

People of the Promise



I have a question for you, one you have probably not spent too much time thinking about. But, one I think is important for us to consider – and we have considered here before. Here it is:

Does it bother you that on any given weekend there are probably more people sitting on bar stools than in church pews?

I asked this question in a sermon a few years ago as well. At first glance, bars and churches don't seem to have much in common. For many Christians, especially older ones, bars are places of sin and churches are places of righteousness.

If we were to look at the number of people who attend church each weekend versus the number of people who spend time in a bar, a club, or someplace similar; I believe world-wide we would find bars are considerably more popular than churches.

Why is this?

The reason more people are comfortable in bars than in churches is because sadly, more people feel a sense of belonging there. They find:

- Fellowship
- A non-judgmental atmosphere
- A listening ear
- Relief from pain

Being listened to and accepted is extremely important. We all want to feel valued. We are all looking for a place to belong, a place where we can feel security.

And this is what Paul specifically addresses next in the book of Romans!

Review

So far in Romans, Paul has let us know that each of us is a hopeless sinner, with no power within ourselves to make ourselves better. He graphically illustrated what Isaiah wrote many years before:

We are constant sinners; how can people like us be saved? We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags. (Isaiah 64:5-6, NLT)

But he does not leave us in this hopeless condition. After describing our sinful condition, Paul concluded:

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight.

He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins ... People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood.

(Romans 3:23-25, NLT)

And then, as we stay with Jesus, Paul tells us that God, not only continues to free us from the *Penalty of Sin*, He begins freeing us from the *Power of Sin*. He wrote:

*But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. **(Romans 6:22-23, NLT)***

Because He is freeing us from the *Power of Sin*, our lives will change to better reflect Jesus' love and character. And as long as we stay with Him, at His second coming, He will free us from the *Presence of Sin*!

And then Paul gave several powerful promises in Romans 8:

*So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. **(Romans 8:1, NLT)***

*... You received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children ... **(Romans 8:15, NLT)***

*And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us ... **(Romans 8:26, NLT)***

... God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God ...

(Romans 8:28, NLT)

*... If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all ... **(Romans 8:31-32, NLT)***

*... Nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. **(Romans 8:39, NLT)***

Who Gets to Enjoy All This?

But then, Paul appears to abruptly change directions.

My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief for my people, my Jewish brothers and sisters. I would be willing to be forever cursed – cut off from Christ! – if that would save them.

(Romans 9:2-3, NLT)

When Paul encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus, he did not make an 180 degree about face that we usually think he did. He actually saw following Jesus as the logical extension of being an Israelite.

At his “conversion” he came to understand Jesus was the Messiah the Scriptures pointed to and the Jews should have been looking for. He wasn’t converted out of Judaism, he finally understood what it meant to be a real Jew. It meant following Jesus, the Messiah Scripture pointed to.

He longed for his own people, the Israelites, to come to this same understanding.

So far in Romans, Paul had painted a clear picture of what salvation is and stated several times that it applies equally to Jews and Gentiles.

He now presents a logical, Biblical argument for why this is true. Paul begins with this observation:

They are the people of Israel, chosen to be God’s adopted children. (Romans 9:4, NLT)

In the previous chapter, Paul had referred to all believers as being adopted in God’s family. His statement here specifically indicates Jews are in the same condition as the Gentiles – not natural born children, but adopted. All of us are natural born children of sin. Paul goes on:

God revealed his glory to them. He made covenants with them and gave them his law. He gave them the privilege of worshiping him and receiving his wonderful promises. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are their ancestors, and Christ himself was an Israelite as far as his human nature is concerned. (Romans 9:4-5, NLT)

He points out that all we have known about God and salvation has come through the people of Israel – even Jesus was an Israelite. But then he makes this point:

... Not all who are born into the nation of Israel are truly members of God’s people! Being descendants of Abraham doesn’t make them truly Abraham’s children. (Romans 9:6-7, NLT)

Human Lineage is Not a Factor

In regards to salvation, human lineage makes no difference. You are not saved just because you can claim Abraham as your ancestor. Your standing with God has nothing to do with who your earthly father is.

He spends most of the rest of chapter 9 supporting this claim and then comes to this conclusion which would have startled and irritated many Jewish readers:

Even though the Gentiles were not trying to follow God’s standards, they were made right with God. And it was by faith that this took place. But the people of Israel, who tried so hard to get right with God by keeping the law, never succeeded. Why not? Because they were trying to get right with God by keeping the law instead of by trusting in him. (Romans 9:30-32, NLT)

Having the right information does not guarantee salvation. Citing his own experience, Paul goes on:

I know what enthusiasm they have for God, but it is misdirected zeal. For they don't understand God's way of making people right with himself. Refusing to accept God's way, they cling to their own way of getting right with God by trying to keep the law. (Romans 10:2-3, NLT)

Then, after summarizing again how one is saved, he says:

So this is the situation: Most of the people of Israel have not found the favor of God they are looking for so earnestly. A few have ... but the hearts of the rest were hardened. (Romans 11:7, NLT)

Paul illustrates this with a picture of a tree – he calls it Abraham's tree. It's roots are firmly planted in God where it gets its nourishment.

But some of these branches from Abraham's tree – some of the people of Israel – have been broken off. And you Gentiles, who were branches from a wild olive tree, have been grafted in. So now you also receive the blessing God has promised Abraham and his children, sharing in the rich nourishment from the root of God's special olive tree. (Romans 11:17, NLT)

Abraham's family tree includes Israelites who have believed in and trusted God, along with everyone else (Gentiles) who have done the same. All who believe in God are a part of the same family tree. This is Spiritual Israel and everything written in the Old Testament (Paul's Scripture) is for all who believe in God and follow Him.

He goes on to say:

I want you to understand this mystery, dear brothers and sisters, so that you will not feel proud about yourselves. Some of the people of Israel have hard hearts, but this will last only until the full number of Gentiles comes to Christ. And so all Israel will be saved. (Romans 11:25-26, NLT)

Notice that is only after the "full number of Gentiles" coming to Jesus that "all Israel will be saved." This is coming from a Jew and it is big. He is saying that Israel is spiritual in nature and our ancestry has nothing to do with it. What matters is our relationship with Jesus! He makes clear that the true Israel (or spiritual Israel) is made up of both Israelites and Gentiles who believe in Jesus.

And then he concludes with this somewhat cryptic statement:

For God has imprisoned everyone in disobedience so he could have mercy on everyone. (Romans 11:32, NLT)

In other words – everyone is in the same boat! And because of this, all believers have equal standing before God and we all belong in His Family! The Apostle John put it this way:

And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life.

I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life. (1 John 5:11-13, NLT)

If we have accepted Jesus into our lives, we have a place to belong. We are “in”!

Why is This Important?

So, why is all this important? What difference does this make to us living in 2019?

Even though we as Christians know it, we tend to ignore what Jesus said would be the dominate characteristic of His disciples:

“So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.” (John 13:34-35, NLT)

This is what made the early church so powerful – they actually lived this.

It’s a wonderful privilege to belong to God. There is great comfort in knowing He claims you as His own child. But many people need to experience this first from a person before they dare believe they can experience it from God.

One day when I was a young principal and teacher at Salt Lake Junior Academy – back in the mid 1970’s, a student was kicked out of typing class and sent to my office.

Since I was teaching a class, I let her sit there in my office for a bit. When I came in, I could see she was hardening herself against being questioned and punished.

In a moment that I can only describe as a gift from God, I said: “So, what’s going on in your life that would make you act the way you did in class today?” And then I just waited for her to answer.

She looked at me for a while, and then burst into tears. I don’t remember the details, but she shared some things that were going on with her family that was causing her pain and insecurity. We talked about it, had prayer together and then I sent her back to class.

Because she was heard and felt valued, her behavior changed. God, through me that day, made her feel like she belonged and it made a difference for her. It wasn’t the last time we talked in my office, but after that time, we had a relationship that allowed us to work out the problems easier.

Once we experience the forgiveness and cleansing from God and realize we have a wonderful place to belong, He asks us to extend it to others. We have the privilege of being God’s physical expression to others of His love and acceptance. This, more than anything else, will bring people to God.

If we as a church lived this way, God would use us to attract others to Him and He would be adding to our number on a regular basis, just like He did for the early church (see [Acts 2:43-47](#)).

But, you cannot do this until you have experienced the peace and joy of God saving you from the penalty of your sin and have engaged in the process of Him freeing you from the power of sin.

Jesus said:

“Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens ... Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you ... (Matthew 11:28-30, NLT)

He also said:

“Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.” (Revelation 3:20, NLT)

This is where the process always begins. Notice that in either place there are no pre-qualifications. You don't even have to be sorry for your sins – you just have to come as you are; or open the door and let Him in.

Have you come to Jesus? Have you answered His knock?

If not, what's keeping you from it?

Whatever it is, confess it and ask God to deal with it in your life.

Why not do it now?

Notes

Text you find in **this color** is a link to more information. It may take you to the Bible verse in context and/or in several different translations utilizing BibleGateway.com. In some cases, it may take you to a website where there is additional information. And, it may take you to a PDF copy of previous sermons in this series.

Previous Sermons in this Series

- January 5, 2019: **Welcome to Rome (Romans, Part 1)**
- January 26, 2019: **The Big Problem, Part 1 (Romans, Part 2a)**
- February 2, 2019: **The Big Problem, Part 2 (Romans, Part 2b)**
- February 16, 2019: **The Incredible Solution, Part 1 (Romans, Part 3a)**
- March 2, 2019: **The Incredible Solution, Part 2 (Romans, Part 3b)**
- March 30, 2019: **The Wonderful Promise (Romans, Part 4)**
- April 6, 2019: **The Wonderful Promise, Part 2 (Romans, Part 4b)**
- May 4, 2019: **The Wonderful Promise, Part 3 (Romans, Part 4c)**

Scripture References

Isaiah 64:1-7 (NLT): *Oh, that you would burst from the heavens and come down! How the mountains would quake in your presence! ² As fire causes wood to burn and water to boil, your coming would make the nations tremble. Then your enemies would learn the reason for your fame! ³ When you came down long ago, you did awesome deeds beyond our highest expectations. And oh, how the mountains quaked!*

⁴ For since the world began, no ear has heard and no eye has seen a God like you, who works for those who wait for him! ⁵ You welcome those who gladly do good, who follow godly ways.

But you have been very angry with us, for we are not godly. We are constant sinners; how can people like us be saved? ⁶ We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags.

Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall, and our sins sweep us away like the wind. ⁷ Yet no one calls on your name or pleads with you for mercy. Therefore, you have turned away from us and turned us over to our sins. (Isaiah 64:1-7, NLT)

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (NLT): *“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD.*

³³ “This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my

people. ³⁴ No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” (**Jeremiah 31:31-34**, NIV)

Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NLT): *And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations.*
(**Ezekiel 36:26-27**, NLT)

Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT): *Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”* (**Matthew 11:28-30**, NLT)

John 13:34-35 (NLT): *“So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”* (**John 13:34-35**, NLT)

Romans 3:19-31 (NLT): *Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God. ²⁰ For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are.*

²¹ *But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. ²² We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.*

²³ *For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. ²⁴ Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. ²⁵ For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, ²⁶ for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he makes sinners right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.*

²⁷ *Can we boast, then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on obeying the law. It is based on faith. ²⁸ So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law.*

²⁹ *After all, is God the God of the Jews only? Isn’t he also the God of the Gentiles? Of course he is.*

³⁰ *There is only one God, and he makes people right with himself only by faith, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. ³¹ Well then, if we emphasize faith, does this mean that we can forget about the*

law? Of course not! In fact, only when we have faith do we truly fulfill the law.

(Romans 3:19-31, NLT)

Romans 6:20-23 (NLT): *When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right.*

²¹ *And what was the result? You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom.* ²² *But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life.* ²³ *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.*

(Romans 6:20-23, NLT)

Romans 7:21 – 8:39 (NLT): *I have discovered this principle of life – that when I want to do what is right,*

I inevitably do what is wrong. ²² *I love God’s law with all my heart.* ²³ *But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me.* ²⁴ *Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?* ²⁵ *Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God’s law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin.*

Life in the Spirit

8 *So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.* ² *And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.* ³ *The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin’s control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins.* ⁴ *He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.*

⁵ *Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit.* ⁶ *So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.* ⁷ *For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God’s laws, and it never will.* ⁸ *That’s why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.*

⁹ *But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.)* ¹⁰ *And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God.* ¹¹ *The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.*

¹² *Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do.* ¹³ *For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live.* ¹⁴ *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.*

¹⁵ So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. ¹⁷ And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

The Future Glory

¹⁸ Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. ¹⁹ For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. ²⁰ Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, ²¹ the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. ²² For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us. ²⁴ We were given this hope when we were saved. (If we already have something, we don't need to hope for it. ²⁵ But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently.)

²⁶ And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. ²⁷ And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. ²⁸ And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. ²⁹ For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. And having given them right standing, he gave them his glory.

Nothing Can Separate Us from God's Love

³¹ What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? ³² Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? ³³ Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one – for God himself has given us right standing with himself. ³⁴ Who then will condemn us? No one – for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.

³⁵ Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? ³⁶ (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being

slaughtered like sheep.” [Psalm 44:22](#)) ³⁷ No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

³⁸ And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow – not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. ³⁹ No power in the sky above or in the earth below – indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. ([Romans 7:21 – 8:39](#) , NLT)

Romans 9 – 11 (NLT): *With Christ as my witness, I speak with utter truthfulness. My conscience and the Holy Spirit confirm it. ² My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief ³ for my people, my Jewish brothers and sisters. I would be willing to be forever cursed – cut off from Christ! – if that would save them. ⁴ They are the people of Israel, chosen to be God’s adopted children. God revealed his glory to them. He made covenants with them and gave them his law. He gave them the privilege of worshiping him and receiving his wonderful promises. ⁵ Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are their ancestors, and Christ himself was an Israelite as far as his human nature is concerned. And he is God, the one who rules over everything and is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.*

⁶ Well then, has God failed to fulfill his promise to Israel? No, for not all who are born into the nation of Israel are truly members of God’s people! ⁷ Being descendants of Abraham doesn’t make them truly Abraham’s children. For the Scriptures say, “Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted,” ([Genesis 21:12](#)) though Abraham had other children, too. ⁸ This means that Abraham’s physical descendants are not necessarily children of God. Only the children of the promise are considered to be Abraham’s children. ⁹ For God had promised, “I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.” ([Genesis 18:10, 14](#))

¹⁰ This son was our ancestor Isaac. When he married Rebekah, she gave birth to twins. ¹¹ But before they were born, before they had done anything good or bad, she received a message from God. (This message shows that God chooses people according to his own purposes; ¹² he calls people, but not according to their good or bad works.) She was told, “Your older son will serve your younger son.” ([Genesis 25:23](#)) ¹³ In the words of the Scriptures, “I loved Jacob, but I rejected Esau.” ([Malachi 1:2-3](#))

¹⁴ Are we saying, then, that God was unfair? Of course not! ¹⁵ For God said to Moses,

“I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose.” ([Exodus 33:19](#))

¹⁶ So it is God who decides to show mercy. We can neither choose it nor work for it.

¹⁷ For the Scriptures say that God told Pharaoh, “I have appointed you for the very purpose of displaying my power in you and to spread my fame throughout the earth.” ([Exodus 9:16](#)) ¹⁸ So you see, God chooses to show mercy to some, and he chooses to harden the hearts of others so they refuse to listen.

¹⁹ Well then, you might say, “Why does God blame people for not responding? Haven’t they simply done what he makes them do?”

²⁰ No, don’t say that. Who are you, a mere human being, to argue with God? Should the thing that was created say to the one who created it, “Why have you made me like this?” ²¹ When a potter makes jars out of clay, doesn’t he have a right to use the same lump of clay to make one jar for decoration and another to throw garbage into? ²² In the same way, even though God has the right to show his anger and his power, he is very patient with those on whom his anger falls, who are destined for destruction. ²³ He does this to make the riches of his glory shine even brighter on those to whom he shows mercy, who were prepared in advance for glory. ²⁴ And we are among those whom he selected, both from the Jews and from the Gentiles.

²⁵ Concerning the Gentiles, God says in the prophecy of Hosea,

“Those who were not my people, I will now call my people. And I will love those whom I did not love before.” (Hosea 2:23)

²⁶ And,

“Then, at the place where they were told, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called ‘children of the living God.’” (Hosea 1:10)

²⁷ And concerning Israel, Isaiah the prophet cried out,

“Though the people of Israel are as numerous as the sand of the seashore, only a remnant will be saved. ²⁸ For the LORD will carry out his sentence upon the earth quickly and with finality.” (Isaiah 10:21-23)

²⁹ And Isaiah said the same thing in another place:

“If the LORD of Heaven’s Armies had not spared a few of our children, we would have been wiped out like Sodom, destroyed like Gomorrah.” (Isaiah 1:9)

Israel’s Unbelief

³⁰ What does all this mean? Even though the Gentiles were not trying to follow God’s standards, they were made right with God. And it was by faith that this took place. ³¹ But the people of Israel, who tried so hard to get right with God by keeping the law, never succeeded. ³² Why not? Because they were trying to get right with God by keeping the law instead of by trusting in him. They stumbled over the great rock in their path. ³³ God warned them of this in the Scriptures when he said,

“I am placing a stone in Jerusalem that makes people stumble, a rock that makes them fall. But anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” (Isaiah 8:14; 28:16)

10 Dear brothers and sisters, the longing of my heart and my prayer to God is for the people of Israel to be saved. ² I know what enthusiasm they have for God, but it is misdirected zeal. ³ For they don’t understand God’s way of making people right with himself. Refusing to accept God’s

way, they cling to their own way of getting right with God by trying to keep the law. ⁴ For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God.

Salvation Is for Everyone

⁵ For Moses writes that the law's way of making a person right with God requires obedience to all of its commands. (see [Leviticus 18:5](#)) ⁶ But faith's way of getting right with God says, "Don't say in your heart, 'Who will go up to heaven?' (to bring Christ down to earth). ⁷ And don't say, 'Who will go down to the place of the dead?' (to bring Christ back to life again)." ⁸ In fact, it says,

*"The message is very close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart."
(Deuteronomy 30:12-14)*

And that message is the very message about faith that we preach: ⁹ If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. ¹¹ As the Scriptures tell us, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced." ([Isaiah 28:16](#)) ¹² Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. ¹³ For "Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved." ([Joel 2:32](#))

¹⁴ But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? ¹⁵ And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, "How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!" ([Isaiah 52:7](#))

¹⁶ But not everyone welcomes the Good News, for Isaiah the prophet said, "LORD, who has believed our message?" ([Isaiah 53:1](#)) ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ. ¹⁸ But I ask, have the people of Israel actually heard the message? Yes, they have:

*"The message has gone throughout the earth, and the words to all the world."
(Psalm 19:4)*

¹⁹ But I ask, did the people of Israel really understand? Yes, they did, for even in the time of Moses, God said,

"I will rouse your jealousy through people who are not even a nation. I will provoke your anger through the foolish Gentiles." (Deuteronomy 32:21)

²⁰ And later Isaiah spoke boldly for God, saying,

"I was found by people who were not looking for me. I showed myself to those who were not asking for me." (Isaiah 65:1)

²¹ But regarding Israel, God said,

“All day long I opened my arms to them, but they were disobedient and rebellious.”
(Isaiah 65:2)

God's Mercy on Israel

11 I ask, then, has God rejected his own people, the nation of Israel? Of course not! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham and a member of the tribe of Benjamin.

² No, God has not rejected his own people, whom he chose from the very beginning. Do you realize what the Scriptures say about this? Elijah the prophet complained to God about the people of Israel and said, ³ “LORD, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too.” (1 Kings 19:10, 14)

⁴ And do you remember God's reply? He said, “No, I have 7,000 others who have never bowed down to Baal!” (1 Kings 19:18)

⁵ It is the same today, for a few of the people of Israel have remained faithful because of God's grace – his undeserved kindness in choosing them. ⁶ And since it is through God's kindness, then it is not by their good works. For in that case, God's grace would not be what it really is – free and undeserved.

⁷ So this is the situation: Most of the people of Israel have not found the favor of God they are looking for so earnestly. A few have – the ones God has chosen – but the hearts of the rest were hardened. ⁸ As the Scriptures say,

“God has put them into a deep sleep. To this day he has shut their eyes so they do not see, and closed their ears so they do not hear.” (Isaiah 29:10; Deuteronomy 29:4)

⁹ Likewise, David said,

“Let their bountiful table become a snare, a trap that makes them think all is well. Let their blessings cause them to stumble, and let them get what they deserve. ¹⁰ Let their eyes go blind so they cannot see, and let their backs be bent forever.” (Psalm 69:22-23)

¹¹ Did God's people stumble and fall beyond recovery? Of course not! They were disobedient, so God made salvation available to the Gentiles. But he wanted his own people to become jealous and claim it for themselves. ¹² Now if the Gentiles were enriched because the people of Israel turned down God's offer of salvation, think how much greater a blessing the world will share when they finally accept it.

¹³ I am saying all this especially for you Gentiles. God has appointed me as the apostle to the Gentiles. I stress this, ¹⁴ for I want somehow to make the people of Israel jealous of what you Gentiles have, so I might save some of them. ¹⁵ For since their rejection meant that God offered

salvation to the rest of the world, their acceptance will be even more wonderful. It will be life for those who were dead! ¹⁶ And since Abraham and the other patriarchs were holy, their descendants will also be holy – just as the entire batch of dough is holy because the portion given as an offering is holy. For if the roots of the tree are holy, the branches will be, too.

¹⁷ But some of these branches from Abraham’s tree – some of the people of Israel – have been broken off. And you Gentiles, who were branches from a wild olive tree, have been grafted in. So now you also receive the blessing God has promised Abraham and his children, sharing in the rich nourishment from the root of God’s special olive tree. ¹⁸ But you must not brag about being grafted in to replace the branches that were broken off. You are just a branch, not the root.

¹⁹ “Well,” you may say, “those branches were broken off to make room for me.” ²⁰ Yes, but remember – those branches were broken off because they didn’t believe in Christ, and you are there because you do believe. So don’t think highly of yourself, but fear what could happen. ²¹ For if God did not spare the original branches, he won’t spare you either.

²² Notice how God is both kind and severe. He is severe toward those who disobeyed, but kind to you if you continue to trust in his kindness. But if you stop trusting, you also will be cut off. ²³ And if the people of Israel turn from their unbelief, they will be grafted in again, for God has the power to graft them back into the tree. ²⁴ You, by nature, were a branch cut from a wild olive tree. So if God was willing to do something contrary to nature by grafting you into his cultivated tree, he will be far more eager to graft the original branches back into the tree where they belong.

God’s Mercy Is for Everyone

²⁵ I want you to understand this mystery, dear brothers and sisters, so that you will not feel proud about yourselves. Some of the people of Israel have hard hearts, but this will last only until the full number of Gentiles comes to Christ. ²⁶ And so all Israel will be saved. As the Scriptures say,

“The one who rescues will come from Jerusalem, and he will turn Israel away from ungodliness. ²⁷ And this is my covenant with them, that I will take away their sins.”
(Isaiah 59:20-21; 27:9)

²⁸ Many of the people of Israel are now enemies of the Good News, and this benefits you Gentiles. Yet they are still the people he loves because he chose their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ²⁹ For God’s gifts and his call can never be withdrawn. ³⁰ Once, you Gentiles were rebels against God, but when the people of Israel rebelled against him, God was merciful to you instead. ³¹ Now they are the rebels, and God’s mercy has come to you so that they, too, will share in God’s mercy. ³² For God has imprisoned everyone in disobedience so he could have mercy on everyone.

Doxology

³³ *Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways!*

³⁴ *For who can know the LORD's thoughts? Who knows enough to give him advice?
(Isaiah 40:13) ³⁵ And who has given him so much that he needs to pay it back?
(Job 41:11)*

³⁶ *For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory. All glory to him forever! Amen. (Romans 9 - 11, NLT)*

Ephesians 2:4-10 (NLT): *But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, ⁵ that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) ⁶ For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. ⁷ So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus.*

⁸ *God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. ¹⁰ For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. (Ephesians 2:4-10, NLT)*

1 John 5:11-13 (NLT): *And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life.*

I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life. (1 John 5:11-13, NLT)

Revelation 3:14-22 (NLT): *"Write this letter to the angel of the church in Laodicea. This is the message from the one who is the Amen – the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's new creation:*

¹⁵ *"I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other!" ¹⁶ But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth! ¹⁷ You say, 'I am rich. I have everything I want. I don't need a thing!' And you don't realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. ¹⁸ So I advise you to buy gold from me – gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. Also buy white garments from me so you will not be shamed by your nakedness, and ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see. ¹⁹ I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference.*

²⁰ “Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends. ²¹ Those who are victorious will sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my Father on his throne.

²² “Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.” (Revelation 3:14-22, NLT)

E.G. White Resources

Desire of Ages, pages 316-317: *The Jewish elders who recommended the centurion to Christ had shown how far they were from possessing the spirit of the gospel. They did not recognize that our great need is our only claim on God's mercy. In their self-righteousness they commended the centurion because of the favor he had shown to “our nation.” But the centurion said of himself, “I am not worthy.” His heart had been touched by the grace of Christ. He saw his own unworthiness; yet he feared not to ask help. He trusted not to his own goodness; his argument was his great need. His faith took hold upon Christ in His true character. He did not believe in Him merely as a worker of miracles, but as the friend and Saviour of mankind.*

It is thus that every sinner may come to Christ. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.” Titus 3:5. When Satan tells you that you are a sinner, and cannot hope to receive blessing from God, tell him that Christ came into the world to save sinners. We have nothing to recommend us to God; but the plea that we may urge now and ever is our utterly helpless condition that makes His redeeming power a necessity. Renouncing all self-dependence, we may look to the cross of Calvary and say, “In my hand no price I bring; simply to Thy cross I cling.” (Desire of Ages, pages 316-317)

Steps to Christ, pages 62-63: *The condition of eternal life is now just what it always has been – just what it was in Paradise before the fall of our first parents – perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness. If eternal life were granted on any condition short of this, then the happiness of the whole universe would be imperiled. The way would be open for sin, with all its train of woe and misery, to be immortalized.*

It was possible for Adam, before the fall, to form a righteous character by obedience to God's law. But he failed to do this, and because of his sin our natures are fallen and we cannot make ourselves righteous. Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.

More than this, Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. So you may say, “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” Galatians 2:20. So Jesus said to His disciples, “It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” Matthew 10:20. Then with Christ working in you, you will manifest the same spirit and do the same good works – works of righteousness, obedience.

So we have nothing in ourselves of which to boast. We have no ground for self-exaltation. Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us. (Steps to Christ, pages 62-63)