



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Romans 9: 1-5

Romans

“Great Sorrow”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We're in Romans 9 this morning. We have just completed the first major section of the Book of Romans, chapters 1 through 8. And you think it's very difficult to get any better than Romans 8 and I would agree with that. Really can't get better than Romans 8, but Romans 9 for me is every bit as thrilling. For many, it's not that, it's provocative, but I think it's a magnificent chapter. We begin at this morning with verses 1 through 5. So Romans 9:1-5 Paul writes, “I'm telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.

For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temp service and the promises, who are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.” May the Lord bless this reading of His word. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are privileged to be here together with the saints, with the believers in Jesus Christ and able to open our bibles and read a text of scripture. Every text of scripture is glorious because all of scripture is your inerrant word and all of it is profitable. We come to a magnificent portion of the bible. We begin a wonderful section of scripture and we look to you to bless us, regardless of the text, regardless of the difficulty of it or what would seem to be the ease in understanding of it, all of it, Father, is a mystery to us apart from the work of the spirit in our lives.

We need Him as our interpreter, our teacher and you have placed Him in the hearts of all of your people so that we have one who enlightens our mind so that we can understand what we have read and what we are to know and how it is to be applied to our lives. And so we pray that His ministry would go unhindered this morning and we would be taught and built up in the faith edified and confirmed to the image of Jesus Christ. That’s our goal, Father, to become like Christ, to know you better, to live lives that honor you in the midst of a world that is full of darkness and error.

Help us to know you better that we might be agents of light, men and women who proclaim the mercies of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ and are used of you. So we look to you to bless us this morning. That’s a spiritual work that the spirit of God does within us and we pray that He would do that, but He does that through your word and so we pray your blessings upon the teaching of your word. Bless us spiritually, pray for ourselves in the material things of life as well we pray that you would bless where blessing is needed and in the way that it is need.

We pray for the sick, that you would give healing and encouragement. We pray for those who are undergoing surgery or have undergone it. We pray that you give them speedy recovery, restore them to health. Pray for those who are discouraged, pray that you would give them encouragement. What a blessing it is when a loved one dies to know that that person is with you. And what a grief to know of those who die and go into eternal darkness. That was the grief that Paul bore for his people and we study this morning. And that is a good grief to have, to be concerned for the lost. We pray that we would have that as a result of our study together.

We do praise you, Father, for the salvation of your people and that you save a multitude and that when they proceed us in death while we sorrow and we grieve, we do not grieve as those without hope and so we thank you that there is that joy in the midst of sadness for your people. But we pray for those who grieve and pray that you give them encouragement. Bless us all with encouragement as we study this morning and we would understand these things better and bless us as we return this evening, as we continue to worship our Lord and remember His coming into this world. Remember what He did as He went to the cross. He did not come to be a great teacher, though He was the greatest teacher to ever walk the earth. Did not come to

give an example on how to live though He is the law for us. We look at His life and we know how to live. All of these things are part of His incarnation and the reason that He came, but the main reason, the chief reason, the great reason is he came into this world, He was born in order to die and save His people from their sins. He did that and we praise you for it.

Bless us as we come back this evening, that we would honor Him and remember that well and bless us now as we sing our final hymn, prepare our hearts for our time of study together, that we would learn more and become more like Christ as a result of our time together. We pray these things in Christ’s name. Amen.

[Message] Some of the saddest stories we hear are those of missed opportunities. Maybe it’s an athlete who wasted his talents or a student who wasted time and lost a scholarship. What is most painful to parents is a prodigal child, one who has been given all of the advantages of a good home, of Christian instruction and love but who rejects it all for a profligate life. That was God’s experience with Israel. He said in Hosea 11:1, “Out of Egypt I called my son.” Israel was His son, His child, delivered from slavery and given the greatest advantages of any nation in the world. No people had a more privileged place in history than the Jews. So what became of their opportunity? Why are the Jews largely in unbelief? What happened?

That’s the question that Paul answers in the next three chapters which form a parenthesis in the Book of Romans. Paul could have proceeded on from 8:39 to 12:1, after all a lot of preachers do that. And we would not have noticed a break in his thought. He has explained God’s purpose of grace toward believers and the future glory that will be revealed to the sons of God. And so it would be natural for Paul to go on to emphasize the Christian’s responsibility, to live in a way that is proper for an heir of glory to come and one who is a child of grace.

That’s what he does in 12:1-2, “Therefore I heard you, brethren,” he writes, “by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God.” We are ready for that kind of instruction. But instead, we read chapters 9, 10 and 11 which deal with what is sometimes called the problem of Jewish Unbelief. Three chapters is a large part of the book and it indicates the importance of this question to the apostle Paul.

It was important to him for a couple of reasons. First, Israel’s unbelief called into question the truth of Paul’s gospel. And secondly, it calls into question the truth

of God’s word. For eight chapters Paul has explained the gospel. He has explained that salvation is all of grace, that it is through faith alone in Christ alone. Paul said in chapter 1 of verse 16 that the gospel was to the Jew first. So how is it that the Jews didn’t recognize their messiah? How is it that the Jews did not believe this gospel which is to them first? If it were true, wouldn’t they have believed it? Doesn’t Jewish unbelief raise the question about the truth of a gospel that Paul preached?

Paul must have heard that objection a number of times as he spoke in the synagogues and as he debated with the rabbis. But if Paul is right about the gospel and if it is true that the Jews are in unbelief and have failed to obtain the salvation that was promised to them, then isn’t Israel’s failure really God’s failure? That’s the second problem and the second objection that no doubt was raised to Paul’s preaching of the gospel. Jews are God’s chosen people, that’s clear from the Old Testament.

In Amos 3:2 God said, “You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth.” In Hosea the Lord asked the rhetorical question, how can I give you up, Ephraim? He made covenant promises to Israel, promises of a kingdom. And yet Israel is not saved. The nation does not possess the promises. It appears that God has given up Ephraim. Did God’s word fail? That’s the question and really, the larger question in this whole issue of Jewish unbelief because if God’s word failed for Israel, will it prevail with the church? If God cannot bring His ancient people into the salvation that He promised them, how can Christians be sure that we will ultimately be saved?

So chapters 9, 10, and 11 naturally follow chapters 1 through 8. They answer questions raised by Jewish unbelief about the validity of Paul’s gospel and the reliability of God’s word. In theological terms these chapters are a theodicy. And that term simply means a justification of God. They are a vindication of God’s actions. And in these chapters Paul demonstrates God’s righteousness by explaining that God is faithful to His word and there is a future for Israel. Its privileged place in history will be restored. But still, Israel’s present condition and unbelief was a heavy burden on Paul’s heart and he begins chapter 9 and this whole section expressing his great concern.

This is the downside of chapter 8. Here his emotions move from joy unspeakable because Christians can never be separated from God to great sorrow because Jews are separated. If anyone questioned Paul’s love for the Jewish people

because he was the apostle to the gentiles, he answers that in Romans 9:1-5 where he begins by strongly affirming his grief over their lost condition. “I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.”

No doubt Paul had been branded an enemy of the Jews after being run out of synagogues for preaching the gospel of salvation apart from the works of the law. The fact that he went to the gentiles and offered the promise of salvation to them provoked Jewish anger and jealousy to the point of attacking him on more than one occasion physically, violently. And so Paul precedes his profession of love for them by saying, “I am telling the truth, I am not lying.” And he affirms this in the strongest terms because he speaks in Christ, meaning he speaks to one who is joined to Christ, united with Him. And being united with Christ, being in Christ, he is in the presence of Christ always. You and I as Christians live in the presence of Jesus Christ and knowing that, Paul is saying, “I must, therefore, tell the truth.”

What he has to say then is no exaggeration, is no fabrication. And his conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit. So he begins by bringing both the son and the Spirit into his testimony that he has great sorrow and unceasing grief over the unbelief of the Jewish people. He calls them his brethren in verse 3 and his kinsmen according to the flesh. The fact that Paul was a member of the church, the body of Christ and joined in a spiritual brotherhood with Christians didn't cut him off from his natural affection for Israel or the Jewish people.

Paul had strong emotional ties to his race. He could not separate himself from his relatives and nation. He cared deeply for them which gives us a glimpse into the heart of the apostle. We know his mind, that he was a careful thinker who taught hard and deep doctrines. Even Peter said that there are some things in his letters that are hard to understand. Because of that, people might get the idea that Paul was just an intellectual, a kind of cold logic chopper with a mind for ideas but not a heart for people.

But no one can understand the doctrines of the bible, no one can be in Christ and have the mind of Christ, which every believer in Jesus Christ has, and not have the affection and the concerns of Christ. No one can be a Christian, in other words, and be uncaring for people. Paul felt deeply for people. He felt deeply for the lost. And he cared very much for his kinsmen. Like many of you do who have unsaved

family members and grieve over their spiritual condition and long for them to be saved. Paul was like that, but much more so. He says in one of the most remarkable statements in the bible, “For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren.” Accursed is the word anathema. And Paul means that he could wish himself damned for their sake. He would willingly take their place so that they might be saved. Statement is similar to the one that Moses made after the incident of the golden calf that’s recorded in Exodus 32. Because of Israel’s apostasy, God threatened to annihilate the nation and make a new one of Moses.

And one might think that was an attractive offer to Moses because they had not been out of Egypt very long and the character of that people had already manifested itself, in fact before they even left Egypt, before they crossed the Red Sea. They were complaining and grumbling and angry and not long after they crossed the sea and finished singing their songs of praise to God, they begin to grumble again and that’s the kind of people that Moses would be leading.

And so He might have thought, yes, let’s be rid of this people and let’s start a new people, a better people. Might have been an attractive offer to Moses, but he did not see it that way at all. Moses loved Israel more than he loved himself and he took up their cause. Moses responded to God’s offer by interceding for the people and asking God to block him out of his book if that would cause God to forgive their sin. Moses was ready to perish in the place of his people if they were to perish. That’s an amazing thought and an amazing offer on his part. But Paul was prepared to suffer perdition if it meant Israel’s salvation. Paul of course could not do that any more than Moses could have taken away people’s sin by his death. There’s only one sufficient substitute for sinners and that’s the Lord Jesus Christ.

And as a child of God, Paul knew that he could not be separated from Christ. He had just stated in chapter 8 that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. So Paul wasn’t actually asking to be damned for their sakes, but he was willing to be deprived of heaven and cast into hell for the Jews if God would have granted that to him. That was his heart. That was his love for his people. James Denney calls Paul’s desire a spark from the fire of Christ’s substitutionary love. That’s true. This is the love that Christ has, and because Paul loved them the way Christ loves, Paul set aside personal concerns. He set aside

concerns about rejection, about his personal and physical safety and setting all of that aside, he went into the synagogues where he was not welcomed and he preached Christ which was not well-received.

He was often hated for it, he was often rejected and beaten. Once he was stoned and left for dead; 5 times he said he received 39 lashes from the Jews. Which means five times he was brought to the brink of death. Five times. I think one beating would have been enough to keep me out of a synagogue. But not Paul. As much as a man could sacrifice himself for people, Paul did that for the Jews and for the gentiles. People do dangerous things for love. They forget themselves, their sacrifice their welfare for others. Paul did for his kinsmen. He was the chief of soul winners, and the heart of the apostle is to beat in the chest of each one of us. We are to have a love for the lost that is like that. He had a great love for the Jews and so because he had a great love for them, he had great sorrow for them as well.

What made Paul’s unceasing grief for them even greater was the unique privileges that Israel had. No people was as honored and blessed as the Jews. There’s a famous story about Benjamin Disraeli that illustrates their privileged place in history. Disraeli was the Prime Minister of England during the reign of Queen Victoria and probably more than anyone was instrumental in building the British Empire. He was a convert to the Anglican Church, but he was a Jew.

And when he was in Parliament as a young man, one of his opponents made a disparaging reference to his Jewish ancestry. Disraeli answered, “Yes, sir, I am a Jew. And I remind my illustrious opponent that when the ancestors of that right honorable gentlemen were brutal savages eating nuts in a German forest, my ancestors were serving as priests in the temple of Solomon and were giving law and religion to the world.” It was an effective response and a true one. The Jewish people have an ancient and an illustrious history which was the source of Paul’s anguish because in spite of that, they had come short. In spite of all of the blessings, they had not arrived at the great blessings.

And in verses 4 and 5, Paul lists the blessings, he lists the privileges that they had, not only to give the reason for his great sorrow, but also to lay the ground for his defense of God’s word and God’s faithfulness and the reliability of God’s promises. As he will explain, God’s promises to Israel had not failed. There is a future for Israel. He develops that very clearly in Romans 11 which he begins with the

statement, “God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew.” And these privileges indicate that, they suggest the reliability of God’s word and His promises. The name Israel indicates that. It is a name with spiritual significance and he probably chose this name rather than the word Jews because that word does not have the same significance that this name has.

It refers to the privileged position that each member of the Jewish race has with God. They are Israelites. You’ll remember that that’s the name that God gave to Jacob in Genesis 32 when Jacob wrestled with the angel of the Lord and he prevailed, there by the river Jabbok. Struggled all night and as a consequence of not letting go of the angel until he was blessed, he was blessed by having his name changed from Jacob to Israel. It’s a name of blessing which marks out those who belong to God. It is a title of honor. And Paul says the Jews are Israelites, present tense.

They still are. Though in unbelief under the condemnation God, God has not rejected them. They still have a special place in His program for history. Paul then lists eight privileges. First, they have the adoption of sons. Throughout the Old Testament God refers to Israel as His son. When He instructed Moses to go speak to Pharaoh, he was to say to Pharaoh, “Israel is my son, my firstborn.” So the basis for bringing them out of Egypt and the reason that Pharaoh was to release them was because the ones that he held in his possession did not belong to him. They were God’s, they were His son, his firstborn.

Well, Paul calls them that here. He speaks of them as sons by adoption, not natural sons, but sons by grace, by God’s choice. So the blessing of adoption means election. Israel is God’s chosen people. For Christians adoption means that we have been given all of the rights and the privileges of the sons of God that are included in the new covenant, we have those blessings. For Israel adoption gave the nation the rights and privileges of the old covenant. It didn’t include salvation, not for all Israelites. But it does indicate that God has continuing regard for them.

Even though they are in unbelief and like branches broken off from the olive tree, as Paul will explain, still down through history God has miraculously preserved them for future blessing. So they are sons by adoption by God’s election. Secondly, the privilege that the Israelites had is the glory which was the visible splendor of God’s presence. They had that from the time they left Egypt, when God guided the nation through the wilderness in the pillar of cloud and fire. He led them, He

protected them all the way from slavery in Egypt until they entered into the Promised Land.

This is the glory that’s called the Shekinah, that first fill the tabernacle and then the temple and came to reside in the holy of holies between the cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant. It was the visible that God was dwelling among His people and that He was for them. What a privilege that was. No nation in the world had that privilege, to have seen the visible representation of God’s presence and to know that He was there with them, reminding them of who He is, reminding them that He had called them out of Egypt, that He had adopted them as His children, that they were His chosen people and that He was for them. Great privilege.

Well, the third privilege is the covenants, not just the old covenant but you’ll notice this is plural, the covenants. So it’s not just the conditional covenant that was made at Mount Sinai but all of the unconditional covenants as well, the Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, the new covenant, covenants which include the promises of land, the promises of the Messianic Kingdom, promise of new hearts, of faith and forgiveness. Forgiveness is the promise given in Jeremiah 31 where the new covenant is revealed and God states that He will establish it with the House of Israel and with the House of Judah, with the Jewish people.

That has not yet happened. But all of these promises must happen, they must be fulfilled because God has promised. His promises are unconditional and the God who makes promises keeps those promises. He must keep those promises because His honor is tied to His word. His honor is bound to His word and so He must keep His word. Well, next Paul mentions the giving of the law. He mentions His word, the fact that God entrusted Israel with His law shows what a privileged position they had and what a privileged possession they had, the revelation of God and the Law of Moses.

Now, the law doesn’t save. Paul made that very clear earlier in 3:20, “By the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.” We cannot be saved by keeping the law, but through the law, men can know that they need to be saved, through the law their sin is made known to them and their need of the savior is revealed. So the law is a great blessing. As was the next privilege on Paul’s list, that of the temple service with the priesthood and the sacrifices. Of all of the nations of the earth, only Israel was chosen to be God’s priests. Of all of the nations of the world, only Israel was given

pure worship which stands in direct contrast to the vile and the cruel religions of the gentiles.

The religion that God gave to Israel was a glorious religion like the world had never seen before. Its sights and sounds were clean and beautiful with choruses and colors, those of the tabernacle and the priestly garments, it was magnificent. All of that was beautiful, but at the heart of it there was that which was not so lovely, the sacrifices which were daily repeated, daily represented to the people the saving truth that without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness. They had that instruction every day. They had that particularly during the great feast days of the Day of Atonement and Passover, this great event of sacrifice reminded them of the need of the shedding of blood for the forgiveness of sins.

The majority of the people of course missed that true and they saw their salvation in the offerings of bulls and goats and in law keeping. But still, they were given the great privilege of divine revelation. At the end of verse 4 Paul mentions the promises, further revelation that God gave to the people which include all of the promises of the covenants that we've already mentioned. But in particular, Paul is probably referring here to the promises of the Messiah and redeemer who was foreshadowed in the offerings of the temple service. And I say that because in Galatians 3:16, he speaks of the promises, but then he refers specifically to those promises or he makes it clear that he's referring specifically to the promises of the redeemer, of Christ.

We have these promises from the very beginning. In Genesis 3:15, there's the great promise of the deliverer to come, the one who would crush the head of the serpent and redeem, deliver the seed of the woman, God's people. And that promise unfolds throughout the Old Testament reaching its height in the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. Great blessing to have that revelation, the gospel given to the people of God. In verse 5 Paul lists the seventh privilege, that of the father's, patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, we can add others, heroes of the faith. The nation takes pride in its heroes and Israel had the greatest. Moses, Joshua, Sampson, Samuel, David, many others, men who killed wild beasts, defeated armies, slew giants. Men with flaws, but men whose lives taught lessons on faith and lessons on God's faithfulness. And lives that pre-figured Christ. It was a great advantage for Israel. It had a rich history and heritage. And from them, from this race the Messiah came, from who is

the Christ according to the flesh. That is the last privilege that Paul lists and it is the greatest of all the privileges.

Calvin wrote, “If He honored the whole human race when He connected Himself with it by sharing our nature much more did He honor the Jews with whom He desired to have a close bond of affinity.” The fact that Paul qualifies Christ here with the words “according to the flesh” indicates that more can be said about Him than one can say about His human nature and His human life, and in fact, Paul does say much more. He concludes the verse with a doxology that identifies Christ as God who is overall God blessed forever. Amen.

And the meaning of that statement is disputed. The reason is due to the fact that the ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament rarely contained punctuation marks like periods and commas, those have to be supplied by editors. And some modern translations punctuate the statement differently from what we have in our text, at least what I have in the New American Standard Bible and they put the period after the word flesh making the rest of the verse a doxology to the Father, not to the Son.

The Revised Standard Version is translated in that way, “According to the flesh is the Christ period. God who is overall be blessed forever, amen.” And in support of that translation it is argued that Paul never states explicitly that Christ is God. He never says, “Jesus Christ is God,” in those words. He may come close to doing that, but he never explicitly makes that statement. But in chapter 14 of Romans, verse 9, Paul does call Him Lord both of the dead and of the living. The word Lord is a title of God and who else is Lord of both the dead and the living but God?

In Philippians 2:6, he states that Christ existed in the form of God and did not regard equality with God, a thing to be grasped. That can only be said of God, only God can exist in the form of God. And then in Titus 2:13, Paul does state that Christ is our great God and Savior. So it’s really not true to say that Paul never actually identifies Christ as God. There are numerous statements that support Paul as identifying Christ here as God. The grammar also supports it. The words who is is most naturally taken with the previous statement joining Christ with God.

And this is the view of a number of scholars. There’s a British scholar, Charles Cranfield regards this as virtually certain that Paul intended to destroy Christ

as God overall. He writes, “There is no good ground for denying that Paul affirms that Christ is God.” And that’s our view. This is Paul’s testimony to the full deity of Jesus Christ. Paul is not making a modalistic statement that Christ is the Father. Modalism was an ancient heresy, one of the first heresies. It tried to explain the unity of God, that there’s one God in light of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit and what Modalists said was there’s only one God and one person in the Godhead who has manifested Himself in different ways, as the Father and then He manifests Himself as the Son and He manifests Himself as the Spirit which is an anti-trinitarian doctrine.

That’s not what Paul is saying. Paul’s not denying the Trinity. There is one God who subsists or exists in three persons and what Paul is saying is Christ is God, the Son. He’s the second person of the Trinity. He’s already said that back in 1:5, he identifies Jesus as the Son of God. He’s the second person of the Trinity who became a man with a sinless but genuine human nature according to the flesh, real flesh. He was flesh and blood. He was a man. He is, though, more than that. He is the God-Man, very God of very God and that’s what Paul is saying.

And that must be for the gospel to be true and the Book of Roman is all about the gospel which is, as Paul said, the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, Jew and gentile alike. There’d be no power in the gospel and faith would be empty if Jesus were not God. Salvation is about the forgiveness and removal of sin. How can sin against the infinite God be forgiven? The guilt of it is infinite because we have violated the law of an infinite God, our guilt is therefore infinite. It is greater than anything that we are able to remove from ourselves.

God can’t simply overlook it as we might. He’s holy and He cannot violate His holiness. He cannot violate His justice. He must deal with sin justly meaning He must punish it which leads to the great question, how can a man be right with God? If He deals with our sin justly, we will all perish because we are all guilty. The solution for God and man is Christ who is the God-Man.

We have paid the price for our sin in the death of another man, the Lord Jesus Christ. He became our substitute. And He was able to remove the infinite guilt of our sin because His deity invested His human life and sacrifice with infinite value. Because Christ became a man, He could be our substitute at Calvary. Because He is God, His death was effective in paying for all our sins. Sufficient for an infinite number of sins. The savior of the world must be the God-Man. He became that,

became our savior through His death. And His death was acceptable, acceptable to God and therefore successful, a successful sacrifice because He triumphed over the grave and the resurrection which is the evidence that God accepted His sacrifice on our behalf and now He is, as Paul says, over all. He is enthroned at the right hand of the Father ruling over the universe and ruling in our behalf.

That’s a great truth. A great truth we cannot estimate how great that is. This is the last privilege that Paul lists here and this last privilege of Christ coming from Israel is, as I said, the greatest of all of the privileges that Paul has listed. It is the fulfilment of Isaiah 7:14, the promise of Immanuel, God with us and yet this greatest of all the privileges is the one that Israel didn’t accept. Paul doesn’t say, you’ll notice, to whom belongs the Christ as he did with all of the other privileges that he’s mentioned here. This one’s different. He says not to whom belongs to Christ but from whom is the Christ.

And that difference suggests the reason for Israel’s failure. They never possessed Him. Christ came from them, but they never had a genuine relationship with Him. So the most privileged nation on earth missed its opportunity. God visited it by becoming a Jew, becoming one of them, but they did not receive Him and did not obtain salvation. All of these privileges were given for the purpose of leading Israel to Christ, but it didn’t arrive.

Why is that? What happened? Did God’s plan and effort fail? Did His word and His promises come to nothing? In verse 6 Paul will answer that by saying, “No, it is not as though the word of God has failed.” He then explains that God’s plan of salvation is one of grace and it works according to election. Not all Israelites are elect. The promises are for the elect and for them, the promises did not fail and will not fail. That’s the divine side and God reveal all of this in the Old Testament. On the human side, Israel rejected God’s revelation and sought salvation by works, so it was Israel who was unfaithful, not God. But as Paul shows in chapter 11, God is not finished with the nation. He bound Himself to that people unconditionally as we see in Genesis 15 and they are still in His plan.

In the future there will be a great awakening among the Jews, they will repent. They will receive Christ as Paul puts it in 11:26, “And so all Israel will be saved.” There is a future for Israel and an earthly kingdom to come. God’s word cannot fail and His faithfulness to Israel is an important lesson for Christians to understand if His

promises could fail for Israel, then they could fail for the church. But what we are assured of in this great portion of the Book of Romans, the theodicy of Romans 9, 10 and 11 is that God’s word cannot fail. All of His promises are certain. They are all yes and amen.

The God who speaks keeps His word. His honor is bound to it. That’s an important lesson for us to know and to understand. God is faithful, in other words. There’s another lesson from Israel’s failure and one that is equally as important for us to understand and that is that great privilege is no guarantee of salvation. You must be born again. Hearing the bible read and taught is a great privilege. You hear God’s word. You hear the words of life and the way of salvation. But if you don’t believe, you won’t be saved.

It’s not enough to hear it, it’s not enough to possess it, you must believe it. Observing the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper are a privilege, they illustrate the new life God gives in Christ and the need to constantly feed on Him by faith, but they don’t save. They don’t impart saving grace. You must believe. Being born into a Christian home is a great privilege, you have godly parents who are examples and who teach the truth. But you cannot inherit salvation, you must be born again.

Salvation is only by grace through faith and faith in Jesus Christ alone. That is how one is saved. It is only in that way. So the question that you must ask yourself is, have you believed? Have you been born again? Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you understand that you are a sinner unable to save yourself by your good deeds, by your works, by your attendance at church or whatever it might be and have you looked to Christ and trusted in Him and in Him alone for salvation?

If not, this is your opportunity to do that. What a tragedy it would be to miss that opportunity. Don’t do that. Trust in Christ. Believe in the one who died in the place of sinners. All who do are saved. For given of their sins and given life everlasting through faith and faith alone. May God help you to do that and help all who have to rejoice in our relationship with the Lord. It is fixed, it is secure and the promises that He has given to us can never be broken. That’s something to praise Him for and reason to serve Him faithfully as Paul himself did. May God help us to do that. Let’s close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for your goodness and grace. We come to text that begins a great portion of scripture on your grace, on your unconditional love and your sovereign effective choice of an undeserving people to be made your people. So as we study these verses in the weeks to come, we will be reminded of your amazing grace. Help us to understand that. Help us at this moment to appreciate the grace with which we have received from you. Apart from that, we would be lost. We pray, Father, for the concern for the lost that Paul himself had, may we have that. So that we go out from this place, men and women, young and old alike with a desire to tell others of the salvation that's in Jesus Christ. It's all of grace and we thank you for it. We thank you in Christ's name. Amen.