

# Lesson 20

(continued from Lesson 19)

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<sup>12</sup> Now if their fall *is* riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!

15. The Jewish rejection of Christ and their subsequent hardening meant riches for the Gentiles.

A. God used the wickedness of the faithless Jews to fulfill his own purposes of bringing blessings to the world through his Son – blessings for both Jew and Gentile alike.

16. What does “fullness” or “full inclusion” mean?

A. Whatever it means, it cannot mean that every Jew who ever lived will be saved because there are numerous examples in the Bible of faithless, wicked Jews who died in their sins.

a) In fact, Paul is writing these chapters to explain why God is faithful even though the majority of the Jews are lost.

B. The term “fullness” is **not** a numerical term.

a) Some teach that in the future the same number of Jews will be saved as were hardened – not the same people, just the same number.

C. The context can help us out here. Note that the “full inclusion” or “fullness” is contrasted with their fall and their failure.

a) Paul is saying that if their defeat (their loss) brought such blessings, what could we say about their victory—it must bring even more blessings!

b) The blessing of the Jews would mean that **all** (both Jew and Gentile) would be blessed.

<sup>13</sup> For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, <sup>14</sup> if by any means I may provoke to jealousy *those who are my flesh* and save some of them.

17. The Roman church was made up of both Gentiles and Jews. So far, Paul has been primarily talking to the Jews. He now addresses some remarks specifically toward the Gentiles.

A. As we will see, some of the Gentiles were arrogantly suggesting that God had rejected the Jews in favor of them and that they were now God's chosen people.

B. That is, they were falling in to the same self-justifying traps in which Paul had just accused the Jews of trusting.

C. Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. Paul here "magnifies" that position because he knows that by teaching the Gentiles he will also cause some of the Jews to turn and be saved.

18. Notice that Paul says that *some* (but not necessarily all) of the Jews will turn and be saved.

A. Paul does not seem to share the optimism that others have about *all* of the Jews one day being saved.

<p><sup>15</sup> For if their being cast away <i>is</i> the reconciling of the world, what <i>will</i> their acceptance <i>be</i> but life from the dead?</p>
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19. First, the word "will" – which indicates to some a predictive prophecy – is **not** in the Greek.

A. Paul is contrasting what their rejection means with what their acceptance *would* mean (if it occurred). He is not predicting that it will occur, but he hopes that it will occur.

20. Paul continues here with his same theme: If the world was blessed through the rejection of Jesus Christ by the faithless Jews, then how much more will the world be blessed if those faithless Jews now turn to Christ.

A. Remember that Paul (starting in verse 13) is now talking to the Gentiles.

a) He wants them to know that God has not rejected the Jews because they were Jews; he has rejected them because they were faithless—and the same thing could happen to the Gentiles.

B. God has **not** said "No more Jews. I will now only deal with Gentiles."

a) The only thing standing between faithless Jews and blessing is their unbelief and that is also true for faithless Gentiles.

b) Again, a primary theme of the entire book is that the Jews and Gentiles are in the same boat. Both groups are lost in their sins apart from Jesus Christ.

c) Premillennial commentators do everything they can do to put the Jews and the Gentiles in separate boats – the very thing that Paul was arguing against.

21. What does Paul mean when he says their acceptance will mean life from the dead?

A. Premillennialists teach that the resurrection will occur after the Jews turn to Jesus on a national scale.

a) But does that fit in with Paul's argument? Remember the context!

B. Paul is speaking here to Gentiles who thought God had permanently rejected the Jews in favor of them.

a) Paul is saying that when a formerly faithless Jew turns to Christ it is like that Jew was raised from death to life.

C. Although that is true for any Christian, it seems particularly true for the unbelieving Jew.

a) Think of the radical change experienced by such a person (and think of Paul's own example!).

b) Such a Jew now loves what he formerly hated. He now hates what he formerly loved. He is now accepted by the very God against whom he had been hardened.

D. How else can we describe the change from Saul to Paul except by a change from death to life? How else can we describe his radical transformation?

<sup>16</sup> For if the firstfruit <i>is</i> holy, the lump <i>is</i> also <i>holy</i> ; and if the root <i>is</i> holy, so are the branches.
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22. The illustration that Paul uses here is from Numbers 15:17–21.

A. When God brought the Israelites into the promised land to eat the bread of the land, they were instructed to offer unto him an offering of that bread.

B. This firstfruit of the bread guaranteed that God would continue to provide bread and its offering released the rest of the bread for ordinary consumption. The dedication of the part implied the dedication of the whole.

C. The first fruits of the dough and the root most likely represent Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The whole lump and the branches would then denote their descendants.

D. To say the Jews were holy means they were set apart to serve God.

a) Paul never denied that the Jews had a special position. Indeed, he had earlier in the book listed their many advantages. But those advantages did not guarantee blessings. The only path to blessings was through Jesus Christ.

b) The Gentiles were saying that the Jews no longer had these advantages. Paul denies this and by this illustration he reinforces his point that the Jews have not been cut off simply because they are Jews.

c) Indeed, if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were approved by God then any Jew can be approved by God. To say that God had rejected all of the Jews simply because they were Jews would mean that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had also been rejected.

E. Some think that the first fruits here refer to the first Jewish converts. This may be true but doesn't seem to fit as well with the context.

a) Paul, we recall, is trying to convince the Gentiles that the Jews have not been rejected by God because of their race. They have been rejected by God because of their lack of faith—something that could also happen to the Gentiles.

<sup>17</sup> 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, <sup>18</sup> do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, *remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.*

23. Paul now begins to develop the figure of the tree that he first mentioned in verse 16.

A. As in verse 16, the root of this tree denotes the patriarchs; those to whom the promises were first made.

B. The branches of the tree denote the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who were offered the promises on the condition of faith.

C. Those branches that were broken off denote the faithless Jews who were cut off from among the people. They are the sons of the kingdom who, in Matt. 8:12, Jesus said would be thrown into outer darkness.

D. The branches that were grafted in denote the Gentiles who had obtained the blessings through faith. These are the ones who Paul said in Eph. 2:13 had been brought near in the blood of Christ. They were now enjoying promises that had been initially offered to the Jews.

24. Paul's point is the same point he has been making in the preceding verses.

A. He wants to convince the Gentiles that they should not be filled with pride over their new found status. They were not to despise the Jews.

B. As Jesus said in John 4:22, salvation is from the Jews. Indeed, the Gentiles were branches that had been grafted in; they were not natural branches like the Jews.

a) If a natural branch could be removed for lack of faith, how much more easily could a grafted branch be removed?

25. Thus, the olive tree denotes those who had appropriated the promises through faith.

A. Those Jews who rejected Christ had been cut off from the tree. Those Gentiles who had accepted Christ had been grafted in.

B. (But was there room for both on one tree? Verse 23–24 will answer this question.)

<p><sup>19</sup> You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." <sup>20</sup> Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. <sup>21</sup> For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either.</p>
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26. Apparently there was quite a rift between the Jews and the Gentiles in the Roman church.

A. Romans 14–15 seems to support this. The Gentiles were passing judgment on the Jews who still kept some of the old law regarding food and special days.

B. Some of the Gentiles thought that Jews had been cast off for the sole reason of letting in the Gentiles as if there were only a set number of people who could be saved. (Now who do we know that teaches that?)

C. But this is not what happened as Paul has already said. The Jews who were cut off were faithless Jews. If they turned to Christ then they too could enjoy the blessings along with the faithful Gentiles. Remember, God wants everyone to be saved. Heaven does not have a membership limit.

27. The Jews were rejected because of their arrogant pride and faithlessness. The Gentiles can be rejected for the same reason.

A. If God did not spare the natural branches, then he certainly won't hesitate to cut off the grafted branches.

B. Can one lose one's salvation? Of course! What else could it mean to be grafted in and then to be cut off?

28. Although the Jews are called "natural branches" that does not mean that God is under any obligation to bless them if they are faithless.

A. According to Paul the natural branches could be cut off.

B. But aren't all of the Jews the sons of the covenant? Yes! But even that doesn't mean they must be blessed in their faithlessness.

a) In Acts 3:25 Peter tells his listeners that they are sons of the covenant yet in verse 15 he reminds them that they killed the Author of Life and need to repent.

b) Yes, the Jews had a special place in God's plan, but that special position did not unconditionally guarantee their salvation. They had advantages, but they were not *saving* advantages.

<p><sup>22</sup> Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in <i>His</i> goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.</p>
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29. Nowhere in the Bible is there a clearer statement that one can fall from God's grace.

A. The Gentiles to whom Paul is now speaking have been grafted into the tree and are enjoying the promised blessings of salvation from sin. However, they will be cut off, Paul promises, if they fail to continue in God's goodness.

B. How could that happen? They entered God's goodness when they obeyed the gospel through faith. Thus, they will fall from that kindness if they become faithless. Then they will experience not goodness but severity.

30. As Paul says, we should all note the goodness (or kindness) and severity of God.

A. Today many see God as a “God without wrath bringing men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministry of a Christ without a cross.”

B. In the words of one, they offer a feel good faith and a hot tub religion offering froth and folly without pain or gain.

C. Hell is a real place and those who choose to reject Christ and disobey God will one day find themselves there.

a) But could a loving God send people to Hell? The real question is could a loving God fail to send people to Hell if they rejected him and were faithless.

b) If there is a path to God apart from Jesus Christ then Jesus died for no reason. If the Hindus and the Muslims are saved apart from Jesus, then Jesus’ death on the cross was unnecessary. What would that tell us about how loving God is? If there is a path to God apart from Jesus, it would have been news to Jesus. He said that no man could come to the Father except by him. (John 14:6)

c) Would God be holy if he did not stand against evil? Would God be righteous if he did not condemn unrighteousness?

d) Those who end up in Hell will have no cause to blame God.

(1) Harold Brown has said that “Hell is the enduring monument to the freedom of the human will.”

e) Men choose the paths that they take—only one path leads to God. Men make their own choices.

(1) C. S. Lewis said that there are two types of people in the world: those who say to God “Your will be done” and those to whom God will one day say “Your will be done.”

f) As Paul suggests, we should always keep in mind both the severity and kindness of God.

g) Jesus was often severe in the gospels. Read, for example, Matthew 23, which has been described as the rolling thunder of God’s wrath.

(1) Do you want to know how God feels about hypocrisy and faithlessness? Look at how Jesus feels about it. Remember, in God there is no Christ-unlikeness.

<sup>23</sup> And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in

again.<sup>24</sup> 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?

31. Paul is telling the Gentiles that no one has been cut off permanently in the sense that they have no hope.

A. The faithless Jews were cut off because of their lack of faith. If they return to God in faith then God will accept them. Again, Paul is emphasizing that the issue is one of faith and not of race.

B. Those in verse 23 that had been cut off and could be grafted back in were those that Paul said earlier had been hardened by God. Question: What had to happen before they could be grafted back in? Did God need to remove the hardening? No.

a) Paul says that **they** had to leave their state of unbelief. It was something **they** had to do—not God. God had already done everything that was needed on his part.

b) Further, Paul says that this grafting back in will occur **if** (rather than **when**) the Jews return to God.

C. Does it sound to you like Paul was predicting a national scale conversion of the Jews?

a) Remember verse 14. There Paul said that it was his hope that he could save **some** of the Jews. Let's keep these verses in mind as we head toward verse 26 where we will read that "**all** Israel will be saved."

32. Paul here is again rebuking the arrogant Gentiles who thought that God had rejected the Jews in favor of themselves.

A. Paul reminds them that if they – who did **not** have all the Jewish privileges – could be grafted in to the promises, then the faithless Jews could certainly be grafted back in as well.

B. Paul reminds the Gentiles that this olive tree belongs to the Jews. They were the ones to whom the promises were first directed. They forfeited those promises when they rejected God and became faithless, but they could be grafted back in.

<sup>25</sup> 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.

33. Although this is a difficult passage, we can determine its meaning if we remember its context and consider its purpose.

A. What is its purpose? *Paul tells us* in the first half of the verse: He wants to make sure that the Gentiles do not become conceited over the fact that they have obtained the promises and the Jews have not.

B. Paul first reminds us that part of Israel has been hardened (or blinded).

a) What part? The part that is not the true Israel, the part that rejected Christ. That is the group of hardened Jews that Paul has been talking about for three chapters.

b) The remnant received the blessings and the rest were hardened. Those who were hardened were those who did not accept the promises on faith.

C. Paul tells us here though that a hardening or blindness has come upon part of Israel **until** the **fullness** of the Gentiles has come in. What does “until” mean here? What is the “fullness” of the Gentiles?

a) Well, some teach that the Jews have been kept from believing in Christ until some predetermined number of Gentiles has been saved. When all of the Gentiles that God wants to save are saved then God will remove the hardening and all of the faithless Jews will rush to Christ. But does this make sense? No.

b) First, as we have seen, the Jews are to blame for rejecting Christ; God is not to blame. No Jew can blame God for his or her own disbelief.

c) Second, there is not some fixed number of people that God wants to save. He makes it very clear that he wants to save everyone and is not willing that any should perish.

d) How many Gentiles does God want to save? Well, how many Gentiles are there? The answers are the same!

e) Thus, without yet being sure what the passage means, we now know at least one thing that it does not mean.

34. A hardening or blindness has come upon part of Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles come in.

A. The word “until” is used in two basic ways.

a) Sometimes it denotes something with a duration that then ends; that is, something happens **until** something else happens and then the first thing stops happening.

(1) “I will teach until the bell rings.”

(2) If this is the way that Paul is using the word “until”, then he is saying that a hardening has occurred and it will last until the Gentile fullness and then the hardening will stop. This may be what Paul means.

b) However, there is another way that the word “until” can be used. Sometimes “until” does **not** imply a change in circumstances when the event under consideration occurs.

(1) A teacher leaves her classroom and tells the students, “Stay in here until I get back.” Can they leave the room when she gets back?

(2) For another example, in Romans 5:13 Paul said that sin was in the world **until** the law came. This does not mean, however, that sin vanished when the Law of Moses arrived. He is just letting us know that it was there **before** the Law of Moses.

(3) In Acts 7:17–18 we read that the people in Egypt grew and multiplied **until** there arose a king who knew not Joseph. That does not mean that they quit multiplying when this king showed up.

(4) Of course, there are many other examples, but I think the point is clear. Namely, it is possible to interpret this passage in such a way that the hardening does **not** come to an end when the Gentile fullness occurs.

B. What about the “fullness” of the Gentiles?

a) First, I don’t think it has anything to do with a number or quantity of the Gentiles despite some modern translations that render it “full number”.

b) Recall what we said about verse 12. The “full inclusion” there did *not* denote a number. It was used instead to contrast the failure and loss of the faithless Jews with their status if they turned to God. That is, it contrasted loss with fullness.

(1) In verse 11, Paul contrasts the Jewish fall with the Gentile salvation. In the first part of verse 12, Paul contrasts the Jewish fall with the riches obtained by the world. In the middle of verse 12, Paul contrasts the Jewish failure with the Gentiles’ riches. At the end of verse 12, Paul contrasts the failure of the Jews with their fullness.

c) What is Paul contrasting here? He is contrasting Jewish hardness with Gentile fullness.

d) What then does the “fullness” mean? The Greek word is *pleroma* and it does *not* necessarily denote number.

(1) Paul uses the word in Romans 15:29 to describe the fullness of the blessing of Christ; again, number is not in view.

(2) In fact, the same word is used in Romans 13:10 where Paul says that love is the fulfilling of the law; it fills it, it completes it.

(3) The insertion of number (as in “full number” in some translations) into this verse is not warranted by the context or by Paul’s use of the word elsewhere.

e) What then is Paul saying?

(1) He is reminding the Gentiles that the hardness of the Jews allowed the Gentiles to receive the fullness of God’s blessings.

(2) He is not saying that the hardness would end when those blessings were received because obviously it had not. Gentiles were blessed and the Jews remained hardened.

f) Could “until” mean that the hardening ceased when the Gentiles received the fullness of the promises?

(1) Possibly. If it does, then it refers to the second hardening that we talked about in verses 7–10.

(2) Perhaps, God removed this judicial hardening of the faithless Jews when the Gentiles received the blessings. Remember, however, that the Jews who God hardened had already hardened themselves against him.

(3) Just because God removed this second hardening does not mean that Jews would remove their own self inflicted hardening. There is nothing here to indicate that a national scale conversion of the Jews will ever occur.

**g) The hardening of the Jews did not make them unbelievers; the Jews were hardened because they were already unbelievers.**

<sup>26</sup> 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; <sup>27</sup> For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.”

35. The Jews were complaining and the Gentiles were boasting. Paul had told the Jews that they had no right to complain, and he had told the Gentiles that they had no right to boast. Here he sums up his argument.

A. Why can't the Jews complain? Why can't the Gentiles boast? **The answer to each question is the same! All Israel will be saved.**

B. Which Israel does Paul have in mind here?

a) He is talking about the true, faithful Israel that he has been discussing all along. That group is the true Israel. That group is saved. The other Jews are not the true Israel. The faithless Jews are lost.

(1) (Romans 9:6) "For they are not all Israel who are of Israel."

b) The faithless Jews cannot say that God has rejected Israel. Why? Because ALL of the TRUE ISRAEL has been saved.

c) The Gentiles cannot say that God has rejected the Jews. Why? Because ALL of the TRUE ISRAEL has been saved.

36. Here is what Paul is saying:

A. If the faithless Jews turn to Christ, then they will be saved.

B. In this way, every single faithful Jew (the true Israel) will be saved according to the prophecy in Isaiah 59.

C. The Gentiles should be assured that God did not reject any of his people to let the Gentiles in.

D. The Jews who had been cast off are not without hope. They are simply like the Gentiles were before they came to Christ.

E. A faithless Jew who accepts Christ will become a real child of Abraham and, as part of the elect, will find acceptance by God in accordance with Isaiah's prophecy. (In John 8:39 Jesus told the faithless Jews that Abraham was **not** their father.)

37. Now doesn't that fit well with the context of the passage and the problem that Paul was dealing with?

A. But doesn't Paul teach that there is a day coming when the Jews on a national scale will turn to Christ and be saved?

B. Much of the denominational world thinks that God must bring the Jews to Christ on a national scale in order to be faithful to his promises to Abraham.

C. The most popular theory about this verse is that “all Israel” indicates the mass of Jews living on earth in the “end-time.” The full number of elect Gentiles will be gathered in. Afterward the mass of the Jews—Israel on a large scale—will be saved. This will happen just previous to, or at the very moment of, Christ’s return.

D. Let’s consider some of the many problems with such an interpretation:

a) The Greek word for “And so” does not mean “then” or “after that.” The rendering “Then all Israel will be saved” is wrong. In none of the other occurrences of this word in Romans, or anywhere else in the New Testament, does this word have that meaning. It means “so”, “in this manner”, or “thus.”

b) This theory also fails to do justice to the word “all” in “all Israel.” Does not “all Israel” sound very strange as a description of the (comparatively) tiny fraction of Jews who will still be living on earth just before, or at the moment of, Christ’s return? What about all of the Jews in the preceding generations who died without Christ? Was God faithless to them?

c) The context clearly indicates that in writing about the salvation of Israelites and Gentiles, Paul is not limiting his thoughts to what will take place in the future. He very definitely includes what was happening then. See especially verses 30, 31 and note the phrase “**you** were.”

d) Would it not be strange for God to single out for a very special favor—nothing less than salvation full and free—exactly that generation of Jews that will have hardened its heart against the testimony of the longest train of Christian witnesses, a train extending all the way from the days of Christ’s sojourn on earth—in fact, in a sense, all the way from Abraham—to the end of the world?

e) The reader has not been prepared for the idea of a mass conversion of Israelites. All along Paul stresses the very opposite, namely, the salvation, in any age (past, present, future) of a remnant. If Romans 11:26 actually teaches a mass conversion of Jews, would it not seem as if Paul is saying, “Forget what I told you previously”?

f) How could the passage from Isaiah 59:20–21 not occur until the end of the world when Peter in Acts 3:26 said that it occurred during the first century? God was turning the Jews from their wickedness in the first century through Peter’s proclamation of the gospel.

E. What is the truth about this passage?

- a) Although God made a promise to every descendant of Jacob those promises were conditioned on faith. To be Jacob's heir one must be a believer.
- b) Faithless Israelites have never been considered a part of God's chosen people. The prophets had said this over and over, so it was nothing new.
- c) Even Moses in Deut. 18:19 said that God would hold accountable those who did not hearken unto Jesus' words.
- d) There is an elect within Israel the nation that is based upon faith. Those elect are the real Israel. Those elect are the real children of Abraham. Those elect are the people from whom the faithless Jews were cut off. Those elect are the ones whom God foreknew and who have not been cast off. Those elect are the Israel who have **all** been saved.

<p><sup>28</sup> Concerning the gospel <i>they are</i> enemies for your sake, but concerning the election <i>they are</i> beloved for the sake of the fathers. <sup>29</sup> For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.</p>
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38. In this passage, Paul is considering the paradox of the Jews.

A. In one sense they were the enemies of God and in another sense they were beloved by God. No group typified this paradox more than those Jews who initially rejected Christ but later came to him in faith. Paul himself was a member of this group!

B. This was the group that Peter preached to in Acts 2 and who upon recognizing their guilt, repented and were baptized.

- a) Their rejection of Christ had brought God's blessings to the entire world.
- b) Their acceptance of Christ had brought them into the election; they became part of the true Israel to whom the promises were first given.

C. In fact, even the *faithless* Jews were paradoxical. Although they were enemies of God in that they rejected Christ and his gospel, no one could deny (as Paul had already asserted) that the Jews had a special place in the plan of God.

a) Paul has earlier listed the many advantages of the Jews—faithful and faithless alike. In this sense every Jew was beloved for the sake of their forefathers to whom the promises had originally been given. Now, however, they found themselves as enemies of God.

D. That hostility however cannot separate them from the advantages that Paul had listed earlier.

a) Even as enemies they were still physical descendants of Abraham, they still had the law, they still had the prophets, they still had the covenants, and they were still members of the race through which the Messiah had entered the world. God's gifts and God's call are irrevocable.

b) The Jews had many advantages and those advantages remained even in their faithlessness, but those advantages did not guarantee blessings. (When Paul listed the advantages in Chapter 9 he was talking about **faithless** Jews.)

c) God's promises to the patriarchs have **not** be revoked. God has completely fulfilled them with the remnant that has turned to Christ in faith.

<sup>30</sup> For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, <sup>31</sup> even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. <sup>32</sup> For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.

39. Paul's grand conclusion is that the Gentiles and the Jews are in the same boat.

A. Every difference between the Jews and the Gentiles with regard to their salvation has been removed in Christ. The Gentiles started off in disobedience but have now received mercy. The Jews became disobedient, and through that disobedience caused blessings to be brought to the world, but they are now able to receive mercy as well.

B. There is nothing in verse 30 that indicates that every Gentile will be saved. Similarly, there is nothing in verse 31 that indicates that every Jew will be saved. What Paul is saying is what he said earlier:

a) All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. All are in need of God's mercy. All, Jew and Gentile alike, have been disobedient.

C. Not every Jew rejected Christ, but those under discussion here are the ones who did reject Christ. Their disobedience allowed God's mercy to be extended to the Gentiles.

D. God's mercy to the Gentiles is also intended to bring mercy to the Jews as Paul explained in verses 13–14. (It was Paul's hope that faithless Jews who became jealous of the blessings being enjoyed by the Gentiles would turn to Christ and be saved as well.)

E. Again we see how God uses man's wickedness for His own good purposes. He used disobedience as a means to extend mercy to all. Did God cause the disobedience? Of course not! He merely used it to bring about something good. As we read in John 3:17, God did not send Christ to condemn the world but to save the world.

<sup>33</sup> 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! <sup>34</sup> "For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?" <sup>35</sup> "Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?" <sup>36</sup> For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom *be* glory forever. Amen.

40. Paul ends his comments regarding the Jewish problem with a hymn of praise to God's wisdom and knowledge that is pieced together from several passages in the Old Testament.

A. God had granted Paul a glimpse into his plan and Paul was left in wonder and awe. Who are we to question the plan of God? Who are we to complain that God is not fair? Who are we to say that God cannot hold us accountable for our sin? Have we given something to God that put him in our debt? Can we read his mind? God consults no man. We don't know his plans unless he reveals them to us. No one can appear before God with pretensions.

B. We are all in need of God's mercy, we are all in the same boat—and that is the theme of these three chapters.