

99-12-12a

Let's begin our worship through the study of God's Word this morning, through taking a moment to clear our minds and prepare our hearts, and seek the ministry of God the Holy Spirit as we feed our souls through looking at the truth in God's Word. Shall we pray? Father, we thank you for the privilege of gathering together and studying your Word. We thank you for the freedom that we enjoy that enables us to do so without fear, without having to be meeting in secret or watching for authorities.

There are many parts of the world where that cannot be said, and we're grateful to be in this country with the heritage of freedom that we enjoy. We thank you that in spite of the erosion that has taken place and the national thinking and national culture in terms of respect for yourself and your Word, we continue to be protected. We thank you for the government that provides us that protection.

We pray that you'll be with those who are in authority over us as the elections draw ever nearer and people are making decisions about various candidates, that you will continue to guide the course of our nation in such a way that the gospel can be preached and believers can learn and grow in freedom and have the opportunities to reflect your glory in all the various aspects of our lives. We thank you most of all for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the example that He has left us, the word of truth that He has given us as a bequest, the fellowship and the ministry of God the Holy Spirit as our comforter and as our guide so that we are thoroughly equipped for every good work when we take advantage of those things. We pray that as we study your Word this morning, God the Holy Spirit will enlighten us, give us insight, perception and remembrance of these things in the hours and days ahead so that we can examine the operation of our lives.

We can examine our priorities, the way that we make decisions, the things that we consider important and see our circumstances and see our opportunities from a divine perspective. We pray that as a result we will be conformed to the image of the Savior, we will be ever more closely restored to your image in which we were created and in so doing your glory will be reflected and your truth will be vindicated both now and in the eternal ages to come. We thank you again and praise you in the name of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. Turn with me for our scripture reading this morning again to the book of Romans. Our scripture reading last week came from chapter 10.

We saw that Israel, as Paul describes them, he bears them witness in chapter 10 verse 2 of Romans that they have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge. They are ignorant of God's righteousness and seek to establish their own righteousness and have therefore not submitted to the righteousness of God. This is a misperception and it's a very difficult perception to overturn, to change.

And yet change of mind is exactly what is needed. This is the baptism that John the Baptist preached, the baptism of change of mind. This is the message that the Lord Jesus Christ brought to the nation of Israel in the wake of John's ministry.

This is the challenge that was communicated and ultimately as a nation and as a generation a challenge that was rejected by the nation of Israel during Jesus' life. And of course God worked that into His plan so that through their rejection the issue was made clear, the Gentiles are at the center of God's plan now and more specifically the church which in this age is composed of both Jews and Gentiles. But there is a lot of misunderstanding abroad today about the distinction between Israel and the church and the distinction between the gospel that the Lord Jesus Christ brought, the good news that He brought to His nation, to His generation as the Messiah of Israel and the good news of the gospel of salvation which is at the forefront of thinking in the church today.

Because of that the means and the content of what Jesus taught, the supernatural power by which He performed miracles, controlled the weather, restored sight and limbs and life, it is a logical conclusion and a conclusion that has been drawn by many in the church that because Jesus presented the good news of the kingdom of God in word and in deed and the power of the Holy Spirit confirming that word by supernatural signs and this is something that He committed to His disciples when He sent them forth, the twelve and later the seventy into Israel, that this is the model which should be followed by the church. It makes a great deal of sense if you look at it in that light. Jesus brings this message of good news.

He preaches it in word and in power. The disciples present it in word and in power. If you carry that forward to the time of the apostles, you have Peter, his shadow falls on someone and they are healed.

He touches a cloth and that cloth touches someone and they are healed. And you think, well, here we are with the good news being preached in word and in power. What has changed? And people say, well, we are cessationists.

We believe the supernatural gifts changed. Well, why? And it is difficult to find scripture that says these supernatural signs that should accompany the preaching of the word have ceased. And this is why you have this debate.

There is not a clincher passage where you can document the fact that the sign, miracle, power has been removed from the church. Therefore, a lot of people have concluded that that power is still available and that the only reason we don't see it more in action is a lack of faith, a lack of seeking it and searching for it. And ergo, you have the charismatic, the Pentecostal, and most recently the signs and wonders movements in the church.

But all of this comes back to the gospel, the good news that was preached by John the

Baptist, by the prophets before him really, and ultimately by the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not going to diverge and get into a study of that. But, in summary, it is not the gospel of salvation that is being presented by the Lord Jesus and by the disciples to the nation of Israel.

They are already the people of God. It is a change of mind away from dead works and righteousness by faith in God rather than righteousness by works. Not saving righteousness, not the judicial imputation of righteousness that makes it possible for us to spend eternity with God.

The Old Testament saints already have that. They are already believers. And you will notice if you read carefully that the call that is issued by John the Baptist, the call that is issued by the Lord Jesus and by his disciples as they go out and preach is a call to obedience.

This is why Jesus says, I am sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. It is only Israel that has this responsibility for obedience. The rest of the world has a responsibility to come to God, to come to saving faith in God in the traditional sense.

Israel is the nation and the people of God. He says, I am their father. They are my children.

I am their God. They are my people. I love them because of the fathers and so forth.

There has been widespread, rampant misunderstanding of what Jesus was confronting his generation with. Why does Jesus not confront them with the gospel of salvation? Because they don't need it. They are saved.

They believe in God. Their problem is not whether or not there is a God, whether or not there is a need for redemption. They understand that.

They believe that. They acknowledge the fact that they sin. They bring the sin offerings.

They observe the day of atonement. There is no one in Israel who thinks they are sinlessly perfect and that they don't need a savior, that they don't need God's grace or God's mercy, or that blood doesn't have to be shed for the remission of sins. They understand that.

They have been steeped in that from early childhood. Their difficulty is, after salvation, what constitutes righteousness. This is why Jesus preaches the woes at the Pharisees.

Woe to you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, who wipe the outside of the dish and not making sure that their hearts are clean. You whitewash tombstones. You have tombs full of dead men's bones.

You hypocrites who canvas the earth to make a proselyte and then make him twofold

the child of Hades that you yourselves are. Why does he condemn them? Not because they don't believe in God. Because of their operation.

Their righteousness is constituted in works. He condemns them for their prayers, where they stand on the street corner to be seen by men. He says, you have your reward.

This is reward. This is the fruit of lifestyle that he's preaching and talking about. Not, you're going to spend eternity in the lake of fire.

It is living righteousness that is in view. Paul, in Romans, is addressing that same issue. The theme of the book of Romans is righteousness by faith.

That Israel, as the prime example, has missed it. In chapter 4, Paul points them back to their father Abraham. He says, you think Abraham is such hot stuff? Well, let's take a look at Abraham.

Abraham wasn't declared righteous when he hauled his son up the mountain. As great as that was, and as wonderful an example of obedience as that was, when did God declare him righteous? When he delivered the promise to him and he believed him. Abraham believed God.

He believed the promise. That was accounted to him for righteousness. But in that whole discussion, Abraham's saving faith is not in view.

Abraham has been a believer ever since he was in Ur. And he got him up from his kindred and nation and went to the land of promise. That's an act of obedience.

And it's important not to confuse the two. But even here in the New King James, when you look at the little italic heading for chapter 10, it says, Israel needs the gospel. Well, this is a misunderstanding of what's going on in Romans.

It's not that they need the gospel in the sense we think gospel only means one thing, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. There's lots of good news. The good news of the fulfillment of the promises of God to Israel is good news.

The good news of the kingdom where the wrongs that have been perpetrated against Israel and the Israelites will be rectified. Justice will be served. Promises will be fulfilled.

Every man will have his own vine and his own fig tree. The Davidic king on the throne and peace from persecution and being scattered and so forth. That's good news for Israel.

It's good news that's contained in the prophets and in the Old Testament. And it was brought near when Jesus came to Israel. And he said, the time is at hand.

John said, look, the axe is already being laid at the root of the trees. It's time for the

pruning out of the forest. The good trees are going to be preserved and the bad trees are going to be chopped down.

And this is in terms of obedience and faith. Where is the living righteousness? That's important to understand when we have, especially when we do a scripture reading out of Romans, where we don't have the first nine or ten chapters of context to remind us that the theme and what is being discussed here is not salvation from the lake of fire. It is not the issue of faith in Christ for eternal salvation.

This book talks entirely about how should we then live because we are believers. The clearest place to review that is in Romans 5, 1 through 5. Therefore, having been justified, having been declared righteous by faith, and this is living faith, we have peace with God. We're not going to have peace with God if we're not living a righteous life.

Israel didn't have peace with God. That's what we're going to see a little bit later in our study this morning. When they disobeyed, when they became apathetic and indifferent and pursued their own course, they did not have peace with God.

God began to work the cycles of discipline on them that Moses predicted. If they turned from God and began to pursue other things, they would lose economic prosperity, they would lose agricultural prosperity, they would lose the increase of the womb. Their children would have a high infant mortality rate.

The sky would turn to brass and the earth would not yield its increase. If they persisted in unbelief and that unbelief is faithlessness, not living by faith. It doesn't mean they don't believe in God.

It means they're not operating on a daily basis in the light of His word and His promises. God would continue to discipline them to attempt to turn them all the way to the fifth cycle, which is being driven out of the land, losing the possession of that land of promise and being held captive in foreign land. Of course, the northern and the southern kingdoms ultimately suffered that fate.

But if they take the example of Abraham that's given in Romans chapter 4, who lives by faith, he believes God and it's credited to him for righteousness. He recovers when he fails. Verse 20 of chapter 4, He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God.

That's the issue. That's what's under discussion. You don't have to believe the promise to be saved.

It is trusting in Christ for salvation in this age. That's what constitutes salvation. In the last age, Hebrews 11.6, believing that God is and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him.

The faith that we exercise in Christ is just a more distinct and well-explained version of the same thing that's in Hebrews 11.6. We believe that God is there, that He is the judge of the universe, that we must be held to account by, and that if we seek Him, He will be found. And we seek God through Christ. Christ says, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No man comes to the Father but by me. So to believe that God is and that He rewards those who seek Him in this age is to believe in Christ because He is the way to the Father. That's what Abraham had done years and years before what Paul talks about in chapter 4. This is living righteousness.

He did not waver at the promise of God through faithlessness, through unbelief. He was strengthened in faith, gave glory to God, and was fully convinced that what had been promised, God was able to perform. Therefore, it was accounted to Him for righteousness.

Verse 23 of chapter 4 of Romans, Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. This is what Romans is written for. Abraham's example is here for our benefit.

It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him, who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses and was raised because of our justification. That righteousness, that living righteousness, will be imputed to us if we trust the Father, the one who raised Christ from the dead. Therefore, he says in chapter 5, having been justified by faith, what does he mean justified by faith? Doing what he says up here in verses 21 through 25, being fully convinced of the promises of God, placing faith in those, being justified in a living, daily sense.

And when we do that, Paul says, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand. We are under the grace dispenser, not the discipline dispenser, when we're justified by faith. We have a choice.

Children who are obedient are given privileges and are rewarded by their parents. Children who are disobedient are disciplined by their parents, if their parents are any good. So, because we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God.

We're not under discipline. Rather, we have access by faith into the grace in which we stand. And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God because hope of blessing and reward in the future sustains us and motivates us, even if we're not justified, even if we are not obtaining material possessions or approbation or fame and fortune, whatever it might be.

We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We have our eyes fixed on the spiritual blessings in heavenly places. And in verse 3, he says, not only that, but we glory in tribulations,

knowing that these tribulations are doing us good.

We talked last time about the fact that Jacob learns so much by struggling. His wrestling with Laban, his wrestling with his brother Esau, his wrestling with God, he struggles, but these tribulations are the arena in which he is learning painfully, learning the hard way, the things that he needs to know to live the life of faith. So, we can glory in tribulations knowing that tribulation produces perseverance.

Perseverance produces character. Character produces hope. And hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

So, that's what's being talked about. And when we come to, a long way around here, our scripture reading this morning in Romans chapter 11, remember that when Paul talks about Israel being cast away, this is not cast away in the sense of salvation because you have to have something before you cast it away. You hold something in your hand and then you throw it away.

This would be loss of salvation if we were talking about the eternal things. But God has made promises to the nation of Israel that are conditional. They're conditioned on obedience.

Israel disobeyed and God has taken away the fulfillment of the promises. They don't have a Davidic king on the throne in Jesus' day or in Paul's day. They don't have possession of the land.

They're in the land, but it's possessed by the Romans. It's a Roman province or collection of provinces. They don't have every man with his own vine and his own fig tree.

There's all kinds of oppression and strife and so forth. And so the question is, well, because they disobeyed and they didn't keep the condition necessary for the fulfillment of the promise, then is the deal off? Is there no future claim on that promise? And Paul says no. In chapter 11, I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not.

For I also am an Israelite of the seed of Abraham of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. In other words, God knew His people.

He knew all along. Not only did He know the ones who would be faithful and obedient, He also knew the ones who would be disobedient and apathetic and indifferent and have to suffer discipline. God knew all of this ahead of time.

Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars. I alone am left and they seek my life. What does the divine response say to him? I have reserved for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.

Even so then, at this present time, there is a remnant according to the election of grace. This election of grace, and right away, people in Reformed theology think, oh, election, this is talking about salvation. Why did we go back and review chapter 4? Why did we review chapter 5? Why did we review what we talked about in chapter 10? This choosing is not for salvation.

This choosing is for blessing and reward, for fulfillment of promise. This remnant in Israel that didn't bow the knee to Baal are not going to suffer this sin unto death. They are going to receive the fulfillment of promise.

In the resurrection, who is going to be rewarded with being in the land? Who is going to have the opportunity to enjoy the blessings that were promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and so on? It's going to be these who are obedient. This is an act of obedience in not bowing the knee to Baal. Remember, if we believe the doctrine of eternal security, once saved, always saved, if someone has expressed faith in God, and they're an Old Testament saint in Elijah's day, they believe in God, but here comes these oppressors, and they say, you've got to bow the knee to Baal or we're going to cut your head off.

And they're afraid. They say, I don't want to have my head cut off. And through fear, they bow the knee to Baal.

And they go along, and they become comfortable in the Baal cult, and they don't any longer take sacrifices down to Jerusalem. Well, have they lost their salvation? No. This is disobedience.

This is disobedience to the first of the Ten Commandments. Thou shalt have no other god before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, and so forth.

Disobedience results in discipline. Not in loss of salvation. So what is being spoken of here when God says, I have reserved for myself 7,000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.

These are faithful men in the living daily life sense. They're obedient. I've reserved them for myself.

There are obedient men in this generation who are continuing to observe the law and are not intimidated and are not afraid. And Paul says, it's the same today. At this present time, there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

God has seen to it that there are faithful Israelites. And Paul is one of them. He says, look, I'm an Israelite, seed of Abraham, tribe of Benjamin.

And I'm not in this crowd of people who don't recognize Christ, who are indulged in legalism and righteousness by works and all of this. There is a remnant according to the election of grace. If it's by grace, then it is no longer of works.

Otherwise, grace is no longer grace. If it is of works, it is no longer grace. Otherwise, work is no longer work.

What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks. What does Israel seek? The approval of God. Righteousness.

They want the blessing of God. They want the inheritance. They want the fulfillment of the promises.

But they're going about it in ignorance. They're ignorant of the righteousness of God and they're seeking to establish their own. Seeking to establish.

This is a pattern of life. This is lifestyle issue here. But the elect have obtained it.

Who are the elect? It's these that God has reserved. God has salted the generation. He's seen to it that there are individuals who have the volition, who have the positive attitude toward God to prevent the entire generation from being annihilated.

God can pick when and where people are born in history. He can see to it that the believers in the Old Testament age are all located in Israel so that it's easy to feed them in the spiritual sense. It's easy to communicate with them.

If he just peppers the human race at large and here's a believer off in China in the Tong Dynasty out there 6,000 years ago or something. How's he going to get the word of God? How's this individual going to understand redemption and be the beneficiary of the pictures? God would have to send an angel or move heaven and earth to get the word. So God in his sovereignty can decide when and where people are born.

And if he knows in his foreknowledge that they are those who will respond, who want to obey, who are going to seek and search, he can plant them in the soil where that nourishment is going to be available. So it was easier for God in the Old Testament age to locate the vast majority of those who would come to saving faith as well as the smaller subset of those who would exercise living faith. Just locate them in Israel.

Make things easy. So you've got the history of the pagan races going back thousands of years. But they're almost universally unbelievers.

And there's no need to go take the gospel. God doesn't give Israel a gospel mission. Send forth your missionaries to China and to Syria and to South Africa and all the other places.

Send them up to the primitive tribes living in Europe and so forth. God doesn't have to do that. There's no need because there's not going to be anyone out there that's going to respond.

It isn't that God preconditioned their volition. It's that he knows. And he's located the

people who are going to be responsive in one place and ministers to them in one nation by and large.

And yet he foreshadows the positive volition among the Gentiles through Ruth the Moabitess and Rahab the harlot of Jericho and Naaman the Syrian and so forth. And he uses these people as a rebuke to Israel. Here you are located right here in the nation.

Why are you apathetic in the area of living righteousness? There are Gentiles who have more appreciation for me than you do. And it's your heritage. You're the chosen people and so on.

He says, I will make you jealous by people who are not a nation. So when Paul is talking here about Israel not obtaining what it seeks, it's not eternal salvation that they're seeking. It's justification.

They want to stand and receive rewards and receive blessings from God. They want God's approval but they're not going about it God's way. This is like we're at the gift-giving season here at Christmas time.

A lot of times when you're going out and shopping, I think all of us have had the experience at some time or another of getting a present that we couldn't figure out. We unwrap it and we say, I can't imagine. You always appreciate the fact that someone was thoughtful enough to get you a gift.

Always. And it's difficult to even bring this subject up without running the risk of hurting someone's feelings. But I think everybody has unwrapped something.

When I was a little kid, it used to be clothes. I wanted toys. I wanted battery-operated things.

I wanted things with blinking lights that were interesting and fascinating to play with. And my grandmother, I'd get a thing from her and I knew before I opened it, just by the feel of the box, it was a sweater or it was a box of socks or something. And it was a wonderful thing and it was a needful thing.

I didn't know enough to appreciate that gift. Other times, people will give you something and you get the idea that they were just checking you off their list and they didn't really put a lot of thought into it. And it's wonderful that they got you anything at all.

But you figure, this person doesn't really know me or they would know that this is not something I'm going to use in a million years. If somebody got me a book on dancing ballet or something, all about dancing ballet, I would know immediately that they didn't know me very well, that I have about as much use for ballet as I do for Hinduism. I just can't see the point of it.

I think it's unnatural. That thing they do with their feet going in point or whatever it is, having to stand on their toes like that, to me it's like the Chinese binding the feet of their daughters and doing these unnatural things. It's painful and it's hard to do and it just looks weird.

Well, anyway. The point is, if you don't know someone well and you give them a gift and they don't appreciate it, you get the idea, well, they didn't really give this a lot of thought. Israel wants to please God, but they haven't bothered to find out what really does please God.

They haven't submitted themselves to the righteousness of God, the faith and His promises, the daily living pattern that would please God. A lot of times in this same vein, people buy something because they like it. They go out and they see something and they say, Oh, I would love to have one of these.

I want to give this to everybody I know. And a lot of times, if they're fairly normal people, a lot of other people are going to enjoy the same things they do, but occasionally not. And this was Israel's problem.

Israel thought, you know, this makes me feel so good. This righteousness, this standing up on the street corner and praying, it makes me feel good. I bet that's pleasing God too.

And they didn't bother to submit themselves. And this is kind of a pride thing. This is where the gift-giving illustration breaks down, because this is normally not the problem.

But for Israel and for us, we get the idea that a ministry where we go out and do something, it gives us a good feeling. We've made an impact. It's one of the favorite words.

We've been a mentor. We have made a difference. We were able to hold the lantern up and shed the light for some other person.

They appreciate us, and we feel that sense of approbation and approval. We've made a difference through some self-sacrificial act on our part. And we think, Boy, this feels good.

And it's all about the things of God. We were quoting the Bible. We led someone to Christ.

We mentored them in the Christian life or whatever. So it's got to be good. God has to be pleased.

And in a lot of cases, we haven't really gone back and looked at the Word of God to see what God is after, what really does please God. What we discover, if we study the Word, is that it is not what we do to and for other people that pleases God. That is a byproduct.

It's an after effect. It's a symptom of the real thing, which is transformation of the soul. Any rank unbeliever, I've mentioned many times, it's my favorite illustration of this, Al Capone gave thousands, hundreds of thousands of dollars to charity in Chicago.

He fed orphans and clothed them and built libraries and gave bequests to orphanages and schools and things in Chicago. He was a big benefactor. It's one of the reasons he was kind of a popular criminal up there because he gave away a lot of his ill-gotten gains up there.

That doesn't constitute righteousness. That doesn't make him a good person. And in the same way, but it made him feel good, it sabbed his conscience.

He felt like it balanced the scales of some of the people that he had to kill and torture and so forth. We tend to do the same thing. It's a trait of human nature that goes all the way back to the garden.

We want to sow up the fig leaves and cover our nakedness instead of looking to God and recognizing that He's the one that has to meet our needs. God is the one that transforms us. God is at work in us to will and to do His good purpose.

And it is God's work that pleases God. It's God's righteousness. It's when we place faith, which is non-meritorious, which accomplishes nothing in and of itself.

It's the object of our faith that has the merit. This is what Paul is talking about in Romans chapter 11. This is what the Bible is talking about from Genesis to Revelation.

And we're going to find that this is the subject when we get back to Jacob wrestling with God's representative there in our study. So when Paul is talking about Israel here in 11.7 of Romans, what then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks. It seeks the approval of God, but it's doing it in ignorance.

The Israelites are doing it by works, by a Pharisaical approach. And the Pharisees are just the most extreme case of what's going on in common life throughout Israel. The elect have obtained it.

The chosen have obtained it. What does it mean, elect? Why does he call them elect here? Because he's still referring back to what he said about the time of Elijah. I have reserved for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.

Who did God reserve to himself? The seven thousand who obeyed. The seven thousand who were still living by faith. God says, I've reserved them for myself.

And Paul says, Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the choosing of grace. Who does God choose to dispense grace to? Is it arbitrary? Is it baseless from a human point of view? Is it the inscrutable, unknowable choice of God?

Scripture tells us over and over again. Who does God reserve mercy and grace for? Go back to Exodus 34.

Go to any of dozens of passages in the Scripture. There's a reason, there's a basis for God's choosing. There's a reason and a basis for being in that group that receives God's grace.

And it is our choice. It's our choosing to express faith. It's our choosing to obey.

These men were chosen because they did not bow the knee to Baal. Why does God even make an issue of not bowing the knee to Baal? Because it's obedience. It's faith in God that He'll preserve them in that time of crisis.

But it's not the works that have the merit. It's the grace that has the merit. That's what He emphasizes in verse 6. If it's by grace, then it's no longer works.

Otherwise, grace is no longer grace. What then? The rest have been blinded. The elect have obtained it and the rest were blinded.

If you persist in rejecting God's way of righteousness, if you don't want to achieve approval in God's way, you're going to be blinded just as it is written, verse 8. God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear to this very day. It is incomprehensible to me that people will come to this passage and turn it around and say, well, the reason they're unbelievers, the reason that they are rejected by God is God marked them out, marked some of us out to be the chosen and to be the elect and to be saved and He didn't mark out the others. But they say, well, we don't go for double predestination.

We believe that God predestinated some for heaven, but we don't believe that God predestinated others for hell. Well, if you're going to take that tack, what do you do with this passage? God has given them a spirit of stupor. He doesn't say they're persisting in their own spirit of stupor.

He says God has given it to them. And I think to be consistent, and I admire the hard core, hard shell, five and a half point Calvinists who go the whole... If that's the way you're going to take the Bible, then you need to take this verse in that light and believe in double predestination. If I were going to be a Calvinist, that's what I would believe because if you're going to be consistent, that's what you have to say.

It says that God has chosen some and others. He has given a spirit of stupor. He has given them eyes that they can't see.

He's given them blind eyes. He has given them deaf ears. That's why they can't respond.

That's why otherwise they might turn and be healed. If you're going to take this as

salvation, then you better be a double predestinationist because that's what the Bible teaches. But that is such an awful thing.

People can't bring themselves to believe it, so they squirt a cloud of ink and try to say, oh no, we just... It's kind of like a sin of omission where, well, God predestinated some to salvation, but you can't say that He predestinated the rest of them to hell. Well, by not predestinating them to salvation, what else can you say? It's like there's six people drowning out beside the yacht. They were all drunk and fell off.

There's six people out there. You've got six life rings up on the boat, but you only throw out two to the two people that you choose in some inscrutable, arbitrary way. And in the Calvinist, the double predestination, they don't want to go for that.

They say, well, isn't it wonderful that God saved those two people? Well, what about the other four life rings, the other four people that drowned out there? Well, you can't blame God for the fact that they weren't delivered. Just be thankful to God that He sent the two life rings out to the ones that were rescued. And He didn't predestinate those other four to drown.

Well, if He didn't throw them a life ring when He had the power, He determined their fate in the same way that He determined the fate of the two that came out. So I have a lot of trouble figuring out how people who get into that whole Reformed theology business make it work. I can't make it work, and I've tried.

And the fundamental problem is misunderstanding what sections of Scripture are talking about. This is not a salvation passage. This is obedience.

This is living righteousness. So those who are obedient, who exercise living faith, have obtained what they sought. They wanted God's approval.

They want the blessing of God. They want the inheritance. And they have obtained it.

The rest have been blinded. Why? Because of their disobedience. They didn't want it.

They weren't willing to submit themselves to the righteousness of God. That is an act of disobedience. Disobedience brings discipline.

And the discipline is no reward for you. No light for you. You're going to be in the darkness which is outside because you refused to come to the light when you were invited.

It is not a lack of ability. This blinded eyes and deaf ears is a result. And if you persist in rejecting after prophets have been sent, after messengers have been sent, after God the Holy Spirit Himself has convicted you in your soul, you reject, you reject, you reject.

Well, God's not a fool. He's not going to continue to throw His pearls before swine. And

He tells us not to do that either.

And He says, fine. If you're not going to use your eyes to see the truth, you're going to have blind eyes. If you're not going to listen with your ears to the truth that has been brought to you many times, if you're like the ground, Hebrews chapter 6, the rain has come upon it many times and all it does is bring up thorns and thistles, that ground's going to be burned.

You're not going to have the chance to produce anything anymore. You're not going to get the water. You're going to get the fire.

That ground has been watered time after time, opportunity after opportunity. Jesus told the parable of the vineyard and the trees that don't bear. And the husbandman says, let me dig around them.

Let me fertilize them. Let me give them one more try. The owner says, you've tried that two times before and it didn't work.

He says, let me do it one more time. And then if they don't bear, we can chop it all down. That's Israel.

That's us in a lot of cases where the truth has come to us and we don't yield. We do not submit to the righteousness of God. And discipline comes.

And if we persist in ignoring the Word, it's like the door of the ark slamming shut. You don't get unlimited opportunities. The opportunity is there.

Now is the appointed hour. Now is the day of salvation, the day of deliverance. If God all day long has been holding out His hands and you're disobedient and stiff-necked, pretty soon it's going to be withdrawn.

You're going to go into discipline that has no end. The ears that they should not hear to this very day. David says, let their table become a snare and a trap.

Their table. This is the place of nourishment. This is where they're supposed to get fed, to get built up and strengthened to do the work that God called them to do.

But because they misuse it, they abuse it, it's like gluttony where they eat and don't work, don't do the thing for which they're living. Let their table become a snare and a trap. This is what's happened today.

Church services where we go and it's supposed to be a place of nourishment, a place of communion and fellowship with God and with one another has become a travesty of entertainment and psychological manipulation and emotional rollercoasterism and miscommunicating God, miscommunicating God's plan, misdefining, wrongly defining who Jesus is and what the issues are in our lives and the table has become a snare and a

trap. In our churches today, in many cases, it is a stumbling block and a recompense. They're getting exactly what they seek.

Because they're looking for self-gratification, they have their reward. They get the emotional buzz. They get the approbation of fellow believers who are in the same boat and with the same attitude.

Let their eyes be darkened so that they do not see and bow down their back always. And in this fruitless pursuit, it's never satisfying. It's never sufficient.

And they go from one thing to another. They're like ships without a rudder, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, ever learning and never coming to a knowledge of the truth, as Paul describes them to Timothy. So Paul goes on to say, Have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not.

Fall with no recovery. They're never going to receive the fulfillment of the promises. Through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, deliverance has come to the Gentiles.

If their fall is riches for the world and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness. And this is such a difficult passage to understand in terms of salvation because you're saying, okay, they're not saved for a while so that the Gentiles can be saved, but then they're going to be restored and get saved after all. That's not what it's talking about at all.

Israel as a nation has suffered discipline and rejection because they were not obedient. God is using the salvation of the Gentiles, not only their eternal salvation, but also their walk in the Holy Spirit, their fruitfulness, their abundance to chastise, to make Israel jealous. I speak to you Gentiles, I'm an apostle of the Gentiles, magnify my ministry.

If I can provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and deliver some of them. This is not for salvation. This is to deliver them from discipline, to wake them up, to open their blind eyes, to open their deaf ears so that they can hear and respond and enjoy the blessing and the fullness that God has reserved for those who live by faith.

If they're being cast away as the reconciling of the world, what will be their acceptance but life from the dead to begin to experience the resurrection that we share positionally with the Lord Jesus Christ. The death He died, He died to sin. The life He lives, He lives to God.

To be a fruitful branch instead of a dead withered branch. To produce fruit. If the first fruit is holy, the lump is also holy.

If the root is holy, so are the branches. Then He goes on to talk about the broken branches and we're familiar with that. Those branches can be broken off because of unbelief.

They can also be grafted back in. And you have to believe in loss and regaining of salvation like Church of Christ and some of the others do. If you're going to take this passage and this book as talking about salvation.

These branches are broken out because of faithless living. Because of disobedient living. If they wake up and realize what constitutes righteousness before God, they can be grafted in again.

And Israel will be grafted in again as a nation because it's not salvation that's in view. It is production and fruitfulness and life in the vine that is in view. All of this bears on the scene we have before us back in Genesis with Jacob wrestling with God.

Jacob receiving the new name. And in the same way that that set our context last week it does this week as well. We're going to pause here and take our break.

When we come back we're going to resume our study in Genesis chapter 32 verses 22 and following and move into chapter 33.