

## Review of Romans 1-8 — Christianity 101:

- 1: 1-11 Paul wants to bring “the gospel of God” to the center of world power, Rome
- 1:16-17 Overture to his gospel — The Power of God for Salvation
- 1:18-32 Paganism’s bad exchange: Idolatry → Degraded Passions → Unfit Mind
- 2:1-5 Because of who God is (perfectly just), ...
- 2:6-29 Judaism’s legal pretense will not stand in the day of judgment
- 3:1-20 For Israel is just as fallen as everybody else — in fact, in the face of God’s complete justice, we’re all lost, for none is righteous
- 3:21-31 Nonetheless, the just God justifies — and that, justly — through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus ... whereby God shows his own “oneness” for there is one means of salvation for Jew & Gentile ...
- 4:1-25 Which redemption we receive by faith, just as Abraham did — and, in fact, as part of Abraham’s story (either as Jews who are a light to the nations or as Gentiles who receive that light) by becoming his sons
- 5:1-11 Justification gives us peace now, glory later, and a sure road to that glory
- 5:12-21 Christ can be the hope for the whole creation because he parallels and contrasts with Adam
- 6:1-14 Will we live in solidarity with Adam or with Christ?
- 6:15-23 Will we live in bondage to the old or in the freedom of the new?
- 7:1-6 We are dead to the Law to bear fruit for God
- 7:2-25 But how can the underlying (good) intention of the Law bless us and not break us since it exposes indwelling sin?
- 8:1-3 Only because the Son has condemned sin in the flesh
- 8:4-27 Only by the Spirit’s power, who is the presence of, the promise of, and our help toward future glory
- 8:28-39 Only by God’s electing & preserving love

## **Preview of Romans 9-16 — Christianity 102:**

- ch. 9 But what about Israel's election? There is a mystery to God's electing ways, because "All Israel is not Israel"
- ch. 10 Christ is the end/goal/purpose of the Law. Christ's coming has made it evident that Israel's purpose was to be God's vehicle for the salvation of the world. Sadly, the good news has prompted Israel's unbelief.
- ch. 11 Nonetheless, Israel retains a remnant. Gentiles need to understand that they have been grafted in (quite contrary to nature) to the tree that Israel belongs to "naturally." Therefore, Gentiles need to put away their arrogance and to understand that God is not done with Israel yet — in fact, he is reconstituting the "Israel of God" (Gal 6:16) in resplendent fashion
- ch. 12 The challenge of living Christ's "new creation" (see Gal 6:15 & 2Co 5:17): spiritual worship — living sacrifices
- ch. 13 Spiritual worship is living: a) under authority, b) in love, and c) in light of "the day at hand"
- ch. 14 Spiritual worship is working through debatable matters in liberty & love
- ch. 15 Spiritual worship is Jews & Gentiles welcoming one another and praising God "with one voice" (And, just a reminder: Paul plans to come to Rome to see this happening for himself — and hopefully to use Rome as a springboard for further mission to the west)
- ch. 16 Paul's longest list of personal greetings: a window into the life and complexion of the early church.

## Romans 9

### ch. 9 But what about Israel’s election? There is a mystery to God’s electing ways, because “All Israel is not Israel”

#### Guiding questions for Rom 9-11

- How does the believer’s security square with Israel’s insecurity (i.e., the historically “foreknown”—11:2)?
- If God has reneged on his promises to Israel, what’s to say we can count on him?
- Moreover, are Gentiles now included at Jews’ expense? (See 11:18)
- If so, do Gentile Christians now have grounds for thinking of historical Israel as being displaced in the plan of redemption?

#### 9:1-3

Paul genuinely aches for his kinfolk, and wants Gentile believers to share his grief.

#### 9:4-5

	<b>Israel’s Privilege</b>	<b>Belongs to Messiah and those “in him”</b>
They are Israelites ...	Gen 32:28, bearing God’s name	Gal 6:15 — the Israel of God defined around Christ; Rom 11:11-36 — believing Gentiles a part of the olive tree
Theirs is the Adoption ...	Ex 4:22-23, Israel is my firstborn son; Dt 14:1-2	Rom 1:3-4, 9; 5:10; 8:3, 29, 32 — Jesus is God’s unique Son; also, Rom 8:15, 23 — we have received the spirit of adoption and await the redemption of our bodies
The Glory ...	Ex 13:21-22; 33:18; 34:29-35; 40:34-38	Rom 5:2; 8:18, 30 — the glory ahead; Rom 8:11, 14; 2Co 3:18 — the glory within
The Covenants ...	From Adam to Abr to Moses to David to New Covenant: Jer 31:33-34; Isa 27:9	Rom 11:27 — “when I take away their sin”

The Giving of the Law ...	Ex 19-20; Dt 5; sum at Dt 6:4-5; Lev 19:18 — the dark side of the Law too, at Dt 27's Mt. Ebal — sin is concentrated in Israel, Rom 5:20	Rom 1:5; 15:18; 16:26; cf. 8:3-4; 13:8-10 — the dark side fulfilled as sin is concentrated in Christ, who is given over and cursed for our transgressions, Rom 4:20; Gal 3:13; 2Co 5:21
The Worship ...	Tabernacle, Temple, Sacrifice, Song	Rom 12:1-2; 15:9
The Promises ...	Gen 12; 15; 18:18; 22:17-18	Rom 4:13-14, 16; 9:8; 15:8
Theirs are the Fathers ...	Gen 17 — Abram (= "Exalted Father") renamed Abraham (= "Father of a Multitude)	Rom 4:11-12 — Abraham is "Father of all who believe" (that is all who embrace Jesus as Messiah/Christ)
From them is the Christ according to the flesh ...	See esp. 2Sm 7:14	See also Rom 1:3 — genuinely one of us
... who is God over all blessed forever. Amen	Ezk 34:11 — "I myself will seek them out and shepherd them..."	See also Php 2:6ff; Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-8 — Jesus is genuinely God himself come to deliver

**Note:** In chap. 3 Paul had introduced three questions, each of which Paul now picks up again, in turn:

- the first had to do with whether Israel's faithlessness had undermined God's faithfulness (3:3 — see 9:6-13);
- the second with whether God was unjust to punish us when our wickedness proves his justice (3:5 — see 9:14-18); and
- the third with why we're culpable when our falsehood promotes God's truthfulness (3:7 — see 9:19-24)

**9:6-13 — Q: Has God's word failed? A: No. God's founding of Israel under the Patriarchs shows that he has a gracious, narrowing purpose in history** (we will see in vv. 19-24, that there is a redemptive purpose for the narrowing: the creating of a special vessel through whom to redeem the world)

God's word has not failed; it has always been a matter of "not all Israel being actually of Israel" — it has always been a matter of the children of the promise versus the children of the flesh.

In light of the explanation in v. 8, I suggest construing vv. 6-7 as a chiasm, with the a. members being the outer circle (historical, national Israel) and the b. members being the inner (believing Israel). Thus:

- a. For not all who are descended from Israel
  - b. are Israel;
  - b. nor are they seed of Abraham
- a. all (those who are) children.

Abraham's line is reckoned through Isaac, not Ishmael — promise versus flesh.

Isaac's line reckoned through Jacob, not Esau — not on the basis of anybody's merits.

Election is not on the basis of anything good or bad ... not because of works. Why? That God's purpose, his choice might stand (v. 11). That the result of the grounds of the choice might clearly lie not in the called one but in the Caller (v. 11).

Question: What is Paul trying to promote by pointing to the utter graciousness of God in election ...

- in the original context in Rome?
- in the present context of our lives?

**9:14-18 — Q: But has God been fair? A: During the Exodus God showed that his purposes transcend the requirements of justice**

It is an issue of *mercy*, not *justice*!

- The historical situation of the Exodus. Paul's two quotes from the OT (Ex 33:19 & 9:16) have to do, first, with Israelites whose worship of the Golden Calf merit them pure judgment, not mercy; and, second, with Pharaoh whom God lets live long enough, despite his implacable resistance to God, to be a vessel for the demonstration of the glory of God
- God's comments on his motivation—Deut 7:6-8; 9:4-5, followed by litany of incidents of rebellion.
- Our situation—Eph 2:1-3 as background not only for 2:4-10, but also for 1:3-6. John 3:1-6 and John 1:12-13 also shedding light on one another.

**9:18** — Because nobody deserves anything good, God has the right to bestow good on whom he wishes and to withhold it from whom he wishes as well—thus the example of Pharaoh, whom God hardens (Ex 4:21; 9:12; 14:4,17) *and* who hardens his own heart (Ex 8:15,32).

Paul's specific point in the context of Rom 9-11 is that what is now happening to Paul's "kinfolk according to the flesh" is neither arbitrary nor unfair: it is a part of God's strange design to bring Israel's light to the nations, thus fulfilling God's covenant promise to Abraham. Paul is vindicating God's character.

**9:19-24** — Judgment & exile as means of God's fulfilling his promises to Abraham. **Q: How can we still be culpable? A: Again, it is a matter of God's *right* to fashion us the way he wishes.**

**As it is, there is a larger picture:** the making known of the riches of God's glory upon vessels of mercy, which he prepared beforehand for glory— vessels drawn not from among Jews only, but from among Gentiles as well.

**9:19** — Picking up the question Paul had raised at 3:7 about our culpability — here it's focused on why God has shaped Israel the way he has. Is Israel — are we — just puppets?

**9:20-21** — Here as elsewhere, Paul's answer lies in the OT passages he is drawing from:

- 9:20 "who are you to answer back?" = Isa 29:16 & 45:9 — Isa was affirming God's long range promises in the midst of judgment & exile
- 9:21 "can't God use one vessel for one thing and another for another?" = Jer 18:6 & Wisd. Sol. (intertestamental & noncanonical) 15:7 — faced with evil (both Israel's and pagans') God has the right to fashion individuals and nations in such a way as to further his own plans — and (as Paul goes on to show, and as Jer had prophesied at 29:10), his plans are for the good

**9:22-29** — Through Israel God has been creating a vessel to absorb God's wrath — see Rom 8:3 — because He wants to bring glory and riches to the world

**The story lies (again) in the OT passages:**

- **9:25-26 = Hos 2:25 & 2:1 (LXX)** — God's promises to ethnic Israel will be fulfilled in excess — that is, by including Gentiles among "My People" & "My Beloved" & "Sons of the Living God"
- **9:27-28 = Isa 10:22-23 & 28:22** — It does Israel no good to have the promise to Abr fulfilled ("sons as the sand of the sea") if final judgment

wipes her out — but notice, Gentle Reader, that Paul has invoked the “stone of testing in Zion” passage — Isa 28:16

- **9:29 = Isa 1:9** — as it is, God has provided a seed ... watch Paul follow through on the narrowing down of Israel and Israel’s seed to Christ himself in ch. 10.

**Throughout, Paul’s interest in believers’ election is not driven by abstract philosophical speculation over determinism or non-determinism. But rather by a twofold passion:**

1. Solidly to anchor our relationship in **his loving strength**. If our situation is a desperate and precarious as Scripture says it is, what can provide us a secure hope?
  2. To demonstrate that not only does history bear out his faithfulness to his promises, but more: it will eventually prove that **the arms of his mercy are longer even than the arms of his faithfulness**.
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## Romans 9:30-10:21

**9:30-33** — The rich irony of Gentiles not in pursuit of righteousness having attained it by faith, with Jews in pursuit of righteousness by law not having fulfilled the law. Israel (thus far) has missed “a stone of stumbling” written into her story line (Isa 28:16): at the heart of her identity a story of election, failure, exile, and restoration that is the telling in advance of the story of Messiah’s incarnation, death, and resurrection (a righteousness “from faith to faith”). Failing to receive Messiah’s story (in fulfillment of the law) in faith, Israel is left in the horrible position of having to fulfill the law by works — which she cannot do (9:32).

**9:31** — Israel was “pursuing a law of righteousness” — I think Paul means here that Israel had been promoting Torah (“pursuing a law”) without understanding that that law all along was about God who would show himself to be “just and justifier” through Christ (see Rom 3:21-26).

**9:33** — Israel’s history was an extended call for believing in a salvation that would come from outside ourselves, not in ourselves — crystallized in this quote from Isa 28:16, when Israel is told that the only way to avoid the storm of judgment was to “believe upon” the Rock of offense.

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## Romans 10

**10:1-4** — Paul’s hypothetical prayer of 9:1 (“I could pray that I might be accursed for Israel”) now gives way to his actual prayer: “that they may be saved.” That prayer will be answered when Israel realizes her mission (the *telos* = “goal” or “purpose” of the law) was to bring Messiah to the world. Ignorant of and failing to “obey” (= believe!) the way God was going to show himself to be “just & justifier” (3:26) at the cross (10:3’s *he tou theou dikaiosune*), Israel finds herself assuming the impossible task of having to try to muster up “their own righteousness” (10:3’s *he idia dikaiosune*).

**Sidebar:** in modern discussions (especially in “New Perspective” writers) Paul is often wrongly charged with preaching against a nonexistent Jewish legalism. In my opinion, part of Paul’s attempt to provoke fellow Jews to jealousy is his charge that if Israel misses the gift of righteousness (5:17) being proffered at the cross, she leaves herself with legalism as her only option. I think this is the way to understand the legalism that emerges in the Mishnah (the collection of Jewish teaching that began to be collated ca. A.D. 200).

**10:5** — Why is Christ the *telos* of the law (v. 4)? Because the law said (Lv 18:5) that the righteousness that it was bringing was a matter of “doing” and “living.” Paul is setting up three points, I think:

1. The real “doing” and “living” is not a matter of works, but of faith (Rom 10:6ff).
2. Israel found that though the blessings of Mt. Gerizim (Dt 28) as well as the curses of Mt. Ebal (Dt 27 & 29) were set before her, she would inevitably stand on Mt. Ebal and bring the curse of exile upon herself — and that her hope rested upon God’s restoration of her from exile (Dt 30). “Doing” and “living” took Israel through the crucible of failure, judgment, exile, and dependence upon God for restoration.
3. There would only be one who could be “the doing them man” (*ho poiasas auta anthropos*), i.e., Christ.

**Sidebar** on translation philosophies — I don’t have an axe to grind here, but there are places where a commitment to gender neutrality can mask a possible Christological reference. Compare on 9:5:

- ... the man which doeth those things — KJV
- ... the man who does those things — NKJV
- The man who does these things — NIV
- ... the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law — NAS95
- ... the man who practices the righteousness which is based on the law — RSV
- ... the person who does the commandments — ESV (a curious choice for the ESV)
- ... the person who does these things — NRSV
- ... whoever complies with it — NJB
- Whoever does these things — TNIV

**10:6-13** — In Dt 30, God promised that when it came time for restoration from exile he himself would circumcise their hearts so they would love him again and live (Dt 30:6). In fact, the commandment that would end Israel’s exile is far easier than the commandment that would have avoided exile (Dt 30:11-14) — the word of promise has come down from heaven and risen from the grave (Rom 10:6-8). All that is called for is confession of his Lordship and belief in the God who raised him from the dead (10:9-13). In Christ is found the true circumcision — a circumcision of the heart by faith (2:27-29)

**10:14-21** — Paul finds a pattern being played out in his own life that was anticipated in the promises of return from exile (Dt 32:21 [LXX] & Isa 65:1-2 [LXX]): Israel would be slow to “get it”; her spiritual obtuseness would be the occasion for Gentiles to get in on her promises; Gentile inclusion would provoke Israel to a jealous faith.

# Romans 11

## Flow of thought in chapter 11

- 11:1a Question: Has God rejected his people?
  - 11:1b-10 Answer: No! God has a remnant today (11:5)
  - 11:11a Question rephrased: Did God's people fall?
  - 11:11b-32 Answer: No! "By their transgressions salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous (11:11).
  - 11:11-15 Paul's present ministry fits this purpose of God
  - 11:16-24 Olive tree illustration
  - 11:25-29 Added OT support
  - 11:30-32 Summary
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## 11:1-10 — The Remnant of Israel

- The main point: just as there always has been, there is now also a **remnant** of God's gracious choice in Israel
- Rom 11:1
- Rom 11:2-4; 11:1
- Rom 11:5

## 11:11-24 — Provocation of Israel via Ingrafting of Gentiles

- The pastoral point: vv. 18-22 — Gentile believers have no bragging rights, neither vis-à-vis nonchristian Jews (in these vv.) nor vis-à-vis Christian Jews (in chaps. 14-15).

## 11:25-36 — The Salvation of "All Israel" — The mystery of God's design of redemptive history calls for:

- "lack of wisdom in our own conceits" (11:25);
- counting ethnic Israel "beloved for the sake of the forefathers" even if "enemies of God" outside the gospel (11:28);
- humble awe at the mercy of God who has consigned Jew and Gentile alike to disobedience (11:30-32);
- patience as we see how it's all going to play out (11:25,31);
- awe-filled worship (11:36)

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## Are there references to a large scale future salvation of ethnic Israel?

- 11:1,2a Rejected from place in a special plan?
- 11:12,15 "Remnant" now, but "fulness" later?
- 11:17-24 Regrafting = a future corporate inclusion?
- 11:25-27 "For a while hardening has happened to Israel?"
- "Until (*axris hou*) the fulness of the Gentiles comes in (after which God will resume work with Israel)"?
- "And then (*houtos* —after the fulness of the Gentiles and God's resumed work with Israel) all Israel will be saved"?

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### 11:25 — "Israel has experienced a hardening in part" (NIV); "a partial hardening has happened to Israel" (NASB)

- "in part," *apo merous*
- of its 8 occurrences in the NT, 7 are non-temporal, i.e., "partial" or "in part" (Rom 11:25; 15:15; 1 Cor 13:9 [twice] 10,12; 2 Cor 1:14; 2:5)
- Rom 15:24 is the lone exception, though admittedly it is an exception
- All 3 examples in Moulton and Milligan are non-temporal; and I do not find the phrase discussed in any of the *New Documents* volumes (though I may have missed it).

### 11:25 — "a partial hardening has happened to Israel *until* the fullness of the Gentiles has come in"

- "until," *axris hou* (= *axri*)
- Joachim Jeremias insists that in eschatological contexts, the phrase consistently points to a termination point, not a beginning point (*The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, p.253). See 1 Cor 11:26; 15:25; Lk 21:24.
- And in Romans 11, just what would that termination point appear to be? Threefold:
- Fullness of Jews (11:12)
- Fullness of Gentiles (11:25)
- "Life from the dead," i.e., Eschatological Resurrection (11:15)

### 11:26 — *houtos* = an adverb of manner, not time. "And so—i.e., in this very manner—all Israel shall be saved."

- Paul is referring to the unbelievable manner in which God will save genuine Israel—i.e., by bringing Jews in the same door as Gentiles in what Herman Ridderbos (*Paul: An Outline of His Theology*) calls the "wave effect" of redemptive history.
- "and so" KJV, NIV, RSV
- "and thus" NASB
- N. T. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, p. 249-250:

11.25a clearly belongs closely with what has gone before: gentile Christians are not to vaunt themselves over Jews. The reason is given in the 'mystery', which is not a new revelation suddenly made to Paul (and contradicting not only the rest of the immediate context but the rest of Paul's theology). The 'mystery' consists of this: that,

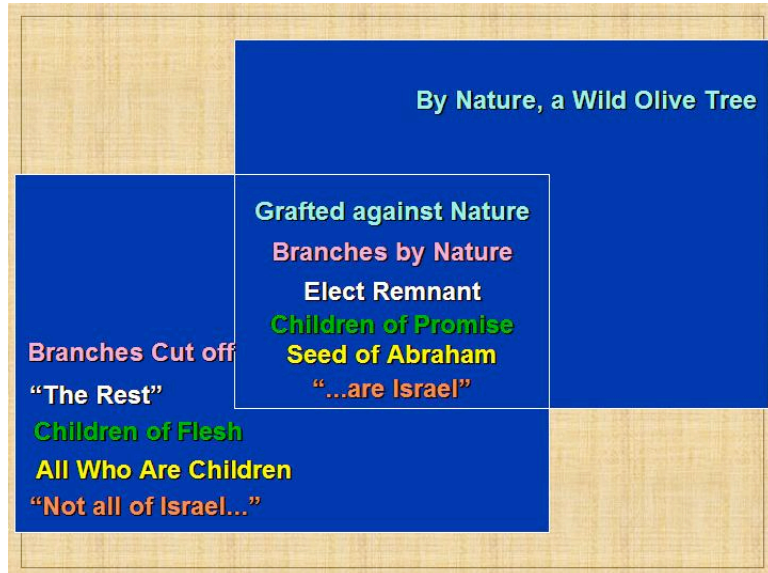
instead of immediately judging the people that rejected his Son, God has allowed a period of hardening, within which his salvation will spread to the ends of the earth, but at the end of which there will be judgment (this is always the point of 'hardening' within the apocalyptic context). During this period of time, the Gentiles are to come in to the people of God: and *that is how* God is saving 'all Israel'. Despite repeated assertions to the contrary, the meaning of *houtōs* is not 'then' but 'thus', 'in this manner'. Paul's meaning is not a temporal sequence — first the Gentiles, *then* the Jews. Rather, it is the interpretation of a particular process *as* the salvation of 'all Israel'. ... (and see the continuation of the quote below).

## “all Israel”

a. *all descendants?*  
But Rom 9:6!

b. *all Israelites in future?* A necessary postulate?

c. *all true Israel*, i.e., Jews who trust Jesus. This group has been on his mind at least since 9:6 — who of those who are merely national and ethnic Israelites are genuinely sons & daughters of Abraham?



- Rom 11:26; 9:6
- Rom 9:33; 10:19 (Dt 32:21); Rom 10:21 — rebellion part of Israel's role in the history of redemption
- Rom 11:13,14 — Paul magnifies his ministry to save some
- Rom 11:30-32 — Ridderbos' Wave
- Rom 11:33-36

d. “*Spiritual Israel*”? The *one* people of God made up of *all* the true children of Abraham, whether Jew or Gentile. The olive tree of vv. 17,24 — *all* those who really belong to the olive tree, **whether**:

1. “according to nature ... grafted back into their own olive tree” (Jews, v. 24b)  
**or**
2. “contrary to nature ... grafted into a cultivated olive tree” (Gentiles, v. 24a).

N. T. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, p. 250 (continued from above):

...And in this context 'all Israel' cannot possibly mean 'all Jews'. It is impermissible to argue that 'Israel' cannot change its referent within the space of two verses, so that 'Israel' in v.25 must mean the same as 'Israel' in v.26: Paul actually began the whole section

(9.6) with just such a programmatic distinction of two 'Israels', and throughout the letter (e.g. 2.25-9) as well as elsewhere (e.g. Philippians 3.2-11) he has systematically transferred the privileges and attributes of 'Israel' to the Messiah and his people. It is therefore greatly preferable to take 'all Israel' in v.26 as a typically Pauline polemical redefinition, as in Galatians 6.16 (though that is of course also controversial), and in line also with Philippians 3.2 ff., where the church is described as 'the circumcision'. What Paul is saying is this. God's method of saving 'all Israel' is to harden ethnic Israel (cp. 9.14 ff.), i.e., not to judge her at once, so as to create a period of time during which the gentile mission could be undertaken, *during the course of which* it remains God's will that the present 'remnant' of believing Jews might be enlarged by the process of 'jealousy', and consequent faith, described above. This whole process is God's way of saving his whole people: that is the meaning of *kai houtos pas Israel sothesetai* ("and so all Israel will be saved").

An attractive reading in the light of Eph 2:12,19.

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**Sidebar: Pushing the Boundary between the Church & Israel**



- Who are Abraham's genuine seed?
- Romans 4:11 – The Father of all who Believe
  
- Who are the true circumcision?
- Romans 2:28-29
- Philippians 3:3
- Galatians 6:16
  
- "With-" (*sun-*) Compounds:
- Rom 11:17
- Eph 2:19
- Eph 3:6
- Eph 3:6
- Eph 3:6
  
- Shameless Appropriation of Israel's Scriptures & Promises
- Romans 9: 25-26
- Romans 4:23; 15:4
- 1 Corinthians 10:6,11
  
- In fact, one would wish that the interpretation of Rom 11 would take into count the general flow of thought in Eph 2 — see esp. the conclusion of the chap., at vv. 21-22. Where is the departure from this organic growth

model at the end of time? One might have expected a hint of departure in 1 &/or 2 Thess as well.

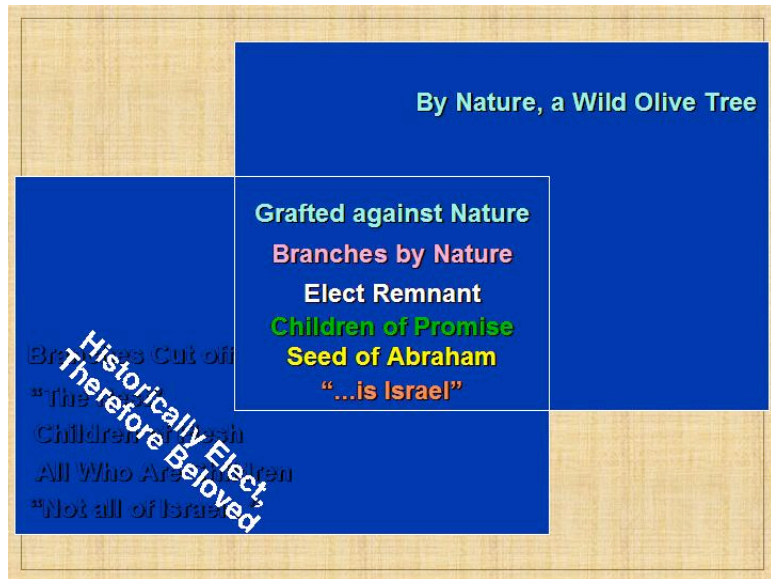
- There is no point of departure in Paul's letters for the definite teaching of a massive conversion of Jews at the end. Of course, this can happen — and it may, indeed, be the case. It is better for us to see Paul addressing the power he sees being loosed in the gospel — power for Jews, power for Palestinians, power for Indonesians, power for Koreans, power for Mexicans, power for, well, everybody — and leave the contours of what Herman Ridderbos calls the “wave effect” to God.

So what? ...

There is no room for Gentile arrogance

- 11:18
- 11:20-22
- 11:28-30

Note Paul's focus on the *present* as the *time* of the salvation of the remnant — i.e., the need for Jewish evangelism, and for prayer for the gospel-peace of Jerusalem



- 11:1 — Paul himself
- 11:5 — A remnant
- 11:13,14 — “that I may save some”
- 11:17-24 — “if you...”, “if they...”
- 11:30,31,32 — “**just as** you once...but now, so these now also...in order that...they **also** may now...”

Point of the epistle: that the power of God *in the gospel* may be shown to Jew and Gentile alike — Rom 3:9,22; Gal 3:22

11:33-36. Paul left with Doxology to God. Who else would devise such a plan of wedding mercy to faithfulness, but the one who could be both just and the justifier (3:26)?

# Romans 12

## Flow of thought in chapters 12-16

- 12-13 — General instruction on how those who have been justified by faith should live by faith — or as NT Wright says: how the fellowship of faith should match the righteousness of faith
- 14:1-15:13 — Specific instruction on how to live out the faith across barriers of custom or tradition and ethnic or tribal identity
- 15:14-16:27 — Paul's travel plans and his greetings to the Roman Christians

## Closer look at the flow of thought in chapters 12-13

- 12:1-2 — The “already” of our salvation calls for lifestyle worship
  - 12:3-13 — Unity in the church through the exercise of different gifts
    - 12:14-21 — Living redemptively before outsiders
    - 13:1-7 — Living responsibly before authorities
  - 13:8-10 — Love as the controlling concern
- 13:11-14 — The “not yet but almost” of our salvation calls for putting on the Lord Jesus

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**12:1-2** — What Paul had done with circumcision at the end of ch. 2 (2:25-29) he now does with worship. Israel had been given the true worship that pleases God (9:4) — now (an eschatological “now”), because of the mercies of God (see 9:15, quoting Ex 33:19) manifest in the way God has revealed his Son (1:3-4) as propitiating sacrifice (3:21-26), true worship is offered by believers who offer their bodies as living (i.e., not dead) sacrifices that please God. The glory of being human — and having my humanity restored in Christ — is that Rom 1 is reversed, and I am delivered from perversity and darkness of mind (see 1:28) so that that which is apt to being a *thinking* being is realized when I present my *body* as God's.

Note the balance in Paul's approach to Christian living. Verse 1 stresses the body in worship, but with the mind's involvement. Verse 2 stresses the renewal of the mind but with an eye to what a person is going to *do* to fulfill God's will.

Ponder: I'm not just given lists of do's and don't's, but the task and opportunity to discern God's will. What do you think about this quote?

*Paul's vision of living sacrifice, and mind renewed, generates a picture of Christian behavior in which rules matter but are not the driving force, in which thought and reflection matter but without reducing ethics to purely situational decisions (N.T. Wright, New Interpreter's Bible 10.706).*

Ponder: if I'm in Christ, what I offer really pleases God. Do I actually believe this?

**12:3** — Compare the mercy revealed to everybody (v. 1), and the grace revealed to Paul (v. 3) — always brings to mind the specific call on Paul for the Gentiles. Also, compare the call here for every believer's circumspect self-evaluation with his call for Gentiles in particular to have a circumspect self-evaluation with respect to Jews (ch. 11:20).

By "measure of faith," Paul is, I believe, anticipating the "weak" and "strong" of chs. 14-15 (I'm taking the genitive as partitive). That not everybody shares the same conviction about everything — that, in other words, certain matters remain debatable — is finally God's business. To "each" God has given a certain level of insight; and though it is better to be "strong" than "weak," God will enable both kinds of believers to stand. What is called for in Rom 12-13 (as a ramping up to the pastoral plea for gracious forbearance) is a sober sense of where I am in relation to others with whom I share a common life in Christ.

I am reluctantly disagreeing with those who take the genitive as appositional, that is, who believe that Paul is thinking here of "faith" as a singular standard: belief that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead (3:27-30; 4:24-25; 10:9) — the ground is equal at the foot of the cross, so to speak — that's how you measure yourself. I think the point is theologically apt — but I don't think it quite captures Paul's pastoral strategy in setting up Rom 14-15.

**12:4-5** — The Christ, the one and the many — deep resonances with ch. 5, but now the individual's place within the larger corporate identity. Being united-to-Christ-*prior-to-any-* consideration-of-what-group-you're-in is the most liberating *and* grounding concept imaginable. The mystery of Christianity's personal and social vision: the whole of the plan of redemption intersects my life (thus, "it's all about me"), but draws me into something larger than myself (thus, "it's so *not* about me").

**12:6-8** — Unity is promoted through the exercise of widely diverse gifts ... do the gift according to the demands and distinctiveness of the gift itself ... do it without apology, do it without wishing it were something else, do it like you love it.

The most interesting phrase is "proportion of faith" (lit. *analogia tes pistews*), by which Paul probably means prophets should consider whether revelations they think are revealed to them really fit within the parameters of the faith as it has already been revealed.

**12:9-13** — Each phrase is worth a week of meditation!

**12:14-21** — Paul turns from the Christian community caring for one another to how we're to respond to those who would attack and harm us — see Matt 5:10-11 (“Blessed are you when they persecute you ... when they revile ... & utter all kinds of evil against you”). The appropriate response to persecution is blessing rather than cursing. NTW reminds us that the Maccabean brothers died martyrs' deaths cursing their persecutors. The early church responded differently because Jesus told them to and showed them how (Mt 5:38-48; Lk 6:28-35; Ac 7:60; 1Co 4:12; 1Pt 2:20-23; 3:9; Eph 5:1).

**12:15-16** — If this paragraph (vv. 14-21) situates us in the world, what do these two verses suggest about the ways we “own” the joys and hurts of those in the world? What do these two verses suggest about the kinds of people we relate to (if the phrase is “associate with lowly people”) or the kinds of interests in our society that we take up (if the phrase is “take on menial tasks”)?

Verse 16 sounds a lot like 11:25 & 12:3. By way of negation, Paul is laying out a powerful social vision. Christians are not to think themselves superior to non-Christian Jews (11:25) or fellow Christians (12:3) or pagans (12:16).

**12:17-18** — A call, and a realistic one at that, to be peacemakers as best we can in the world. Note the note of forethought, “think out ahead of time what is noble before all men.” It's worth pondering the generosity of Paul's thought — Php 4:8; Titus 1:12; 2:12. One of my favorite French Catholic commentators, Ceslas Spicq, calls Paul the architect of a “Christian humanism.” The conservative Reformed scholar J. Gresham Machen says much the same thing: Paul builds a new humanism not based on human autonomy, but on the grace of God.

**12:19-21** — Foregoing exacting justice on our own behalf (it helps to keep in mind that God's near-term provision for justice lies at the beginning of Rom 13, and his long-term provision for justice lies at the end of Rom 13). Everything will work out for the *right* — meanwhile, the pressure is off of us to insure cosmic justice. Instead, we model cruciform love: for the burning coals, see Prov 25:21-22, and consider the example of Elisha in 2Kg 6:20-23.

N.T. Wright is right, I think: “The ‘coals of fire’ are almost certainly intended as the burning shame of remorse for having treated someone so badly” (*New Interpreters Bible* 10.715).

**12:21** — It's not just a matter of not returning evil for evil (12:16), but wondrously and gloriously actually offering the power of cross-shaped lives as the antidote to evil. God defeated evil through the goodness of the cross — our surprising generosity and grace are a participation in his reclamation of that which was lost — it's a part of “winter working backwards.”

Ever seen this?