

**ROMANS 9-11 – GOD’S ULTIMATE PLAN OF SALVATION FOR ISRAEL**



We now come to another very important section—how God’s plan of salvation will ultimately have a positive outcome for the vast majority of Israelites throughout the ages. Paul says we must have faith in God’s perfect wisdom and plan, comparing Him to a Master potter who is carefully shaping a clay vessel and how it would be ludicrous for a vessel to question its maker.

As he says, “Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. You will say to me then, ‘Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?’ But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why have you made me like this?’ Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, *endured with much longsuffering* the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction [he had just spoken about the Pharaoh during the Exodus from Egypt in vs. 17], and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the *vessels of mercy*, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, *even us whom He called* [now], not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?” (Rom. 9:18-24).

So, in God’s Plan of Salvation, He *temporarily* would punish some unconverted and prideful people to show His great power at the right time in history (such as when God’s people left Egypt in a powerful way against a stubborn Pharaoh, Gen. 15:13-16). Conversely, He would also call others that *yielded to His way* and show His power and glory through them (such as Moses and Aaron).

As Paul concludes about God’s plan: “What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who *did not* pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because *they did not seek it by faith*, but as it were, by *the works of the law* [rituals and oral law]. For they stumbled *at that stumbling stone* [Christ]. As it is written: ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’ Brethren, my

heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is *that they may be saved*. For I bear them witness that they have *a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge* [or a wise way]. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God” (Rom. 9:30-10:3).

As *Believer’s Commentary* explains: “The apostle gives his testimony that they have a zeal for God. This was apparent from their careful observance of *the rituals and ceremonies* [and the oral law] of *Judaism*.” This is a completely mistaken and unbiblical, concept of the law that the Pharisees personified in keeping their traditions. Paul had tried it as a Pharisee, but it had led him to religious pride and self-righteousness (Phil. 3:3-8). Without the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in one, the righteousness of the law cannot be satisfied. But the Jewish people in general rejected this concept and clung to their unbiblical rabbinic teachings.

Paul then states the right purpose of the law: “For Christ is the end [Gk. *telos* – goal or purpose] of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Rom. 10:4). A more exact translation puts it, “You see, God’s *purpose for the law* reaches *its climax* when the Anointed One arrives; now all who trust in Him can have their lives made right with God” (VOICE). Of the 42 times *telos* is used in the New Testament, 37 times it means “a goal or purpose,” and only 5 times, the end of something.

So, how can we be completely sure that here *telos* means “purpose or goal,” and not the “end” of something? To do this, we must study *the context* of the scripture. Note a few verses before, in Rom. 9:30-33, “But Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained [it]. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but by works of the law.” So, we see the problem is not with the law itself, but with *how* it was *wrongly* applied, something that Paul has mentioned from the first chapter until now (see Rom. 1:17; 2:23-29; 3:19-30). As Dr. Samuel Bacchiocchi notes, “The problem [with interpreting *telos* as the end of the law] is that it *contradicts the immediate context* as well as the *numerous explicit* Pauline statements

which *affirm* the validity and value of the Law...Consequently, 'Christ is *the goal* of the Law' in the sense that the Law of God, understood as the...Old Testament, has reached *its purpose* and *fulfillment* in Him...In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the overwhelming influence of German liberal theology...caused the *antinomian* 'abrogation of the Law' *interpretation* of Rom. 10:4 to prevail...What Paul is condemning...is the *homemade* righteousness which many Jews made into a Law without Christ as its object" (*The Sabbath Under Crossfire*, 1998, pp. 217-218).

Moreover, why did the Jews apply God's law incorrectly? Paul answers: "For they stumbled at the stumbling block...and whoever believes in him [Christ] will not be put to shame" (Rom. 9:33). By rejecting Christ and His sacrifice for sin, they stubbornly insisted that the rituals and oral laws they kept were sufficient to be right with God.

Now, Paul explains how God's law can now be fully kept through Christ being in on by the Holy Spirit. He says, "For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, 'The man who does those things shall live by them.' [And] the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, 'Do not say in your heart, 'who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes on him will not be put to shame.' For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him" (Rom. 10:5-12).

There is, unfortunately, in Rom. 10:6, a translation error of a Gk. preposition that inserts "but" instead of "and" (YLT) and grossly distorts this account. Paul is actually quoting Moses as saying God's law is *not* impossible to keep (Dt. 30:11-13) and insists that by accepting Jesus Christ and having God's spirit, it is *not* as

unreachable as heaven nor as unplumbable as an abyss. Salvation is possible through Christ.

Next, Paul explains the role of a true minister: "For 'whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved' How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!' But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?' So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: 'Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world' But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: 'I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.' But Isaiah is very bold and says: 'I was found by those who did not seek me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for me.' But to Israel he says: 'All day long I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people'" (Rom. 10:13-21).

It is therefore always a privilege to announce the truths and good news of what Christ has done and is doing for us, and how we can obey the God's Word to please Him. Since most Jews rejected the Messiah, now the opportunity opens mostly to the Gentiles, who are willing to listen—although there is a faithful Jewish remnant who did accept Christ, as Paul goes on to explain in chapter 11.

As He states, "I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin" (Rom. 11:1). He then goes on to give several scriptures about the faithful remnant of His people and concludes, "Even so then, at this present time *there is a remnant according to the election of grace*. And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise, grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise, work is no longer work" (Rom. 11:5-6).

Paul insists these converted Jews are there through Christ and not by their own Jewish works—*not by race but by grace*. He says, "For as

many of you as were *baptized* into Christ have put on Christ. *There is neither Jew nor Greek*, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for *you are all one in Christ Jesus*. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and *heirs* according to the promise" (Gal. 3:27-29).

So, what happens to the remnant of Israel who *have not believed*? He says, "What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest *were blinded*...I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them. For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, 'Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.' Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?" (Rom. 11:11-24).

Paul now reveals that all of these people of Israel are not lost, nor have they died in vain, but

that there will be a future opportunity for repentance for them. He illustrates this truth with the analogy of grafting a branch of a wild olive tree (Gentiles) to a cultivated olive tree (Jews). He warns the converted Gentiles not to boast, but be thankful for being called instead of some Jews for the time being, but that is not the end of the story.

Then he discloses God's plan for the Israelites in the future when they will be called and given an opportunity to be converted and be saved. He says, "For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that *blindness in part* [temporarily] has happened to Israel *until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in*. And so, ***all Israel will be saved***, as it is written: 'The deliverer will come out of Zion, and he will turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins.' Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you *they also may obtain mercy*. For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! 'For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to Him? For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen'" (Rom. 11:11:25-36).

So, the "mystery" or what had not been revealed before, is precisely this aspect of God's Plan of Salvation. In the future, when Christ comes, Israel will have an opportunity to be saved. For some it will be during the Millennium, and for the great majority, it will be in the Second Resurrection mentioned in Ez. 37:1-14 and in Rev. 20:11-12.

As Paul contemplates this wonderful plan of salvation from God, he rejoices and gives Him so many thanks and glory for His great love and mercy!