

Romans 12A

[Rom. 11:25](#) ¶ For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery — so that you will not be wise in your own estimation — that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

[Rom. 11:26](#) and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written,
“ THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION,
HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.”

[Rom. 11:27](#) “ THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM,
WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.”

- Last week we finally reached the answer to the question of what about Israel
 - In fact, as we begin the last third of Paul’s letter, we need to recheck our roadmap
 - Chapters 1-8 formed the first third
 - In the first third, the topic was obtaining righteousness
 - How all men are unrighteous, sinful and are justly under condemnation before a God who demands perfection
 - No one seeks God and none will find Him by themselves
 - Then we learned that God in mercy makes a way possible for men to receive a righteousness that is not their own – God’s righteousness through faith
 - Not by our works or by family history – only by faith in Jesus
 - Then Paul explained the consequences of this appointed righteousness
 - Our present justification, our future glorification, but in the meantime our wrestling with sin
- Then Paul began Part 2, chapters 9-11, to explain an obvious question: what about Israel?

- If God is the one doing the work of redemption on behalf of those who receive His promises, what happened to His chosen people, Israel?
 - Was God unfaithful to them?
- In 9-11 we learned about God's plan for Israel
 - His past choice of a certain Israel
 - His present day hardening of the nation while preserving a faithful remnant
 - And His future plan to bring the entire nation into faith in Christ in keeping with His promises
 - And during this time of hardening, the Gentiles are being welcomed into the promises given to Israel because God is faithful to His word
 - For as He told Abraham, all the nations of the world will be blessed through Abraham's descendents
 - Knowing this, we Gentile believers must maintain a Biblically informed perspective concerning the Jewish people
 - Paul sums it up in 11:28-32

[Rom. 11:28](#) 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;

[Rom. 11:29](#) for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

[Rom. 11:30](#) For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience,

[Rom. 11:31](#) so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy.

[Rom. 11:32](#) For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.

- Paul says that when we take stock of the Jewish people from the perspective of an evangelist – someone trying to win men and women for Christ
 - They are our enemies – but if so, it was only because of us that God made them this way
 - So in other words, we can't hold that against them personally

- Especially because if we see them from God's point of view, they remain forever His beloved – for the sake of the fathers
 - In other words, because God made promises to the fathers of Israel, He won't forget the nation
 - For to do so would be to break His promises
 - We know He will do this because the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable
 - One of my favorite verse of the Bible
 - I rest in this verse
- Paul launched into chapter 9 because of the possibility that someone might interpret Israel's situation as reason to doubt God's promises
 - But by the end of chapter 11 here's Paul proving that God will keep all His promises to Israel
 - And do so in a most dramatic and miraculous way
 - Thus proving to us that the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable
 - Therefore, we have an obligation to treat Israel, even the hardened Israel of today, with a certain sensitivity
 - As Paul says in verses 30-32, just as we were once the outsiders, the sinners without hope
 - And the Jewish people enjoyed God's mercy
 - Now we are the ones receiving His grace while the Jews remain outside for a time
 - And ultimately, God will have treated both kinds of people equally – giving both their time of mercy and judgment
 - Remember, not individuals but nations of people
- This is God's plan for His creation for all mankind for all eternity
 - It kind of takes your breath away

- In fact, it took Paul's breath away

[Rom. 11:33](#) ¶ Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

[Rom. 11:34](#) For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR?

[Rom. 11:35](#) Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN?

[Rom. 11:36](#) For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen.

- I love the way Paul finishes chapters 9-11
 - Earlier, Paul brought the reader to the point of questioning God's judgment
 - Then he admonishes us for even posing such a question
 - But now Paul brings us to the opposite conclusion
 - When you finally understand the whole plan, you can't help but be amazed at God's wisdom and knowledge
 - His ways are unsearchable, unfathomable
 - Meaning his logic and purposes are literally beyond human comprehension or appreciation
 - Much like the US Congress
 - Apart from God's divine revelation, we have no hope to discover God nor His plan
 - And as Paul was blessed to convey just a small part of it to us through this letter, he steps back for a moment and admires it
 - Don't miss an opportunity to step back and admire the wisdom of God as He reveals it to you
- Paul finishes quoting Isa 40:13-14
 - Isaiah says rhetorically, who could ever offer God advice on a better way to do what God wills to do?
 - Who could ever accomplish anything or create anything of value to offer to God?
 - We can only stand in awe of Him

- The more you know of God's plan as revealed in scripture, the more you experience that awe

[Rom. 12:1](#) ¶ Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship.

[Rom. 12:2](#) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

[Rom. 12:3](#) ¶ For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

- Now Paul begins part 3 of the letter – moving from doctrine to practice
 - Paul moves smoothly from describing how to obtain righteousness
 - To how we are to live having already obtained righteousness
 - This is the fundamental and defining difference of Christianity
 - No man can work his way to heaven, for who can offer God anything He doesn't already have?
 - Our works can't erase our debt before God because the only payment He will accept is death
 - So we don't try
 - Instead, we accept His payment on our behalf
 - And then we live to serve the God who has already saved us by our faith and trust in Christ's work
 - No man-made religion has ever offered such a solution
 - Because the God of the Bible is the only true God and in His wisdom He offers to only true solution
 - And that's what Paul uses as his launching point for part three
 - He remarks on God's awe-inspiring wisdom and mercy because it becomes our motivation for service to God
 - We don't accomplish good works to earn anything with God, much less our salvation

- We serve God in our lives out of a motivation stirred by our awe of Him and our gratitude for His plan of mercy and redemption
- Look at verse 1
 - Therefore...“oun” in Greek
 - It connects all of chapters 1-11 to our response in chapter 12
 - We’re talking about what does a Christian do knowing the details of what God has done for us
 - When we finally understand God’s plan, come to accept it and believe it (and be saved through it)
 - Convicted of our unworthiness
 - Humbled by His grace and mercy extended to us
 - Only from that perspective are we in a position to serve Him
 - So Paul follows his own exclamation of God’s awesomeness with the word therefore
 - He urges us by the mercies of God to present our bodies as living sacrifices
 - Mercies refers to the total description of God’s plan of salvation in chapter 1-11
 - Knowing what God has done, what should you do
 - Present – put at God’s disposal
 - Aorist tense, meaning set yourself on that course and never waiver from it
 - And offering of sacrifice to God at the temple was completely burned up – nothing was left unused
- A couple of observations
 - You can only do Romans 12:1 if you have already come through Romans 1-11 in your own life

- You can't serve God unless He receives your works of service
 - And Hebrews 11:1 says – without faith it is impossible to please God
- Secondly, here's why a firm understanding of doctrine matters
 - As we come to understand grace in its fullness
 - We will be drawn into a closer walk of faith
 - The more we understand God – and the doctrines that define our relationship with him – the more we desire to live a life that is pleasing to Him
 - We become a living sacrifice acceptable to God
 - It's a false and damaging notion to suggest that study of doctrine isn't practical or helpful
 - It's essential
 - Paul just devoted 315 verses to pure doctrine
 - As a prerequisite to 12:1
 - Otherwise why would you do 12:1 except that you grasp something of the awesomeness of God's mercy and wisdom
 - Teaching Christian living apart from Christian doctrine is a cynical man centered approach
 - I must be exposed to the truth about who God is and what He has done before I will have a reservoir of purpose in serving Him
- Having come to understand these things, then what other choice makes sense?
 - That is Paul's reaction in 12:1
 - God saved us despite ourselves
 - He has made promises to give us a glorified body in a future day

- So what else can we do in the meantime but serve Him with the temporary body that we carry for the time being
 - Do we dare withhold anything from God?
 - And that life lived for God's glory is our spiritual service of worship (reasonable service)
 - In other words, true worship is obedience
 - The church today makes so much of style of worship and rituals and practice (ecclesiology)
 - We're arguing about how to arrange the deck chairs on the Titanic
 - We argue about music or ritual thinking these are what make up worship
 - Meanwhile worship is about how you live your life, not how you spend your Sunday morning
- Now in case we were wondering what presenting our bodies looks like, Paul gives us six principles for how to live out the Christian walk, the righteous life
 - First, in verse 2 Paul names the first principle (the word "and" doesn't appear in Greek)
 - Do not be conformed to the world
 - Sadly, many believer never get past step 1
 - Do not be conformed (su-schema-tizo)
 - From sun (companion with or accompanying)
 - And schema, meaning a form or pattern
 - The idea here is do not become a companion with the world's patterns of thought or action
 - Don't reflect them in your appearance (not just your outward look)
 - Once you know the truth, stop buying into the lie
 - Once you have been shown the light, stop living in the dark

- Conforming means different things to each of us, but at the core of it is a willingness to be seen as different
- Now, assuming we have the courage and conviction to live a life that doesn't follow the world's pattern, we are ready for step two
 - Be transformed by the renewing of your mind
 - We're talking about a dedicated effort to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ
 - First and foremost, to seek an understanding of God's word
 - No more would embark on serving as a policeman or a doctor or an engineer without understanding the expectations, practices and truth of my profession
 - Likewise, as a disciple of God, a adopted son of God and one who shares in the inheritance of God's Son, now I have an expectation to know His will
 - Look at how Paul expressed it specifically
 - Be transformed (metamorphoo – metamorphosis)
 - Be changed into something totally different
 - You see knowing God's word is first and foremost a pursuit of transformation, not information
 - What you learn in God's word changes who you are
 - God will transform you by His word, for He has provided His word for this very purpose
 - Men seek counseling from psychologists, and we believe their words can change us for the better
 - We listen to motivational speakers, because we believe their words can move us to live life differently
 - And these are mere men

- God has provided His unfathomable wisdom in His word, and too often we set it aside thinking it can't possible relate to our circumstances
- Our spiritual service of worship is to be transformed by a renewing of our mind
 - And God's word is the principle tool provided for that purpose
 - Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God
- So, having resisted the urge to conform and in its place having set our purpose to renew our mind, now we move to step three: proving what the will of God is, that which is good acceptable and perfect
 - To understand what Paul is saying, begin by asking what is God's will regarding His children?
 - It's a thought connected to Paul's comments at the end of chapter 11
 - God's will is that we would show the world His mercy and grace by testifying to His work in our life
 - And we prove (dokimazo – approve) the will of God by our efforts to reflect Him in the world
 - When we resist conforming to a fallen and lost world
 - When we allow God to renew our mind according to His word
 - We will look different, act different, be different
 - By living in this way, we prove to the world what is good and acceptable – we glorify God
 - This is our spiritual service of worship
- We're talking about more than merely living a good life for the sake of morality or the public good
 - We're talking about a life that witnesses to the work and wisdom of the true living God to a world that does not know Him

- About how we makes decisions, how we respond to tragedies in life, set priorities in our finances, how we engage in relationships
 - How we raise our kids
 - How we treat our parents
 - How we love our enemies
 - We prove, or approve that which is godly by refusing to confirm to a world blinded by the enemy and by allowing God's word to renew our mind according to Holiness
- Now having taken these steps – and we never stop working at all three of these steps – then we will begin to see three spheres of change in our live in our walk as Christians
 - First, Paul says we should not think more highly of ourselves than we ought
 - Don't assign to yourself a greater importance or self-worth than...what?
 - How would I know what my real importance is?
 - Go back to steps 1-3
 - In my experience, the more you concentrate on steps 1-3, the lower you adjust your standard of self-importance
 - And the way Paul introduces this thought is so intriguing
 - He says by the grace given to me
 - Remember the way Paul received grace
 - On the road to Damascus to persecute Christians
 - Do you think Paul had an appreciation for how someone can think themselves more important and more "right" and more righteous than they truly are?
 - So the first expectation of presenting our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice is personal humility

- Are we saying that Christians are automatically humble?
 - Of course not...that's why Paul is admonishing us to make it our life's pursuit to seek that which is good and perfect in God's will
- We are called to see humility rise up in our nature
- Nothing humbles a man more than a knowledge of God's holiness as revealed in His word and an awareness of his own sinfulness as revealed through the Spirit
- The second personal outcome in verse 3 is sound judgment in our thinking
 - A humble man enlightened by God's word is a wise man
 - For the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom
 - A Biblically counseled, God centered life is a life lived with sound judgment, and this is one of the outcomes of serving God with your life
- Then, Paul moves to a second sphere of says we will then serve Him according to our measure of faith within the Body of Christ
 - By faith he's referring to the spirit gifts

[Rom. 12:4](#) For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function,

[Rom. 12:5](#) so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

[Rom. 12:6](#) Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly*: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;

[Rom. 12:7](#) if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching;

[Rom. 12:8](#) or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

- Work as a group, but express your service to God through individual contributions
 - Again, we work to serve God, but our efforts are directed toward other people
 - Not meaningless works of piousness, but meaningful works of caring, contributions, edification

- And according to how God has gifted and called us
 - Match your work to your gift and serve accordingly
 - Don't serve in the wrong place
 - But you should serve somewhere
 - Always with a heart to please God