

all men, both Jew and Gentile, shall hear this "word of faith, which we preach" (v.8). In verses 16-20 he quotes from the Old Testament to prove that Israel has heard. Also that God even there pointed out His purpose to offer His gospel of grace to the Gentiles. But since Paul is dealing primarily with the Jew, he emphasizes the fact that the Israelites even refused to hear God's message in the Old Testament, implying that as a people they have not heard it in the form of the gospel even though it had been preached throughout the Roman Empire or the inhabited earth (v.18).

He says that the "sound" of the gospel went out "into all the earth." The word "sound" (*phthoggos*) means the vibration of a musical string. The very pronunciation of the word gives such a vibration. Try it by giving the two "gg's" a nasal "n" sound — *phthonggos*. So although the gospel string was first struck in Jerusalem, and has vibrated from there throughout the Roman Empire wherein the Jews were dispersed, few have heard. The word "heard" means to hear and heed. They heard with their ears, but did not heed with their hearts.

In verse 21 he quotes Isaiah 65:2. "All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." The word "disobedient" means not to allow one's self to be persuaded. "Gainsaying" means to talk back, to refuse to have anything to do with the one speaking. So Paul says that the Jews would not allow themselves to be persuaded. They talked back to the gospel, and refused to have anything to do with the Christ of the gospel.

This is a dismal picture. But it applies to both Jews and Gentiles. The same Lord is over all. He is rich in mercy unto all, Jew and Gentile, who call upon Him in faith.

So to the Jew I share Paul's "heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel . . . , that they might be saved." To the Gentile I extend the same desire and for you make the same begging prayer. To the Christian I declare your responsibility to preach the gospel that both may hear and heed. For both Jew and Gentile I pray that with your heart you will believe unto righteousness; and with your mouth you will confess unto salvation. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (v.13).

THE TRUE ISRAEL

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"And so all Israel shall be saved . . ."
— Romans 11:26

Who is the true Israel of God? Is it the nation of Israel prior to 70 A.D., and which will be revived at the Lord's return? Or, is it a people of true faith with regard to God's redemptive purpose, both in the Old and New Testament eras? The latter seems to be Paul's position in Romans 9-11. He says in Romans 9:6 that "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel."

Let us, therefore, examine the question

of the true Israel as we consider, first, the remnant; second, the grafting; third, the purpose.

THE REMNANT

First, note the remnant. The doctrine of the remnant looms large in the hope of Israel. First seen in Isaiah 10:21-22 it appears repeatedly throughout the remainder of the Old Testament. The immediate reference is to the small body of Jews who will return to Palestine from the Babylonian captivity. However, Paul in Romans applies it in the sense

of those Jews who will believe in Christ as Saviour.

Already Paul has foreseen this thought in Romans 9:25-27. He reintroduces it in Chapter 11 with the question, "Hath God cast away his people?" (v.1). The form of the question in the Greek invites a negative answer, which he immediately gives in his familiar "God forbid." The basis of the question is God's rejection of national Israel as set forth in chapters 9-10. The verb "cast away" is in the aorist tense, middle voice. The aorist tense signifies a definite historical event. The middle voice of this verb means to push away from one's self. The truth is that God did not cast away national Israel. She cast away God. God's rejection was simply a recognition of the fact. Then Paul proceeds to answer his question by developing the idea of the remnant.

In the first place, he says, God has not cast off the true Israel, as is seen in the fact that "I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin" (v.1). Thus Paul points out that the true Israel is one of faith and not of human heritage. In Romans 4 he has shown that Abraham's own relationship to God and His redemptive purpose was through faith and not through works. Others of Paul's contemporaries were descendants of Abraham, and of Benjamin, according to the flesh; but they were not a part of the true Israel. So Paul regards the true Israel as one of faith in Christ who stands at the center of God's redemptive purpose.

NOT ALONE

However, the apostle goes even further as he shows that in God's own mind there has always been a remnant as shown by the distinction between the nation of Israel and the true Israel of God. This he does by quoting from I Kings 19:10, 18. Here Elijah complains that he alone in the nation is true to God. To which God replies, "I have

reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal" (Rom. 11:4). The greater part of national Israel had cast away Jehovah for Baal, but a remnant of seven thousand remained true (cf. Rom. 9:25-27).

Now Paul reiterates that "at the present time (when he wrote) also there is a remnant according to the election of grace" (v.5). Some interpreters see here evidence that by God's election in the end all of national Israel will be saved. But Paul is talking not of a nation but of a remnant. Furthermore, "election" must be understood not only in the light of the sovereign choice of God, but of the free-will of man. Also, it is an "election of grace." In the sovereign offer of His salvation by grace God extends salvation to all Jews. But the free-will of each individual Jew, either in acceptance or rejection, determines the final issue. It is, therefore, not of works (or inheritance) but of grace (v.6).

So Paul concludes the matter by saying, "What then?" Since God did not push Israel away, what is true? "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (hardened)" (v.7). Only those who by faith in Christ fulfilled the condition of God's electing grace are a part of the true Israel. The others had their eyes calloused (cf. Rom. 11:8-10). They are merely Jews in the racial sense. They adhere to Judaism, but are not a part of the true Israel of God.

THE GRAFTING

Second, consider the grafting. Paul introduces this theme by another question. "Have they (Jews) stumbled that they should fall?" (v.11). "Stumble" and "fall" both are aorist tenses. The former is merely one of historical event. The latter, however, is what is called an effective aorist. Did they stumble that they might fall completely and for good? Once again Paul's answer, "God forbid."

Thus he says that national Israel is not beyond the hope of redemption. God still extends to each individual Jew his election of grace. The fact remains that as a group they have rejected God's grace.

However, since the true Israel is composed of a people of faith, through Christ God has revealed His mystery that the Gentiles also are to be included in His election of grace. Those who accept it are to be a part of this true Israel. Thus through the Jews' rejection of God's election of grace the fulness or opportunity of the Gentiles has come in. Through it some of the Jews themselves will be provoked to accept God's grace through Christ that they also may partake of God's "fulness" (v.12). As the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul glorifies his office, that in reaching many Gentiles for Christ he may provoke the Jews to a like faith that he "might save some of them" (vv.13ff.). Note "save some of them," not all of them. Paul sees no national turning of the Jews to Christ, but an individual one. Even that will be as "life from the dead." (v.15). *National* Israel is dead so far as God's redemptive purpose is concerned.

The inclusion of the Gentiles Paul likens to the process of grafting into the true olive tree the wild branches of the Gentiles (vv.16ff.). That it is contrary to nature Paul recognizes (v.24). God follows not the processes of nature but of His sovereign will.

Looking at the figure of grafting Paul says, "For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches" (v.16). Most commentators refer the "firstfruit" to the patriarchs and the "root" to Abraham. But since both are singular they both may well refer to Abraham. However, we believe that there is a further thought which better fits the context. That is that both terms refer to Christ.

THE FIRST FRUITS

Already in I Corinthians 15:23, written before Romans, Paul has referred to

Christ as the "firstfruits." Isaiah 53:2 speaks of the Messiah as "a root out of a dry ground." That of which Paul is speaking is not lineal descendants of Abraham. It is a new people (9:25) brought about through a faith relationship with Jesus Christ.

The branches of national Israel were broken off through their rejection of Christ. The wild branches are grafted in through faith in Him. Henceforth, the relationship will be not that of racial or national consideration. It will be one of faith. When Jesus died on the cross He brought to an end the law upon which national Israel relied. Furthermore, He destroyed the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:14), that He might include both in one body, the church (Eph. 3:6). Thus God's redemptive purpose is centered not in the kingdom of Israel, now or ever again, but in "the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22ff.). The "firstfruit" or "root" is Christ. Since He is

Baptist Hour Sermon Topics for March

Dr. Herschel H. Hobbs

Theme: Applied Christianity

March 6—"The Christian and Sanctification" (Romans 12)

March 13—"The Christian and Citizenship" (Romans 13)

March 20—"The Christian and Christianity" (Romans 14-15)

March 27—"A Parting Benediction" (Romans 16:25-27)

Hear them on

THE BAPTIST HOUR

Read them in

THE BEAM

holy, that which is related to Him in faith is also holy.

Now Paul warns the Gentile Christians not to look down upon the rejected Jews (v.18). Instead they are to regard their present good fortune as due to the unbelief of the Jews (vv.19f.). Therefore, they are to strive for the winning of the Jews that through their individual faith they also may be grafted into the root which is Christ (v.23). He warns them that the fate which befell the Jew may be theirs also if they, like them, reject their place in God's redemptive purpose (vv.21f.). If so, God will raise up another people through whom to express His redemptive purpose.

THE PURPOSE

Third, note the purpose. In concluding his discussion of the Jew and Gentile in God's redemptive purpose, Paul yet holds out hope to the Jews. The Gentiles have received their "fulness" or opportunity (v.25) because of the hardness in part of the Jews. This Paul describes as the "mystery" which God has now revealed that it is His purpose to include both Jews and Gentiles in His redemptive purpose. Though for the present the Jews are hardened in part, not all, the apostle refuses to believe that no more Jews will be saved. But they will be saved in the same way as the Gentiles.

When in verse 26 Paul says, "And so all Israel shall be saved," we must remember that he is not thinking of national Israel, but of the true Israel of God. This distinction he has already made clear in Roman 9:6, "For they are not all Israel (spiritual), which are of Israel (natural)." In verse 27 he says, "For this is my covenant unto them . . ." In God's language he calls it "my covenant." Literally, "The from me covenant" or "My side of the covenant I have made with them." This is the Mosaic covenant in which God's promises were conditioned upon Israel's obedience (Ex. 19:6).

God says that He is ready to honor His

part of the covenant whenever Israel will meet the conditions. But as a nation they rejected the conditions. Henceforth in the "mystery" referred to in verse 25 both Gentile and Jew alike are included and upon the same condition—faith. "As concerning the gospel, they (Jews) are enemies for your (Gentiles) sakes: but as touching the election (of grace), they are beloved for the fathers' sakes" (v.28). In their rejection of Christ the Jews are enemies of God. But God still loves them, and wants to save them. God does not regret His offer to Israel (v.29). In time past the Gentiles were in unbelief. Because of the Jews' rejection of Christ, the Gentiles through faith have been included in God's grace (v.30). Now, through the Gentiles, God will extend the same grace unto mercy to the Jews (v.31).

The conclusion of the matter is seen in verse 32. "For God hath concluded them all (Jew and Gentile, [cf. Rom. 3:23]) in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all (Jew and Gentile)."

So God's dealing are not with Jews on the one hand, and with Gentiles on the other. He deals with both as lost in their unbelief. He extends the election of His grace to both through their faith. So wonderful is God's purpose that even Paul could not understand it. He could only exclaim, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out (tracing out)!"

Some of God's tracks He has left so that we may plainly see. But others are beyond us as they are hidden in "the mystery of Christ . . . that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs (with the Jews), and of the same (fellow-members of the) body (His church), and partakers (partners or joint possessors of a house, with the Jews) of his promise in Christ by the gospel . . . according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:4,6,11). Thus is formed the true Israel of God!