John Gill’s Exposition of the Bible » Commentary on Romans 11

Introduction

INTRODUCTION TO ROMANS 11

The apostle having spoken of the calling of the Gentiles, and given a hint of the perverseness of the Jews in slighting the Gospel, proceeds in this chapter to treat of their rejection; in which he shows, that it was not universal, though of the greater part in his time; and which he confirms by some passages out of the Old Testament, and then points at the end and design of God in the casting them off; and exhorts the Gentiles not to insult them, but to learn to be humble and cautious by what was done to them; and foretells the conversion of the Jews in the latter day, which will be general, so that their rejection is not final; and resolves the whole dispensation of God, both with respect to Jews and Gentiles, into the unsearchable wisdom and sovereign will of God: he begins with an objection he saw would be made upon what he had said, concerning the calling of the Gentiles, and the unbelief of the Jews, that then God had wholly cast off his people, Romans 11:1, to which he answers with a “God forbid”, by way of detestation; and by instancing in himself, who was of the people of the Jews, and yet was called; and by distinguishing between some and others among them: there were some who were foreknown, loved, and chosen of God from everlasting: these were not cast off, but others who were not foreknown, Romans 11:2, and then he illustrates the present case of the Jews by observing how it was with them in the times of Elias; who though he complained of their apostasy and

cruelty, and imagined that there were none left but himself that worshipped the true God, yet there were then seven thousand, which were preserved from the idolatry of Baal, Romans 11:2, and so the apostle observes it was now, Romans 11:5, there was a small number whom God of his free grace had chosen, and reserved for himself, and so were not all cast away, as the objection suggested; and having called this choice an election of grace, he argues the contrariety and inconsistency of grace and works in this affair, Romans 11:6, and since it appeared that there were two sorts of people among them, one that were chosen and the other not, hence it was, that though Israel did not obtain the righteousness they sought for, yet they that were chosen obtained it, and so were not cast away, when the rest were, Romans 11:7, and that so it should be, or that this should be the case of the greater part of the Jews, that they should be given up to blindness and hardness of heart, the apostle proves by some testimonies of Isaiah and David, which he produces, Romans 11:8, hence follows an objection, that if this be the case, then God had appointed them to stumble, that they might fall even all of them, and always continue fallen; to which the apostle answers with a “God forbid”, as usual, when anything is objected which is abhorred; and by observing the view, event, and order of things; showing, that the fall of the Jews issued in the salvation of the Gentiles; and the salvation of the Gentiles was to provoke the Jews to seek the same mercy, Romans 11:11, and then follows an improvement and illustration of this end, or event of their fall, Romans 11:12, that if the fall and lessening of the Jews were the means of enriching the Gentiles with the riches of Christ and his grace, what a glory must be brought to them, when they should all of them be converted and join them! and that the rejection of the Jews was neither total nor final, the apostle argues from his office, even as an apostle of the Gentiles, whom he addresses as such, Romans 11:13, and from his view and end in executing that office, which was to provoke the Jews to emulate the Gentiles, and so save some of them, Romans 11:14, and then he repeats in other

words, Romans 11:15, the argument he had used in Romans 11:12, and proves the future conversion of the Jews, from the instances of conversion and sanctification, which had been, and were then among them; which were as the firstfruits to the lump, and the root to the branches; and were pledges and tokens of a general conversion and sanctification of them hereafter, Romans 11:16, and by occasion of the metaphor of the root and branches before used, he expresses the rejection of the Jews, by the breaking off some of the branches, and the reception of the Gentiles by their ingrafting into a Gospel church state among the converted Jews, enjoying the same privileges with them, Romans 11:17, and since they were originally of a wild olive tree, and merely of grace partook of the root and fatness of the good olive of the Gospel church state, as consisting first of the Jews, they ought not to be haughty and insolent, and boast and brag over the Jews, since they were beholden to them, and not the Jews to them, Romans 11:18, and whereas an objection might be made, that the Jews were cast out, to make room for the Gentiles, Romans 11:19, and therefore the one must be more deserving than the other; the apostle replies to it, Romans 11:20 by granting, that the one were broken off, or rejected, that the other might be ingrafted, or taken in but then as it was owing to unbelief in the Jews that they were cast off, in which the Gentiles were before conversion as well as they, so it was by faith they stood in their church relation, which was the gift of God, and owing to his grace; so that their ingrafting and continuance in a Gospel church state were not the effect of merit in them; wherefore he gives them this good advice, not to be proud and lifted up with their privileges, as though they were of their own deserving, but to fear the Lord and his goodness, from whence they sprung; and suggests, that they should be so far from making such an use of the rejection of the Jews, that it ought rather to engage them to caution, care, and fear; for they were the natural branches in the olive tree, and if these were not spared when behaving disagreeably, they must not expect to fare otherwise, who were originally of the wild

olive tree, should they act unworthy of the privileges they enjoyed, Romans 11:21, wherefore the apostle recommends to their serious consideration the severity of God in the casting off of the Jews, and his goodness in taking in them, the Gentiles; and threatens them with cutting off, should they slight, neglect, or misuse the goodness of God to them in his house and ordinances, Romans 11:22, and on the other hand, an intimation is given, that the Jews, though broken off shall be grafted in again, should their unbelief discontinue, and faith in Christ be given them, which was not impossible with God; he is able both to remove their unbelief, give them faith, and reinstate them in a church relation, Romans 11:23, and as it is without doubt he can do it, it looks very likely that he will; which may be argued from the ingrafting of the Gentiles, who were like the olive tree, wild by nature; were cut out from thence, and, contrary to nature, grafted into the good olive tree; wherefore by an argument from the lesser to the greater, much more may it be thought, that the Jews, the natural branches, will, in God's own time, be grafted in their former church state, some of their ancestors were in, Romans 11:24, yea, the apostle argues the certainty of their conversion, and reinstatement into the Gospel church, from the design of Providence in suffering blindness in part to happen to them; which was not intended always to continue, only until all the elect of God are gathered in among the Gentiles; and this mystery of Providence and grace, he thought fit to acquaint the Gentiles with, lest they should be conceited of themselves, as if they only shared the favour of God, and were deserving of it, to the contempt of the Jews, Romans 11:25, Moreover, the apostle affirms that all Israel shall be saved, Romans 11:26, which is consequentially deduced from what he had said, and which he proves by a passage, out of Isaiah 59:20, and by its being a principal part of the covenant, which God has made with them, which he will not break, but shall be fulfilled; when he shall make them sensible of their sins, and take them away by the application of his pardoning grace, Romans 11:27, and whereas the implacable enmity of the

Jews to Christ and his Gospel might be objected to such a gracious procedure of God towards them, the apostle removes the objection, by granting that they were enemies to the Gospel on account of the Gentiles, to whom it was preached; but then there was a chosen people among them, who were beloved of God; which would be made manifest, because of the oath and promise made unto their their fathers, Romans 11:28, wherefore as the purposes, promises, and covenant of God are immutable, so the gifts of his grace, and the calling of his people included in them, are things certain and irrevocable, Romans 11:29, and so the calling of the Jews, and the gifts of his grace designed for them, which is another proof of their calling and conversion; and which is further argued, and made both more probable and certain, by comparing the case of the Jews and Gentiles together; as for the Gentiles, they were formerly infidels and obtained mercy, through the unbelief of the Jews, Romans 11:30, wherefore arguing from the less probable to that which is more so, the Jews, though for the present unbelievers, yet it may be thought, that through the mercy the Gentiles had received, they would some time or other be provoked to seek for, and so obtain the same mercy, Romans 11:31, and the rather this may be given into and received, not only because they both have been in a state of unbelief, but the end and design of God in concluding them in it, were to have mercy on each of them, Romans 11:32, which dispensation of God both to one and to the other by turns, in different ways, was so amazing and unaccountable to the apostle, that he breaks out into admiration at the wisdom and knowledge of God: which were so abundant, that they could not be searched out, conceived of, and expressed, Romans 11:33, the reasons of which lay in his own breast, and are only known to himself no one having known his mind, or been his counsellor, Romans 11:34, nor is he obliged to give an account of his matters, and the reasons of his proceedings, to any of his creatures; he is not indebted to them for anything, nor does he any injustice to any of them, by whatsoever steps he takes in Providence and grace; let that appear, and recompense will be

made, Romans 11:35, everything must be resolved into his sovereign will and pleasure, and so this of choosing some, and leaving others, of rejecting the Jews, and receiving the Gentiles, and also that of calling the Jews again; as it is reasonable everything should, since all things are from him, through him, and to him, Romans 11:36, and so all glory is due unto him, and here ends the doctrinal part of this epistle.

Verse 1

I say then, hath God cast away his people?…. The Alexandrian, copy adds here, "whom he foreknew", as in Romans 11:2, upon the citation of the above passages out of Moses and Isaiah, relating to the calling of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews, the apostle saw an objection would arise, which he here takes up from the mouth of an adversary, and proposes it; in which is suggested, that God has cast away all his people the Jews, according to this count; and if so, where is his covenant with Abraham? what is become of his promises? and how is his faithfulness to be accounted for? and what hope can any Israelite have of ever obtaining salvation? than which, nothing can be thought more injurious to God, and absurd in itself. This was an old prejudice of the Jewish nation, and still continues, that God never would, nor has he cast them away, even in their present condition; it is one of the articles of their creed, received by the Karaites[F15]Apud Trigland. de Sect. Karaeorum, c. 10. p. 151. , a sect among them, that

"the blessed God □□□□□ □□□□□ □□□ □□, "hath not cast away the men of the captivity", though they are under the chastisements of God; but it is fit that they should every day obtain salvation by the hands of Messiah, the Son of David.'

Now to this objection the apostle makes answer; "first", in his usual way,

God forbid, when anything was objected which was displeasing to him, abhorred by him, which was not agreeable to the perfections of God, to the truth of his word, and promises, and could by no means be admitted of; and next by observing his own case, which was a standing instance to the contrary; for God had chosen him unto eternal salvation, Christ had redeemed him by his blood, and he was effectually called by grace; and as to his eternal state, he had no doubt or scruple about it; and besides, the Lord had made him a minister of the Gospel, had greatly qualified him for that work, had raised him to the high office of an apostle, and had made him very useful to the souls of many, both Jews and Gentiles; and yet he was one of the nation of the Jews, and therefore God had not cast them all away, as the objection insinuates:

for I also am an Israelite; according to the flesh, by lineal descent from Jacob or Israel; see 2 Corinthians 11:22; as well as in a spiritual sense:

of the seed of Abraham; “the grandfather of Israel”; the head of the Jewish nation he was, both of his natural and of his spiritual seed, who is the father of us all:

of the tribe of Benjamin; a very little tribe, which in the time of the Judges was near being destroyed, and, upon the return from the captivity of Babylon, was very small, as it was at this time; and yet God had not cast away this, much less all the tribes of Israel.

Verse 2

God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew,…. The apostle goes on with his answer to the objection, by distinguishing and explaining who he meant by the people God had not cast away, namely, which were “foreknown” by him; for all mankind are in a sense his people, being made, maintained, and supported in their beings by him, yet they are not all

foreknown; for were they, they would be all predestinated, called, conformed to the image of Christ, justified and glorified; but some of them will be cast away, being bad and wicked, and will be sent into everlasting punishment: and though the people of the Jews in general were the people of God, being in a sense chose, known, and distinguished by him from the rest of the world, yet they were not all a "foreknown" people, in the sense the apostle uses the word; wherefore a great number of them were cast away, of which afterwards the apostle speaks largely in this chapter: but then there were a people among them, that were the people of God in a more special sense; they were chosen by him from everlasting to be his people; they were taken into the covenant of his grace as such; they were given to Christ as his people, and were redeemed and saved by him on that account; and were, or were to be called, with an holy calling, when they are openly declared to be the people of God, whom he foreknew: he not merely knew them before, by his general prescience and foreknowledge, which extends to all persons and things; or foresaw their faith, holiness, and good works, and so chose them for himself; for faith, holiness, and good works, are fruits and effects of electing grace; but he so knew them before, even from all eternity, as that he approved of them, liked them, loved them, and took delight and complacency in them: now these his people he never did, nor never will cast away. Their numbers may be but very small in some periods of time, yet none of them are cast away; God may not immediately arise to their help and assistance in time of distress, or so soon as they desire and expect; he may withdraw his presence, hide himself, and stand at a distance from them; he may afflict them in a fatherly way, when they may think he has cast them off, or cast them away; whereas he never casts any of them away, nor out of his heart's love, nor out of his sight, nor out of the covenant of his grace, nor out of the hands of his Son, nor out of his family, or so as that any of them shall perish eternally; so far from it, that he takes the utmost delight in them, grants them the greatest

nearness to himself, bears the strongest affection for them, and takes the most diligent care of them; whoever casts them out of their affection and company, he will not; the reasons are, because his love to them is unchangeable, his purpose concerning their salvation stands firm and sure, his word and oath are unalterable, his gifts and calling are without repentance; and they are his jewels, portion, and inheritance; they are as the apple of his eye, and continually held by his right hand. The apostle next replies to this objection, by putting them in mind of the case and state of the church of God, in the times of Elijah; and what judgment that prophet formed of it, and in which he appeared to be mistaken:

wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias? do ye not know? ye cannot be ignorant who have, and read the Scripture, what it says of Elias, or “in Elias”; that is, as the Arabic version renders it, “in the history of Elias”; in the account it gives of his life and times:

how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying: that is, how he spoke to God in prayer concerning Israel; and instead of praying for them, as the prophets were wont to do, he was obliged to bring a complaint against them for their idolatry, contempt of the worship of God, and violent persecution of his true followers. The apostle chose to mention this instance because there was some likeness between his case and Elijah’s; and the state of the people of Israel at the then present time, and as in the times of Elijah; for as the Jews in his time killed and persecuted the prophets of the Lord, so in the present time they had killed the Lord Jesus Christ, and persecuted his apostles; and as Elijah, though one of their own prophets, was obliged to make intercession against them, so the apostle, though one of their own countrymen, could not but speak against them, and of their just rejection by God: and this he observes, to soften their resentments against him, when so great a prophet had done so before him: and this the Jews themselves own[F16]Laniado in 1Kings

xix. 14. , for they say that Elijah □□□□□ □□ □□□□□□□□□ □□□□, “brought an accusation against Israel”: and it is observed by another[F17] Jarchi in Isa. vi. 6. that

“coals are said of Isaiah and Elijah, because they delivered an accusation against Israel: one called them a people of unclean lips, and the other said, for they have forsaken thy covenant:’

which is the apostle’s sense.

Verse 3

Lord, they have killed thy prophets,…. By the order of Jezebel, wife of Ahab king of Israel, 1 Kings 18:4. This sin of slaying the prophets of the Lord is charged upon the Jews by Christ, Matthew 23:31, and by the apostle, 1 Thessalonians 2:15. In the text in 1 Kings 19:14, it is added, “with the sword”: which expresses the manner of death they were put to; and this clause is there put after the following, according to a rule of transposition among the Jews; See Gill on Matthew 27:10.

And digged down thine altars; either the altars which the patriarchs had formerly built, and were still in being; and though not used, yet were kept and had in great veneration; wherefore the pulling of them down was done in contempt of them, and of the worship of God, which had been formerly performed there; or else such altars, which the religious among the ten tribes built, since the times of Jeroboam, who forbad them to go up to Jerusalem, but ordered them to go to Dan or Bethel; which they not choosing to do erected altars in different places for divine service, and which the Jews[F18] Kimchi in 1 Kings xviii. 30. say were allowed; for from that time, the prohibition of altars at other places than at Jerusalem ceased:

and I am left alone: meaning either as a prophet, not knowing that Obadiah had hid an hundred prophets by fifty in a cave, 1 Kings 18:4; or else as a worshipper of the true God, imagining that he was the only person in Israel, that had a true zeal for the Lord of hosts:

and they seek my life; lay in wait for it, Jezebel by her emissaries being in quest of him; it is added in 1 Kings 19:14, "to take it away"; for she had swore by her gods, that by the morrow about that time, his life should be as the life of one of the prophets of Baal he had slain; and in one copy it is added here.

Verse 4

But what saith the answer of God unto him?…. The divine response, or oracle, the □□□ □□, "Bath Kol", or voice from heaven; the still small voice of the Lord, which Elijah heard, 1 Kings 19:12,

I have reserved to myself; for his worship and service, to be partakers of his grace, inheritors of his kingdom, to show forth his praise, and for his name's sake, for his honour and glory: these he reserved in eternal election, in the council and covenant of peace; separated them in time from others by his grace, and preserved them from the general defection and apostasy: even

seven thousand men: meaning either that precise and exact number, which was but small in comparison of the very large multitude of persons that were in the ten tribes, or else a certain number for an uncertain:

who have not bowed the knee; a sign of reverence and adoration:

to *the image* of Baal; Jezebel's god, the god of the Zidonians;

a name common to many of the “deities” of the Gentiles, and signifies “lord”, or “master”; we read of “Baalim” in the plural number, for there were “lords many” of this name: in the Greek text the article is of the feminine gender, wherefore our translators have supplied the word image. This word has, in the Septuagint version, sometimes a feminine article as here; see 2 Kings 21:3; but in 1 Kings 19:18, from whence this passage is taken, the article is masculine, as it is also in Judges 2:11, and in other places. This deity being either of both sexes, or of no distinguished sex; or it may be, the reason it has so often a feminine article is, because it was a young heifer, or in the form of one; so in the history of Tobias 1:5, it is said, that “all the tribes which apostatized together sacrificed”, τη βαλ τη δαμαλει, “to Baal the heifer”. The apostle’s view in mentioning this instance is to show, that when the church and cause of God are at the lowest, God has always some true worshippers of him; and that he never casts away his foreknown people, whose numbers are generally more than they are thought to be by the saints themselves; good men, as Elijah, may be mistaken in this matter; all which he accommodates to the then present state of God’s people, in Romans 11:5.

Verse 5

Even so then at this present time also,…. In which the apostle lived, the time of preaching the Gospel, the accepted time, the day of salvation, which then was, and also now is; at that time when the Gospel was sent unto the Gentiles, and God took out of them a people for his name; when multitudes of them were converted, and embraced the faith of Christ; and when the Jews in general had rejected the Messiah, killed the Lord Jesus, persecuted his apostles, and contradicted and blasphemed the Gospel; yet still God had made a reserve of some among them, for himself:

there is a remnant; alluding either to Isaiah 10:21, or to the oracle delivered to Elijah, saying, “I have reserved”, or “left”, &c. 1 Kings 19:18, that as God had reserved for himself, in Elijah’s time, a number of persons, who had not gone into the idolatrous worship of Baal, when the greater part of the Israelites did, so he had taken care to make a like reserve in the apostle’s time, when the bulk of the Jewish nation had refused the Messiah, and despised his Gospel. This is a further proof, that God had not cast away all the people of the Jews; and that as Elijah was not the only worshipper of the true God in his time, so the apostle was not the only instance of grace among that people now; there was a number of them; the number of the disciples after our Lord’s ascension, was an hundred and twenty; upon the first sermon preached by Peter, three thousand were converted, and added to them; after that, they are said to be about five thousand, and still multitudes were added, both of men and women, and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith; so that before the dispersion of the church at Jerusalem by a persecution, there might be at least such a number called by grace, as God had reserved in Elijah’s time; though these, when compared with the generality of the nation, which remained in unbelief, were but a few, and therefore called a “remnant”, or a “reserve”, as the word may be rendered; for these were a set of men, whom God had reserved and preserved in his Son, and in the covenant of his grace, from everlasting; and had kept a watchful eye over them in time, reserved them in his providence, and saved them to be called; and by calling them, had reserved them by his grace, and preserved them by his power, from the general unbelief, impenitence, blindness, and ignorance, which prevailed over the people of the Jews; which reserve was not owing to their superior goodness, they being in no wise, with respect to nature, birth, and privileges, better than those who were not reserved; nor to the disposition of their minds and wills, their minds and consciences being defiled, and their wills naturally as obstinate and perverse as others; nor to any good

works done by them, since works before calling are not properly good, and those after are the fruits of that grace: but this reverse was made,

according to the election of grace; God’s choice of these persons before the world was, which is the source and spring of all the blessings of grace, both in time eternity: hence these persons were put into the hands of Christ, secured in an everlasting covenant, took special care of by divine Providence, were called by grace, justified, sanctified, and at last glorified: and this choice is owing to grace, for not men’s choice of God’s grace, but God’s choice, owing to his, own grace, is here meant. The Pelagians would have it, that this election is the choice which man makes of the grace of God: whereas such is the enmity of mans nature, and will against God and his grace, that he would never make choice of that, if the grace of God did not first make choice of him, and lay hold upon him: grace here, does not design the object of the choice, but the cause, spring, and motive of it, which is not any habit or quality in men, as faith and holiness, for these are fruits and effects of electing grace, and so not causes, motives, or conditions of it, but the free love and favour of God in his own heart; and shows the sovereignty and freeness of election, which is no ways depending on the will and works of men, but upon the sovereign good will and pleasure of God.

Verse 6

And if by grace, then is it no more of works,…. Upon election, being called “the election of grace”, the apostle forms an argument, showing the contrariety and inconsistency of grace, and works, in that affair; proving, that it must be by the one or the other: and if by the one, then not by the other; and that these two cannot be mixed and blended together in this matter. If election is “by grace”, as it certainly is; for no

other reason can be given why God has chose one, and not another, but his own sovereign pleasure, or that free favour and unmerited love, with which he loves one and not another; and not because they are better, or had done or would do better things than others; “then it is no more”, or not at all, for it never was “of works”, was not influenced by them, does not arise from them, for it passed before ever any were done; and those that are done aright spring from it, and therefore could never be the rule and measure, causes, motives, and conditions of it;

otherwise grace is no more grace; for

“grace (as Austin has long ago observed) is not grace, unless it is altogether freed;’

it will lose its nature, and ought to change its name, and be no more called or reckoned grace, but a due debt; and a choice of persons to salvation should be thought, not to be what God is free to make or not, but what he is obliged to, as a reward of debt to men’s works:

but if it be of works, then it is no more grace; if election springs from, and depends upon the works of men, let no man ascribe it to the grace of God; for there is nothing of grace in it, if this be the case:

otherwise work is no more work; that will free gift: but these things are contrary to one another; and so unalienable and unalterable in their natures, that the one cannot pass into the other, or the one be joined with the other, in this or any other part of man’s salvation; for what is here said of election, holds true of justification, pardon of sin, and the whole of salvation. The Ethiopic version applies it to justification.

Verse 7

What then?…. What can be said to the point the apostle is upon? it is as clear as the sun, out of all question, that God has not cast away all the people of the Jews, nor any whom he foreknew, any age or period of time; neither in the time Elijah, nor in the apostle's, he always having a reserve of some for himself; which reserve is owing to a previous choice of them, and that previous choice to ascribed not to any works of theirs, but to his free grace and sovereign pleasure. Indeed

Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; that is, carnal Israel, the body and bulk of that people; who sought for life and righteousness by their obedience to the law, and which they in general were in quest of, and pursuit after, but did not obtain, though, some of them might imagine they did; for the thing was impracticable and impossible, no life nor righteousness are ever to be had by the law of works; they did not obtain life and righteousness, because they sought them in a wrong place and in a wrong way; they sought them not by faith in Christ Jesus, where they are only to be had, but by their own works, which fall abundantly short of procuring them for them:

but the election hath obtained it. The apostle divides Israel into two parts, "the election and the rest": by "the election" he means, elect men, the remnant among them, whom God had reserved for himself; just as "circumcision" designs circumcised persons, and "uncircumcision" uncircumcised persons, and "calling" called ones, and "righteousness" righteous men and women; see Romans 3:30 2 Peter 3:13. Now these chosen ones obtained mercy, grace, life, and righteousness in Christ, as the apostle himself did, who was one of them; and that by virtue, and in consequence of their election, for which reason the word is here used; hence mercy was shown them, grace was bestowed upon them, the righteousness of Christ was imputed to them, faith was given them, holiness was wrought in them, and they entitled to, and

made meet for eternal life: these among Israel then obtained such favours and blessings; and so God's elect, in all ages and nations, obtain the same things, and will obtain; for the purpose of God according to election stands sure, his word and oath are immutable, his covenant inviolable, his grace inalienable, and his power omnipotent:

and the rest were blinded: the non-elect, or those who were not chosen and reserved, to whom Christ was "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence"; and who "stumbled at the word" of the Gospel, "being disobedient" to the divine revelation, "whereunto they were appointed", 1 Peter 2:8; hence they obtained no mercy, grace, faith, life, righteousness, and eternal salvation, but were "blinded"; left in that native blindness and ignorance, in which they were born and brought up; were blinded by themselves wilfully more and more; as they knew not the Messiah, so neither would they understand; they sinned wilfully against light knowledge; they shut their eyes against all that evidence and demonstration given, of Jesus of Nazareth being the Messiah, by his doctrines and miracles; and they were blinded by Satan, the god of this world, by whom they were led captive; who wrought effectually in them, and stirred up the malice and enmity of their minds against Christ and his Gospel; for they were of their father the devil, and his lusts they would do; and they were also blinded by God himself, so that they could not believe; for after all this, it was but just with God to give them up to judicial blindness and hardness of heart.

Verse 8

According as it is written,…. In Isaiah 29:10 which passages the apostle seems to refer to, though it is not exactly word for word as here, yet the sense is the same:

God hath given them the spirit of slumber; or of stupidity and

insensibility, so that they were as persons in a deep sleep; their senses locked up, without any knowledge of, or concern about, the danger they were in; having no sense of sin, or of the need of a Saviour; or of their being upon the borders of eternal ruin and damnation, or of any ways and means to escape it; but careless and secure, as persons fast asleep in the midst of the sea, or upon the top of a mast, who, when stricken and beaten, feel it not; but if by jogging are awaked at all, immediately return to sleep again, and so sleep the sleep of eternal death:

eyes that they should not see; which being closed by the deep sleep and stupidity of mind they were judicially given up to, could see no beauty in Christ, wherefore they should desire him; none of the glories and excellencies of his person, blood, righteousness, and sacrifice; noticing amiable and agreeable in his Gospel, and the truths of it; nor had they any light in the prophets of the Old Testament, which were so remarkably fulfilled in him; their minds were blinded, a vail was upon their hearts, and which remains to this day:

and ears that they should not hear; for persons in a sleep, as their eyes are closed that they cannot see, so their ears are stopped that they cannot hear: and thus it was with these Jews, the awful judgment being upon them; they were uncircumcised in heart and ears; they were like the deaf adder, stopping their ears to the charming voice of Christ in the Gospel; and being given up in a judicial way, could neither understand his speech, nor hear his word: and this spirit of stupidity and insensibility, as it appeared in the times of Isaiah, so it continued

unto this day; the then present time, in which the apostle lived; and has continued ever since, at least in part, and will until the fulness of the Gentiles is brought in. These passages, with some others following, are produced by the apostle out of their own prophets, to take off their resentment against him; and lest, he should be thought to be

severe upon them, when he said no more of them, but what had been prophesied long before concerning them. So Jarchi on Isaiah 29:10; says, that Isaiah prophesies □□□□□ □□□□□ □□, "concerning the transgressors of Israel".

Verse 9

And David saith,…. That is, Christ by the mouth of David, or David in the person of Christ; for the psalm out of which the following words are taken is a prophecy of the Messiah, as appears from some passages cited out of it in the New Testament, and applied to Christ; compare Romans 11:4 with John 15:25, and Romans 11:9 with John 2:17, and Romans 11:21 with John 19:28; and what are here cited are not so much imprecations, as predictions of what should befall the Jews, by way of recompense for their ill usage of the Messiah, in giving him gall for meat, and vinegar for drink, Matthew 27:34,

let their table be made a snare, and a trap and a stumbling block. By their "table" may be meant, the altar; see Malachi 1:7; and the sacrifices offered up upon it, their meat offerings and drink offerings, and all others; likewise the laws concerning the difference of meats, and indeed the whole ceremonial law may be intended, which lay in meats and drinks, and such like things: now the Jews placing their justifying righteousness before God, in the observance of these rites and ceremonies, and imagining that by these sacrifices their sins were really expiated and atoned for, they neglected and submitted not to the righteousness of Christ, but went about to establish their own; so that that which should have led them to Christ, became an handwriting of ordinances against them, and rendered Christ of no effect to them: moreover, the sacred writings, which are full of spiritual food and divine refreshment, the prophecies of the Old Testament, which clearly pointed out Christ, not being understood, but

misapplied by them, proved a trap, a snare, and a stumbling block to them; so that they rejected the true Messiah, which issued in their utter ruin and destruction: yea, the preaching of the Gospel, the salutary truths and wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ, were a stumbling block to the Jews, nay, even the savour of death unto death. Though these words may be literally understood of their table mercies, the necessary provisions of life, their common food and drink, of which they had great scarcity in their last wars; so that they not only by wicked methods stole it from one another, but ate what was forbidden by their law, and what was abhorrent to nature, as one is said to eat her own child; nor is it to be overlooked what is suggested by some, that the passover may be meant by their “table”; which was their grand yearly feast, and which they were eating[F19]Josephus de Bello Jud. l. 6. c. 9. when they were surrounded and taken by the Roman army, like birds in a net, or beasts in a trap: and all this as

a recompense to them; a just judgment upon them, by way of retaliation for their ill treatment of Christ when on the cross, giving him gall and vinegar for his meat and drink.

Verse 10

Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see,…. Which is to be understood not literally of their being struck with blindness, as the men of Sodom were by the angels, and as Elymas the sorcerer was by the Apostle Paul; but mystically, of the eyes of their understandings being darkened, as they were by themselves and by Satan, and judicially by God; so that they could not see into the true same of the prophecies and promises concerning Christ; and how all the characters of the Messiah met in Jesus of Nazareth; their eyes were so blinded, that they could see no beauty nor comeliness in him; no excellency in his person, nothing wonderful in his works, nor amiable in his doctrine; nay, not only spiritual things,

the things of the Gospel, were hid from the most wise and prudent among them, from their doctors and Rabbins, but also the things which regarded their temporal peace and happiness were hid from their eyes; their eyes were not only darkened with respect to things spiritual and evangelical, but even with regard to things natural and civil: never did a people act more imprudently for their temporal safety and welfare, or appear so infatuated in all their conduct, as they did, as the history of their wars does abundantly declare:

and bow down their back alway; which may denote their subjection and bondage to the Romans, when taken and carried captive by them; who laid very heavy burdens on them, which bowed down their backs indeed, multitudes of them being condemned to the mines; or this may design the general disposition of the minds of these people, which are bowed to the earth, for they mind nothing but earth and earthly things; the acquiring of which they are bent upon at any rate, and are infamous for their earthly mindedness, covetousness, extortion, usury, tricking, and over reaching: or this phrase may be expressive of that trembling, distress, horror, and despair, which shall seize them; especially when the son of man comes in the clouds of heaven, and they that have pierced him shall behold him, and wail because of trim; for in the Psalms the words are, “make their loins continually to shake”, Psalm 69:23.

Verse 11

I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall?…. This is an objection, which the apostle takes from the mouth of an adversary; and the purport of it is, you say that the people of the Jews being blind, have stumbled at Christ and his Gospel, as was prophesied of them, and to which they were appointed; pray what were God’s view and end in this? was it that they should fall and perish eternally? if it be so, is

not this doing himself, what he forbids others, namely, “to put a stumblingblock before the blind?” Leviticus 19:14, and can he be excused from cruelty, and rejoicing at the misery of others? or is their stumbling permitted, that they should “all” fall through unbelief, and be cast away? and so it is an objection of the same kind with Romans 11:1; or since they have stumbled, and have thereby fell into a forlorn and miserable condition, are they always to continue in it, as the last clause in the above cited passage suggests? To which the apostle answers,

God forbid; neither of these are to be admitted of. The end which God had in view, in suffering the Jews to stumble and fall, was not their destruction, but rather the salvation of the Gentiles; and especially not the destruction of “all” of them, blindness had only happened “in part” to them; for there was a remnant among them according to the election of grace, which should be saved; a chosen number, which obtained life and righteousness by Christ; yea, a fulness of them, how small soever their number might be now, which should be brought in; and still less that they should always continue in this sad condition, their unbelief had brought them into; for the time would come, when there would be a receiving of them as life from the dead, when all Israel should be saved. And at present there appeared nothing ill in view,

but rather through their fall, salvation is come unto the Gentiles. That is, the Gospel; which is sometimes called salvation, the Gospel of our salvation, the word of “salvation”; because it is a declaration of salvation by Christ, and is the power of God unto it; or a means made effectual by the power of God to convince persons, both of their need, and of the worth of it, and also a means of the application of it to them, by the Spirit of God: now this came to the Gentiles by the ministry of the apostles, according to the orders and command of Christ; and that through the fall of the Jews, their unbelief and rejection of the Messiah; for the

Gospel was first preached to them, but they contradicting and blaspheming it, the apostles turned to the Gentiles, and preached it to them, as the Lord had commanded them: and thus they came to be acquainted with the doctrine of salvation by a crucified Christ, and to have it powerfully applied to their souls by the Spirit of God; when salvation might be said to "come" to them, in such sense as our Lord says it did to Zacchaeus and his house, Luke 19:9, and another end is to be answered hereby; which is

for to provoke them to jealousy: that is, to provoke the Jews to jealousy; not in an ill sense, as in Romans 10:19, and as they were provoked upon the first sending of the Gospel to the Gentiles, and the calling of them, when they discovered a great deal of envy, wrath, and bitterness; but in a good sense, as will appear in the latter day, when being convinced of their sin in rejecting the Messiah, and observing the many advantages the Gentiles have received by embracing him, and they have lost by their contempt of him, will be provoked to an holy emulation of them, and be stirred up through their means to seek the Lord their God, and David their King; and thus things will wind about in Providence. The fall of the Jews makes way for the Gospel among the Gentiles; and this having had its effects with them, will be a means of putting the Jews upon serious thoughts about, and a studious inquiry after, the true Messiah, and salvation by him; all which is a full answer to the question, and the objection contained in it.

Verse 12

Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world,…. By "the world", as is clear from the next clause, is meant the Gentiles; who were frequently called so by the Jews, who reckoned themselves to be "the church", and all the nations round about them, "the world"; which observation may serve to

illustrate other passages of Scripture; see John 3:16; now the fall of the Jews, which was a lessening of them, was the riches of the Gentiles;

and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; the number of the true believers in Christ among them were very few, the generality of them received him not, but stumbled at him, and fell through unbelief; but the few that did believe were the means of carrying and spreading the Gospel, which is, "the unsearchable riches of Christ", Ephesians 3:8, in the Gentile world: thus at first a persecution being raised against the church at Jerusalem, the ministers of the Gospel were scattered abroad, and went everywhere preaching the word; and afterwards the Jews behaving in a very indecent manner towards the apostles of Christ, they turned in a manner wholly to the Gentiles; and thus by the means of a few, a diminutive company, of which the Apostle Paul was one, the Gospel, the pearl of great price, treasure hid in a field, and put into earthen vessels, was carried into the Heathen world, and by it they were enriched. This handful of men that went out of Judea, were the means of converting vast numbers, large multitudes of souls among the Gentiles, which may be also designed by "riches": this word sometimes signifying plenty, see Romans 2:4; and also of enriching them with the gifts and graces of the Spirit, and of directing them to Christ, who has durable riches, treasures of wisdom and knowledge, riches of grace, and riches of glory. Now the apostle argues, that if such a small number of the Jews who embraced Christ, were of so much advantage to the Gentiles,

how much more their fulness? when converts to Christ among them will be as the sand of the sea, a nation of them shall be born again at once, and all Israel be saved. This will be a great accession to the Gentile church, bring much glory to it, contribute greatly to its welfare, and be a means of establishing their faith, and of putting fresh life and vigour into them, and of inspiring them with more zeal for Christ,

and for his honour and glory.

Verse 13

For I speak to you Gentiles,…. The church at Rome, as the primitive churches for the most part did, consisted of Jews and Gentiles; hence the apostle sometimes addresses the one, as in Romans 2:17, and sometimes the other, as here; and this he does to observe unto them the grace and goodness of God, in enriching them with the Gospel of salvation; and that they might not despise the Jews, from whom it first came out, and through whose fall it came to them, and was preached among them by some of that nation:

in as much as I am the apostle of the Gentiles. He was ordained and set apart by God, in his eternal purposes, to be a teacher of the Gentiles; he was sent immediately by Christ to bear his name among them, though not among them only, to the exclusion of the people of Israel; he chiefly preached the Gospel to them, though sometimes to the Jews also; and the success of his ministry was mostly among the uncircumcision, though he sought by all ways and means to gain both Jews and Gentiles: hence he addresses the Gentiles with greater freedom and boldness, because he was their apostle, and had been so useful among them; and is a reason why we Gentiles should have a special regard to his writings; for though every word of God is pure, and all Scripture is divinely inspired, and is profitable on one account or other; nor is any part of it to be slighted and neglected; yet as Paul's epistles are written chiefly to the Gentile churches, excepting that to the Hebrews, and which some question whether it is his, they ought especially to be attended to by us; though, alas, of all the inspired writings they are had in the least esteem:

I magnify mine office: not himself, for he was not of a self-exalting spirit, but humble and lowly minded, ready at all

times to own himself to be less than the least of saints and the chief of sinners; but his office, which he had received from Christ, as an instance of his grace and favour. This was magnified partly by the miracles, signs, and wonders done by him, in proof, and for the confirmation of his apostleship; and partly by his constant, diligent, and faithful preaching of the Gospel: as also by the unwearied pains he took to spread it far and near; and likewise by the numbers of souls he was the means of bringing to the knowledge of Christ; and it was no small accession of glory to his office, as an apostle of the Gentiles, that he was an instrument of the conversion of many among the Jews.

Verse 14

If by any means I may provoke to emulation,…. What he had in view, even in discharging his office among the Gentiles with so much labour, assiduity, and indefatigableness, was, that if possible he might stir up the Jews to emulate and imitate the Gentiles, in seeking after Christ; for these he means when he says,

them which are my flesh; they being his brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh, for it was common with the eastern nations to call such persons their flesh; see Genesis 29:14; and carries in it a reason why he was so solicitous for their welfare, because of the relation of them to him, and the natural affection he bore towards them; and his hope was, that they seeing the nations of the earth blessed in the promised seed, through his preaching the Gospel to them, great gatherings of the people to Shiloh, and the Gentiles seeking to the root of Jesse, set up for an ensign to the people, might be provoked to an emulation of them; and likewise seek the Lord their God, and David their King, and thereby have his end he so much wished for and desired:

and might save some of them; he says “some”, not all, for he knew the bulk of the people was rejected, only a seed was left among them, a remnant according to the election of grace that should be saved, and which did obtain righteousness and life, while the rest were blinded. The ministers of the Gospel may be said to save souls, not efficiently, for the author or efficient cause of salvation is God only; the Father has chose unto it, the Son has effected it, and the Spirit applies it; but instrumentally, as the word preached by them is the means of regeneration, faith, and conversion, with which salvation is connected: and as they show unto men the way of salvation, and encourage souls to believe in Christ, in whom alone it is. Now the apostle argues from his office, and the usefulness of it, to some among the Jews, to saving purposes, to prove that their rejection was not total.

Verse 15

For if the casting away of them,…. This argument, as before, in Romans 11:12, is from the lesser to the greater, showing that as the Gentiles received present advantage through the rejection of the Jews, they would receive far greater at their future recovery, and which proves that their rejection is not final; for by “the casting away of them”, is meant the rejection of the Jews, and refers to God’s writing a “Lo-ammi”, Hosea 1:9, upon them, and his taking away the Gospel from them, and which were the occasion of

the reconciling of the world, the Gentiles; not of God’s drawing the scheme of their reconciliation in his Son; nor of the actual reconciliation of them by his sufferings and death; but of the Gospel, the word of reconciliation being carried among them upon the Jews’ disbelief and contempt of it, which was made effectual by the power of divine grace, to the reconciling of them to God, to the, way of salvation by Christ; to be willing to serve him, and be saved by him; to,

lay down their arms, surrender to his victorious grace, and become obedient to him both by word and deed; and if this was the case then, as it was, he asks

what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead? By the receiving of them is meant the conversion of the Jews in the latter day, when they will be received by Christ, on whom they will look with an eye of faith, and mourn in an evangelical manner for their sins against him; who casts out none that come unto him, but receives them into his arms in the most kind and tender manner; and when they will be also openly received into the house and family of God, into the visible church of Christ; and as the apostle afterwards says, "be grafted into their own olive tree", Romans 11:24; and this their restoration will be as "life from the dead"; which regards not so much the quickening of the Jews themselves, though their conversion will be, as the conversion of every sinner is, a resurrection from the death of sin to a life of grace, and is so represented in Ezekiel 37:1, but rather the reviving the work of God among the Gentile churches, who having lain long in a dead, lifeless, lukewarm, and indifferent frame of spirit, will be aroused and quickened, at this wonderful work of grace upon the Jews; and besides it will be as unexpected by them, and as surprising to them, as a person's being raised from the dead would be; yea as joyful, and as welcome to them, as if a man received his nearest relation and friend from the dead; add to this, and which some of the ancients make to be the sense of the place, quickly after the conversion of the Jews, the fulness of the Gentiles being brought in, and nothing more to be done in a way of grace, the first resurrection from the dead will follow, and happy is he that will have part in it.

Verse 16

For if the firstfruit be holy,…. Some by "the firstfruit" and

“root” understand Christ, who is sometimes called, “the firstfruits of them that slept”, 1 Corinthians 15:20, and “the root of Jesse and David”, Isaiah 11:10, and indeed of all the righteous; and certain it is, that since he is holy, has all the holiness of his people in him, and is sanctification unto them, they shall be holy likewise; have it imparted to them in this life, and perfected in them in another: but this does not seem to agree with the apostle’s argument. Others think that by them are meant the Jewish ancestors, and particularly Abraham, and dream of a holiness derived from him to his natural seed; but if no such holiness was derived from him to his immediate offspring, Ishmael, it can hardly be thought any should be communicated by him to his remote posterity; and to these here designed, at the distance of four or five thousand years from him: but by them are intended the first converts among the Jews, under the Gospel dispensation; it being usual with the apostle to call those persons, that were first converted in any place, the firstfruits of it; see Romans 16:5; These were they who received the firstfruits of the Spirit in Judea, and who first among the Jews hoped and believed in Christ; these were but few in number, as the “firstfruit” is but small in comparison of “the lump”, and mean, abject, and despicable, as the “root” under, and in a dry ground is; but yet were pledges and presages of a larger number of souls among that people, to be converted in the latter day: now the apostle’s argument is, “if the firstfruit be holy”,

the lump is also holy, and if the root be holy, so are the branches; that is, that whereas those persons who were converted among the Jews, however few in number, and despicable in appearance they might be, yet were truly sanctified by the Spirit of God; and as they were, so should the whole body of that people be in the last days, “when holiness *shall* be upon the horses’ bells, *and* every pot in Judah and Jerusalem shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts”, Zechariah 14:20, by which metaphorical expressions is meant,

that holiness should be common to the whole nation, and all the inhabitants of it, of which the call of some few among them was a pledge and presage. The allusion in the former clause is to the holy offerings of firstfruits to the Lord, the two wave loaves, Leviticus 23:14, whereby the whole lump was sanctified, for after use throughout the year following; and that in the latter clause, to the holiness of trees; that is, to trees devoted to sacred use or that were planted in a field appropriated thereunto: hence we read[F20]Misn. Pesachim, c. 4. sect. 8. , that the men of Jericho permitted, or as other exemplars read it, cut down □□□□ □□ □□□□□□, "branches of holiness", or "holy branches"; and eat fallen fruit on the sabbath day.[F21]In Misn. Pesachim. c. 4. sect. 8. Bartenora explains these branches, of such that grow upon a tree devoted to holy uses; and Maimonides[F23]In ib. , observes, that they thought it lawful to eat what grew in a holy field.

Verse 17

And if some of the branches be broken,…. This is to be understood, not of the exclusion of the Jews from their national church; for the persons designed by the "branches", were the principal members of it, as the civil and ecclesiastical rulers, the priests, Scribes, and Pharisees, and the far greater part of the people; and on the other hand, the apostles and followers of Christ were put out of their synagogues, and deemed by them heretics and apostates: nor of the destruction of the Jewish nation, city, and temple; for as yet they existed as a nation, their city of Jerusalem was in being, and their temple standing: but of their being left out of the Gospel church, gathered among them, they not believing in the Messiah, but rejected and crucified him; and though afterwards the Gospel was preached to them, they despise it, contradicted, and blasphemed it; so that it pleased God to take it wholly away from them, when they might be truly said

to be, “as branches broken off”; which phrase seems to be borrowed from Jeremiah 11:16; they were withered, lifeless, and hopeless, being cast off by God, and neglected by his ministers, the Gospel being removed from them, and they without the means of grace and salvation: and this was the case of the generality of the people; for though the apostle only says “some”, making the best of it in their favour against the Gentiles, and speaking in the softest terms; yet they were only a few, a seed, a remnant, that were taken into the Gospel church, and the rest were blinded, hardened, rejected, and left out for their unbelief:

and thou being a wild olive tree: speaking to the Gentiles, to some, not to all of them; for not a whole tree, but a part of one, what is cut out of it, a scion from it is grafted into another; and so they were a certain number which God took out from among the Gentiles, to be a people for his name and glory, and who before conversion were comparable to a wild olive tree; for though they might have some show of morality, religion, and worship, yet lived in gross ignorance, superstition, idolatry, and profaneness were destitute of a divine revelation, of all spiritual light and knowledge, of true righteousness and the grace of God; were barren and unfruitful in good works, were without hope, God and Christ in the world. This metaphor rather regards their character, case, and manners, than their original; in respect of which they and the Jews were on a level, being by nature equally corrupt, and children of wrath; and yet though a wild olive tree, were

grafted amongst them; meaning either the broken branches, in whose stead they were grafted; the Syriac version favours this sense, reading it □□□□□□□□□, “in their place”; as also in Romans 11:19; and so the Ethiopic version: or rather the believing Jews, of whom the first Gospel church and churches consisted; for the Jews first trusted in Christ, received the firstfruits of the Spirit, and were first incorporated into a Gospel church state; and then the Gentiles which believed were

received among them. The first coalition of Jews and Gentiles, or the ingrafting of the Gentiles in among the Jews that believed, was at Antioch, when dropping their distinctive names of Jews and Gentiles, they took the common name of Christians, Acts 11:19. So that this is not to be understood of an ingrafting into Christ unless by a visible profession, but of being received into a Gospel church state; which is signified by the "olive tree" in the next clause:

and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; the Gospel church is so called for its excellency the olive tree being a choice tree, as they were a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; for its fruitfulness, bringing forth berries that are wholesome, delightful, and useful, so the saints are filled with the fruits of grace, and good works, which are by Christ to the praise and glory of God; for its beauty when laden with fruit, so a Gospel church is beautiful maintaining the purity of Gospel doctrine, discipline, worship and conversation; "his beauty shall be as the olive tree", Hosea 14:6; see Jeremiah 11:16; and for its verdure and durableness, and growing on the mountains, all which may denote the continuance and firmness of the church of Christ. Now the Gentiles being grafted into a Gospel church state with the believing Jews, partook of the same root and fatness as they did, being built upon the same "foundation of the apostles prophets", Ephesians 2:20; rooted, grounded, and built up in the same church state they enjoyed the same privileges, had the doctrines of Christ and his apostles preached to them, communicated with them in the ordinances of the Gospel, and were satisfied with the goodness and fatness of the house of God; for they became "fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel", Ephesians 3:6, the apostle speaks according to the nature of the olive tree, which is unctuous, from whence an oil is taken, which makes the face of man to shine, the fruit of which fattens those that are lean; and hence it loses not its leaves, δια το θερμον και λιπαρον,

“because of its heat and fatness”, as Plutarch[F24]Sympos. l. 8. qu. 10. says.

Verse 18

Boast not against the branches,…. Those that were broken off: the apostle would not have them vaunt it over them, despise them, and trample upon them; but pity them, and pray for and be abundantly thankful and humbled before God, under a sense of Ida sovereign and distinguishing grace, who had settled them in a Gospel church state, who were before comparable to a wild olive tree; and much less should they glory over the believing Jews, among whom they were, there being no difference between them, for they were all one in Christ Jesus:

but if thou boast; but if such a vain temper of mind should prevail, he suggests they would do well to sit down and consider what little reason they had on their side to glory; and if such glorying and boasting, one against another was lawful, the Jews had the greatest reason for it; for, adds the apostle,

thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. The Jews received no advantages from the Gentiles, but on the contrary the Gentiles from the Jews, to whom were committed the oracles of God, and by whom they were faithfully kept and transmitted to the Gentiles; the Gospel itself came out first from among them; the first preachers of it were Jews, who carried it into the Gentile world, where it was greatly succeeded to the conversion of many, who by this means were brought into a Gospel church state, and so enjoyed all the privileges they did: yea, Christ himself, according to the flesh, came of them, was sent unto them, was the minister of them, lived and died among them, and wrought out the great salvation for his people; hence “salvation” itself is said to be “of the Jews”,

John 4:22, so that the root and foundation of all their enjoyments were from the Jews, and not those of the Jews from them; hence there was no room, nor reason, for boasting against them, and vaunting it over them.

Verse 19

Thou wilt say then,…. This is an objection which the apostle foresaw the Gentiles would make against what he had said, and in favour of their boasting;

the branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. The sense of which is, that the Jews were rejected and left out of the Gospel church, on purpose to make way for the Gentiles, that they might be put in their room; and consequently the Jews must be more vile and unworthy, and the Gentiles more deserving of such favours and privileges, or God would never have taken such a step, to leave out one to make room for the other.

Verse 20

Well,…. To this the apostle answers, by approving and granting in, part what was said, that the unbelieving Jews were broken off and rejected, and that the Gentiles that believed in Christ were grafted in among the Jews that professed his name; but then he tacitly denies that it was for their sakes, and their account, they were broken off, but for their own incredulity:

because of unbelief they were broken off; because of their unbelief and contempt of the Messiah, they were rejected of God, and died in their sins; that which excluded their forefathers from the land of Canaan, shut them out of the Gospel church state, and the kingdom of heaven:

and thou standest by faith; which is not of a man's self, but the gift of God; so that it was not by their merits, and better deservings, but by the grace of God that they were in the situation they were; they were blessed with faith in Christ, and having made a profession of it were admitted to Gospel ordinances, and into a Gospel church; and being helped hitherto to hold the profession of their faith in a becoming manner they stood their ground, and continued in their church relation; and therefore ought not to give way to a vain boasting spirit, but to be humble, modest, and dependent; wherefore he gives them this proper pertinent, and wholesome advice,

be not highminded, but fear. The apostle would have them not be elated with their gifts, privileges, and enjoyments, and look over others, or down upon them with contempt and disdain, considering that all they had and enjoyed were owing to the goodness of God, and not to any deserts of theirs; and therefore should fear the Lord and his goodness; for not a fear of hell and damnation, or a distrust of the grace of God, is here meant; but a fear of offending him, and that not from a dread of punishment, but from a sense of his grace and goodness; and also designs humility of soul, in opposition to pride, haughtiness, and elation of mind, a lowly carriage and behaviour to others, and an humble dependence on grace and strength from above, to enable to persevere and hold out to the end; for "let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" into sin, 1 Corinthians 10:12; so as to dishonour God and Christ grieve the Holy Spirit, wound his own conscience, and bring himself under the censure of the church, and to be cut off from the good olive tree, the root and fatness of which he now partakes.

Verse 21

For if God spared not the natural branches,…. That is,

executed his righteous judgments, inflicted due punishment upon the Jews, unchurched them, and stripped them of those privileges they enjoyed in a church state; who were the natural descendants of Abraham; were naturally, and as born into the world, in a national church state and in that national covenant God made with that people; to whom belonged a national adoption, in which sense they were the sons of God, his firstborn; they were chosen by him as a special and peculiar people, to very great favours and privileges; they were Christ's own, he came of them according to the flesh, and was particularly sent unto them, and ministered among them; wherefore, if, at last, God did not spare this people, though he had for a long time done it, but stirred up all his wrath against them, they disbelieving his Son, rejecting and despising the Messiah, and salvation by him, this should awaken the fear, care, and caution of the Gentiles in a church state, lest if they behave not well, he should deal in like manner with them:

take heed lest he also spare not thee; for whatever was done to the Jews in former or latter times, are written for the instruction and admonition of Gentiles; and the use they are to make thereof is, to be careful and cautious, lest by imbibing principles derogatory from the grace of God and glory of Christ, or by an unbecoming walk and conversation they provoke the Lord to unchurch them as he has done the Jews before them; and which they may the rather fear, since the Jews were the natural branches, and they formerly strangers and aliens.

Verse 22

Behold therefore the goodness, and severity of God,…. The consideration of both the grace and kindness of God to some, and his severity or strict justice towards others, is recommended by the apostle as very proper to abate pride, vain

glory, and haughtiness of spirit; and to engage to humility, fear, care, and caution;

on them which fell, severity: the Jews who stumbled at Christ and his Gospel, and fell by unbelief, God in strict justice and righteous judgment not only destroyed, as afterwards their nation, city, and temple, and scattered them abroad in the world to be a reproach, a proverb, a taunt, and a curse in all places; but cast them off as his people, broke his covenant with them, took away his Gospel from them, left them out of a Gospel church state, except a few, and gave up the generality of them to blindness and hardness of heart; so that wrath is come upon them to the uttermost, both with respect to things civil and religious, and they continue as living standing monuments of God's severity and justice, to be beheld by us Gentiles with pity and concern, and to excite in us the fear of God, and caution as to our conduct and behaviour in the world, and in the church:

but towards thee, goodness; the Gentiles, who not only share in the goodness and grace of God, displayed in the election of many of them to eternal life, in their redemption by Christ, and the effectual calling of them by the grace of God; but in their church state, they being made fellow citizens with the saints, fellow heirs, and of the same body, and having a place and a name in God's house, better than that of sons and daughters; and therefore under great obligation to fear the Lord, and his goodness, and to walk worthy of the calling wherein they are called, in all humility and lowliness of mind:

if thou continue in his goodness; meaning not the love, grace, and free favour of God, or the grace of the Spirit, a continuance in which no "if" is to be put upon; for such who are interested in the love of God always continue in it, and nothing can separate them from it; and such as have the graces of the Spirit implanted in them, as faith, hope, and love, can never lose them; these always remain in them, and they in the

possession of them, though not always in the exercise of them; but the goodness of God in a church state is here meant, as the means of grace and comfort, the ministration of the word and ordinances; and the sense is, if thou dost not despise the riches of divine goodness in a church relation, if thou dost not abuse it, or walk unworthy of it, if thou abidest by it, and retainest a value for it, thou wilt still share the advantages of it:

otherwise thou also shall be cut off; from the good olive tree, the Gospel church state, into which the Gentiles were taken; and which, with respect to particular persons, may intend the act of excommunication by the church, expressed in Scripture by purging the old leaven, putting away the wicked person, withdrawing from such that are disorderly, and rejecting heretics, that is, from the communion of the church; and with respect to whole bodies and societies, an entire unchurching of them by removing the Gospel, and the ordinances of it; which threatening has been awfully fulfilled in many Gentile churches, in Asia, Africa, and Europe; and therefore may serve to awaken our fear, care, and caution, lest we should be treated in like manner.

Verse 23

And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief,…. The apostle suggests that the Jews also might be recovered and brought into a Gospel church state, provided they did not continue in infidelity; but inasmuch as they seem to lie under invincible ignorance, obstinacy, and unbelief, and were such bitter enemies to the Gospel, and abhorrers of Gospel ordinances, and a Gospel church state; yea, that they must and will abide in unbelief, unless the Spirit of God convinces them of it, and it is given to them to believe in Christ, and they are powerfully drawn by the Father to come to the Son, there is no possibility or likelihood that they

shall be grafted in, or taken into a Gospel church state; to which the apostle answers, and argues for their ingrafting, and the possibility of it from the power of God:

for God is able to graft them in again; as many of them were in the times of the apostles, and some since, for nothing is impossible with God; he can remove their unbelief, knock off the shackles and fetters in which they are held, and bring, them out of the prison of infidelity, in which they are shut up; he is able to take away the blindness of their minds, and the hardness of their hearts, the veil that is over them, and turn them to the Lord; he can by his mighty power work faith in them, and cause them to look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn in an evangelical manner; he can bring them to Christ, and into his churches, and among his people, and fold them with the rest of his sheep; so that there one fold of Jew and Gentile, under one shepherd, Jesus Christ.

Verse 24

For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree,…. As the apostle argues the possibility of bringing the Jews into a Gospel church state, from the power of God; so here the probability of it, or the easiness and likelihood of its being performed, from the ingrafting of the Gentiles; who were originally like an olive tree,

which is wild by nature, grows in the field, bears no fruit, and is useless and unprofitable; so they by nature were sinners of the Gentiles, children of wrath, full of unrighteousness, without any fruit of holiness; being not within the pale of the Jewish church and commonwealth; but in the wide field of the world, worthless, and of no account; and yet many were “cut out of” this wild olive tree; were, through the ministration of the Gospel, by the power of divine grace separated from the rest of the world; were effectually called

and brought into a Gospel church state; God took out from among them a people for his name. This their being cut out of the wild olive, as it expresses the power and grace of God towards them, it might teach them humility, as it led them to observe their original state and condition:

and wert grafted, contrary to nature, into a good olive tree: for an olive tree being full of fatness, will not admit of ingrafting; nor was it ever usual to ingraft upon olive; hence the Jews say[F25]T. Hieros. Celaim, c. 1. fol. 27. 2. □□□ □□□ □□□□ □□□□□, "there is no ingrafting on olives": besides, it is contrary to nature, use, and custom, to ingraft wild scions, or grafts of any sort into a good stock; but always good scions or grafts into a wild stock, for in wild hungry stocks, grafts grow best: but in the ingrafting of the Gentiles into a Gospel church state, just such a method was taken, as if a wild graft were let into a good stock; so that this ingrafting was not of nature, it was contrary to it; but of pure grace, and, sovereign good will and pleasure; and the apostle's argument is this, that if the Gentiles, who were originally as a wild olive tree; if some as grafts were taken out from among them, and, quite contrary to their own nature, and the nature of things, were, by the goodness and grace of God, grafted into a good olive, the Gospel church state;

how much more shall these which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? that there is a greater likelihood, and more easily may it be, according to all appearance of things, that the Jews, the natural branches or descendants of Abraham, should be brought into a Gospel church state, which first began among them, and which at first only consisted of some of their nation. The Gospel church is called "their own olive tree", in allusion to Israel, or the Jewish church, which is often so called in their writings.

"Says[F26]T. Bab. Menachot, fol. 53. 2. R. Joshua ben Levi, to what are the Israelites like? □□□□, "to an olive tree"; to

teach them that as the leaves of an olive tree do not fall, neither on sunshine days, nor on rainy days; so the Israelites will never cease, neither in this world, nor in the world to come; and says R. Jochanan, to what are the Israelites like? "to an olive"; to teach thee that as an olive does not send forth its oil, but by the means of pressing, so the Israelites do not return to do good, but by the means of chastisement:'

and says another[F1]R. Abraham Seba, Tzeror Hammor, fol. 83. 4. of their writers,

"as oil ascendeth above all liquids, and is not mixed with them; so the Israelites ascend above all nations, and are not mixed with them; and there is an intimation that they are even like □□□□, "to an olive", that is pressed or squeezed; for so the Israelites are bruised and afflicted, and yet, notwithstanding all this, they ascend by virtue of the law, which is called "oil olive".'

It is easy to see from whence this simile is borrowed.

Verse 25

For I would not, brethren,…. The apostle in order to raise the attention of the Gentiles to what he was about to deliver to them, not only styles them "brethren", expressing his affection for them, and their relation to him and other believing Jews, and to one another, being all one in Christ Jesus, partakers of the same grace, and heirs of the same glory; but also tells them, that what he had to acquaint them with was a "mystery", a thing secret and hidden, which had not been heard of and known, at least not so fully and clearly as he was about to reveal it; and because of his great respect for them, he was unwilling, as he says,

that ye should be ignorant of this mystery; he was desirous that they should abound and improve in all spiritual knowledge

and judgment, and, among the rest, be better informed of this particular article, the call of the Jews: and his view in apprizing them of it is expressed in the following clause,

lest ye should be wise in your own conceits: lest they should imagine that they were the only wise and knowing persons, and be elated in their minds with their knowledge and understanding, and look with contempt upon the poor, blind, ignorant Jews, as if they were always to remain in such a state of darkness and infidelity. The thing he had to inform them of is,

that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; by Israel is meant the Jews, the descendants of Jacob, whose name was Israel. Philo the Jew observes[F2]De Temulentia, p. 251. & De Sacrificiis Abel & Cain, p. 151. , that this name signifies οραοιν θεου, "the vision of God"; indeed, Jacob had it given him when he wrestled with the angel, and saw God face to face, though it does not seem to be for that reason; however, blindness had now befallen the Jews, who had been favoured with a divine revelation, with the knowledge of God, his will and worship; and none were more blind than those who were called the servants and messengers of the Lord of hosts, as the Scribes and Pharisees, the priests and princes of the Jewish world. This "blindness" designs their unbelief, the hardness of their hearts, and darkness of their understandings with respect to God himself, whom they knew not in Christ; not as the Father of Christ; nor even the perfections of his nature, particularly his righteousness; which was the reason of their setting up their own righteousness, and of their non-submission to the righteousness of Christ: they were blind as to the Messiah; they knew him not, when he came; they saw no beauty and comeliness in him; could not discern the characters of him in Jesus, though they were so manifest; and rejected him notwithstanding the clear evidence of his ministry and miracles. They were in the dark about the sense of the

prophecies of the Old Testament; a vail was upon their hearts when they read them, so that they understood them not, and could not see their accomplishment in Christ; they were even ignorant of the law, the spiritual nature, true use, and right end and scope of it; and it is no wonder that the Gospel should be hidden from them. This blindness “happened” to them not by chance, but befell them by the decree, and according to the will of God, who hardens whom he pleases; and according to various predictions in the Old Testament, cited in Matthew 13:14; and in righteous judgment, for since they liked not to retain God and his Christ in their knowledge, it was but just in God to give them up to reprobate minds, to judicial blindness, and hardness of heart: but then this blindness only happened to them “in part”; not that it was only in some measure or some degree, for it was total, they were darkness itself, and had no spiritual and evangelic light at all on whom it fell; but that this blindness was not general with respect to persons, there were some few, a seed, a remnant, that were delivered from it, though the far greater part of the nation were involved in it, and continue in it to this day; and will do, “until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in”: that is, till the whole number of God’s elect among them, be called and brought into the Gospel church state, which in the latter day will be very great; when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea; when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ; and the abundance of the sea shall be converted, and the forces of the Gentiles shall come to the church, and multitudes of them shall flock thither, as doves to their windows: and since the blindness of the Jews is not yet removed, it seems plain that the full number of God’s chosen ones among the Gentiles is not yet completed in regeneration; for as soon as ever they are all called and brought in, the vail will be taken away from the Jews, and they will be turned unto the Lord.

Verse 26

And so all Israel shall be saved,…. Meaning not the mystical spiritual Israel of God, consisting both of Jews and Gentiles, who shall appear to be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, when all God's elect among the latter are gathered in, which is the sense many give into; but the people of the Jews, the generality of them, the body of that nation, called "the fulness" of them, Romans 11:12, and relates to the latter day, when a nation of them shall be born again at once; when, their number being as the sand of the sea, they shall come up out of the lands where they are dispersed, and appoint them one head, Christ, and great shall be the day of Jezreel; when they as a body, even the far greater part of them that shall be in being, shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their King; shall acknowledge Jesus to be the true Messiah, and shall look to him, believe on him, and be saved by him from wrath to come. There is a common saying among them[F3]Misn. Sanhedrin c. 11. sect. 1. , □□□ □□□ □□ □□□□□ □□ □□□ □□□□□, "all Israel shall have a part", or "portion in the world to come"; and in support of this they usually produce the passage in Isaiah 60:21, "thy people also shall be all righteous": yea, they even go so far as to say[F4]T. Bab. Erubin, fol. 19. 1. & Chagiga, fol. 27. 1. ,

"that hell fire will have no power over the transgressors of Israel;'

fancying, that every individual person of their nation will be saved; though they sometimes except such who deny the resurrection of the dead, and that the law is from heaven, or is an epicure, and he that reads foreign books, or is an enchanter, or pronounces the ineffable name: but the apostle is not to be understood with such a latitude; he refers to the last times, and to a very general conversion of them to the

Messiah:

as it is written, Isaiah 59:20,

there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer: the words of the prophet are, “and the Redeemer shall come to Zion”: by the Redeemer, or Deliverer, words of the same signification, is meant the Messiah, as the Jews[F5] Aben Ezra in loc. T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 98. 1. themselves own, and apply this passage to him; who is the “Goel”, or near kinsman of his people, to whom the right of their redemption belongs as man; and who as God was able to effect it, and, as God-man and Mediator, was every way qualified for it, and has obtained it for them: and whereas, in the prophet Isaiah, he is said to “come to”, and by the apostle, “out of Zion”, this may be reconciled by observing, that the servile letter מ sometimes signifies “from”, as well as to, when it is put in the room of מן; of which instances may be given, as Exodus 16:1 compared with 2 Chronicles 11:4. Besides, the Messiah was to come out of Zion, as well as to come to it, according to Psalm 14:7; so that the apostle fitly expresses the faith and expectation of the old Jewish church in this citation:

and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; in the prophet it is, “and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob”, Isaiah 59:20. The apostle follows the translation of the Septuagint, and which is favoured by the Chaldee paraphrase, which runs thus; “the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and to turn the rebellious ones of the house of Jacob to the law”; so that the Jew[F6] R. Isaac, Chizzuk Emuna, par. 2. c. 81. has no reason to charge the apostle with a perversion of the prophet’s words, when they are cited so agreeably to their own Targumist: and the sense of them relates not to what Christ did on the cross, when the iniquities of his people were laid on him, and he bore them, and removed them all in one day from them; but to what he will do to the Jews in the latter day, in consequence thereof; he will convince them of their

ungodliness, give them repentance for it and remission of it.

Verse 27

For this is my covenant unto them,…. This is what God has promised to them in covenant, and he will be as good as his word; his covenant will never be broken, it will always remain sure and inviolable; so that there is not only a possibility, and a probability, but even a certainty, of the call and conversion of the Jews; which promise and covenant will have their accomplishment,

when I, saith the Lord,

shall take away their sins: some think that the apostle alludes to Jeremiah 31:34; others, that he takes this passage out of Isaiah 27:9; where in the Septuagint version the selfsame phrase is used; though it may be no citation, or reference, but the apostle's own words, explaining what is meant by "turning away ungodliness from Jacob", Romans 11:26; and as before; regards not the taking away of their sins by the sacrifice of Christ, which is done already, and is what the blood of bulls and goats could not do; but of the removing of their sins from themselves, from their consciences, by the application of the blood of Christ, and the imputation of his righteousness.

Verse 28

As concerning the Gospel,…. Whereas it might be objected to the call and conversion of the Jews, their implacable enmity to the Gospel, the apostle replies, by granting, that with respect to that,

they *were* enemies to God and Christ, to the Gospel, and the ministers of it, and particularly to the apostle:

for your sakes; the Gentiles, to whom it was preached, and by whom it was received, and which greatly irritated and provoked the Jews; or the sense is, that they were suffered to reject the Gospel, and treat it with hatred and virulence, that by this means it might be taken away from them, and carried to the Gentiles; so that the present enmity of the Jews to the Gospel, turned to the advantage of the Gentiles, and should not hinder the future conversion of God's elect among them in the latter day:

but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes; as many of them as belong to the election of grace, are beloved of God; and will appear to be so, when they are called by grace, as they will be, for the confirming of the promises concerning their future restoration made unto their fathers; not one of which shall ever fall to the ground, or they be deprived of any gifts and blessings of grace, which God has purposed for them, or promised to them, as is clear from what follows:

Verse 29

For the gifts and calling of God,…. By "gifts" are meant, not the gifts of nature and providence, as life, health, strength, riches, and honour, which God sometimes gives, and repents of, and takes away; as he repented that he had made man upon earth, and Saul king of Israel; which must be understood by an "anthropopathy", after the manner of men, and that not of a change of the counsel of his mind, but of the course of his providence: nor do gifts here design external gifts of grace, or such gifts of the Spirit, which qualify men for ministerial work, for public service in the church; for these may be taken away, as the "parable" of the "talents" shows, Matthew 25:29; see 1 Corinthians 13:8; but the special and spiritual gifts of God's free grace, which relate to the spiritual and eternal welfare of the souls of men, even that, grace which was given

to God’s elect in Christ before the world was, and all those spiritual blessings wherewith they were then blessed in him: these

are without repentance; that is, they are immutable and unalterable; God never revokes them, or calls them in again, or takes them away from the persons to whom he has made such a previous donation: the reasons are, because that his love from whence they spring is always the same; it admits of no distinction, nor of any degrees, nor of any alteration; and electing grace, according to which these gifts are bestowed, stands sure and immovable; not upon the foot of works, but of the sovereign will of God, and always has its sure and certain effect; and the covenant of grace, in which they are secured, remains firm and inviolable; and indeed, these gifts are no other than the promises of it, which are all yea and amen in Christ, and the blessings of it, which are the sure mercies of David. Whatever God purposes, or promises to give, or really does give to his people, whether into the hands of Christ for them, or into their own, he never repents of or reverses.

Agreeably to these words of the apostle, the Jews say[F7]R. Saphorno apud R. Juda Muscato in Sepher. Cosri, fol. 43. .

“that the holy blessed God, after □□□□□ □□□□, “that he hath given a gift”, □□□□□ □□□□□ □□, “never takes it away from the receiver”; and this is the “Gemara”, or doctrine of the Rabbins[F8]T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 25. 1. □□□□ □□ □□□□ □□□□ □□□□□, “that giving they give, but taking away they do not take away”; the gloss upon it is, □□□□□ □□□, “after it is given”:’

the meaning is, that what is once given to men from heaven, is never taken away from them up into heaven: and elsewhere[F9]T. Bab. Erachin, fol. 15. 1. they ask,

“is there any servant to whom his master gives a gift, and returns and takes it away from him?’

Moreover, the apostle here says the same of the “calling of God”, as of gifts; by which is meant, not a bare external call by the ministry of the word, which oftentimes is without effect, and may be where persons are neither chosen, nor converted, nor saved; but an internal effectual call, by special, powerful, and efficacious grace; and designs either actual calling, to which are inseparably annexed final perseverance in grace, and eternal glorification; or rather the purpose of God from eternity, to call his people in time, and which is never repented of, or changed. The apostle’s argument here is this, that since there are a number of people among the Jews whom God has loved, and has chosen to everlasting salvation, and has in covenant promised to them, and secured and laid up gifts for them, and has determined to call them by his grace; and since all these are unchangeable and irreversible, the future call and conversion of these persons must be sure and certain.

Verse 30

For as ye in times past have not believed God,…. The times referred to, are the times of ignorance, idolatry, and superstition; when God suffered the Gentiles, for many hundreds of years, to walk in their own ways; while the Jews were his favourite people, were chosen by him above all people, separated from them, and distinguished by his goodness; had his word and oracles, his judgments and his statutes to direct them, and many other valuable blessings: the times before the coming of the Messiah are here meant, when these people sat in darkness, and in the region of the shadow of death; till Christ, who came to lighten the Gentiles, sent his Gospel among them, and which has been attended with great success; in these times they were in a state of incredulity: they either, as some of them, did not believe there was a God, or that there was but one God, at least but very few believed it; and these did not know who he

was; nor did they glorify him as God, or perform any true spiritual worship to him: the far greater part believed there were more gods, and did service to them which by nature were no gods, and fell down to idols of gold, and silver, and wood, and stone:

and yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; that is, they were regenerated, effectually called and converted, through the rich and abundant mercy of God; repentance unto life was granted to them; and faith in our Lord Jesus, as a free grace gift, was bestowed upon them; and they had an application of pardoning grace and mercy, through the blood of Christ, made unto them; and all this through the unbelief of the Jews: not that their unbelief could be the cause of their obtaining mercy; but the Jews not believing in the Messiah, but rejecting him, and contradicting and blaspheming his Gospel, it was taken away from them, and carried to the Gentiles; which was the means of their believing in Christ, and obtaining mercy; so that the unbelief of the Jews was the occasion and means, in Providence, of bringing the Gospel to the Gentiles, whereby faith came; see Romans 11:11. This mercy they are said to enjoy “now”; for the present time of the Gospel is the dispensation of mercy to the Gentiles.

Verse 31

Even so have these also now not believed,…. Now is the time of the Jews’ unbelief, blindness has happened to them, the vail is over their hearts; as the Gentiles formerly did not believe God, so the Jews do not now; though they believe there is a God, and that there is but one God, yet they do not believe God in Christ; nor that he is the Father of Christ; or that Christ is the Son of God, the true Messiah, and Saviour of the world: they do not believe, as some read the words, connecting them with the next clause, and so they stand in the original text, “in your mercy”; meaning either Christ, in whom the

Gentiles obtained mercy; or the Gospel, the means of it; or the sense is, that they do not believe that mercy belongs to the Gentiles, having entertained a notion, treat the Messiah, and the blessings of mercy and goodness by him, are peculiar to Israel: but our version after Beza, who follows Theophylact, connects the clause with the following,

that through your mercy they may obtain mercy; not through the mercy the Gentiles show to others, but which they have received of God; and principally intends faith, which springs from the mercy of God, and is a gift of his pure, free, rich grace; and stands opposed to the unbelief of the Jews, through which the Gentiles are said to obtain mercy; and the meaning: is, that in time to come, the Jews, observing the mercy obtained and enjoyed by the Gentiles, will be provoked to jealousy, and stirred up to an emulation of them, to seek for the same mercy at the same hands, and in the same way, they have had it; see Romans 11:11; The apostle's argument in favour of the call and conversion of the Jews, upon the whole is this, that since the unbelief of the Gentiles was no bar to their obtaining mercy, and that through the infidelity of the Jews; then it cannot be thought, that the present blindness, hardness of heart, enmity, and unbelief, which now attend the Jews, can be any obstacle to their obtaining mercy in the same way the Gentiles have; but as the one has been, the other also will be.

Verse 32

For God hath concluded them all in unbelief,…. Both Jews and Gentiles, particularly God's elect among them: some think the metaphor is taken from the binding up of sheaves in bands; and that Jews and Gentiles are the sheaves, and unbelief the band, in which they are bound together; but the apostle is not speaking of their being together in unbelief, but as separate, first the Gentiles, and now the Jews: rather it seems to be

taken from a prison, and Jews and Gentiles are represented as prisoners, and unbelief the prison, in which they are shut up by God: not that God is the author of unbelief, or of any other sin in men; he does not put it into them, or them into that, but finding them in unbelief, concludes them in it, or leaves them in such a state, and does not as yet however deliver out of it, or say to the prisoners, go forth: moreover, to be "concluded in unbelief", is the same as to be "concluded under sin", Galatians 3:22; that is, to be thoroughly convinced of it; and to be held and bound down by such a sense of it in the conscience, as to see no way to escape deserved punishment, or to obtain salvation, but by fleeing to the mercy of God in Christ:

that he might have mercy upon all: not upon all the individuals of Jews and Gentiles; for all are not concluded in, or convinced of the sin of unbelief, but only such who are eventually believers, as appears from the parallel text, Galatians 3:22; and designs all God's elect among the Jews, called "their fulness", Romans 11:12; and all God's elect among the Gentiles, called "the fulness of the Gentiles", Romans 11:25; for whom he has mercy in store, and will bestow it on them; and in order to bring them to a sense of their need of it, and that he may the more illustriously display the riches of it, he leaves them for a while in a state of unbelief, and then by his Spirit thoroughly convinces them of it, and gives them faith to look to, and believe in, the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life.

Verse 33

O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God,…. These words are the epilogue, or conclusion of the doctrinal part of this epistle, and relate to what is said throughout the whole of it hitherto; particularly to the doctrines of salvation by Christ, justification by his

righteousness, predestination, the calling of the Gentiles, the rejection of the Jews, and their restoration in the latter day; upon the whole of which, the apostle breaks forth into this pathetic exclamation; the design of which is to show, how much of the wisdom and knowledge of God is displayed in these doctrines, and how small a part of it is known by the best of men, and therefore ought not to be cavilled at and objected to, because of some difficulties attending them, but to be received upon the testimony of divine revelation: and if there was a depth in these things unsearchable and past finding out by so great a man as the apostle, who had by revelation such knowledge in the mysteries of grace, and who had been caught up into the third heaven, and heard things unutterable, how much less is it to be fathomed by others, and therefore should be silent: by “the wisdom and knowledge of God”, one and the same thing is meant; and design not so much the perfections of the divine nature, which are infinite and unsearchable, the understanding of which is too high for creatures, and not be attained to by them; nor the display of them in the works of creation and providence, in which there are most glorious and amazing instances; but rather the effects of them, the counsels and decrees of God; which are so wisely formed and laid, as not to fail of their accomplishment, or to be frustrated of their end; and the doctrines of grace relating to them, in which are treasures, riches, that is, an abundance of wisdom and knowledge; and a depth, not to be reached to the bottom of, in this imperfect state, and in which the knowledge and wisdom of God are wonderfully displayed: thus in the doctrine of redemption and salvation by Christ, wherein God has abounded in all wisdom and prudence; in the person fixed upon to be the Saviour, his own Son; who by the assumption of human nature, being God and man in one person, was very fit and proper to be a Mediator between God and man, to transact the affair of salvation; was every way qualified for it, and able to do it: so likewise in the manner in which it is accomplished, being done in a way which glorifies all the divine perfections; in which the rights of God’s justice and

the honour of his holiness are secured, as well as his love, grace, and mercy, displayed; in which Satan is most mortified, sin condemned, and the sinner saved; and also in the persons, the subjects of it, ungodly sinners, enemies, the chief of sinners, whereby the grace of God is the more illustrated, and all boasting in the creature excluded. The wisdom of God manifestly appears, in the doctrine of a sinner's justification; which though it proceeds from grace, yet upon the foot of redemption and satisfaction, in a way of strict justice; so that God is just, whilst he is the justifier; it is of persons ungodly, and without a righteousness in themselves, and yet by a perfect and complete righteousness, answerable to all the demands of law and justice; and the grace of faith is wisely made the recipient of this blessing, that it might appear to be of free grace, and not of works, and that the justified ones might have solid peace, joy, and comfort, from it. The doctrine of predestination is full of the wisdom and knowledge of God; his choice of some to everlasting life in his Son, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, for the glorifying of his grace and mercy, in a way of righteousness; and his passing by others, leaving them to themselves, and in their sins, justly to perish for them, for the glorifying of his justice, are acts of the highest wisdom, and done according to the counsel of his will. The account just given of the call of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews, is an astonishing scheme of infinite wisdom; that, on the one hand salvation should come to the Gentiles, through the fall of the Jews, and they should obtain mercy through their unbelief; and on the other hand that the restoration of the Jews should be as life from the dead to the Gentiles; and the Jews, through their mercy, obtain mercy; and that both, in their turns, should be shut up in unbelief by God, that he might have mercy on them all, "O the depth", &c. To which is added,

how unsearchable are his judgments! which are not to be understood of his awful judgments on wicked men in particular,

nor of the administrations of his providence in general; though these are a great deep, and in many instances are unsearchable, and cannot be counted for in the present state, but will hereafter be made manifest; nor of the commands of God, sometimes called his judgments, which are all plain, and may be easily searched out in his word; but rather of the counsels and purposes of God, and the doctrines of grace relating thereunto; which are the deep things of God, and are only searched out by the Spirit of God, who reveals them to us:

and his ways past finding out! not the methods and course of his providence, though his way in this respect is often in the deep, his footsteps are not to be known, discerned, and traced, by finite creatures; but rather the goings forth and steps of his wisdom from everlasting, in his purposes and decrees, council and covenant, which are higher than the ways of men, even as the heavens are higher than the earth; and which are all mercy and truth to his chosen people, and strict justice to others, and not to be found out by any; particularly his ways and methods, and dealings, with both Jews and Gentiles; that he should for so many hundred years leave the Gentiles in blindness and unbelief; and now for as many years his favourite people the Jews in the same, and yet gather in his elect out of them both; these are things out of our reach and comprehension.

Verse 34

For who hath known the mind of the Lord,…. The intentions of his mind, the thoughts of his heart, and the counsels of his will: these could never have been known, if he had not revealed them; nor can the doctrines relating to them, though externally revealed, be known by the natural man, or by the mere dint of nature, but only by the light of the Spirit of God; who searches them, and makes them known in a spiritual

manner to spiritual men, who have a spiritual discerning of them; and yet even by these they are not known perfectly, only in part, and are seen through a glass darkly:

or who hath been his counsellor? or was of his council, when all things were fixed according to his sovereign will: when the scheme of man's salvation was consulted and agreed upon between the eternal Three, there was no creature, angel, or man there; no created angel, only the eternal One, "the Counsellor", Isaiah 9:6; or as the Septuagint there style him, αγγελος μεγαλης βουλης, "the angel of the great council"; none but Father, Son, and Spirit, were present, when the book of life was made, when the names of God's elect were put into it, and others left out; when all things relating to his chosen ones, both for time and eternity, whether among Jews or Gentiles, were determined, ordered, and settled; and as there was no creature that assisted, or could give any advice about these matters, so there were none that were privy to the resolutions, determinations, and counsels of his will; which were purposed in himself and in his Son, and were known only to them and his Spirit, which is in him: from the whole it appears, that predestination is not according to men's works, or the foresight of them; for then these things would be plain and easy, they would not be unsearchable and past finding out; there would not be an unfathomable depth in them; the mind and counsels of God, and the springs of them, would be obvious; but it is according to his secret, sovereign, and unchangeable will.

Verse 35

Or who hath first given to him,…. See Job 41:11; no man can give God anything, which he has not first given him, or which he has not a prior right to, or a claim upon him for; Adam, in innocence, was not able to give God anything, nor are the angels in heaven, much less sinful men on earth; their bodies

and souls, and all their enjoyments, all that is good in them, or done by them, are from the Lord; men by all their good works, best duties and services, give nothing to God, nor lay him under any manner of obligation to them: hence no man can merit anything at the hands of God, if he could,

it shall be recompensed to him again; but it is impossible there should be merit in a creature, who has nothing but what he has from God, and does nothing but what he is obliged to do; and that not by his own strength, but by the grace and strength of God; and therefore there is no retribution made by God as of debt, but of grace: hence it follows, that God is indebted to, and obliged by none, and may do what he will with his own; love Jacob and hate Esau; choose one and not another; reject the Jews, and call the Gentiles; save and justify some, and not others; none can call him to account, or say unto him, what dost thou?

Verse 36

For of him, and through him, and to him are all things,…. Not only all things in nature and providence, he being the Maker and efficient cause of things, and the preserver and supporter of them their beings, and to whose glory they are all designed and directed; but all things in grace owe their original to him, as their first cause; they are produced by him, and make for his glory; they all spring from his sovereign will, are brought about by his almighty power, and tend to the glory of his grace; as does every thing in election, redemption, and regeneration: particularly the counsels and purposes of God respecting men may be here meant; which all rise out of his own heart, without any motive or inducement to them in the creature; are accomplished by his divine power, notwithstanding all the opposition of men and devils; and all issue in his glory, even such of them as may seem to carry in them severity to some of his creatures: and since this is the

case, the following doxology, or ascription of glory to God, is justly and pertinently made,

to whom be glory for ever; and which will be given to him by angels and men to all eternity, for the perfection of his being, the counsels of his will, and the works of his hands, both of nature and grace; to which the, apostle annexes his

amen, so be it, assenting to it, wishing for it, and believing of it.