

who have no need of repentance”, they believe they are able to stand and exist in their own righteousness before God. Therefore they do not need him who came to call sinners to repentance and in whom God grants his salvation as a gift. They do not want it as a gift; thus they do not wish to believe. With all their knowledge of God they just remain closed against what matters most, the message from the God who freely gives. This is the content of the next section.

The True Way of Salvation (10: 4-15)

⁴For Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified.

⁵Moses writes that the man who practises the righteousness which is based on the law shall live by it. ⁶But the righteousness based on faith says, Do not say in your heart, “Who will ascend into heaven?” (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷or “Who will descend into the abyss?” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach); ⁹because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved. ¹¹The scripture says, “No one who believes in him will be put to shame.” ¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him. ¹³For, “every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.”

¹⁴But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? ¹⁵And how can men preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news!”

Once more the two ways which are the main theme of the letter are opposed: The way of the Law and the way of faith. Whoever wanted to reach the goal along the path of the Law would have to

fulfil the Law. That this is useless Paul believes he has sufficiently demonstrated by this time. In Christ this way has come to its end. Since him and through him one is able to know that it does not lead to the goal. But just there the new way is also opened up which leads to the goal: it is the righteousness by faith, the fellowship with God as granted, not gained, from the beginning. It is now no longer a question of bringing down righteousness from above or bringing it up from below—the way of all human religion—but it is here in the Word of Christ and in faith in Christ.

Paul now demonstrates this new way of salvation in a chain of ideas which leads backwards from present faith to the origin of the whole movement. Salvation is here, on your lips—by your confession—and in your hearts—by faith. Out of the heart faith rises to the lips as confession; faith is incomplete if it does not become audible in witness. The confession of faith before the world is in this world the end of the line—as it also again becomes the beginning. For how does faith enter into the heart? Through hearing. And how can it be heard except by preaching, how could they preach without being sent? The commission which is linked to the gift does not allow the movement to come to a standstill. Where faith is, there is the mandate to confess. But where confession is, there preaching takes place, from which faith emerges once again. As the substance of faith and the message is God's self-communicating love, so the self-communication of faith is once more its natural movement forward. Faith comes from other men and leads to other men. Faith comes from outside and leads to outside; it springs from "verbal declaration," as Luther always emphasized, and leads to verbal declaration. As faith has as its object an historical event, the Christ-event, so it also expands in an historical form and again creates history. Faith and mission are inseparably linked.

***The Disobedience of Israel* (10: 16-21)**

¹⁶But they have not all heeded the gospel; for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" ¹⁷So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ.

¹⁸But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have; for

“Their voice has gone out to all the earth,
and their word to the ends of the world.”

¹⁹Again I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says,

“I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation;
with a foolish nation I will make you angry.”

²⁰Then Isaiah is so bold as to say,

“I have been found by those who did not seek me;
I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.”

²¹But of Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to
a disobedient and contrary people.”

What has happened then to Israel? How is one to understand the riddle of the Jewish people? The answer can only run: The riddle of Israel is the riddle of disobedience, of unbelief towards God's bestowing Word. The Greek words of the apostle cannot be adequately translated at the crucial point. He forms three main concepts from the root of one word. Obedience, hearing and “what is heard”; we speak of a “vision of Isaiah”, the apostle speaks essentially of “what is heard”. This “thing that is heard” is at the same time a message. Faith thus comes in a double sense from “what is heard”: From the message which itself is “something heard”—and from hearing the message. And this act of hearing is both times obedience. If instead of “what is heard” we translate it by preaching, not only is Paul's play on words lost but, what is more important still, the actual sense of the whole chapter: the fact that hearing, obedience, faith and proclamation belong together; also both ends of the chain which form a pair: making one's faith known through confession and the hearing of the divine commission.

Israel cannot excuse itself. There was no lack of publishing the message; there was also no deficiency of intelligibility. If the Gentiles have understood, how should not the Jews have been able even more to understand it! They did not want to understand; they were disobedient. But how little Paul is inclined even here to trace back human disobedience to an eternal divine decree of hardening is shown in the last of his quotations: God truly has

not failed in providing proofs of his seeking love. As a mother runs after her disobedient child to entice him home, so God has stretched out his hands towards Israel—but in vain. Why? Because Israel did not want to. That is the final answer. Paul, at all events, no longer looks for an answer behind it in the hidden will of God. This is made perfectly clear in the next chapter.

The Faithfulness of God is Greater than the Unfaithfulness of Man (11:1-36)

The Israel of Faith (11: 1-10)

¹I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. ²God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? ³“Lord, they have killed thy prophets, they have demolished thy altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.” ⁴But what is God’s reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” ⁵So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. ⁶But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

⁷What then? Israel failed to obtain what it sought. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, ⁸as it is written,

“God gave them a spirit of stupor,
eyes that should not see and ears that should not hear,
down to this very day.”

⁹And David says,

“Let their feast become a snare and a trap,
a pitfall and a retribution for them;

¹⁰let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs for ever.”

The question of Israel’s destiny is now clarified by the past; we know now why things have turned out in this way. The blame rests

on their disobedience. But what is to happen to them? Is there an answer to this question which is directed to the future? Paul dares to give it in this chapter. In doing so he becomes a prophet; he attempts to draw, at least in their most general features, the future ways of God with mankind and with Israel. This chapter is perhaps the most daring that Paul ever wrote. It is no accident that just he, the renegade who brought the salvation of the Jews to the Gentiles, whom the Jews therefore hated more than any other man, he whose whole thinking revolved round the contrast between Law and Gospel, had to write this prospect of the ultimate deliverance of the Jews; God had equipped him alone, this man in whose heart and life took place the whole argument about the difference between Judaism and the Christian Community.

Has God rejected Israel? No. The proving of this No is the substance of this chapter. First: Paul himself, of course, is an Israelite and that not only by blood but also because of the path along which he had deliberately walked. Thus he himself is the strongest evidence for the fact that saving grace can even subdue a fanatical advocate of the righteousness of the Law. Secondly: there is, of course, even in the Christian Community a selection of Jews.

The people as a whole are certainly disobedient; yet a remnant similar to that remnant of the faithful in the time of Elijah has received the Word of Christ. The apostle knows from his own experience that this is no merit. It is solely and simply the grace of God which gave this open ear. It is God's free choice, not a reward for human fulfilling of the Law. For the rest, the judgment of their disobedience is indeed fulfilled in their hardening. Hardening is being able no longer to say anything but No. God permits them to become entangled in their own No. The quotations from the Old Testament are meant to show that even where men turn their backs upon God, God is not, so to speak, disabled; there too he has his hand in the game. The hardening is as much his work as faith is. Just as God has given up the Gentiles "to the lust of their hearts" after their refusal to be drawn by him into true worship, so he now has also hardened the Jews after they have said their No. The hardening is not the original cause but God's punishment for their unbelief. Yet even that is not the last word.

The Wisdom of God uses also the Sin of Man (11:11-24)

¹¹So I ask, have they stumbled so as to fall? By no means! But through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. ¹²Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

¹³Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry ¹⁴in order to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. ¹⁵For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? ¹⁶If the dough offered as first fruits is holy, so is the whole lump; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

The disobedience of Israel is a terrible fact. But the wisdom and omnipotence of God show themselves precisely at the point where his plan is apparently being crossed. The resistance of the Jews to Christ has become in God's hand the tool of reconciliation. What from man's side is called the Crucifixion of God's ambassador, that, from God's side, signifies the highest revelation of divine love. Thus the opposition of the Jews to Christ's message made the apostle carry the Gospel into the world of the Gentiles. The Jews therefore went away empty handed, yet it benefited the Gentiles. But if already the disobedience of the Jews had such a beneficial effect, what a blessing will their obedience in faith then be! When once the whole of Israel will have been converted to Christ the Lord, what a blessing that must be for the peoples of the world!

By way of the detour of the mission to the Gentiles, the Gospel will and must again return to the Jews. Once they see what the Gospel accomplishes among the Gentiles, they, too, will not be able to resist for long. Thus, at any rate, the apostle understands his mission and his service to the Gentiles. In this way he works, even though it be indirectly, for the conversion of his people. Only a Christian Community strong in faith and love can break the pride of the Jews and provoke them to emulation. But when that happens—Israel's conversion to Jesus Christ—then the fulness of

his grace must come, the resurrection from the dead. Upon what is this daring hope based? What else but the divine promise? If God has chosen Israel, then he will also—even though it were through the midst of rejection and judgment—lead them to salvation. That which God has begun with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he will complete at the end of time.

Through God Israel's history is sanctified history; through God's election Israel is the holy nation; through God's wonderful guidance out of an Israel now so unsanctified there will one day appear the truly sanctified Israel even though, as punishment for its disobedience, it will only come after the Gentiles. How is this to happen?

¹⁷But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the richness of the olive tree, ¹⁸do not boast over the branches. If you do boast, remember it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you. ¹⁹You will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." ²⁰That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast only through faith. So do not become proud, but stand in awe. ²¹For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. ²²Note then the kindness and severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you too will be cut off. ²³And even the others, if they do not persist in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. ²⁴For if you have been cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree.

Israel's fall and rejection is the means in the hand of God for sending salvation to the Gentiles. Israel is first of all "cut out". An alien has been ingrafted on the tree of Abraham. The Gentiles nourish themselves on the rich root of the patriarchal promise. Is it any praise to the Gentiles that God has given them the salvation which the Jews rejected? It is truly not due to their merit. On the other hand, they could certainly lose what has been

granted to them in this way. We cannot give ourselves faith, yet we are responsible if we lose it and fall into unbelief. That would indeed be our fault. Thus it is always right to look at both sides: To remember gratefully the grace of God, to which alone we owe our salvation; and to remind ourselves in solemn earnestness of God's severity, which rejects him who is unfaithful.

The missionary to the Gentiles from the Jewish people has a special word to say to his Gentile Christians. They are now the ones who are favoured; certainly, their advantage does not derive from themselves, yet they are allowed to share as a gift in the blessing that was promised to Abraham. They have come into Abraham's inheritance. To whom do they owe this? They owe it to Israel's guilt and God's grace, but truly not to themselves. It is really entering into a legacy from which no one can benefit less than the heir. From his point of view there is absolutely no reason for it to turn out like that. Conversely one has, however, seriously to reckon with the possibility that those who by nature belong to the family of Abraham will also receive his inheritance. They also will receive it as soon as they give up their resistance and believe. The Gentile who is now a believer has therefore no reason whatever to exalt himself above the Jew. He ought to take to himself a warning example and allow himself to be told by him that faith is not capital from which one can draw interest. We remember here the words that are written in another letter: "Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10: 12).

The Wisdom of God Leads All Mankind to the Goal (11: 25-36)

²⁵Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brethren: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles come in, ²⁶and so all Israel will be saved; as it is written,

"The Deliverer will come from Zion,
he will banish ungodliness from Jacob";

²⁷"and this will be my covenant with them
when I take away their sins."

²⁸As regards the gospel they are enemies of God, for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. ²⁹For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable. ³⁰Just as you were once disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, ³¹so they have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may receive mercy. ³²For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all.

³³O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

³⁴“For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counsellor?”

³⁵“Or who has given a gift to him
that he might be repaid?”

³⁶For from him and through him and to him are all things.

To him be glory forever. Amen.

Hitherto the apostle has only weighed the possibility that Israel's obstinacy might, after all, not be final. Now the full assurance breaks through. He, the apostle to the Gentiles, may at last reveal to the Romans a divine mystery entrusted to him, so that he may finally destroy all Gentile-Christian presumption. The entire letter, of course, offers sufficient guarantee that on the other side the Jewish or Jewish-Christian self-assertion does also not spring up again. This aspect of the educational task has been thoroughly taken care of, so that Paul, without having henceforth to fear any misunderstanding, can say: they who are now still God's enemies, as enemies of the Gospel and of the Church of Jesus, are, however, the loved ones of God in virtue of the election and for the sake of the inheritance of the forefathers.

Even the temporary unbelief of the Jews is included in God's plan of salvation. The Jews are not the expelled but the reinstated. In the last resort both Jews and Gentiles are equal before God. Both have at the beginning said No to God, and then by God's mercy faith is nevertheless bestowed upon them. The Jews must wait until all this has happened to the Gentiles—and this having