

## Introduction

### **Reflection:**

- How would you define 'Unity'?

Christians are called to be united and yet so often we see arguments over issues that seem to present the church at large in a state of gross disunity.

- What is it about 'Unity' that we should uphold?
- What actually unites Christians?
- When is it the right thing *not* to be united?

- Chapter 11 logically follows as a natural subsection (along with Chapters 9 and 10) in the argument of Romans. Romans 9-11, generally speaking, has something to do with the place of 'true' Israel in God's plan of salvation – chapter 11 looks at this with particular reference to the place of the Gentiles in the Kingdom of God (Rom 11:25-26).<sup>1</sup>

## Romans 11

- The rejection of God by the Jews as recorded in Chapter 10 leads to the obvious question about the salvation of the Jews – has God abandoned them? The answer Paul offers is 'No'! (11:1)
- He offers himself as an example (not the first time – c.f. Phil 3:4-6) and then uses scripture to back up his position. God has promised his people in the Old Testament that he would 'not cast away his people'.<sup>2</sup> Regardless of human effort, God in his grace will redeem his people (Rom 11:5-6).<sup>3</sup>

Israel failed to obtain  
righteousness by works  
(for it is impossible) – Rom  
11:7 c.f. 9:31-33.

No one deserves to receive  
the free gift of salvation in  
Christ

By God's grace, the elect  
received - Rom 11:5-6.  
The others were hardened  
– Rom 11:7.

### ***The Process of Election for Israel***

<sup>1</sup> J.R.W. Stott suggests that 9:1-33 looks at Israel's past fall and God's purpose for election. Israel's present fault and God's dismay over her disobedience is the concern of 10:1-21. Then 11:1-32 considers the future of the new Israel for Jew and Gentile, the ultimate goal of God's long-term design. (*The Message of the Romans*. BST; Leicester:IVP,1994, 262.)

<sup>2</sup> 1 Sam 12:22 c.f. Ps 94:14.

<sup>3</sup> An alternative view suggests that 'the remnant' mentioned in 11:5 are not simply the remnant of ethnic Israel, or the Gentiles, nor those who live righteously according to the law, but it is the ones that God has 'chosen by grace' (11:5).

- Why is it that God hardens the hearts of some?
  - Isn't this the sixty-four thousand dollar question that lies at the heart of 'predestination'?!
  - Paul answers – because it was part of God's eternal plan! In God's plan, the rejection of the hardened Jews compelled the early Christians to take the gospel to the Gentiles – that in fact was what Paul did (11:11b-15).
  - Paul's zeal for the Gentiles was not only for their benefit, but also for that of his own people – the Jews. Even to the point of making the Jews jealous to save them.

**Exercise:**

Chapter 11:17-24 gives the metaphor of the olive root and branches.

- What/ or Who does the 'root' represent? (c.f. 11:28)

- The Jews had/have an important and privileged place in the plan of God. It is a position that must be honoured. Romans 11:26-28 seems to state that all Israel will be saved. Is that all 'true' Israel (those in faith - reflecting on 9:6-7) or is that all 'true' Israel (those descendants of Abraham and Joshua, the ones who received God's unbreakable promise – reflecting on 11:27 c.f. Is 27:9)?
- Paul is not saying that the Jews automatically receive the kingdom of God simply because they are descendants of Abraham – that would contradict Romans 9:7-8 – No, he is ensuring that the Jews are recognized for their special situation as recipients of the promises of God – 'they are loved on account of the patriarchs' (11:28). It is a position that should warn the Gentiles not to become arrogant and presume that they are in a position that is better than the Jews (the same as what Jews had done to them).
- What Paul does make clear, is that the salvation of all Israel is intimately connected with the Gentiles – they will not be redeemed totally until the full complement of Gentiles have been accepted into the Kingdom (11:25). Notice however that neither the Jews or the Gentiles will be redeemed until the 'deliverer' comes – salvation is dependant on the return of Christ (11:26). It is with the return of Christ that 'all Israel' are saved.
- This is the goal of the argument. Paul's argument is not whether the Jews would be saved *over* the Gentiles, but rather that those who have faith will be saved over those without. Jew and Gentile are both exposed to God's judgment in 1:18-2:24, and both are included in God's plan for salvation in 3:21-31 (c.f. v29). Abraham is presented as the Father of both the Jews and Gentiles because of faith in Chapter 4 (c.f. v16). And so, in chapters 9-11 we see how God's plan of salvation is made open to both Jew and Gentile – it is through Jesus Christ. All people who have faith in Jesus will be saved (10:12).

- Paul is presenting what it means for a Christian to live by faith - those in the kingdom of God are distinguished by their relationship with Christ rather than their racial, geographical or worldly relationship, which ultimately has no justified value.
- The doxology (11:33-36), the outburst of praise that ends the chapter also brings to a close the first part of the letter (see Unit 1 – Appendix). Paul's theological argument has now been drawn. Along the way he has drawn out several applications, but with Chapter 12 he turns his attention almost entirely to putting his theology into applied practice.

**Exercise:**

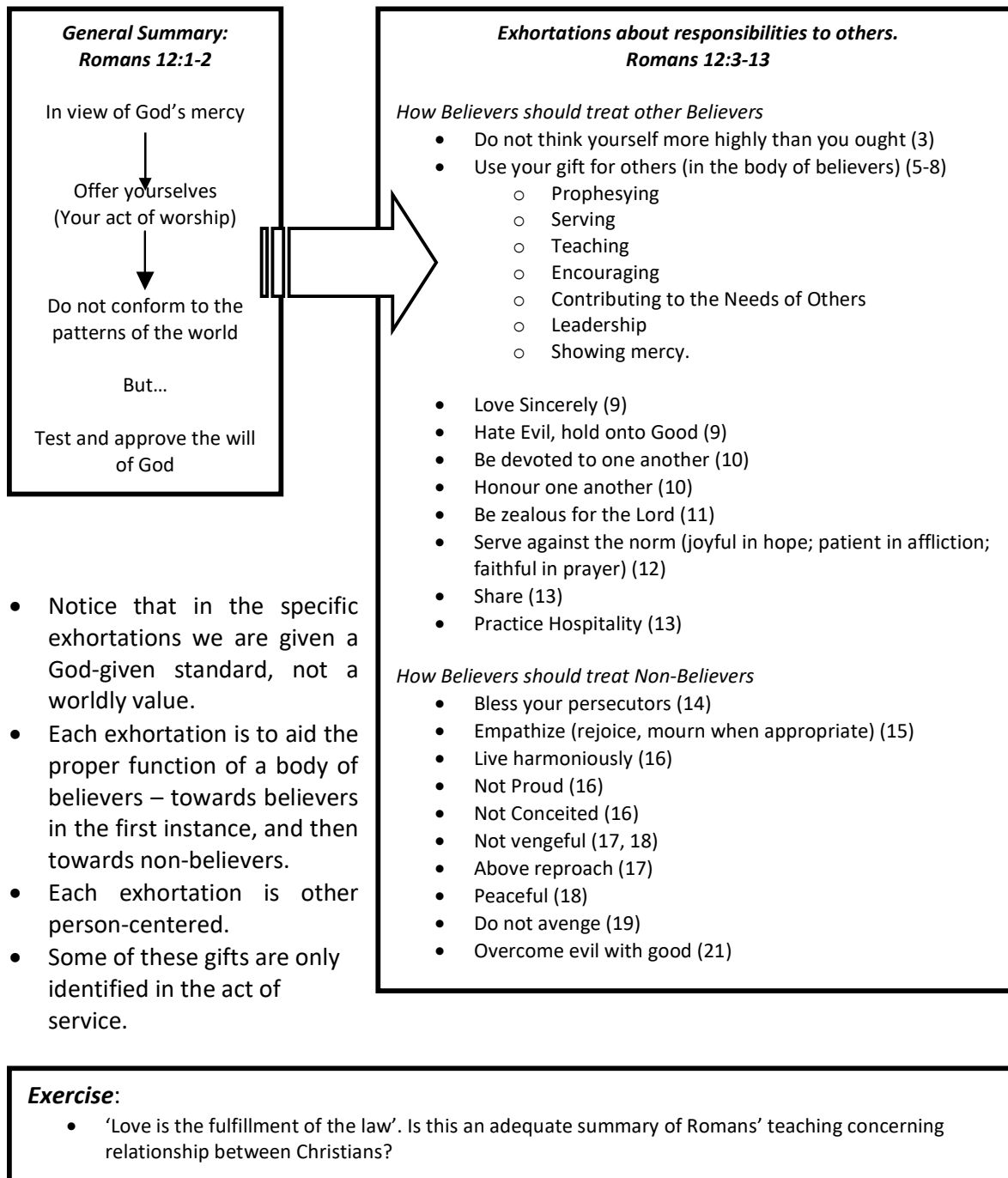
- What role does Romans suggest Israel has under the new covenant?

**Reflection:**

- As an aside, Paul by spending so much time in theological argument, has given us an example of how to 'think theologically'.
- As we live as Christians we are presented choices – often ethical. Choices that usually draw the difference between God and the World. Choices where our faith is put to the test. Choices that often challenge our Christian integrity.
- How do we make faithful choices?
- Often, Christians will work out what feels right. Because they are Christian they often make good choices. Once made, they then work out how God fits into the situation. This is a dangerous way of living as a Christian, because it puts opinion, or feeling ahead of the Bible. Often this narrows the decision to the realm of experience which then means the decision has to massage our theology so that it fits our newly decided circumstance.
- A wiser way of making decisions as a Christian is to 'think theologically'. When faced with a choice, Christians should think about how the Bible addresses the issue - what theological principles have some relevance to the choice. By taking this step first, it means that the decision is often shaped first and foremost by the Bible, it is then applied to our circumstance.
- This decision-making process shouldn't deny how we feel about the choice, but it should ensure that our feelings and opinions are influenced faithfully.
- Paul gives us an example of this in Romans – he spends the first eleven chapters stating his theological position and only once that is in place, does he move to work out how to fully apply it to his Christian living (c.f. 12:1-2).

**Romans 12 – The Christian Way of Life**

- We practice what we preach, because God has been merciful to us in Christ. Paul wants the Roman Christians to be motivated by the mercies they have received from God. It is for this reason that Christians should 'offer themselves as living sacrifices' (12:1). The gospel properly understood is the foundation for Christian living.



**Application:**

- How does your theological belief influence the way you make decisions?
- How are you united in faith with other believers? Where are you not united? Is it for a godly reason?

**For next Week:**

- Read Unit 10 (for next week).
- In order to ensure you know the flow of Romans well – keep reading through Romans. This time, read it as if it was written to you as a Gentile.

**References** (for possible further reading)

Barnett, P., *Romans – The Revelation of God's Righteousness*. Focus Series: Christian Focus Pub; Scotland, 2003, Chapter 12, 251-71.

**Glossary** (taken from the New Bible Dictionary)

**Predestination.** The idea of God's foreordination of all things – his will. The Bible speaks of God's will for humankind in two ways, his law and his plan. It is his plan for events that concerns predestination and in order to understand it we must consider God's plan as a whole.

It is Paul who draws the concept of predestination most elaborately – for him, God has had a plan from all eternity – the aim of the plan is to that humankind be made God's adopted sons and renewed in the image of Christ (Rom 8:29). Believers then should rejoice in the certainty that as part of God's plan he has predestined them personally to share in this destiny. (Rom 8:28ff; Eph 1:3ff; 2 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 1:9)

In order to fully understand predestination we would have to understand the sovereignty of God – a feat impossible for us this side of heaven!

**Doxology.** A short, spontaneous ascription of praise to God<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> P.T. O'Brien, 'Benediction, Blessing, Doxology and Thanksgiving' in *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, Edited by G. Hawthorne, R. Martin, and D. Reid. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 1993, 69.