

Record of Sermons delivered during the month of June 2020

(added progressively after each Sunday)

(see following pages)

Christ Fulfils the Office of Priest

Romans 8:28

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

The great divide between portions of the professing Christian Community is between those that follow man's religion rather than God's revealed 'good news'! The so-called Christian Church has to make up it's mind which it is. And quickly. The matter is urgent! What is to be followed. What is to be believed. Are we to believe what is in the Scripture – although there is much that our human logic cannot follow – or will we only believe what we can understand? Are we to believe what God has said, or believe our particular interpretation of what God has said?

It's very, very easy to put the Scriptures together in a way that makes them easy to believe. It's easy to play around with them to make them palatable and acceptable. So that they offend nobody; hurt nobody; and confuse nobody! There are a great many mysteries in the Holy Bible and one of the chief of these is the one we now consider:

We by now have learned that we are creatures of God. We're not in this world by accident. We are not creatures that have just happened. We are not just a coincidence. There's a meaning in our life. God made us. We are made for Him! God has told us that we may know what He is like and also know what He expects from us. He has told us all of this in the Scriptures. There is no need to look anywhere else! He has spoken through the Prophets and through the Apostles. So that we have in our hands this very day the Holy Bible, where in it is the revealed will of God for men and women. All we need to know is there.

We also know from the Holy Bible a great range of things that are usefully summarised and referenced to the Bible, in the Westminster Confession of Faith and it's associated 'Questions and Answers' called the Catechism.

We have found what God is like; that He sent a Saviour, to save the people He had chosen; who that Saviour is; that He is God and at the same time 'man'; has a true human body and a soul that reasons; that this Saviour does three distinct things in His role as Saviour:

- a Prophet,
- a Priest, and
- a King!

As Prophet we can note that He is still a Prophet: He still teaches men and women through the Scriptures. As we are doing at present.

However, unless the sound is turned off, while we all hear the same words there will be some who are distracted: thinking about tomorrow or other things. Some will try to think about the Bible Readings and the Sermon. But only for some will this be 'going home'! Only for some will the Word reach the heart. Because Jesus Christ, as

Prophet, is speaking to some, and in a mystery which we can't understand, He is not speaking to others. So Jesus Christ is not, in the same way, Prophet to all! (Matthew 13:13)¹

In the same way He is not King to all: We know there are those to whom the Word of Christ has been preached and Jesus Himself has subdued their will; crushed their rebellion; made them believers – acknowledging Him as King. Others with the same benefits go on in their stubbornness and rebellion and in unbelief. Not able to do anything else, because the Son of God has not stepped in to quell their will. So that He is King to some people in a way that He is not King to others.

He IS king over the universe and some experience Him as King in their life, while others do not – hopefully, not yet!

So a principle develops where as Prophet and King, Jesus Christ is so in one special way for some but not for others.

So now our focus is on Jesus Christ as Priest: we learn from the Holy Scriptures that Christ is Priest to some and not to others.

How does Christ fill the Office of a Priest? (Larger Catechism Q 44)²

The summary answer proclaims that as Priest, Christ offered Himself as a spotless sacrifice to God. Being the reconciliation for the sins of His people, and makes intercession constantly for them.

Now some churches, motivated as above, not to offend, include mention of 'the world' and 'everybody', when they use such a catechism.

That's not what was said in the original catechism: which was drawn up by believers for believers, and children of believers. It was written by those who believed it to be a summary of their Christian Faith. When those early (in the days of Reformed Christianity in Britain) writers composed their summary they purposely left out any mention of 'everybody' or 'the world'. Using 'His' people: particularly. As many references in the New Testament describe Christ's own description of the people He saves: "His people" or "the people God has given Him"

It is a fact of Scripture that although every man & woman, boy and girl benefits from Christ's death, and even though they go out from a church unbelieving and railing against God, nonetheless, God in His kindness has made, even them, in some way to benefit from Christ's death³. Yet it is also a fact that when Christ was dying on the Cross He was dying as a substitute for some but not for all.

1 ¹³This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

2 Christ fills the office of a priest in His once offering of Himself to God as a spotless sacrifice, to be a reconciliation for the sins of His people, and in making constant intercession for them. (Heb 9:14,28, Heb2:17, Heb 7:25]

3 These are examples of that crowd of Christian 'lookalikes' which in the 'narrow road' analogy are stumbling alongside in the left or right ditches – *called* (perhaps) *but not chosen* – who absorb some of the benefits of the practice of Christian association and mores.

Many are called but few are chosen. Matthew 22:2-14

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/what-did-jesus-mean-by-many-are-called-but-few-are-chosen/>

It is clear from the Bible, that when Jesus comes He will save all people from their sins? NO! He will save the 'world' from their sins? "No", says the angels, "You shall call His Name Jesus - Saviour". Because He is a Saviour. He's not a 'potential' Saviour. He's not just making salvation possible. "You shall call His Name Jesus - Saviour." Because He **will** save **His** People, from their sins! (Matthew 1:21). He is coming into the world to save His people. Not all people, His people! When Christ died on the Cross He died in the place of His people.

So this is our topic today and continuing next week: Particular Redemption.⁴ As careful study of the Bible continues to reveal this truth, we will see the practical benefit of preaching this truth. When a believer embraces this truth he will grow in sanctification and grace and understanding in a way that he will never ever grow, if he holds back this truth from his heart and his sense.

How is Christ's Priestly work taught in the Bible?

It is never taught that Jesus Christ, as He died on the Cross: made something possible. Never taught. That's an invention! It's cropped up at various times in Church History. Especially in Holland⁵, and then spread, until it has become the religion of many Evangelicals.

You can search the Bible about Jesus' death and read all about the Cross and it's never taught in that Holy Book, that Jesus Christ, on the Cross, made something possible. It's always taught that He actually made something happen on the Cross. He didn't put Himself in a position by which He could offer something. He actually accomplished something. He actually did something! He actually performed something. When Jesus died on the Cross He wasn't making atonement possible, He was atoning. When He died on the Cross He wasn't making reconciliation possible. He was reconciling. He wasn't making forgiveness possible. He was forgiving. He wasn't making salvation possible. He was saving. He wasn't making it possible for men to draw near to God. He was drawing men to God!

He achieved something. He did something. He accomplished something on the Cross. And the final proof of it was, that He cried from the Cross, "It is finished!" Any other explanation of the atonement other than this as preached, is in direct contradiction of the words of our Lord Jesus.

So now some references which show that Christ was an actual substitute for sins. We are told that – *it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in **bringing many sons to glory**, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.* (Hebrews 2:10) He didn't just make this possible. He did it!

4 Some prominent examples of Christian groups, having become diverse in their doctrine over many Centuries, are now characterised by the description, 'Particular' (some continue in this original way in England) while others by the description, 'General' (unfortunately the more common in Australia) due to having wandered away from the Biblical truth of Particular Redemption in favour of Christ redeeming every one in the world.

5 Note the effect of the Remonstrants of the early 17th Century. The reply to their attack on reformed theology has been summed up in the five replies to their 'questions' characterised by the acronym, TULIP. Which has since that time been taken as a statement of Calvinism, which formalised the majority of Reformed doctrine and as such was much wider in it's scope than merely an answer to those five points of emphasis.

We are told a little later, in verse 17, that He actually turned away the righteous wrath of God. (The words used in the ESP are: *to make propitiation for the sins of the people.*) When Jesus died on the Cross, says the Bible, then and there, He **was** the propitiation. He was actually turning away the anger of God. As a consequence he was actually reconciling, or bringing back a people to God.

But who was He bringing back? We are told by Paul in Galatians that when He died on the Cross He was being a 'curse' for somebody else who deserved to be cursed. Who was it? Further we are told that He now, in heaven, actually intercedes for the people for whom He died. But who are these people? For whom did Jesus die? Who was He the substitute for. From whom did He actually turn away the wrath of God? Who did He reconciled to God? For whom was He actually accursed? Who are the people who at this moment He is interceding for? Who did He do it for? Who did He actually save?

Well there are a range of prevalent answers:

- The Universalists – those that are absolutely strict – the absolute Universalist, says that when Jesus Christ died on the Cross, He actually did all those things for everybody. That when He died on the Cross, He was the absolute substitute for everybody. When He died on the Cross, He turned away the wrath of God for everybody. When He died on the Cross, He actually reconciled everybody to God, When He died on the Cross, He was accursed for everybody. And now that He's in heaven, He intercedes for everybody. This is what they say. That on the Cross Jesus actually did something, but He did it for everybody!

Therefore they believe that He did it for Judas, Hitler, Esau – for everybody. So then everybody will be in heaven. Nobody will be left out. This is what they consistently believe. But there aren't many of them these days. They died out before they became – universal. An irony of history. They preached that everybody was saved, but when it came to the point, nobody wanted their message. So the name has all but disappeared, but the ideas persist: that in the end everybody will be OK. There might be some periods of re-education or re-learning that might be unpleasant, but the 'God of love' will see us right in the end. And so we have such a lovely funeral service for our well known reprobate of a relative and so can all go off to the booze up with a clear and happy conscience.

This teaching is wrong in so many ways. If you build your Christian life on this teaching you will most certainly be lost!

- Now there is another teaching which has gained a lot of acceptance. Its called 'arminianism'. Now we are commanded by our Lord to love other Christians and many of these could have absorbed this teaching. So our target is not them as individuals but the system of teaching to which they have been exposed. Fortunately for many what has been placed in their heads is overshadowed by the experience in their hearts. For many of them in their hearts they experience salvation, with a zeal and love for the Lord Jesus that would put many, of more orthodox doctrine, to shame! However this doesn't justify that they have a wrong view

in their heads.

What they have come to believe is this:

When you talk to them about who did Jesus actually save, they say that Jesus **made it possible** for everybody and anybody to be saved. But He didn't actually save anybody! Jesus provides salvation for everyone and we must go to everyone and ask (beg) them to claim their personal share of what He did for everybody.

That's not according to the Scriptures. Here it is taught that when Jesus died on the Cross, He was actually doing something. He wasn't just making salvation possible. He was actually saving. Actually reconciling. A substitute dying in the place of actual people.

If the arminian view is right then there is nobody who is saved, since Jesus died for everybody in general but nobody in particular. Heaven will be full of everyone in general, but there will be no one in particular there.

This is a teaching that while it might be attractive to our human minds, is dangerously at odds with Biblical teaching.

- What then does the Bible teach?

The key word is 'particular'! When Jesus died who was He actually the substitute for? A particular people! Who did He turn away the wrath of God from? A particular people! For whom was He living a curse? A particular people. Who as He died on the Cross did He actually bring back (reconcile) to God? A particular people. And who is He interceding for in heaven? A particular people! The Scripture teaches that He didn't just make things generally possible, but that He did actually save a particular people, by His death upon the Cross.

That's the truth to which we must hold fast. Nor is it a truth that should be a surprise to anybody. Christ was a prophet to some, but not to others. He's a King to some and not to others. And now we find from the Word of God, that He is a Priest to some and not to others.

This truth is called 'particular redemption' and is consistent with all the words used in the Bible.

When a sacrifice was made in the Old Testament, it was made for the specific people who brought it. When the High Priest went into the Holy of Holies he went for a specific people. All the words used in connection with Christ's redemption confirm that Jesus Christ didn't die to save everybody. He died to save the Church.⁶

So we can look carefully at today's reading from Romans and be mightily reassured. But we have further to learn, next week, from it.

[2394]

May this be so for all the saints gathered here today.

⁶ Two views on this topic from the internet:

1. <https://www.trinitychurch.com.au/resources/doctrines-of-grace/christ-atones-definitely>

2. <https://www.timberlandchurch.org/articles/christ-died-to-save-all> Sounds plausible (with lots of Bible references), but note the final sentence: But those that will avail themselves of the gracious gift of God's Son and the cleansing power of His blood by humbly submitting to what God requires (the good works ordained by God - [Ephesians 2:10](#)) will receive forgiveness of sins.

Christ Fulfils the Office of Priest – Part 2

Romans 8:28

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

The key point from part 1 of this topic from last week was that “Jesus didn’t die for everybody! He didn’t die for nobody in particular! He did die for a particular people, whom God had given to Him before the foundation of the world. That people which is called ‘the Church of God!’”

So you might ask what is the proof. The Bible says so:

- Matthew 1:21⁷ You shall call His Name Jesus because He will save --- all people? No! Nobody in particular? No! --- His people from their sins.
- John 6:37ff. We know that Christ came into the world to save sinners. Listen to this: *³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.* There Jesus tells us specifically that He has come to save: not everybody! But He has come to save that people that the Father gave Him, before the world was made. And the way they will be saved is by seeing the Son and believing on Him and everyone whom He has come to save will be saved. The Father has given them to Him; He will call them and raise them up at the ‘last day’.
- John 10:11-15. Did Jesus die for all the world? No! Did he die for nobody in particular? No! He died for those the Father Gave Him!. So, He is the good shepherd since --- He gives His life for the goats? No, it doesn’t say that *¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.⁸ ... ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.*
- John 10:26-30. *²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one.”* Again Christ refers to those that are chosen and given to Him.
- Acts 20:28 Again, here is an Apostle preaching, and reminding a group of elders in a local church of the message he has preached and their responsibilities: *²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit*

⁷ Matthew 1:21 ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

⁸ ¹² He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³ He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

Who was actually purchased by the blood of the Lord? The Church, chosen by God. "The church of God".

- And finally today's reading from Romans 8. In particular verses from verse 31 onward: You'll remember, Paul has said that God loved His own people beforehand. God's made up His mind that the people will be elected to conform to Christ. Christ being the first-born of a marvellous family. That people He is going to call; justify; and glorify. "God has a marvellous plan for the people on whom He has set His love", said the Apostle.

He then goes on to say that God will bless that people with all blessings (V32). And asks, "who could bring any charge against God's elect – those He has chosen, because it is God Himself who justifies them. Who can condemn what God has chosen to do? Who can condemn the chosen seeing Christ has died for them; has risen and is now even at the right hand of God interceding for them."

No one can condemn these chosen people for they are the ones for whom Christ died, rose and ascended.

These then are those for whom Christ died. No one can exclude them! Christ saves all those the Father has given Him!

There could not be any clearer teaching on Particular Redemption than that. That is why in 1 Corinthians 8:11⁹ you find that another title for a Christian is "the brother for whom Christ died".

Some who may have followed the general gist of what we have said so far to day and also last week, may be troubled, perhaps for the first time. Those who have always thought that Jesus died for everybody and that they could come to Him and be saved. But now they are told that Jesus Christ didn't die for everybody. He only died to save a particular group. So they are troubled. Because they think to themselves that if Jesus Christ only died to save a particular group, how do they know if there is any hope for them? It's a good question. Jesus Christ did only die to save a particular group. The worry is how does one know He has died for him or her?

When the Scripture is talking to people like this about the Son of God it doesn't say that you have to believe that Jesus Christ died for you. It says that you have to understand that Jesus Christ died for sinners. So do you understand that Jesus Christ died for sinners? As you look at the Law of God do you recognise yourself as a sinner? Then you are perfectly qualified to call on the Lord Jesus Christ, and just see if He turns you away, because He will not! Because although He says, (John 6:37)³⁷ *All that the Father gives me will come to me*, He goes on to say, "*and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.*"

But some don't like this truth! Because it shows that everyone is completely in the hands of God. That salvation is completely from above and they can't do anything to save themselves.

9 ¹¹ And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died.

Some when they hear the truth that Christ died for some and not for others, realise now that perhaps they are helpless. Where all these years they have been thinking that they might patronise Jesus Christ and one day do Him a favour and call on Him. One day! One day they might just do it. When it's convenient to them!

Now hearing that Christ died for some and not for others, and that salvation comes to those He chose and He keeps to the end those on whom He has set His love. Perhaps the thought has crossed the mind for the first time and you don't know if you are in that group or not! Perhaps then, God's words that come through the Centuries have been used by God to shake such complacency.

But we are not able to turn to God just when we feel like it, because we are not able to. We're only able to turn to Him through His power. When He touches your will so that you do turn to Him. Before this you're like a dead man, says the Scripture, with no power to leave the grave, as it were. To remove yourself from six feet of earth. To present yourself alive (spiritually). No power to turn to Him. No ability. No desire. Left as you are you're lost! So not only are you a sinner in need of salvation, you're a helpless person who can do nothing for oneself. Unless God has mercy on you, you will stay as you are – eternally lost!

Being so helpless the only thing you can do is to call out to God. So call. There is no other hope. But there is hope in God – who saves sinners. You are completely, utterly helpless. So call out to Him and admit it, Say, "Helpless! Helpless, I look to you for grace". Simply talk to Him this way, and you will find that although it is clearly and strictly taught in Scripture that He only saves a certain people. None the less His invitations go to all people! Anybody, who ever he is, what ever he feels, may take to himself any of God's invitations.

Perhaps, right now, you feel the desire for Christ. Then you can be certain that He desires you. You want Christ! So you can be certain that He wants you. And although election and that fact that Christ died for some and not for others is taught clearly in the Bible! It is also taught clearly in the Bible (first by prophesy through Joel in the Old Testament (Joel 2:32) and then quoted and confirmed by Paul (Romans 10:13) and Peter (Acts 2:21) in the New Testament) ¹³ *For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

You don't understand it! Nor do I. But remember the religion that we have is the one taught in the Bible. It's not a religion of man. Limited by what he can understand. We cannot understand all the workings of God. Why should we! Are we, as Adam and Eve sought to be – equal to God!. Would He be God if we, the created creature, were to be so able to understand?

We do not understand it all. We're not able to 'tie up all the strings'. Relate every truth to every other truth:

- Here are the **purposes** of God – which cannot be broken! He has chosen a people. He has sent His Son to die for a people. He will only call that people. Only bring to glory that people. These are the purposes of God. They cannot be broken!
- Here are the **promises** of God – they cannot be broken either! *"everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* (Romans 10:13)

⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (Romans 10:9-10)

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

So there is this great mystery. God's purposes can't be broken! God's promises can't be broken! God's purpose is mysterious. God's promises are plain. We teach Particular Redemption because it's in the Bible. We teach the 'free offer of the Gospel' because it's in the Bible. We teach you that you cannot come to Christ because you cannot; and we teach you that you must come to Christ, because you must, or you will be lost. But we also teach you that God gives help to helpless sinners. We teach you that left to yourself you must perish, but there is a Saviour for sinners. That as a sinner you need no further qualification, than to call on Jesus Christ.

You don't have to know that you are elect. That Christ particularly redeemed you. You don't have to know that. You need to know there is a Saviour for sinners! You are a sinner. And therefore, as a sinner, you can call on the Saviour of sinners.

You see, some people will put the 'cart before the horse'. (Hyper Calvinism)¹⁰

However, a return to embracing the truth of Particular Redemption will have a profoundly beneficial effect on us.

If you would believe that Scripture teaches us that Jesus Christ died for His church and you have that firmly in your mind. It will have a profound effect on you:

- the first thing that will happen to you is that immense love and devotion will become part of your Christian experience. Because instead of believing now that Jesus Christ died for an anonymous, enormous group of people, you now know the Son of God loves you and gave Himself for you.¹¹
- The next thing that will happen to you if you believe the truth of Particular Redemption is that a great assurance and comfort will come to you.

Did the Son of God come specifically to the Cross for you? "Yes!" answers the

¹⁰ They say that you must know that you are elect! Before you call on Christ. This is a lie/ They say that you must know that you are one of the one's for whom Jesus Christ died, before you call on Him. Nonsense! They say to you that there is something that you must know, before you come to Christ. And when you know these things then you will be qualified to come to Christ.

Jesus Christ doesn't ask from sinners any qualification. All that He asks is that sinners admit they are sinners and believe that He is the Saviour of sinners. They turn from their sin to see if He will turn them away and He will not!

This is worth saying because there are some people who say that the teaching of Particular Redemption is opposed to Gospel Preaching. It isn't. In fact the greatest evangelist of all time, with the glorious exception (that proves the rule) of John Wesley, the vast majority of the early evangelists of the world have been men who have preached, quite fearlessly, bluntly without chains the scriptural doctrine of Particular Redemption

¹¹ So that you know that when Jesus died on the Cross He didn't just have sin in mind, He had in mind your particular sin. What is the particular sin that is bogging you down at the moment? What are the particular sins that beset you and you constantly fall into? The particular temptations which you, and me, constantly give in to? When Jesus died, He didn't just have sin in mind. He had your particular sin in mind. He died loving you, if you are a true believer, and that particular sin ... and that particular sin. Because He was dying for the particular sins of particular people. Remembering that is the greatest possible spur for turning from those particular sins. Remember it's for that sin ... and that sin ... that the Son of God shed blood! So we hate the sin and turn from it, and find ourselves lost in wonder, love and praise. Because He knowing all that would happen to Him, He still went to the Cross to redeem each of us there.

believer. So the Son of God came to the Cross for me? “Yes”

If then He has done so much for me. For me. He won't withhold any other good thing from me, will He? “No”, says the Apostle Paul.

So my heart becomes filled with great assurance and great comfort because I know that He has done something for me personally and that He will continue to do things for me! Permanently, even to the last day and glorification. (verse 30)

- The next thing is that worship will return, because God met you with grace: you were once the children of wrath, just as with others, it was just His distinguishing love, which you never deserved. Which you were never able to look for. Found you out and made you a believer. What a great spur to worship!

Finally. When Particular Redemption is rightly understood, then the spur to evangelism will return. Why should I go out to every creature to preach the Gospel of Christ? Because He loved me and gave Himself for me. He tells me to do it. So I must go and preach the Gospel, out of love for Him. Because He said, “If you love me, keep my commandments.” And so the great evangelists of history. Those great Christians of the early Church. They went out to preach to the lost out of love for Christ. It was love for Christ which kept them in the field for evangelism.¹²

The marvellous Scriptures teach that God's **purposes** in Particular Redemption cannot be broken and they equally teach that God's **promises** in that '*everyone who calls on the Lord will be saved*' cannot be broken!

That is:

- “Christ died for me! “ That is assurance. But you can be saved without assurance.
- “Christ died for sinners! I am a sinner”. I call on Him! That is salvation! (That is Gospel preaching!)

[2438]

May this be so for all the saints gathered here today.

¹² Not the ebb and flow of results! Not encouragement from numbers. Because when the encouragement of numbers goes, that sort of evangelism fades out. But when a person remembers that the Saviour died for him, and gave the Great Commission particularly to him: He goes on.

And also, in all those places where you spend your days they are sheep who are lost. They haven't heard their Shepherd's voice. Yet! You can be the conduit for His voice. The moment they hear. They know His voice! Hearing it they follow it. Everywhere where you are there are sheep for whom the Saviour died. They need to hear His voice. Bring Him to them. They are His sheep. You don't need to spend a lifetime in preparing to one day be well enough credentialed. You simply go out, with the word of the Shepherd, which is His Scriptures. The sheep answer. That's how evangelism is encouraged.

You don't go out to all and sundry saying, “Christ died for you, believe it!” You go to say, “Christ died for sinners. Believe that Christ died for sinners. You are a sinner. Call on the Saviour of sinners.” Putting no other demands upon the sinner than that He a sinner and therefore may call to the Saviour of Sinners. Not compelling them to believe that Christ died for Him, but that Christ died for sinners and to call on Him.

In other words: “Christ died for me! “ That is assurance. But you can be saved without assurance. “Christ died for sinners! I am a sinner”. That is salvation! (That is Gospel preaching!)

Don't preach Assurance until you've preached Salvation.

Romans 9

The True Chosen People

Rom 9:23-24

²³ in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— ²⁴ even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

Recently we read through the whole of Chapter 8. This has clarified the part of Paul's letter from which the clearest statement of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith (alone) is proclaimed. While we have been able to relate Paul's teaching to our lives here and now, it has largely been confirmatory and applicable to a true believer. (As Paul's original audience was comprised of.) True, the nature of the ongoing Christian 'life' *in Christ* has been emphasised. But Paul has more specific detail on this to come (Chapter 12 and onward).

Today however there is another aspect which we have not yet completely covered: Evangelism.

Lets us now begin to consider Romans Chapters 9-11. I am guided in this brief summary by the work of Stuart Olyott.¹³

The end of Romans chapter 8 is one of the most triumphant passages in the Bible. But we must not think that joy is the only emotion which we as Christians experience. We also have great sorrow and unceasing pain in our hearts. This is caused by the fact that that we are surrounded by perishing men and women who know nothing of the power of the gospel. This pain is especially acute when those nearest to us have failed to accept the salvation of God.

Paul experienced this pain to the deepest degree when he thought of his fellow Jews. [Though] he had used the example of Abraham to demonstrate the truth of justification by faith, yet for the most part, Abraham's descendants were strangers to such justification. God had promised to bless the world through Israel. Yet [that] nation [on the whole] did not believe. Through Israel had come the Scriptures which proclaimed the very gospel that Paul preached. Yet the nation neither believed those Scriptures, nor recognised the Christ so plainly revealed in them.

In Chapters 9-11 Paul sets himself to look into this problem of Israel's unbelief, and in so doing unveils the most glorious teaching:

How much more strongly could Paul desire that his countrymen receive the result of God's promise? If he could he would offer his own salvation in return! (v 1-5) Paul has no doubt that his nation as a whole is no longer the Israel of the promise'. Earlier in Chapter 4 he has set the principle, that the true descendants of Abraham are those who believe and are thus 'children of the promise', not merely blood descendants.

¹³ Stuart Olyott, *The Gospel As It Really Is – Romans simply explained*, pp 111-144

Thus in Chapter 11, he says, ²⁶*And in this way all Israel [the entire 'children of the promise', Jew and Gentile] will be saved.* But he goes further. The choice of who are and are not, true descendants, is entirely with the sovereign God. As illustration he describes the choice of one twin over the other, Jacob over Esau. Even before they were born. (9:16) ¹⁶ *So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.*

The true descendants of Abraham are determined by the free pleasure of God's holy choice. We have already learned from 8:28-30 that all those who are chosen by God are subsequently called by the gospel and justified in Christ. The true children of Abraham are the believing men and women who compose the Christian church. [see Rom 2:28-29; 4:11-13,22-25; Gal 6:14-16; Philippians 3:3 and Hebrews 12:22.]

Further, consider the strong teaching of Romans 9:14-24.¹⁴ The key to God's salvation history is found in God's sovereign will to choose. ¹⁸ *So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.*

It is consistent with Paul's high view of God that he, a mere man, does not spring to His defence. He is simply content to assert that God loves and elects whom He wills, and He hates and reprobates whom He wills. He is the Great Uncontrollable, who is governed only by His own holy character. All are answerable to Him, but He is answerable to none.

[There is no surprise then that Paul] could not entertain the thought that God's Word [and promises] should ever fail.

When an unconverted person hears the high teaching we have just surveyed, his sinful heart resents it, and he raises all sorts of objections. It needs to be stressed that the doctrine of election is only acceptable to men and women who have faith. When we read in the Bible that God is righteous in all His works, we believe it. When we read that He accepts some, and rejects others, out of the mere pleasure of His will, we believe that too. We cannot see how the two truths tie up. But we remember that we are fallen and ignorant men and women. The Scriptures claim to be the inerrant Word of God, and we believe what they say. We believe them even when they teach two doctrines which, to our minds, appear to be in tension, [an antinomy] ¹⁵

The unconverted person rejects the doctrine of election. As may the weak believer. Because no real place is given to the Word of God in his thinking. He has not yet seen how mistaken his own reasoning can be. He trusts his own reason in preference to the Word of God. The mature believer does not have that problem. He believes what God has said and in addition finds great comfort in being securely one of God's chosen.

14 According to my observation, the Revised Common Lectionary (which is frequently and in some cases the only source of Scripture used by Uniting Church congregations, for example), avoids verses 6-33 of Romans 9. Hard to see how God's true gospel 'call' can occur if His complete word is not read and His complete word not heard nor preached.

15 Empirical reason cannot here play the role of establishing rational truths because it goes beyond possible experience and is applied to the sphere of that which [transcends](#) it. [Immanuel Kant](#)

Another antinomy is the 'sovereignty of God' over against the 'responsibility of man'. The guilty sinner tries to evade any sense of responsibility, yet knows within himself he is responsible for his actions. The limitations of human logic over-ruled by conscience – a remnant of God's image in us at Creation.

So great is God that His purpose and will is carried out through multiple generations of Old Testament history, right up to Paul's time. 'The fullness of God's time'. And throughout that history God's Word, His prophecies, have been stated and now fulfilled: (9:25-26) Hosea foretold that the inheritance would be taken from earthly Israel; (9:27-29) Isaiah also predicted how Israel would be rejected as a nation. Only a remnant would be saved. Instead the Gentiles would be admitted to the salvation promised to Abraham. If not for that remnant the whole nation would have been completely written off and destroyed, as were Sodom and Gomorrah.

[The apostles argument] is that the Jews as a nation, have been rejected by God. But this does not mean that His promises to Israel have been broken. God's true people all along have been composed, not of Abraham's descendants as such, but of God's elect. Such election is the key to history. The elect, as their calling has shown, are composed of both Jews and Gentiles. This is just what the Old Testament promised.

Most of the Christians in Rome were Gentiles and so with today's Christians. They are not to think of themselves as 'after thoughts' or second choice citizens. All are the elect, from before time began, of the sovereign God, who wills whatever He wills.

All eternity will be too short to praise Him for the undeserved mercy which He has displayed to such arrogant and rebellious sinners as ourselves.

(10:1-13) Paul continues His great love and concern for his own people. But recognises that though they had great privilege, potential and zeal they got it wrong. They showed unparalleled enthusiasm in trying to get right with God. Tragically misdirected. On the whole they were ignorant of the one way to get right with God. Rather than His revealed way, they clung to attempts to earn it. Christ spells the end of trying to get right with God by keeping the law (that comes later), by works, by self-effort, by any form of earning, or by personal achievement. Christ's way is by believing in what He has done.

Deuteronomy foreshadowed this (30:11-14): Paul builds on this at (10:6-13). ⁶ *But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷ or "'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

The inward heart is to believe in order to be saved. It must believe in the Lordship and saviourhood of Christ, and that He is ever alive to save, God having raised Him from the dead. This belief must be a living faith, sufficiently real to lead the person concerned into open confession. (Once again neither the act of belief nor the confession are of themselves the grounds of salvation, but the means by which such faith is demonstrated.)

Verse 13 includes the quote from Joel 2:32. Whoever cries, whether he be Jew or Gentile, the Lord hears and saves. Again Paul holds to two doctrine at once confident in God's inerrant Word. The doctrine of election and the free offer of the gospel. He finds no embarrassment in this. Nor should we. We are not at liberty to cut out either, but in the knowledge of God's wisdom, to hold to both.

Here (Rom 10:14-15) is a strong call for our personal and corporate evangelism:
¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

(v 17) Faith comes only by hearing the Word of God. The electing God who has decreed who shall be saved has at the same time decreed that there is no salvation without gospel preaching. The recognition of God's sovereignty becomes the main-spring of all true evangelistic endeavour.

To sum up: Who is saved is decided by God's election; Those whom He has chosen are His people, the true children and His Israel. They are mainly Gentiles, with some Jews. Generally speaking the Gentiles received God's appointed way and the Jews did not, nevertheless the gospel is freely offered to both, and then all who call on the Lord are saved. Saving faith is the fruit of hearing the Word of God, and therefore it is essential that the churches evangelise unsparingly. Normally the Jew remains unmoved. Although the gospel is freely offered, all things are going on as God has decreed and as the Scriptures have previously predicted. (10:18-22) Christians must constantly remind themselves that their salvation is due entirely to the grace of God, and that human merit has no part in it at all. The recognition of this would generate a new humility among us all.

[1917]

Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today. Amen

Romans 9:1-26

God's Eternal Decree

Romans 9:11-12 ¹ *though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—* ¹² *she was told, “The older will serve the younger.”*

(Keep Bibles Open)

Warning!

Bible believing, faithful preachers have a common experience with the way a sermon like today's is often received by some people in their congregations. Some people can be violently opposed to what they hear.

But if we consider for a moment the 'fallen' history of human-kind, since the beginning, we shouldn't be surprised. When Eve succumbed to the crafty 'serpent', Satan, she did so with the suggestion that by eating that fruit she could become like God. (Gen 3:5) [Since the footnote to this passage points out that the Hebrew word for 'you' was in the plural, we recognise that the discussion was with both Adam & Eve collectively.]

All the natural offspring of this first couple – this couple rightly cursed into 'sin and misery' by God – have the same unholy inclination: to be like God!

So when He tells us, in His Word, what He is like: that He is the Creator – we His subject, creatures. Then we are affronted, offended and very annoyed. It is our human nature to be so. We don't like to be told, even by the Word of God that we are not in charge. That is until we are 'born' again into 'newness of life'.

To his rather larger and more varied Congregation, Stuart Olyott once said:

“Why is it that when we preach on this subject there is such a tremendous reaction? ... When men and women find that they are not as God - they are not like God – they get annoyed, frustrated and angry. Today we are going to find out that God is God and that you are not! To some of you this will be such a blow: to suddenly realise, possibly for the first time, that you really do live and die in the hands of God. ... But the truth we come to now, we are not going to keep quiet about.”¹⁶

The question has been known to have been asked, “Is it wise to preach on this subject, publicly, because of the reaction it can produce?” Even the Westminster Confession advises caution and sensitivity. (3:8 – see back of today's order of Service)

¹⁶ Quoted from. http://www.knowyourbiblerecordings.org/sermons_locked/TWB04.mp3. On which: today's Sermon is substantially based.

But it must be affirmed that everything that is revealed in the Word of God *belongs to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the works of this law.*¹⁷ All the things that God doesn't want, or need for us to know, has not been revealed!

Above all, this topic is a prominent theme in Scripture and unlike those who systematically ignore the relevant parts of Scripture, we should not follow suit.¹⁸

We must simply declare what the Bible says, with the Bible standing for itself. And it will!

The truth of God's Eternal Decree: Before the world was created, God decided certain things.

(We will present four points each with a lesson to 'take to the heart')

- The first is really self evident, but if we miss it, or as many do, dismiss it, then we are at a great disadvantage. It is the most important point, while the rest are logical consequences of it,

God is God! Even the intellect that God has permitted us to have – even in it's damaged state after the 'fall' but much better now that we are 'born again' – makes the logic unassailable: there is nothing anywhere where God does not perfectly control it.

But even more reliably, than our reasoning, since it is through the Scriptures, He causes to be written, is that we know anything about God: We are told that *His kingdom rules over all*¹⁹ (Psalm 103:19) and He *works all things according to the counsel of His own will.*²⁰ (Ephesians 1:11)

In fact if there were to be anything that was not under His perfect control, He would cease to be God. If something, or someone else were to be in control of even the slightest thing. Then this would be God. But there isn't.

Even what we would describe, and believe to be, things of chance! The roll of a die. *The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.* (Proverbs 16:33)

But more telling is the free actions of men. Consider the decision of God for Christ to be betrayed and sent to the Cross – to bring to accomplishment the Eternal Plan of Salvation – decreed by the Trinity before Creation and the Fall. The betrayal was brought about by Judas. By His free will. Because of the person he really was.

*Matt 7:17-19*¹⁷ *So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.* ¹⁸ *A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree*

¹⁷ Deuteronomy 29: 29 ... *but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

¹⁸ An analysis of a Lectionary in use by the Uniting Church in 2010 showed that in the three year cycle those parts of Romans that were to be read avoided this topic.

¹⁹ Ps 103:19 ¹⁹ *The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.*

²⁰ Eph 1:11 ¹¹ *In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,*

bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

God didn't cause Judas to do other than his own nature determined. But in what Judas did he brought about God's **predestined** purpose.

Matthew 26:24 ²⁴ *The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."*

And again, afterwards when Peter preaches his first sermon: Acts 2:23 ²³ *this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.* Here the 'lawless men' - a description of their nature – did what their nature demanded, but brought about the plan that was part of God's **foreknowledge**.

But what about this 'foreknowledge'? Does it mean that God is able to look into the future and see what men of their own free will will do in every circumstance and then decide what He should do as a consequence. Would this make God, God? Could such a practice fit the required nature of God? Would it fit our own limited understanding of what a God must be? Or one *who rules over all and works all things according to the counsel of His own will*? You see. If he merely sees what's going to happen and only then works out what to do, then He is not God!

What then? As truly God, being all powerful, having perfect control. He knows what will happen because he controls it so that it does happen. But He is not the author of sin!

For God to be God, He must predestine everything or cease to be God. It is God's predestination that makes things certain. God (the Trinity) made the Salvation through Christ happen. God predestines that His people will be saved!

So the Lesson: No matter what you see about you. Wars and rumours of wars and even pandemics God is in perfect control because He predestines.

- **God is God over men and angels.**

This clearly follows from the main point. Here we learn by carefully reading from Romans Chapter 9:10-23. A portion of Scripture that is deliberately avoided by many.

It is God who determines who shall, and who shall not, be saved.(Romans 9:15-16)

He gives to some what they deserve – damnation. (Romans 9:22)

He gives to others what they in no way deserve – salvation. (Romans 9:23)

It is God who puts a difference between them. (Romans 9:11, Exodus 11:7²¹)

²¹ ⁷ *But not a dog shall growl against any of the people of Israel, either man or beast, that you may know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.*

His decision is conditioned, not upon something in the creature, but rather something in Himself. (Romans 9:15,18, 21)

What God can do, and does, then, is clear. But why does He do what He does? We find this answer in other places²² also but here, it is further on in Romans. 11:36 ³⁶ *For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen.*

While there is no hiding God's purpose in this quote from Ezekiel:

²² *Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. ²³ And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. (Ezekiel 36:22-23)* And this was one of the prophecies that announced the New Covenant: the new birth – the new heart – His putting, His Spirit within us.

Lesson 2. Because it is God's purpose and for His glory He **will** put His Spirit in those He chooses. Rejoice! Heaven will be full.

- **God is God over the elect.**

It is clear that God is perfectly in control in giving us our daily bread. But this is accomplished by complex means and agencies. The control of the weather providing for the growing of crops. Even the life preserved in the seeds and the means for their germination. And so on ...

So it is with our salvation, which is God's gift: (Romans 6:23²³)

God gives this salvation, by His Son through His Spirit (1 Peter 1:2) ² *according to the **foreknowledge** of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood:*

God, the **Father** chooses who is to be saved. (John 10:26-29) ²⁶ *but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.*

God the **Son** has died for them, and them alone. (John 10:11) ¹¹ *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*

God the **Holy Spirit** brings them to experience and enjoy what has been planned for them (Ephesians 3:16) ¹⁶ *that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,* Thus we clearly see that Salvation is the work of the Triune God!

Lesson 3: Go with expectancy to the work of Evangelism. It is God's work. He is

²² So many Bible references which show the zeal God has for His own Name and glory: <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/biblical-texts-to-show-gods-zeal-for-his-own-glory>

²³ ²³ *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

in perfect control. It cannot fail!

- **God is God over the rest of mankind.**

God has determined to pass them by, and not to save them. Preterition²⁴. (Romans 9:15-16)

They are no more and no less sinful than the elect.

The reason for preterition lies solely with God (Romans 9:10-13)

God determines to treat them (the non-elect) with strict justice, so that they receive what they deserve: reprobation²⁵ (Romans 9:22 and Jude 1:4²⁶)

God is arbitrary (Romans 9:18) – but He is not unfair or unjust (Romans 9:14 & Psalm 145:17²⁷)

He does nothing other than what is right for Him as God to do (Romans 9: 20-21)

Lesson 4. All who are saved, are saved by God's mercy alone.

And so we have no logic to hide behind, no Scriptural warrant to defend us, and no hope apart from the mercy and love of God. We are entirely in His hands. We can pray and we can call. In His grace, (undeserved mercy) through which he exercises perfect control, he has promised: *Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved.* (Romans 10:13 – and others)

Let us join with Frances Crosby and recite or sing Hymn 394. *Pass me not, O gentle Saviour.*

[1963]

Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today. Amen

24 Preterition: (in Calvinist theology) the state of not being predestined to salvation.

25 In theology: rejection by God, as of persons excluded from the number of the elect or from salvation.

26 ⁴ *For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*

27 ¹⁷ *The LORD is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works.*