on promise; but God granted it to Abraham by means of a promise. Why the Law then? (you might say) It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made.

So, you can see the special disclosures were made to Abraham and were made to Moses.

Capital B: Their Confirmation. And we turn back now to verse 8 of Romans chapter 15. In an important passage, for this is really an important passage, Romans 15:8 and following, or perhaps 7 through 13, the apostle traces the confirmation, the bringing to realization of the promises to the ministry of Christ. And notice, in verse 8, the expression, or verse 7, "Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God."

Now, to understand that, we must understand the preceding context in chapter 14 to this point. But I imagine most of you are familiar enough with Romans to know that in chapter 14, the apostle discusses indifferent things. He talks about the observance of days, and he talks about the observance of certain meats. And the point of it is to suggest that these are indifferent things, and we ought to be willing to sacrifice our freedom in certain aspects of our lives if it might be the means of causing a stumbling block to our brethren. And so now in verse 7, after having spoken of that, he says, "Wherefore, accept one another," that is, do not let these indifferent things, what you eat and drink, or the days that you observe, be the means of a division among you. Be willing to sacrifice, for these are indifferent things, not the real things.

And I would like to suggest to you that in reading it, when Paul talks about the strong and the weak, that he probably has in mind the strong are the Gentiles, and the weak are the Jews, because the Jews would have the scruples knowing the Scriptures a

bit better than the Gentiles and having been under law. So, in doubtful things then, the Gentiles are to bear with the weak, the Jews. They shouldn't try to please themselves because Jesus Christ did not please himself, as he's just stated just above. Rather, receive one another as Christ did all of us, both Jews and Gentiles.

And now in verse 8 begins with "For." This is why we should accept one another. "For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers, and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy."

Now this introduces the proof of the preceding, the proof of his reception of the Romans. And there're just two things I'd like to emphasize here. And I'd like to emphasize first the order in the statements of verse 8 and 9. He says first of all he was a minister of "the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God." And then in verse 9, "And for the Gentiles to glorify God."

So first, our Lord is a minister of the circumcision, and incidentally, that's a "minister of circumcision." "The" is not found in the original text. Perhaps it shouldn't be rendered that way. It could be rendered that way; however, it's not a major point. "The minister of circumcision."

Now, why is our Lord said by Paul to be a minister of circumcision? Well, the reason is very simple, actually, if you would think about it for a moment. The condition attached to the promises of the Abrahamic covenant was circumcision. And the male children should be circumcised on the eighth day. And that was a rite through which they went to signify their faith in the promises of God and that they might be included within the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant.

I don't want to go too far in saying what I'm going to say, because there is a sense in which baptism is not really parallel with circumcision. But there is a parallel between them in the sense that water baptism is designed to be a kind of a seal of the faith, that is, the saving faith that God has given to us. And likewise, circumcision for the males within

Israel was the same kind of seal. Paul talks about it in the 4th chapter. It's not that which saves, but it's that which signified the individual had believed and belonged to the company of the covenant people. The promises lay within the limits of the covenant.

If you turn back to Genesis chapter 17, you can turn if you like, I'm going to read three verses, chapter 17 verse 7, then verse 14, and then verse 21. Verse 7, God speaking to Abraham says, "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your seed after you throughout your generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you."

And then verse 14, "But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."

And verse 21, "But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year."

So the circumcision, verse 11, "And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you."

Now, the promises, then, that God gave to Abraham, the Abrahamic promises are promises then that lay within the limits of the covenant. And you'll notice that the Gentiles, this may be humbling, but this is what the word of God says, the Gentiles have no direct promise. They are included within the promises that were made directly to Abraham and to his seed. You notice the 15th chapter again, verse 8, "I say that Christ has become a servant of the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers." The promises were given to the fathers. "And for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written."

So, in other words, the Abrahamic covenantal promises were promises that were given to Abraham and to his seed. Our Lord's ministry is directed toward the ratification of the Abrahamic covenantal promises to the fathers, both in his person and in his work. So, our Lord came as the covenanted person, the Messiah, and he also carried out the covenanted work of the sacrifice of the cross.

Turn back to Galatians chapter 4 in verses 4 and 5, and you'll notice the statement that the apostle makes concerning the person of our Lord. In verse 4 of chapter 4, "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." And so, in his person, he came to fulfill the promises.

Now his work, if you'll turn to the Book of Matthew in chapter 10 in verse 5, I think you will see how in his work this was the purpose for which our Lord came. When he, in Matthew chapter 10, sent out the apostles, this is what he gives to them as their commission. The 5th verse of the 10th chapter, "These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them saying: "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

How can you understand something like that if you do not understand this significant aim and goal of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ found in the promises fundamentally given to Abraham and enlarged and expanded upon through the Old Testament ?

Now turn to Matthew chapter 15 and verse 24. We have the same thing with the Canaanite woman in verse 22. While you're finding that verse, we read,

"Behold a Canaanite woman came out from that region and began to cry out, saying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed.' But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came to him and kept asking Him, saying, 'Send her away, for she is shouting out after us.' But He answered and said, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'"

Isn't that interesting? "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Now you know the story, of course, how she then ultimately takes the place of the lost sheep of the house of Israel, acknowledges her position that she's like the dogs that

feed on crumbs from under the master's table. Then the Lord Jesus says, "O woman, your faith is great; be it done for you as you wish." She had taken the place of the Gentiles. She had taken the secondary place. And having taken the secondary place, then the promises pertain to her.

John chapter 4 in verse 22 fits in with all of this, of course, in which in the chapter that has to do with the Samaritan woman we read this from our Lord, "You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from (or of) the Jews."

Paul tells us that the gospel is to be preached to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. The question is whether that was simply historical or to be followed today. And most studying the Epistle to the Romans think that what the apostle means is that's the order in which it has been done historically.

Now, there's another thing that we should note here in chapter 15. While the order of the preceding suggests the priority of the Jews, for God's fidelity is displayed toward them, still there is mercy for the Gentiles. So we don't want to give the wrong impression that there is not mercy for Gentiles. There is mercy for Gentiles, but the order and goal of our Lord's ministry primarily is to be noted particularly. Notice that although they are without a covenant, they are nevertheless included in the covenants to display his mercy because the 9th verse says, "And for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written."

The redemptive purpose of the minister of circumcision was worldwide. When Abraham was given his promises, he was told, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." And so in that, there is provision made for Gentiles. That's the fundamental provision made for Gentiles. They do not have any covenants. We don't have any covenants. And even in the fulfillment of the new covenant, the fulfillment of the new covenant is the fulfillment of the covenant that God made with Jeremiah in Jeremiah's day

with the Nation Israel. But in the covenant that was Israel's covenant, provision is made for Gentile mercy. That's the point.

So, the redemptive purpose of the minister of the circumcision was a worldwide ministry, but the Gentiles receive the blessings only by mercy. As E. H. Gifford in his commentary of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans, a reprint of the speaker's commentary says, "Even for Gentiles, salvation is of the Jews, not secured by covenant, but granted of free mercy."

Now, there were indications, of course, in the Old Testament that this was what was going to happen. That is, that the ministry went to Israel, but the Gentiles were included in the last line of the Abrahamic promises. And the Old Testament has many passages that refer to the blessing of the Gentiles. And Paul has drawn a number of them to attention here in verse 9, 10, 11, and 12. And the key word is the word Gentiles. "And for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written." And now he cites one of the psalms, "Therefore I will give praise to Thee among the Gentiles, And I will sing Thy name," Psalm 18 verse 49.

Notice the next, "And again he says, 'Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.' And again, (That incidentally was Deuteronomy 32:43). And again, 'Praise the Lord all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him.'" And finally, (That, I believe, is Psalm 117 and verse 1) and then finally, "And again Isaiah says, 'There shall come the root of Jesse, and he who arises to rule over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles hope.'"

Now if you want to get the point of what he's writing about, just underline Gentiles. Underline it with two lines. And then draw one line from each Gentile, that is, each Gentiles. Verse 9 we have, "And for the Gentiles to glorify God." Underline it, draw a line to Gentiles at the end of the verse. Then verse 10 to Gentiles, verse 11 to Gentiles, and then verse 12, the last, well we have two reference to them in the next to the last line and the last line. In other words, Paul has taken a series of passages from the Old Testament and thrown them all together to make the point that the Gentiles do receive

Abrahamic blessing without a covenant because they're included in the covenant that God made with Abraham.

I think a lot of Gentiles have a feeling that that isn't the way it ought to be. We ought to be on the same level with Israel. But we are not. There is distinguishing grace in Genesis 3:15, the seed of the woman, the seed of the serpent. And the seed of the serpent does not possess the promises of God. And when the promises are made to the Nation Israel, there's distinguishing grace again. The Nation Israel becomes the people of the Lord God and the covenanted people. But the Gentiles are included if they believe in the redeemer of Israel.

We might think that the ground ought to be level, but God works out of sovereign mercy. He extends blessing to whom he wishes to bless. He hardens whom he hardens. And the time is coming when, even though it may seem difficult for us, we will understand fully and we will praise God for the righteous and gracious marvelous way he has dealt with men.

Well the culmination. This is Capital C in my outline: The Culmination. The culmination of the promises or the promise program in history is set forth in Romans chapter 11, verse 25 through verse 27 and beyond. And these are Pauline topics, they are to be reserved for some other time. But you, no doubt, are familiar with them.

Now let me say a few words secondly, and this is Roman II in my outline: The Place of Israel in Pauline Thought. I think I did forget to give you one point. Their Confirmation was Capital B, and then Capital C: Their Culmination. And now Roman II: The Place of Israel in Pauline Thought. The divine intention in their calling: Capital A.

The national and worldwide purposes of God find expression in Israel's covenantal relation to God. They were called in order that they might be the means of God's glorification. Turn over to Isaiah chapter 43 in the Old Testament, and let me read a couple of verses there. In Isaiah chapter 43 and verse 7 and verse 21, these are the verses. Isaiah 43:7, "Everyone who is called by My name, And whom I have created for

My glory, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made." "Created for My glory." Verse 21, "The people (This is a reference to the Nation Israel) The people whom I formed for Myself will declare My praise."

So, in the case of the Nation Israel, they were called in order that they might be the means of God's glorification. They are also called that they might be saved, because we read in verse 11 of Isaiah 43, "I, even I, am the LORD, And there is no savior besides Me." So, called to glorify God, called that they might be saved, called that they might possess the oracles of God, the promises of God as we read in Romans chapter 3 in verse 2 and Romans chapter 9 verse 4 and 5. In fact, that was the divine intention of their called, to glorify his name, to possess his word, to be the means by which his purpose on earth might be ultimately accomplished. Of course, the seed: the seed, is the one who makes it all possible, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, Capital B: Their Present Condition in Unbelief. That raised a great amount of question in the days of the apostles because those men knew what the Old Testament said. I wouldn't have had to tell them that you have your blessings by covenant and the Gentiles do not have any covenants. They knew that. The apostle begins the 9th chapter of Romans by saying, "Who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises." They all belong to Israel. They knew that. So, they would not have been shocked by my statement tonight. In fact, a few of them might have even said, Amen, because that's exactly the truth, and that's the way some still feel, even in their unbelief.

But their unbelief is developed by the apostle after he points that out. And he deals with the history of it in Romans 9 and 10. And you know, it talks about how it is, that in spite of the fact that they had the promises of God, nevertheless, having the promises of God, they are in a state of unbelief in the present day. And they obviously do not possess what the apostle is talking about. And so, what has happened?

And if the apostle says what he says, that we are the people of God, they would have, of course, had very vigorous objection. And we read the Book of Acts, and we discover that that is true. So in chapter 9 and chapter 10, Paul launches in to a discussion of history and how if they read the Old Testament properly, they would have noted that not every Israelite, regardless of faith in Christ, was included in the promises. That was evident in the call of Isaac. "For in Isaac shall thy seed be called." Others are set aside. There was distinguishing grace in the midst of Israel.

And finally at the end of the 10th chapter, having said that the reason that Israelites have not responded to the promises made to them is their unbelief. And so in chapter 10, verse 21, he says, "But as for Israel He says (that is, God says), 'All the day long I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.'

I know you've heard me say this, but one of the commentators has commented on this expression "All day long I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people," which is a citation from Isaiah 65, that if you will think for a moment of the Lord God stretching out his hand to a disobedient and gainsaying people, you have a vivid picture of the cross of Jesus Christ. And strikingly, the very picture of God presented as stretching out his hands to a gainsaying people was a way of saying to them the blessings come through the one who hangs upon the cross. And incidentally, the one who hangs upon the cross is the one who makes the promises because he, the Lord Jesus, is the Old Testament Yahweh. So Yahweh, the Lord Jesus, hanging upon the cross is the expression of God's desire that they be saved and also the expression the cross itself of their disobedience. How significant the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is. So, Capital B: Their Present Position of Condition in Unbelief.

And now, Capital C: The Future Salvation and Blessing. Israel's unbelief, Paul makes plain in his greatest chapter on Israel's place in history, Romans chapter 11, is not total. It's true. They are a disobedient and gainsaying people, but the first 10 verses of chapter 11 make it very plain that not every Israelite has been disobedient. In fact, at the

present day when Paul writes this, after the nation has been guilty of the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus, he can say in the 5th verse, "In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice."

So, the first 10 verses of the chapter are designed to set forth the fact that though Israel has rejected the promises, nevertheless, the promises still hold. And in evidence of it is the fact that there is a remnant at the very present time in token of God's faithfulness to his promises.

And let me say it to you, my Christian friends, the very fact that that there is one Jewish man today who is a Jewish Christian is evidence that God has not forgotten the promises that he made to Abraham and to his seed. And the fact that there are numerous Jewish believers over the face of this earth is also testimony to the faithfulness of God to the promises even today.

Now having made that point, then in verse 11 through verse 27 he says not only is Israel's unbelief not total, but it's not final either. And he gives that magnificent illustration of the olive tree. And I'm sure you remember it of the natural branches being cut off (that the Nation Israel), the unnatural branches grafted in (the Gentiles being grafted in), and furthermore, notice, that he says in connection with those branches that are grafted in that they, verse 17, they have become "partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree."

So, the remnant is the olive tree. The unbelieving Jews are cut off. Believing Gentiles are grafted in and partake of, as he puts it, the rich root of the olive tree with them, that is, with the believing Israelites. That's why, in my opinion, we cannot talk of two peoples of God. We talk of one people of God, one people of God down through the years, but with a different kind of experience. In the Old Testament the people of God are primarily Israel, but Gentiles were also here and there saved, in the same way that the woman of Canaan was converted. At the present time still, that fundamental remnant, the people of God, but now filled in with adopted people, the Gentiles. Still

one people, but one people made up of Jew and Gentile standing on equal ground before the Lord in the sense of the possession of salvation.

So, at the present day, we have a church made up overwhelmingly of Gentiles through the ministry of the Jewish apostle, the Apostle Paul, possessing the promises that were found in the olive tree. And with them, those faithful Israelitish believers down through the years.

Now, what about the future? Well, the apostle goes on to say in verse 25 through verse 27 that the present status is going to change. It will change in the future. Incidentally, he argues. He argues by logic, by history, that is, if you'll look in the past, the promises have been fulfilled because there've always been Jewish people who have been the possessors of the Abrahamic promises. And then logic as well. And the logic, I particularly like, in verse 23 and verse 24, "And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again." Again. In other words, the same way in which Israelites were in the olive tree, they will be in the olive tree again. "For," this is the logic of it in Paul's mind. "For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more shall these who are the natural branches be grafted into" whose tree? Whose tree? To whom does the tree belong? The tree belongs to whom? To Israel. The tree is Israel's tree. Isn't that interesting? In the original text, that's very emphatic also. Those words are reserved for the last part of the sentence, the emphatic position. And at the end, the ones according to nature, how much more shall these who are according to nature, that is, "the natural branches shall be grafted into their own olive tree."

So, to show that Scripture supports that too, as well as history and logic, he now cites the word of God. "For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this secret—lest you be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to

Israel until the full number of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel shall be saved; just as it is written."

Now when he says "all Israel," he does not mean every single Israelite. The Old Testament makes that very plain. But the term "all Israel" means Israel as a whole. So, Israel as a whole shall come in. But we say, Israel crucified Christ, don't we? What do we mean by that? Every single Israelite? No, we mean the majority, the mass plus the leaders. And I would suggest to you, that when it says "all Israel shall be saved," we're not talking about every single individual Israelite. The Old Testament prophecies, they record events in the future, deny that point. But what we shall see is the mass of believing Israelites come in and the leaders of the people. As Zechariah puts it in chapter 12 and verse 10 of his prophecy, "And they shall look unto Me whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only child." Zechariah chapter 12, verse 10 and following, and speaks of the bitter weeping that shall take place then.

So, history, logic and prophecy assure Israel's covenanted place. Now, I'd like to say just a few words before we conclude on the Mosaic law and the preparation for salvation. And this is Roman III in the outline: The Mosaic Law and the Preparation for Salvation. And Capital A: The Purpose of the Law. Of course, in twelve or thirteen minutes, it's impossible to deal fully with this topic. But I would like to note the principal emphasis of Paul's conception of law.

Paul makes reference to the ceremonial law. He makes reference to it, I believe, in Ephesians 2:15, in Galatians chapter 3 in verse 17. He makes reference to it in Galatians 3, verse 23 through verse 25. Perhaps I should read these verses in Galatians 3:23-25, he says,

"But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law became our tutor to lead us unto

Christ, that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor."

We also could notice chapter 4, verse 1 through verse 3,

"Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world."

Most of the commentators have felt that Paul refers to more than simply the Ten Commandments when he states these things. So, we'll just say that Paul does refer to the ceremonial law, but his great point is that the law was given, and primarily speaking of the Mosaic law of commandments, was to reveal sin. In Romans chapter 3 in verse 20, he says by the law is the full knowledge of sin. He uses a term, incidentally, that refers to experiential knowledge. It's almost as if he says the law was given that you might come to know and know it in your experience to know sin.

And furthermore, in chapter 5 in verse 20 of the Epistle to the Romans, I think that what he says is that the law was given to aggravate sin. "And the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more." In other words, the law was given so that we might know we were sinners. And the law was given so that sin might be aggravated so we'd be sure to know that we were sinners.

For the transgressor, the law is a threat and a terror. The apostle in chapter 4 in verse 15 speaks of the law as that which brings wrath. Verse 15 of chapter 4, "For the Law brings about wrath." It was designed for a temporary period of time, as he says in Galatians chapter 3 in verse 19, "Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until

the seed should come to whom the promise had been made." 2 Corinthians 3:7-11 and 1 Corinthians 15:56 add to that point.

Now Capital B: The Nullification of the Law. The apostle conceives of the believer in Jesus Christ as freed from the Law of Moses. The passage I read here in Galatians 3 states that. Romans chapter 7, verse 1 through 6 states it. 2 Corinthians 3:7-18 states it. And to make it plain that he's talking about the law inclusive of the Ten Commandments, those latter two passages, Romans 7 and 2 Corinthians 3, refer specifically to the commandments. And Paul says that we are not under them, we have died to them.

But here in Galatians 3, let me read verse 23 through verse 25 again,

"But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law became our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor."

So in this passage, I think the point's made plainly. But let's move on to chapter 4, and I believe I've got time to read this and make some comments about it as well.

"Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything (He is illustrating by a common figure to show that Israel in the Old Testament was under tutors.), he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father (And the tutor, of course, is the law). So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts,

saying, "Abba! Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God."

So, the apostle indicates then that the believers were legitimately under the law for a time, but are now no longer under the law. Now, since believers were never under the law for salvation in the Old Testament, it must have been for sanctification purposes. But in that sense, then, they are no longer under the law as his illustration shows. We're not under the law for sanctification. The law has been done away with.

One other thing that makes it very plain that we're not under the Law of Moses as a code by which we are to live for our sanctification is the fact that in the law of the Old Testament, sanctions were set forth in Scripture for those who broke the law. And for those who would like to put Christians under law, they love to forget the sanctions of the Old Testament which were there for broken laws. So in the Old Testament, those sanctions were very severe. But in the present day, it's very common for people to say, Yes, we're still under the law. But when you say, Well, what about the sanctions when you disobey the law? Well, they hadn't really thought of that often. But the association of sanctions with the law only serves to confirm the fact that the law has been done away with as a code for believers in this age.

We are under the Holy Spirit, the person of the Holy Spirit who indwells every believer. That does not mean that we should expect to live contrary to the moral principles that are found in the Law of Moses. Paul makes that very plain when he says in Romans chapter 8,

"For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

So, the test of a man's walking according to the righteousness that is found in the law of God is the kind of life that he lives under the Holy Spirit.

Now finally, just a comment on the uses of the law. Lutherans and Calvinists have debated the uses of the law down through the centuries, differing primarily over the so called third use of the law. The Lutherans have set forth, generally speaking, two uses of the Law of Moses. First of all, there is the normative use which is the law is given to bring us to the knowledge of our sin. And so Lutherans like to say the way we preach the gospel is we preach the law and we bring men under the conviction of sin, then we preach the gospel to them. They also acknowledge there's a political use of the law in which the law is to be a civil guide in the society of Christian people.

But the Calvinists said that there was a third use of the law, *tertius usus legis*, the third use of the law. And a great deal of controversy has existed between Lutherans and Calvinists over the third use of the law. The Calvinists have contended that there is a didactical use of the law, that is, that we are under the commandments as a guide for Christian living. The Lutherans have denied this. But the Calvinists have insisted that we are under the law as a teacher of how to live the Christian life.

There is a sense, of course, as we just said, that we should pay careful attention to the moral principles of the Law of Moses. If we are breaking the moral principles of the Law of Moses, we're not walking by the Spirit. But so far as I can tell in the New Testament, we are not under the Mosaic law as a code. In my opinion, this is only my opinion, my opinion is that when you put people under the Ten Commandments, almost inevitably, a legalistic spirit, not legalism, that is, that a man is saved by what he does - sanctified by what he does and the merits of it, but generally speaking a legalistic spirit arises in the congregation of the believers wherever they are.

And to my mind, the congregation of the believers ought to be full of the joy of the Lord and the freedom of walking by the Holy Spirit. Not freedom to sin, but freedom

to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. So, Augustine said, "The law was given that grace may be sought, and grace is given that the law may be fulfilled." Romans 8:4 and Romans 13:8-10 and Galatians 5:14 argue for some use of the law as a didactic principle that we should keep before us but in the sense, in my opinion, of a test of whether we're walking by the Holy Spirit.

I wish we had time for some questions. If you'd like to come ask me some questions, I'll be up here for a few minutes. But I try to avoid questions for two reasons. Number one, I might not know the answer to them. And that's embarrassing, you know. Being as old as I am, and not know an answer, why that's terribly embarrassing. And the second reason is probably more fundamental. It's difficult for me to hear you in the back of the auditorium. So if you'll come up here and ask me, I'll prove my ignorance up here among closer touch with you.

Let's bow together in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the word of God and we thank Thee for the apostle, for the clarity of the way in which Thou didst bring him to the knowledge of the present age, of the relationship that we have to the promises that were given to Abraham and to his seed. We thank Thee for our Lord Jesus who faithfully met the conditions in his sacrificial death, confirmed the covenant, confirmed it for all eternity, and we thank Thee so much, Lord, that in sovereign grace Thou didst open the door for the full and free salvation of Gentiles. For Jesus' sake. Amen.