

A Verse by Verse Study of

Romans Chapters 9-11

and

Excerpts from *The Fire of His Holiness*

by Sergio Scataglini

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The original paper has been modified to some extent to create this internet version of the paper. The primary change is that I substantially abbreviated some of the quotations that were included in the original paper. I had received permission from several publishers to quote extensively (more than 300 words) in the original paper, but I didn't receive permission to quote extensively for this internet version.

March, 2001
by Karl Kemp

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(Some of these page numbers are different than in the original paper.)

INTRODUCTION

Much introductory material is included as part of the study of Romans chapter 9 in this paper, so I can be somewhat brief here. In my teaching I often have occasion to disagree with several foundational teachings of Calvinism.¹ For example, from my point of view, Calvinists overstate the fallenness of man.² They say that man is so fallen that he has no ability to cooperate with the grace of God or to have faith. They say that God must give faith to His elect (the ones that He chooses)—the elect must be regenerated/born again (*before* they have faith) *so* they can have faith.

I agree that man is so fallen (in spiritual death and in bondage to sin) that God must take the initiative in our salvation, and I agree that we are saved one hundred percent by the grace of God in Christ and that God must receive all the glory for saving us. But it seems clear to me that the Bible consistently shows that faith is something we do in response to God's initiative and His grace and that we can, and we must, cooperate with His grace through faith.³ See my *Paper on Faith*. It's very important for us to understand the meaning of the word *faith* in the New Testament; this is the most important word used in the New Testament to show what God requires of us.

Another important example that often comes up is the Calvinistic doctrine *once saved, necessarily always saved* (eternal security; the perseverance of the saints).⁴ This

¹ These foundational teachings originated with the latter view of Augustine (AD 354-430). John Calvin (AD 1509-1564) and the Calvinists, who have been and still are very influential in Protestantism, followed Augustine's latter view.

² After the fall man is spiritually dead, having lost his life-flowing relationship with God, but God hasn't totally separated Himself from man. He hasn't totally withdrawn His presence from the earth (including the presence of His Spirit and of His angels), or His truth, or His blessings. Furthermore, He limits what He permits the devil to do. Some generations and some peoples are more separated from God than others; the generation of the flood is an example of a terribly wicked generation.

³ We couldn't have saving faith if God didn't take the initiative in our salvation, but it goes too far to say we must be born again *before* we can have saving faith. The Bible frequently speaks of repenting and believing the gospel (and of submitting to Christ in faith) so we can be born again (cf., e.g., Mark 1:14, 15; 16:14-16; John 3:16-21, 36; 5:39-47; 6:29; 8:24; 17:20; Acts 28:24; Rom. 1:5, 16, 17; 3:3; 3:21-5:2; 6:17; 10:9, 10; 11:23; 1 Cor. 1:21; Gal. 3:21-27; Eph. 1:13; Col. 2:12-15; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Thess. 1:8-10; 2:10-12; 1 Tim. 1:16; Heb. 6:1; 11:1-39, especially 11:1, 2, 6-8, 39, 40; and 1 Pet. 4:17). Calvinists cite a few verses which they understand to teach that God gives us saving faith (e.g., Eph. 2:8; Rom. 12:3), but it seems clear to me that they are misinterpreting these verses. See my *Paper on Faith*; those verses are discussed there.

God doesn't give us faith, and he doesn't make us continue in faith to the end (we'll talk more about our need to continue in faith as we continue with this Introduction). But it *is* Biblical to say that God enables us to be strong in faith and to continue in faith to the end as we look to Him and cooperate with His Word/grace/Spirit. Furthermore, faith is nothing for Christians to boast about. To the extent Christians are boasting in their faith, they show that they don't really understand faith or God's gracious plan of salvation. Faith isn't a *work* of man; faith involves a humble submission to God from the heart and a trusting, total dependence on Him, and on Him alone.

⁴ Many non-Calvinists also believe once saved, necessarily always saved. Many of them (if not most of them) don't realize that this doctrine originated (at least for the most part) with the latter view of Augustine (AD 354-430), which was picked up and passed on by the Calvinists. The doctrine could hardly have arisen on its own with much acceptance without the overall framework adopted by Augustine in his latter viewpoint (the foundational framework that we are so fallen that we can't have any input regarding

doctrine follows as a logical deduction once you accept the Calvinistic idea that our salvation is totally of God and that we don't have any real input as to whether we will become Christians or as to whether we will stay Christians to the end. God, they say, ensures that the elect will continue (persevere) in faith to the end. I don't believe that the Bible backs up the idea that God makes believers continue in faith to the end. There are many very clear passages which demonstrate that it's possible to turn from God and to lose salvation. Believers can become unbelievers; they can apostatize. See my paper *Once Saved, Always Saved?*

On the other hand, and this is very important, God isn't trying to get rid of us! Quite the contrary! He loves us! Every true Christian can, and should, continue in faith to the end and inherit eternal glory. God will enable those who look to Him to keep pressing on in faith to the end; His grace is more than sufficient for those who will appropriate it through faith. Furthermore, believers can, and should, have assurance of salvation.

The primary reason that I consider once saved, necessarily always saved to be such a problem is that it is so often understood and taught in a way gives Christians the very wrong assurance that they will stay saved no matter what they do. Nothing is required of them. They can just coast. They aren't even required to learn what God says in His Word. Righteousness, holiness, and living for God are optional matters,⁵ and Christians certainly don't have to be concerned about all the warnings in the Bible that they could forfeit their salvation. The clear warnings are denied or explained away. In our day many Christians do not fear God; they are often told that they are not supposed to fear Him. The Bible, however, very much including the New Testament, repeatedly warns that we must fear sinning against God.

The more that Christians aren't walking close to God in truth, righteousness, and holiness—and much of the Christian church of our day is sadly lacking in this area—the more serious the problems caused by the doctrine *once saved, necessarily always saved* necessarily become. One factor that makes the problem far more serious is the apparent fact that many of those who are resting in the doctrine never became born-again Christians in the first place. In our day many people who consider themselves to be born-again Christians have never heard anything close to the gospel taught in the New Testament; many have never heard the word *repent*, for example. I'm not saying that none of these people are born again. I'm not the judge. But this type of Christianity is on very shaky ground—if the Bible is true (and I believe it is).

Thankfully, some Calvinists guard against much of the abuse of the doctrine *once saved, necessarily always saved* by insisting that God requires us to live according to His Word in righteousness and holiness and by insisting that we must take His warnings

our salvation and that our becoming believers and our staying believers is strictly determined by God and His sovereign will) because once saved, necessarily always saved has so little scriptural support and so many very clear passages of Scripture in direct opposition to it. See my paper *Once Saved, Always Saved?*

⁵ Some Christians (and some of them are evangelical Christians) are so far from the balanced truth of the gospel that they think that things like living in righteousness and holiness are in the category of optional works, and that they only need *faith* to be saved. (I hear this kind of thing from Christians quite often.) But the apostle Paul would agree with the apostle James (Gal. 1:19) that “faith without works is dead” (James 2:26); in other words it isn't real faith/saving faith. When Christians walk in the Spirit by faith (and this isn't an optional matter for Christians) righteous works (fruit) of the Spirit will necessarily be produced.

seriously. But, based on what I have observed over the years, many Calvinists don't do much guarding against abuses of the doctrine and many non-Calvinists who hold the doctrine don't either.

I'll just mention one more example, the Calvinistic doctrine of *limited atonement*. This means that Christ didn't die for everybody, just for the elect. The doctrine follows quite naturally once you accept the other foundational ideas, but there are quite a few passages of Scripture which clearly show that Christ *did* die for all men. First Timothy 2:4-6 and 1 John 2:2, by themselves, would be sufficient to convince me. Calvinists try to explain away such verses, but, in my opinion, quite unsuccessfully. (Most Christians are pretty good at explaining away verses that don't fit well with what they *know* to be the truth.)

I don't like to disagree with other Christians, and I'm trying to not be argumentative, but we can't avoid dealing with issues as important as these. Our viewpoints on issues like *faith* and *once saved, necessarily always saved* substantially impact our concept of Christianity and our ideas regarding what God requires of us. It isn't bad news to learn that God requires something of us. We aren't robots or low-level creations of God. We were created in His image and for His glory. The fall greatly affected us, but we still have some capacity to cooperate with His saving grace in Christ, and especially after we are born again; His grace is more than sufficient. For one thing, He paid an infinite price to save us!

What does all this have to do with Romans chapters 9-11? A lot! Romans chapter 9 is the primary scriptural passage (but not the only such passage) that is used by Calvinists to support their foundational framework. There can be no doubting that the apostle Paul strongly emphasized the sovereignty of God in Rom. 9:6-29 (you could get the idea from what he said in these verses, and many Calvinists do, that he didn't believe that man has an input when it comes to his salvation), and we need to take these verses seriously, but I don't believe Paul said nearly as much in these verses as some Calvinists think he said. (He didn't say, for example, that God gives us faith or that He makes us continue in faith to the end.) Furthermore, we must balance out what he did say in these verses with things that he said in other verses. If we just balance out what he said in Rom. 9:6-29 with what he said in the following verses (Rom. 9:30-10:21), we will see that Paul didn't believe that God gives faith to the ones He has chosen or that He makes them continue in faith to the end (*once saved, necessarily always saved*).

Calvinists respect the Bible (at least evangelical Calvinists do), and they must be commended for their emphasis on the need for Christians to give God *all* the glory. The problems with Calvinism haven't arisen because Calvinists are insincere or because they are unintelligent or uneducated—quite the contrary, but, as we'll discuss in this paper, Calvinists (it seems to me) typically read too much into Rom. 9:6-29 (and several other passages with a similar emphasis), and they don't give adequate weight to the very large number of verses that contradict their doctrines. It isn't that they ignore the other verses, but they (with good intentions) force them to fit with what they already *know* to be the truth. All Christians probably do this to some extent.

I'm thankful I can honestly say that I have a lot of respect for Calvinists. In no way is this paper meant to be an attack against Calvinists. They aren't the enemy, quite the contrary. I consider many Calvinists to be my brethren and friends in Christ. They may not have everything right, but they aren't alone in that. I was led to Christ by Calvinists; I was grounded in Christ by Calvinists; and I graduated from a Calvinistic seminary. I'm very thankful for the many things that Calvinists have right and for the fact that many of them are sincere, committed, born-again Christians who love God. I have learned very much from Calvinists, and Calvinists wrote many of the books that I use the most often (including Bible commentaries). Most Christians could learn a lot from Calvinists and could balance out what they believe with some of the many valid points made by Calvinists.

I don't want to criticize my brothers in Christ, but I do want to do everything I can do to help Christians (starting with me) come to the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. I want to be a blessing to all Christians, very much including Calvinists. I don't have all the answers, but I believe that the things I say in this paper (and in my other papers) can substantially help Christians find the balanced truth.

Although the things I mentioned in the preceding paragraphs were very much on my mind while writing this paper (because these things come up so often in my teaching), Romans chapters 9-11 deal with more than the things I have mentioned. The apostle Paul deals mostly with Israel in these three chapters. He deals with issues like why so few Israelites were becoming Christians and with God's ultimate plans for Israel. In Rom. 11:26 he shows that the time will come that all Israel (the end-time remnant of Israel) will be saved through faith in Christ.

I'm including some excerpts from *The Fire of His Holiness* by Sergio Scataglini, an Argentinean pastor involved in the Christian revival taking place in that country. I was challenged by his teaching and exhortations regarding the need for Christians to live in holiness through the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

All Bible quotations in this paper were taken from the NASB, 1995 edition, unless otherwise noted.

May God's will be accomplished through this paper! May His name be glorified and His people be blessed!

ROMANS CHAPTER 9

In Romans chapters 9-11 the apostle Paul deals, for the most part, with Israel. “The true theme of chapters 9-11 is God and Israel...”⁶ Why have so few Israelites become Christians? *Has God failed to keep His covenant promises with Israel?* (Not that Paul could actually entertain the idea that God could be unfaithful—God isn’t unfaithful, and He isn’t on trial.) What will happen to Israel? Paul was often confronted, sometimes he was attacked, with questions like these. Paul answers these questions in Romans chapters 9-11. He has already spoken a lot about Israel and about the Law in the first eight chapters of Romans (see Rom. 1:16; 2:1-21; 3:1-22, 27-31; 4:1-16; 5:20; 6:14, 15; 7:1-25; 8:3, 4, 7; also compare Rom. 1:2, 3; 5:13, 14).

Romans chapter 9 (actually Rom. 9:6-29) is probably the most difficult of all the important doctrinal passages in the New Testament. The body of Christ is extremely divided on the interpretation of this passage. Some Christians (for example, the Calvinists) seriously grapple with the strong emphasis on God’s sovereignty presented in these verses, but (from my point of view) they take quite a bit more out of Paul’s words than what he actually said or intended to communicate, and they fail to adequately balance out what he did say here with what he said as he continued with Romans chapter 9-11, and with many other relevant passages; some substantially miss the balanced truth. Other Christians are so busy balancing out what Paul said here with other things the Bible teaches (frequently they are reacting against the Calvinists) that they don’t adequately deal with what he said here. We’ll consider these things in some detail in this paper. It’s very important for us to understand what Paul said in this passage, and what he didn’t say, and it’s very important for us to come to the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. For one thing, true Christians can unite around the balanced truth.

I encourage the reader to read all that I say (or quote) regarding the meaning of Rom. 9:6-29 and then all that I say (or quote) regarding the meaning of Rom. 9:30-11:36 instead of making quick judgments about what has been said. For one thing, I’m not attempting to present the fully balanced truth under any one verse.

I’ll quote part of what Douglas J. Moo said as an introduction to Romans chapters 9-11.⁷ “...the theme of these chapters is the place of Israel in God’s plan of salvation, and this is a theme that is much involved with Paul’s concerns in Romans. From the beginning of the letter (1:2; cf. also 3:21, 31; ch. 4) Paul has been concerned to demonstrate that the gospel stands in continuity with the OT. He wants to make it clear that the coming of Jesus Christ and the new regime of salvation-history that he has inaugurated is no innovation in God’s plan for history, but its intended culmination. However, the unbelief of the majority of Jews in Paul’s day presents a potential problem for Paul’s attempt to establish such continuity. Was not God’s promise of salvation given to the people of Israel? How can he remain true to that promise if it is now fulfilled in the church instead of in Israel?

These are the questions Paul answers in chapters 9-11, as he defends the thesis that *It is not as though God’s word has failed* (9:6a). Jewish unbelief at the present time does not mean, Paul asserts, that God’s promises to his people have *failed* because (i) God had never promised to

⁶ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16* [Word, 1988], page 520.

⁷ *New Bible Commentary*, 21st Century Edition [Inter-Varsity Press, 1994], page 1142.

save every single Jew (9:6b-29); (ii) the Jews are themselves responsible for failing to believe (9:30-10:21); (iii) God's promises to Israel are even now being fulfilled in a *remnant*, of Jewish Christians (11:1-10); and (iv) God will yet save *all Israel* (11:12-32). Throughout, Paul is concerned to show that God's promises to his people Israel – when correctly understood – remain fully intact."

I'll quote part of what Leslie C. Allen said as an introduction to Romans chapters 9-11.⁸ "It is important to understand the angle from which Paul was writing. He had no intention of answering those who queried, or were curious about, the truths of divine sovereignty and election and human responsibility and their compatibility. Rather, he is interpreting the first-century missionary situation in terms which he shared with both his Christian and Jewish contemporaries. He with them had taken over the viewpoint of the OT and it did not occur to him to question it. His Jewish critics demurred only at his application of these OT doctrines, and not at the doctrines themselves.

Paul found three different clues [I prefer a different word than *clues*] that helped solve his problem. The first is a number of OT precedents and promises of divine control over the history of God's people for His appointed ends. He stressed God's sovereignty in order to hit out at the cocksure Jewish notion that God *had* to save them, bound by the bonds of the law, circumcision, and good works. Paul insists strongly that God is free and gracious. Side by side with the first clue he places a second one without attempting to square the two. The Jews have refused to go God's way, and, as long as they do not believe, put themselves out of God's saving reach. The third clue, again uncoordinated with the earlier ones, is God's faithfulness. The One who never breaks a promise can be trusted to bring Israel to salvation. God's present tactics may [seem to] be pro-Gentile and anti-Jew, but his overall strategy is for the ultimate benefit of the Jews and the enrichment of the Church."

I'll quote part of what William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam said as an introduction to Romans chapters 9-11.⁹ "Now [that Paul has finished Romans chapters 1-8] he is at liberty to discuss in full the question: How is this conception of Christ's work consistent with the fact of the rejection of the Jews which it seems to imply? The answer to this question occupies the remainder of the dogmatic portion of the Epistle, chapters 9-11.... ..in 9:6-29 the faithfulness and justice of God are vindicated; in 9:30-10:21 the guilt of Israel is proved; in chapter 11 St. Paul shows the divine purpose which is being fulfilled and looks forward prophetically to a future time when Israel will be restored...."

I'll also quote part of a paragraph from their page 267 that deals with the interpretation of Romans chapters 9-11. "We must...remember – and it is quite impossible to understand St. Paul if we do not – that the three chapters ix-xi form one very closely reasoned whole. Here more than anywhere else in his writings...does St. Paul show signs of a definite method. He raises each point separately, argues it and then sets it aside. He deliberately isolates for a time the aspect under discussion. ... He isolates one side of his argument in one place, one in another, and just for that very reason we must never use isolated texts. We must not make deductions from one passage in his writings separated from its contexts and without modifying it by other passages presenting other aspects of the same questions. The doctrinal deductions must be made at the end of chap. xi and not of chap. ix."

Lastly, I'll quote from C. E. B. Cranfield's lengthy introduction to Romans chapters 9-11.¹⁰ "With regard to the special difficulties which the contents of these chapters present, those

⁸ *New Layman's Bible Commentary* [Zondervan, 1979], page 1405.

⁹ *Epistle to the Romans* [T. & T. Clark, 1977 reprint], page 226.

¹⁰ *Epistle to the Romans*, Vol. 2 [T. & T. Clark, 1983], pages 447, 448.

features which have struck very many students of the Epistle to the Romans—not surprisingly—as offensive and repugnant, several things may usefully be said at this point.

It is of the utmost importance to take these three chapters together as a whole, and not to come to conclusions about Paul’s argument before one has heard it to the end; for chapter 9 will certainly be understood in an altogether unPauline sense, if it is understood in isolation from its sequel in chapters 10 and 11.”

I’ll include some more quotations at the end of the discussion of Rom. 9:1-29.

I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying [Compare Gal. 1:20; 1 Tim. 2:7. The apostle knew that many of the Jews considered him to be an enemy of Israel and of the Law of God.], **my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, (2) that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. (3) For I could wish that I myself were accursed** [cf. Ex. 32:32; 1 Cor. 16:22; and Gal. 1:8, 9], **separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh** [cf. Rom. 11:14], **(4) who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons** [Israel was *adopted* by God as His covenant people (cf., e.g., Ex. 4:22, 23; Deut. 7:6; and 14:1, 2).], **and the glory** [cf. Ex. 40:34-38; 1 Kings 8:10, 11] **and the covenants** [cf. Gen. 17:1-14; Deut. 29:14; Luke 1:72; Acts 3:25; and Eph. 2:12] **and the giving of the Law** [cf. Deut. 4:13, 14; Psalm 147:19] **and the temple service** [cf. Heb. 9:1, 6] **and the promises** [cf. Acts 2:32; Eph. 2:12], **(5) whose are the fathers** [starting with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; cf. Acts 3:13; Rom. 11:28], **and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh** [cf. Matt. 1:1-16; Rom. 1:3], **who is over all** [cf. Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-23; and Col. 1:16-19], **God blessed forever** [“Christ, who is God over all, forever praised” (NIV); “Christ...*the* eternally blessed God” (NKJV). Christ is deity with the Father (and the Spirit), and it is scriptural to call Him *God* (cf., e.g., Isa. 9:6; John 1:1; and 20:28), but it is quite possible (even probable) that the last words of this verse were intended to bless God the Father (not Christ), “Christ, who is over all. God be blessed forever!” “...Messiah. May God, supreme above all, be blessed for ever!” (NEB). “Messiah (I speak of his human origins). Blessed forever be God who is over all!” (NAB).]. **Amen. (6) But it is not as though the word of God has failed.** [This is a key point with the apostle Paul in Romans chapters 9-11. God’s word doesn’t fail; it can’t fail; He keeps His promises (cf., e.g., Num. 23:19). It’s true, however, that sometimes people (even true believers) don’t adequately understand His word/promises. Sometimes they miss the balanced truth of what He said; at other times they don’t understand the conditional nature of some of His promises; etc. As the apostle continues, we can see that the primary issue of contention being considered here was whether God’s word regarding the salvation of Israel had failed.

Paul could not, and he did not, accept the charge that God’s word to Israel had failed. “What then? If some [Jews] did not believe [in Christ], 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...” (Rom. 3:3, 4a). For one thing, as Paul goes on to show in Rom. 9:7-13, it takes more than being a physical descendant of Abraham, or Isaac (or Jacob, or one of his twelve sons) to be a member of God’s true Israel.¹¹ Paul also

¹¹ To be part of true Israel one must be a believer, which includes being faithful (from the heart) to the covenant(s) with God.

informs us in Rom. 11:26 of the important fact that the time will come when “all Israel [the end-time remnant of Israel] will be saved.”

With Paul’s viewpoint in Rom. 9:6-29 (with *all* the emphasis being on the sovereignty of God), he wants to strongly make the point that God is in control; God wasn’t at all surprised by the fact that the majority of the Israelites didn’t submit to the Lord Jesus Christ; that was part of His overall plan (knowing/foreknowing, for one thing, the hearts of all men). The sovereign God had rejected many of the Israelites (He had even hardened them); that was the primary issue, not that they had rejected Him (even though the latter point is also true and quite important).] **For they are not all** [part of God’s true] **Israel who are descended from Israel** [“For they *are* not all [part of God’s true] Israel who *are* of Israel” (NKJV). Romans 2:28, 29 are important verses to show who the real Jews are in the days after the new covenant has been inaugurated.]; **(7) nor are they all children** [“children of God” (cf. Rom. 9:8)] **because they are Abraham’s descendants** [cf., e.g., John 8:33, 39-47], **but: “THROUGH ISAAC** [not Ishmael] **YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED** [Gen. 21:12; cf. Heb. 11:18; Gen. 25:1-11].” **(8) That is, it is not the children of the flesh** [The word *flesh* is used here, as it often is in the Bible, to speak of fallen man, man in spiritual death, man without the *Spirit* of God. If it were not for the saving intervention of God in His mercy and grace, all the descendants of Adam would remain *children of the flesh*—no one would be saved. Many of the Jews of Paul’s day were not part of God’s true Israel; many “Christians” of our day are not part of God’s true Israel.] **who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.** [Words like *flesh* and *promise*, as they are used here (and as they are often used in the New Testament), are loaded with meaning. (See the Chart on pages 98-100 of my *Paper on Faith*.) The word *promise* points to God’s initiative, His plan, His grace, and His work.] **(9) For this is the word of promise: “AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON** [Gen. 18:10].” [It isn’t enough to be a physical descendant of Abraham (or even a physical descendant of Isaac, or of Jacob/Israel, or of one of his twelve sons). All the *children of God*, like Isaac, are *children of promise*. God gave Abraham a *word of promise* regarding the conception and birth of Isaac (and there were other words of promise to Abraham that dealt with the birth of Isaac beyond the words quoted by Paul here in verse 9); what God promised to do, He did, as He always does—Isaac was born. The birth of Isaac would not have taken place apart from God’s saving intervention—it was the work of God. The same thing is true regarding the salvation of every believer—it is the work of God, and He must receive all the glory.

Although it isn’t nearly as important as the grace of God and God’s saving work, it is also true (and quite important for us to understand) that Isaac would not have been born apart from the *faith* of Abraham (see, for example, Rom. 4:1-5, 9-22; Gal. 3:6-18). Abraham submitted to God in faith; he trusted Him to do what He said (promised) He would do. He believed that God truly was God, that He was able to do what He said He would do (for one thing, no other god would be able to stop Him). Of course, Abraham couldn’t have submitted to God in faith if God hadn’t revealed Himself to Abraham, and he couldn’t have believed the promise(s) if they hadn’t been given to him. Again, God must receive all the glory, but Abraham (like all believers) had to do his part, the part assigned and required by the sovereign God—*faith*.

God foreknew Abraham (which included foreknowing him with favor¹²); He chose Abraham knowing/foreknowing His heart. (God called Abraham; Abraham responded with faith.) It isn't that Abraham could say that he deserved to be chosen, as if God owed him something. He was saved (and he received from God) one hundred percent by the mercy/grace of God in Christ, not because of merit, just like every other believer is saved and receives from God. But it is also true that people are different. Abel was different than Cain; Abraham was different than (at least most of) his contemporaries; and Jacob was different than Esau—they were people of faith.¹³

I don't believe we have enough information to fully understand why people are different, but they are. God doesn't just give people faith,¹⁴ and He isn't the author of the pride, unbelief, and rebellion of men (or of angels). Men are free moral agents created in the image of God. Genesis 9:6, which speaks of man after the fall, says, "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man." Although the will of man was affected by the fall (there is substantial bondage of the will), man still has some freedom of the will.¹⁵ God takes the unbelief and sinful acts of man seriously, which He wouldn't do if we didn't have any freedom. (He will judge us according to what we have done, according to our works; what we do flows from what is in our hearts.) He also takes faith seriously, and the righteous acts of man. (Unbelievers can do some righteous acts, but being fallen men, they can't be righteous. The Bible makes it quite clear that all men are sinners. All men are totally dependent on God's saving grace.)

The Biblical teaching that God isn't a respecter of persons is typically found in a context that speaks of His judgment (of people) being a righteous judgment (cf., e.g., Deut. 10:17; Rom. 2:11; Gal. 2:6; and Eph. 6:9). This means that He doesn't skew His judicial decisions (like earthly judges frequently do) for any inappropriate reasons, like ignorance of the facts, favoring the rich or the poor, or the educated or the uneducated, or the male or the female, or because of race or outward appearance, or for a bribe, or because of fear. I don't believe there is any reason to doubt that these words about God's not being a respecter of persons also apply to His election to salvation (cf., e.g., Acts 10:34, 35), whether we think of Him electing before creation, or at some later time. He *always* has perfect reasons for what He does; He *never* acts with respect of persons (with an unfair partiality) or arbitrarily.

¹² On God's *foreknowledge* of the elect, see under Rom. 8:29 in my paper dated July 2000.

¹³ Abel, Abraham, and Jacob are all listed as men of faith in Hebrews chapter 11. Jacob didn't earn God's favor by his righteousness (he was a sinner too), but Jacob was different than Esau. For one thing, Jacob was concerned with the important things; Esau, on the other hand, was willing to sell his birthright privileges (being the firstborn son) to Jacob for a meal (Gen. 25:27-34). Hebrews chapter 11 confirms that faith was something that the Old Testament believers did (not something that God just gave them). Hebrews 11:2 (cf. 11:39), for example, even says that the Old Testament believers "were commended for" (NIV) their faith, but this doesn't mean that they merited salvation.

¹⁴ See my *Paper on Faith*.

¹⁵ See the excerpts from Norman Geisler's *Chosen but Free: A Balanced View of Divine Election* in my paper dated July 2000.

We must submit to God and His promises in faith. With us Christians, as with Abraham, who is the father of all believers,¹⁶ faith is something that we do in response to God's initiative (it isn't something that God just gives us or does for us).¹⁷ The fact that we receive from God through faith, based on what He has offered in His promises, doesn't mean that we are earning, or partially earning, our salvation. *Faith* cannot receive more than what God makes available by His *grace*. "For this reason [since no one could be saved by the Law] it is by faith that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise [the salvation promised] will be guaranteed to all the descendants [of Abraham], not only to those who are of the Law [Jewish Christians], but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham [Gentile Christians, in that Abraham was an uncircumcised Gentile when he submitted to God in faith], who is the father of us all [all believers]" (Rom. 4:16).

The only way to become a child of God and to live as a child of God in truth, righteousness, and holiness is *by faith*. Faith (faith that submits to God and His word/promise(s) and Spirit) enables us to rise above the realm of the flesh, through the grace of God in Christ (see Rom. 4:13-16; Gal. 3:14 [with 3:15-29]). The Old Testament believers (I'm including those like Abraham who lived in the days before the old covenant was established on the Mosaic Law) didn't have the new birth available to them when they lived on the earth (because Christ had not yet dethroned sin, Satan, and spiritual *death* through His atoning death and resurrection). But they did have the promise(s) of full salvation to come, they were set apart for God as His people, and they experienced some grace in Old Testament days.

The apostle Paul didn't use the word *faith* in Rom. 9:6-29, or any other word(s) that would show that man has a necessary role to fulfill in God's salvation plans; he put *all* the emphasis on God's role in our salvation in this passage.¹⁸ (Paul wanted to demonstrate in Rom. 9:6-29, for one thing, that God had the right to choose or to reject individual Israelites as He saw fit. He wasn't obligated to choose any of them for salvation in Christ Jesus, but they thought that He was.) Paul did, however, teach about the need for man to submit in faith to God and the gospel of salvation throughout the epistle to the Romans. I'll list the verses from the first eleven chapters of Romans where he specifically mentioned *faith*, *believing*, or the equivalent: Rom. 1:5, 8, 12, 16, 17; 2:7, 8¹⁹; 3:3, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31; 4:3, 5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 24;

¹⁶ In Rom. 4:9-17 (and Gal. 3:7, 29) the apostle shows that all Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles, are the spiritual offspring of Abraham.

¹⁷ God kept the devil from destroying us; He gave His Son to die for us; one way or another, He sent the word of the gospel of salvation to us as individuals; and He draws, convicts, teaches, etc., but the New Testament is full of verses which show that faith is something we do in response to God's initiative. See my *Paper on Faith*.

¹⁸ The apostle Paul also put the emphasis on God's role in our salvation in Rom. 8:28-30 and Eph. 1:3-14. But Eph. 1:13 does mention that Paul's Christian readers, having heard the message of truth (the gospel), believed (they submitted to the gospel in faith). Romans 8:28-30 and Eph. 1:3-14 are discussed in some detail in my paper dated July 2000.

¹⁹ It's important to see that Paul was speaking of Christians in Rom. 2:7; they are the ones who (by God's grace through faith) "by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, [to whom God will render] eternal life" when [in the day of judgment] He "will render to each person according to his deeds [works]" (Rom. 2:6). In Rom. 2:8 Paul was speaking of people who were not submitting to the gospel in faith (in context these words were aimed to some significant extent, if not entirely, at the Jews), "to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, [God will render] wrath and indignation." By saying that they did "not obey the truth," Paul meant that they did not submit to, and *obey*, the truth of the gospel in faith. By saying that they did not *obey* the truth of the

5:1, 2; 6:17; 9:30, 32, 33; 10:3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17; 11:20, 22, and 23. Many other verses from Romans chapters 1-11, including Rom. 6:1-23; 8:1-17 (these are two of the most important passages in the Bible), which I didn't list here, except for Rom. 6:17, are permeated with the concept that salvation comes through faith in Christ Jesus.

Even though Paul didn't mention faith or anything else that man has to do to obtain salvation in Rom. 9:6-29, because of his emphasis on the sovereignty of God in these verses, we are not permitted to forget what he has already said in Romans chapters 1-8 or what he will say in Rom. 9:30-11:36 (or what he says in his other writings, or what other New Testament writers say about the need for man to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel in faith). Paul meant what he said in those verses too.

We must always be seeking for the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches, including what is said in each of its books. (I'm sorry to say that I don't find too many Christians doing this to an adequate extent, not even the leaders. It's much easier to just stick with what we have been taught, with what our denomination/group believes.) Some of the things that Paul says in Rom. 9:6-29 are far from the balanced truth. (I didn't say that they aren't true; they represent a very important strand of God's revealed truth.) The apostle didn't intend for Rom. 9:6-29 to be read as if these verses represented the balanced truth or taught all that we need to know to understand God's plan of salvation. (Romans chapters 1-8 contain more important teaching regarding God's plan of salvation than Rom. 9:6-29, which deal mostly with the people of Israel.) He knew, for one thing, that what he had said already in Romans and what he would go on to say as he continued with chapter 9 and chapters 10, 11 would substantially qualify some of the things he said in 9:6-29.

It's very significant that there are places in Romans chapters 1-11 where the apostle Paul makes it quite clear that the Jews who didn't submit to the gospel were responsible for their unbelief; in other words, it wasn't just that they couldn't believe because they hadn't been called by God but had been hardened by Him instead, as you might have thought based on what Paul says in Rom. 9:6-29. (See Rom. 2:8; 3:3; 9:32, 33; 10:2-4, 9-18, 21; 11:13, 14, and 20-23.) I am not suggesting that these verses just cited contradict what Paul says about God's hardening many of the Jews in Rom. 9:6-29, but I am saying that verses like these alert us to the need to seek for the balanced truth.

It's very important for us to know that it was common for some ancient Jewish writers, and, significantly, this includes the apostle Paul, to make statements about the sovereignty of God that seemed to rule out the free will of man (Rom. 9:6-29 is the most significant such passage in the New Testament), but as you keep on reading, you find out that these writers *did* believe that man has an important and necessary role to fulfill as free moral agents.²⁰ In our day, we don't expect such incomplete, one-sided (out-of-balance) statements (like those found in Rom. 9:6-29) without some sort of warning or qualification.

gospel, Paul probably made the point even stronger that they were responsible to submit to God and the gospel of salvation than if he had said that they did not have faith in God and the gospel. I'll list some other verses that speak of *obeying* or *not obeying* the gospel: Rom. 1:5; 6:17; 10:16; 2 Thess. 1:8 (cf. 2 Thess. 2:10-12); and 1 Pet. 4:17. Rom. 2:1-16 are discussed in *The Christian, the Law, and Legalism*.

²⁰ This important fact is discussed in some detail under Rom. 8:30 in my paper dated July 2000. Also, see the quotations from E. P. Sanders on pages 32, 33 of this present paper.

This one problem (the ancient Jewish practice of sometimes making out-of-balance statements regarding the sovereignty of God without immediately balancing them out or qualifying them) is probably sufficient to explain where much of the confusion has come from in the Christian church regarding God's sovereignty and man's free will. This is a major problem in the body of Christ in our day, as it has been throughout much of the history of the church. Directly related to this problem is the controversy regarding *faith*, whether faith is something that man does in response to God's initiative and His grace (which is one very common view and, I believe, the correct view), or the view that faith is something that God must give to His chosen ones (since fallen man is not able to respond to God with faith).

Some Christians, starting (at least for the most part) with the latter view of Augustine (AD 354-430), say that man is so fallen that he has no ability to have faith or to cooperate with God's grace and that, furthermore, God could not choose between people based on foreknowledge of differences between them because they are all total zeros when it comes to the things of God, so He must give faith to the ones that He elects (chooses) in an unconditional manner,²¹ in other words, His election couldn't have anything to do with differences between them. He couldn't, they say, foreknow that some would be receptive to God's saving grace (through faith) because, after the fall, no one has the ability to have faith or to cooperate with God's saving grace.

Where did Augustine get this viewpoint, which, it seems clear to me, is rather far from the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches? I'm not an expert on Augustine, but I know that Rom. 9:6-29 substantially influenced his later viewpoint.²² (By the way, I have a lot of respect for Augustine; he had a lot right, even in his latter viewpoint. I also have much respect for John Calvin and the Calvinists, who followed Augustine in his latter viewpoint.) You often hear Calvinists mention the importance of Romans chapter 9. The very day I am writing this, I heard R. C. Sproul on the radio tell how this chapter greatly influenced him toward the Calvinistic viewpoint; it was the only passage he mentioned. I can see how sincere Christians, who love and respect the Bible, could study Rom. 9:6-29 (along with several other passages that put *all* the emphasis on God's role in our salvation) and think they have found *the* truth (the really important foundational truth that explains everything else) and then close their minds (but not intentionally) to what so many other verses so clearly say.

It's amazing how much capacity we have to make other verses fit once we are convinced that we already know *the* truth. (This is true for most Christians, not just for Calvinists.) Romans 9:6-29 *are* true all right, but these verses don't present the balanced truth. Even though this passage deals with a lofty topic (the sovereignty of God and His right to save the Israelites He chooses and to reject the rest of them), it isn't the *one really important* passage that we must lock on to and then make every other passage fit (one way or another). Quite the contrary; Rom. 9:6-29 deal, for the most part, with the rather specialized topic of God's dealings with Israel in the days of the new covenant.

Two of my primary concerns as I write this section on Rom. 9:6-29 are with the idea that God gives faith to the elect and the idea once saved, necessarily always saved. It's

²¹ The "U" of the Calvinistic TULIP stands for *unconditional* election.

²² In his earlier viewpoint Augustine held that man is able to believe in response to God's call to salvation. See the first paragraph of page 5 of the Introduction to my *Paper on Faith*. I suggest reading that entire Introduction.

important to see that, even though Paul put *all* the emphasis on God's sovereignty in these verses, he didn't suggest that faith is something God gives to His elect, and he didn't say once saved, always saved. He did mention (in Rom. 9:24; cf. 9:11) that God calls some (not all) to salvation,²³ but that is very different than saying God gives faith to the elect. And, although some infer once saved, always saved based on Paul's emphasis here (which makes it sound like our salvation depends only on God and that man doesn't really have any input), he doesn't mention any such idea in these verses.²⁴ If we just take seriously what Paul says in the last few verses of Romans chapter 9 and in chapters 10, 11, we will see that he didn't believe that God gives saving faith to the elect or that born-again Christians will necessarily continue in faith to the end.

I'll quote two sentences from the Introduction to D. A. Carson's book *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility: Biblical Perspectives in Tension*²⁵ and make a few comments to wind up this present discussion. "Some writers [including Augustine in his latter viewpoint and many Calvinists] draw every possible conclusion out of all passages which stress or presuppose God's unconditioned sovereignty, and then construct a system to filter out and explain any other evidence. Methodically speaking, such an approach is no different from that of writers [including many Arminians] who focus on man, his responsibilities and choices, and conclude on the basis of their system that God's sovereignty is necessarily limited, perhaps self-limited, in some way." My primary interest here is with the first sentence I quoted from Carson, but with respect to the second sentence, I don't have any problem saying that God can limit His sovereignty to leave room for the free will of man to any extent He chooses, if such a limitation of His sovereignty is required.

It seems to me that Calvinists (following the latter viewpoint of Augustine) extrapolate from the strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God in Rom. 9:6-29 (and of similar verses) and arrive at what might seem to be reasonable deductions that necessarily follow from the sovereignty of God. The problem, however, is that I don't believe the apostle Paul would agree with their deductions. I don't believe he would agree with what most Calvinists mean by *Total depravity*, that man is so fallen that he has no capacity to cooperate with God's grace and that God must therefore give faith to His elect. (He would agree, of course, that no one could be saved apart from God's intervention and that we are totally dependent on His grace.) I don't believe he would agree with the deduction that God's election is *Unconditional*, that it has nothing to do with differences between men and what is in their hearts. (He would agree that no man deserves to be chosen and that salvation is one hundred percent by grace.) Furthermore, I don't believe Paul would agree with the deductions of *Limited atonement*, *Irresistible grace*, or *Perseverance of the saints* (once saved, necessarily always saved). The T-U-L-I-P represents the so-called five points of Calvinism. We can learn a lot from Calvinists (I have), and many Christians need to balance out what they believe by leaving more room for the valid points that Calvinists make, but the Calvinistic TULIP, it seems clear to me, doesn't represent the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches.

²³ See under Rom. 9:24 in this paper for a very important qualification to this statement.

²⁴ As I demonstrated in the paper *Once Saved, Always Saved?*, the idea once saved, necessarily always saved originated, at least for the most part, with Augustine's latter viewpoint. If it were true that our salvation from its beginning to its end is totally dependent on God and that we don't have any input regarding our salvation, then once saved, always saved would be a logical deduction.

²⁵ Baker, 1994, page 3.

Instead of extrapolating from what the Bible says about God's sovereignty to the deductions reached by Augustine and the Calvinists, we must, I believe, realize that the Bible teaches the free will of man as clearly as it teaches the sovereignty of God and seek for a more balanced viewpoint. (I agree though that the sovereignty of God is more important for us to emphasize that the free will of man, and I agree with the Calvinistic emphasis that we must give God all the glory.) I don't believe we have enough information or insight in our present state to say exactly where the balance is, but we should be able to back off from viewpoints that clearly miss the balanced truth. There's no excuse for maintaining doctrines that are wrong (no sincere Christian would intentionally do that), even if sincere Christians have held them for hundreds of years.] **(10) And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac [see Gen. 25:19-26]; (11) for though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to *His* choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls** [The apostle doesn't say here that it doesn't matter what we do. How could he? The Bible (including the writings of Paul) frequently mentions that all men (including Christians) will be judged at the final judgment according to their works, according to what they have done (cf. Psalm 62:12; Prov. 24:12; Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6-11; 14:10-12; 1 Cor. 3:12-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; Eph. 6:8; Col. 3:25; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; and 22:12). There is no contradiction, as far as the Bible is concerned, saying that we are saved by grace through faith and saying that we will be judged according to our works. At the final judgment, our works must demonstrate that our faith was real; the works of righteousness produced by the grace/Spirit of God as we walk in faith aren't optional. Of course, forgiveness (by the grace of God) is an important aspect of Christianity, but Christianity involves much more than forgiveness.

The apostle Paul frequently makes the point that we are saved *by grace* through faith, *not by works/merit* (cf., e.g., Rom. 3:21-4:5; Gal. 2:16; 3:1-14; and Eph. 2:8-10). *That's his point here when he speaks of the twins not having "done anything good or bad" and "not because of works."* God was not obligated to choose Jacob or the Jews of Paul's day (or anybody else) because of their works (works like circumcision, temple sacrifices, or any other work of man in the flesh).

Paul doesn't say that God's choice of Jacob over Esau (to continue the lineage that started with Abraham that ultimately leads to the Messiah and new-covenant salvation) had nothing to do with differences between Jacob and Esau. Jacob was different than Esau, and the differences were not based on God's preprogramming, as if they were robots. God's choice of Jacob was based on foreknowledge (cf. Rom. 8:29), but God *was not obligated* to choose Jacob for any reason—His choice of Jacob *was totally of grace*.

The fact that we have a definite role to fulfill in our salvation doesn't make our salvation any-the-less dependent on God's grace; none of us (including Abraham and Jacob) merited salvation; God could have left all the descendants of Adam to perish; all of us are one hundred percent dependent on God's grace. If God had not sent His Son to die for us, and then called us to salvation, we could not have answered the call (in faith), and we would have been lost. We must submit to God's call in faith, and we must continue on in faith (by His enabling grace) to the end. We'll talk more about God's *call* to salvation (aiming for the balance of what the New Testament teaches) under

Rom. 9:24. In accordance with God's plan, we must appropriate His saving grace through faith. God is sovereign, but—thanks be to God!—He wills to save the lost; He does so by grace through faith.

I'll quote part of what Godet said under this verse.²⁶ "...the preference given to Jacob was expressed before the birth of the twins, before they had done any act whatever; so true it is, that it was not founded on any particular merit which Jacob might possess. ... No doubt it might have been said in answer to the apostle, that God foresaw the good works of Jacob and the evil acts of Esau, and that His predilection for the former was founded on this prevision. ... But supposing the apostle had wished to discuss the question thoroughly, he might have replied in turn that the divine prevision, on which election rests, relates not to any *work* whatever as being able to establish some merit in favor of the elect, but on his faith, which cannot be a merit, since faith consists precisely in renouncing all merit, in the humble acceptance of a free gift. Faith foreseen is therefore a wholly different thing from works foreseen. The latter would really establish a right [The apostle frequently makes the point in Romans that no one can merit salvation by works because all men are spiritually dead, and sinners. Salvation is based totally on grace, with no admixture of merit.]: the former [faith foreseen] contains only a moral condition, that, namely, which follows from the fact that possession in the case of a free being supposes acceptance. ... To accept and to merit are two different things. But the apostle does not enter on this discussion, and simply states the fact that it was no *merit* on Jacob's part which constrained God to organize His plan as He did. This plan certainly was not arbitrarily conceived, but it contains nothing which gives it the character of an obligation or debt.the choice on which the plan rests was not made in accordance with a merit of works, but solely according to the will of the caller. Romans 8:29 has shown us that this choice is unmerited, yet neither is it arbitrary." I believe Godet is on the right wavelength here, but I don't believe his viewpoint fully squares with Paul's viewpoint.²⁷ God's election of individuals is based on His knowledge/foreknowledge; He is above the time of our created world; He knows the heart; He knows who will serve and worship Him from the heart, and He knows who is serving and worshipping Him from the heart [He knew, for one thing, that many (even most) of the Jews of Paul's generation were not worshipping Him from their hearts.], **(12) it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER."** [Paul quoted the last part of Gen. 25:23 here. I'll quote Gen. 25:21-23. "Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived. (22) But the children struggled together within her, and she said, 'If this is so, why then am I *this way*?' So she went to inquire of the LORD. (23) The LORD said to her, 'Two nations are in your womb; And two peoples will be separated from your body [The "two nations/peoples" are to be headed by the two sons in her womb, Jacob and Esau.]; And one people shall be stronger than the other; And the older shall serve the younger.' " Esau was born first (Gen. 25:25, 26). The covenant nation Israel (that began with Abraham, then Isaac, then Jacob) eventually became dominant over the nation Edom (that began with Esau [cf., e.g., Gen. 27:29]).

²⁶ *Epistle to the Romans*, [Zondervan, 1969 reprint], pages 348, 349.

²⁷ Godet doesn't acknowledge a special *call* for the elect, but that's the way Paul uses the word *call* in Rom. 8:28, 30; 9:24 (and other verses). In Godet's view (which is a view widely held), God calls all men and then elects those He foresees submitting to the gospel in faith. But for Paul it can't be quite as simple as God's choosing for salvation those that He foresees submitting to the gospel in faith when, from Paul's (typical) point of view, they are not called until after they are chosen. I'm not disputing the fact that in a very significant way God does call *all* men to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel, but here in Rom. 9:6-29, as in Rom. 8:28-30, he uses the word *call* of the special call of the elect. (See the discussion under Rom. 8:29, 30 in my paper dated July 2000, and see under Rom. 9:24 in this present paper.)

I should point out that God's choice of Jacob over Esau didn't mean that Esau and his descendants were all destined for damnation. Subordination doesn't mean damnation. In the millennial kingdom, and then in the eternal state, true Israel will apparently reign over the nations, that is, over the elect remnant of the nations who (except for those who rebel during the millennium) will be saved, including the Edomites (see under verse 13).] **(13) Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED."** [Paul quoted these words from Mal. 1:2, 3. The names *Jacob* and *Esau* are used in Mal. 1:2-5 of the nations *Israel* and *Edom*. Malachi was writing some 1,400 years after the birth of the twins.

The word *hate* is not always used in an absolute sense in the Bible (it is sometimes used in a relative sense of loving someone/something less than loving someone/something else [cf. Luke 14:26; Matt. 10:37]); but the idea of God's displeasure with Esau and his descendants is included here. These words about loving and hating do not apply, however, to every single individual, whether the Israelites or the Edomites. God certainly didn't hate the individual Edomites who turned to Him from their hearts and lived for Him, and many of the descendants of Esau will apparently have a place in God's eternal kingdom as part of the nations.²⁸] **(14) What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!** [The apostle Paul's primary point here is that there is no injustice with God when He saves some of the Israelites of Paul's generation but leaves many of them (even the majority) on the outside of new-covenant salvation. As Paul goes on to show in Rom. 9:15-18, God has the right to have mercy/compassion on whom He desires, but He doesn't *owe* mercy/compassion to any person, not even Moses, and He has the right to reject and harden whom He desires.

In Rom. 9:6 Paul has already said, "But *it is* not as though the word of God has failed. For they *are* not all [part of God's true] Israel who *are* of Israel." And in verses 10-13 he has shown that God had the right to choose Jacob over Esau (even though Esau was the firstborn) and that His choice of Jacob was *not* dependent on works, as if Jacob could say that he earned the right to be chosen, or that the Israelites could say that God was *obligated* to choose them for new-covenant salvation in Christ Jesus.²⁹ Paul expects his Jewish antagonists to agree that whatever God has done (as recorded in the Old Testament) was right to do.

I'll quote a few sentences from what Robert H. Mounce says under Rom. 9:14-18.³⁰ "Although God elects with sovereign freedom, it does not follow that Israel had nothing to do with their rejection. Later in the chapter we will learn that Israel failed to attain a right standing

²⁸ The salvation of the nations (the nations being distinct from God's true Israel) is discussed in my paper dated November 1998. Compare Deut. 23:7; Isa. 11:14; and 21:11, 12 (These verses from Isaiah, which seem to infer the ultimate salvation of the remnant of Edom, are discussed in my paper dated August 2000); Jer. 49:11 (with 49:7-10); and Amos 9:12. All the verses cited specifically mention descendants of Esau (Edomites).

²⁹ God would have been obligated to save the Israelites of Paul's generation if they had been doers of the Law, but none of them were (cf., e.g., Luke 13:1-5; Rom. 2:1-29; 3:9-20; and Gal. 3:10, 22). The believers who lived under the Law (the old covenant) will be saved, but it will be because of God's grace in Christ, not because they earned salvation through fully keeping the Law. It is true, however, that believers under the old covenant did make it a priority to live according to the Law, and there was some grace available under that covenant to help them. Once Christ had come it was not an option to continue under the old covenant and reject Christ and the new covenant in His blood.

³⁰ *Romans* [Broadman and Holman, 1995], page 200.

with God because they pursued it on the basis of works (vv. 30-32). The sovereignty of God does not set aside human responsibility.”] **(15) For He says to Moses, “I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION [Ex. 33:19³¹].” (16) So then it *does not depend on the man who wills [John 1:13] or the man who runs [“on man’s desire or effort” (NIV)], but on God who has mercy.* [It takes more that the will/desire of the Israelites (or the Gentiles) to be saved and their running/effort/works, striving in the flesh in an attempt to gain salvation, as if these things obligated God to choose them. The Israelites (like the Gentiles) are totally dependent on the saving mercy of God in Christ. God doesn’t *owe* His saving mercy (grace) to anyone, including the Jews of Paul’s day. The apostle’s primary concern here (in the context of Rom. 9:6-29) was with God’s right to not have mercy/compassion on (to even harden; cf. Rom. 9: 18; 11:7, 25) many of the Israelites in the day of new-covenant salvation.**

Significantly, these words of Rom. 9:16 don’t say that God doesn’t consider the hearts of men when He elects one for salvation in Christ and doesn’t elect another (His choices are influenced by His knowledge/foreknowledge of the hearts of men). And these words don’t mean that the will of man and efforts of man are meaningless or unnecessary when it comes to working out their salvation (by grace through faith).

As Paul will show in Rom. 10:2, it required more than the religious *zeal* of the Israelites to please God. The devotees of many religions (and some atheists too) are *zealous*; God is interested in those who are *zealous* for Him (the God who really is God) and for His truth and righteousness. Our zeal must be from the heart (by faith), and it must be in accordance with the plan, truth, word, and righteousness of God. Before we *run* for God (by His grace), we must submit our hearts to Him (this is a big part of what faith means in the Bible); we must get our attitudes, motives, and priorities in divine order (by His grace); and we must learn what He requires us to do, where and how He wants us to *run*. Once the new covenant had been established on the basis of the blood of Christ, God required faith in Christ—works of the flesh could never bypass the need for faith in Him.] **(17) For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH [Ex. 9:16].”** [These words were spoken to Pharaoh after six of the ten plagues had already fallen on Egypt. God’s plan included using the obstinacy (hardness) of Pharaoh, and even to further harden him, to bring forth judgments so intense and dramatic that His power and name would be broadcast across the world. (His name being broadcast would help many people worldwide to begin to consider Him, the God of Israel, the God of creation, the God of all men. His intense judgments against Egypt also had a powerful effect on Israel.) The book of Exodus makes it quite clear that Pharaoh had great pride and a hard heart, but it also makes it clear that God further hardened him for His own purposes.³²] **(18) So then He has mercy on whom**

³¹ The apostle quoted these words from Ex. 33:19 to show that, even in the case of Moses, God granted his request on the basis of mercy/compassion, not because He was obligated to him. It is also clear, however, that God’s mercy/compassion to Moses was not arbitrary (as if there were no differences between Moses and most of the other men living on the earth at that time); Moses was a believer and he lived for God (quite unlike Pharaoh).

³² Although Paul doesn’t mention this point (Paul’s discussion in Rom. 9:6-29 puts *all* the emphasis on God’s sovereign role in salvation), it is significant that the book of Exodus establishes the point that

He desires [like Moses and the elect Jews of Paul's generation], **and He hardens whom He desires** [like Pharaoh and the non-elect Jews of Paul's generation]. [But God's decisions aren't arbitrary (far from it); there was, for one thing, a big difference between Moses (Rom. 9:15) and Pharaoh (Rom. 9:17). The primary point that Paul makes here (in this context) is that God has the right to have mercy on the Israelites He has chosen and to harden the rest of them (see Rom. 11:7, 25). Hardening is a form of judgment; the idea here is to harden against becoming Christians.

Paul (apparently) doesn't mention God's hardening Gentiles in Romans chapters 9-11, except for the hardening of Pharaoh in Rom. 9:17, which was a hardening that didn't directly deal with his salvation. And, significantly, one reason that Paul mentioned the hardening of Pharaoh in Rom. 9:17 was to set the stage to show (in Rom. 9:22, 27-29) that God's hardening of Israel would lead to intense, dramatic judgment of Israel, even as the hardening of Pharaoh had led to intense, dramatic judgment of Pharaoh and Egypt.

The apostle could have discussed the fact that God always has *perfect* reasons for doing what He does (for one thing, He doesn't arbitrarily judge/harden people), but some things don't really need to be said. *God isn't on trial* (although many people think He is), and there is a limit to how much we can defend Him without indirectly insulting Him. Also, as I have mentioned, the apostle wasn't trying to give a balanced presentation of the truth in Rom. 9:6-29; he was dealing exclusively with one strand of truth: God's sovereign right to do what He does, and in this context he was dealing almost exclusively with God's dealings with Israel. As far as Paul was concerned, if God did it, is doing it, or will do it, it is right and good. Israel was challenging God: Christ Jesus isn't the promised Messiah; if He were the Messiah, God hasn't kept the promises He made to Israel (in that so many of the Israelites aren't being saved).

Didn't God want the Jews to become Christians? First Timothy 2:4-6 makes it clear that God wants all men to repent and submit to the gospel in faith (though He knows it isn't going to happen), but, and this is important, He doesn't want people to become "Christians" in a half-baked way that isn't really Christianity. It does much damage to the body of Christ, and it increases the sin of those people too.

God knew the hearts of the Israelites; He knew that many of them, even though many of them were religious, were not submitted to Him in their hearts and that they were not about ready to really submit in faith to Christ and the gospel of righteousness from their hearts. Such Jews God hardened. He knew, for one thing, that they would have so distorted the gospel that it would have made it very difficult for Gentiles to be saved through Christ and the new covenant. (The Judaizers caused enough problems for the

Pharaoh's heart was hard (Ex. 3:19; 7:13, 14; 7:22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 34, 35; 14:5 [see the NIV on these verses; some of these verses are ambiguous in the NASB]) before it says God hardened his heart (Ex. 4:21; 7:3; 9:12 [this is the first verse where it mentions that God hardened Pharaoh's heart]; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; and 14:4, 17). God never hardens hearts that aren't already hard toward Him; He never makes righteous people sinful. He isn't the author of sin. He does, however, use sinful beings in His judgments, including the devil, evil angels and demons, *Pharaoh*, Antichrist, and the false prophet.

How did God harden Pharaoh? The Bible doesn't supply the details, but it may have involved nothing more than setting the stage for men and demons to remind Pharaoh that he was a god and the head of the mightiest nation on the earth. By yielding to Moses and the god of the Hebrews, he would be wrongly humbling himself, and letting his gods down, and his nation; he would be letting his forefathers down, and his people; how would it look in the history books for great Pharaoh and mighty Egypt to have been humbled by the god of a slave people, who surely must be a rather insignificant god?

apostle Paul and the Gentile Christians as it was.) Also, the judicial hardening of the unbelievers in Israel contributes to the repentance and salvation of the remnant of Israel. For a rather lengthy discussion on the topic of God's hardening of Israel, see under John 12:37-41 and Isa. 6:8-13 on pages 42-47 of my *Paper on Faith*. Better yet, start on page 38 under John 6:44, 45.

I'll quote a few sentences from what Charles R. Erdman says regarding verses 14-18.³³ "Paul does not here mention the complementary truths of faith and fault on the part of men; he is asserting only the divine sovereign freedom of God, whether in showing mercy or in hardening, whether in the cases of Moses and Pharaoh, or in the case of the believing and unbelieving Jews in the days of Paul. The choices and actions of God are not capricious or unjust, but they are absolutely free and uncontrolled."

I'll also quote two sentences from what Moo says under Rom. 9:14-23.³⁴ Although Moo is a Calvinist, by including statements like these he brings some much-needed balance to this topic. "The Scriptures make plain that God will never refuse to accept, or cast away, those who diligently seek him. [This is extremely important! We should always encourage people to humble themselves before God, to repent, and to diligently seek Him, starting with what He has said in His Word. No one should be given the mistaken idea that they will be wasting their time to seek God because they may not be one of the elect. The Bible says that all who truly seek God according to His terms will find Him.] ... [Paul] has earlier in the letter made it plain that people are fully responsible for their rejection of the truth of God (1:20-2:11), and he will make the point again with respect to Israel (9:30-10:21)."] **(19) You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will** [cf., e.g., 2 Chron. 20:6; Job 9:12; and Dan. 4:35]?" [As the apostle continues in Rom. 9:20-29, he doesn't answer the questions, "Why does He still find fault?" and "For who resists His will?" The apostle was offended by such questions, questions that challenged the goodness and righteousness of God. He didn't answer the questions at all here. Instead, he made it quite clear that no man has a right to answer back to God in such a way (Rom. 9:20). As Paul continues with this discourse in Rom. 9:30-11:36 (as in his other writings, and as it is taught in other books of the Bible), he does, however, answer the question as to why God finds fault with the Jews (and the Gentiles too).

The destiny of the Jews (or the Gentiles) isn't determined apart from the input of each person. The Jews were responsible for their unbelief (cf., e.g., Rom. 2:5, 8; 3:3; 9:32; 10:3, 9-13, 16; 11:20-23, and 30). To the extent a person's sin is due to the hardening of God, I don't believe they would be responsible (I'm just giving my opinion), but, in general, the unbelief and sinfulness of man does not result from the hardening of God; we are responsible for our unbelief and sin.

When it comes to foundational issues, like the fact that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem of a virgin, that He would be crucified and die for our sins, and that He would be raised on the third day, or the fact that God's end-time judgment of the world will come to pass as it is spelled out in the book of Revelation, God doesn't leave room for man (or for the devil and his angels) to alter His plans. But when it comes to the details of the lives of men, God (in His sovereignty) leaves much room for the input of man. The Bible is literally full of verses that back up this point. The New Testament is

³³ *Epistle of Paul to the Romans* [Baker, 1983], page 119. Erdman (AD 1866-1960) was a Calvinist who taught at Princeton Theological Seminary and pastored Presbyterian churches.

³⁴ *New Bible Commentary*, 21st Century Edition, page 1144.

packed with verses that show, for example, that faith is something man does in response to God's grace, and that men are responsible for their unbelief when they don't submit to the gospel in faith (or when they turn from faith back into unbelief).³⁵ All men are called to repent and submit to the gospel in faith (cf., e.g., Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 17:30, 31; and 1 Tim. 2:4-6).

God's will isn't always done; for example, the sin of Christians isn't the will of God (e.g., "For this is the will of God, your sanctification [holiness]; *that* is, that you abstain from sexual immorality [and all other sin]" [1 Thess. 4:3]). And even though the book of Revelation speaks of the Lamb's book of life, which has only had some names written in it since the foundation of the world, the names of the elect (cf., e.g., Rev. 13:8; 17:8), it also shows that if the Christians at Sardis didn't repent (and what was said regarding them is applicable to all Christians who are in a similar situation), their names would be erased from the book (Rev. 3:1-6). It's clear that it wasn't the will of God for those Christians (or any other Christians) to continue in sin and have their names erased from the book of life—He called for them to repent.

Again, Paul's total emphasis in Rom. 9:6-29 is on God's sovereign right to elect some of the Israelites of his day and to reject and harden the rest of them. The fact that God's right to do this was being challenged by many of the Israelites was a substantial factor that tended to keep Paul from answering the question here as to why God still finds fault. Furthermore, it's important to understand how intensely some of the Israelites were working to try to stop the gospel from going forth, including going forth to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 5:17-40; 6:8-8:3; 9:23-30; 11:19; 12:1-19; 13:45-51; 14:1-6, 19; 15:1-5; 17:5-13; 18:5, 6, 12, 13; 19:8, 9; 20:3; 21:20-22, 27-32; 22:21-24; 24:1-9; 25:1-3, 7-12; Gal. 4:29; 6:12; 1 Thess. 2:14-16; and Rev. 2:9; 3:9.) **(20) On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God [cf. Job 33:13]? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?** [Compare Isa. 29:16; 45:9; 64:8; Jer. 18:6; and Rom. 9:22-26. In this context, Paul was speaking, at least for the most part, to the Israelites of his day with whom God finds fault, the ones who had not been elected for salvation through Christ Jesus. They would be the ones answering back to God and complaining about what He has done with the clay, the ones on whom God has not had mercy, the ones who end up being a "vessel for dishonor" (Rom. 9:21), a "vessel of wrath" (Rom. 9:22).

I'll quote a few sentences from what Woodrow M. Kroll says under verses 19, 20.³⁶ "God is not answerable to man for what He does, but He must act consistent with His character. Divine sovereignty does not permit God to do what divine character will not allow. If we can trust the character of God, we can trust the wisdom of His sovereignty as well." **(21) Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use [literally, "for honor"] and another for common use [literally, "for dishonor"; the KJV; NKJV have "dishonor"]?** [What did Paul mean by the *same lump of clay* here. I can't be dogmatic, but I believe Paul was referring to the people of Israel as the *lump* here. Romans 11:16 lends substantial support to this viewpoint in that the *lump* there refers to the people of Israel. More specifically, Paul was speaking of the Israelites of his generation, who lived in the day of the new covenant. Although God had determined these things before the foundation of the world (through His foreknowledge,

³⁵ See my *Paper on Faith*.

³⁶ *Liberty Bible Commentary*, New Testament [Old-Time Gospel Hour, 1982], page 382.

etc.), it's also true that He dealt with the people of Israel as He found them in Paul's day. This is, of course, a very common Scriptural viewpoint, including the viewpoint of John 12:37-41 and Isaiah 6:8-13 (both mentioned above under Rom. 9:18).

The viewpoint I presented in the preceding paragraph fits well with the important passage in Jeremiah where God was likened to a potter (Jer. 18:1-12). A primary feature of that prophetic message was that God, the Master Potter, would deal with Israel (and the other nations) according to their response to Him and His word (whether they would repent, etc.). The dominant message of Rom. 9:6-29 is that God has a right over this lump of clay to make some vessels for honor (those elected for salvation in Christ by the knowledge/foreknowledge of God) and some vessels for dishonor (those rejected for salvation, those who were even to be hardened in a way that would lead to a great demonstration of God's wrath, even as Pharaoh was hardened in a way that led to a great demonstration of God's wrath [see verses 17, 18, 22-29]).

Many think that the *lump* speaks of all mankind, and some of them derive doctrines from these verses far beyond anything Paul intended, even though it *is* true that Paul emphasized God's sovereignty in Rom. 9:6-29. From my point of view, even if Paul did intend for the *lump* to refer to all mankind here (and I don't believe he did), he didn't intend to teach that the fall of mankind, or the sin of individual men, came by God's creative work or design, or that He created some men for destruction, or that He predetermines the destiny of men apart from any consideration of what is in their hearts, apart from any input from them.

I'll quote a sentence from what Joseph A. Fitzmyer says regarding this *lump*.³⁷ "The Greek word *phyrama* [which is the Greek noun translated *lump* in Rom. 9:21], which also occurs at 11:16; Gal. 5:9; 1 Cor. 5:6-7, was translated into Latin as *massa*, from which came the pejorative term *massa damnata* in the predestinarian controversies of the Augustinian period (Augustine, *Ep.* 190.3-9 [CSEL 57.144])." It is very important to understand what Fitzmyer says here. Augustine, in his latter viewpoint, held that mankind is so fallen that no one has any capacity to have faith or to cooperate with God's grace. If anyone is to be saved, God must elect them and give them faith, etc., and His election can't have anything to do with differences between men because (for one thing) all are part of the *massa damnata*. As I mentioned, I believe the Bible teaches that we are totally dependent on God's grace to save us, but that it overstates what the Bible teaches about the extent of the fall of man to say that we have no capacity to cooperate with God's grace and to respond to God's offer of salvation with faith.

John Calvin followed Augustine's latter viewpoint, I'll quote several sentences from what Calvin said under Rom. 9:11-13.³⁸ "...[Paul] plainly refers the whole cause [for God to choose Jacob] to the unmerited election of God [I agree that God's choice of Jacob was totally *unmerited*], which in no way depends on men [I believe this substantially misstates the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches].the first principle of theology, which ought to be well known to all Christians, viz. that God can see nothing in the corrupt nature of man, as displayed by Esau and Jacob, to induce Him to show His favour. [I don't believe anything in Jacob *induced* God to show His favor, but I do believe that differences between Jacob and Esau were a key factor in His election of Jacob. We may not fully

³⁷ *Romans* [Doubleday, 1993], page 569.

³⁸ *Epistles of Paul to the Romans and Thessalonians* [Eerdmans, 1980 reprint], pages 199, 200.

understand God's election, but it isn't arbitrary, and it isn't a total mystery either. We know a lot about what God wants from men; we know all that we need to know.] When, therefore, Paul says that neither of them had at that time done any good or evil, we must add at the same time his assumption that they were both the children of Adam, sinners by nature, and not possessed of a single particle of righteousness.even though the corruption which is diffused through the whole human race is sufficient to cause damnation before it shows its nature in deed or act, it follows from this that Esau deserved to be rejected [as did Jacob and every other man] for he was by nature a child of wrath. [I doubt that God will mention the sin of Adam with its consequences (original sin) when men stand before Him at the final judgment; He will want to talk to them about *their* sin (very much including unbelief), for which they are responsible because they have free will (it is free to some extent even after the fall).] In order, however, to prevent any doubt from remaining, as though Esau's condition had been worse [than Jacob's, or any other man's] because of some vice or fault, it was expedient for Paul to exclude sins no less than virtues [the twins had not done anything good or *bad*]. It is true that the immediate cause of reprobation is the curse which we all inherit from Adam."

Calvin made it clear that, in his view, God's foreknowledge didn't enter into His choice of Jacob (or of any of God's elect).³⁹ For one thing, as far as Calvin was concerned, God's foreknowledge of relevant differences between Jacob and Esau would have meant that Jacob *merited* God's favor. For another thing, man is so fallen (according to Augustine in his latter viewpoint and Calvin) that there couldn't be any relevant differences for God to foreknow. As I mentioned, Calvinists believe that God must impart life to the elect (He must regenerate them) before they can have faith.

I'll quote part of what R. C. H. Lenski says under this verse.⁴⁰ "Calvinism finds its peculiar sovereignty of God in this verse: supralapsarian⁴¹ Calvinism the sovereignty which created some men to fall and to be damned and other men to be saved despite the fall, both

³⁹ For example, "If foreknowledge had anything to do with this distinction of the brothers, the mention of time would have been out of place [in Rom. 9:11]" (Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* [Eerdmans, 1989], page 216 [book III, chapter XXII.4]).

⁴⁰ *St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* [Augsburg, 1936], pages 620, 621.

⁴¹ This word means *before the fall*. The supralapsarian Calvinists believe that God elected some to salvation *before* He decreed *the fall* of man. I'll quote part of what the Calvinistic theologian Charles Hodge says regarding this view (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2 [Eerdmans, 1986 reprint] page 316). "According to this view, God in order to manifest his grace and justice selected from creatable men (i.e., from man [yet] to be created) a certain number to be vessels of mercy, and certain others to be vessels of wrath. In the order of thought, election and reprobation precede the purpose to create and to permit the fall. Creation is in order to redemption. God creates some to be saved, and others to be lost.

This scheme is called supralapsarian because it supposes that men as unfallen, or before the fall, are the objects of election to eternal life, and foreordination to eternal death. This view was introduced among a certain class of Augustinians even before the Reformation, but has not generally been received. Augustine himself, and after him the great body of those who adopt his system of doctrine, were, and are, infralapsarians. That is, they hold that it is from the mass of fallen men that some were elected to eternal life, and some for the just punishment of their sins, foreordained to eternal death."

I'll also quote part of what Hodge says regarding infralapsarianism on pages 319, 320. (Infralapsarian means *after the fall*.) "According to the infralapsarian doctrine, God, with the design to reveal his own glory, that is, the perfections of his own nature, determined to create the world; secondly, to permit the fall of man; thirdly, to elect from the mass of fallen men a multitude whom no man could number as 'vessels of mercy'; fourthly, to send his Son for their redemption; and, fifthly, to leave the residue of mankind, as He left the fallen angels, to suffer the just punishment of their sins."

according to an absolute decree; infralapsarian [see footnote 41] Calvinism the sovereignty which from the same fallen lump of humanity decreed and shaped some to salvation and decreed and shaped some to damnation. Such a sovereignty which is contrary to God's very nature as *agapē* does not exist.

Calvinism assumes that the whole story as to why some are saved and others are lost is figuratively described in this verse [Rom. 9:21], but the *tertium comparationis* [Lenski means something like the *point of comparison*] of this figure, like every *tertium* of a figure, deals only with one point, that of blame; as the potter cannot be blamed by any vessel which he turns out for dishonor instead of making it like another for honor, so also God cannot be blamed by any man whom he hardens instead of saving him. After his case was concluded, Pharaoh could not demand of God: 'Why didst thou make me thus?' The Jews, equally obdurate, could not in the end, when God had finished with them, blame God: 'Thou didst make us thus!' The *tertium* of the potter and the two vessels extends no farther. For the figure of the potter and the clay could not picture the self-hardening of Pharaoh and of the Jews in permanent obduracy against God's mercy, which self-hardening called forth God's judicial hardening [emphasis mine]."

I'll quote a few sentences from what Everett F. Harrison says regarding the work of the potter here.⁴² "Some interpreters have concluded that Paul has in mind the creation. While it is true that Genesis 2:7 contains the word 'formed' which is the same root as 'potter,' it is clear that Paul envisions the clay as a 'given,' and the real problem is what the potter does with the clay, namely, fashioning one type of vessel or another [for honor, or dishonor]."

I'll quote part of a lengthy paragraph from H. Orton Wiley on *Augustinianism*.⁴³ "Augustinianism represents the opposite extreme of thought [from Pelagianism]. Instead of denying original sin as did Pelagius, Augustine made it the foundation of his entire system of theology. The fall having bereft mankind of all capacity for good, salvation must be solely of grace without any human admixture of human cooperation. He maintained the freedom of the will, but only in the sense of freedom to evil. Grace, therefore, operates directly on the will. This necessitated a belief in a divine decree which determined the exact number of those who were to be saved. To these efficacious grace was applied, which included irresistible grace [the "I" of the Calvinistic TULIP] for the beginning of the Christian life and [irresistible] persevering grace for its close [Perseverance of the saints (once saved, necessarily always saved); the "P" of the Calvinistic TULIP]."

I'll quote two sentences from what John MacArthur says under verses 18-24.⁴⁴ "Whatever God's sovereignty may mean in its fullness, it does not mean and cannot mean that He chose for men to become sinful. The perfectly holy and righteous God is not responsible in the slightest way for the sinfulness of His creatures."

Lastly, I'll quote several sentences from what W. H. Griffith Thomas says under Rom. 9:21.⁴⁵ "It is absurd and monstrous for man to question God's dealings. 'Hath not the potter a right over the clay?' (ver. 21). This illustration, together with the word 'formed' ["formed" is the word used in the KJV] rather than 'created' in verse 20, deserves attention, as showing the Apostle is not referring to original creation, but to spiritual destination. God is regarded as

⁴² *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 10 [Zondervan, 1976], page 107.

⁴³ *Christian Theology*, Vol. 2 [Beacon Hill Press, 1952], page 348.

⁴⁴ *Romans 9-16* [Moody Bible Institute, 1994], page 39.

⁴⁵ *St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* [Eerdmans, 1947], page 260.

taking men as He finds them, just as the potter does not create the clay but uses it. ... [Paul] does not touch the question as to why men are sinners, but accepting the fact that they are, he shows that God has a perfect right to deal with them as such.”] **(22) What if God, although** [I don’t believe the word “although” should be included in the translation (see below).] **willing** [wanting] **to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience** [“longsuffering” (KJV; NKJV)] **vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?** [The word “vessels” used in verses 22, 23 refers to the *vessels for honor* and the *vessels for dishonor* spoken of in verse 21. Many agree with the NASB that the word “although” should be supplied in the translation.⁴⁶ I agree with the majority viewpoint that Paul did not intend the word “although,” or any similar word, be included here. The NIV, KJV, and NKJV don’t supply any such word. The NKJV, for example, starts this verse with the words, “*What if God, wanting to show His wrath.*” We could translate, “...because He wanted to demonstrate His wrath.”

Because God wanted to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known in an intense, dramatic way (building on what the apostle said in verse 17 about God’s hardening Pharaoh to demonstrate His power in a dramatic way that His name might proclaimed across the world), He endured with much longsuffering the *vessels of wrath*⁴⁷ among the Israelites,⁴⁸ rather than judging them immediately, even though they were already prepared (ready) for judgment. They were ready for judgment at least from the time they rejected Christ and the gospel.

Many commentators agree that Paul was saying that God, by delaying His judgment, was setting the stage for a more intense, dramatic judgment. (On God’s hardening those Israelites, see under Rom. 9:17, 18. In verse 23 Paul adds another reason, a very important reason, for God to delay His judgment of the vessels of wrath.) In verses 27-29 Paul concludes this section (Rom. 9:6-29) that speaks almost entirely of God’s sovereign dealing with the Jews, showing that God will reduce Israel to a relatively small remnant when He deals with the *vessels of wrath* among the Jews in His end-time judgment of Israel.

Paul apparently believed that it was necessary for him to explain why God’s judgment had not already fallen on Israel if it was true, as he proclaimed, that so many Israelites were so far from God in those days. When Paul wrote Romans (about AD 55), Israel had gone for many years without experiencing much obvious judgment. It had been some twenty-five years since the new covenant was inaugurated in the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. God’s people (Jews and Christians) often wrongly assume that all is well between God and them if He, in His mercy, temporarily withholds judgment (cf., e.g., Rom. 2:4). But Rom. 2:5 (speaking, of/to the Israelites who had not submitted to the gospel in faith) says, “But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are

⁴⁶ There is no word in the Greek corresponding with the word “although” here, but the Greek does permit this word to be included as one of several ways to translate the Greek participle.

⁴⁷ God’s wrath never comes arbitrarily; the Scriptures make it clear that His wrath comes against the rebellion and sin of angels and men.

⁴⁸ I agree, of course, that there were “vessels of wrath” among the Gentiles too (cf., e.g., Eph. 2:1-3) who were also headed for eternal destruction, but Paul doesn’t seem to mention them here. Note that Paul just goes on to speak of God’s intense judgment falling on Israel (Rom. 9:27-29), and note that Romans chapters 9-11 deal mostly with Israel.

storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

Significantly, Christ had prophesied that intense judgment was coming to Israel (cf., e.g., Matt. 21:33-46; 22:3-7; 23:23-39; and 24:1, 2). Judgment finally fell when the Romans came against Israel, even destroying Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70, as Jesus had prophesied. From our perspective, we know that that judgment was preliminary to the end-time judgment of Israel that is often spoken of in the Bible. In Rom. 9:27-29 Paul was speaking of the end-time judgment of Israel, but in his day (he wrote his epistles and he died [apparently he was martyred for Christ in Rome in the mid 60s] before AD 70) it wasn't at all clear that Christ's prophecy about the judgment of Israel (with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple [e.g., Matt. 24:1, 2; Luke 21:20-24]) was preliminary to the coming of Antichrist and the abomination of desolation (in the rebuilt temple at Jerusalem) and the intense end-time judgment of Israel (see, e.g., Isa. 66:1-6; Zech. 13:8; 14:1, 2; Matt. 24:15-22; and 2 Thess. 2:3-8).⁴⁹ The last reference just cited (2 Thess. 2:3-8, which was also written by Paul) shows that the apostle knew that Antichrist would come to the temple in Jerusalem, but he probably didn't know that it would be a *rebuilt* temple since the temple still stood in Jerusalem in his day.

The *vessels of wrath* (which means that the *vessels* were destined for God's *wrath*, including His eternal wrath) were “prepared for destruction.” In this context, with the strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God, the apostle probably meant that the non-elect Israelites of his generation had been *prepared for destruction* from the time that God hardened them (with a judicial hardening [see Rom. 9:18]) so that they would not submit to the Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel.⁵⁰ But we must understand that God's *wrath* comes against angels and men because of *their* rebellion. Because of God's foreknowledge and the fact that He lives above the time of our world (the time of our world began at the time of creation), we could say that the vessels of wrath have been destined for destruction since the time the world was created (or even before it was created [cf. Eph. 1:4]). God's manifested wrath against the vessels of wrath will, for one thing, be part of the vindication of His persecuted people (the Christians, true Israel). (See, for example, the discussion of Isa. 66:1-6 in chapter 16 of *Mid-Week Rapture*.)

I'll quote part of what Godet says under verse 20.⁵¹ “the question is not...about the *production* of the clay...but...about the *use* made of it by the potter. He does not create the clay; he takes it as he finds it.... [The question is not] ‘Why hast Thou *created* me good or evil?’ [God doesn't create beings evil, whether angels or men (cf. Gen. 1:31)]...but: ‘Why...hast Thou assigned me an honorable use (by favoring me with Thy grace, like Moses) or a vile use (by hardening me like Pharaoh)? ... The question whether, in determining the use of one and another, He will act without rhyme or reason, or whether, on the contrary, He will

⁴⁹ All the verses cited in this sentence, excluding Rom. 9:27-29, are discussed in *The Mid-Week Rapture*. Paul thought that the end could come in his lifetime (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 15:51, 52; Phil. 3:20, 21; and 1 Thess. 4:13-17). From our perspective we can see that the end was (at least) some two thousand years in the future.

⁵⁰ Although it would be Biblical to say that these *vessels of wrath* were appointed to this doom (cf. 1 Pet. 2:8) because of their unbelief and rebellion (without repentance), Paul doesn't say anything like that throughout Rom. 9:6-29 because of his strong emphasis on God's sovereign right to reject, and even harden, those Israelites that He rejects. God doesn't have to answer challenges from those He rejects as to His right to reject them.

⁵¹ *Epistle to the Romans*.

adapt the use made of each to His moral predispositions, finds no place in the mind of any one who understands that God's perfections always act in harmony, and that consequently His power is ever the servant of His goodness, justice, and wisdom. ...what explains the sovereignty of God and His right over mankind is not only His almightiness, but His supreme understanding, and His infinite moral perfection. ... Such is the apostle's complete view. But it is true, as Lange says: 'When man goes the length of making to himself a god who he affects to bind by his own rights ["I have my rights; God has no right to reject me"], God then puts on His majesty, and appears in all His reality as a free God, before whom man is a mere nothing, like the clay in the hand of the potter. Such was Paul's attitude when acting as God's advocate, in his suit with Jewish Pharisaism. [The Jewish hatred for Paul and his gospel wasn't limited to the Pharisees.] This is the reason why he expresses only *one side* of the truth. The following passage, Rom. 9:30-10:21, will show that he is very far from mistaking or forgetting the other" (pages 357, 358).

I'll also quote part of what Godet says under verse 22. "God's intention in regard to the Jews was moving on to the *display* of His wrath and the *manifestation* of His power. In these expressions there is an evident allusion to the saying of God regarding Pharaoh, as just quoted, ver. 17; comp. the expressions...*to show wrath*, ver. 22, *to show in thee*, ver. 17 [using the same Greek verb for *show* in both verses]...*His power*, ver. 22...*My power*, ver. 17 [using the same Greek noun for *power* in both verses, *dunamis*]. This because unbelieving Judaism was playing toward the church, at the date of Paul's writing...the same part as Pharaoh formerly played toward Israel themselves. [See the last sentence under verse 19 in this paper.] ... And hence God's dealings with Pharaoh must now be reproduced in the judgment of Israel. — *The manifestation of wrath* refers at once to the doom of destruction which was already suspended over the head of the nation in general, and to the condemnation of all unbelieving Israelites in particular: comp. Rom. 2:5, and the saying of John the Baptist, Matt. 3:10 and 12. ... the allusion to the destruction of Pharaoh and his army (ver. 17) leads us...to apply this expression to the near destruction of Jerusalem and of the Jewish people by the arm of the Romans, which was to be in this unexampled catastrophe the instrument of God's wrath and power" (page 360).

The primary reason I wanted to include this last excerpt from Godet is that he sees, rightly I believe, that verse 22 builds on verse 17 and that Paul was thinking of an intense, dramatic judgment coming against unbelieving Israel. I don't agree, however, that Paul was thinking *only* of the judgment coming through the Romans in the first century; I'm confident that he was thinking of God's end-time judgment that is to involve Antichrist and the abomination of desolation. Many commentators agree that verse 22 builds on verse 17 and that the Israelites were playing the role played by Pharaoh, but most of them think only of God's *judgment* of the unbelieving majority of Israelites by not electing them for salvation and hardening them. But God's hardening of the Israelites, in itself, hardly qualifies to make His power known in a dramatic way. God's power wasn't demonstrated in Egypt in the hardening of Pharaoh, but in the intense, dramatic judgments that resulted from that hardening.] **(23) And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory** [In this verse Paul mentions a second reason, a very important reason, why God delayed His end-time judgment of Israel (and of the world). (God's end-time judgment of Israel, which is often spoken of in the Bible, is just part of His end-time judgment of the world.) God has been using the intervening time to call the elect, the *vessels of mercy*, to salvation (cf., e.g., Rom. 8:28-30). The vessels of mercy are destined for eternal glory, most of which is still future for us.], **(24) even us, whom**

He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. [The New Testament typically uses the word *call* of God's *special call of the elect*, as it is used here (see Acts 2:39; Rom. 1:6; 8:28, 30; 9:11; 1 Cor. 1:9, 24, 26; 2 Thess. 2:14; and Heb. 9:15).⁵² (The New Testament also shows that God calls all mankind to repent and submit to Christ and the gospel in faith [cf., e.g., Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 17:30, 31; and 1 Tim. 2:4-6].) Even though Paul deals mostly with the Jews in Romans chapter 9-11, he could hardly fail to mention the elect Gentiles here. For one thing, many of the original recipients of this epistle were Gentile Christians. Paul quotes two verses from Hosea (2:23; 1:10)⁵³ (mostly following the Septuagint) in the next two verses to back up what he has just said about God's call of Gentiles to salvation in Christ Jesus. The idea that Gentiles could become the people of God without becoming Jews first (without being circumcised, etc.) was rejected by Israel.] **(25) As He says also in Hosea, "I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, 'MY PEOPLE,' AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, 'BELOVED.'" (26) "AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, 'YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,' THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD."** (27) [Paul now "quotes" from Isa. 10:22, 23; 1:9 (mostly following the Septuagint) in Rom. 9:27-29 to show that Israel is headed for intense, dramatic judgment that will reduce them to a relatively small remnant.⁵⁴ In these verses (Rom. 9:27-29), in this context, Paul placed more emphasis on the intense end-time judgmental shaking of Israel than on the fact that there will be a remnant. As I mentioned (see under Rom. 9:17, 18, 21-23), I believe the apostle was thinking of this intense end-time judgment of Israel when he spoke of God's enduring with longsuffering the vessels of wrath so that His judgment would be more dramatic (even as God set the stage for a dramatic judgment of Pharaoh and Egypt by the hardening of Pharaoh). Based on Zech. 13:8, it seems that some two thirds of the Israelites will be cut off in a short period of time (by death or by exile).⁵⁵ This reduction will take place, at least for the most part, during the one-month period between Antichrist's abomination of desolation and the mid-week return of Christ, during the warfare of the short, great tribulation that will directly involve Jerusalem, the temple, and the land of Israel.⁵⁶] **Isaiah cries out concerning**

⁵² We can know we have been *called* to salvation with a special *call* from the time we have assurance of salvation. Our salvation, which includes the new birth, confirms that God has called us. Christians are the ones who benefit from this strand of Biblical truth that puts all the emphasis on God's role in our salvation; we wouldn't expect unbelievers to understand or to appreciate this strand of truth. God called us, and as we look to Him and are faithful to Him to do what He requires of us (by His grace), we can rest in the assurance that He will keep us. The emphasis must be on God, His plan, His grace, His power, His work, and His being glorified, not on us. But, at the same time, we must always make sure that we continue to do what God requires of us by His grace through faith. He doesn't just give us faith in the beginning, and He doesn't just make us continue in faith to the end. If we want to glorify God (and we were created in order that we might glorify Him), we must do our part from the beginning to the end (until we have finished our race).

⁵³ Those verses from Hosea are discussed on page 200 of *Mid-Week Rapture*.

⁵⁴ See the discussion of Isaiah 10:20-23 and Romans 9:25-27 in my paper on Isaiah dated August 2000. That discussion is located toward the end of the chapter dealing with Isaiah chapter 27.

⁵⁵ Zechariah 13:8 is discussed on pages 226, 227 of *Mid-Week Rapture*. Revelation 16:19 fits the idea that two thirds of the Israelites will be cut off in the last days. See the discussion of that verse in my eschatological paper dated January 1999.

⁵⁶ On the intense end-time judgment(s) that will reduce Israel to a humbled, repentant *remnant*, see under Dan. 12:1 in *Mid-Week Rapture* (pages 149-159); under Zech. 13:8 (pages 226, 227); and under Zech.

Israel [It would probably be better to translate the Greek particle *de* as “And” here, rather than leaving it untranslated: “And Isaiah cries out.” *Israel* here, like Israel in Rom. 9:31-10:3; 11:7, for example, refers to unbelieving Israel. Some of these Israelites were yet to become Christians (e.g., Rom. 11:14), however, and the time will come that “all Israel [the end-time remnant of Israel] will be saved” (Rom. 11:26).], **“THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT⁵⁷ THAT WILL BE SAVED** [Paul’s quotation here in verse 27 is very close to the Septuagint version of Isa. 10:22. Verse 28 is an abbreviated quotation of the Septuagint version of Isa. 10:23.]; **(28) FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD** [He will bring His prophetic word to pass (a word that is frequently mentioned by the Old Testament prophets), that intense judgment was ordained for Israel at the end of this age and that it was only the remnant left after that judgment that would be saved.] **ON THE EARTH** [or, “LAND.” Isaiah 10:23 (NASB) reads, “For a complete destruction, one that is decreed, the Lord GOD of hosts will execute in the midst of the whole land.” Isaiah 10:20, which wasn’t quoted by Paul here, demonstrates that the judgment spoken of in Isa. 10:20-23 looks (at least for the most part) to God’s end-time judgment of Israel, not to some earlier judgment (like that which came through the Assyrians or Babylonians); it reads, “Now in that day the remnant of Israel, and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped [they will have escaped being removed in the judgment], will never again rely on the one who struck them [like the Assyrians or Babylonians], but will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.”], **THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY.” (29) And just as Isaiah foretold, “UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOth HAD LEFT TO US A POSTERITY, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE RESEMBLED GOMORRAH.”** [Paul quoted this verse from the Septuagint version of Isa. 1:9. For Israel to become like Sodom and Gomorrah would mean that there would be no remnant left after God’s intense judgment.⁵⁸]

Some More Quotations Regarding the Interpretation of Romans Chapter 9

I’ll quote part of what Erdman (a Calvinist) says as an introduction to Romans chapters 9-11.⁵⁹ “These chapters are difficult, possibly the most difficult to interpret of any which Paul ever penned. Their chief obscurities are in connection with his statements of divine sovereignty and ‘election.’ ...

... It is possible to form quite wrong opinions by reading detached and isolated statements; the three chapters must be read as a unit. Paul does state the sovereignty of God, but also, quite as clearly, the free agency and moral responsibility of man. The three chapters form a trilogy:

14:1, 2 (pages 228, 229). Joel 2:32 and Mic. 5:3 are two other verses that speak of the humbled, repentant end-time remnant of Israel; those verses are also discussed in *Mid-Week Rapture*.

⁵⁷ Paul uses the word *remnant* of the Israelites of his day who had become Christians in Rom. 11:5. (Romans 11:5 uses a different Greek word for *remnant* [*leimma*] than Rom. 9:27 [*hupoleimma*].) Romans 9:27, taken by itself, would fit the idea of the remnant as the word is used in Rom. 11:5, but Rom. 9:28, 29 fit much better with the idea of the remnant left standing after God’s end-time judgment of Israel, and those verses tend to force that interpretation on 9:27 too. We’ll discuss this remnant further as we discuss Rom. 9:28, 29.

⁵⁸ It could be argued that Lot and his two daughters were a remnant of Sodom and Gomorrah.

⁵⁹ *Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, pages 109, 110.

The first deals with divine sovereignty, the second with human responsibility,⁶⁰ the third with universal blessing They open with a cry of anguish as Paul looks upon the unbelief and loss of the kinsmen he so truly loves; they close with a doxology of praise in view of the mercy which overarches all the mysterious providence of God, whose 'judgments' are 'unsearchable,' whose 'ways are past tracing.'

... Paul makes no endeavor to reconcile the facts of divine predestination and human freedom.... While stating, in startling terms, the sovereignty of God, he nonetheless holds Israel responsible for its impenitent unbelief, and warns the Gentiles against pride, self-confidence, and loss of faith. ...

Again, no matter how moral one is trying to be, he is really guilty of fatal fault, if he is willfully refusing the way of goodness and life, of pardon and purity, provided in Jesus Christ. (Chapter 10.)' " Amen!

I'll quote part of what Godet says as an introduction to Romans chapters 9-11.⁶¹ "The domain upon which the apostle here enters is one of the most difficult and profound which can be presented to the mind of man. It is that of *theodicy*, or the justification of the divine government in the course of human affairs. But he does not enter on it as a philosopher, and in its totality; he treats it in relation to a special point, the problem of the lot of Israel, and he does so as a part of his apostolic task.

... Some have taken it as a dogmatic and general statement of the doctrine of *election* This view finds its refutation in the entire course of this great exposition, in which the apostle constantly reverts to the people of Israel, the antecedents of their history (9:6ff.), the prophecies concerning them (9:27-29 and 10:19-21), and their present and future destiny (see the whole of chapter 11, and particularly the conclusion, vv. 25-31). ... Calvin himself is perfectly aware of this. Here is the dilemma which, according to him, St. Paul resolved in these chapters: 'Either God is unfaithful to His promises (in regard to the Jews), or Jesus whom Paul preaches is not the Lord's Christ particularly promised to that people.' "

I'll also quote a paragraph that Godet included at the end of his discussion of Rom. 9:1-18. "Perhaps we shall be charged with introducing into the explanation of the apostolic text clauses which are not found in it. This charge is just; only it is not against us that it comes. The reserves indicated in our interpretation arose of themselves, we think, from the *special case* the apostle had in view. For he was not here writing a philosophy or a system of Christian dogmatics; he was combating a determined adversary, Jewish Pharisaism with its lofty pretensions both in relation to the Gentiles, and relatively to God Himself. Paul, therefore, only unveils the side of the truth overlooked by this adversary, that of divine liberty. Certainly if Paul had been disputing with an opponent who started from the opposite point of view, and who exaggerated divine liberty so as to make it a purely arbitrary and tyrannical will, he would have brought out the opposite side of the truth, that of the moral conditions which are taken into account by a wise and good sovereignty, like that of God. — This occasional character of the apostle's teaching in this chapter has not always been considered; men have sought in it a general and complete exposition of the doctrine of the divine decrees; and so they have completely mistaken its meaning. And hence we have been forced to put ourselves at the general standpoint by supplying the clauses which the apostle took for granted, and the statement of which was not required by the particular application he had in view" (page 356).

⁶⁰ I'll quote Erdman's brief analysis of Romans chapter 10 from page 108 of his book. "...the rejection of Israel as a nation was due entirely to the fault of Israel. The way of salvation appointed by God, even through faith in Christ, was offered to all, and had been made perfectly plain to Israel. Their rejection, therefore, was not arbitrary on the part of God, but was due to their stubborn and willful unbelief."

⁶¹ *Epistle to the Romans*, pages 336, 337.

I'll quote part of what Schreiner says as an introduction to Romans chapters 9-11.⁶² "... The thesis of all of Romans 9-11... follows in 9:6a. 'It is not as though the word of God has fallen.' The central issue in the chapters is not predestination.... At the forefront of Paul's thinking is God's faithfulness to his promises. ... The reason why God's word has not fallen is explained in the first major section, 9:6b-29. ...

Romans 9:30-11:10 constitutes the second movement...and...functions as a corollary to the first. In 9:6b-29 Paul emphasizes God's electing will, which sees to it that his promises are effectively secured. [If God weren't sovereign, we couldn't be sure that He could fulfill what He promised.⁶³] It would be a serious misreading of Paul if this were read in a fatalistic way that undermined human responsibility. ... Paul emphasizes that salvation is equally accessible to Jews and Gentiles by faith, and the Jews had ample opportunity to believe, since they heard the gospel. ...they resisted God's offer of salvation....

...some scholars believe a contradiction exists between 9:6b-29 and 9:30-10:21. In the first text God's promises are said to be effective because they are based on his electing grace. Then in the second text Paul resorts to human responsibility or freedom as the reason why Israel was excluded. ... The OT teaches that human freedom operates under the umbrella of divine sovereignty. ...

... ..the OT Scriptures pledge a glorious future for Israel.... .."

I'll quote part of what Henry Alford says as an introduction to Romans chapters 9-11.⁶⁴ "The Gospel being now established [in Romans chapters 1-8], in its fullness and freeness, as the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, —a question naturally arises, not unaccompanied with painful difficulty, respecting the exclusion of that people, as a people, to whom God's ancient promises were made. With this national rejection of Israel the Apostle now deals: first (9:1-5) *expressing his deep sympathy with his own people: then (9:6-29) justifying God, who has not (verses 6-13) broken His promise, but from the first chose a portion only of Abraham's seed, and that (verses 14-29) by His undoubted elective right, not to be murmured at nor disputed by us His creatures: according to which election a remnant shall now also be saved.* Then as to the rejection of so large a portion of Israel, *their own self-righteousness (verses 30-33) has been the cause of it, and (10:1-13) their ignorance of God's righteousness....*

In no part of the Epistles of St. Paul is it more requisite, than in this portion, to bear in mind his habit of *INSULATING the one view of the subject under consideration, with which he is at the time dealing.* The *divine side* of the history of Israel and the world is in the greater of this portion thus *insulated: the facts of the divine dealings and the divine decrees insisted on, and the mundane or human side* of that history kept for the most part out of sight, and only so much shewn, as to make it manifest that the Jews, on their part, failed of attaining God's righteousness, and so lost their share in the Gospel.

It must also be remembered that, whatever inferences, with regard to God's disposal of *individuals*, may justly lie from the Apostle's arguments, the assertions here made by him are universally spoken with a *national* reference. Of the eternal salvation or rejection of any individual Jew there is here no question: and however logically true of any individual the same conclusion may be shewn to be, we know as matter of fact, that in such cases [*when dealing with the salvation of individuals*] *not the divine, but the human side*, is ever held up by the Apostle—the universality of free grace for all—the riches of God's mercy to all who call upon Him, and consequent exhortations to all, to look to him and be saved. The apparent inconsistencies of the Apostle, at one time speaking of absolute decrees of God, and at another

⁶² *Romans*, pages 472-474.

⁶³ On page 505 Schreiner says, "God's faithfulness to his promises is assured since it does not depend on human beings but on himself alone."

⁶⁴ *New Testament for English Readers*, Vol. 2 [Baker reprint, 1983], pages 917, 918.

of culpability in man,—at one time of the election of some, at another of a hope of the conversion of all,—resolve themselves into the necessary conditions of thought under which we all are placed, being compelled to acknowledge the divine Sovereignty on the one hand, and human free will on the other, and alternately appearing to lose sight of one of these, as often as for the time we confine our view to the other.” We need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches on this topic (as on every topic), as far it is possible to know it.

I’ll also quote part of what Alford says under Rom. 9:16.⁶⁵ “I must pause again here to remind the student, that I purposely do not enter on the disquisitions so abundant in some commentaries on this part of Scripture, by which it is endeavored to reconcile the sovereign election of God with our free will. *We shall find that free will asserted strongly enough for all edifying purposes by this Apostle, when the time comes.* At present, he is employed wholly in asserting the divine Sovereignty, the glorious vision of which it ill becomes us to distract by continual downward looks on this earth. I must also protest against all endeavors to make it appear, that no inference lies from this passage as to the *salvation of individuals.*”

I’ll quote a paragraph from what Joseph H. Fitzmyer says regarding the interpretation of Rom. 9:6-29.⁶⁶ “The paragraphs that follow in this chapter [Rom. 9:] 6-29, coupled with Paul’s assertion in [Rom.] 8:28-30, have been the subject of a long history of interpretation with regard to free will and predestination by Gnostics, Origen, John Chrysostom, Augustine, Abelard, Thomas Aquinas, Calvin, Arminius, and more modern interpreters. For a brief survey of this history, see Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, pages 269-275.”

I’ll include a few excerpts from the book just referred to by Fitzmyer.⁶⁷ “Chrysostom [AD 347-407] is like Origen [about AD 185-254] a strong defender of Freewill. ... On [Rom. 9:16] he explains that Jacob was called because he was worthy [Jacob was different than Esau, and he was receptive to God’s grace, but to say that he was *worthy* of God’s saving grace tends to minimize his need for God’s mercy and grace.], and was known to be such by the Divine foreknowledge. ... The commentaries of Chrysostom became supreme in the East, and very largely influenced all later Greek commentators” (page 270). I don’t believe Chrysostom adequately interpreted what Paul said in Rom. 9:6-29, but that’s common with these verses. I have much respect for Chrysostom’s commentary on Romans. He was strong on righteousness and holiness, and his interpretation of Romans chapter 7 was better than that of most modern commentators.

I’ll include a very brief excerpt from what Sanday and Headlam say regarding Augustine’s latter view, “...Election is not based on foreknowledge, for if it were based on foreknowledge then it would imply merit” (page 271). If it was inappropriate for Chrysostom to speak of Jacob’s being *worthy* to be chosen by God (see the preceding paragraph), it was also inappropriate for Augustine to say that God’s foreknowledge of certain individuals with favor would mean that those individuals had *merited* salvation.

And I’ll quote part of what Sanday and Headlam say regarding Calvin and Arminius. “The antithesis which was represented among patristic commentators by Augustine and Chrysostom was exaggerated at the Reformation by Calvin and Arminius. Each saw only his own side. Calvin followed Augustine, and exaggerated his harshest teaching; Arminius showed a subtle power of finding Freewill even in the most unlikely places.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, page 923.

⁶⁶ *Romans*, page 559.

⁶⁷ This is the book cited in footnote 5 in this paper, under Romans Chapter 9.

The object of St. Paul, according to Calvin, is to maintain the freedom of the Divine election.the one He predestinates to salvation, the other to eternal damnation. This determination is quite independent of foreknowledge, for there can be nothing in man's fallen nature which can make God show kindness to him. [Nothing in man's fallen nature can "make God show kindness," but it is quite relevant that some are receptive to His saving grace.] ... There is no means of telling the principle by which one is taken and another rejected; it lies in the secret counsels of God" (pages 273, 274). We may not fully understand why God elects one and not another, but the Bible makes it rather clear what response He requires of men, things like humility, repentance, faith, and obedience (obedience by grace).

Lastly, I'll include some excerpts from E. P. Sanders.⁶⁸ The first excerpts are taken from his section 3 (which covers pages 257-270), which is titled "Election and predestination," in the chapter titled "The Dead Sea Scrolls." The reason we are considering the viewpoint of the community that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls regarding God's sovereignty and man's free will is that it has much in common with what we find in the New Testament. (I'm not suggesting, of course, that the writings of the community at Qumran are comparable with the inspired Scriptures.) These excerpts from Sander's book will help us better understand the tension between God's sovereignty and man's free will (man's will is free to some extent).

First I'll include three brief quotations from the writings of the community at Qumran that speak of God's sovereign control of everything (taken from page 259 of Sander's book). "All things come to pass by His knowledge; He establishes all things by His design and without Him nothing is done. (IQS 11.11)" "For without Thee no way is perfect, and without Thy will nothing is done. It is Thou who hast taught all knowledge and all things come to pass by Thy will. (IQS 11.17f.)" "In the wisdom of Thy knowledge Thou didst establish their destiny before ever they were. All things [exist] according to [Thy will] and without Thee nothing is done. (IQH 1.19f.)."

Sanders points out, significantly, that though the people at Qumran emphasized the sovereign control of God, they "did not understand this in such a way as to exclude man's ability to choose which of two ways he would follow. The idea of God's electing grace was not formulated in opposition to man's freedom of choice, and in this sense it is anachronistic to speak of 'predestination.'⁶⁹ ... Thus we note repeatedly in the Scrolls the notion of election by God side by side with explanations of entrance into or exclusion from the covenant on the basis of the individual's choice"⁷⁰ (page 261).

"... The 'doctrine of predestination' in the Scrolls is best seen as *answering the question of why the covenanters are elect*, rather than whether or not there is free will" (pages 267, 268).

Lastly, I'll include an excerpt from the part of Sander's book that deals with the apostle Paul. After discussing the fact that Paul taught that men must submit to the gospel in faith, he went on to say, "... Although the individual's ability to decide and commit himself to a way or a Lord seems to us to exclude predestinarian statements, we should recall that the two generally go together in Judaism. Just as the Qumran covenanters are called both the elect and those who choose God, so Paul has no difficulty in thinking of those who

⁶⁸ Reprinted from *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* by E. P. Sanders, copyright © 1977 Fortress Press. Used by permission of Augsburg Fortress.

⁶⁹ Sanders has a footnote here. "... The particular way in which God's electing and governing grace is emphasized in some passages... makes 'predestination' a natural term, as long as it is not understood in the technical sense of excluding free will."

⁷⁰ This footnote was intentionally left blank in the revised internet version.

accept the gospel as being the *elect* of God (cf. also 1 Thess. 1.4; 1 Cor. 1.24, 26; Rom. 9.11f; 11.7). Precisely how we should formulate the balance between predestination and decision in Paul is difficult to say. ... It is noteworthy that Paul did not feel compelled to make the harmonization. When he has in mind the assurance of salvation, God's action in giving it to men and God's grace in so doing, he can employ predestination terminology. When he has in mind the human need for decision for Christ's lordship, the terminology is that of 'faith.' Statements of the latter type predominate in Paul's letters, but the predestination and grace statements prevent them from being understood as offering the possibility that one may be saved by his own efforts" (pages 446, 447).]

(30) What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained ["have obtained" (NIV)] righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith [It probably would have been better to start chapter 10 with this verse. (The chapter and verse divisions were added at a much later date.) Although the Gentiles, unlike the Jews, speaking in general, were not interested in being righteous before the God of Israel (who is the Creator, God, and Judge of all men), many of the Gentiles obtained the righteousness of God (the imputed and imparted righteousness of God) through faith in Christ. Most of the Jews rejected Christ and the gospel, and they failed, therefore, to obtain the righteousness they were pursuing. The apostle makes it very clear in the book of Romans (and in other epistles) that faith in Christ is the only way to obtain the righteousness of God (cf., e.g., Rom. 1:16, 17; 3:21-24; 10:6; 2 Cor. 5:21; and Phil. 3:9). We'll speak more of the all-important righteousness of God which is by faith as we continue with verses 31, 32.

In Rom. 9:30-10:21 (and in some key verses of chapter 11), the apostle writes from the point of view that God calls all men (all Jews and all Gentiles) to repent and submit to the gospel in faith. This is the most common point of view found in the New Testament, so we can't be too surprised when we find it expressed here. But I can't help being somewhat shocked by the contrast with Rom. 9:6-29, where *all* the emphasis was placed on God's sovereign right to elect and call, or to reject and harden, as He wills, making it sound like man doesn't have any input.⁷¹ Both emphases represent important Biblical strands of truth, but as we discussed, it's difficult to determine exactly where the balanced truth is. Anyway, we'll be in good shape as long as we continue to fully acknowledge both strands of truth, not denying one strand or the other (which so often happens).]; **(31) but Israel, pursuing a law [Law] of righteousness, did not arrive at that law [Law].** [See under verse 30. Israel (speaking of the Israelites who did not submit to Christ and the gospel) did not arrive at the law (Law) in the sense that they did not arrive at the righteousness of the Law. The Law taught about righteousness, and it demanded righteousness; but it could not impart this righteousness. No one could be saved by keeping the Law, because no one had the ability to fully keep the Law apart from being born again and sanctified through the new covenant in the blood of Christ Jesus (cf., e.g., Rom. 3:9-24; Gal. 3:10-14, 21, 22). I'll quote the second sentence of Gal. 3:21, "For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law [the Law]."⁷²

⁷¹ As I pointed out under Rom. 9:6-29, the *hardening* spoken of in those verses apparently dealt only with the special case of the hardening of some of the Israelites.

⁷² This sentence in Gal. 3:21 is very important for at least two reasons. For one thing, it confirms that the new birth was not available under the old covenant. It also confirms that Paul was speaking of an actual righteousness, a righteousness of the heart and life imparted to believers by the Spirit. The Spirit who *imparts life* imparts righteousness; the *imparted life* of God includes the power to be righteous and holy. Believers under the old covenant (and believers living in the days before the old covenant) could be

More must be said regarding what Paul meant by not arriving at that law/Law. The Law did much more than teach about righteousness, demand righteousness, and help those under the Law to see that the sin problem wasn't solved by the old covenant.⁷³ Significantly, the Law also bore witness to the fact that the sin problem would be solved and the righteousness of God would be manifested through the new covenant in the blood of Christ. For example, Rom. 3:21, 22 say, "But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Christ for all those who believe." (God's righteousness is manifested in the hearts and lives of those who submit to the gospel.) And, significantly, Gal. 3:24 (also written by Paul) says, "Therefore the Law has become our tutor [child-conductor] to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified [be declared righteous and be made righteous by the imputed and imparted righteousness of God] by faith." The Law required righteousness, but it is only faith in Christ and the new-covenant salvation that believers have in union with Him that enables them to live in the righteousness of God. Living in the righteousness of God includes fulfilling the requirements of the Law⁷⁴ in our daily lives (cf., e.g., Rom. 2:26-29; 8:4; Jer. 31:31-34 [with Heb. 8:6-13; 10:10-18]; and Ezek. 36:26, 27).⁷⁵

It is significant that Paul goes on in Romans chapter 10 to speak much about the righteousness of God that is imputed and imparted through the new covenant. He specifically mentions this *righteousness* in 10:3, 4, 6, and 10, cf. 10:5. I'll quote Rom. 10:3, 4, "For not knowing about God's righteousness [Israel could have known and should have known about the righteousness of God] and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the Law [That is, the Mosaic Law and the old covenant established on that Law have been superseded by the new covenant established on the atoning death (and resurrection) of the Lamb of God] for [rather, "resulting in"] righteousness [the righteousness of God] to everyone who believes."] **(32) Why? Because *they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works.*** [We must supply some words from what Paul said in verse 31 to complete the thought here in verse 32. The words supplied by the NASB in italics are adequate. *They* [Israel] *did not pursue it* by faith; that is, Israel did not pursue God's intended goal

forgiven and have right standing with God, and some grace was available for them to live relatively righteous lives through faith, but spiritual death and sin continued to reign until they were overthrown through the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁷³ For one thing, as chapters 8-10 of the book of Hebrews show, the fact that the sacrificial offerings of the old covenant had to be offered repeatedly, day by day, year by year, made it very clear that the sin problem hadn't been solved yet. Those sacrifices were effective to atone for the sins of the sons of Israel that were not defiant, but they didn't have the power to solve the sin problem in the hearts of the worshippers, nor did they claim to have that power. The sons of Israel were still spiritually dead and in bondage to sin with the rest of Adam's offspring. The old covenant sacrifices couldn't take away the penalty of Adam's sin (very much including spiritual death and bondage to sin). Some of the key verses of Hebrews chapters 8-10 are discussed on pages 156-163 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.

⁷⁴ Although Christians don't put the emphasis on the Law (we put the emphasis on the plan of God, on His grace, His Spirit, His work, and on His glory), we are enabled and required to keep the Law in our daily lives (by grace through faith). One major qualification to this statement is that we are not required to keep the ceremonial parts of the Law. These things are discussed in some detail in my paper titled *The Christian, the Law, and Legalism*.

⁷⁵ These significant verses from Romans and Hebrews (with Jer. 31:31-34) are all discussed in *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* and/or *The Christian, the Law, and Legalism*. Ezekiel 36:26, 27, which are very important verses prophesying of new-covenant salvation, don't really need any explanation.

for the Law, which is the righteousness of God, by faith. Paul's primary point was that Israel didn't submit in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel of new-covenant salvation, through which they would have become partakers of the righteousness of God (the imputed and imparted righteousness of God).⁷⁶ It wasn't a viable option to cling to the old covenant once the new covenant had come, which is what Israel did. Paul frequently mentions that we must be saved by *faith* (a faith that appropriates God's grace, in accordance with His plan of salvation), not by *works* (cf., e.g., Rom. 3:27-30; 4:1-16; Gal. 2:16; 3:1-14; 5:2-6; and Phil. 3:9).⁷⁷ If we could be saved (if we could earn salvation) by our *works/works of the Law* (which we can't), we wouldn't be saved by the *grace* of God (cf., e.g., Rom. 11:6.) **They stumbled over the stumbling stone** [It's important to see that Paul is speaking of the Israelites of his generation, those who had been confronted with the gospel; he wasn't thinking of the Israelites of previous generations. Christ (and new covenant salvation through faith in Him) is *the stumbling stone*. Israel couldn't stumble over this stumbling stone before He had come.

God could have sent His Son in a way that would have ensured that all Israel would have readily followed Him and become Christians. For example, He could have had Christ "born" into a respected family; He could have made it widely known that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, even though He was raised in Galilee (thus fulfilling the prophecy of Micah); He could have seen to it that Jesus had the proper religious credentials; and He could have had Him brag on the religious leaders and the people of Israel instead of insulting them and demanding that they repent or perish. But the purpose of God was to separate off those that didn't really have faith in God and His word, or love Him and His word, and who weren't about to repent and appropriate (by grace through faith) the righteousness of God. Christ's coming showed where their hearts were (cf., e.g., John 15:18-25).

In John 7:17, Jesus said (He was dealing with the fact that many of the Jews didn't believe in Him), "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching [Jesus' teaching], whether it is of God or *whether* I speak from myself." The Israelites who loved God and had faith in Him loved His Son and had faith in Him (cf., e.g., John 8:42-47); the Israelites who were backslidden could repent and submit to God and His Son, and many of them did, but most of them didn't.], **(33) just as it is written, "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED** [literally, "put to shame."]."⁷⁸ [Paul "quotes" part of Isa. 28:16 with Isa. 8:14 here. Isaiah 8:14 mentioned a "stone of stumbling." The words at the end of Rom. 9:33 are also quoted in Rom. 10:11. Those who don't believe in Him (who don't

⁷⁶ Although it's true that many of the Israelites didn't have faith in God and His word in the days of the old covenant, which was required and without which works were meaningless, Paul is speaking here of the need for Israel to have faith in Christ now that He has come and the gospel of new-covenant salvation is being proclaimed. (The Israelites who had truly submitted to God and His Word in faith were quick to submit to His Christ and the gospel in faith when it was presented to them [cf., e.g., John 3:2; 5:42-47; 7:17; and 8:42-47].) By the time Paul wrote Romans, some twenty-five years had passed since Christ had been crucified, resurrected, ascended to heaven, and had poured forth the gift of the Spirit (starting at Pentecost). The Israelites who had faith in God in the days of the old covenant are saved through Christ, but they couldn't receive the new birth or the imparted righteousness of God before Christ had overthrown spiritual death, sin, and the devil in His atoning death.

⁷⁷ Faith wasn't a new idea. As Paul showed in Romans chapter 4, Abraham (who is the father of the nation Israel and the father of all believers) was saved by grace through faith, not by works or merit.

submit to Him and the gospel in faith) will be “put to shame,” in accordance with the plan of God.]

ROMANS CHAPTER 10

Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them [Israel] is for *their* salvation. [Compare Rom. 9:1-5. To have the *righteousness of God* spoken of in Rom. 9:30; 10:3, 4, 6, 19 is to have *salvation*. Romans 10:10 uses the words *righteousness* and *salvation* in parallel; Rom. 10:9, 13 speak of having *salvation/being saved*.] **(2) For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.** [Their zeal was misdirected since it was not in accordance with the fact that Jesus Christ is the Messiah and the new covenant in His blood has superseded the old covenant (which was established on the Mosaic Law).] **(3) For not knowing about God's righteousness** [the righteousness that comes to believers from God] **and seeking to establish their own** [by works of the Law], **they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God** [in Christ]. [Israel didn't have a legitimate excuse for not knowing about the righteousness of God. The problem was that they had rejected Christ and the gospel that offers men the righteousness of God; "they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God" that comes through faith in Christ. We discussed the all-important righteousness of God (the imputed and imparted righteousness) that became available with the new covenant quite a bit under Rom. 9:30-32.

It isn't hard to understand where the motivation came from to seek to establish their own righteousness, and this problem was not at all limited to ancient Israel. Men, in their pride, would much rather try to earn salvation than to humble themselves before God and admit that they are totally dependent on His grace and mercy. We are all dependent on His grace and mercy, whether we know it or not, and whether we want to admit it or not (cf., e.g., Rom. 11:32-36).] **(4) For Christ is the end of the law** [the Law (the Mosaic Law); cf., e.g., Rom. 6:14; Gal. 5:18; and Col. 2:14] **for** [resulting in (Greek *eis*)] **righteousness to** [or, "for"] **everyone who believes.** [I believe the translation of the NASB substantially misses Paul's intended meaning. I would translate the Greek preposition *eis* as "resulting in" here, or the equivalent.⁷⁸ The following translations are all on the right wavelength: "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (NIV); "For Christ ends the law and brings righteousness for everyone who has faith" (NEB); "For Christ marks the termination of the law, so that now anyone who has faith may attain uprightness" (Goodspeed); and there are quite a few other similar translations.

The covenant established on the Mosaic Law given at Mount Sinai has been terminated and replaced by the new covenant; the old covenant could not provide righteousness (the imputed and imparted righteousness of God) to believers.⁷⁹ (This meant, for one thing, that Gentiles didn't have to submit to the ceremonial law of the

⁷⁸ The NASB translates this same Greek preposition as "resulting in" twice in Rom. 10:10.

⁷⁹ People of faith in the days before Christ came, like Abraham, Moses, or Daniel could be forgiven and declared righteous on the basis of what Christ was going to do, but they had to wait for Him to accomplish His saving work before they could enter into the fullness of what it means to have the righteousness of God imputed and imparted to believers. (Some grace was provided under the old covenant, but it was very limited compared to the grace provided in the new covenant [cf., e.g., John 1:16, 17].) Once Christ had come and initiated the new covenant in His blood, it was not an acceptable option for Jews (or Gentiles) to reject Christ and try to be saved through the old covenant.

old covenant to become part of God's true Israel, which was a controversial issue in the early Christian church.) Christ had to solve the sin problem in His atoning death to provide this righteousness. It never was God's plan for believers to attain righteousness by the old covenant, by the Law; He always planned to send His Son to solve the sin problem and make believers righteous (e.g., 1 Pet. 1:20).

The translation of the NASB doesn't make it clear that the dispensation of the Law has been terminated, and it could (wrongly) be understood to teach that saving righteousness could be attained by keeping the Law. Believers were sometimes called *righteous* under the old covenant, but it was a relative righteousness. Those who were "righteous" in the days when Jesus came on the scene, for example, were quick to admit that they needed to repent and submit to the righteousness of God. They answered the call to repent sounded by John the Baptist and then sounded by Christ Himself and by His disciples.

Although Christians aren't under the old covenant and the Mosaic Law, we are enabled, and required, to keep the requirements of the Law (excluding the ceremonial works of the Law) in our daily lives as we walk in the Spirit by faith.⁸⁰ After all, God's Law tells us how men should think and live; His moral law doesn't change. Paul makes the point in Romans that it is only born-again Christians who have the ability to fulfill the requirements of the Law in their daily lives (see Rom. 2:26-29; 8:4); the ability to fulfill the requirements of the Law in our daily lives comes by the imparted righteousness of God. Our living righteous lives, in the will of God, by His grace through faith, is a big part of what new-covenant salvation is all about. God hates sin! He paid a very high price to make us righteous and holy!] **(5) For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness.** [Compare Lev. 18:5; Neh. 9:29; Ezek. 20:11, 13, 21; Rom. 7:10; and Gal. 3:12. Although believers could be called *righteous* under the old covenant, they could not fully keep the Law or achieve eternal life by the Law—they could not achieve eternal life apart from the grace of God in Christ. Paul contrasts two kinds of "righteousness" in Rom. 9:30-10:13. One kind of "righteousness" (I put the word *righteousness* in quotation marks because this type of righteousness doesn't really exist) is where men (apart from the grace of God in Christ) try "to establish their own [righteousness]" (Rom. 10:3) by keeping the Law.⁸¹ If this type of righteousness did exist, men could earn/merit eternal life by their righteousness. The other type of righteousness is the righteousness of God (spoken of, for example, in Rom. 9:30; 10:3, 4, 6-10; and Phil. 3:9), which is received, and walked in, by grace through faith in union with Christ.] **(6) But the righteousness based on faith** [I prefer the translation of the NIV, "the righteousness that is by faith." The Greek preposition used here (*ek*) is often used with the word for *faith* (e.g., Rom. 1:17 [used twice]; 5:1; 9:30; Gal. 2:16; 3:7, 8, 11, 12, 24; and 5:5), and the two words together are often translated *by faith*. The primary point that Paul makes regarding "the righteousness that is by faith" here in Rom. 10:6-13 is that this righteousness, which we must have to be saved (the imputed and imparted righteousness of God), comes by the work of God through the resurrected

⁸⁰ See my paper, *The Christian, the Law, and Legalism*.

⁸¹ As I mentioned, Christians are enabled by the grace of God to keep the Law in their daily lives, but they are not trying to establish their *own* righteousness; they walk in the righteousness of God, by His grace, and for His glory.

and glorified Lamb of God—all that remains for us to do is to receive and walk in this righteousness by grace through faith. It’s His plan; His work; His grace; His righteousness. In a very real sense His saving work is done; He doesn’t want *our* works (works of the flesh/works of the Law); He wants our submission to Him and to His grace from our hearts in faith; and He wants us to give Him all the glory forever. Anything less constitutes a violation of divine order in the universe.] **speaks as follows** [In verses 6-8 Paul loosely quotes and applies Deut. 30:12-14 to demonstrate the important point that God’s work is finished—we must submit (in faith) to His new-covenant righteousness and salvation.]: **“DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, ‘WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?’ (that is, to bring Christ down) [It’s too late for us to do any work that would motivate God to send His Son down to the earth to be born of a virgin to save us—He has already been sent; He has already come!], (7) or ‘WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).”** [It’s also too late for us to try to descend into the abyss (Hades, where Jesus descended after He died for our sins [cf. Acts 2:27, 31; Luke 23:43; and Eph. 4:9⁸²]) to bring Jesus up from the dead. He has already been raised from the dead.] **(8) But what does it say? “THE WORD IS NEAR YOU** [The apostle is speaking of the “word” of the gospel, which he also calls the “word of [the] faith” later in this verse. God the Father has already sent His Son to die for us, He has already raised Him from the dead and made Him Savior and Lord (cf. Acts 2:36), and He has already sent the word of the gospel to tell us what He has done for us and what He requires of us (to submit to the gospel in faith).], **in your mouth and in your heart”** [The NASB didn’t use capitalized letters for the words “in your mouth and in your heart.” These words are included in Deut. 30:14, and the NASB included these words within quotation marks. God’s word must be in our heart; faith is of the heart. And His word must be in our mouth; if we believe the gospel in our heart, we will confess it with our mouth. “For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart” (Matt. 12:34, 35).]—**that is, the word of faith** [The Greek has the definite article with the noun for faith here; it could be translated “the faith.”⁸³] **which we are preaching, (9) that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord** [cf. Matt. 10:32; Luke 12:8; Rom. 14:9; and 1 Cor. 12:3], **and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved** [Paul undoubtedly mentioned confessing with the mouth first (before believing in the heart) because Deut. 30:14 happened to mention “in your mouth” before “in your heart.” Anyway, it’s clear that faith must be in the heart before confessing with the mouth is meaningful. In the next verse Paul mentions believing before confessing. Confession isn’t something separate from faith; it goes with faith; and confession isn’t a work that merits salvation any more than other aspects of faith.

For us to confess Jesus *as* Lord from our heart is a big part of what salvation is all about. Paul isn’t talking about just saying the words *Jesus is Lord* (cf., e.g., Luke 6:46); he is talking about saying these words from the heart and in conjunction with living like He is our Lord (by grace through faith). There is no valid Christianity apart from

⁸² These verses are all discussed in my paper dated July 2000. Start under Eph. 4:8 (on page 30) of that paper.

⁸³ On “the faith,” cf., e.g., 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 1:23; 6:10; Eph. 4:13; Col. 1:23; 1 Tim. 1:2; 4:1, 6; 5:8; and 6:10, 21.

submitting to Jesus as Lord. To the extent we are not serving Him as Lord, our salvation (if we even have salvation) is on shaky ground.

We are required to believe more than the fact that God raised Jesus from the dead to be saved (for example, we must believe that He is deity, God the Son through whom all things were created; we must believe that He was born of a virgin, that He lived a sinless life, that He died on the cross bearing our sins with the guilt and the penalties, and that He is coming again to judge the world), but the resurrection of Christ is an essential part of the gospel message. We must believe all the Bible teaches about Jesus; we must believe *in Him* and *into Him* (cf., e.g., John 3:15-18; Acts 16:31).⁸⁴]; **(10) for with the heart a person believes** [More literally, “for with the heart it is believed.” God wants (and demands) our hearts; people can be very religious and they can do many works without giving God their hearts, without really submitting to Him or loving Him from the heart. Faith (Bible faith/saving faith) is of the heart; it involves much more than giving mental assent to the facts of the gospel. It includes a submission of self to God, to His Christ, to His covenant, to His Word.], **resulting in** [Greek *eis*] **righteousness** [the imputed and imparted righteousness of God in Christ], **and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.** [If we really believe the gospel (submit to the gospel in faith), including the fact that Jesus is Lord, we will make it top priority to live like it (by the grace of God). Receiving and walking in the righteousness of God by grace through faith is a big part of what salvation is all about.] **(11) For the Scripture says, “WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.”** [Literally, “will not be put to shame.” Paul “quoted” these words from Isa. 26:18 in a fuller form in Rom. 9:33. We won’t be *disappointed* or *put to shame* because God makes righteous and saves from the wrath to come those who submit to Christ and the gospel in faith. We must, of course, continue to walk in faith to the end; faith isn’t a one shot deal; God wants our hearts today, tomorrow, and forever.] **(12) For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all** [Compare, for example, Acts 10:36; Rom. 3:29. Jesus *is* Lord of all. He is the Lord of all men, of all Jews and all Greeks (Gentiles); and all men are called to submit to Him in faith. At the present time most people living on the earth do not acknowledge the lordship of Christ (or the lordship of God the Father), and God isn’t forcing the issue. The time will come, however, when all men, whether believers or unbelievers, whether alive or dead, will acknowledge, one way or another, that Jesus is Lord (to the glory of God the Father), along with every other being in the universe, whether righteous or evil (cf., e.g., Phil. 2:9-11).], **abounding in riches for all who call on Him** [There is no distinction between Jew and Greek (Gentile) in that all are sinners and in that all that are saved the same way, by grace through faith in Christ (cf., e.g., Rom. 3:22-24, 28-31). To “call on Him [Christ]” includes submitting to Him in faith, in accordance with the gospel. *Calling on Christ* is something *we* do, not something God does, though it is true, as we discussed under Rom. 9:6-29, that we couldn’t have faith in Christ if God didn’t take the initiative in our salvation. Faith isn’t something God gives us, but at the same time it is nothing for believers to boast about. To submit in faith to Christ includes admitting that we are spiritually dead and in bondage to sin and in no way able to save ourselves or to try to earn salvation. Faith isn’t a work (by Biblical definition), and it includes the admission that God must receive all the glory forever.]; **(13) for “WHOEVER WILL**

⁸⁴ We come *into* union with the Lord Jesus Christ through faith.

CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.” [These words were quoted from Joel 2:32 to substantiate the fact that those who repent and call upon the name of the Lord Jesus (in faith) will be saved.⁸⁵ The fact that the word “LORD” is *Yahweh* in the Hebrew causes no problem in that Jesus (God the Son) is fully deity with God the Father; it is Biblical to use the name *Yahweh* for Christ, even as it is Biblical to use the word *God* for Him.] **(14) How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?** [It’s clear that people can’t call on the name of the Lord Jesus in repentance and faith before they hear about Him and the gospel of salvation.] **(15) How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS [Isa. 52:7]!”** [God had sent messengers, like the apostle Paul, and they had preached the gospel to the Jews and the Gentiles.] **(16) However, they did not all heed the good news** [The KJV is better, “But they have not all obeyed the gospel.” Many who heard the gospel (not that they had opened their hearts before God to really *hear* the gospel), did not submit to the gospel in faith—they did not obey the gospel.⁸⁶]; **for Isaiah says, “LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?”** [This quotation from Isa. 53:1 supports the idea that many would not believe (which includes not submitting to or obeying) the report of salvation provided in the sacrificed Lamb of God (who was spoken of in Isa. 52:13-53:12). In that Paul was dealing mostly with Israel in Romans chapters 9-11, he probably was thinking (at least for the most part) of Israel here in verses 16, 17; most of the Israelites were not submitting to the gospel in faith.] **(17) So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.** [I believe it’s clear (in context with verses 14-16, 18) that Paul wasn’t saying here that because people hear the gospel they will necessarily submit to the gospel in faith.⁸⁷ What he was saying is that we must hear the gospel, “the word of [or, about] Christ,” before we can have faith in Christ, not that if we hear the gospel we will necessarily have faith.] **(18) But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; “THEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD** [Psalm 19:4; cf. Rom. 1:8; Col. 1:6, 23].” [Paul made the point again here that the problem wasn’t that people hadn’t heard—and again, in this context, Paul was speaking (at least for the most part) about the people of Israel—the problem was that many had heard but had not submitted to the gospel in faith (“they have not all obeyed the gospel” KJV [Rom. 10:16]).] **(19) But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they?** [In Rom. 10:19-21 the apostle speaks of the fact that God had made it known to Israel (in the verses from the Old Testament that he goes on to quote in Rom. 10:19-21) that Israel (speaking of the majority of the Israelites) would not submit to the gospel (Rom. 10:21) but that many Gentiles would (Rom. 10:20), and that He would make unbelieving Israel jealous by saving many Gentiles (Rom. 10:19). His

⁸⁵ Joel 2:28-32 are quoted in Acts 2:16-21. Joel 2:20-3:2 are discussed on pages 156-158 of *Mid-Week Rapture*.

⁸⁶ On obeying or not obeying the gospel, see footnote 19 in the chapter dealing with Romans chapter 9 in this paper. *Unbelief* and *disobedience* go together (cf., e.g., Heb. 3:18, 19).

⁸⁷ Some (wrongly) use this verse as a verse that supposedly shows that God gives people saving faith by sending the gospel. The *hearing* of this verse is the same *hearing* spoken of in verse 14. Many *hear* the gospel but do not submit in faith to what they have heard and obey it. As free moral agents (we still have some freedom of the will after the fall), we must respond to God and the word of the gospel with faith.

quotation here in verse 19 is from Deut. 32:21 (from the Septuagint). Paul continues with the theme of God's making Israel jealous by saving a large number of Gentiles in Romans chapter 11 (see Rom. 11:13, 14, 25, 26, 30, and 31). He shows that God will use this jealousy as a factor in the conversion of individual Jews and in the ultimate conversion of (the end-time remnant of) Israel. Paul quotes Isa. 65:1 in Rom. 10:20, and he quotes Isa. 65:2 in Rom. 10:21.] **First Moses says, "I WILL MAKE YOU JEALOUS BY THAT WHICH IS NOT A NATION, BY A NATION WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING WILL I ANGER YOU." (20) And Isaiah is very bold and says, "I WAS FOUND BY THOSE WHO DID NOT SEEK ME, I BECAME MANIFEST TO THOSE WHO DID NOT ASK FOR ME." (21) But as for Israel He says, "ALL THE DAY LONG I HAVE STRETCHED OUT MY HANDS TO A DISOBEDIENT AND OBSTINATE PEOPLE."** [See under verse 19. I'll quote a paragraph from what Thomas R. Schreiner says under Rom. 10:14-21 that deals with the overall interpretation of chapters 9 and 10.⁸⁸ "Upholding divine sovereignty...does not lead Paul to minimize human responsibility and the seriousness of human choices. All of Rom. 9:30-10:21 emphasizes that Israel *should* believe and is held responsible for not doing so. ... Finally, God's election of some for salvation does not exclude the notion that he genuinely invites all to be saved. The outstretched arms of God in Rom. 10:21 reveal a genuine longing on his part that all will respond in faith (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4). Some respond that such an idea is nonsense if he has determined that only some will be saved. Paul himself, however, was certainly well aware that his view of divine sovereignty seemed to cancel genuine human freedom and responsibility (see Rom. 9:6-23). [I don't agree that Paul was "well aware that his view of divine sovereignty seemed to cancel genuine human freedom and responsibility." It's certainly true that Paul put *all* the emphasis on God's sovereignty in Rom. 9:6-23, especially on His right to elect or to harden the Israelites with respect to new-covenant salvation. And I agree that Paul would undoubtedly consider "human freedom and responsibility" to be subordinate to divine sovereignty. But I believe it goes too far and misses the balance to say that Paul would have thought that what he said about divine sovereignty in Rom. 9:6-23 "seemed to cancel genuine human freedom and responsibility." I believe Paul held both of these strands of truth without any awareness that the one didn't leave room for the other. I have much respect for the work of Schreiner, and I believe he is closer to the balanced truth than many are, but I believe he reads too much into what Paul says in Rom. 9:6-23, more than the apostle intended.⁸⁹] Nonetheless, he continued to advance both divine sovereignty and human responsibility as true, without reconciling the tension between the two philosophically. I suggest that all attempts to solve the problem philosophically are either unconvincing or inevitably suppress one side of the biblical witness."]

⁸⁸ *Romans* [Baker, 1998], page 575.

⁸⁹ Schreiner believes, for example, that the apostle Paul emphasized the sovereignty of God to such an extent that he believed and taught once saved, necessarily always saved.

ROMANS CHAPTER 11

I say then, God has not rejected His people [Israel (the Jews)], has He? May it never be! [God had said that He would not reject Israel (cf., e.g., Deut. 29:22-32:47; 1 Sam. 12:22; Jer. 31:35-37; and 33:23-26). The issue the apostle Paul raised with this rhetorical question is very similar to the issue he raised in Rom. 9:6a, “But *it is* not as though the word of God has failed.” The integrity of God (including the truthfulness of His word) was at stake with the issue raised in Rom. 9:6a as with the very similar issue raised here in chapter 11. This explains, I suppose, why Paul reverted (in Rom. 11:1-10) to the strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God that he displayed in Rom. 9:6-29. In Rom. 9:6-29 Paul showed that the word of God had not failed (it cannot fail). His word regarding Israel (including His covenant promises to Israel) had not been rendered void by the fact that most of the Jews were failing to submit to the gospel while many Gentiles were becoming Christians.

It was no little thing for the apostle that the integrity of God was being challenged. As I mentioned when discussing Rom. 9:6-29, unbelieving Israel wasn’t directly saying that God had rejected Israel, but that if the gospel Paul preached were true (which it couldn’t be, they thought), it would mean that God had failed to keep His promises made with Israel since so few Jews were being saved. (Paul knew, of course, that the gospel he preached was true.) In Romans chapter 11 the apostle will show that God has not rejected Israel.

In Rom. 9:6-29 the apostle strongly defended God’s sovereign right to elect and save some Israelites and to reject and harden the rest of them. Here in Rom. 11:1-10 Paul speaks of the same election and salvation of some of the Israelites and of the rejection and hardening of the rest of them. As we have seen, the apostle so strongly emphasized the sovereignty of God in Rom. 9:6-29 that you could (and many do) get the wrong impression, that is, that Paul didn’t believe man has any role to play when it comes to his salvation—either a person is elected (and he will be saved) or hardened (and he will be lost), and that’s all there is to it.

But that’s not all there is to it, according to the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. It’s very important for us to understand and to acknowledge God’s sovereignty. But it’s also very important for us to seek the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches and to realize that the apostle Paul (for example) makes it quite clear in many passages (including, significantly, Rom. 9:30-10:21, the passage between Rom. 9:6-29 and Rom. 11:1-10) that man does have a necessary role to fulfill.⁹⁰ Romans 9:30-10:21 show, for example, that God doesn’t just give faith to the elect. It’s very important for us to understand what the sovereign God requires of us as free moral agents (our freedom was limited by the fall, but we still have some ability to respond to God and to cooperate with His grace after the fall). Romans 9:30-10:21 (cf. Rom. 11:20-24) also show that God doesn’t make believers continue in faith to the end. God does, however, enable those who continue to cooperate with His grace through faith to live in righteousness and holiness and to stay faithful to the end.] **For I too am an Israelite, a**

⁹⁰ The word *faith*, when it is understood in a full sense, pretty well covers what God requires of man. Faith includes submitting to God from the heart, to His grace, to His Word, and to His Spirit. Faith includes trusting God and obeying Him (by His grace). It is better to speak of repentance and faith.

descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. [The apostle goes on (in this chapter) to substantiate the fact that God has not rejected Israel in two ways. First, the fact that God had saved a remnant of Israel in Paul’s day (speaking of those Jews who, like Paul, had become Christians even though Israel had for the most part rejected the Lord Jesus Christ) as He had kept a remnant of Israel for Himself in the days of Elijah (days when Israel was terribly backslidden during the reign of King Ahab and his infamous wife Jezebel, who strongly promoted the worship of Baal in Israel) showed that God had not rejected Israel in Paul’s day either (Rom. 11:2-6).⁹¹ And, second, significantly, “all Israel will be saved” (Rom. 11:26): The end-time remnant of Israel will be saved through submitting to Christ (see Rom. 11:11-16, 24-32).] **(2) God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew.** [I agree with the large number of commentators who understand “His people” to refer to Israel (the Jews) as God’s people, even as the words “His people” were used in verse 1. The verb *foreknow* is used in a different sense here than in Rom. 8:29, where the verb was used of the individuals (whether Jews or Gentiles) that God had foreknown and elected. Paul says that God has not rejected Israel. This does not mean that all the Israelites will be saved. (Paul has already established this fact in Romans chapter 9, for example. He has shown that many of the Israelites are not part of God’s true Israel.) But it does include the significant fact that the time will come that all Israel (the end-time remnant of Israel) will be saved (Rom. 11:26). Paul didn’t know when the end would come; he thought it could come in his lifetime (cf., e.g. 1 Cor. 15:51, 52; Phil. 3:20, 21; 1 Thess. 1:9, 10; 4:14-17; and 2 Thess. 1:4-2:15); from our perspective we know that it was (at least) some two thousand years in the future.] **Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? (3) “Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE** [1 Kings 19:10, 14.]” **(4) But what is the divine response to him? “I HAVE KEPT [or, I have left”] for Myself** [By not capitalizing these two words, the NASB editors were showing that these two words were not included in 1 Kings 19:18, which Paul was “quoting” here. I’ll comment further on this “quotation” as we continue.] **SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL.]** [I have already commented to some extent on the meaning of these words that deal with the days of Elijah under Rom. 11:1. For one thing, Paul’s quotations and comments dealing with the remnant of Israel in the days of Elijah helped demonstrate that God had not rejected Israel in Paul’s day.

Paul gave an abbreviated, somewhat modified “quotation” here, a quotation suited to fit what he was saying. (Unlike our quotations today, quotations in the ancient world were often quite loose.) First I’ll comment on the meaning that Paul apparently intended for the “quotation” of 1 Kings 19:18 here in verse 4, then I’ll comment more fully on the meaning of 1 Kings 19:9-18. With the form of Paul’s “quotation” of 1 Kings 19:18 here in verse 4 and with his strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God (who has elected some of the Israelites for salvation and has rejected the rest of them) in Rom. 11:5-10

⁹¹ From the time of the founding of the northern kingdom as a kingdom separate from Judah (this founding took place more than fifty years before Ahab became the king of the northern kingdom), the kingdom was backslidden to some extent. From the beginning, for example, that kingdom had two golden calves as a substitute for the temple at Jerusalem (1 Kings 12:26-13:6).

(which makes it sound, as in Rom. 9:6-29,⁹² like man has no role to play in his salvation), I assume Paul intended Rom. 11:4 be understood in a sense that puts *all* the emphasis on God's role in the salvation of the Israelites.

Writing from this point of view (as in Rom. 9:6-29), Paul apparently intended to include the idea that *God had kept [faithful] to Himself* the "seven thousand men who [had] not bowed the knee to Baal." (God's sanctifying grace wasn't available under the old covenant in anything like the measure it is available under the new covenant, but some grace was available for those who looked to Him in faith.) It's Biblical to give God the glory for keeping the saints faithful (by His grace), but we want to be careful we don't we read too much into Paul's words (as some do) and come up with ideas that go far beyond what Paul believed or intended to communicate. I don't believe Paul meant to communicate the idea, for example, that God *made* the seven thousand stay faithful in Elijah's day or that He *makes* born-again Christians stay faithful and that it is impossible, therefore, for believers to become unbelievers. There's a big difference between God's *enabling* His own to be faithful by His grace and His overriding their wills and *making* them to continue in faith to the end.⁹³ As we'll see, that idea certainly wasn't included in 1 Kings 19:18. The apostle Paul surely knew the meaning of 1 Kings 19:18 in its context.

It will be beneficial for us to consider 1 Kings 19:14-18 (NASB). "Then he [Elijah] said [in response to God's question], 'I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.' (15) The LORD said to him, 'Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you have arrived, you shall anoint Hazael king over Aram⁹⁴; (16) and Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint king over Israel [see 2 Kings 9:1-10:36]; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place [see 1 Kings 19:19-21; 2 Kings 2:1-14]. (17) It shall come about, the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall put to death. (18) Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him.' "

What 1 Kings 19:18 says, in its context, is that God would leave alive (He would not remove in His coming judgment(s) of Israel) the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. To bow before the pagan god Baal constituted apostasy; it was not compatible with faith in God. The seven thousand didn't merit salvation because they had perfectly kept the Law (because they hadn't), but they were people of faith. They would have been the sort of people who would have admitted it when they sinned, and

⁹² As I mentioned under Rom. 11:1, the apostle was dealing with a very similar issue in Rom. 9:6-29 and in Rom. 11:1-10: The integrity of God was being challenged.

⁹³ See my paper, *Once Saved, Always Saved?* and my *Paper on Faith*. Romans 9:30-10:21 are key verses to show that Paul didn't believe that God makes believers continue in faith to the end. These verses are discussed in both papers.

⁹⁴ God, for one thing, was informing Elijah of His plans to judge Israel because of the terribly backslidden state of the nation. (*Israel* here in 1 Kings 19 means the northern kingdom; it doesn't include the southern kingdom of Judah. If Paul had included the remnant faithful to God in Judah, it would have been much larger than the seven thousand mentioned in 1 Kings 19:18.) The Bible doesn't mention that Elijah anointed Hazael king over Aram, but it does inform us that Elisha (the prophet who took the place of Elijah) did go to Damascus, and although he didn't literally anoint Hazael king, he was involved with his becoming king (see 2 Kings 8:7-15).

they would have looked to God for forgiveness and restoration (cf., e.g., Rom. 4:6-8). And they would have been the sort of people who would have looked to God for His enabling grace, and they would have given Him the glory for what faithfulness they did manifest.] **(5) In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant⁹⁵ according to God's gracious choice** [literally, “choice/election of grace [not of merit]”]. [As Paul discussed in Rom. 9:6-29, God wasn't obligated to save any Israelites of any generation. None of them had merited salvation through their works; all of them (like all of the Gentiles) were dependent on God's choosing them for salvation (by His grace) through Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God.] **(6) But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.** [For us to be saved by grace means that our salvation is totally unmerited/unearned; we can't merit salvation by our works because, for one thing, we are spiritually dead and don't have the power to overthrow sin. By Biblical definition, the fact that we (as free moral agents) must receive and walk in God's righteousness and salvation by *faith* doesn't make our salvation anything less than one hundred percent *grace* (cf., e.g., Rom. 4:16). We receive and walk in grace by faith; we do not, and we cannot, earn anything from God through faith.] **(7) What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained** [Israel was seeking righteousness and salvation (see Rom. 9:31, 32; 10:3).], **but those who were chosen** [“the elect”] **obtained it** [The Israelites who had been chosen by God, in accordance with His knowledge/foreknowledge and grace, obtained the righteousness of God and salvation through faith in Christ.⁹⁶], **and the rest were hardened** [“The rest [of the Israelites] were hardened” by God against becoming Christians (cf. Rom. 9:6-24).⁹⁷ It wasn't that God didn't want all the Israelites to become Christians (cf., e.g., 1 Tim. 2:4-6), but knowing their hearts, He didn't want them to become “Christians” in a shallow, unacceptable way and for the wrong reasons,⁹⁸ and in a way where they would have so distorted the gospel that it could hardly have saved Gentiles. (For one thing, God didn't want the gospel to be distorted by being too closely associated with national Israel and the ceremonial law of the Old Testament.) As we discussed under Rom. 9:17, 18, God's *hardening* is a form of judgment; He never hardens hearts that are not already hard. It's significant that the verses Paul goes on to quote in Rom. 11:8-10 to show that

⁹⁵ It's important to see that the word *remnant* here in verse 5 relates to the verb *I have kept/I have left* in verse 4. In the Greek the relationship between the noun and the verb is much more obvious. The Greek noun translated *remnant* here is *leimma*. This Greek noun was derived from the Greek verb *leipō*. The verb used in verse 4 was *kataleipō*, which was formed from the verb *leipō* and the preposition *kata*.

⁹⁶ It is also true, of course, that the Gentiles who had been chosen by God obtained salvation by grace through faith in Christ, but in this context Paul is dealing with Israel, as he is throughout most of Romans chapters 9-11.

⁹⁷ This didn't mean, however, that “the rest” of the Israelites who had not already become Christians when Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans were all blocked from becoming Christians; the potential for repentance was still there (cf., e.g., Rom. 11:14), and at the end of the age “all Israel will be saved” (Rom. 11:26). Also, Rom. 9:32-10:18; 11:20-23 (along with many other verses) show that the Israelites were responsible for the sin of not submitting to Christ and the gospel in faith. God's *hardening* is only part of the picture.

⁹⁸ For example, God didn't want the Israelites to become “Christians” without a true understanding of the gospel (including understanding that we are saved one hundred percent by the grace of God in Christ and not by our genealogy or by our works [whether works of the Law or other works of the flesh]) or without true humility, true repentance, and a true submission to God from their hearts in faith. Without these things there is no true faith, no saving faith (a faith that receives salvation).

God's *hardening*⁹⁹ of Israelites was no new thing, when read in their contexts, confirm that God doesn't harden hearts that aren't already hardened through sin.¹⁰⁰

We have already discussed the fact that the Bible mentions quite a few times that Pharaoh hardened his heart before it mentions that God hardened his heart. I'll list some more verses that demonstrate that men are responsible for the sin of hardening their own hearts: Deut. 15:7; 1 Sam. 6:6; 2 Chron. 36:14; Psalm 95:8; Acts 19:9; and Heb. 3:13. God's *hardening*, for one thing, leads to more intense judgments (cf. Ex. 7:3; Rom. 9:17, 18, 22, 27-29), and some good fruit comes from such judgments (as when some of God's people repent and begin to fear Him; or as when Egypt and the whole world were made aware of God through His intense judgments against Egypt at the time of the exodus).

It's important to see that God's intense judgments against Israel in the last days that will reduce Israel to a remnant—which will result, at least to some extent, from the *hardening* of God—will be a significant factor in the humbling of that remnant and preparing their hearts to repent and submit to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith (see under Rom. 9:17, 22, 25-27 in this paper.); **(8) just as it is written, “GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY.”** [On verses 8-10, see under verse 7, including the footnotes.] **(9) And David says, “LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP, AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM.** [Verse 9 and the second half of verse 10 speak of judgments, not hardening, but Paul was undoubtedly thinking of judgments that came to Israel as a result of God's judicial hardening.] **(10) LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT** [Paul undoubtedly understood these words to speak of a form of hardening (cf. Rom. 11:8).], **AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER** [A translation like “continually” instead of “forever” would probably be better.]” **(11) I say then, they [Israel] did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be!** [For Israel to have stumbled so as to fall without getting up again would be the equivalent of their having been rejected by God, which has not happened (and cannot happen) according to Rom. 11:1, 2 (and many passages in the Bible).] **But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.** [The apostle initiated the theme of God's using the Gentile Christians to make Israel jealous in Rom. 10:19, and he continues with this theme quite a bit in chapter 11 (Rom. 11:13, 14, 25, 26, and 31).¹⁰¹ At least in some ways, it can be said that

⁹⁹ The quotations in Rom. 11:8, 10 don't use the word *hardening*, but they speak of the same thing using different words, for example, “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes to see not and ears to hear not.”

¹⁰⁰ When Deut. 29:4 (which is “quoted” along with Isa. 29:10 in Rom. 11:8) is read in context with Deut. 29:1-32:47, it's clear that Moses was blaming Israel for their sinfulness. He wasn't at all shifting the responsibility for their sinfulness and hardness of heart to God. And when Psalm 69:22, 23 (from the Septuagint), which are quoted by Paul in Rom. 11:9, 10, are read in the light of the entire psalm, it's clear that David considered his enemies to be fully responsible for their sin.

¹⁰¹ God will use other things too that will lead to the conversion of the end-time remnant of Israel. I'll list some of the key things that He will use: the intense judgments that will reduce Israel to a humbled, repentant remnant in the last days (see under Rom. 11:7); the ministry of the two prophets of Rev. 11:3-12 (as these verses in Revelation show, much of their ministry will be oriented toward Israel; cf. Mal. 4:5, 6); the sounding of the seven trumpets of the book of Revelation (Rev. 8:6-11:19); and then, finally, they will see Christ Himself when He comes in glory to initiate the rapture and to judge the world. (These verses from the book of Revelation are all discussed in *Mid-Week Rapture*.) Some (if not all) of these

“salvation *has come* to the Gentiles” because of the “transgression” of Israel, referring to their transgression of not submitting to the Messiah and the gospel in faith. Paul also continues with this theme quite a bit as he continues with chapter 11 (Rom. 11:12, 19, 28, and 30).

There can be no doubting that God foreknew with favor and chose many Gentiles for salvation before the foundation of the world; Paul himself taught this (cf., e.g., Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13; Rev. 13:8; and 17:8). Looking at the salvation of Gentiles from this point of view, it’s clear that the salvation of Gentiles wasn’t just an after thought with God that came because of the transgression (unbelief) of Israel.¹⁰² But it is also true that, in the outworking of God’s plan of salvation (cf., e.g., Rom. 11:30-36), when the Jews rejected the gospel, the apostle Paul was sent/went to the Gentiles (Acts 13:44-51; 18:6; 19:8-10; and 28:23-28). There is no contradiction saying that God planned to save many Gentiles before the foundation of the world *and* saying that the unbelief of Israel and the salvation of Gentiles to make Israel jealous was a factor in the outworking of God’s plan of salvation.] **(12) Now if their [Israel’s] transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles** [Compare Matt. 21:43. The “transgression” and “failure” of Israel refer to the fact that they didn’t submit to Christ and the gospel in faith. The “riches for the world” and “riches for the Gentiles” speak of the salvation of the Gentiles that came through faith in Christ.], **how much more will their [Israel’s (the Jews)] fulfillment [or, fullness] be!** [Paul specifies what he means by these words in verse 15b: When Israel repents and is accepted by God (when all Israel is saved [Rom. 11:26]), it will be time for “life from the dead,” that is, it will be time for the resurrection and glorification of true Israel and the creation. The repentance and conversion of Israel (the Jews) must take place before the “restoration of all things” (Acts 3:19-21). The creation itself will also be glorified along with the people of God (Rom. 8:18-22). Many prophetic verses demonstrate that Jerusalem will be the center of God’s kingdom during the millennium; in the eternal state it will be *new* Jerusalem (cf., e.g., Isa. 2:2-4; Rev. 21:2). We’ll get into some important details under verse 15 and under verses 25-27.] **(13) But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles** [“the apostle of the Gentiles” (NIV). Compare Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17; Rom. 1:5; 15:16; Gal. 1:15, 16; 2:7-9; and 1 Tim. 2:7], **I magnify my ministry** [That is, Paul was faithful (by the grace of God) to do everything he could do to get Gentiles saved, solidly saved. As he will go on to show, one reason he magnified his ministry with the Gentiles was to move to jealousy the Israelites, which he mentions in the next verse. But Paul isn’t saying here that he magnifies his ministry with the Gentiles for the sake of the Israelites (though the Israelites were on his heart, and he was concerned for their salvation and well being, as he mentions several times in Romans chapters 9-11); he is saying that the conversion of the Israelites will lead to glory for Gentile believers (as he states in verses 12, 15).], **(14) if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen [cf. Rom. 9:3] and save some of them.** [Paul is speaking, of course, of Israelites being saved through faith in

other things may prove to be more instrumental in the salvation of the end-time remnant of Israel than the *jealousy* factor.

¹⁰² A large number of verses could be cited to demonstrate this point (cf., e.g., Matt. 28:18-20; John 4:4-42; 10:16; Acts 1:8; and Rom. 9:24-26). Of course God knew from the beginning that Israel (speaking of the majority of the Israelites) would reject the Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel when He came.

Christ Jesus. On the theme of God's using the conversion of the Gentiles to make Israel jealous, see under verse 11. It's easy enough to see that the conversion of a large number of Gentiles tended to force the issue and make it more difficult for Israel to ignore and/or reject the Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel. In verses 25-27, 31 Paul goes on to show that ultimately "all Israel will be saved" and that the jealousy of Israel will play a role in that conversion.] **(15) For if their rejection** [the partial, temporary rejection of Israel] **is the reconciliation** [cf. Rom. 5:10, 11; 2 Cor. 5:18, 19] **of the world** [in the sense mentioned in verse 11, "by their transgression salvation *has come* to the Gentiles"], **what will their acceptance** [Their "acceptance" will take place at the end when "all Israel will be saved" (Rom. 11:26).] **be but life from the dead?** [For a start, see under verse 12. It seems clear that Paul is speaking of the resurrection and glorification that will take place at the end of this age. Here in verse 15 he informs us that the conversion of Israel will signal that the time has come for these glorious things to come to pass. This viewpoint seems to fit with everything the apostle Paul taught on the end times (as recorded in his epistles).

Paul's teaching on the end times was incomplete. I believe we know enough (based on subsequent, fuller revelation, mostly from the book of Revelation, which was given to the apostle John some thirty years after Paul died) to get into several details that Paul didn't mention (and he probably didn't know) and to qualify a few things that he said.¹⁰³

Although it's true that the glory of the millennial kingdom will not come forth until after Israel has been saved through Christ (Rom. 11:12, 15), I believe the resurrection (for those members of true Israel who will have died before Christ returns in the middle of Daniel's 70th week), the transformation (for those members of true Israel who will still be alive when Christ returns), and the rapture (for all the members of true Israel who will have been converted before Christ's mid-week return) will come to pass *before* the end-time remnant of Israel submits to Christ as Savior. The end-time remnant of Israel will not be converted until they look on Him whom they have pierced (Zech 12:10), which they won't do until after it's too late for them to be taken in the rapture.¹⁰⁴

Based on verses like Rom. 8:18-22; 1 Cor. 15:20-28, 42-57; 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11; and 2 Thess. 1:6-2:15,¹⁰⁵ we can say, I believe, that Paul didn't think in terms of people (whether Jews or Gentiles) being converted after the rapture. The book of Revelation, however, shows that the end-time remnant of Israel (and more Gentiles too) will become Christians after the rapture.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ God's revelation is progressive. For example, there were many important things that He didn't fully reveal through the Old Testament prophets. Israel didn't understand, for example, that Messiah was to be deity, God the Son, and they didn't know that He was to have two totally different comings to the earth. We can only know as much as God chooses to reveal to us.

¹⁰⁴ On the conversion of the end-time remnant of Israel, start with number 14 on page 17 of *The Mid-Week Rapture*.

¹⁰⁵ Most of the verses cited from 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and 1 and 2 Thessalonians are discussed in *Mid-Week Rapture*. All of 1 Corinthians Chapter 15 is discussed in my paper dated November 1998; the verses from Romans chapter 8 are discussed in my paper dated July 2000.

¹⁰⁶ See on Rev. 7:1-8 (pages 176-179 of *Mid-Week Rapture*); see on Rev. 11:13 (pages 288, 289 of *Mid-Week Rapture*); on Rev. 12:6-17 (pages 317-324 of *Mid-Week Rapture*); on Rev. 13:7-10 (pages 332-334 of *Mid-Week Rapture*); on Rev. 14:6, 7, 9-13; 15:2 (in my paper dated Jan. 1999); and on Rev. 20:4 (in my paper dated November 1998).

When does the rapture come to pass in the view of Paul? If Paul thought in terms of the final seven-year period that is sometimes called Daniel's 70th week, he probably would have thought of Christ's returning very near the end of that seven-year period (not long before the millennial kingdom begins).¹⁰⁷] **(16) If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too.** ["The first piece of *dough*" and "the root" both speak of Abraham (or Abraham and the other fathers of Israel [cf. Rom. 9:5]), in whom Israel originated. "The lump" speaks of Israel, and "the branches" speak of individual Israelites, including, as the next verse shows, the Israelites who had been cut off in Paul's day (some of them were only temporarily cut off) from the tree of God's true Israel because they rejected Christ and the gospel. Paul clearly didn't mean to say that the unbelieving Israelites were *holy* in the full new-covenant sense of the word. A person must be born-again through Christ and walk by the Spirit to be holy in that sense. They were not even holy in the sense that believers were holy under the old covenant. (The words *holy* and *sanctified* are sometimes used in special, limited senses [cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 7:14].)

Paul has already made the point in Rom. 9:6 that the Israelites were not all part of God's true Israel. He wanted the Gentile Christians to understand, however, that God hadn't cast off unbelieving Israel; many of the Israelites were yet to be saved, especially at the end when "all Israel [the end-time remnant of Israel] will be saved." The Israelites deserved respect; all men deserve some respect as those who have been created in the image of God (cf., e.g., Gen. 9:5, 6). When men accept viewpoints that deny that man was created by God in His image (and that we are obligated to Him as Savior, God, and Judge), they often begin to treat other men as animals, or things. If men are animals, or things, issues like genocide, murder, abortion, and enslaving men are no big deal.] **(17) But if some of the branches were broken off** [speaking of the Israelites who were broken off when they rejected Christ and the gospel], **and you** [speaking to the Gentiles who had become part of the tree of God's true Israel through faith in Christ], **being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree** [cf., e.g., John 4:22; Eph. 2:11-22], **(18) do not be arrogant toward the branches** [Paul cautioned the Gentile Christians to humble themselves regarding the Israelites. If we aren't very careful, pride (pride is a big part of what sin and the old man is all about) will manifest itself against others. I'm sure Paul knew of cases where Gentile Christians were arrogant toward unbelieving Jews, and even some cases where they were arrogant toward Jewish Christians. Of course arrogance was often manifested from the Jewish side too, but the sin of the other person doesn't make it OK for us to sin too, whether Jews or Gentiles. God's plan of salvation is designed, for one thing, to humble all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles (cf., e.g., Rom. 11:30-36).]; **but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you.** [Gentile Christians were grafted into the tree of true Israel. Abraham became their father; he is the father of all believers (e.g., Rom. 4:11-17).] **(19) You** [Gentile Christians] **will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in."** [Paul is continuing with a theme first mentioned in verse 11. Individual Israelites were broken off the tree of God's true Israel when they failed to submit to Christ and the gospel.] **(20) Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith** [Gentile Christians *stand* (they stand, as opposed to falling;

¹⁰⁷ See the last chapter of *Mid-Week Rapture*, especially pages 347-349.

falling is the equivalent of being broken off the tree of God's true Israel).]. [Paul has already made it clear that the Israelites were responsible for their unbelief regarding Christ and the gospel (e.g., Rom. 2:5, 8; 3:3; 9:32, 33; 10:3, and 16-21). Romans 11:20 with verses 21-24 are some of the most important verses in the Bible to demonstrate that faith is something we do (but we couldn't have saving faith if God didn't take the initiative in our salvation) and something we must keep on doing (by His grace), not something God does, or something He just gives us, or something that He *makes* us continue to do. I believe the Bible makes this quite clear (see my *Paper on Faith* and my paper *Once Saved, Always Saved?*).

Even in a passage like Rom. 9:6-29, which is written from a perspective that puts *all* the emphasis on God's role in our salvation, Paul doesn't come close to saying that God gives His chosen ones faith or that He makes them continue in faith to the end. He does speak of a special *call* for His chosen ones (Rom. 9:24), but that is very different from saying that He gives them faith. They still must submit to the call of the gospel in faith, and they must continue in faith to the end. The Bible makes it very clear (including the writings of the apostle Paul, very much including the verses we are discussing now, verses 21-24) that there is no guarantee that those who start in faith will continue in faith to the end. (For a discussion of this important topic and for a listing of many more passages that are as clear on this topic as Rom. 11:20-24, see my paper *Once Saved, Always Saved?*)

I'm not suggesting that God is trying to get rid of us, quite the contrary, but I'm very sure that He intended for us to take His exhortations and warnings seriously. They should put the fear of God in us so we will make it a top priority to live in His will by His grace. In my opinion, most Christians in our day don't have a fear of God. This is mostly due to the fact that they have not heard the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. We desperately need the balanced truth!] **Do not be conceited** [Here Paul means "do not be conceited against the Israelites who have been broken off.'], **but fear** [In the next verse Paul shows why they must fear God: They too will be cut off (like the unbelieving Israelites) if they do not maintain their faith as Christians, which includes living like Christians are required to live (by the grace of God through faith, in accordance with His Word). I have found that most Christians in our day don't want to hear about fearing God (they want to hear how God will continue to love them just the same forever no matter what they do), but the New Testament is as clear as the Old Testament that we must fear God, that is, we must fear sinning against Him¹⁰⁸; it could cost us our soul if we don't.]; **(21) for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either.** [If God did not spare the Israelites, but cut them off for their unbelief when they rejected Christ and the gospel, He will also cut off Gentile Christians if they do not "continue in His kindness" (Rom. 11:22) by continuing to live/walk in faith.] **(22) Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise**

¹⁰⁸ For a discussion on the need to fear God see under Phil. 2:12 in my paper *The Christian, the Law, and Legalism*. For a refutation of the unbiblical idea that God will always continue to love us just the same no matter what we do, see my paper dated July 2000 (pages 7, 8, 19-26). I'm not suggesting that we can in any way earn God's love or be worthy of it in ourselves (we can't), but the Bible is full of warnings that we will experience God's eternal wrath, not His eternal love, if we insist on continuing in rebellion against Him. If we really have faith in God, we will make it top priority to please Him and to live in His righteousness and truth (by His grace, in accordance with His Word).

you also will be cut off [cf. John 15:2]. [I'll quote part of what James D. G. Dunn says under verses 20-22.¹⁰⁹ I'm impressed with what Dunn says here so I'll quote quite a bit, but I could have quoted quite a bit more. First I'll quote part of what he says under verse 20. "... the warning example continues to be Israel whose presumption transformed *pistis* [faith] into *apistia* [unbelief; unfaithfulness]. In advocating 'fear' Paul draws on a strong strand of Jewish piety prominent in the wisdom tradition, the fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom (e.g., Pss 2:11; 34:9, 11; 111:10; 112:1; Prov 1:7; 3:7...); so in Paul himself particularly 2 Cor 5:11; 7:1; Phil 2:12; and Col 3:22. Cf. also [Rom.] 3:18 and 13:7. Only fear of God can keep faith from deteriorating into presumption, since only in trembling creatureliness does faith retain its character as dependent trust..." (page 663).

I'll quote part of what Dunn says under verse 21 regarding the words "He will not spare you either." "The seriousness of the warning should not be underestimated. If Jewish branches could be cut off, then gentile branches could certainly suffer the same fate.... The possibility of believers 'falling away' (= failing to stand firm; v 20), apostatizing, is one which Paul certainly did not exclude. On the contrary, he reckoned with it in all seriousness. ... See particularly [Rom.] 8:13; 8:17 ('provided that'); 9:3; 11:22; 14:15, 20. Elsewhere note particularly 1 Cor 3:17; 8:11; 9:27; 10:1-12; 15:1-2; 2 Cor 13:5; Gal 5:4; Col 1:22-23; Heb 3:14; 6:4-8; 10:29. A doctrine of 'perseverance of the saints' which does not include the lessons of salvation-history has lost its biblical perspective. ..." (page 664).

I'll quote part of what Dunn says under verse 22 regarding the words "but to you, God's kindness, if [Greek *ean*] you continue in His kindness." "...Paul's whole point is that presumption is fatal, whether Jew or Gentile. ... Once again Paul underlines the point that perseverance is a Christian responsibility rather than an unconditional promise..." (page 665).

I'll quote part of what Dunn says under verses 20, 21. "Man's response to God's purpose is also part of the picture, and it is here that attention should be focused. [God will take care of His part all right; the only question is whether we will do what He requires us to do (in accordance with His word and by His grace through faith).] The reason why so many Jewish branches were lopped off is not to be grasped solely in terms of divine fiat [decree], but is rather to be explained from Israel's unfaith. And gentile believers must never forget that their own insertion into the covenant/tree came about through their own faith, and that continuance within the covenant/tree is dependent on their continuing faith.... Paul is quite clear that the tension between God's sovereign purpose and human responsibility must never be slackened into presumption...[A major point that the apostle made in Romans chapter 2 was that Israel couldn't boast of their privilege of having the Law of God while failing to keep the commandments of the Law.]...[Bible faith includes obedience to God and His Word, including His Law. Believers are enabled, and required, to keep the Law (excluding the ceremonial law) by the grace of God in Christ.¹¹⁰] For such presumption is the very opposite of the humble trust which relies only on God's power for the fulfillment of his promise (chap. 4). ..." (pages 673, 674).

Lastly, I'll quote a paragraph from what Dunn says under verse 22. "... It is when faith responds to God's gracious outreach and remains within that alone (5:2), under that alone (6:14), that it can do its work within the believer. ... Paul underlines the precariousness of the gentile believers' situation—precarious because the history of Israel shows how quickly faith can be corrupted into unfaith, how easily grace can be perverted into human presumption. Individual gentile Christians should not assume that what has happened to them is something final and irreversible; the only security derives from a sustained and unreserved reliance on

¹⁰⁹ *Romans 9-16* [Word, 1988].

¹¹⁰ See my paper titled *The Christian, the Law, and Legalism*.

God's grace alone" (page 675). Amen!] **(23) And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. (24) For if you [the *Gentile* Christians] were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree [the *tree* of God's true Israel], how much more will these who are the natural *branches* [the Israelites who had been cut off because of unbelief] be grafted into their own olive tree? (25) For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery [God's plan to partially harden Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has been saved and then to save Israel is called a "mystery" in that this plan of God, which had not been revealed to men, was now being revealed through the apostle Paul.¹¹¹—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation [Apparently Paul meant these words in the sense that, through God's revelation, the Gentile Christians could now have real wisdom, God's wisdom, not being limited to their own "wisdom" (their ideas) regarding God's plans for Israel and the Gentiles.¹¹²—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel [God's hardening of Israel was only partial in that some of the Israelites (like Paul) were not hardened (cf. Rom. 11:1-10).] until the fullness ["full number" NIV] of the Gentiles has come in [or, "has entered." Compare Luke 21:24.¹¹³; (26) and so [or, "thus"] all Israel will be saved [When the full number of the (elect) Gentiles has come in to (has entered) the church (I assume this is what Paul intended by his words at the end of verse 25), "all Israel will be saved." It seems clear that Paul is building on the theme begun in Rom. 10:19 (and continued in Rom. 11:11, 13, 14, 25, 26, 30, 31), that God uses the Gentile Christians to make Israel jealous. The word "so," (or, "thus,") undoubtedly refers (at least to some extent) to the fact that the full number of the Gentiles will have come in, which will make Israel jealous.**

There will be no more need for the (partial) hardening of Israel once Israel (the end-time remnant of Israel) has been humbled and has repented before God. They will be ready to submit to Christ with all their hearts and for the right reasons.

Some important qualifications regarding what Paul says in verses 15, 25-27 are required because of God's subsequent revelation (referring especially to the book of Revelation). See under Rom. 11:15. With the insight we have from the book of Revelation (which was given to the church some thirty years after Paul died), I believe we can interpret the fulfillment of Paul's words about all Israel being saved after the full number of the Gentiles has come in (entered) in a higher, much more significant sense than the one (apparently) intended by Paul.

With the insight we have from subsequent revelation, we can see that the Christian church (which includes all true Christians and consists mostly of Gentiles) will *enter* eternal glory (including being raptured from the earth) in the middle of Daniel's 70th week, just before God begins to save the end-time remnant of Israel. It's not hard to imagine that the end-time remnant's seeing the rapture of the glorified saints (at the time they enter eternal glory) will be sufficient to cause substantial jealousy on the part of Israel, jealousy that will work for good; they certainly won't want to miss God's

¹¹¹ Some other verses that will help us to understand what Paul meant by the word *mystery* here are Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 2:7-10; 15:50-53; and Eph. 3:3-12.

¹¹² The BAGD Greek Lexicon (under *phronimos*, the Greek adjective that is translated *wise* here) says that the meaning here is "relying on your own wisdom."

¹¹³ Luke 21:20-24 are discussed on page 278 of *Mid-Week Rapture*.

eternal glory.]; **just as it is written, “THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.”** [God will remove ungodliness from the end-time remnant of Jacob/Israel/Judah through new-covenant salvation, with some emphasis on making them holy (cf., e.g., Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:7-13; and 10:15-18). Also see under verse 27.] **(27) “THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.”** [The apostle “quoted” part of Isa. 59:20, 21 from the Septuagint version, except for the last words, “when I take away their sins,” which he apparently took from Isa. 29:7. Also, the Hebrew has “to [or, for] Zion,” instead of “from Zion,” and the Septuagint has “for the sake of Zion.” Paul could have taken the words “from [out of] Zion” from Psalms 14:7; 53:6.¹¹⁴ Paul used this composite “quotation” from the Old Testament to confirm that God will save the end-time remnant of Israel, which is a common theme in Old Testament prophecy.¹¹⁵] **(28) From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake** [Paul means that they are “enemies” in the sense that unbelieving Israel has been cut off from true Israel (e.g., Rom. 11:19-24). “For your sake” means that (in some ways) salvation has come to the Gentiles through the cutting off of Israel (cf. Rom. 11:11, 12, 15, 19, 30, and 32).] **but from the standpoint of God’s choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers** [cf. Deut. 7:8; 10:15; Rom. 9:3-5; and 11:2]; **(29) for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.** [In other words, God hasn’t rejected (and in some ways He couldn’t reject) Israel (cf., e.g. Rom. 11:1, 2, 11-16, 25-29, 31, 32). Based on what Paul has said already in Romans chapters 9-11, we know, however, that this doesn’t mean that every Israelite of every generation will be saved, far from it.] **(30) For just as you once were disobedient to God** [Paul is speaking directly to the Gentile Christians (as he has been since at least verse 18); they had been disobedient to God in the years before they became Christians.], **but now have been shown mercy because of their** [Israel’s] **disobedience** [Now the Gentile Christians had been shown mercy in that God had saved them. And, as we have seen, a major theme of Paul in this chapter is that the disobedience of Israel (their rejection of Christ and the gospel) opened the door (in some ways) for the gospel to come to the Gentiles.], **(31) so these also now have been disobedient** [Here Paul was speaking of Israel’s disobedience in rejecting Christ and the gospel.], **that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy.** [And here Paul means that because of the mercy shown to the Gentile Christians, Israel will be saved, building on the theme that was first mentioned in Rom. 10:19 that is so often mentioned in this chapter, that God uses the Gentile Christians to make Israel jealous.] **(32) For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.** [In the first place, there’s no idea here of God’s being the author of the rebellion, sinfulness, and disobedience of any people, Jews or Gentiles. Paul would

¹¹⁴ The Septuagint of Psalms 14:7; 53:6 used the same Greek preposition (*ek*) that Paul uses here in Rom. 11:26. The Hebrew preposition (*min*) used in Psalms 14:7; 53:6 is typically translated *from*. I’ll quote the first line of Psalm 14:7, which is the same as the first line of Psalm 53:6, “Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of [from] Zion!”

Paul probably understood *the Deliverer’s coming from Zion* (cf. Heb. 12:22) to speak of Christ’s coming from heaven at the end of the age to save the end-time remnant of Israel. If so, he probably thought of His coming to save them before the rapture of the saints; it seems Paul thought of the end-time remnant of Israel’s being saved in time to be taken in the rapture with the rest of the saints.

¹¹⁵ See my paper on Isaiah, dated August 2000. Isaiah 59:19-21, verses that deal (in part) with God’s salvation of the humbled, repentant end-time remnant of Israel, are discussed there.

say, however, along with the rest of the Bible, that all men are sinful and need to be saved through Christ Jesus (cf., e.g., Rom. 3:9-19, 23). One primary point that Paul includes here is that God, in His overall plan of salvation, didn't give Israel a covenant at Mt. Sinai that would dethrone spiritual death and sin; He didn't give the Mosaic covenant (the old covenant) to solve the sin problem; before the foundation of the world, He had already planned to send His Son as the Lamb of God to fully solve the sin problem. In some ways the Mosaic Law intensified, rather than solving, the sin problem (cf., e.g., Rom. 4:15; 5:13, 29; and 7:8-11).

It is only the new covenant established on the atoning death of the Lamb of God that has the authority and power to dethrone spiritual death and sin, as Paul so often teaches in Romans and his other epistles (cf., e.g., Rom. 1:16, 17; 2:26-29; 3:21, 22; 5:1-6:23; and 8:1-14). If the old covenant had solved the sin problem, there would have been no need for the new covenant, and the Gentiles could have been left out of God's salvation plans (cf., e.g., Gal. 3:19-4:7). But, as Paul shows in this chapter, God is working out His new-covenant plan of salvation in a way that includes some Jews and many Gentiles and that will eventually lead to the salvation of all Israel.

It is very significant that God's plan of salvation was designed to humble His people. Pride is at the root of sin, starting with the devil and his rebellion against God (cf. 1 Tim. 3:6). If we could be saved through keeping the Law, there would be an opening for us to think that God owes us something, that we have earned a place in heaven. To that extent we could boast in ourselves and in our accomplishments instead of boasting *only* in Him, as it must be. He is the Creator, Savior, and Judge; we must be totally committed to Him, and we must give Him all the glory. He is a good God! He paid an infinite price to save us by His mercy and grace! Thanks be to God (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit!) **(33) Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom [cf. Eph. 3:10; Col. 2:3] and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways [cf. Job 5:9; 11:7]! (34) For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? [cf. Isa. 40:13 (Septuagint)] (35) Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? [Cf. Job 35:7; 41:11.] (36) For from Him and through Him; and to Him are all things [cf. 1 Cor. 8:6; 11:12; Col. 1:16; and Heb. 2:10]. To Him *be* the glory forever [cf. Rom. 16:27; Eph. 3:21; Phil. 4:20; 1 Tim. 1:17; 2 Tim. 4:18; 2 Pet. 3:18; Jude 1:25; Rev. 1:6; 5:13; and 7:12]. Amen. [And, Amen!]**

Excerpts from *The Fire of His Holiness* by Sergio Scataglini

When I read this book recently, which was published in 1999 by Renew Books, I knew I wanted to include some excerpts in a paper. The author, Sergio Scataglini, who has an MA degree in Theology from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, is an Argentinean pastor who has been involved in the revival in Argentina for many years. In 1997 he had an experience that led to a significant increase in the holiness of his life. Since then he has been ministering this message to the body of Christ in many nations. (I have done major abbreviations for the internet version of this paper. In the original paper, this section covered some seven pages.)

Excerpts from the Foreword. I'll start with a few quotations from the foreword by C. Peter Wagner of the Wagner Leadership Institute, who taught for many years at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. "... ...the Body of Christ needs to move to a new level, and that level is a total sell-out to personal holiness. I agree with Sergio that God's standard is not 98%, but nothing less than 100%. " I don't know much about Peter Wagner, but I very much appreciate what he said regarding holiness in this Foreword.

Excerpts from the Introduction. "...This book is a combination of two things: a testimony of the direct intervention of God Almighty in my life and an instrument to impart the same to you. ... If you are not seeking the fire of His holiness, you are in a different movement than the one Jesus began. ..." (pages 19-21).

Excerpts from Chapter 2, "The Fear of the Lord." In this chapter Sergio reports what happened on the third day of the powerful experience he had in 1997. "... I had accepted a distortion of biblical teaching that it is OK if we always have a percentage of sin or evil in us.the Lord pointed out specific things in my life that were not right. ... All sin is evil and destructive. ... Then the Lord spoke to me again and said clearly, '98% holiness is not enough' " (pages 34, 35).

"... By faith, we must allow Him to cleanse us. ..." (pages 36-38).

Excerpts from Chapter 5 under the subheading "Counterfeits of Holiness." "...

Legalism

... Remember, holiness is not a list but a person: Jesus Christ. He has become our righteousness and sanctification (see 1 Cor. 1:30). Legalism believes salvation is by faith but that sanctification is by works. But the reality is that both salvation and sanctification are by faith accompanied by repentance and obedience. ..." (pages 61, 62).

Excerpts from Chapter 6, "Our Evangelical Sins." In the first part of this chapter Sergio quotes Gal. 5:17 from the NIV; he then comments on this verse. "*For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with one another, so that you do not do what you want* [To do "what you want" would be to do "the desire of the flesh," which the apostle just mentioned at the end of Gal. 5:16]. The above passage in Paul's letter to the Galatians [Sergio is speaking of Gal.

5:17] is written to believers. This speaks about the story of Christian frustration.... .

[Although Sergio does a good job exhorting Christians to walk in holiness as he deals with Gal. 5:17-21 on pages 67-75 of this chapter, I believe his comment here regarding the meaning of Gal. 5:17 is misleading. (Galatians 5:16-25 are discussed in some detail in my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.) Paul wasn't speaking of "frustrated Christians" in Gal. 5:17. I'm assuming that what Sergio means by "frustrated Christians" is Christians who are frustrated with the sin in their lives. But Paul didn't write Gal. 5:17 from the viewpoint that his Christian readers would continue to sin. He wrote Gal. 5:16-25, very much including 5:17, to exhort his Christian readers to always walk by the Spirit so they would not yield to the sinful desire of the flesh.

In Gal. 5:16 (which is one of the most important verses in the New Testament exhorting Christians to always walk in holiness with the victory over all sin), Paul has just said, "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you [most certainly] will not carry out the [sinful] desire of the flesh." In this verse (Gal. 5:16) Paul exhorts born-again Christians to walk by (or, "in/after") the Holy Spirit on a continuous basis by faith (which they are called to do and enabled to do) so they "will not carry out the [sinful] desire of the flesh," in other words, so they will not sin. The "desire of the flesh" is to do the sinful works of the flesh; all sin is a *work of the flesh*, as Paul's partial listing of the "works of the flesh" in Gal. 5:19-21 shows. The *flesh* in Gal. 5:16, 17, and 19 speaks of much more than the physical body; the *flesh* is the old man¹¹⁶ that still wants to sin; the NIV translates *sinful nature* instead of *flesh* in all three verses.

A walk by (or, "after/in") the Holy Spirit is far from being automatic for Christians. In Gal. 5:17 Paul makes it clear that Christians still have to fight against the all-too-real potential to walk after the flesh (to walk after the old man); the flesh/old man has not been annihilated yet, and it will manifest itself in sin to the extent it is permitted to do so. (And the demons are eager to encourage and help the old man to sin.) But, as I mentioned, Paul didn't write verse 17 from the viewpoint that Christians are frustrated because they keep slipping into sin. Verse 17 follows in the same victorious note of verse 16. The words at the end of verse 17 ("so that you do not do what you want" NIV; "so that you may not do the things that you please" NASB) were written to exhort Christians to not yield to the sinful desire(s) of the flesh mentioned at the end of verse 16 (to which they won't yield if they continually walk by the Spirit through faith—the Holy Spirit doesn't lose battles against any enemy).

The fact that the flesh (the old man) hasn't been annihilated yet and that Christians sometimes have to wage war (by the Spirit through faith) against sinful desires doesn't mean that Christians will continue in sin. "Frustration" results when Christians, for one reason, or another,¹¹⁷ aren't walking after the Spirit (which they are called to do, and

¹¹⁶ On the "old man," which must be crucified/put off/laid aside and kept crucified/put off/laid aside by the grace/Spirit of God in Christ, see Rom. 6:6; Eph. 4:22, 25-31; and Col. 3:9.

¹¹⁷ Many Christians haven't been taught that they are called to walk in victory over sin; they don't have a solid Biblical basis for faith for holiness and victory over sin. In fact, many Christians have been taught that the Bible teaches that we will necessarily continue to sin as long as we live in this world. As I discussed in *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* (starting on page 194), the three passages most often used to try to prove that Christians can't stop sinning in this life are Rom. 7:14-25; 1 John 1:8; and Gal. 5:17. I'm quite sure that those Christians who understand these three passages that way are misinterpreting the passages; all three passages are discussed in *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.

enabled to do, on a continual basis).] But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. [This last sentence is an exact quotation of Gal. 5:18 NIV, except that the NIV has “law,” not “the law.”] This means you will not be at fault with the Old Testament Mosaic law, the commandment of our Lord. [What Sergio means, I believe, is that Christians who are led by the Spirit will live in accordance with the righteousness required by the Mosaic Law (obviously excluding the ceremonial parts of the Mosaic Law, things like circumcision and not eating pork). In Rom. 2:26-29 and 8:4 Paul taught that Christians are to walk in accordance with God’s Law.¹¹⁸ Anyway, what Paul meant in verse 18 was that the “gospel” of the Judaizers, which had come to Galatia, must be rejected; Christians are not under the old covenant established on the Mosaic Law (cf., e.g., Rom. 6:14; 7:4, 6; Gal. 2:19; and 3:23-25); they are saved through the new covenant that was established on the atoning death of the Lamb of God.] As we yield completely to the Holy Spirit under the New Covenant of grace, we are not under condemnation— we are free (see Rom. 8:1). [What Sergio means, I believe, is that “we are not under condemnation” because, through the grace of God in Christ, we are enabled to *yield completely to the Holy Spirit* and live in righteousness and holiness. That’s what Paul meant in Rom. 8:1, as Rom. 8:2-4 demonstrate.¹¹⁹ The forgiveness for our past sins and for any sins we should commit after we become Christians is, of course, provided in the new covenant, but the emphasis in Rom. 8:1-14 and Gal. 5:16-25 is on the enablement for, and the requirement for, Christians to walk in holiness with the victory over all sin through the grace/Spirit of God in Christ. Holiness and victory over sin isn’t presented as optional for Christians in the New Testament.]

Now what follows is one of the strongest warnings to believers in the entire New Testament. These are signs of someone who has fallen into decadence, ruin and disaster [or of “Christians” who never escaped from the works of the flesh to begin with]: ‘The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery’ (Gal. 5:19). ...

...

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly father is perfect (Matt. 5:48).

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children (Eph. 5:1).

Be holy, because I am holy (1 Pet. 1:16).

... The pattern of carnality is struggle-defeat-struggle-defeat. But the pattern of the Spirit-led life is struggle-victory-struggle-victory!” (pages 67-69).

I’ll quote part of what Sergio said in a later section of this chapter; this section is titled “A Strong Warning in the New Testament.” “... In Galatians 5:21 Paul says, ‘I warn you, as

Even after Christians see the solid Biblical basis for holiness and victory over sin, a walk in holiness and victory over sin is far from being automatic, or easy. The world, the flesh, and the devil are engaged in intense warfare against us. It’s rather easy to doubt, to be fleshly/carnal and worldly, but the grace of God in Christ is sufficient for those who appropriate it. We must, of course, make God, His Word, His righteousness, and His holiness top priority in our hearts and lives or we are not going to be able to live in the center of His will. Making God and the things of God top priority is part of what *faith* in God is all about.

¹¹⁸ These important verses are discussed in *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.

¹¹⁹ Romans 8:1-4 are discussed in *Holiness and Victory over Sin*.

I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.' ...” (pages 72, 73).

The last section of this chapter is titled, “Depression Is Not Part of the Package of the Gospel.”

Excerpts from Chapter 7, “Self-Examination and the Call to Repentance.” “...Jesus will impart more and more of His purity to you as you receive more of Him!

Some of you have repented for years for your sin and you say, ‘How can I repent again for the same sin? ... Please do not give up hope.... ...” (pages 80, 81).

Excerpts from Chapter 8, “False Conversions and God’s Fire.” The first excerpt is taken from the section titled, “Grace Does Not Cover Unconfessed Sin.” “... Without repentance...a person creates a false hope, a false standard of the Christian experience. ...” (pages 91, 92).

Excerpts from Chapter 11, “The Dynamics of Temptation.”