

## *Application*

To judge by many writers on Romans 11, the apostle wants us to come to the end of that chapter thinking about a massive awakening among the Jews, leading to unmitigated blessing for the world.

Clearly, this is a mistake. Paul concludes the chapter by exalting the glory of God – the glory of God in the fulfilment of his eternal purpose to have mercy on all his elect and to save them all, whether Jew or Gentile. In addition, Paul has highlighted God’s wisdom in overruling all things in working out his will. Coupled with this, we have the apostle’s motive in writing this portion of Scripture; namely, his earnest desire to see as many sinners (especially his fellow-Jews) as possible converted. That is what Romans 11 is about.

If, therefore, we want to test our understanding of Romans 11, we must ask ourselves how moved *we* are to see the glory of God in the salvation of sinners. How much do we long for sinners to be saved? What steps are we taking to bring it about? Or does our prophetic view, or our Calvinism, come between us and a passionate love for the lost?

In other words, it’s the gospel, the saving mercy of God, the saving will and purpose of God towards sinners which is paramount here. With respect, it’s not some pipe-dream about a world-wide revival and a golden age!

How Romans 11 should challenge us as believers, move us and melt us in our approach to unbelievers. They are lost – lost now and will be lost for ever. Let us not rest until we have caught the apostle’s fire, emotion, passion, desire and urgency to see as many sinners as possible saved. If our exposition of Romans 11 does not move us to long to see sinners saved, and to work for it, we’ve got the wrong end of the stick altogether!

And what an encouragement Romans 11 is for the unbeliever to come to Christ. In light of the apostle’s motive and words in this chapter, let me address any unbeliever reading this: no matter how grievously you have sinned, no matter how bitter have been your words against Christ, no matter how many times you have refused

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him, the door of God's mercy stands open still – open to you, and for you. Judas perished, not because he betrayed Christ, but because he did not turn to Christ in repentance and faith; Peter sinned, but repented. Repent, unbeliever, trust Christ, and he will save you. Come to Christ! He will receive you. The angels in heaven will rejoice over your repentance (Luke 15:10)! So come, and come now!

*Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched,  
Weak and wounded, sick and sore;  
Jesus ready stands to save you,  
Full of pity joined with power.  
He is able, he is able;  
He is willing; doubt no more!*

*Come, ye needy, come, and welcome;  
God's free bounty glorify;  
True belief and true repentance,  
Every grace that brings us nigh.  
Without money, without money  
Come to Jesus Christ and buy!*

*Let not conscience make you linger,  
Nor of fitness fondly dream;  
All the fitness he requireth  
Is to feel your need of him.  
This he gives you, this he gives you,  
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam!*

*Come, ye weary, heavy laden,  
Bruised and mangled by the fall;  
If you tarry till you're better,  
You will never come at all.  
Not the righteous, not the righteous;  
Sinners Jesus came to call!*

*Lo! th' Incarnate God, ascended;  
Pleads the merit of his blood!  
Venture on him; venture wholly,  
Let no other trust intrude;  
None but Jesus, none but Jesus  
Can do helpless sinners good.*

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*Saints and angels, joined in concert,  
Sing the praises of the Lamb;  
While the blissful seats of heaven  
Sweetly echo with his name!  
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!  
Sinners here may sing the same.*<sup>1</sup>

And another:

*The door of thy mercy stands open all day  
To the poor and the needy who knock by the way;  
No sinner shall ever be empty sent back,  
Who comes seeking mercy for Jesus's sake.*<sup>2</sup>

Unbeliever: believe it! Act on it.

Believer: preach it! Don't get lost in a welter of over-heated speculations about some supposed world revival, brought about by a massive conversion of the Jews. Don't get hooked on poring over TV news-bulletins, trying to read prophetic minutiae in the never-ending wars raging in the Middle East. Exalt Christ in preaching the gospel, now. Command sinners to repent and trust Christ, now. Encourage sinners to look away from themselves and their sins, and to look to the Lord Christ and be saved. Let the sovereignty of God move you to passion for the saving of the lost and the free preaching of Christ; don't let it stifle either the passion or the preaching. For if our Calvinism or our prophetic view has stifled our love for sinners, and all that goes with that love, then our Calvinism is no Calvinism at all, and our prophetic view needs radical attention. No man could more passionately and dogmatically assert the sovereign will and grace of God than Paul, and yet no mere man ever matched him in his love for sinners. Hear him:

I speak the truth in Christ – I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit – I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own [people], the people of Israel... Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved... I make much of my ministry

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<sup>1</sup> *Gospel Hymns* number 402. Hart: *Hymns* number 100, p133.

<sup>2</sup> *Gospel Hymns* number 51.

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in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them (Rom. 9:1-4; 10:1; 11:13-14).

That is the man who wrote Romans 11! Would that all interpreters of that chapter could say the same.

Where did Paul get that love for sinners? We don't have to guess. As he knew, and said in the context of Romans 11, God could declare: 'All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people' (Rom. 10:21).

As the apostle explained elsewhere:

Christ's love compels us... God... reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. As God's fellow-workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain... I tell you, now is the time of God's favour, now is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 5:14,18 – 6:2).

This is what Romans 11 is all about.