

The Roman Pilgrimage (Part 16)



Part 16/20

The Roman Pilgrimage
By Derek Prince

This is the fourth and final session in this four part series of teachings on Romans 9–11. At the end of the third session we had just got somewhere into the beginning of chapter 11. Paul had pointed out that there is amongst the Jewish people a remnant of believers according to the election of grace. There always has been a remnant, there's never been a time when there hasn't been Jewish people who believed in Jesus as their Messiah from the first century until this time. Sometimes it's been a small remnant, at this time it's increasing rapidly. And quite soon it's no longer going to be just a remnant.

I want to speak for a moment tonight about the word grace. I was preaching once in a church which happened to call itself Grace Church. I had forgotten that fact and I made this statement. I said, "Generally speaking, the people who talk the most about grace know the least about it." Of course, I had to apologize afterwards. But that is so often true. What we would call Fundamentalists or Evangelicals or Pentecostals talk so much about grace and sometimes they know very little about it. They say, "We're not under the law", but they're under their own little law. Each group has its own set of rules that you've got to keep to be whatever it is that you want to be, without going into details.

Grace is very different from that. And in this 11th chapter, speaking about this remnant that's there by grace, Paul says in verse 6:

> "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace."

That's extremely important. If you can earn it, it's not grace. If you deserve it, it's not grace. Grace is not earned and it's not deserved, it's received only by one way, by what in one word? Faith, that's right. Paul said by grace you have been saved through faith.

And then he said and that's not of yourselves. You can't even boast about the fact that you have faith, because God gave you the faith by which to receive His grace.

And so, grace begins where human ability ends. And God is continually thrusting us out beyond the level of our own ability that we may move out into His grace. If I knew this

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evening exactly how to preach this message, I wouldn't need God's grace. But I don't and so I'm depending on God's grace. One of the hardest things for humanity is to be dependent on God because the very essence of the fall in the garden was the desire to be independent of God. And that has been borne into every descendant of Adam. And it's the hardest thing for us to overcome, it's the hardest thing for God to deal with in us, is to bring us to the place where we're willing to be dependent on God and on His grace.

Ruth was recently in a Catholic hospital, as she was telling you earlier, and one time just after surgery when she was feeling a little bit down and wanted to read the Bible but didn't have the strength, the nun in charge of the ministry of the hospital, a woman about my age—if you can guess what that is—came around and saw Ruth with the Bible and offered to read it to her. They entered into a beautiful time of fellowship and in the end this nun shared with Ruth the lesson that she'd received from a recent retreat that she'd attended, conducted by a Trappist monk. You know, the Trappists aren't allowed to speak but they are allowed to go out and share what they've learned when they weren't speaking inside the monastery. And this nun shared with Ruth three questions which have just preoccupied both her and me ever since. I mean, they go so much to the root of things, they deal with this desire to be independent. The three questions are:

Are you willing not to be secure?

Are you willing not to be esteemed?

And, are you willing not to be in control?

I think I got it in the wrong order. Are you willing not to be in control? Are you willing not to be esteemed. And, are you willing not to be secure. I tell you, that third one, that's not easy. I think I've come to the place where I'm willing not to be esteemed but not to be in control and not to be secure—but that's the essence of being dependent. You aren't in control, your security doesn't depend on you. You have to depend moment by moment on the grace of God.

That's grace. It's supernatural. Grace doesn't operate on a natural plane. If you can do it on the natural plane by your own natural ability, you don't need grace.

So, I put this question to you. Are you willing to accept God's grace on God's condition? Are you willing to move out beyond the level of what you can handle, of what you know how to do? You'll notice basically that all the people that were truly called of God in the Bible immediately said, "I can't do it." Moses, Jeremiah, no matter who it was. I tell you this, if you ever meet anybody who says, "I was called by God, I knew I could do it," they weren't called by God. Because, God only calls people who don't know how to do it and know they don't know. And that's how He gets them depending on His grace.

And what has generally happened to the church is new movements have begun depending on the grace of God and then they become so clever and so efficient that they can do it without His grace. And if you can do it without God's grace, I'll tell you something, you'll do it without His grace. He doesn't force His grace on anybody. It's received freely by faith or not at all.

In Hebrews 4:16—I'm not going to turn there but it says:

> "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Bear in mind when you are seeking God in your need, you're coming to a throne, the throne of the one who rules the universe. Bear that in mind. But it's a throne of grace. It's a throne that makes God's grace available to you. And the writer says let us come boldly that we main obtain two things: Mercy and grace to help in time of need. I am personally convinced that everybody who comes to obtain mercy and grace receives it. The only reason people don't receive mercy and grace is they don't come. Because, God has made it available to every one of us. The first thing we need is mercy to cover up all our failures and transgressions, and then we need grace to enable us to move out in the will of God beyond the level of our own ability.

God doesn't ever force us to do things but He knows what we're going to do because He knows us from inside out. I want to direct your attention to just one passage in Genesis 18:19 in regard to Abraham. This is what God said:

> "I have chosen him [but the Hebrew says literally 'but I have known him'] in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, in order that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about."

You see, God never forced Abraham to do anything, but He chose him because He knew He could trust him to do what

He called him to do. "I've known him that he'll do it." What did He ask of Abraham? That he would teach his children and his household the ways of the Lord, that God might bring upon Abraham the promise that He'd made. So, God made the promise freely, He didn't compel Abraham, but He knew Abraham that he would do the things that would entitle him to the promise. Do you see what I'm saying? So when God makes a commitment to you, He never compels you to do anything. But, He knows you, He knows that He can trust you to do the very thing that He's called you to do.

I think God's trust in humanity is astonishing. When I think what God entrusted to me, to a certain extent, God has entrusted to me the ability to equip thousands of workers for the Lord around the earth. What a responsibility! My constant prayer is that I may be faithful. But when I think about the virgin Mary, this young girl in a little village, probably not more than 15 years old. And God sent an angel and said, "You're going to become the mother of the Son of God." Suppose Mary had been afraid, the whole plan of salvation would have failed. Think of what rested on one young woman of 15 in an obscure village in an obscure land! And then think what is resting on me? What has God trusted me with? Because, God has never trusted you with something that He doesn't know that you can do by His grace. That's what He said about Abraham. "I've known him, he'll do it." What has God said about each one of you? "I've known him or I've known her. He or she will do it."

You know, that motivates me much more than a set of rules. The fact that God has got something for me to do and He's trusting me to do it. I can easily be tempted to break rules but I really don't want to fail God's trust. I'm overwhelmed by the trust that God puts in us that He knows our frame, He knows we're dust and ashes, and yet He's chosen us. That's all part of this wonderful teaching about God's grace.

And then let's move on. Maybe we better turn to 2 Timothy 2:19, because it's in the outline and if we don't turn there you'll wonder why it was in the outline. So, it's just a good scripture, 2 Timothy 2:19:

> "Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal..."

Now, there's a double seal on God's foundation. The first seal is:

> "The Lord knows who are His."

The second is:

> "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness."

The second one is easy to understand. If you claim to belong to Jesus Christ, you've got to abstain from ungodly, evil behavior. But the first one is a secret seal, the Lord knows those who are His. We don't. I don't know everybody who is God's, nor do you. But God knows. And that's what keeps us is the fact that God knows us, He's set His seal upon us.

All right, let's turn back to Romans 11 and just look at verses 7–8 for a moment. Now he's still dealing with this problem of why Israel didn't believe. If you have followed with me, I think you'll see that Paul was continually wrestling with this issue, "Why didn't my Jewish brothers and sisters believe in their own Messiah?" And so he said in verse 7:

> "What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened..."

Those who were chosen in the literal Greek is "the election", those whom God foreknew and chose, they have obtained it. And the rest, he says, were hardened. And then he quotes from Isaiah in verse 8:

> "GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY."

And then he quotes from the Psalm of David, Psalm 69. David says:

> "LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP, AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM. LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT, AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER."

That's because they hardened their hearts against God. They rejected the truth of God. And this is one of the most frightening facts of the spiritual life, that if we persistently and obstinately reject the truth that God has brought to us, God will withdraw from us the ability to understand the truth. And God will open up to us some kind of spirit that will take in—that's the spirit of error and deception. I think that's one of the most terrible judgments that can come

upon those who deliberately reject God's revealed truth. There are two examples of it which are given here in the outline. In 1 Samuel 16:14, this is the story of Saul, the King of Israel who rejected God's revealed purpose, turned against it. And it says about him in 1 Samuel 16:14:

> "Now the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and an evil spirit from the Lord terrified him."

Can you absorb that? God permitted an evil spirit to have access to Saul because he had rejected the truth. That frightens me. I continually ask myself am I hardening myself against the truth? I don't want God to take His Spirit from me and release an evil spirit instead. See, Satan doesn't have any power to do anything that God doesn't permit him to do. But God can permit Satan to release an evil spirit against us if we persistently reject the truth.

And then there's a warning in 2 Thessalonians 2 of what is going to happen, and is already happening, I believe, at the close of this age. 2 Thessalonians 2:10–12. This whole chapter is really about the coming of the antichrist and how the way is being prepared and what he's going to do. And it says in verse 10 and following:

> "He will come with all deception and wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved."

Isn't that frightening? If we don't receive the love of the truth then God is going to deal with us. And we're going to come under deception. And then it says:

> "And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness."

I believe that is already happening. I believe God is permitting a deluding spirit to come upon various sections of the church which have deliberately rejected the revealed truth of God. Especially upon ministers and leaders who are responsible for these errors. And when that deluding spirit comes upon any person, that person can no longer see the truth, they lose the ability. But Paul is dealing with his own Jewish brothers and he says that's what happened to my brothers and sisters, because they had all the prophets century after century, then they had John the Baptist, finally they had the Messiah, then they had the apostles. And having rejected that, God permitted them to come under a spirit of blindness and stupor and they were not any longer able to see.

To me, that's not just an historical experience for Israel, that's a frightening fact about God's dealings.

And then if we go back to Romans 11, in the quotation from the Psalm of David it says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap." I just want to point out to you from the history of Josephus, the war of the Romans against the Jews, that it so happened that when the Roman armies besieged and invaded Jerusalem, it was the Passover season and therefore, Jews from all over the land had gathered in Jerusalem and were trapped there. So what should have been their table, God's provision for them, became their trap. Just to see the reality of this, and of course, Paul wrote these words before the event actually happened.

So, going back now to Romans 11 and going on from verse 11, we'll just read through that rather quickly.

> "I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be!"

You remember what we say for that? Perish the thought.

> "But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous."

So Paul says had they fallen irretrievably? And the answer is perish the thought. May it never be. Their fall is temporary, not permanent. But it's lasted a long while nonetheless.

Then Paul goes on:

> "Through their transgressions salvation has come to the Gentiles..."

That's one of those amazing mysteries of God that the rejection of the Messiah and His crucifixion opened the way for salvation to come to the entire Gentile world. We see this illustrated in two passages of Matthew. Matthew 10 is where Jesus sent out his first apostles and He told them only to go to their own people. Matthew 10:5 and following:

> "These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them, saying, 'Do not go in the

> way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any cities of Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'"

So the first apostolic sending forth in the ministry of Jesus, they received specific instruction only go to the Jews. Because, God had ordained the Jewish people were to receive the first offer of the gospel.

But after the death and resurrection of Jesus, right at the end of Matthew's gospel, in Matthew 28, Jesus revised those orders and He said right at the end of Matthew 28:18–19:

> "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations [all the Gentiles]...'"

So Israel had the first offer, they refused; because of their refusal and their rejection of the Messiah the opportunity for salvation was extended to all other nations. They refused, they lost the kingdom because they rejected the king. They wanted the kingdom, they believed the kingdom was for them but they rejected the king. And see, that is a lesson for the church. If we reject the king we lose the kingdom, the kingdom is taken from us.

Just reading Matthew 21, the parable of the vinedresser, Matthew 21:43, Jesus said this to the Jewish people:

> "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it."

You see, the qualification for the kingdom is fruit. Any group that does not produce the fruit forfeits the kingdom. What was the nation to which the kingdom was offered? It was not America nor Britain nor Russian, but it was the church, a new nation, a holy nation. But, the church only qualifies to be the custodian to the kingdom as long as what? We bring forth the fruit. Once we fail to bring forth the fruit we don't qualify any longer for the kingdom and the kingdom can be taken away and restored to the Jewish people.

If you turn to Acts 1 just for a moment, right at the beginning of the book of Acts after the resurrection of Jesus, one of the final questions that His disciples asked Him, one that was obviously right at the front of their minds, in Acts 1:6:

> "And so when they had come together they were asking Jesus, saying, 'Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?'"

Some people say the kingdom will never be restored to Israel but I believe if that were true, Jesus would have said it will never be restored. But what he said was something else has got to happen first. What was the something else?

> "He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed in His own authority, but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.'"

So once the offer of the kingdom had been extended to all nations, it had to reach all nations, it had to reach every part of the earth before the age could close. And if you'd like to look at one of my favorite verses with me, Matthew 24:14, Jesus explained:

> "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come."

So once Israel forfeited the kingdom and the message was sent to all other nations, then the age cannot close until all other nations have received the message. So that's what Paul means when he says "through the fall of the Jewish people salvation has come to other nations."

Turning back now to Romans 11, reading verse 11 again:

> "And did they stumble so as to fall [irretrievably]? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles [to the other nations] to make them jealous."

And this is something that Paul emphasizes. The way that the other nations receive and embrace the gospel should make the Jews jealous. And I have to say frankly I think we've done a very poor job of making the Jews jealous. I

don't want to go into that, I talked about it in a previous session.

Then verse 12:

> "Now if their transgressions be riches for the world, and their failure be riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!"

If all these blessings have come to the other nations through their transgressions, what will come when they're restored? That's what Paul is asking. You see, how completely we're missing the purposes of God if we don't align ourselves with His plan for the restoration of Israel, because the fullness of God's blessing will not come to other nations until Israel is restored.

And then it says:

> "I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them."

See again, Paul wants to bring forth a Gentile church that will so enjoy the blessings of God and demonstrate the presence of God that the Jews will say, "We want what they have." And I've seen a few situations like that. We had a meeting in our own city, Fort Lauderdale, in our local church there which we invited the local Jewish community to attend. And they sent, I think, one rabbi and I think about 100 came. Later on we had some meetings in a large theater where about eight or nine hundred Jewish people came. But I think of this particular situation, I got on the platform and I was dancing to praise the Lord and the rabbi danced with me. See? Once he saw something worth having, he wanted it. And I thought to myself, "You see, he's the natural branch. It really belongs to him and he smells oil and says this is what we ought to have had." I don't say the rabbi became a believer but at least he got a little scent of something.

But how often, honestly, how often has the church really done anything to make the Jews jealous? Let me tell you, basically the Jewish people believe in enjoying themselves. I tell people, "If a Jew gets happy, he has to dance." I mean, there's no way Jewish people can be really happy without dancing. If you go to Israel, they're the most dancing people anywhere. And so, don't restrain yourself in order to please the Jews. Turn loose and let them see you're really happy and it will speak to them.

Anyhow, that's just a little by the way, we won't get into that now.

Going back to Romans 11, this is now an exciting verse, verse 15:

> "For if their rejection be the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?"

Through the rejection of the Jewish people the Gentiles had the opportunity to be reconciled with God. When the Jews are reconciled themselves, what will it be but life from the dead? That's a profound statement. I tell you what I see, you may not agree. I see a Gentile civilization committing suicide. I see the civilization that we're in today committing suicide. Destroying the earth, destroying ourselves, building armaments that can wipe out the human race 250 times over. What's going to change it? I believe the restoration of Israel to their Messiah. I believe that's going to produce cosmic changes. I believe that's the hope of the earth.

If I'm right, and I mean, I don't ask you to believe I'm right. But if I'm right you'll see how important this message is, how desperately necessary it is for Gentile Christians to see what's involved in the restoration of the Jewish people, because it's in our best interests. We are never going to get what God intended the whole world to have until the Jews are back in their place and back in a right relationship with the Lord. I believe there's a kind of principle that every nation has its right place and only when nations are in their right place will things go right with the earth. And the first nation that God begins with is always Israel. When Israel are back in their right place and in a right relationship with God, then everything else on the earth will get sorted out. Until then there's going to be confusion. That's my understanding of this scripture.

We'll move on. Then it says in verse 16:

> "And if the first piece of dough be holy, the lump is also; and if the root be holy, the branches are too."

That's taken from the ceremonies of the law of Moses. If you dedicate something to the Lord, you're offering a little piece of it to the Lord, the whole thing is holy. So, if a little firstfruits of the Jewish people have been offered to the

Lord, that means the whole nation is holy. It may have lost its holiness but it's potentially there.

And then Paul goes in verse 17:

> "If some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you."

That's so important at this time. Paul is writing now specifically to believers from a Gentile background. And he says, remember it's not your olive tree. The olive tree is God's people from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob onwards. You didn't belong in that olive tree but some of the branches were unbelieving and got broken off. You've been grafted in among them. But bear in mind you don't support the tree. The tree supports you. Don't be arrogant toward the Jewish people.

If you look at the history of the church, especially in Europe, you'd have to say that instruction just got left out. Because, the attitude of the church and primarily in Europe but not exclusively, has been one of almost unbridled arrogance toward the Jewish people from about the 5th century onward. It's a pity that they didn't read the letter to the Romans. And, I'd have to say it's a particular pity that the Roman church didn't read the letter to the Romans. Because, history would have been very different.

Going on, verse 19:

> "You will say then, 'Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.'"

They fell, they were unbelieving, and here am I, I'm a believer, I'm in the tree. Paul says that's true:

> "Quite right. They were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand [only] by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear..."

I wonder if the church has got that message, "Do not be conceited, but fear." Why?

> "...for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you."

You remember what the requirement for the kingdom is? What is it? Fruit. No fruit, you forfeit the kingdom. God is not a respecter of persons. Israel forfeited the kingdom because they didn't bring forth the fruit. Any group on earth that does not bring forth the fruit will forfeit the kingdom. Is that a real danger for some sections of the church? I would have to say it's a very real imminent danger.

Then we come to verse 22:

> "Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you [Gentile believers], God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off."

It's very plain language. You stand by faith as long as you bring the fruit. But if you cease to live in faith and if you fail to bring forth the fruit, you will be cut off just as much as the Jewish branches were cut off.

I want to say, behold or consider the kindness and severity of God. There is a great deal of preaching today which speaks only about the kindness of God and doesn't deal at all with the severity. It's like a coin which has two sides. One side is kindness, the other side is severity. But you know that if you deface one side of a coin, the coin becomes valueless. And if we present the message of God that only speaks of His kindness and not of His severity, it's a valueless coin, it has no more value. We've got to be faithful to God.

I was in a meeting in Southeast Asia with Ruth two or three years ago. The message was basically on healing. An American preacher, a man I know, a man I respect, and a man I love—it was an excellent message on how to be healed for people that knew the Bible and believed in Jesus. But at the end, to this large group of mainly Chinese people, he said, "Now, if you want all these blessings, come forward and we'll pray for you." Not one word was spoken about repentance. Most of them were involved in idol worship, they had all sorts of charms and talismans on them. Nothing was said about that. And then Ruth and I, being amongst the people on the platform, got turned loose to pray for them. Well, I tell you, it was confusion because, first of all, we couldn't communicate with them in their own language; and secondly, they hadn't met the conditions. So simply to say come forward and get blessed, even if it's

said with the best intention and the kindest heart, is to create confusion. Because, you cannot keep one foot in Satan's kingdom and one foot in the kingdom of God and be blessed. You become a split personality. Is that negative preaching? I've heard that kind of preaching dismissed as negative. It's not negative, it's just the other side of the coin. Remember, there are two sides to the coin: God's kindness and His severity.

All right, going on. Verse 23:

> "And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief [this is Jewish people] will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again."

So that's a very positive statement. They are not excluded forever.

And then it goes on, now addressing the Gentile—and please bear in mind that I'm a Gentile.

> "For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more shall these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?"

You see, that gives us pause for thought. I am not by any means an expert in horticulture, there may be somebody here who is. But the principle of grafting, as I understand it, is you take an uncultivated stalk and you graft in a fruitful branch. And so the life of the uncultivated stock then flows through the fruitful branch and brings forth fruit. But Paul says what God has done in getting the Gentiles in is contrary to nature. Because He's taken an unfruitful branch and grafted it into a fruitful stock which is contrary to all principles of grafting. Is that right? Somebody who knows something about grafting, am I speaking correctly? So, we were unfruitful branches and contrary to nature, God grafted us in to the fruitful olive tree which is God's historic people going back to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. What Paul is saying is if God could do that for uncultivated branches, it's much easier for Him to graft the cultivated branches back again. See what he's saying? That should encourage us, those of us who are praying for Israel, because it's much more of a miracle that Gentiles get saved than the Jews get saved. Jews are just getting back into their own tree; Gentiles are being put into a tree that they never belonged to. Can you accept that? It's true whether you can accept it or not. I'm aware that in a way it's rather different from the usual emphasis.

I have a background, a long background in various sections of the church. I was part of a movement—I still am in a sort of way—where we were taught "We've got it all." I am so tired of that phrase, please don't use that to me again. I remember I was in a little Pentecostal church in Denmark and this dear precious widow who was poor and sick and really depressed said in Danish, "We've got it all." I looked at her and I said, "Dear Lord, if that is all, it isn't much." I really was concerned for the woman but I thought, "Lord, if that's all, I'm really not excited."

Brothers and sisters, we don't have more than a small fraction of what God has for us. We're just paddling in the margin of a vast ocean. Let's not deceive ourselves by telling us we've got it all. We've got the full gospel. Well, what are we doing with it? I tell people every now and then when they say to me, "I got it all when I was born again." I say, "Well, if you got it all, where is it all, let's see it. Just don't tell us, show us." That's a very dangerous attitude. I've had to kind of preach myself out of it because I was brought up in that particular section of the ministry, "We've got it all. We've got the full gospel." Dear Lord.

Now we're coming to something exciting which is God's program to close the age. There are various different passages in scripture which deal with this but here in the end of the 11th chapter of Romans from verse 25 onwards, Paul outlines very briefly certain things that must take place as the age comes to a close. He says, first of all, in verse 25:

> "I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed..."

The Old King James Version says "ignorant." Some people have read it, "I do not want you to be ignorant brethren." But anyhow, God sets no premium on ignorance. It's interesting if you read the writings of the apostles, how many times they were struggling with ignorance. I don't think I ever realized the power of ignorance until I went to Pakistan and preached there with 80 percent of women illiterate, sixty some percent of men illiterate, without any background in western knowledge or truth or science or the Bible. And preaching to them was like there was a great vast wall of ignorance. It seemed so hopeless to break through that wall. But the power of God did break through. I think we had in one week about 8,000 people that stood and prayed the sinner's prayer. I'm not saying they all got

saved but they all stood to pray the prayer. One third of them were probably Muslims. But I never had appreciated the awful darkness of ignorance until I'd been there.

And then I came back and I saw how many times the apostles were fighting against ignorance, ignorance, ignorance. God sets no premium on ignorance. I'm not talking about education. Education is a two edged sword. It's partly good and partly not. But ignorance is a terrible evil. And you don't have to attend a university to be set free from ignorance, let me tell you that.

Going back to verse 25:

> "For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery..."

Now a mystery in the New Testament is something that has been kept secret by God but is now opened up. So, a mystery needs no longer to be mysterious, you understand? A mystery is one of God's secrets which He's seen fit to reveal to us in the church age. "I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery." Now, here's the mystery, first of all:

> "...lest you be wise in your own estimation..."

Work through this chapter on your own and see how many times Paul warns against arrogance and conceit. It's very interesting.

> "...that [now here is the mystery] a partial hardening has happened to Israel..."

It's never been a total hardening. As I said, there have always been Jews in every generation who have acknowledged Jesus as their Messiah. It's always been only partial. A partial hardening has happened to Israel. And then we get to the word until. And wherever the Bible speaks about God's rejection of Israel, it always follows with a phrase like "until". In other words, it is not permanent.

> "...until the fullness [I prefer to say the full number] of the Gentiles has come in..."

So, the full restoration of Israel will not take place until every single Gentile whom God has foreknown and chosen has heard and responded to the gospel. You see, it's the last are first and the first are last. Israel were the first but they lost their place. So, the message was sent out to all other nations and Israel are last. Only when all other nations have responded will Israel come back in their fullness.

Ruth and I were talking to a married couple a few years ago. The husband was a Presbyterian, the wife was Jewish and was not a believer in Jesus but very sympathetic. They had heard some of my teaching on this theme and they had a meal with us and they said, "Now, is this what you believe?" I explained to them basically I felt that the gospel had to be proclaimed to every nation, every people, tribe and tongue have got to hear the gospel before the full restoration of Israel can take place. And this Jewish lady looked at me and she said, "Well, I wish you'd get on with the job!" She got the message. Unfortunately, at that time at least she didn't receive the full message of the Messiah.

So, see, our ministry, as Ruth was describing it earlier, we've got a foot in both camps. Because we are to the best of our ability doing everything we can to proclaim the good news of the kingdom to every nation on earth, to every language group, to every tribal group. We can't do it but we can equip those who can do it.

But, at the same time we have a home in Jerusalem which is our faith statement that Israel is going to be restored. So, here we are. I believe both. I believe the full gospel, I mean, I really mean the full gospel has got to come to every nation on earth. And I believe at the same time the Holy Spirit is preparing the hearts of the Jewish people as never before for 19 centuries to turn back to their Messiah.

When I was in Israel in l948 when the nation was born, if you talked to some Jewish people about Jesus they would turn around and spit. That was their reaction. But since the 6 day war in l967, basically there has been a dramatic change in the attitude of the Jewish people to Jesus. Somebody told me more books proportionately are written about Jesus in Israel than in any other nation today. And we have friends in this sort of upper level of Jerusalem society: a lawyer, an architect, an engineer. And when they come to us and we give them a cup of coffee or whatever it is, they'll sit around and sit and sit and we say to ourselves, "Why don't they go?" Do you know why? Because they're waiting for us to tell them about miracles, how God answers our prayers. And as long as you want to talk to Jewish people about the supernatural, they will listen. The Jews require a sign, a supernatural sign.

But that wouldn't have been true 40 years ago. There's a change. For many, many centuries—you know the Hebrew word for Jesus is Yeshua, and the last letter is that a, it's called an I in Hebrew. Well, they would never write that letter, they would call him Yeshu. He's the Gentile Messiah,

He doesn't belong to us. Today the name Yeshua is being used widely again amongst the Jewish people. You can't realize what a revolution that is until you know how many centuries it's not been happening.

So let me say this, the gospel of the kingdom is going to be proclaimed to every nation. Jesus said it would. He said this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed in every nation on earth. If He said it will, it will. No matter what the devil does, no matter what the politicians say, no matter how the experts pontificate; it will be proclaimed to every nation on earth.

And, at the same time, God is preparing the heart of the Jewish people. And I personally believe that when they turn, ultimately it will be in one day. Just like the nation politically was born in one day, the nation will be reborn in one day. I also personally believe that Jesus will have a personal interview with His Jewish people. If you listen to the testimonies of Jewish people who have found the Messiah, most of them have come to Him by a direct personal revelation. Jesus is a little jealous of them. He says, "I want the privilege of revealing myself to my brothers." I personally am inclined to believe from prophecies in Ezekiel and Hosea that there's going to be a rendezvous between Jesus and the Jewish remnant somewhere maybe in the Negev, who knows. And He's going to reveal Himself to them.

Just as Joseph revealed himself to his brothers. There's the most beautiful parallel in the story of Joseph. I don't know whether you think about it. Joseph was alienated from his brothers, abandoned, they thought he died. He was in Egypt and he became totally Egyptianized. He dressed like an Egyptian, he spoke Egyptian, there was no evidence that he was still Jewish. But in the hour of their need, his brothers had to come to him and fulfill the dream which had made them so angry years before, they bowed down before him. And they were talking Hebrew to one another and didn't know that Joseph understood. But he understood everything that they said. And he put them through all sorts of things to bring them to the place of total dependence on him. And then it says he could restrain himself no longer and he sent all the Egyptians out of the house and then he revealed himself. He said, "I'm Joseph."

See, that's what happened to Jesus. As far as the Jewish people are concerned, He's become totally Gentilized. They don't see Him as a Jew any longer. For most Jewish people, Jesus is a statue that Christians worship in a church. And they don't like it. But that's changing. God is softening their hardened hearts, preparing them. A gentle rain of the Holy Spirit is beginning to fall and it's softening that hard soil that's been unresponsive for centuries.

If you want to be excited, get excited about that. I'll tell you something that happened to me just recently this summer when we were in Jerusalem. I was awake about 2 A.M. in the morning, I wasn't troubled about anything, I was just awake. And I suddenly got the impression that I was experiencing what Jesus was experiencing. There was a sense of excitement. I felt Jesus is excited. And because Jesus was excited, all heaven was excited. It only lasted a few seconds. The reason Jesus was excited was because He was about to be reconciled with His brothers after 19 centuries of alienation.

See, it's a good thing to empathize with the Lord. So much of our motivation is carnal, we've got to do it, God said to do it and I'm going to do it. Well, praise God, that's good. But there's a much better motivation which is you have His motivation in your heart.

The Jewish people are not easy to love. I hope you'll forgive me for saying that. I remember once when I was still in the British army a Catholic sergeant said to a Jewish woman sergeant in my presence, "I love the Jews." And she said to him, "You love them at a distance." When you get close they're not always easy to love. But you know what I love? I love loving them when they're not easy to love. When they're really awkward and ornery, that's when I enjoy loving them.

We have a little meeting with two Jewish couples in Jerusalem, we meet weekly to pray, it's one of the best meetings we've ever had in all our ministry. Six of us get together and we pray like one person. One day we were sitting there and discussing the ultra Orthodox. I mean, they are not easy to love. And we were kind of pulling them to pieces and the Spirit fell on one of these young Jewish women. She got a little prophetic message from Jesus. She said, "I know they're funny but I love them." And what a warning that was. I know they're funny but I love them. So bear that in mind. They may be funny but Jesus loves them.

So going on with this, verse 26:

> "...and all Israel will be saved..."

Did you hear that. I pointed out before all Israel is the chosen remnant, it's not all Israel that's now in being.

> "...as it is written, 'THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB. AND THIS IS

> MY COVENANT WITH HIM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.'"

God has made a covenant commitment that the Redeemer will come to Israel and take away their sins and the whole nation will be saved.

> "From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."

I've heard that message quoted so many times about spiritual gifts and ministries. It's true, but bear in mind that it's said initially about God's gift and calling to the Jewish people. They are irrevocable. Nothing is ever going to cancel them.

And then Paul goes on:

> "For just as you were once disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, so these also now have been disobedient, in order that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy."

So the mercy we receive is to bring mercy to Israel.

And then he says:

> "For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all."

Isn't that an astonishing statement? God has got us all penned in the prison of disobedience, Jews or Gentiles, no matter whether we're Russians or American or Chinese, we're all disobedient. God has got us shut up, but He's shut us up there in order that He might show mercy. Isn't that just like God?

And then we come to this what is a kind of doxology with which I want to close this series of four teachings.

> "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!"

Don't deceive yourself, you cannot understand all the judgments of God. You don't know all the ways that God works. Just accept that fact and trust Him. Trust Him, He knows what He's doing even if you don't.

> "FOR WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? OR WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN?"

And then we close with this glorious statement:

> "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen."

And in Revelation 21:6 He says:

> "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end."

And when we receive this revelation, there's only one thing that's appropriate, just to worship Him. To give Him the glory that's due to His name.

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Sermon

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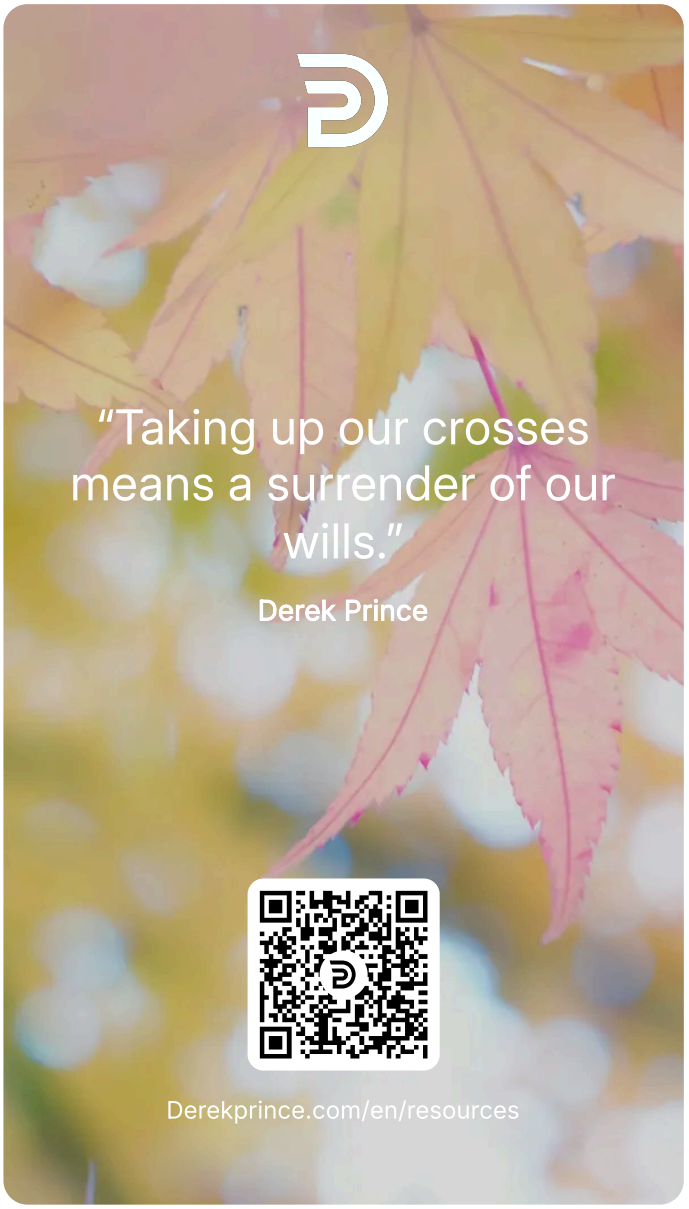

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