

97-01-12b

Okay, we are back from our break now, and we've had quite a lively discussion growing out of these things. And of course, we're looking at the issue of the heart, and much of what we've been talking about here the last 20 or 30 minutes during our extended break has focused on the heart, because that's what is at the focus in the New Testament and the Old Testament scriptures that we have been looking at. And as we look at Romans chapter 10, the issue has been put before Israel.

They are believers. The word has been communicated. God sent the prophets.

God sent Moses and had him write these things down, and the word was near them. It's in their mouth and in their heart, and the issue now for them is faith and obedience as a way of life, not as a means of salvation. Faith comes by hearing, hearing by the Word of God.

Haven't they heard? Yes, they have. The sound of these messengers has gone out to all the earth. And were they not encouraged and motivated? Yes, God motivated even Old Testament Israel.

He provoked them to jealousy by those who were not a nation. He moved them to anger by a foolish nation. God used Cyrus, and God had believers come up out of pagan nations like Rahab and Naaman and some of these others.

Look at the book of Jonah where the response of Nineveh at the Word of God was greater and life-changing among the pagans than it was amongst Israel, and the whole book of Jonah is designed to provoke Israel. The book of Jonah, the word Jonah, means the dove, and the dove is a symbol of that that's flighty and indecisive, and Israel is compared to Yonah, the dove, and they won't commit, they won't pursue the things of God, and so God provokes them to jealousy, and Jonah himself is a picture of the nation. They're complacent.

They're secure in their own identity, and they don't care what happens to the nations. They don't care if they fulfill their calling as the people of God, and when the call comes to go and preach the gospel to Nineveh, Jonah says, no, I've got a beef with Nineveh. It's the capital of Assyria, and I don't care about them.

I don't want to go there. This is a command of God, and I don't want to fulfill it, and God disciplines him and gets him to go, and he responds to the discipline and goes, which again is a picture of the history of Israel. Jonah goes, and he tosses out his message, get 40 days, Nineveh will be destroyed, and then he goes up to sit on a hill and watch him be destroyed, and you have the whole thing with the plant, but all of that is a picture of Israel.

Israel is apathetic. God provokes them to jealousy. Look how angry Jonah gets when Nineveh responds, the response of faith.

He doesn't see what great glory that reflects on God. He's ticked off because his expectation is not fulfilled, and the very ending verses of that book say, don't you care anything about the people out here, these X thousand number of people who don't even know their right hand from their left? Don't you see that they've made a choice to turn at the message of God, and you, Jonah, aren't turning in your heart to the things of God. You're not loving the Lord your God.

You're not seeing his glory reflected in this circumstance. You're only thinking about your comfort. You're thinking about your expectations, your ideas of what's right and wrong.

You want to see the Ninevites destroyed. You don't acknowledge that the function of repentance that has taken place here. You're missing the whole point.

That's the book of Jonah. This is what God was doing in Israel. So they did have the word, and they did have the encouragement.

God provoked them. God disciplined them. God did everything he could to make the issue of faith, not faith for lake-of-fire deliverance, but faith for living righteousness and fulfillment of God's purpose.

And Isaiah, Isaiah, Old Testament prophet, hundreds of years before this time, I was found by those who did not seek me. I was made manifest to those who did not ask for me. Because when they are faced with the issue, they weren't out there seeking righteousness, but when they see the issue, they respond.

And here's Israel who's grown up with it. And all day long, God holds out his hands to a disobedient and contrary people. So what's the deal here? Did God not give them the ability? This is the answer in chapter 10.

God has given them the word. He has sent the messengers. He has given them the encouragement.

He's provoked them with the nations that surround them. He has disciplined them with captivities and with the curses that were written back there in Deuteronomy 29 and 30 and so forth. But one of the things we see here in connection with this study is that there's something in the Old Testament economy relative to the heart and what God does with the heart.

Now, Reformed theology today says that God determines whether your heart is going to have the ability to have a faith response, even for salvation, that if you are elect according to the foreknowledge of God, that means that God in eternity past marked you out and loved you in a special way and knew you with a special intimacy and tagged you to be saved from the lake of fire and to be the recipient of his grace and his mercy and to have eternal life, deliverance from the eternal destruction that unbelievers will experience. And that God effectively, through efficacious grace, moves believers to repentance, to change of mind, and gives them the ability

that they did not have. Now, if you look back there one more time at Deuteronomy chapter 29, we want to just resolve this issue of the heart.

What is going on in the heart? We had another very fruitful discussion about the nature of the heart during the break. Scripture tells us that the heart is the decision maker. That's why Moses is telling them here to turn if their hearts turn, that they need to turn their hearts, and that if their hearts turn away, their hearts need to turn back, and so forth.

So the heart is the seat of decision. We know that the thinking and the intentions of our lives reside in the heart. In Timothy, when Paul talks about the Word of God, that it pierces to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, it is a critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The picture we have there is that at the center of the soul and at the center of the spirit, when you lay back the layers with the sword of the Word of God, you find the heart. And that's where the thinking and the intentions reside. And that's what is judged, is criticized, is approved or condemned by the Word of God, the thinking and intention that resides in the heart.

So that's where we fulfill the processes that determine our directions, where we set our priorities. And so Moses tells the Israelites here in 29.4 of Deuteronomy, the Lord has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear. Let's think about that.

Sight, hearing, and perception. What is the object of those things? What can they see and hear and perceive? What is it that Paul is talking about over in Romans chapter 10? What is it that they're hearing and seeing? It's the Word of God, isn't it? It's the plan of God, the character of God, God's self-revelation. And what is the purpose of that seeing and hearing and perceiving? It's for the function of faith.

You can't have faith unless you hear. That's what Paul's pointing out in Romans 10. How can they believe if they haven't heard? How can they hear unless someone communicates? How can someone communicate unless they're sent by God? That's his point.

And over here, we see this same idea here. You have seen what God did in Egypt to Pharaoh and his servants. You've seen the trials, the signs, and the wonders.

But God has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear. And he's talking about in the spiritual realm. You've had these experiences, but in your heart, you're not getting the perception that goes along with, that's going to result in faith and obedience.

That's something that God has to give, and God has not given it to you yet. Now, he launches into this discussion of the covenant, and he says, turn your hearts and God will circumcise them. You make your decision, and God will give you the ability to see and hear and perceive.

So what this tells us is, the choice that we make to pursue God or to pursue the false gods of Canaan, as it were, is something that we make, and we don't need the eyes to see and the ears

to hear and the heart to perceive to make that choice. Our fundamental decision in terms of direction, do I want to please God or do I want to please myself, doesn't depend on these things. If we choose God, and if we turn toward him and want to fulfill his purpose, we are going to need these things in order to complete that, to make that happen.

That's going to be a necessary ability to live in faith and to live in obedience. We're going to have to have eyes to see and ears to hear. What does this tell us? We don't have to have eyes to see and ears to hear to be saved from the lake of fire, to become believers in Christ.

We don't have to have eyes to see and ears to hear to want to please God and to set that as our priority. For that to come to fulfillment, for that to be brought to completion, we do have to have eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart to perceive. And in the Old Testament economy, God would give that ability to those people who were seeking him.

If you're seeking God, he will give you the eyes to see. Think about this, if you're in a completely dark room, there's only one way out. It's a large room and there's one door and it's total darkness in there.

I've read accounts of people who were thrown in dungeons and prisons and so forth and when they woke up from the beating that they took or whatever, it was dark and they couldn't see a thing and they had to start feeling around to find out where they were. And of course, the first thing you want to look for is, is there a way out of this place? Is there a door? And so they start feeling about in the dark. Scripture pictures people in this regard.

It talks about if perchance they may grope after God. We have the ability to grope. We have the ability to look for God.

We have the ability to seek him. It's a familiar story about Helen Keller when the lady working with her was finally able to teach her enough by way of communication with this blind and deaf and mute girl. Taught her how to communicate and was it was able to advance beyond concrete things and talk about spiritual things and start to ask her about God and try to share the gospel with her.

And when she, when the nurse, the lady that was working with her, explained about God and was giving her the gospel, Helen Keller said, oh, yes, I know. I know there's a God. I've known that since since I was old enough to think.

She, she even in comunicado with the rest of the world, was aware of God and had a desire to know about him and was so grateful that once she was able to communicate, to get the knowledge that she sought, to get the information that she was groping after in the darkness of being blind and mute and deaf. And so this passage helps clarify for us that situation. We have the ability to seek.

We have the ability to grope. But we can't see and we can't hear and we can't perceive unless God gives it to us. What is the sequence of events? Does God give us the ability to perceive and then we choose? That would be Reformed Theology.

That would be God determining because he'll give that ability to perceive to some and not to others. It is true that God does not give that to everyone, but it's based on something. It's not an arbitrary, unknowable, mysterious thing that God does where he saves some and not others.

Deuteronomy 29 and passages like it tell us that if we seek and if we search, we will find. This is the consistent picture in both the Old Testament and the New. Remember what Jesus said? Ask and it shall be given.

Seek and ye shall find. Knock and it will be opened to you. If we grope, if we seek, God will give us eyes to see and ears to hear.

Now, if we as believers don't seek and don't turn our hearts toward the things of God, what's going to happen? Even if we have had eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart to perceive in the past, God will take that away. Turn to Isaiah chapter 29. It's kind of easy to remember.

You have Deuteronomy 29 and Isaiah 29 that give us insight into this issue. Now, remember the situation with Isaiah. The northern kingdom has already, the Assyrian invasion, the fifth cycle of discipline has already hit the northern kingdom.

They're out. They're gone. All you're left with is Judah, which is actually Judah and Benjamin.

You're a couple hundred years further into the future after the fall of the northern kingdom and now Hezekiah is king coming under discipline from God because they have been disobedient and apathetic. Judah still represents the people of God. The prophet has been sent to them to warn them, to encourage them.

And the discipline that they're experiencing, the oppression from the outside, is because they have been disobedient and unfaithful to God as the people of God, as believers. Look at verse 9 of Isaiah 29. Pause and wonder.

Blind yourselves and be blind. They are drunk but not with wine. They stagger but not with intoxicating drink.

For the Lord has poured out on you the spirit of deep sleep and has closed your eyes, namely the prophets, and he has covered your heads, namely the seers. The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one who is literate, saying, read this, please. And he says, I cannot, for it is sealed.

Then the book is delivered to one who is illiterate, saying, read this, please. And he says, I am not literate. What's the case here? You have a book of important information and people say, we

need to know the information in this book.

And you have two reasons why the information doesn't come across. In the first case, someone who is able to read it says, I'm sorry, but I'm not allowed. There's a seal on this book that I can't break.

If it weren't sealed, if I were allowed, I could read it to you, but I'm not allowed. That's the case of the remnant in Israel. There are prophets.

There are seers who are faithful. There is a remnant of 7,000 that's not bowed the knee to Baal, as it were. But they're not allowed to speak.

There's a seal on the book. God tells Daniel, seal up the vision and the prophecy until the time of the end. Daniel understood it, but he wasn't allowed to reveal it, because God needed to inflict discipline on his people at that time.

Now, there are other people, in verse 12, who are illiterate. They don't have the ability to read, even if the book were opened. You hand them the book and they say, if it were open, I couldn't read it.

Some people have the ability to see and perceive, but they're not allowed to speak. Others don't even have the ability to see and perceive. This is in the realm of believers.

You have two categories of believers in Old Testament times, those who can perceive and those who can't. In this particular case, even those who are allowed to perceive, it's a time of discipline, and God says, don't communicate it. Don't read it.

Therefore, the Lord says, inasmuch... Now, why is this the case? Why is it that this communication is not going to go forward? Why are the contents of the book not going to be revealed in Israel? God says, inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor me with their lips, but they have removed their hearts far from me. Therefore, their fear toward me is taught by the commandments of men. Now, this is a thing we have today.

We talked about this in the first session. We try to use peer pressure. We try to use techniques and programs and encouragements and ministries.

We try to have impact on people and get them to change and be different. That's the fear of God taught by the commandments of men. We're trying to work the fear of God into somebody from the outside.

Fear of God taught by the commandments of men. God condemns this. He says, they're drawing near with their mouths, honoring me with their lips, but their hearts are far away.

Look around us today. That's what the bulk of Christianity is in. There's a lot of lip service to God.

There's a lot of things done in God's name, and the heart is far away. It's done for self-gratification. Even when it's done in the Lord's name, and even when people try to convince themselves that it's doing the Lord's work, people are getting that little rush from making an impact and making a difference and being approved by people and being appreciated by people.

God says in verse 14, It's not that there is no wisdom, but the few wise men that are left are going to be hidden. And if you go on down here, you'll see that we have a reference to the potter and the clay. And as we've seen in the past, every time you find the potter and the clay, it is discipline.

The potter is having to discipline the clay. He's having to shatter the vessels. The point here is that God is going to take away their ability to perceive because they have removed their hearts far from him.

This is a result, not a cause. God doesn't put a spirit of blindness. He doesn't close their eyes and stop up their ears and then say, well, lookie there, I've made you blind and deaf and what do you know? You're not responding to me anymore.

They are hypocrites. They are doing things for the wrong reasons. They're doing things in the name of God, but they have removed their hearts.

They themselves have removed their hearts far from God. And so God is putting a spirit of deep sleep. He has closed their eyes and he has covered their heads.

It's a result of what people have done in their hearts. In the Old Testament, age, especially, these passages talk about the Old Testament believers. If you pursued God with your heart, he would open your eyes, open your ears, give you perception and enable you to understand.

Now, this is true even in the New Testament. Let me direct your attention to Matthew chapter 13, keeping in mind that Jesus ministered, did his ministry in the age of Israel. We remember many times in Matthew when he gives a parable, he teaches the parable of the soils here in Matthew chapter 13.

After he delivers this parable, he says, he who has ears to hear, in verse 9, let him hear. He who has ears to hear, let him hear. We've studied this parable in depth in the past and we know that this is directed to believers about their choices in life.

Are you going to heed the word and be fruitful or not? And this was true even in the Old Testament economy, just as it is true today. Fruit is born in the life based on receiving the word, nourishing it in the soul, having it spring up and bear fruit. He says, he who has ears to hear, let him hear.

What does this imply? Some of these people listening to this teaching about the life of believers, some are going to hear it and some are not. Some have the ability to hear it and comprehend it

and some don't. It reflects that Old Testament truth that if your heart has been turned in the right direction, you have ears to hear.

If your heart is seeking other things as a believer, this parable isn't going to make any sense. Verse 10, the disciples came and said, why do you speak to them in parables? He answered and said to them, because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. Now, does this mean that Jesus is wasting his time teaching him the parables because there's no ability to comprehend? Not at all.

Teaching these parables demonstrates who has ears to hear and who does not. And that in turn is a reflection of who has turned their heart to the Lord and who has not. Because having eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart to perceive is given by God based on what people have done with their heart.

Have they turned toward God? Like Moses talks about in Deuteronomy 29 and 30, if they have turned their heart to the living God, God will circumcise their heart and give them eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart to perceive. Whether or not you have ears to hear is a gift from God based on what you did with your heart. It isn't a gift from God that determines what you do with your heart.

It's a result, not a cause. And Jesus, when he teaches these parables, people who have turned their hearts to the Lord have eyes to see and ears to hear and it communicates to them. But to those who are living in apostasy, those who are living in apathy and faithlessness toward God, even though they're believers, they will not understand it.

The ability to understand these parables has not been given to them. They are believers. This parable is about lifestyle for a believer, not about salvation.

And people have taken this and twisted it and said, look, see, God didn't give them the ability to understand the gospel and now they're going to go to the lake of fire. Not at all. They are believers who, by turning their hearts away from the Lord, can't understand good teaching when it comes.

They're illiterate when it comes time to read the book. And even when someone comes who has the ability to read the book, the book is sealed. And Jesus says, I talk to them in parables so that hearing they will hear and not perceive.

Whoever has, to him more will be given and he will have abundance. You have to already have something going on in your soul. You're a believer and God has given you the ears to hear.

More is going to be given and your faith is going to grow and you'll have abundance. But whoever does not have, and the implication is here, they should have it and they don't. And because they don't have what they should have, because they haven't turned their hearts to the Lord and been

given the gift of eyes and ears and a receptive heart, a perceptive heart, even what he has will be taken away from him.

Therefore I speak to them in parables because seeing they do not see and hearing they do not hear nor do they understand. The very same thing we saw in Deuteronomy and Isaiah chapters 29 in both of those books. In them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled which says, hearing you will hear and shall not understand.

Seeing you will see and not perceive. Why? For the heart of this people have grown dull. They have turned their hearts away from God and that's why they can't perceive and they can't hear.

If they had turned their heart toward God, God would have given them eyes to see and ears to hear. But God doesn't waste those seeing eyes and hearing ears on people who have turned their hearts away because they're not going to use them. How do you find out who's got the eyes and who's got the ears? Jesus teaches in parables.

And he says, to you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. There's a basis for this gift and this is not a determinative gift. It doesn't determine their salvation and it doesn't determine their growth and their function in God's plan.

It is a result of the decision that they have made. The heart of this people in verse 15 of Matthew 13, the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing and their eyes they have closed.

Otherwise, and this shouldn't be translated less, it should be translated otherwise. Otherwise, they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and they would understand with their hearts and turn so that I should heal them. It's a result of what they've done with their hearts.

And that's the first thing in this sequence. And if you turn your heart, God will give you perception in your heart. He'll give you eyes to see and ears to hear.

Look at verse 16. But blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear. You've received the gift because these men have forsaken everything and followed Christ, haven't they? They turned their hearts toward Christ.

Why do you think they have these seeing eyes and hearing ears? Because when Christ said put down what you're doing and follow me, they did it. They have turned their hearts toward God and the things of God and followed Christ. And they've been given this gift of perception as a result, not as a means.

Assuredly, I say to you many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see and did not see it, to hear what you hear and did not hear it. Therefore, hear the parable of the sower. And he goes on and talks about what happens when you hear.

So, that's what we're talking about when we talk about hard hearts, when we talk about perceptive hearts. When we see these passages, and there are several in the New Testament, they talk about hearing you will hear and shall not understand. Go back to Isaiah and the context of that.

These are believers who have turned their hearts away from God. And God says I'm going to demonstrate that you don't have the gift of seeing eyes and hearing ears. I haven't been able to give you that gift because you've turned your heart away from me.

But in Deuteronomy 29 and 30, we saw that if as a result of discipline and being awakened and motivated by God and chastened by God, if you turn your heart toward God, he will come back and circumcise your heart. He will give you those seeing eyes and hearing ears. So we can lay to rest once and for all the misunderstanding of these things that God somehow determines who is responsive and who is not by whether or not he gives them the gift of perception.

It's just the other way around. We make our choice of what we're going to do with our heart. It's an ability that everyone has.

That's why Moses encourages Israel. He says God hasn't given you these hearts yet, but turn, obey, seek, and you will find, knock, and it will be open to you. The message is consistent to Israel all the way through.

And when we come back now to Romans chapter 10, this is what is going to help us understand what we see when we get to chapter 11. I say then, has God cast away his people? Certainly not. I am an Israelite, seed of Abraham, tribe of Benjamin.

God has not cast away his people whom he foreknew. God made provision because he knew that there would be people who would turn their hearts toward him. And in eternity past, he provided them with blessings.

He provided them with a destiny. He provided them with a fulfillment of function. Now God has cast away some of his people, but he hasn't cast away the ones that he foreknew.

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 and I alone am left and they seek my life. This is from 1 Kings 19. What is the situation there? If you go back and look at that, these are the Israelites that have torn down God's altars.

These are the believers that have gone so far afield that they don't worship God anymore. They have killed your prophets. They have torn down your altars.

I alone am left and they seek my life. But what does the divine response say to him? I have reserved for myself 7,000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Elijah is to continue his

ministry as a prophet in Israel for the sake of these 7,000.

They have eyes to see. They have ears to hear. God is going to preserve Elijah for the sake of the 7,000.

He's going to continue to be a communicator. But to the rest of Israel, Lord who has believed our report, Isaiah says, Elijah thinks there's no one out there. Paul says, even so then at this present time, now in the church age, among the Jews, there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

You look up these words for remnant. I saw an English translation where it says, even so then at this present time, there is a remnant chosen by grace. And that's wrong.

This is not a remnant chosen by grace. This is kata plus the accusative of ek-logay. Ek-logain means to select.

It was used by some of the Greek writers to talk about, he had a library and he was going to bring out some selections from that library to present because they were particularly worthy. He couldn't read the whole library to these people. So he made selections of the choice books, the choice passages, the choice writings.

He chose them because of something. They were chosen out because they had a particular quality and he called them ek-logay. In the Septuagint, this word, this very same word ek-logay occurs and it's in this passage that Paul quotes, there is a remnant that is chosen out because of something.

Why does God choose? Why does God choose to give the hearing ears and the seeing eyes? There's a basis for that choice and it's the heart that has responded and has turned to him. And there is a remnant, there is a group of Jewish Christians that have been marked out by God. They've been selected by God because they have perceptive hearts, because they understand righteousness by faith and that it's not based on the law.

There is a larger group of Jewish Christians who misunderstand this. That's what we saw in Acts chapter 21 and chapter 22. They rejoice that people are coming to Christ.

They themselves are believers in Christ but they think that righteousness comes by the law and they want Paul to go keep a law ritual and fulfill this vow with these young men to demonstrate that righteousness still comes by the law. Now, they have been chosen by grace. And what's the point here? Why are they chosen by grace? The whole point is they didn't do something to earn this choosing.

They became something. They turned their hearts. They didn't go perform an act.

They didn't get circumcised. They didn't keep a feast. They didn't fulfill a vow.

They turned their hearts. And their God's choosing of them is grace. It's the same kind of grace choosing that happens at the point of salvation when we accept Christ, Ephesians 2.8.9. You've been saved by grace.

You've been delivered by grace. It's a gift of God, not from works, lest any man should boast. This choosing is also by grace through faith.

Turning of the heart, God is able to give that gift. If by grace, it is no longer of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. If it is from works, it is no longer grace.

Otherwise, work is no longer work. What then? In verse 7. Israel has not obtained what it seeks. What does it seek? Look at 10.3. Israel, being ignorant of God's righteousness, seeks to establish their own righteousness, and they've not submitted to the righteousness of God.

They're seeking righteousness, and they've not captured it. They've not overtaken it. They've not obtained it.

The chosen have obtained it, but the rest were blinded. Now, does it mean that they didn't get the righteousness because they are blind? Not at all. Those who are chosen by God, those who have turned their hearts toward God, are operating in faith, and God can give them the declaration of righteousness based on faith.

But these that are seeking it by works and have not submitted themselves to righteousness, they've turned their hearts away from God. They're seeking some other thing. They're seeking approval.

They're seeking gratification. They're seeking the fulfillment of their own desires, and they are blinded. Their eyes to see aren't there.

Their ears to hear aren't there. But these things are a result, not a cause. It doesn't say that God has blinded them, and therefore they have not obtained what they sought.

What a horrible God we would have to react in this way. Here are people that are seeking God. They want to be righteous, but God just blinds them.

He says, Sorry, I'm not going to give you any eyes to see and find out how to be righteous. I'm just going to blind you. You're seeking righteousness, but I'm just not going to give you the ability to understand how it works.

I'm just going to blind you because in my inscrutability and my ways are higher than your ways, and I'm just going to do this and not explain it. That's a horrible God, and yet that's the God that's presented in some theologies. God, His eyes rove to and fro in the earth, seeking the ones.

This is in Chronicles, by the way. I want to say 1 Chronicles 18. I ran across this verse the other

day where, let me see if I can find that verse.

It's a great verse. Look around 1 Chronicles chapter 18, if my memory serves. No, it must be 2 Chronicles.

Yes. Micaiah is prophesying somewhere in this general vicinity. It talks about the fact that the eyes of the Lord are roving to and fro in the earth, looking for the one who's going to have faith in Him.

And that's the point. I can't find the exact verse, but suffice it to say it's back there. God is anxiously seeking those who will turn their hearts toward Him so that He can bless them.

He's not looking for people so that He can blind them and be arbitrary and capricious. Those who are seeking their own righteousness and not submitting to the righteousness of God, God has blinded them and they brought it on themselves. 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.

David says, let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block, and a recompense to them. This is a recompense. This is a result of something they have brought on themselves.

Their eyes be darkened so that they do not see and bow down their back always. If we come away today from our study with one thing clear in mind, it is that God is anxious that we turn and repent. It is not the will of God that any should perish, but that all come to a change of mind.

God calls us. God called Israel on the banks of the Jordan to turn their hearts toward Him so that He could bless them and multiply them and make them fruitful. But if they turn their hearts away, God will take their blessings away.

If they don't seek Him, He's not going to give them eyes to see. He's going to blind them. He's going to deafen them, and He's going to discipline them hoping that they will turn their hearts.

When they turn their hearts back, then He will give them eyes to see and ears to hear. So the blindness and deafness is a result, not a cause, of discipline for believers. And that's Paul's point.

When we pick up in this study next time in Romans chapter 11, we're going to see that this whole idea of branches being grafted in and broken off is a reflection of this principle. And he's going to build on this to demonstrate that the Jewish Christians who have misunderstood righteousness and who have rejected the righteousness of God by faith, if they do turn their hearts, God will be able to pick them up and graft them back into the tree of production, the tree of fruitfulness and blessing. And that if they residing in that tree don't bear any fruit, if they don't seek the things of God and are not fruitful, God will snap them out of that tree.

And He's going to tell the Gentiles the very same thing can happen to you. Don't boast over the branches that have been snapped off and get your eyes on people and off of the things of God,

because if you turn your heart away from God, you can be snapped off just like they were. Whether or not we reside in the tree as a branch, we'll see this next time, depends on what we do with our hard attitude.

And we can't blame God and say, well, God didn't give me the motivation. God didn't give me the revelation. God didn't give me the eyes to see.

We have no one to blame but ourselves. If we turn our hearts, God will give us. And to him who has, more will be given in abundance.

But if we have not, even the things we have, the eyes to see and ears to hear, will be taken away and we'll go into the discipline phase. And God will use that discipline to seek to turn us and motivate us. And when we get our heart straightened out, then He can return us those faculties of perception that enable us to advance and be fruitful in His plan.

So the bottom line is, as believers, the lesson of observing Israel's history is it depends on us in terms of where we end up. God will graciously provide everything that we need, but we have to set the priority in our heart of whether or not we're going to seek Him. Why is it that people don't know what God's will is? Why is it that we have difficulty discerning God's will? And we wonder whether or not we're being guided by God.

Do we have eyes to see? Do we have ears to hear? Do we have hearts that can perceive? Hopefully we do. And if we do, we can watch and wait for God to shine the light on the path. But if much of Christianity today that's off seeking its own righteousness through works has no concept of divine guidance and asks for the answers to questions that shouldn't even be asked because they're so far out in the weeds, they have no eyes to see and no ears to hear.

We can have this same fate happen to us. So it's a strong encouragement to us to be sure our hearts are squared away and that we're seeking things which are above and not things which are on the earth. And seeking we will find.

Asking we will receive. Knocking it will be open to us. Let's close in prayer.

Father, we thank you for the wonderful opportunity, the open door that you have placed before us of life and opportunity. We pray that as a result of studying these things we will see that opportunity. We will understand it.

We will pursue it. Our hearts will be encouraged to turn in the direction of the things that are a part of your plan and your purpose for us and that as a result we will be in a position to see and hear to perceive and to grow and produce the fruit that you have called us to produce in this life. As a result of these things we know that our lives can reflect the glory of our Savior and we pray that that will take place and we ask these things in his name.

Amen.

