

God's Never-Ending Love for Israel

by: John Calvin

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Romans, chapters 10-11

Romans 10:1 "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. 5 For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them." 6 But 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*) 7 or, " 'Who will descend into the abyss?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 8 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): 9 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. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." 14 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? 15 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!" 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" 17 So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. 18 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." 19 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." 20 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." 21 But to Israel he says: "All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people.""

ROMANS 10:1-4

"1. Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2. For I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

We here see with what solicitude the holy man obviated [sought to prevent] offenses; for in order to soften whatever sharpness there may have been in his manner of explaining the rejection of the Jews, he still testifies, as before, his goodwill towards them, and proves it by the effect; for their salvation was an object of concern to him before the Lord, and such a feeling arises only from genuine love. It may be at the same time that he was also induced by

another reason to testify his love towards the nation from which he had sprung; for his doctrine would have never been received by the Jews had they thought that he was avowedly inimical [hostile] to them; and his defection would have been also suspected by the Gentiles, for they would have thought, as we have said in the last chapter, that he became an apostate from the law through his hatred of men.

2. For I bear to them a testimony, etc. This was intended to secure credit to his love. There was indeed a just cause why he should regard them with compassion rather than hatred, since he perceived that they had fallen only through ignorance, and not through malignancy of mind, and especially as he saw that they were not led except by some regard for God to persecute the kingdom of Christ.

Where do you find true religion? True religion is found in the word of God alone.

Let us hence learn where our **good intentions** may guide us, if we yield to them. It is commonly thought a good and a very fit excuse, when he who is reprov'd pretends that he meant no harm. And this pretext is held good by many at this day, so that they apply not their minds to find out the truth of God, because they think that whatever they do amiss through ignorance, without any designed maliciousness, but with good intention, is excusable. But no one of us would excuse the Jews for having crucified Christ, for having cruelly raged against the Apostles, and for having attempted to destroy and extinguish the gospel; and yet they had the same defense as that in which we confidently glory. Away then with these vain evasions as to good intention; **if we seek God sincerely, let us follow the way by which alone we can come to Him. For it is better, as Augustine says, even to go limping in the right way than to run with all our might out of the way.** If we would be really religious, let us remember that what *Lactantius* teaches is true, that **true religion is alone that which is connected with the word of God.**

And further, since we see that they perish, who with good intention wander in darkness, let us bear in mind, that we are worthy of a thousand deaths, if after having been illuminated by God, we wander knowingly and willfully from the right way.

Ignorance is not bliss!

3. For being ignorant of the righteousness of God, etc. See how they went astray through inconsiderate zeal! for they sought to set up a righteousness of their own; and this foolish confidence proceeded from their ignorance of God's righteousness. Notice the contrast between the righteousness of God and that of men. We first see, that they are opposed to one another, as things wholly contrary, and cannot stand together. It hence follows, that **God's righteousness is subverted, as soon as men set up their own.** And again, as there is a correspondence between the things contrasted, the righteousness of God is no doubt His gift; and in like manner, the righteousness of men is that which they derive from themselves, or believe that they bring before God. Then he who seeks to be justified through himself, submits not to God's righteousness; for **the first step towards obtaining the righteousness of God is to renounce our own righteousness:** for why is it, that we seek righteousness from another, except that necessity constrains us?

We have already stated, in another place, how men put on the righteousness of God by faith, that is, when the righteousness of Christ is **imputed** to them. But Paul grievously dishonors the pride by which hypocrites are inflated, when they cover it with the specious mask of zeal;

for he says, that all such, by shaking off as it were the yoke, are adverse to and rebel against the righteousness of God.

4. For the end of the law is Christ, etc. The word *completion*, seems not to me unsuitable in this place; and *Erasmus* has rendered it *perfection*: but as the other reading is almost universally approved, and is not inappropriate, readers, for my part, may retain it. The Apostle obviates here an objection which might have been made against him; for the Jews might have appeared to have kept the right way by depending on the righteousness of the law. It was necessary for him to disprove this false opinion; and this is what he does here. He shows that he is a false interpreter of the law, who seeks to be justified by his own works; because the law had been given for this end—to lead us as by the hand to another righteousness: no, whatever the law teaches, whatever it commands, whatever it promises, has always a reference to Christ as its main object; and hence all its parts ought to be applied to Him. But this cannot be done, except we, being stripped of all righteousness, and confounded with the knowledge of our sin, seek gratuitous righteousness from Him alone.

It hence follows, that the wicked abuse of the law was justly reprehended in the Jews, who absurdly made an obstacle of that which was to be their help: no, it appears that they had shamefully mutilated the law of God; for they rejected its soul, and seized on the dead body of the letter. For though the law promises reward to those who observe its righteousness, it yet substitutes, after having proved all guilty, another righteousness in Christ, which is not attained by works, but is received by faith as a free gift. Thus the righteousness of faith (as we have seen in the first chapter) receives a testimony from the law. We have then here a remarkable passage, which proves that the law in all its parts had a reference to Christ; and hence no one can rightly understand it, who does not continually level at this mark.

ROMANS 10:5-10

“**5.** For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. **6.** But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh in this way, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) **7.** Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) **8.** But what saith it? The word is near thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach; **9.** That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. **10.** For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

The Mosaic Covenant and the Covenant of Christ (i.e., the new covenant) compared and contrasted

5. For Moses, etc. To render it evident how much at variance is the righteousness of faith and that of works, he now compares them; for by comparison the opposition between contrary things appears more clear. But he refers not now to the oracles of the Prophets, but to the testimony of Moses, and for this reason—that the Jews might understand that **the law was not given by Moses in order to detain them in a dependence on works, but, on the contrary, to lead them to Christ.** He might have indeed referred to the Prophets as witnesses; but still this doubt must have remained, “How was it that the law prescribed another rule of righteousness?” He then removes this, and in the best manner, when by the teaching of the law itself he confirms the righteousness of faith.

But we ought to understand the reason why Paul harmonizes the law with faith, and yet sets the righteousness of one in opposition to that of the other: The law has a twofold meaning; it sometimes includes the whole of what has been taught by Moses, and sometimes that part only which was peculiar to his ministration, which consisted of precepts, rewards, and punishments. But Moses had this common office—to teach the people the true rule of religion. Since it was so, it behooved him to preach repentance and faith; but faith is not taught, except by propounding promises of divine mercy, and those gratuitous: and thus it behooved him to be a preacher of the gospel; which office he faithfully performed, as it appears from many passages.

In order to instruct the people in the doctrine of repentance, it was necessary for him to teach what manner of life was acceptable to God; and this he included in the precepts of the law. That he might also instill into the minds of the people the love of righteousness, and implant in them the hatred of iniquity, promises and threatening were added; which proposed rewards to the just, and denounced dreadful punishments on sinners. It was now the duty of the people to consider in how many ways they drew curses on themselves, and how far they were from deserving anything at God's hands by their works, that being thus led to despair as to their own righteousness, they might flee to the haven of divine goodness, and so to Christ Himself. This was the end or design of the Mosaic dispensation [age / covenant].

But as evangelic promises are only found scattered in the writings of Moses, and these also somewhat obscure, and as the precepts and rewards, allotted to the observers of the law, frequently occur, it rightly appertained [belonged] to Moses as his own and peculiar office, to teach what is the real righteousness of works, and then to show what remuneration awaits the observance of it, and what punishment awaits those who come short of it. For this reason Moses is by John compared with Christ, when it is said, "That the law was given by Moses, but that grace and truth came by Christ." (John 1:17).

And whenever the word law is thus strictly taken, Moses is by implication opposed to Christ: and then we must consider what the law contains, as separate from the gospel. Hence what is said here of the *righteousness* of the law, must be applied, not to the whole office of Moses, but to that part which was in a manner peculiarly committed to him. I come now to the words.

In order to be saved by works, you would have to be perfect (cf. Matt. 5:48). Since no man is perfect, no one can be justified by their works, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

For Moses describes, etc. . . . The passage is taken from Leviticus 18:5, where the Lord promises eternal life to those who would keep His law; for in this sense, as you see, Paul has taken the passage, and not only of temporal life, as some think.

Leviticus 18:5 states, "You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I *am* the LORD."

Paul indeed thus reasons—"Since no man can attain the righteousness prescribed in the law, except he fulfills strictly every part of it, and since of this perfection all men have always come far short, it is in vain for any one to strive in this way for salvation: Israel then were very foolish, who expected to attain the righteousness of the law, from which we are all excluded."

See how from the promise itself he proves, that it can avail us nothing, and for this reason, because the condition is impossible. What a futile device it is then to allege legal promises, in order to establish the righteousness of the law! For with these an unavoidable curse comes to us; so far is it, that salvation should from this proceed.

The more detestable on this account is the stupidity of the Papists, who think it enough to prove merits by adducing bare promises. "It is not in vain," they say, "that God has promised life to His servants." But at the same time they do not see that it has been promised, in order that a consciousness of their own transgressions may strike all with the fear of death, and that being thus constrained by their own deficiency, they may learn to flee to Christ.

6. *But the righteousness which is by faith, etc.* This passage is such as may not a little disturb the reader, and for two reasons—for it seems to be improperly applied by Paul—and the words are also turned to a different meaning. Of the words we shall hereafter see what may be said: we shall first notice the application. It is a passage taken from Deuteronomy 30:12, where, as in the former passage, Moses speaks of the doctrine of the law, and Paul applies it to evangelic promises.

“‘It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' (Deut. 30:12)

This knot may be thus untied—**Moses shows, that the way to life was made plain:** for the will of God was not now hid from the Jews, nor set far off from them, but placed before their eyes.

If he had spoken of the law only, his reasoning would have been frivolous, since the law of God being set before their eyes, it was not easier to do it, than if it was afar off. He then means not the law only, but generally the whole of God's truth, which includes in it the gospel: for **the word of the law by itself is never in our heart, no, not the least syllable of it, until it is implanted in us by the faith of the gospel.** And then, even after regeneration, the word of the law cannot properly be said to be in our heart; for it demands perfection, from which even the faithful are far distant. But the word of the gospel has a seat in the heart, though it does not fill the heart; for it offers pardon for imperfection and defect.

And Moses throughout that chapter, as also in the fourth, endeavors to commend to the people the remarkable kindness of God, because He had taken them under His own tuition [instruction] and government, which commendation could not have belonged to the law only. It is no objection that Moses there speaks of forming the life according to the rule of the law; for the spirit of regeneration is connected with the gratuitous righteousness of faith. Nor is there a doubt but that this verse depends on that main truth, "the Lord shall circumcise your heart," which he had recorded shortly before in the same chapter.

They may therefore be easily disproved, who say that Moses speaks only in that passage of good works. That he speaks of works I indeed allow; but I deny it to be unreasonable that the keeping of the law should be traced from its own fountain, even from the righteousness of faith. The explanation of the words must now follow.

Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend?, etc. Moses mentions *heaven* and the *sea*, as places remote and difficult of access to men. But Paul, as though there was some spiritual mystery concealed under these words, applies them to the death and resurrection of Christ.

If any one thinks that this interpretation is too strained and too refined, let him understand that it was not the object of the Apostle strictly to explain this passage, but to apply it to the explanation of his present subject. He does not, therefore, repeat verbally what Moses has said, but makes alterations, by which he accommodates more suitably to his own purpose the testimony of Moses.

He spoke of inaccessible places; Paul refers to those, which are indeed hid from the sight of us all, and may yet be seen by our faith. If then you take these things as spoken for illustration, or by way of improvement, you cannot say that Paul has violently or inaptly changed the words of Moses; but you will, on the contrary, allow, that without loss of meaning, he has, in a striking manner, alluded to the words *heaven* and the *sea*.

Let us now then simply explain the words of Paul: As the assurance of our salvation lies on two foundations, that is, when we understand, that life has been obtained for us, and death has been conquered for us, he teaches us that faith through the word of the gospel is sustained by both these; for Christ, by dying, destroyed death, and by rising again He obtained life in His own power. The benefit of Christ's death and resurrection is now communicated to us by the gospel: there is then no reason for us to seek anything farther.

That it may thus appear, **that the righteousness of faith is abundantly sufficient for salvation**, he teaches us, that included in it are these two things, which are alone necessary for salvation. The meaning then of the words, *Who shall ascend into heaven?* is the same, as though you should say, "Who knows whether the inheritance of eternal and celestial life remains for us?" And the words, *Who shall descend into the deep?* mean the same, as though you should say, "Who knows whether the everlasting destruction of the soul follows the death of the body?" He teaches us, that doubt on those two points is removed by the righteousness of faith; for the one would draw down Christ from heaven, and the other would bring Him up again from death.

Christ's ascension into heaven ought indeed fully to confirm our faith as to eternal life; for He in a manner removes Christ Himself from the possession of heaven, who doubts whether the inheritance of heaven is prepared for the faithful, in whose name, and on whose account He has entered there. Since in like manner Christ underwent the horrors of hell to deliver us from them, to doubt whether the faithful are still exposed to this misery, is to render void, and, as it were, to deny His death.

8. What does it say? For the purpose of removing the impediments of faith, he has up until now spoken negatively; but now in order to show the way of obtaining righteousness, he adopts an affirmative mode of speaking. Though the whole might have been announced in one continuous sentence, yet a question is interposed for the sake of exciting attention. And his object at the same time was to show **how great is the difference between the righteousness of the law and that of the gospel**; for the one, showing itself at a distance, restrains all men from coming near; but the other, offering itself at hand, kindly invites us to a fruition of itself, *The word is near you*.

It must be further observed, that lest the minds of men, being led away by crafts, should wander from the way of salvation, the limits of the word are prescribed to them, within which they are to keep themselves. For it is the same as though he had bidden them to be satisfied with the word only, and reminded them, that in this mirror those secrets of heaven are to be seen, which would otherwise by their brightness dazzle their eyes, and would also stun their ears and overpower the mind itself.

Hence the faithful derive from this passage remarkable consolation with regard to the certainty of the word; for they may no less safely rest on it, than on what is actually present. It must also be noticed, that the word, by which we have a firm and calm trust as to our salvation, had been set forth even by Moses.

This is the word of faith. Rightly does Paul take this as granted; for the doctrine of the law does by no means render the conscience quiet and calm, nor supply it with what ought to satisfy it. He does not, however, exclude other parts of the word, no, not even the precepts of the law; but his design is, to show that remission of sins stands for righteousness, even apart from that strict obedience which the law demands.

Justification by faith alone

Sufficient then for pacifying minds, and for rendering certain our salvation, is **the word of the gospel; in which we are not commanded to earn righteousness by works, but to embrace it, when offered gratuitously, by faith.**

The *word of faith* is to be taken for the word of promise, that is, for the gospel itself, because it bears a relation to faith. The contrast, by which the difference between the law and the gospel appears, is indeed to be understood. And **from this distinction we learn—that as the law demands works, so the gospel requires nothing else, but that men bring faith to receive the grace of God.** The words, *which we preach*, are added, that no one might have the suspicion that Paul differed from Moses; for he testifies, that in the ministration of the gospel there was complete consent between him and Moses; inasmuch as even Moses placed our felicity [happiness] in nothing else but in the gratuitous promise of divine favor.

9. That if you will confess, etc. Here is also an allusion, rather than a proper and strict quotation: for it is very probable that Moses used the word *mouth*, by taking a part for the whole, instead of the word *face*, or *sight*. But it was not unsuitable for the Apostle to allude to the word *mouth*, in this manner: “Since the Lord sets His word before our face, no doubt He calls upon us to confess it.” For **wherever the word of the Lord is, it ought to bring forth fruit; and the fruit is the confession of the mouth.**

By putting *confession* before *faith*, he changes the order, which is often the case in Scripture: for the order would have been more regular if the faith of the heart had preceded, and the confession of the mouth, which arises from it, had followed. But he rightly confesses the Lord Jesus, who adorns him with His own power, acknowledging Him to be such an one as He is given by the Father, and described in the gospel.

Express mention is made only of Christ's resurrection; which must not be so taken, as though His death was of no importance, but because Christ, by rising again, completed the whole work of our salvation. For though redemption and satisfaction were effected by His death, through which we are reconciled to God; yet the victory over sin, death, and Satan was attained by His resurrection; and hence also came righteousness, newness of life, and the hope of a blessed immortality.

And thus is resurrection alone often set before us as the assurance of our salvation, not to draw away our attention from His death, but because it bears witness to the efficacy and fruit of His death: in short, His resurrection includes His death. On this subject we have briefly

touched in the sixth chapter. It may be added, that Paul requires not merely an historical faith, but he makes the resurrection itself its end. For we must remember the purpose for which Christ rose again; — it was the Father’s design in raising Him, to restore us all to life: for though Christ had power of Himself to reassume His soul, yet this work is for the most part ascribed in Scripture to God the Father.

10. *For with the heart we believe unto righteousness, etc.* This passage may help us to understand **what justification by faith is**; for it shows that **righteousness then comes to us, when we embrace God’s goodness offered to us in the gospel**. We are then for this reason just, because we believe that God is propitious [benevolent] to us in Christ. But let us observe this—that the seat of faith is not in the head (*in cerebro*—in the brain) but in the heart.

Yet I would not contend about the part of the body in which faith is located. But as the word *heart* is often taken for a serious and sincere feeling, I would say that faith is a firm and effectual confidence (*fiducia* —trust, dependence) and not a bare notion only.

With the mouth confession is made unto salvation. It may seem strange, that he ascribes no part of our salvation to faith, as he had before so often testified, that we are saved by faith alone. But we ought not on this account to conclude that confession is the cause of our salvation. His design was only to show how God completes our salvation, even when He makes faith, which He implants in our hearts, to show itself by confession: no, his simple object was, to mark out true faith, as that from which this fruit proceeds, lest any one should otherwise lay claim to the empty name of faith alone. For it ought so to kindle the heart with zeal for God’s glory, as to force out its own flame.

And surely, he who is justified has already obtained salvation: hence he no less believes with the heart unto salvation, than with the mouth makes a confession. You see that he has made this distinction—that he refers the cause of justification to faith—and that he then shows what is necessary to complete salvation; for no one can believe with the heart without confessing with the mouth. It is indeed a necessary consequence, but not that which assigns salvation to confession. But let them see what answer they can give to Paul, who at this day proudly boast of some sort of imaginary faith, which, being content with the secrecy of the heart, neglect the confession of the mouth, as a matter superfluous and vain; for it is extremely puerile [childish] to say, that there is fire, when there is neither flame nor heat.

ROMANS 10:11-13

“**11.** For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed. **12.** For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. **13.** For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

11. *For the Scripture says, etc.* Having stated the reasons why God had justly repudiated the Jews, he returns to prove the calling of the Gentiles, which is the other part of the question which he is discussing. As then he had explained the way by which men obtain salvation, and one that is common and opened to the Gentiles no less than to the Jews, he now, having first hoisted an universal banner, extends it expressly to the Gentiles, and then invites the Gentiles by name to it. And he repeats the testimony which he had before adduced from Isaiah, that what he said might have more authority, and that it might also be evident, how well the prophecies concerning Christ harmonize with the law.

12. For there is no distinction, etc. Since faith alone is required, wherever it is found, there the goodness of God manifests itself unto salvation: there is then in this case no difference between one people or nation and another. And he adds the strongest of reasons; for since He who is the Creator and Maker of the whole world is the God of all men, He will show Himself kind to all who will acknowledge and call on Him as their God. For as His mercy is infinite, it cannot be but that it will extend itself to all by whom it shall be sought.

Rich is to be taken here in an active sense, as meaning kind and bountiful. And we may observe, that the wealth of our Father is not diminished by His liberality; and that therefore it is not made less for us, with whatever multiplied affluence of His grace He may enrich others. There is then no reason why some should envy the blessings of others, as though anything were thereby lost by them.

But though this reason is sufficiently strong, he yet strengthens it by the testimony of the Prophet Joel; which, according to the general term that is used, includes all alike. But readers can see much better by the context, that what Joel declares harmonizes with the present subject; for he prophesies in that passage of the kingdom of Christ: and further, after having said, that the wrath of God would burn in a dreadful manner, in the midst of His ardor, he promises salvation to all who would call on the name of the Lord. It hence follows, that the grace of God penetrates into the abyss of death, if only it be sought there; so that it is not by any means to be withheld from the Gentiles.

ROMANS 10:14-17

“14. 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? **15.** And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! **16.** But they have not all obeyed the gospel: for Isaiah says, Lord, who hath believed our report? **17.** So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

I shall not engage the reader long in reciting and disproving the opinions of others. Let every one have his own view; and let me be allowed to bring forward what I think. That you may then understand the design of this gradation, bear in mind first, that there was a mutual connection between the calling of the Gentiles and the ministry of Paul, which he exercised among them; so that on the evidence for the one depended the evidence for the other.

It was now necessary for Paul to prove, beyond a doubt, the calling of the Gentiles, and, at the same time, to give a reason for his own ministry, lest he should seem to extend the favor of God without authority, to withhold from the children the bread intended for them by God, and to bestow it on dogs. But these things he therefore clears up at the same time. But how he connects the thread of his discourse, will not be fully understood, until every part be in order explained.

The meaning of what he advances is the same as though he had said, “Both Jews and Gentiles, by calling on the name of God, do thereby declare that they believe on Him; for a true calling on God’s name cannot be except a right knowledge of Him were first had. Moreover, **faith is produced by the word of God, but the word of God is nowhere preached, except through God’s special providence and appointment.** Where then there is a calling on God, there is faith; and where faith is, the seed of the word has preceded; where there is preaching there is the calling of God. Now **where His calling is thus**

efficacious and fruitful, there is there a clear and indubitable proof of the divine goodness.

It will hence at last appear, that the Gentiles are not to be excluded from the kingdom of God, for God has admitted them into a participation of His salvation. For as the cause of faith among them is the preaching of the gospel, so the cause of preaching is the mission of God, by which it had pleased Him in this manner to provide for their salvation. We shall now consider each portion by itself.

The prayer of the man of faith

14. *How shall they call? etc.* Paul intends here to connect prayer with faith, as they are indeed things most closely connected, for he who calls on God betakes [commits] himself, as it were, to the only true haven of salvation, and to a most secure refuge; he acts like the son, who commits himself into the bosom of the best and the most loving of fathers, that he may be protected by his care, cherished by his kindness and love, relieved by his bounty, and supported by his power. This is what no man can do who has not previously entertained in his mind such a persuasion of God's paternal kindness towards him, that he dares to expect everything from Him.

He then who calls on God necessarily feels assured that there is protection laid up for him; for Paul speaks here of that calling which is approved by God. Hypocrites also pray, but not unto salvation; for it is with no conviction of faith. It hence appears how completely ignorant are all the [Roman Catholic] schoolmen, who doubtingly present themselves before God, being sustained by no confidence.

Paul thought far otherwise; for he assumes this as an acknowledged axiom, that we cannot rightly pray unless we are surely persuaded of success. For he does not refer here to hesitating faith, but to that certainty which our minds entertain respecting His paternal kindness, when by the gospel He reconciles us to Himself, and adopts us for His children. By this confidence only we have access to Him, as we are also taught in Ephesians 3:12: "in whom [Christ] we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him."

But, on the other hand, learn that **true faith is only that which brings forth prayer to God;** for it cannot be but that he who has tasted the goodness of God will ever by prayer seek the enjoyment of it.

How shall they believe on him? etc. The meaning is, that we are in a manner mute until God's promise opens our mouth to pray, and this is the order which he points out by the Prophet, when he says, "I will say to them, you are My people," and they shall say to me, "You are our God" (Zechariah 13:9).

Study to know the true God!

Indeed, **it does not belong to us to imagine a God according to what we may fancy; we ought to possess a right knowledge of Him, such as is set forth in His word.** And when any one forms an idea of God as good, according to his own understanding, it is not a sure nor a solid faith which he has, but an uncertain and evanescent imagination; **it is therefore necessary to have the word, that we may have a right knowledge of God.**

No other word has he mentioned here but that which is preached, because it is the ordinary mode which the Lord has appointed for conveying His word. But were any on this account to contend that God cannot transfer to men the knowledge of Himself, except by the instrumentality of preaching, we deny that to teach this was the Apostle's intention; for he had only in view the ordinary dispensation of God, and did not intend to prescribe a law for the distribution of His grace.

15. *How shall they preach except they be sent? etc.* He teaches us that **it is a proof and a pledge of divine love when any nation is favored with the preaching of the gospel**; and that no one is a preacher of it, but he whom God has raised up in His special providence, and that hence there is no doubt but that He visits that nation to whom the gospel is proclaimed. But as Paul does not treat here of the lawful call of any one, it would be superfluous to speak at large on the subject. It is enough for us to bear this only in mind, that the gospel does not fall like rain from the clouds, but is brought by the hands of men wherever it is sent from above.

As it is written, How beautiful, etc. We are to apply this testimony to our present subject in this manner, The Lord, when He gave hope of deliverance to His people, commended the advent of those who brought the glad tidings of peace, by a remarkable eulogy; by this very circumstance He has made it evident that the apostolic ministry was to be held in no less esteem, by which the message of eternal life is brought to us. And it hence follows, that it is from God, since there is nothing in the world that is an object of desire and worthy of praise, which does not proceed from His hand.

But hence we also learn how much ought all good men to desire, and how much they ought to value the preaching of the gospel, which is thus commended to us by the mouth of the Lord Himself. Nor is there indeed a doubt, but that God has thus highly spoken of the incomparable value of this treasure, for the purpose of awakening the minds of all, so that they may anxiously desire it. . . . Take *feet*, by metonymy, for *coming*.

16. *But not all have obeyed the gospel, etc.* This belongs not to the argument, which Paul designed to follow in the gradation he lays down; nor does he refer to it in the conclusion which immediately follows. It was yet expedient for Paul to introduce the sentence here, in order to anticipate an objection, lest any one should build an argument on what he had said, —that the word in order always precedes faith, as the seed the corn—and draw this inference, that faith everywhere follows the word: for Israel, who had never been without the word, might have made a boast of this kind. It was therefore necessary, that, in passing, he should give them this intimation—**that many are called, who are yet not chosen.**

He also quotes a passage from Isaiah 53:1, where the Prophet, before he proceeds to announce a remarkable prediction respecting the death and the kingdom of Christ, speaks with astonishment of **the few number of believers**, who appeared to him in the Spirit to be so few, that he was constrained to exclaim, “O Lord, who has believed our report?” that is, the word which we preach.

. . . We now see why this exception was by the way introduced; it was, that no one might suppose that faith necessarily follows where there is preaching. He however does afterwards point out the reason, by saying, “To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” by which he implies that there is no benefit from the word, except when God shines in us by the light of His Spirit; and **thus the inward calling, which alone is efficacious and peculiar to the elect, is distinguished from the outward voice of men.** It is hence evident, how foolishly

some maintain, that all are indiscriminately the elect, because the doctrine of salvation is universal, and because God invites all indiscriminately to Himself. But the generality of the promises does not alone and by itself make salvation common to all. On the contrary, the peculiar revelation, mentioned by the Prophet, confines it to the elect.

17. Faith then is by hearing, etc. We see by this conclusion what Paul had in view by the gradation which he formed; it was to show, that **wherever faith is, God has there already given an evidence of His election**; and then, that He, by pouring His blessing on the ministration of the gospel, to illuminate the minds of men by faith, and thereby to lead them to call on His name, had thus testified, that the Gentiles were admitted by Him into a participation of the eternal inheritance.

The efficacy of preaching

And this is a remarkable passage with regard to **the efficacy of preaching**; for he testifies, that **by it faith is produced**. He had indeed before declared, that of itself it is of no avail; but that when it pleases the Lord to work, it becomes the instrument of His power. And indeed the voice of man can by no means penetrate into the soul; and mortal man would be too much exalted, were he said to have the power to regenerate us; the light also of faith is something sublimer than what can be conveyed by man: but all these things are no hindrances, that God should not work effectually through the voice of man, so as to create faith in us through His ministry.

It must be further noticed, that **faith is grounded on nothing else but the truth of God**; for Paul does not teach us that faith springs from any other kind of doctrine, but he expressly restricts it to the word of God; and this restriction would have been improper if faith could rest on the decrees of men. Away then with all the devices of men when we speak of the certainty of faith. Hence also the Papal conceit respecting implicit faith falls to the ground, because it tears away faith from the word; and more detestable still is that blasphemy, that the truth of the word remains suspended until the authority of the Church establishes it.

ROMANS 10:18-21

“18. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes truly, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. **19.** But I say, Did not Israel know? First, Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. **20.** But Isaiah is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought Me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me. **21.** But to Israel He saith, All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying [contrary/obstinate] people.”

18. But I say, have they not heard? etc. Since the minds of men are imbued, by preaching, with the knowledge of God, which leads them to call on God, it remained a question whether the truth of God had been proclaimed to the Gentiles; for that Paul had suddenly betaken himself to the Gentiles, there was by that novelty no small offense given. He then asks, whether God had ever before directed His voice to the Gentiles, and performed the office of a teacher towards the whole world.

But in order that he might show that the school, into which God collects scholars to Himself from any part, is open in common to all, he brings forward a Prophet's testimony from Psalm 19:4 (“Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun”); which yet seems to bear apparently but little on the subject: for the Prophet does not speak there of Apostles but of the material works of

God; in which he says the glory of God shines forth so evidently, that they may be said to have a sort of tongue of their own to declare the perfections of God.

This passage of Paul gave occasion to the ancients to explain the whole Psalm allegorically, and posterity [later generations] have followed them: so that, without doubt, the sun going forth as a bridegroom from his chamber, was Christ, and the heavens were the Apostles. They who had most piety, and showed a greater modesty in interpreting Scripture, thought that what was properly said of the celestial architecture, has been transferred by Paul to the Apostles by way of allusion. But as I find that the Lord's servants have everywhere with great reverence explained Scripture, and have not turned them at pleasure in all directions, I cannot be persuaded, that Paul has in this manner misconstrued this passage.

Under the old covenant, God revealed Himself to the Gentiles (pagan nations) by general or natural revelation.

I then take his quotation according to the proper and genuine meaning of the Prophet; so that the argument will be something of this kind: God has already from the beginning manifested His divinity to the Gentiles, though not by the preaching of men, yet by the testimony of His creatures; for though the gospel was then silent among them, yet the whole workmanship of heaven and earth did speak and make known its author by its preaching.

It hence appears, that the Lord, even during the time in which He confined the favor of His covenant to Israel, did not yet so withdraw from the Gentiles the knowledge of Himself, but that He ever kept alive some sparks of it among them. He indeed manifested Himself then more particularly to His chosen people, so that the Jews might be justly compared to domestic hearers, whom He familiarly taught as it were by His own mouth; yet as He spoke to the Gentiles at a distance by the voice of the heavens, He showed by this prelude that He designed to make Himself known at length to them also.

. . . it seems to me probable, that the heavens are introduced as declaring by what is written as it were on them, as well as by voice, the power of God; for by the word *going forth* the Prophet reminds us, that the doctrine, of which the heavens are the preachers, is not included within the narrow limits of one land, but is proclaimed to the utmost regions of the world.

19. *But I say, has Israel not known?* This objection of an opponent is taken from the comparison of the less with the greater. Paul had argued, that the Gentiles were not to be excluded from the knowledge of God, since He had from the beginning manifested Himself to them, though only obscurely and through shadows, or had at least given them some knowledge of His truth. What then is to be said of Israel, who had been illuminated by a far different light of truth? for how does it happen that aliens and the profane [Gentiles] should run to the light manifested to them afar off, and that the holy race of Abraham should reject it when familiarly seen by them?

For this distinction must be ever borne in mind, "What nation is so renowned, that it has gods coming near to it, as your God at this day descends to you?" (cf. Deut. 4:7). It was not then without reason asked, why knowledge had not followed the doctrine of the law, with which Israel was favored.

First, Moses says, etc. He proves by the testimony of Moses, that there was nothing inconsistent in God in preferring the Gentiles to the Jews. The passage is taken from that

celebrated song, in which God, upbraiding the Jews with their perfidiousness, declares, that He would execute vengeance on them, and provoke them to jealousy by taking the Gentiles into covenant with Himself, because they had departed to fictitious gods. "You have," He says, "by despising and rejecting Me, transferred My right and honor to idols. To avenge this wrong, I will also substitute the Gentiles in your place, and I will transfer to them what I have up until now given to you."

False worship and manmade traditions elicit God's wrath.

Now this could not have been without repudiating the Jewish nation: for the emulation, which Moses mentions, arose from this—that God formed for Himself a nation from that which was not a nation, and raised up from nothing a new people, who were to occupy the place from which the Jews had been driven away, inasmuch as they had forsaken the true God and prostituted themselves to idols. For though, at the coming of Christ, the Jews were not gone astray to gross and external idolatry, they had yet no excuse, since **they had profaned the whole worship of God by their inventions**; yea, they at length denied God the Father, as revealed in Christ, His only-begotten Son, which was an extreme kind of impiety.

Without God, man is foolish, dark, and hopeless.

Observe, that a *foolish nation*, and no *nation*, are the same; for **without the hope of eternal life men have properly no existence**. Besides, the beginning or origin of life is from the light of faith: hence spiritual existence flows from the new creation; and in this sense Paul calls the faithful the work of God, as they are regenerated by His Spirit, and renewed after His image. Now from the word *foolish*, we learn that **all the wisdom of men, apart from the word of God, is mere vanity**.

As Paul said to the Gentiles in Ephesus: "Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh -- who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands -- that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." (Ephesians 2:11-12).

20. But Isaiah is bold, and says, etc. As this prophecy is somewhat clearer, that he might excite greater attention he says that it was expressed with great confidence; as though he had said—"The Prophet did not speak in a figurative language, or with hesitation, but had in plain and clear words declared the calling of the Gentiles." But the things which Paul has here separated, by interposing a few words, are found connected together in the prophet Isaiah 65:1, where the Lord declares, that the time would come when He should turn His favor to the Gentiles; and he immediately subjoins this reason—that He was wearied with the perverseness of Israel, which, through very long continuance, had become intolerable to Him. He then speaks thus—"They who inquired not of Me before, and neglected My name, have now sought me (the perfect tense for the future to denote the certainty of the prophecy); they who sought Me not have beyond hope and desire found me."

Isaiah 65:1: "I was sought by *those who* did not ask *for Me*; I was found by *those who* did not seek Me. I said, 'Here I am, here I am,' To a nation *that* was not called by My name."

I know that this whole passage is changed by some Rabbis, as though God promised that He would cause that the Jews should repent of their defection: but nothing is more clear than

that He speaks of aliens [foreigners / outsiders]; for it follows in the same context —“I have said, Behold I come to a people, on whom My name is not called.” Without doubt, then, the Prophet declares it as what would take place, **that those who were before aliens would be received by a new adoption unto the family of God.** It is then **the calling of the Gentiles;** and in which appears a general representation of **the calling of all the faithful;** for there is no one who anticipates the Lord; but we are all, without exception, delivered by His free mercy from the deepest abyss of death, when there is no knowledge of Him, no desire of serving Him, in a word, no conviction of His truth.

21. *But of Israel, etc.* A reason is subjoined why God passed over to the Gentiles; it was because He saw that His favor had become a mockery to the Jews. But that readers may more fully understand that the blindness of the people is pointed out in the second clause, Paul expressly reminds us that the elect people were charged with their own wickedness.

Literally it is, “He says to Israel;” but Paul has imitated the Hebrew idiom; for ל, *lamed*, is often put for *men*. And He says, that to Israel He stretched forth His hands, whom He continually by His word invited to Himself, and ceased not to allure by every sort of kindness; for these are the two ways which He adopts to call men, as He thus proves His goodwill towards them. However, He chiefly complains of the contempt shown to His truth; which is the more abominable, as the more remarkable is the manner by which God manifests His paternal solicitude in inviting men by His word to Himself.

And very emphatical is the expression, that He *stretches out His hands*; for **by seeking our salvation through the ministers of His word, He stretches forth to us His hands no otherwise than as a father who stretches forth His arms, ready to receive his son kindly into his bosom.** And he says *daily*, that it might not seem strange to any one if He was wearied in showing kindness to them, inasmuch as He did not succeed by His assiduity [persistence]. A similar representation we have in Jeremiah 7:13; and Jeremiah 11:7, where He says that He rose up early to warn them.

Jeremiah 7:13: "And now, because you have done all these works," says the LORD, "and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you, but you did not answer,"

Jeremiah 11:7: "For I earnestly exhorted your fathers in the day I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, until this day, rising early and exhorting, saying, "Obey My voice."

Their unfaithfulness is also set forth by two most suitable words. I have thought it right to render the participle *refractory*, or rebellious, and yet the rendering of *Erasmus* and of the Old Translator, which I have placed in the margin, is not to be wholly [completely] disapproved. But since the Prophet accuses the people of perverseness, and then adds that they wandered through ways which were not good, I do not doubt but that the Greek Translator meant to express the Hebrew word *surer*, by two words, calling them first disobedient or rebellious, and then gainsaying; for their contumacy showed itself in this, because the people, with untamable pride and bitterness, obstinately rejected the holy admonitions of the Prophets.

Romans 11

Romans 11:1 "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. 2 God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, 3 "LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life"? 4 But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." 5 Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 6 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. 7 What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. 8 Just as it is written: "God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see And ears that they should not hear, To this very day." 9 And David says: "Let their table become a snare and a trap, A stumbling block and a recompense to them. 10 Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their back always." 11 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. 12 Now if their fall *is* riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! 13 For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, 14 if by any means I may provoke to jealousy *those who are* my flesh and save some of them. 15 For if their being cast away *is* the reconciling of the world, what *will* their acceptance *be* but life from the dead? 16 For if the firstfruit *is* holy, the lump *is* also *holy*; and if the root *is* holy, so *are* the branches. 17 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, 18 do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, *remember that* you do not support the root, but the root supports you. 19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." 20 Well *said*. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. 22 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. 23 And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. 24 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? 25 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 has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 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; 27 For this *is* My covenant with them, When I take away their sins." 28 Concerning the gospel *they are* enemies for your sake, but concerning the election *they are* beloved for the sake of the fathers. 29 For the gifts and the calling of God *are* irrevocable. 30 For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, 31 even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. 32 For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. 33 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! 34 "For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?" 35 "Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?" 36 For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things, to whom *be* glory forever. Amen."

ROMANS 11:1-6 "1. I say then, Hath God cast away His people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 2. God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew. Or do ye not know what the scripture saith of Elijah? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, 3. Lord, they have killed Thy prophets, and torn down Thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. 4. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to Myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. 5. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 6. And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.

1. *I say then, etc.* What he has up until now said of the blindness and obstinacy of the Jews, might seem to teach that Christ at His coming had transferred elsewhere the promises of God, and deprived the Jews of every hope of salvation.

The Abrahamic Covenant is not abrogated. The Abrahamic Covenant is an everlasting covenant of grace, which finds its fulfillment in the new covenant, the Covenant of Christ.

This objection is what he anticipates in this passage, and he so modifies what he had previously said respecting the repudiation of the Jews, that no one might think that the covenant formerly made with Abraham is now abrogated, or that God had so forgotten it that the Jews were now so entirely alienated from His kingdom, as the Gentiles were before the coming of Christ. All this he denies, and he will presently show that it is altogether false.

But the question is not whether God had justly or unjustly rejected the people; for it was proved in the last chapter that when the people, through false zeal, had rejected the righteousness of God, they suffered a just punishment for their presumption, were deservedly blinded, and were at last cut off from the covenant. The reason then for their rejection is not now under consideration; but **the dispute is concerning another thing, which is this, That though they deserved such a punishment from God, whether yet the covenant which God made formerly with the fathers was abolished.** That it should fail through any perfidiousness of men, was wholly unreasonable; for Paul holds this as a fixed principle, that since adoption is gratuitous and based on God alone and not on men, it stands firm and inviolable, however great the unfaithfulness of men may be, which may tend to abolish it. It was necessary that this knot should be untied, lest the truth and election of God should be thought to be dependent on the worthiness of men.

Paul (previously named Saul) was an ethnic Jew who became a Christian.

For I am also an Israelite, etc. Before he proceeds to the subject, he proves, in passing, by his own example, how unreasonable it was to think that the nation was utterly forsaken by God; for he himself was in his origin an Israelite, not a proselyte, or one lately introduced into the commonwealth of Israel. As then he was justly deemed to be one of God's special servants, it was an evidence that God's favor rested on Israel [ethnic/cultural Jews]. He then assumes the conclusion as proved, which yet he will hereafter explain in a satisfactory manner.

That in addition to the title of an Israelite, he called himself the seed of Abraham, and mentioned also his own tribe; this he did that he might be counted a genuine Israelite, and he did the same in his Epistle to the Philippians, Philippians 3:4.

Philippians 3:4-6 “though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”

But what some think, that it was done to commend God’s mercy, inasmuch as Paul sprung from that tribe which had been almost destroyed, seems forced and far-fetched.

2. *God has not cast away, etc.* This is a negative answer, accompanied with a qualifying clause; for had the Apostle unreservedly denied that the people were rejected, he would have been inconsistent with himself; but by adding a modification, he shows it to be such a rejection, as that God’s promise is not thereby made void. So the answer may be divided into two parts—(1) that God has by no means cast away the whole race of Abraham, contrary to the tenor of His own covenant—(2) and that yet the fruit of adoption does not exist in all the children of the flesh, for secret election precedes.

The visible and the invisible Church under the old covenant.

Thus general rejection could not have caused that no seed should be saved; for the visible body of the people was in such a manner rejected, that no member of the spiritual body of Christ was cut off. If any one asks, “Was not circumcision a common symbol of God’s favor to all the Jews, so that they ought to have been all counted His people?” To this the obvious answer is—That as outward calling is of itself ineffectual without faith, the honor which the unbelieving refuse when offered, is justly taken from them. Thus a special people remain, in whom God exhibits an evidence of His faithfulness; and Paul derives the origin of constancy from secret election.

The true meaning of God’s foreknowledge explained

For it is not said here that God regards faith, but that He stands to His own purpose, so as not to *reject* the people whom He has foreknown. And here again must be noticed what I have before reminded you of—that by **the verb *foreknow***, is not to be understood a foresight, I know not what, by which God foresees what sort of being any one will be, but **that good pleasure, according to which He has chosen those as sons to Himself, who, being not yet born, could not have procured for themselves His favor.**

The free offer of the gospel versus God’s effectual calling

So he says to the Galatians, that they had been known by God (Galatians 4:9); for He had anticipated them with His favor, so as to call them to the knowledge of Christ. We now perceive, that though universal calling may not bring forth fruit, yet the faithfulness of God does not fail, inasmuch as **He always preserves a Church, as long as there are elect remaining**; for though God invites all people indiscriminately to Himself, yet He does not inwardly draw any but those whom He knows to be His people, and whom He has given to His Son, and of whom also He will be the faithful keeper to the end.

Do you not know, etc. As there were so few of the Jews who had believed in Christ, hardly another conclusion could have been drawn from this small number, but that the whole race of Abraham had been rejected; and this thought might creep in—that in so vast a ruin no sign of

God's favor appeared. For since adoption was the sacred bond by which the children of Abraham were kept collected under the protection of God, it was by no means probable, unless that had ceased, that the people should be miserably and wretchedly dispersed.

The small, faithful remnant—the true church of Jesus Christ

To remove this offense, Paul adopts a most suitable example; for he relates, that **in the time of Elijah there was such a desolation, that there remained no appearance of a Church**, and yet, that when no vestige of God's favor appeared, the Church of God was, as it were, hidden in the grave, and was thus wonderfully preserved.

It hence follows, that they egregiously mistake who form an opinion of the Church according to their own perceptions. And surely if that celebrated Prophet [Elijah], who was endued with so enlightened a mind, was so deceived, when he attempted by his own judgment to form an estimate of God's people, what shall be the case with us, whose highest perspicuity, when compared with his, is mere dullness? Let us not then determine any thing rashly on this point; but rather let this truth remain fixed in our hearts—that **the Church, though it may not appear to our eyes, is sustained by the secret providence of God**. Let it also be remembered by us, that they are foolish and presumptuous who calculate the number of the elect according to the extent of their own perception: for God has a way, easy to Himself, hidden from us, by which He wonderfully preserves His elect, even when all things seem to us past all remedy.

And let readers observe this—that Paul distinctly compares here, and elsewhere, the state of things in his time with the ancient condition of the Church [i.e., the old covenant Church], and that it serves in no small degree to confirm our faith, when we bear in mind, that **nothing happens to us, at this day, which the holy Fathers had not formerly experienced**: for novelty, we know, is a grievous engine to torment weak minds.

As to the words, *In Elijah*, I have retained the expression of Paul; for it may mean either in the history or in the business of Elijah; though it seems to me more probable, that Paul has followed the Hebrew mode of speaking; for \beth , *beth*, which is rendered in the Greek by *in* is often taken in Hebrew for *of*.

The testimony of Elijah the prophet—lessons for us from the apostasy of the visible church in Elijah's day.

How he appeals to God, etc. It was certainly a proof how much Elijah honored the Lord, that for the glory of His name he hesitated not to make himself an enemy to his own nation, and to pray for their utter ruin, because he thought that the religion and worship of God had perished among them: but he was mistaken in charging the whole nation, himself alone *excepted*, with that impiety, for which he wished them to be severely visited. There is however in this passage, which Paul quotes, no imprecation, but a complaint only: but as he complains in such a way as to despair of the whole people, there is no doubt but that he gave them up to destruction.

Let us then especially notice what is said of Elijah, which was this—that when impiety had everywhere prevailed, and overspread almost the whole land, **he thought, that he was left alone**. *I have reserved for myself seven thousand, etc.* Though you may take this finite for an indefinite number, it was yet the Lord's design to specify a large multitude. Since then the grace of God prevails so much in an extreme state of things, **let us not lightly give over to**

the devil all those whose piety does not openly appear to us. It also ought to be fully imprinted on our minds—that however impiety may everywhere prevail, and dreadful confusion spread on every side, **yet the salvation of many remains secured under the seal of God.**

But that no one may under this error indulge his own sloth, as many seek hiding-places for their vices in the hidden providences of God, it is right to observe again—that **they only are said to be saved who continue sound and unpolluted in the faith of God.** This circumstance in the case ought also to be noticed—that those only remained safe who did not prostitute their body, no, not even by an external act of dissimulation, to the worship of idols; for he not only ascribes to them a purity of mind, but that they had also kept their body from being polluted by any filthiness of superstition.

So then also at this time, etc. He applies the example to his own age; and to make all things alike, **Paul calls God's people a remnant**, that is, in comparison with the vast number in whom impiety prevailed: and alluding at the same time to the prophecy he had quoted from Isaiah, he shows, that in the midst of a miserable and confused desolation the faithfulness of God yet shone forth, for there was still some remnant: and in order more fully to confirm this, he expressly calls them a remnant that survived through the grace of God: and thus he bore witness that God's election is unchangeable, according to what the Lord said to Elijah—that where the whole people had fallen away to idolatry, He had reserved for Himself seven thousand: and hence we conclude, that through His kindness they were delivered from destruction.

Just as under the old covenant, the visible church under the new covenant largely consists of unbelievers. Only a small percentage of professing Christians are regenerate, true believers—the elect seed.

Nor does he simply speak of grace; but he now calls our attention also to election, that we may learn reverently to rely on the hidden purpose of God. One thing then that is laid down is—that **few are saved in comparison with the vast number of those who assume the name of being God's people**; the other is—that those are saved by God's power whom He has chosen with no regard to any merit. The *election of grace* is a Hebrew idiom for gratuitous [unearned; undeserved; unmerited] election.

6. *If through grace, it is no longer by works, etc.* This amplification is derived from a comparison between things of an opposite character; for such is the case between God's grace and the merit of works, that he who establishes the one overturns the other.

The false teaching of foreseen faith and merits denounced

But if no regard to works can be admitted in election, without obscuring the gratuitous goodness of God, which He designed thereby to be so much commended to us, what answer can be given to Paul by those infatuated (*phrenetici — insane*) persons who make the cause of election to be that worthiness in us which God has foreseen?

For whether you introduce works future or past, this declaration of Paul opposes you; for he says, that **grace leaves nothing to works.** Paul speaks not here of our reconciliation with God, nor of the means, nor of the proximate causes of our salvation; but he ascends higher, even to this—why God, before the foundation of the world, chose only some and passed by others: and he declares, that **God was led to make this difference by nothing else, but by**

His own good pleasure; for if any place is given to works, so much, he maintains, is taken away from grace. It hence follows, that it is absurd to blend foreknowledge of works with election. For if God chooses some and rejects others, as He has foreseen them to be worthy or unworthy of salvation, then the grace of God, the reward of works being established, cannot reign alone, but must be only in part the cause of our election.

For as Paul has reasoned before concerning the justification of Abraham, that where a reward is paid, there grace is not freely bestowed; so now he draws his argument from the same fountain—that if works come to the account, when God adopts a certain number of men unto salvation, reward is a matter of debt, and that therefore it is not a free gift.

Now, though he speaks here of election, yet as it is a general reasoning which Paul adopts, it ought to be applied to the whole of our salvation; so that we may understand, that whenever it is declared that there are no merits of works, our salvation is ascribed to the grace of God, or rather, that we may believe that **the righteousness of works is annihilated, whenever grace is mentioned.**

ROMANS 11:7-10

7. "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election [the elect] have obtained it, and the rest were blinded 8. (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear) unto this day. 9. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompense unto them: 10. Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back always."

7. What then? What Israel seeks, etc. As he is here engaged on a difficult subject, he asks a question, as though he was in doubt. He intended, however, by expressing this doubt, to render the answer, which immediately follows, more evident; for he suggests, that no other can be given; and the answer is—that Israel in vain labored to seek salvation, because his attempt was absurd. Though he mentions here no cause, yet as he had expressed it before, he certainly meant it to be understood in this place. For his words are the same, as though he had said—that it ought not to seem strange, that Israel gained nothing in striving after righteousness.

And hence is proved what he presently subjoins concerning election—For if Israel has obtained nothing by merit, what have others obtained whose case or condition was not better? From where has come so much difference between equals? Who does not here see that it is election alone which makes the difference?

Now the meaning of the word *election* here is doubtful; for to some it seems that it ought to be taken in a collective sense, for the elect themselves, that there may be a correspondence between the two clauses. Of this opinion I do not disapprove, provided it be allowed that there is something more in the word than if he had said, the elect, even this, that he teaches that there was no other reason for obtaining their election, as though he said—"They are not those who strive by relying on merits, but those whose salvation depends on the gratuitous election of God." For he distinctly compares with the whole of Israel, or body of the people, the remnant which was to be saved by God's grace. It hence follows, that **the cause of salvation exists not in men, but depends on the good pleasure of God alone.**

The Biblical doctrine of reprobation

And the rest have been blinded. As the elect alone are delivered by God's grace from destruction, so **all who are not elected must necessarily remain blinded**. For what Paul means with regard to the reprobate is—that the beginning of their ruin and condemnation is from this—that they are forsaken by God.

The quotations which he adduces, collected from various parts of Scripture, and not taken from one passage, do seem, all of them, to be foreign to his purpose, when you closely examine them according to their contexts; for you will find that in every passage, blindness and hardening are mentioned as scourges, by which God punished crimes already committed by the ungodly; but Paul labors to prove here, not that those were blinded, who so deserved by their wickedness, but rather those who were rejected by God before the foundation of the world.

You may thus briefly untie this knot—that **the origin of the impiety which provokes God's displeasure, is the perversity of nature when forsaken by God**. Paul therefore, while speaking of eternal reprobation, has not without reason referred to those things which proceed from it, as fruit from the tree or river from the fountain. The ungodly are indeed, for their sins, visited by God's judgment with blindness; but if we seek for **the source of their ruin**, we must come to this—that being accursed by God, they cannot by all their deeds, sayings, and purposes, get and obtain any thing but a curse.

Yet the cause of eternal reprobation is so hidden from us, that nothing remains for us but to wonder at the incomprehensible purpose of God, as we shall at length see by the conclusion. But they reason absurdly who, whenever a word is said of the proximate causes, strive, by bringing forward these, to cover the first, which is hid from our view; as though God had not, before the fall of Adam, freely determined to do what seemed good to Him with respect to the whole human race on this account—because He condemns His corrupt and depraved seed, and also, because He repays to individuals the reward which their sins have deserved.

8. God has given them, etc. There is no doubt, I think, but that the passage quoted here from Isaiah is that which Luke refers to in Acts, as quoted from him, only the words are somewhat altered. Nor does he record here what we find in the Prophet, but only collects from him this sentiment—that they were imbued from above with the spirit of maliciousness, so that they continued dull in seeing and hearing.

The Prophet was indeed bidden to harden the heart of the people: but Paul penetrates to the very fountain—that brutal stupor seizes on all the senses of men, after they are given up to this madness, so that they excite themselves by virulent stimulants against the truth. For he does not call it the spirit of giddiness, but of compunction [stupor], when the bitterness of gall shows itself; yes, when there is also a fury in rejecting the truth. And **he declares, that by the secret judgment of God the reprobate are so demented**, that being stupefied, they are incapable of forming a judgment; for when it is said, that by seeing they see nothing, the dullness of their senses is thereby expressed.

Then Paul himself adds, *to this very day*, lest any one should object and say, that this prophecy had been formerly fulfilled, and that it was therefore absurd to apply it to the time of the gospel: this objection he anticipates, by subjoining, that it was not only a blindness of one day, which is *described*, but that it had continued, together with the unhealable obstinacy of the people, to the coming of Christ.

9. *And David says, etc.* In this testimony of David there is also made some change in the words, but it is not what changes the meaning. For he thus speaks, “Let their table before them become a snare, and their peaceful things a trap”; there is no mention of retribution. As to the main point there is sufficient agreement. The Prophet prays, that whatever is desirable and happy in life might turn out to the ruin and destruction of the ungodly; and this is what he means by *table* and *peaceful things*. He then gives them up to blindness of spirit and weakening of strength; the one of which he expresses by the darkening of the eyes, and the other by the incurvation of the back. But that this should be extended almost to the whole nation, is not to be wondered at; for we know, that not only the chief men were incensed against David, but that the common people were also opposed to him. It appears plain, that what is read in that passage was not applied to a few, but to a large number; yes, when we consider of whom David was a type, there appears to be a spiritual meaning in the opposite clause.

Seeing then that this imprecation remains for all the adversaries of Christ—that their meat shall be converted into poison (as we see that the gospel is to be the savor of death unto death), **let us embrace with humility and trembling the grace of God.** We may add, that since David speaks of the Israelites, who descended according to the flesh from Abraham, Paul fitly applies his testimony to the subject in hand, that the blindness of the majority of the people might not appear new or unusual.

ROMANS 11:11-15

“11. I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, to provoke them [the Jews] to jealousy. 12. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness? 13. For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: 14. If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. 15. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?”

11. *Have they stumbled, etc.* You will be greatly hindered in understanding this argument, unless you take notice, that the Apostle speaks sometimes of the whole nation of the Jews, and sometimes of single individuals; for hence arises the diversity, that at one time he speaks of the Jews as being banished from the kingdom of God, cut off from the tree [which is symbolic of the Church] and precipitated by God’s judgment into destruction, and that at another time he denies that they had fallen from grace, but that on the contrary they continued in the possession of the covenant, and had a place in the Church of God.

It is then in conformity with this difference that he now speaks; for since the Jews for the most part rejected Christ, so that perverseness had taken hold almost on the whole nation, and few among them seemed to be of a sane mind, he asks the question, whether the Jewish nation had so stumbled at Christ, that it was all over with them universally, and that no hope of repentance remained.

God still has a plan to save some ethnic Jews; there still remains an elect seed among ethnic Israel. God’s love for ethnic/cultural Jews has not ceased and never will cease.

Here he justly denies that the salvation of the Jews was to be despaired of, or that they were so rejected by God, that there was to be no future restoration, or that the covenant of grace, which he had once made with them, was entirely abolished, since there had ever remained in

that nation the seed of blessing. That we are so to understand his meaning is evident from this—that having before connected a sure ruin with blindness, he now gives a hope of rising again; which two things are wholly different. They then, who perversely stumbled at Christ, fell and fell into destruction; yet the nation itself had not fallen, so that he who is a Jew must necessarily perish or be alienated from God.

But by their fall salvation has come to the Gentiles, etc. The Apostle asserts two things in this place—that the fall of the Jews had turned out for salvation to the Gentiles; but to this end—that they [the Jews] might be kindled by a sort of jealousy, and be thus led to repentance.

He no doubt had an eye to the testimony of Moses, which he had already quoted, where the Lord threatened Israel—that as He had been provoked by them to emulation [jealousy] through their false gods; so He also, according to the law of retaliation, would provoke them by a foolish nation [i.e., the Gentiles]. The word here used denotes the feeling of emulation or jealousy with which we are excited, when we see another preferred before us. Since then it was the Lord's purpose that Israel should be provoked to emulation, they were not so fallen as to be precipitated into eternal ruin; but that God's blessing, despised by them, might come to the Gentiles, in order that they might at last be also stirred up to seek the Lord, from whom they had fallen away.

But there is no reason for readers to weary themselves much as to the application of this testimony: for Paul does not dwell on the strict meaning of the word, but alludes only to a common and well-known practice. For as emulation [jealousy] stimulates a wife, who for her fault has been rejected by her husband, so that she strives to be reconciled again; so it may be now, he says, that the Jews, seeing the Gentiles introduced into their place, will be touched with grief for their divorce, and seek reconciliation.

12. *And if their fall, etc.* As he had taught us that after the Jews were repudiated, the Gentiles were introduced in their place, that he might not make the salvation of the Jews to be disliked by the Gentiles, as though their salvation depended on the ruin of the Jews, he anticipates this false notion, and lays down a sentiment of an opposite kind, that nothing would conduce more to advance the salvation of the Gentiles, than that the grace of God should flourish and abound among the Jews. To prove this, he derives an argument from the less—"If their fall had raised the Gentiles, and their diminution had enriched them, how much more their fullness?" For the first [i.e., the salvation of the Gentiles] was done contrary to nature, and the last [i.e., the salvation of some ethnic Jews] will be done according to a natural order of things.

And it is no objection to this reasoning, that the word of God had flowed to the Gentiles, after the Jews had rejected, and, as it were, cast it from them; for if they had received it, their faith would have brought forth much more fruit than their unbelief had occasioned; for the truth of God would have been thereby confirmed by being accomplished in them, and they also themselves would have led many by their teaching, whom they, on the contrary, by their perverseness, had turned aside.

Now he would have spoken more strictly correct, if, to the *fall*, he had opposed *rising*: of this I remind you, that no one may expect here an adorned language, and may not be offended with this simple mode of speaking; for these things were written to mold the heart and not the tongue.

13. *For to you Gentiles I speak, etc.* He confirms by a strong reason, that nothing shall be lost by the Gentiles, were the Jews to return again to favor with God; for he shows, that the salvation of both is so connected, that it can by the same means be promoted. For he thus addresses the Gentiles—“Though I am peculiarly destined to be your Apostle, and ought therefore with special care to seek your salvation, with which I am charged, and to omit as it were all other things, and to labor for that only, I shall yet be faithfully discharging my office, by gaining to Christ any of my own nation; and this will be for the glory of my ministry, and so for your good.” For whatever served to render Paul’s ministry illustrious, was advantageous to the Gentiles, whose salvation was its object.

And here also he uses the verb *to provoke to emulation*, and for this purpose, that the Gentiles might seek the accomplishment of Moses’ prophecy, such as he describes, when they understood that it would be for their benefit.

14. *And save, etc.* Observe here that **the minister of the word is said in some way to save those whom he leads to the obedience of faith**. So conducted indeed ought to be the ministry of our salvation, as that we may feel that the whole power and efficacy of it depends on God, and that we may give Him His due praise: we ought at the same time to understand that **preaching is an instrument for effecting the salvation of the faithful**, and though it can do nothing without the Spirit of God, yet through His inward operation it produces the most powerful effects.

15. *For if their rejections, etc.* This passage, which many deem obscure, and some awfully pervert, ought, in my view, to be understood as another argument, derived from a comparison of the less with the greater, according to this rendering, “Since the rejection of the Jews has availed so much as to occasion the reconciling of the Gentiles, how much more effectual will be their resumption? Will it not be to raise them even from the dead?”

For Paul ever insists on this, that the Gentiles have no cause for envy, as though the restoration of the Jews to favor were to render their condition worse. Since then God has wonderfully drawn forth life from death and light from darkness, **how much more ought we to hope, he reasons, that the resurrection of a people [the Jews], as it were, wholly dead, will bring life to the Gentiles.**

It is no objection what some allege, that reconciliation differs not from resurrection, as we do indeed understand resurrection in the present instance, that is, to be that by which we are translated from the kingdom of death to the kingdom of life, for though the thing is the same, yet there is more force in the expression, and this a sufficient answer.

ROMANS 11:16-21

“**16.** For if the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches. **17.** And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive-tree, were grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree; **18.** Boast not against the branches: but if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. **19.** Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. **20.** Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: **21.** For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee.”

16. *For if the first-fruits, etc.* By comparing the worthiness of the Jews and of the Gentiles, he now takes away pride from the one and pacifies the other, as far as he could; for he shows

that the Gentiles, if they pretended any prerogative of honor of their own, did in no respect excel the Jews, no, that if they came to a contest, they should be left far behind.

Let us remember that in this comparison man is not compared with man, but nation with nation. If then a comparison be made between them, they shall be found equal in this respect, that they are both equally the children of Adam; the only difference is that the Jews had been separated from the Gentiles, that they might be a peculiar people to the Lord. They [the Jews] were then sanctified [set apart] by the holy covenant, and adorned with peculiar honor, with which God had not at that time favored the Gentiles; but as the efficacy of the covenant appeared then but small, he bids us to look back to Abraham and the patriarchs, in whom the blessing of God was not indeed either empty or void.

He hence concludes, that from them an hereditary holiness had passed to all their posterity. But this conclusion would not have been right had he spoken of persons, or rather had he not regarded the promise [given to Abraham]; for when the father is just, he cannot yet transmit his own uprightness to his son: but as the Lord had sanctified Abraham for Himself for this end, that his seed might also be holy, and as he thus conferred holiness not only on his person but also on his whole race, the Apostle does not unsuitably draw this conclusion, that all the Jews were sanctified in their father Abraham.

Then to confirm this view, he adduces two similitudes: the one taken from the ceremonies of the law, and the other borrowed from nature. The firstfruits which were offered sanctified the whole lump, in like manner the goodness of the juice diffuses itself from the root to the branches; and posterity hold the same connection with their parents from whom they proceed as the lump has with the first-fruits, and the branches with the tree. It is not then a strange thing that the Jews were sanctified in their father. There is here no difficulty if you understand by holiness the spiritual nobility of the nation, and that indeed not belonging to nature, but what proceeded from the covenant. It may be truly said, I allow, that the Jews were naturally holy, for their adoption was hereditary; but I now speak of our first nature, according to which we are all, as we know, accursed in Adam. Therefore **the dignity of an elect people, to speak correctly, is a supernatural privilege.**

The dignity of the Gentiles [the non-Jewish converts to Christianity]: Note that the Gentiles were engrafted into the Church of God [symbolized by the olive tree]. Contrary to the teaching of dispensationalism, the Church of Christ is essentially the same Church as the assembly of God's people, the congregation of Israel in the Old Testament, with the same Gospel—the same way of salvation (cf. Gal. 3:8; Heb. 3:16-4:2; 1 Pet. 3:20-21). Romans 11 teaches us the unity of the Church of God under the old and new covenants and that there is to be one Church, with Jews and Gentiles fully united together without distinction (Rom. 3:22-30).

17. And if some of the branches, etc. He now refers to the present dignity of the Gentiles, which is no other than to be of the branches; which, being taken from another, are set in some noble tree: for **the origin of the Gentiles was as it were from some wild and unfruitful olive**, as nothing but a curse was to be found in their whole race.

Whatever glory then they had was from their new insition [being grafted in], not from their old stock. There was then no reason for the Gentiles to glory in their own dignity in comparison with the Jews. We may also add, that Paul wisely mitigates [lessens] the severity of the case, by not saying that the whole top of the tree was cut off, but that some of the branches

were broken, and also that God took some here and there from among the Gentiles, whom He set in the holy and blessed trunk.

God condemns racism.

18. *But if you boast, remember that you do not support the root, etc.* The Gentiles could not contend with the Jews respecting the excellency of their race without contending with Abraham himself; which would have been extremely unbecoming, since he was like a root by which they were borne and nourished. As unreasonable as it would be for the branches to boast against the root, so unreasonable would it have been for the Gentiles to glory against the Jews, that is, with respect to the excellency of their race; for Paul would have them ever to consider the origin of their salvation.

All Christians have been grafted into the stock of Abraham. Abraham is the father of all the faithful, Jew and Gentile (Rom. 4:16). We are inheritors of the promises made to Abraham, the everlasting covenant (Gal. 3:29). The Jews and Gentiles are “fellow heirs” and “fellow members of the body” [the olive tree, the Church], and “fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Eph. 3:6). There should be no divisions among Christians, for in Christ “there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all” (Col. 3:11). Christians may be divided by language, but they should not be divided by race or ethnicity. There is “one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph. 4:5-6).

And we know that after Christ by His coming has pulled down the partition-wall, the whole world partook of the favor which God had previously conferred on the chosen people. It hence follows, that the calling of the Gentiles was like an engrafting, and that they did not otherwise grow up as God’s people than as they were grafted into the stock of Abraham.

19. *You will say then, etc.* In the person of the Gentiles he brings forward what they might have pleaded for themselves; but that was of such a nature as ought not to have filled them with pride, but, on the contrary, to have made them humble. For if the cutting off of the Jews was through unbelief, and if the engrafting of the Gentiles was by faith, what was their duty but to acknowledge the favor of God, and also to cherish modesty and humbleness of mind?

For **it is the nature of faith**, and what properly belongs to it, **to generate humility and fear**. But by fear understand that which is in no way inconsistent with **the assurance of faith**; for Paul would not have our faith to vacillate or to alternate with doubt, much less would he have us to be frightened or to quake with fear. Of what kind then is this fear? As the Lord bids us to take into our consideration two things, so two kinds of feeling must thereby be produced. For he would have us ever to bear in mind the miserable condition of our nature; and this can produce nothing but dread, weariness, anxiety, and despair; and it is indeed expedient that we should thus be thoroughly laid prostrate and broken down, that we may at length groan to Him; but this dread, derived from the knowledge of ourselves, keeps not our minds while relying on His goodness, from continuing calm; this weariness hinders us not from enjoying full consolation in Him; this anxiety, this despair, does not prevent us from obtaining in Him real joy and hope. Hence the fear, of which he speaks, is set up as **an antidote to proud contempt**; for as every one claims for himself more than what is right, and becomes too secure and at length insolent towards others, we ought then so far to fear, that our heart may not swell with pride and elate itself.

But it seems that he throws in a doubt as to salvation, since he reminds them to beware lest they also should not be spared. To this I answer—that as this exhortation refers to the subduing of the flesh, which is ever insolent even in the children of God, he derogates nothing from the certainty of faith. And we must especially notice and remember what I have before said—that Paul's address is not so much to individuals as to the whole body of the Gentiles, among whom there might have been many, who were vainly inflated, professing rather than having faith. On account of these Paul threatens the Gentiles, not without reason, with excision [removal; being cut off], as we shall hereafter find again.

21. *For if God has not spared the natural branches, etc.* This is a most powerful reason to beat down all self-confidence: for the rejection of the Jews should never come across our minds without striking and shaking us with dread. For what ruined them, but that through supine dependence on the dignity which they had obtained, they despised what God had appointed? They were not spared, though they were natural branches; what then shall be done to us, who are the wild olive and aliens, if we become beyond measure arrogant? But this thought, as it leads us to distrust ourselves, so it tends to make us to cleave more firmly and steadfastly to the goodness of God.

And here again it appears more evident, that the discourse is addressed generally to the body of the Gentiles, for the excision, of which he speaks, could not apply to individuals, whose election is unchangeable, based on the eternal purpose of God. Paul therefore declares to the Gentiles, that if they exulted over the Jews, a reward for their pride would be prepared for them; for God will again reconcile to Himself the first people whom He has divorced.

ROMANS 11:22-24 “**22.** Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. **23.** And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. **24.** For if thou were cut out of the olive-tree, which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a good olive-tree; how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive-tree?”

22. *See then, etc.* By laying the case before their eyes he more clearly and fully confirms the fact—that **the Gentiles had no reason to be proud**. They saw in the Jews an example of God's severity, which ought to have terrified them; while in themselves they had an evidence of His grace and goodness, by which they ought to have been stimulated to thankfulness only, and to exalt the Lord and not themselves.

The words express the same, as though he had said—“If you exult yourself over their [the Jews'] calamity, think first what you have been; for the same severity of God would have impended over you, had you not been delivered by His gratuitous favor: then consider what you are even now; for salvation shall not continue to you, except you humbly recognize the mercy of God; for if you forget yourself and arrogantly exult, the ruin, into which they have fallen, awaits you. It is not indeed enough for you to have once embraced the favor of God, except you follow His call through the whole course of your life.”

They indeed who have been illuminated by the Lord ought always to think of **perseverance**; for they do not continue in the goodness of God, who having for a time responded to the call of God, do at length begin to loathe the kingdom of heaven, and thus by their ingratitude justly deserve to be blinded again.

But he does not address each of the godly individually, as we have already said, but he makes a comparison between the Gentiles and the Jews. It is indeed true that each individual among the Jews received the reward due to his own unbelief, when they were banished from the kingdom of God, and that all who from among the Gentiles were called, were vessels of God's mercy; but yet the particular design of Paul must be borne in mind.

For he would have the Gentiles to depend on the eternal covenant of God, so as to connect their own salvation with the salvation of the elect people, and then, lest the rejection of the Jews should produce offense, as though their ancient adoption were void, he would have them to be terrified by this example of punishment, so as reverently to regard the judgment of God. For from where comes so great licentiousness on curious questions, except that we almost neglect to consider those things which ought to have properly taught us humility?

But as **he speaks not of the elect individually, but of the whole body**, a condition is added, *If they continued in His kindness*. I indeed allow, that as soon as any one abuses God's goodness, he deserves to be deprived of the offered favor; but it would be improper to say of any one of the godly particularly, that God had mercy on him, when He chose him, provided he would continue in His mercy; for **the perseverance of faith, which completes in us the effect of God's grace, flows from election itself**.

Not long after Paul's death did the whole world return to a dark age. Within a few centuries, the church during the Middle Ages (the 400s to the 1400s)—the spiritual Dark Ages—was shrouded in intellectual and spiritual darkness, manmade tradition, legalism, and superstition.¹

Paul then teaches us, that the Gentiles were admitted into the hope of eternal life on the condition, that they by their gratitude retained possession of it. And dreadful indeed was the defection of the whole world, which afterwards happened; and this dearly proves, that this exhortation was not superfluous [unnecessary]; **for when God had almost in a moment watered the world with His grace, so that religion flourished everywhere, soon after the truth of the gospel vanished, and the treasure of salvation was taken away**. And from where came so sudden a change, except that the Gentiles had fallen away from their calling?

Otherwise you also shall be cut off, etc. We now understand in what sense Paul threatens them with excision [being cut off], whom he has already allowed to have been grafted into the hope of life through God's election. For, first, **though this cannot happen to the elect, they have yet need of such warning, in order to subdue the pride of the flesh**; which being really opposed to their salvation, ought justly to be terrified with the dread of perdition. As far then as Christians are illuminated by faith, they hear, for their assurance, that the calling of God is without repentance; but as far as they carry about them the flesh, which wantonly

¹ The Middle Ages or medieval period lasted from around A.D. 500 to 1500, beginning with the Roman Empire's decline and fall (A.D. 480) and ending with the Renaissance and the Age of Discovery. The spiritual Dark Ages began earlier and continued until the time of the Protestant Reformation, officially started by Martin Luther in 1517 and continuing under John Calvin (1509-1564) and John Knox (1513-1572). However, the light of the Gospel started to break through in history earlier under the labors of "the morning star of the Reformation" John Wycliffe (1330-1384), John Hus (1369-1415), and other forerunners of the Reformation. (While the Renaissance and Age of Discovery began in the 1300s and 1400s, many Christian historians mark the end of the Middle and Dark Ages around 1500, as the light of truth began to shine most brightly starting in the 16th century.)

[rebelliously] resists the grace of God, they are taught humility by this warning, “Take heed lest you be cut off.”

Secondly, we must bear in mind the solution which I have before mentioned—that Paul does not speak here of the special election of individuals, but sets the Gentiles and Jews in opposition the one to the other; and that therefore the elect are not so much addressed in these words, as those who falsely gloried that they had obtained the place of the Jews. Moreover, he speaks to the Gentiles generally, and addresses the whole body in common, among whom there were many who were faithful, and those who were members of Christ in name only [i.e., the nominal Christians].

But if it be asked respecting individuals, “How any one could be cut off from the grafting, and how, after excision, he could be grafted again”—bear in mind, that there are three modes of insition [being grafted in], and two modes of excision [being cut off].

Three modes of engrafting

For instance, (1) the children of the faithful are engrafted, to whom the promise belongs according to the covenant made with the fathers; (2) engrafted are also they who indeed receive the seed of the gospel, but it strikes no root, or it is choked before it brings any fruit; and (3) thirdly, the elect are engrafted, who are illuminated unto eternal life according to the immutable purpose of God.

Two modes of being cut off

(1) The first are cut off, when they refuse the promise given to their fathers, or do not receive it on account of their ingratitude; (2) the second are cut off, when the seed is withered and destroyed; and as the danger of this impends over all, with regard to their own nature, it must be allowed that this warning which Paul gives belongs in a certain way to the faithful, lest they indulge themselves in the sloth of the flesh. But with regard to the present passage, it is enough for us to know, that the vengeance which God had executed on the Jews, is pronounced on the Gentiles, in case they become like them.

23. For God is able, etc. Frigid would this argument be to the profane; for however they may concede power to God, yet as they view it at a distance, shut up as it were in heaven, they do for the most part rob it of its effect. But as the faithful, whenever they hear God’s power named, look on it as in present operation, he thought that this reason was sufficient to strike their minds. We may add, that he assumes this as an acknowledged axiom—**that God had so punished the unbelief of His people as not to forget His mercy**; according to what He had done before, having often restored the Jews, after He had apparently banished them from His kingdom.

It is comparatively easier for ethnic/cultural Jews to be saved in the future, because they have the benefit of an understanding of the Old Testament, approximately 78% of Holy Scripture, whereas the Gentile only has the light of nature (Creation), unless he hears the preaching of the Gospel and/or studies the special revelation of the Word of God.

And he shows at the same time by the comparison, how much more easy it would be to reverse the present state of things than to have introduced it; that is, how much easier it would be for the natural branches, if they were again put in the place from which they had

been cut off, to draw substance from their own root, than for the wild and the unfruitful, from a foreign stock: for such is the comparison made between the Jews and the Gentiles.

ROMANS 11:25-27

“**25.** For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. **26.** And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: **27.** For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.”

25. *I would not, etc.* Here he rouses his hearers to a greater attention, while he avows that **he is going to declare something that was secret.** Nor did he do this without reason; for he wished to conclude, by a brief or plain sentence, a very perplexed question; and yet he declares what no one could have expected.

But the words, *Lest ye should be proud in yourselves,* show what was his designed object; and that was, to check the arrogance of the Gentiles, lest they should exult over the Jews. This admonition was also necessary, lest the defection of that people should immoderately disturb the minds of the weak, as though the salvation of them all was to be forever despaired of.

The conversion of a remnant of ethnic Jews is foretold, and yet it is “a mystery.”

The same is still not less useful to us at this day, so that we may know, that **the salvation of the remnant, whom the Lord will at length gather to Himself, is hidden, sealed as it were by His signet.** And whenever a long delay tempts us to despair, let us remember this word **mystery**; by which Paul clearly reminds us, that the mode of their [ethnic Jews'] conversion will neither be common nor usual; and hence they act absurdly who attempt to measure it by their own judgment; for what can be more unreasonable than to regard that as incredible which is far removed from our view? **It [the salvation of ethnic Jews] is called a mystery, because it will be incomprehensible until the time of its revelation.** It is, however, made known to us, as it was to the Romans, that our faith may be content with the word, and support us with hope, until the event itself come to light.

That blindness in part, etc. “In part,” I think, refers not simply to time, nor to the number, but means, in a manner, or in a measure; by which expression he intended, as it seems to me, only to qualify a declaration which in itself was severe. *Until* does not specify the progress or order of time, but signifies the same thing, as though he had said, “That the fullness of the Gentiles,” etc. The meaning then is—That God had in a manner so blinded Israel, that while they refused the light of the gospel, it might be transferred to the Gentiles, and that these might occupy, as it were, the vacated possession. And **so this [ethnic Jewish] blindness served the providence of God in furthering the salvation of the Gentiles, which He had designed.**

The Church of Christ contains a majority of Gentile believers, in accordance with the promises:

Revelation 5:9: “For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.”

Revelation 14:6: “Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth -- to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.”

And **the fullness of the Gentiles is to be taken for a great number:** for it was not to be, as before, when a few proselytes connected themselves with the Jews; but **such was to be the change, that the Gentiles would form almost the entire body of the Church.**

All Israel will be saved! What a tremendous promise of God. This cannot mean every ethnic Jew, as that would contradict Scripture. Indeed, Paul elsewhere writes that in Christ there is no longer a division between Jew and Gentile, but that they are one body. Instead, God is promising that the fullness of His elect, both Jew and Gentile, will be saved. And He is declaring that He has not abandoned the ethnic Jews, who were His special people and holy nation under the old covenant.²

Cf. **Galatians 6:16** “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon **the Israel of God.**”

1 Peter 2:9 “But you [the Church, Jew and Gentile] *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

26. And so all Israel, etc. Many understand this of the Jewish people, as though Paul had said, that religion would again be restored among them as before: **but I extend the word Israel to all the people of God,** according to this meaning—“**When the Gentiles shall come in, the Jews also shall return from their defection to the obedience of faith; and thus shall be completed the salvation of the whole Israel of God, which must be gathered from both; and yet in such a way that the Jews shall obtain the first place, being as it were the first-born in God’s family.**”

This interpretation seems to me the most suitable, because Paul intended here to set forth **the completion of the kingdom of Christ,** which is by no means to be confined to the Jews, but is to include the whole world. The same manner of speaking we find in Galatians 6:16.

The Israel of God is what he calls the Church, gathered alike from Jews and Gentiles; and he sets the people, thus collected from their dispersion, in opposition to the carnal children of Abraham, who had departed from his [Abraham’s] faith.

As it is written, etc. He does not confirm the whole passage by this testimony of Isaiah, (Isaiah 59:20) but only one clause—that the children of Abraham shall be partakers of redemption. But if one takes this view—that Christ had been promised and offered to them, but that as they rejected Him, they were deprived of His grace; yet the Prophet’s words

² Contrary to the mistaken teachings of dispensationalists, this is a key passage that refutes several false notions of dispensational theology—a theology popular in many evangelical, Baptist, and Pentecostal churches today, which has led many believers astray from the teachings of the apostle Paul and the rest of God’s Word. The dispensational theology contradicts Scripture’s teaching on the Church and Israel, as well as eschatology (the end times), the sacraments, and the covenants of God. For a further look on this topic, consider O. Palmer Robertson’s *The Israel of God: yesterday, today, and tomorrow* (New Jersey: P&R, 2000).

express more, even this—that there will be some remnant, who, having repented, shall enjoy the favor of deliverance.

Paul, however, does not quote what we read in Isaiah, word for word; “come,” he says, “shall a Redeemer to Zion, and to those who shall repent of iniquity in Jacob, says the Lord” (Isaiah 59:20).

But on this point we need not be very curious; only this is to be regarded, that the Apostles suitably apply to their purpose whatever proofs they adduce from the Old Testament; for their object was to point out passages, as it were by the finger, that readers might be directed to the fountain itself.

All Christians, Jew and Gentile, are Israelites and the Israel of God. And, yet, there still remains something special to being an ethnically Jewish Christian believer.

But though in this prophecy deliverance to the spiritual people of God is promised, among whom even Gentiles are included; yet as the Jews are the first-born, what the Prophet declares must be fulfilled, especially in them. **For that Scripture calls all the people of God Israelites, is to be ascribed to the pre-eminence of that nation, whom God had preferred to all other nations.** And then, from a regard to the ancient covenant, he says expressly, that a Redeemer shall come to Zion; and he adds, that He will redeem those in Jacob who shall return from their transgression.

By these words God distinctly claims for Himself a certain seed, so that His redemption may be effectual in His elect and peculiar nation. And though fitter for His purpose would have been the expression used by the Prophet, “shall come to Zion;” yet Paul made no scruple to follow the commonly received translation, which reads, “The Redeemer shall come forth from Mount Zion.” And similar is the case as to the second part, “He shall turn away iniquities from Jacob.” For Paul thought it enough to regard this point only—that as it is Christ’s peculiar office to reconcile to God an apostate and faithless people, some change was surely to be looked for, lest they should all perish together.

27. And, this is my covenant with them, etc. Though Paul, by the last prophecy of Isaiah, briefly touched on the office of the Messiah, in order to remind the Jews what was to be expected especially from Him, he further adds these few words from Jeremiah, expressly for the same purpose; for what is added is not found in the former passage. This also tends to confirm the subject at hand; for what he said of the conversion of a people who were so stubborn and obstinate, might have appeared incredible. He therefore removes this stumblingblock, by declaring that the covenant included a gratuitous remission of sins. For we may gather from the words of the Prophet—that God would have no more to do with His apostate people, until He should remit the crime of perfidy [unfaithfulness], as well as their other sins.

ROMANS 11:28-32

“**28.** As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes. **29.** For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. **30.** For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; **31.** Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they have also may obtain mercy. **32.** For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all.”

28. *With regard indeed to the gospel, etc.* He shows that the worst thing in **the Jews** ought not to subject them to the contempt of the Gentiles. **Their chief crime was unbelief.** But Paul teaches us, that they were thus blinded for a time by God's providence, that a way to the gospel might be made for the Gentiles; and that still they were not for ever excluded from the favor of God. He then admits, that they were for the present alienated from God on account of the gospel, that thus the salvation, which at first was deposited with them, might come to the Gentiles; and yet that God was not unmindful of the covenant which He had made with their fathers, and by which He testified that according to His eternal purpose He loved that nation: and this he confirms by this remarkable declaration—that the grace of the divine calling cannot be made void; for this is the meaning of the words.

29. *The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.* He has mentioned gifts and calling; which are to be understood, according to a figure in grammar, as meaning the gift of calling: and this is not to be taken for any sort of calling but of that, by which God had adopted the posterity of Abraham into covenant; since this is especially the subject here, as he has previously, by the word, election, designated the secret purpose of God, by which He had formerly made a distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles.

For we must bear this in mind—that he speaks not now of the election of individuals, but of the common adoption of the whole nation, which might seem for a time, according to the outward appearance, to have failed, but had not been cut up by the roots. As the Jews had fallen from their privilege and the salvation promised them, that some hope might remain to the remnant, Paul maintains that the purpose of God stands firm and immovable, by which He had once promised to choose them for Himself as a peculiar nation. Since then it cannot possibly be, that the Lord will depart from that covenant which He made with Abraham, "I will be the God of your seed," (Genesis 17:7), it is evident that He has not wholly turned away His kindness from the Jewish nation [i.e., ethnic Israel]³.

He does not oppose the gospel to election, as though they were contrary the one to the other, for whom God has chosen He calls; but inasmuch as the gospel had been proclaimed to the Gentiles beyond the expectation of the world, he justly compares this favor with the ancient election of the Jews, which had been manifested so many ages before. And so election derives its name from antiquity; for God had in past ages of the world chosen one people for Himself.

On account of the Fathers, he says not, because they gave any cause for love, but because God's favor had descended from them to their posterity, according to the tenor of the covenant, "Your God and the God of your seed." How the Gentiles had obtained mercy through the unbelief of the Jews, has been before stated, namely, that God, being angry with the Jews for their unbelief, turned His kindness to them. What immediately follows, that they became unbelievers through the mercy manifested to the Gentiles, seems rather strange; and yet there is in it nothing unreasonable; for Paul assigns not the cause of blindness, but only declares, that what God transferred to the Gentiles had been taken away from the Jews.

³ By the Jewish nation, Calvin clearly means ethnic Jews, not the modern nation/country of Israel, established in 1948. The modern state of Israel is not a Christian theocracy; it is not a fulfillment of the promises of God to His elect seed. However, God loves the believers in Israel just as He does those in every other nation, and the land of Israel does indeed have an important history. The point is that contrary to much "end times" hype and errant teachings popular in most evangelical churches today, the New Testament teaches that the Church is the new Israel and Christians await the new Jerusalem, the heavenly Jerusalem, the Jerusalem that is above, not in the Middle East.

All merits are excluded. The Gentiles are saved by God's sovereign mercy alone.

But lest what they had lost through unbelief, should be thought by the Gentiles to have been gained by them through the merit of faith, mention is made only of mercy. What is substantially said then is—that as God purposed to show mercy to the Gentiles, the Jews were on this account deprived of the light of faith.

32. *For God has shut up, etc.* A remarkable conclusion, by which he shows that there is no reason why they who have a hope of salvation should despair of others; for whatever they may now be, they have been like all the rest. If they have emerged from unbelief through God's mercy alone, they ought to leave place for it as to others also. For **he makes the Jews equal in guilt with the Gentiles**, that both might understand that the avenue to salvation is no less open to others than to them.

For it is the mercy of God alone which saves; and this offers itself to both. This sentence then corresponds with the testimony of Hosea, which he had before quoted, "I will call those My people who were not My people" (Hosea 2:23). But he does not mean, that God so blinds all men that their unbelief is to be imputed to Him; but that He has so arranged by His providence, that all should be guilty of unbelief, in order that He might have them subject to His judgment, and for this end—that all merits being buried, salvation might proceed from His goodness alone.

Paul then intends here to teach two things—(1) that there is nothing in any man why he should be preferred to others, apart from the mere favor of God; and (2) that God in the dispensation of His grace, is under no restraint that He should not grant it to whom He pleases.

There is an emphasis in the word *mercy*; for it expresses that God is bound to none, and that He therefore saves all freely, for they are all equally lost. But extremely gross is their folly who hence conclude that all shall be saved; for Paul simply means that both Jews and Gentiles do not otherwise obtain salvation than through the mercy of God, and thus he leaves to none any reason for complaint. It is indeed true that this mercy is without any difference offered to all, but every one must seek it by faith.

ROMANS 11:33-36

"**33.** 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! **34.** For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counselor? **35.** Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? **36.** For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

33. *Oh! the depth, etc.* Here first the Apostle bursts into an exclamation, which arose spontaneously from a devout consideration of God's dealings with the faithful; then in passing he checks the boldness of impiety, which is accustomed to clamor against the judgments of God. When therefore we hear, *Oh! the depth*, this expression of wonder ought greatly to avail to the beating down of the presumption of our flesh; for after having spoken from the word and by the Spirit of the Lord, being at length overcome by the sublimity of so great a mystery, he could not do otherwise than wonder and exclaim, that, **the riches of God's wisdom are deeper than our reason can penetrate to.**

Whenever then we enter on a discourse respecting the eternal counsels of God, let, a bridle be always set on our thoughts and tongue, so that after having spoken soberly and within the limits of God's word, our reasoning may at last end in admiration. Nor ought we to be ashamed, that if we are not wiser than he [Paul], who, having been taken into the third heaven, saw mysteries to man ineffable [inexpressible], and who yet could find in this instance no other end designed but that he should thus humble himself.

Some render the words of Paul thus, "Oh! the deep riches, and wisdom, and knowledge of God!" as though the word *buthos* was an adjective; and they take *riches* for abundance, but this seems to me strained, and I have therefore no doubt but that he extols God's deep riches of wisdom and knowledge.

How incomprehensible, etc. By different words, according to a practice common in Hebrew, he expresses the same thing. For he speaks of *judgments*, then he subjoins *ways*, which mean appointments or the mode of acting, or the manner of ruling. But he still continues his exclamation, and thus the more he elevates the height of the divine mystery, the more he deters us from the curiosity of investigating it. Let us then learn to make no searchings respecting the Lord, except as far as he has revealed Himself in the Scriptures; for otherwise we shall enter a labyrinth, from which the retreat is not easy. It must however be noticed, that he speaks not here of all God's mysteries, but of those which are hid with God Himself, and ought to be only admired and adored by us.

34. Who has known the mind of the Lord? He begins here to extend as it were his hand to restrain the audacity of men, lest they should clamor against God's judgments, and this he does by stating two reasons: the first is, (1) that **all mortals are too blind to take a view of God's predestination by their own understanding**, and to reason on a thing unknown is presumptuous and absurd; the other is, (2) **that we can have no cause of complaint against God, since no mortal can boast that God is a debtor to him**; but that, on the contrary, **all are under obligations to Him for His bounty**.

Within this limit then let every one remember to keep his own mind, lest he be carried beyond God's oracles in investigating predestination, since we hear that man can distinguish nothing in this case, any more than a blind man in darkness. This caution, however, is not to be so applied as to weaken the certainty of faith, which proceeds not from the acumen of the human mind, but solely from the illumination of the Spirit; for Paul himself in another place, after having testified that all the mysteries of God far exceed the comprehension of our minds, immediately subjoins **that the faithful understand the mind of the Lord, because they have not received the spirit of this world, but the Spirit which has been given them by God**, by whom they are instructed as to His goodness, which otherwise would be incomprehensible to them.

God's secret will versus God's revealed will, which is His written word.

As then we cannot by our own faculties examine the secrets of God, so we are admitted into a certain and clear knowledge of them by the grace of the Holy Spirit: and if we ought to follow the guidance of the Spirit, where He leaves us, there we ought to stop and as it were to fix our standing.

If any one will seek to know more than what God has revealed, he shall be overwhelmed with the immeasurable brightness of inaccessible light. But we must bear in mind **the distinction**, which I have before mentioned, **between the secret counsel of God, and His will made**

known in Scripture; for though the whole doctrine of Scripture surpasses in its height the mind of man, yet an access to it is not closed against the faithful, who reverently and soberly follow the Spirit as their guide; but the case is different with regard to His hidden counsel, the depth and height of which cannot by any investigation be reached.

35. *Who has first given to Him, etc.* Another reason, by which God's righteousness is most effectually defended against all the accusations of the ungodly: for if no one retains Him bound to himself by his own merits, no one can justly expostulate with Him for not having received his reward; as he, who would constrain another to do him good, must necessarily adduce those deeds by which he has deserved a reward. The meaning then of Paul's words is this—"God cannot be charged with unrighteousness, except it can be proved, that He renders not to every one his due: but it is evident, that no one is deprived by Him of his right, since He is under obligation to none; for who can boast of any thing of his own, by which he has deserved His favor?"

We are saved by grace alone in Christ alone.

Now this is a remarkable passage; for **we are here taught, that it is not in our power to constrain God by our good works to bestow salvation on us**, but that he anticipates the undeserving by His gratuitous goodness. But if we desire to make an honest examination, we shall not only find, that **God is in no way a debtor to us, but that we are all subject to His judgment—that we not only deserve no favor, but that we are worthy of eternal death.**

And Paul not only concludes, that **God owes us nothing**, on account of our corrupt and sinful nature; but he denies, that if man were perfect, he could bring anything before God, by which he could gain His favor; for as soon as he begins to exist, he is already by the right of creation so much indebted to His Maker, that he has nothing of his own. In vain then shall we try to take from Him His own right, that He should not, as He pleases, freely determine respecting His own creatures, as though there was mutual debt and credit.

36. *For from Him and through Him, etc.* A confirmation of the last verse. He shows, that it is very far from being the case, that we can glory in any good thing of our own against God, since **we have been created by Him from nothing, and now exist through Him.**

He hence infers, that **our being should be employed for His glory**: for how unreasonable would it be for creatures, whom He has formed and whom He sustains, to live for any other purpose than for making His glory known?

It has not escaped my notice, that the phrase, *to Him*, is sometimes taken for *in or by Him*, but improperly: and as its proper meaning is more suitable to the present subject, it is better to retain it, than to adopt that which is improper. The meaning of what is said is—**That the whole order of nature would be strangely subverted, were not God, who is the beginning of all things, the end also.**

To Him be glory, etc. The proposition being as it were proved, he now confidently assumes it as indubitable [unquestionable]—That the Lord's own glory ought everywhere to continue to Him unchangeably: for the sentence would be frigid were it taken generally; but its emphasis depends on the context, that **God justly claims for Himself absolute supremacy**, and that in the condition of mankind and of the whole world nothing is to be sought beyond His own glory. It hence follows, that absurd and contrary to reason, and even insane, are all those sentiments which tend to diminish His glory.