

THE EXISTENCE OF A JEWISH REMNANT AS EVIDENCE OF GOD'S  
REDEMPTION PLAN FOR ISRAEL

by

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*The opinions expressed in this [thesis/dissertation] do not necessarily reflect the views of the South African Theological Seminary.*

## **DECLARATION**

I hereby acknowledge that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any academic institution for degree purposes.

LOUISE ONEN

05/04/2011

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## SUMMARY

The purpose of the mini thesis was to present enough biblical evidence to show that God's plan of redemption for Israel is fulfilled through the elect Jewish remnant. The research followed a thematic approach, making full use of literary scholarship and exegesis.

The theme of the remnant was initiated in the Abrahamic Covenant with the promise given to Abraham of both physical and spiritual descendants. It was the concept of spiritual heirs that was the focus of the study. The link was then made between the Abrahamic Covenant and Paul's teaching in Romans Chapters 1 to 10. Here Paul uses Abraham to emphasize that salvation is a personal matter based on God's prerogative to elect those who shall come to faith in Christ, and has nothing to do with national heredity.

An exegesis of Romans 11:26 followed. It was important to try and reconcile Paul's' doctrine of salvation in the previous chapters with the seemingly contradictory statement made here that the whole nation of Israel (literally) shall be saved. The scholarly debate of those who fiercely defend a literal interpretation and not a spiritual one was noted. The context of Romans 11:26 however makes Paul's message clear. All those who shall be saved constituted the total number of the remnant; individual Jewish believers, saved according to God's predetermined plan of redemption through Jesus Christ.

The thesis statement was substantially proven that the salvation of Israel is fulfilled in the remnant; the connotation of spiritual heirs of Abraham being synonymous with the remnant.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. SCHOLARLY PERSPECTIVES

There is no lack of theological literature on the broad subject of the Nation of Israel in relationship with God as His special people. But there is uncertainty amongst the Jewish people and many Christians as to how the Jewish nation's rejection of the Messiah impacts on God's promised plan of salvation. Moo (1996:719) gets to the heart of the matter that the main problem is indeed whether God can be faithful to His work of salvation in spite of Israel's rejection of Jesus Christ. Ladd (1998: 607) takes it a step further when he views the rejection of Christ by Israel as not a mere accident of history but part of the plan in God's redemptive purpose. As God's chosen people, the outcome is important.

An exegetical and theological study of Romans 11 is to be undertaken. This pericope is chosen by me for a good reason. It is in this text that Paul deals with the important doctrine of salvation, in so far as it relates specifically to the nation of Israel. He deals with the issue of a Jewish remnant being brought into the Church. As Guthrie (1990:43) points out, the hope of the future for Israel is to come through the remnant. In Romans 11:26 Paul makes the statement that "all Israel will be saved" and scholarly perspectives were relied upon to establish what Paul meant by this statement. Berkhoff (1994: 699) sets the tone of the research when he indicates that what is envisaged here is that the whole number of the elect out of the ancient covenant constitutes 'all Israel'. The research project commences with a literary review and analysis of existing writings on the topic of the redemption of Israel. An investigation of the Old Testament Abrahamic covenant is to follow because it is important to get an understanding of God's relationship with Israel in terms of the specific content of that original covenant.

The study will then move into the New Testament, with an overview of Romans chapters 1 to 10. It is in these chapters of his letter to the Romans that Paul

establishes general principles of sin and salvation. He sets out to show that from God's perspective, not all ethnic Israel are God's chosen people, pointing to the remnant. The main objective of the research is now reached with an exegesis of Romans chapter 11. Here Paul deals specifically with the salvation of the remnant. God is seen to be faithful to his promises although the Messiah is rejected and, as Guthrie (1990:429-431) indicates, an opportunity is missed because of their self righteousness. The scope of this study is limited to a research of the remnant as it pertains to the redemption of Israel. Research will not venture into the realm of the relationship which may exist between God and Israel in the future, nor consider how God may ultimately restore ethnic Israel.

With this in mind, the following scholarly perspectives are used as helpful and informative contributions to the body of literature referred to above. It is a good starting point and indeed important to have an understanding of the historical background to the covenantal relationship enjoyed between God and the Nation of Israel. Vaughan Roberts (2002:51-55) is always informative and makes a scholarly contribution as he presents God's bigger picture by tracing the story-line of the Bible. He introduces the Abrahamic covenant and refers to the bleak consequences of the Israelites breaking their obligations to obey God and rejecting the New Covenant in Jesus Christ.

Moving on to the remnant itself, scholars such as Ladd (1993:106) refer to the concept of Jesus' disciples as the true Israel, better understood against the background of the Old Testament concept of a faithful remnant. Israel is subject to divine judgment as a whole due to their rebellion and disobedience as a nation. It is the believing remnant that constitutes the true people of God. The statement in Romans 11:26 that "all Israel will be saved" therefore needs clarification. I am grateful for the contribution made by Moo and Piper in writing a case study of this verse in the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society. They conclude that the Israel of God is all who believe in the present age; Jew and Gentile (JETS 49/2. June 2006). John Hagee (2001:220) makes his contribution from a different perspective that there is no remnant at all as the whole nation of Israel will be saved.

Fruchtenbaum (1993:422) makes the important statement that generally speaking, every covenant made with Israel is an earthly one, whereas the covenant to the church is a heavenly one. This highlights the importance of the church as a spiritual people; the nation as a physical one. If there is no different plan of salvation for the Jewish people who must also respond to the gospel, it suggests that God's true people are not an ethnic people, but a believing one (Romans 2009:207). Walvoord (1988:24-25) also makes reference to the important aspect of individual Jews and Gentiles in a spiritual unity in reference to Romans Chapter 11.

## **1.2. MAIN OBJECTIVE OF MINI THESIS**

The major objective of this paper is to research the view that a remnant only of Jewish believers will be saved as a part of God's plan for Israel. It needs to be established how, in spite of the fact that God's chosen people rejected Christ; His plan of redemption for Israel was not thwarted.

## **1.3. SUBSIDIARY OBJECTIVES**

The following subsidiary objectives are selected to support the main research into the Old Testament Jewish remnant.

### **1.3.1. Tracing the Abrahamic Covenant through the Old Testament**

God's special covenantal relationship with the Nation of Israel begins in the Book of Genesis. The first subsidiary objective is to trace the Abrahamic covenant through the Old Testament, so that the far reaching promises God made to the people of Israel under that covenant are clearly established.

### **1.3.2. Overview of Romans 1-10 (Paul in reference to Abraham)**

The covenant motif surrounding Abraham expands beyond the Old Testament and into the New Testament. This is evident with Paul's explanation of God's salvic purposes for the Jewish people in Romans chapters 1 to 10 as he refers to the theology of Israel. An examination of these chapters will provide a pivotal link

between the Old Testament Abrahamic Covenant and Paul's ultimate message regarding the remnant contained in chapter 11 of the book of Romans. The Old Testament defines the Abrahamic Covenant and Romans chapters 1 to 10 continue in the covenantal theme.

### **1.3.3. Implications for Christians today based on the text**

The third subsidiary objective deals with the implications of Paul's message in Romans chapters 1 to 11, namely that salvation is an individual faith in Jesus Christ, and is not based on national selection. Guthrie (1990:411) stresses the importance for the text to always meet the immediate needs of the readers as a major contributing factor in the exegesis of any text.

## **1.4. PLAN OF MINI THESIS**

The paper will take the following chapter outline –

### **1.4.1. Introduction**

### **1.4.2. Literary Review**

It is beneficial, as with any research, to get an idea of what the scholars have to say about issues pertinent to my topic.

### **1.4.3. Tracing the Old Testament Abrahamic Covenant**

The first subsidiary objective is to trace the establishment and reaffirmation of the Abrahamic covenant through the Old Testament, so that the elements of the promises God made to Abraham to be a blessing to Israel and all the nations may be fully established.

### **1.4.4. Overview Romans Chapters 1-10**

The covenant may not be as explicitly stated in the New Testament as it is in the Old, but it is implied. There is a definite link in Paul's reference in these chapters to the Abrahamic promises and covenant. The second subsidiary objective is

important - to endeavour to provide specific background knowledge regarding the redemption of Israel. Chapters 1 to 5 reveal the problem of God's wrath at unrighteousness and provide the solution namely, justification by faith in Christ. Paul cites Abraham as a scriptural argument for justification by faith and as the spiritual progenitor of a spiritual people. Faith and promise, implicit in Genesis, forms the cornerstone of Paul's use of Abraham as an image of faith in contrast to the law (with special focus on Genesis 15:6). In Chapters 9 and 10 Paul deals with the reason why so few Jews are saved. Chapters 1 to 10 provide the link between the Old Testament Abrahamic covenant and the content of Paul's message contained in Romans chapter 11.

#### **1.4.5. Exegesis of Romans Chapter 11**

The main objective of the research is to consider God's plan of redemption for Israel. The Abrahamic covenant and Paul's theology both point to the salvation of a remnant only of Jewish people. In this chapter Paul addresses the Jewish people directly regarding salvation. An exegesis of Romans chapter 11 further enhances and clarifies the view that God's plan of redemption for Israel is fulfilled through the remnant. If God is seen to save everyone He chooses, including all the Jews He intends to save, Israel is redeemed through the elect. The following sub-sections are complementary to the main exegesis –

##### **1.4.5.1. My Presuppositions and Scholarly Perspectives**

##### **1.4.5.2. Relevant Background to the Pericope**

##### **1.4.5.3. Writer/ Audience/Purpose for writing/Original Message**

##### **1.4.5.4. Establishment of a correct understanding of what Paul refers to as "all Israel" in Romans 11:26**

##### **1.4.5.5. Implications of findings**

There are far reaching implications of any findings of the research into God's plan of redemption for the people of Israel. A sobering reality begins to emerge that it

was never God's intention to save the whole Jewish nation but only the elect Jews from within that nation, as with any other nation. God's special people are those whom He has chosen. From a human perspective, being part of God's people should then be cause for great rejoicing. But there is also an awesome sense of privilege and responsibility, which includes evangelization of the Jews.

## **1.5. Conclusion**

## **Bibliography**

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of the thesis is to show that there is enough biblical evidence to support the remnant as the means through which God's plan of redemption for Israel is fulfilled. To assist in the process, it is important to gain an insight into scholarly perspectives regarding the subject of Israel's salvation. An evaluation may then be made as to prevalent opinions regarding the remnant to support or refute the stated claim.

The covenants were the vehicle through which God interacted with Israel. It is intended to focus specifically on the Abrahamic covenant as it is here that the concept of the remnant is initiated. Clarification is needed regarding the promise given to Abraham of heirs. It is felt that opinion would be divided between those who viewed the promise of heirs to be Abraham's literal physical offspring, and those who prefer a future spiritual inheritance, namely the remnant. Perspectives regarding the structure of the covenant are also to be sought as here too, opinions vary. The fulfilment of the promises made under the Abrahamic covenant may be seen to be conditional upon Abraham's obedience to God or totally unconditional and inviolate in terms of God's sovereign will.

The outworking of the promise to Abraham of descendants may then be traced to the New Testament in terms of the progressive unfolding of God's eschatological plan. What began with Abraham is continued with Paul, as he connects with Abraham as a man of faith. An overview of commentary on Romans 1 to 10 is to follow with the aim of establishing Paul's teaching regarding personal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone under the New Covenant.

Extensive debate is expected as the study advances into the main exegesis of Romans 11:26. This is due to Paul's seemingly contradictory and controversial statement that all Israel shall be saved. His message may either be understood to justify the interpretation of ancestral preference based on Israel as God's chosen elect people; or alternatively Paul's explanation would be seen to be an expansion



on the Abrahamic theme of salvation of Israel through the remnant. It is anticipated that the current review of literature would provide enough evidence to support a biblically sustainable argument for the remnant, and of course contribute in any other way possible.

## **2.2. OLD TESTAMENT ABRAHAMIC PERSPECTIVES**

### **2.2.1. Biblical Covenants**

The Abrahamic covenant, recorded in Genesis chapters 12 to 17 (reconfirmed in 26:2-5, 28: 1-4 and 12-15) and restated throughout the Old Testament, holds the key to understanding God's dealings with Israel. This covenant is one of six covenants entered into between God and His people. It is helpful at this point to define the important principles which govern the Old Testament covenants, with specific reference to the covenant with Abraham. The covenants were all relational between God and His people and manifested one of two distinct characteristics; conditional or unconditional. The question of the character of the Abrahamic covenant needs to be addressed. If the covenant is seen to be conditional upon Abraham's obedience or totally unconditional, would it in any way impact upon God's predetermined plan to redeem Israel (Roberts 2002:108-116; Waltke 2007:442-443; Lioy 2006:89-90)?

#### **2.2.1.1. A Conditional Covenant**

A conditional covenant may be compared to the common treaty between regional powers and vassal states in the ancient Near East. It was a solemn bilateral agreement between two parties, with obligations on both sides even though one of the parties had less status than the other. The covenant God made with Moses in Exodus 20:1-31:18 is conditional and involved bilateral obligations. God intended to bring the nation of Israel together under His rule if the people obeyed Him by keeping the covenantal obligations (Pentecost 2007:42; Fruchtenbaum 2005:144; Mendenhall 1992:1180-1183). Applying the 'treaty' approach to the Abrahamic Covenant would necessitate Abraham, as the minor party to leave the land of his birth so that certain specific promises of blessing may be given. Although the Genesis text (12:1 and 13:17) indicates definite obligation on the part of Abraham

that unless he obeyed God's instruction to go the blessing would be withheld, there is nothing however to suggest that God's blessing was contingent upon Abraham's obedience. There were even times when Abraham was not obedient, yet he still received God's favour (Pentecost 1975:65-68; Edersheim 1995:79).

Where an agreement sets out the terms that have to be obeyed and the penalties that will be applied if the minor party does not comply, the same cannot be said of God that He responded to Abraham according to obedience or disobedience. As God always acts unilaterally and unconditionally it is therefore clear as Wiersbe (2007: 58); Williamson (2000: 422-423) and Roberts (2002:51-55) concur - God's authority is never violated or negated through human behaviour. It must also be remembered that it was God who graciously gave His covenant to Abraham, who in turn responded with faith and obedience. Abraham's faith determined his obedience; by faith he obeyed God (Heb 11:8-10).

#### **2.2.1.2. An Unconditional Covenant**

An unconditional covenant places no onus for its fulfilment on the recipient of the covenant. It is only binding on the one making the covenant to a certain course of action. Accordingly the Abrahamic covenant may be defined as totally unconditional as it was initiated by God who bound Himself to fulfil His plan through the covenant, irrespective of Abraham's obedience or faithfulness. God's covenant with Abraham stands no matter what Israel believes (Walvoord 1952:37-38; Waltke 2007:21, 42).

The unconditional nature of the biblical covenants is further substantiated by Lioy (2006:91). He comments that apart from the Mosaic Covenant, the four Old Testament covenants, namely the Noahic Covenant (Gen 9:1-8), the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-15:17); the Palestinian Covenant in Deuteronomy and the Davidic Covenant of 2 Samuel 7:14-16 were all unconditional promises of blessing. It is therefore safe to conclude that God's actions were never dependent on obedience, even with an element of accountability. Likewise, God's new covenant with His people in Christ rests solely upon His grace and sovereign will to work out His plan of salvation.

Dispensationalists also advocate a strictly unconditional covenant, but the position which they traditionally hold is unscriptural. It is based on the belief that a covenant is a compact or agreement between God and man (suggestive of a conditional treaty between two parties). According to Dispensationalists, first Abraham had to fulfil a condition, and only then did God institute His irrevocable and unconditional programme (Gen 17:1-5; 18:19; 22:2; 24:4-5). By giving Abraham a measure of authority however infers that he was in a position to circumvent God's actions through his own (Fruchtenbaum 1993:144; Walvoord 1962:43-45; Pentecost 1962:72-73).

Waltke (2007:440) endeavours to clarify the position concerning the 'dispensations' under which God administered His people differently at different times. Whilst God may indeed be seen to administer His people differently at different times, if God is specifically seen to be unilaterally pursuing three distinct and separate programmes (as favoured by Dispensationalists), for the Jew; for the Gentile and for the church, this presents the potential for misrepresentation. The existence of three different covenants, with three distinct and separate privileges for each group of people opens the way for a special unconditional dispensation to be freely given to the whole nation of Israel, bypassing the need of individual salvation as stressed by Paul.

### **2.2.1.3. Progressive Covenantalism**

Another feature relative to the covenants is the unity of God's unbroken storyline which runs through the Bible. What began in the Old Testament as a promise is fulfilled in the new covenant in Jesus Christ. Guthrie (1990:249) points to the significance that in John 8:56 Christ makes reference to Abraham, clearly expressing the link between the Old and the New Testaments. Writing in the journal *Conspectus* Lioy (2006:81-102) presents 'Progressive covenantalism' as a working model to substantiate the integration of Scripture. The concept portrayed is one that sees the unfolding and progression of the Old Testament covenants as they are fulfilled in the New Testament. The covenants were not only relevant to the people of Israel; they were also full of future eschatological promises, affirming a continuity and unity between the books of the Bible.

The benefits of such a model are immediately apparent to Eichrodt (1961:1:26) and Roberts (2002:108-116). For the promise of heirs handed down to Abraham to be fulfilled, God's eschatological covenantal blessing must be extended to all who believe, and therefore goes beyond the Old Testament. The theme of remnant which began with the promise of seed to Abraham in the Book of Genesis is ongoing and may be traced to Paul in the Book of Romans.

### **2.3. PERSPECTIVES ON ROMANS CHAPTERS 1-10**

The progressive unfolding of God's plan of salvation for Israel is clearly advanced by Paul. The promise of heirs originating with Abraham is dealt with by him in Romans. A preliminary study is to be conducted into commentary on chapters 1 to 10 to establish Paul's very important doctrine of salvation. This pericope is foundational to the main exegesis of Romans 11:26 where he focuses more on the salvation of the remnant.

#### **2.3.1. Salvation through faith in Christ alone**

Salvation is one of the great doctrines of the Bible and is taught by Paul in Romans. Numerous scholars (for example Guthrie 1990; Grudem 1994 and Ladd 1993) are in agreement about the rich theological content of chapters 1 to 10. They identify the key words in Chapters 9 and 10 of *faith*, *righteousness*, and *justification by faith*. There is none righteous for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Ro 3:23; 5:15). Redemption is in Christ alone, whose blood was shed as a living sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin (Ro 3:24-25; Ro 5:8-9; 10:9). A response to Christ as Saviour results in confession of sin, repentance, and restoration to a full relationship with God. It requires an act of faith to believe in Christ who is able to save from sin, for without faith it is impossible to please God (Ro 4:19-21) (Pawson 2007:201-202; Grudem 1994:710-712; Ladd 1993:489-490).

Bearing in mind the original audience whom Paul was addressing, it is important to develop the theme of faith further by relating Romans 10:5-13 to the Old Testament teaching on righteousness by *faith*, and not by the Law. Paul emphasises that the doctrine of justification by faith and not the law is taught in the Old Testament. This is

because Abraham was not saved in his Jewishness under the Law, but because of his faith in God. The Apostle wants to make the point that Abraham was a friend of God and the spiritual father of all who believe. All believers, like Abraham are friends of God, justified by faith in Christ and accounted righteous in God's sight (Guthrie 1988:100; Ladd 1993:489). Further commentary by Berkhoff (1994:520-521); ROMANS (2009:2000-2003) and Evans (1979:145-158) is enlightening - Paul makes it clear that there is an ignorance of God's standard of righteousness as people wilfully seek to establish their own right standing instead of submitting to the righteousness of God. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Ro 8:8). Nor will anyone be declared righteous in God's sight by observing the Law. The righteousness from God comes only through individual faith in Jesus Christ and is open to all who believe, both Jew and Gentile (Ro 3:20-22).

#### **2.3.1.1. Personal faith and not national selection**

Whereas the old covenant was based on the Law and addressed the people collectively, the new covenant is a personal one based on faith in Christ and is addressed to all believers. Romans 4 makes it clear that it is the individual (and not the nation) who is blessed through faith in Christ. Paul's recurring theme is that salvation is a personal matter, (although faith is lived out communally), meaning there cannot be any special dispensation for any nation or people. Natural descendants were not automatically guaranteed inheritance of the divine promises as God did not show partiality to Israel (Lioy 2006:101; Grudem 1994:710).

Ladd (1993:607-608) and Munck (2005:1544) make it clear that Paul's teaching is that Israel could not take their salvation for granted. The people may not live anyhow in the carnal security their circumcision would guarantee salvation. Otherwise the question must be raised that if salvation is a matter of national preference, why did Paul expound the message of justification by faith in Christ alone on an individual basis and not by the Law? The principle of salvation remains that it is not children of the flesh, but children of the promise who are the descendants or seed of Abraham (Ro 9:8).

Drawing further on Kaiser (1990:100); Pawson (2007: 201-202) and Liroy (2006:84-85), they endorse the fact that the new covenant which God initiates, clearly supersedes the Abrahamic covenant. God's eschatological programme which began with the promise of spiritual descendants under the Abrahamic Covenant finds fulfilment and completion under the new covenant of God's grace and sovereignty in Jesus Christ (Ro 8:18-23).

### **2.3.1.2. Two Covenant Theology (a form of dispensationalism)**

In stark contrast to a more biblical perspective on salvation, a rather controversial view is presented by Two Covenant theologians. Glatzer (1961:341) for instance reports on Franz Rosenzweig, the originator of this approach, who has denied that the covenant the Jews have with God has ever been replaced or superseded by Christianity. Rosenzweig taught that there are two separate, distinct but equal covenants or ways to God, one for the Jews who are related to God through the Law and the other for Christians who are related to God through Christ. The two covenants which God has established between Moses and the Covenant in Jesus being complementary to each other.

Furthermore Rosenzweig holds the conviction that as the covenant with the Jews has never been abrogated; the faithful Jews are saved under the old covenant. He states that Jews therefore do not need to become Christians in order to attain salvation. Judaism however does not save Jews, whereas Christianity does save Christians. He makes the further comment that Christianity acknowledges the God of the Jews not as God but as the Father of Jesus Christ and no one can reach the Father except through him. The situation is then quite different for the people of Israel who do not have to reach the Father because they are already with God and have been ever since Sinai. Jews may simply keep the Law of Moses because of the everlasting covenant in Genesis 17:13 between Abraham and God, whereas Gentiles must convert to Christianity (Glatzer 1961:341). John Hagee (1988:01), one of the best known promoters of the Two Covenant doctrine concurs with a somewhat controversial interpretation of scripture.

The problem for dual covenant theology lies in the major theme of Paul's epistle to the Romans - Jew and Gentile are equally in need of individual redemption. The need of the gospel is therefore the same for both and is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes; for the Jew first then for the Gentile (Ro 1:16). Ezekiel 18:1-4 highlights individual accountability even though Israel had a group relationship with God. It is therefore unethical to suggest that Jews today can be saved without confessing Christ, denying the necessity of his death to make atonement for sin.

Extensive reference is made to Berkhof (1994:500-502); Chester and Timmis (2007:1031-1032); McGregor (1970:727-728) and Waltke (2007:322) for their extensive exposition of Romans. Believers are not then justified through the blood of Christ in a system which advocates national favouritism on the part of God. It is also important to remember that if God in His wisdom and grace has predetermined Israel's future through the remnant, then there can be no other plan of salvation for the Jews. Nowhere does Paul indicate that God (a) has one set of rules for the Gentiles; (b) has a separate plan which favours the nation of Israel, (c) infers that the whole nation of Israel should be saved and (d) teaches that Jews today can be saved without confessing Jesus Christ.

### **2.3.2. Election and Predestination – Romans Chapters 9 and 10**

As important as it is to emphasize individual faith, God's role in the selection of the faithful must be acknowledged. A theology of election lends itself to the fact that God is calling out a people for Himself. The elect are chosen individually to come to faith in Christ, predetermined according to His divine and sovereign plan for all those who believe (Acts 13:48). The election of Abraham in the Old Testament must be seen to be pivotal to God's plan of salvation. God did not choose Abraham according to merit. He chose Abraham according to His good pleasure, to initiate His saving plan in history through him (Pawson 2007:698; Romans 2009:433-435).

At the start of the New Testament period, the promise of salvation given to Israel had not yet been fulfilled in Christ. In Romans 9 and 10 Paul is making a profound statement regarding God's prerogative to choose His own, to exercise His right to

define His people according to His choice, and not by virtue of ancestry. Guthrie (1990:430) and Moo (1970:1147-1149) comment on the controversial subject of the sovereign freedom of God to elect His own (Ro 9:6-29). In addressing the Jews in their apparent unbelief, Paul tries to make it clear that God's people have always been defined by His choice, rather than through national preference. In rejecting the Messiah, Israel failed to obtain what it sought and Paul indicates two distinct groups within the people of Israel. Those who were 'elect' and obtained the salvation that they sought, and those who were not the elect and who were simply 'hardened' in judgment so that the minority of Jews together with the elect Gentiles may be saved. As with Abraham election is not based on merit or faith but by grace (Ro 11:5-6). Paul uses soteriological terms such as 'Abraham's children' and 'children of God' in Romans 9:8 and 9:11 to spiritually define these believers.

As controversial and contentious as the issue of election may be, nothing can thwart God's predetermined plan to elect His own. Free will is not removed as those opposed to the doctrine of election suggest (Methodists, certain Baptists and Anglicans). According to this objection the doctrine of election denies all the gospel invitations that appeal to the will to choose. But voluntary choice is always present for it is not God's will that any be lost. Human responsibility and accountability is always assumed even though God has predetermined everything which will occur. Grudem (1994: 671) explains how Romans 9:20-24 makes it clear that salvation is God's work. No one has the right to impose any sense of human justice on the omnipotent right of God, even if the idea of election seems unfair. God's sovereignty in salvation is emphasized in Romans 9 and 10 so that God's purpose of election might continue.

The fact that Israel rejected the Messiah was part of the plan which transcended any human decision for or against Him. The harsh reality is made clear by the writer of ROMANS (2009:199; 201-207; Guthrie (1990:42); Carson (2001:452-453); Grudem 1994: 670-677) and Liroy (2006:95) that God is under no obligation to save any nation, or show mercy to everyone. The existence of the remnant underscores the fact that not all Jews are saved and is proof of God's right to predetermine His own.



## **2.4. PERSPECTIVES ON ROMANS CHAPTER 11:26 THE REMNANT OF ISRAEL**

The theme of the remnant which began in the Abrahamic covenant in the book of Genesis is ongoing and may be traced to Paul in the book of Romans. It is important to have an understanding of the image of 'seed' which often denotes human lineage or heritage and this is provided by Alexander (2000:772-773); Lioy (2006:81-90) and Ryken (1998:770-771). Abraham's seed refers to the many spiritual descendants of his unusual faith. In the New Testament, Paul creates a lucid argument against the law by pointing out that Abraham's descendants were heirs through the righteousness that comes by faith and not the law in Romans 4:13. The heirs to the promise are individuals who come to faith in Christ and are identified with Abraham. In view of the fact that Paul stipulates that those who are saved are individual Jewish and Gentile believers, predetermined by God, the statement made by the Apostle in Romans 11:26 that 'all Israel shall be saved' seems to contradict his prior teaching and needed clarification. In addition to which scholarly opinion is divided as to whether a literal or figurative interpretation should be applied to Paul's words?

### **2.4.1. A Literal Reading**

Although a study into the place of a literal, national redemption is out of the scope of this paper, it is nonetheless informative to briefly acknowledge scholarly opinion in this regard. In Genesis 15:5 Abraham is promised physical descendants or heirs, which he waited patiently for and lived to see (Heb 6:13-15). Paul also makes it clear that God will bring Israel back into the place of blessing and salvation because of His irrevocable covenant with Israel. God has not cast Israel away. The rejected Israel is not rejected at all. Here Boetner (1957:89-90) and Elliott (2000:724-725) confirm that the blinding of the people was only for a time so that God could institute a programme with the Gentiles.

Irons (2009:1-6) refers to the problem which arises however, when Romans 11:26 is taken out of context to conform to the views of those who favour a literal interpretation; instead of carefully affording to Paul an acknowledgement of his original purpose for writing and his original audience. In an attempt to justify an erroneous interpretation that the whole physical nation of Israel will be saved, the

main focus is on the interpretation of verse 26 as a literal, inclusive “all” meaning that after the culmination of the fullness of the Gentiles; all Israel literally, will be saved. ‘All Israel’ namely the whole ethnic nation of people are seen as a corporate solidarity. The theology of Dual Covenantalism accommodates this perspective and is based on the existence of two separate covenants (see 2.3.1.2. above). Every Jewish person who lives in the light of the Torah has a relationship with God and will come to redemption. The teaching is regarded to be blatantly heretical because under such a dispensation the Jews do not need to be saved, as they are automatically ensured salvation by virtue of their heritage and standing. The recipients of the promise, as literal descendants of Abraham are not called upon to have faith in Christ, according to Hagee (2007:144-152). MacArthur (2007:1544); Moo (1996: 1149); Pentecost (1975:187-188) and Waltke (2007:326-332) confirm that many Christians and most Jews do favour a literal, collective plan of salvation over an individual one - even though it deviates from the Scripture and negates the doctrine of salvation set down by Paul.

#### **2.4.2. A Spiritual Seed**

By contrast a figurative interpretation understands the promised salvation to refer to the spiritual remnant of believers only, chosen by grace. The promise is not to the natural descendants of Abraham. Not all of Abraham’s descendants are therefore all his children, in accordance with God’s gathering in of the chosen remnant (Ro 9:7). The identity of the remnant is affirmed by Paul in Romans 4:16 in reference to Abraham as the spiritual father of all who believe. As Guthrie (1975:77-78); Kaiser (2005:544) and ROMANS (2009:90-92) bears witness, when Paul establishes the link to the Abrahamic covenant he does so, importantly, to associate himself not only as an Israelite but as one counted with the remnant, the seed of Abraham (Ro 11:1-6). Paul contrasts the remnant elected by grace with the majority who have been hardened in judgment. In so doing, he effectively affirms the existence of the minority of Jews who believe and may be identified as the spiritual seed of Abraham. The statement he makes in Romans 11:26 that *all Israel shall be saved* must be seen in the context of the remnant to signify the all inclusiveness not of Israel, but of the elect Jews and Gentiles. The concept of the ‘seed’ or heirs of Abraham found in

Genesis 12:1-3 and restated in Genesis 26:24 has a direct link to the concept of the remnant in Romans 11:26.

Vine (1996:557-558) on the other hand, presents an argument against God's plan of salvation finding fulfilment through Abraham's natural heirs, based on the ancient text. Vine explains how Paul clarifies his teaching by referring to the genetic seed of Abraham as the simple 'his' seed but when he wants to expand the reference to include the true spiritual offspring of Abraham, he uses 'all' to embrace the seed as "the spiritual lineage coming from Abraham", meaning the remnant. This is because the children of the promise are reckoned for a 'seed' by analogy to the fact that all believers are the elect children of God by spiritual birth. The divine intent would have indicated the use of the plural 'children' if the motif had been to express physical descent.

Vine comments further, that the promise to Abraham and his descendants was not for their sake only, but it was intended ultimately to bring redemption to all who would believe. All those in Israel who trusted in God and kept the law, qualified for the many blessings of the covenant. 'All' therefore does not literally mean 'all of Israel' without exception. Rather, it signifies the total number of all those Jews who constitute the remnant who shall be saved and is unquestionably used in that context. Consequently "all Israel" only refers to the whole remnant of Israel and not a future (literal) national turning.

Paul's theology also includes Gentile believers. The promise is to both Jewish and Gentile seed as those 'still being saved' until the full number set according to God's plan, are brought in. Gentiles will share in the blessing according to Isaiah 45:23-24 that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Again in Romans 10:12-13 Paul is citing Joel 2:32 that there is no distinction between Jew and Greek who call on the name of the Lord for salvation. Importantly, it was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise but through the righteousness that comes by faith and which is free from the law for all those who are descended spiritually from Abraham as heirs to God's promise (Ro 4:13-18). Exegetical support is extensively available from Kaiser (2005:94-95, 1544); Guthrie (1975:77-78); Ladd

(1993:504) and Walvoord (1988:36-37) that what began with the Old Testament promise to Abraham of seed is pointing forward in a progressive covenantalism to the reality of the remnant as revealed by Paul in the New Testament. The seed of Abraham and the remnant may be biblically identified as one and the same spiritual group of people, heirs to an eternal legacy

## **2.5. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHURCH**

Paul indicates that God is not done with the people of Israel and will never reject them (Ro 11:11-32). Nor is the hardening of Jewish hearts to be construed as permanent or an act of final judgment (Ro 11:7-10). It was so that the Gentiles may be brought in. The privilege of such a position must not be forgotten by the church, nor should God's act of grace be something the church should ever forget nor become high thinking about themselves. Israel's future salvation is bound up in God's wisdom to use Israel's current unbelief to accomplish His plan of salvation of the Gentiles In view of which Moo (1970:1150-1151) advocates an aggressive determination to evangelize the Jewish nation.

The Missiologist Anderson however cautions against the Church being overly zealous as Christians have no special mission to the Jews. Nor should the Church lose sight of the possibility that the Jewish people may consider that they are being given something which they already have (1974). Although it may be a sensitive and controversial issue, Chester and Timmis (2007) remind the church that the Bible makes it clear that mission outreach starts with the Jews. They prioritise missionary outreach to Israel and refer to Isaiah the prophet and the great vision he had which included all nations as he realised that God had chosen Abraham and his descendants for the sake of all nations (Gen 12:03). Paul justified his ministry among the Gentiles by referring to Isaiah in Romans 9:27-33. This would indicate that not only did Isaiah's vision for the nations shape Paul's missionary endeavour, the prophet's cry for Israel should also be a challenge to the church to be pro-active in missionary enterprise to the Jews.

## 2.6. CONCLUSION

The review of literature will accomplish its purpose to gain an insight into scholarly opinion regarding God's salvation plan for Israel. The hypothesis in favour of the remnant may therefore biblically be upheld. God always entered into relationships with His people Israel through the biblical covenants recorded in the Old Testament. The inception of His plan to redeem Israel is traced back to the Abrahamic covenant where the promised blessing of heirs was recorded. The plan which God had set in motion to redeem Israel is to be accomplished through the promise of future offspring. Some scholars may advocate a strictly literal interpretation however, meaning that the promise is fulfilled through the natural descendants which Abraham lived to see.

It is noted that opinions differ as to whether the covenant manifests conditional or unconditional characteristics. Essentially the important difference to emerge is that a conditional covenant is binding on two parties, whereas an unconditional one is unilateral. The latter proves to be more appropriate as Abraham's behaviour in no way prejudiced God's future dealings with Israel. Essentially the important difference to emerge therefore is that a conditional covenant is bilateral with obligations on two parties, or unconditional and therefore unilateral. The latter applies to the Abraham covenant as Abraham's actions did not in any way affect the ultimate outcome of God's plan. The progressive unfolding of the promise of heirs became evident when Paul established the link to Abraham as an example of one who had faith in God.

An overview of commentary on Chapters 1 to 10 is to be conducted to establish Paul's teaching on personal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone. In emphasizing personal faith, Paul dismisses the teaching that the promise of heirs is fulfilled through the lineage of Abraham. Paul continues in Chapter 11 to show solicitude for Israel and to assure the people that God has not totally rejected them. God does have a plan of salvation for both Jews and Gentiles. According to this plan, a fixed number of each shall be saved. There is as always, a remnant of Jews who shall be elected by grace, unlike the majority who have been hardened for judgment.

Paul's statement in Romans 11:26 that all Israel shall be saved seems to contradict his previous teaching on individual faith, inviting robust debate. Although defence of a literal interpretation of the promise of heirs is presented, the context of Romans 11:26 would suggest that the promise to Abraham of seed is fulfilled through the election of all who complete the full number of those who should be saved, namely the remnant.

As far as the current review of literature is concerned, the results are positive. The evidence presented in favour of the existence of the remnant is conclusive. The link between the promise of offspring to Abraham in Genesis and the promise of a remnant in Romans becomes a reality. Scripture confirms scripture that the remnant constitutes the full number of the Jewish elect. What began in the Old Testament with Abraham is confirmed in the New Testament with Paul. The fact that God unfolds His revelation of Himself progressively is good news for all who believe - both Jew and Gentile. The promise of the Abrahamic covenant is fulfilled in the church age.

## CHAPTER 3

### TRACING THE OLD TESTAMENT ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

#### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

A common feature of all the covenants (from the Edenic to the Davidic) is the divine initiative of God breaking into history with the intent of entering into a special relationship with Israel. It is the Abrahamic covenant however which is foundational to any research into God's eschatological plan for both Israel and the nations of the world. As far as the salvation of Israel is concerned the theme of remnant is initiated in the Abrahamic Covenant. The promise of future spiritual seed was implicit in the universal blessing given to Abraham and extended beyond the Old Testament in eschatological significance. It is this universal promise of spiritual heirs to come through Abraham which is the primary focus of this chapter and which will form the basis for the research to follow into the remnant, flowing as it does out of the study into the Abrahamic Covenant. The significance of the Abrahamic Covenant for the nations of the world is also connected to the specific promise given to Abraham of universal blessing.

There are several subsidiary issues which need to be resolved. These matters are pertinent to the argument for a Jewish remnant originating in the Abrahamic covenant. Firstly, there are promises made to Abraham, identifiable as personal to him and to the nation of Israel. Abraham was promised innumerable natural descendants and a land in which the people of Israel would live as their inheritance. These promises of physical land, namely Canaan and natural descendants are taken to be understood literally and personally as a blessing fulfilled in Abraham's lifetime, and remain separate from the promise of future descendants.

Secondly, the nature of the covenant needs to be scrutinised. Scholars are divided as to whether or not there were stipulations placed upon Abraham that could influence God's pledge to redeem His people. The criterion for an unconditional covenant is God's prerogative to fulfil His Covenant irrespective of Abraham's obedience. Conversely the proponents of a conditional covenant base their

suppositions on Abraham's response which would suggest that human interference is powerful enough to influence the final outcome of any divine plan.

Thirdly, the fact that the covenant is not only restated in the book of Genesis but throughout the Old Testament indicates its significance for the people of Israel. By tracing the repeated references to the covenantal promises also indicates a future fulfilment, thereby establishing the all important link between the Old and the New Testaments. Paul in the book of Romans makes the connection back to Abraham as the father of all who believe and points ahead to the anticipated climax in God's new covenant in Jesus Christ. Fourthly and significantly, salvation is portrayed in the New Testament as a matter of personal faith in Christ. This means that as with Abraham, salvation is based on individual election and justification and not on national selection.

A successful outcome of research into the redemptive purposes both for Israel as a covenant people in special relationship with God and the world is seen to have its roots in the Abrahamic covenant. The establishment of a firm biblical foundation for the existence of the Jewish remnant based on the promise laid out in Genesis 12:1-3 is possible and therefore imperative. This means that it is hard to overstate the importance of this covenant as the cornerstone in biblical theology and the single most important event in the Old Testament. All subsequent revelation is the outworking of this covenant, resulting in the ongoing unfolding of God's plan of salvation for His people through the remnant. The promised blessing to the nations is the bridge to the ongoing unfolding of God's plan to redeem both Jew and Gentile alike.

### **3.2. THE OLD TESTAMENT ABRAHAMIC COVENANT**

At the outset it is important to place on record the contents of the Abrahamic Covenant and to bring the nature of the covenant under scrutiny. This is because scholars have raised concern as to whether or not Abraham's response to his election (foreknown to God) in any way influenced the outcome of the covenant.



There are four primary passages which form the Abrahamic covenant, Genesis 12, 15, 17 and 22. Genesis 12 is a pivotal statement of the covenant as it is God's first recorded speech to Abraham to make him a great nation, to bless him and to make his name great. The divine speech is stated in these words: <sup>1</sup> *The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.* <sup>2</sup> *"I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.* <sup>3</sup> *I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you"* (Gen 12:1-3) (NIV 2011).

When God breaks into history to make a covenant, He enters into an agreement to commit Himself to give what He promises as an act of grace. As Roberts (2002:108) and Waltke (2007:442-443) indicate, the covenant God initiated with Abraham was one of intended redemption for both Israel and the nations of the world. As such, this Covenant furnishes the key to an understanding of the entire Old Testament. It also provides the key to biblical eschatology because the programme of redemption reaches far into the New Testament for its fulfilment.

### **3.2.1. The call of Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3**

The call of Abraham is noted because of the pivotal role it played in the implementation of God's long term programme of redemption for Israel. God called Abraham who responded with faith and obedience (Heb 11:8-10). The grand plan of redemption initiated by God had its roots in the election of Abraham in the book of Genesis. The call of Abraham set the agenda for the entire covenant narrative and subsequent events. Abraham must have enjoyed a special relationship with God. He was referred to as a man of faith, the friend of God and the Father of all who believe. Abraham was summoned while still in his homeland of Ur and instructed to leave his family and country and go to a land God would show him (Walvoord 1999:139; Ladd 1993:607; Henry 1979:26-27). God established a covenant with Abraham (Abram) and set him apart for special service with the words, "*On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram*" (Gen 12:1-3). Abraham trusted God even though there were consequences. The significance of leaving his land lies in the fact that Abraham

would in essence be leaving his nation, his relatives and his father's house. According to Genesis 10, common ancestry was the basis of national identity. To be called to leave the land was paramount to renouncing his identification not only with his own family but with the nations who were in rebellion against God (Lioy 2006:90).

### **3.2.2. The Character of the Covenant**

It is important to seek clarification as to the nature of the Covenant because questions are raised as to whether or not Abraham was at liberty to influence the final outcome of God's supreme will. Although the issue of the nature of the covenant is addressed more fully with the assistance of scholarly perspectives in chapter Two above, it warrants a brief treatment here. Fruchtenbaum (1993:755) indicates that although opinion is divided as to whether or not there were any conditions attached to the covenant, scholars on both sides of the debate are able to substantiate their claim regarding Abraham's participation in the covenantal programme.

#### **3.2.2.1. Conditional Covenant**

If the basis for a conditional covenant is human behaviour, Abraham was either to obey or had already obeyed as an express condition of the promise. Edersheim (1995:232) argues that Abraham had to leave his homeland so that the promises could be implemented. It was therefore only when Abraham obeyed the command to leave his own country and go to a land that God would show him, did certain blessings accrue to him. Yet God did not define His actions based on Abraham's behaviour even though He knew what Abraham's response would be beforehand.

Edersheim further substantiates a conditional perspective by making reference to Genesis 22:15-18 where it states that all nations of the earth shall be blessed because of Abraham's obedience to God's voice. However Pentecost (1975:65) counters this by stating that although blessing was associated with obedience, blessing was not conditional upon Abraham's obedience. As he observes, none of the covenants were in fact ever contracted between two parties of equal power and authority, with equal rights and interests. Rather, it is an undisputable fact that the

covenants were not negotiable between parties who were in fact unequal, with no time limit and no conditions agreed upon by both parties.

### **3.2.2.2. Unconditional Covenant**

Wiersbe (2007:58, 100-101) further disagrees with a conditional interpretation by indicating that if obedience were a factor, the inference would be that God's mercy is always withheld because of disobedience. But this is not the case - God's promises are not dependent on human faithfulness. Clearly there were times in Abraham's life when he was not obedient and yet God did not withdraw the promise of the covenant. Scripture itself presents the best defence for an unconditional covenant. Nowhere are conditions recorded in the formal establishment of the covenant in Genesis 15:7-21. Instead, when Abraham was obedient God reiterated the promise and added further details, but never was the promise made contingent upon later obedience.

Nonetheless, it cannot be overlooked that there was an element of accountability. Individually and collectively the Israelites would qualify for personal blessings through obedience. Israel as the participant in the covenant was blessed in the land when they obeyed. When they were disobedient, they were removed and taken away into captivity. But in the case of the specific covenants God entered into with Israel, nothing could or would deter Him from accomplishing that which He pleased (Wiersbe 2007: 100-101; Kaiser 1978:3-7).

A balanced view is presented by Goldingay (1980:16); Essex (2008:01-02) and Bruce (1968:79-80) and one which is scriptural. The ultimate fulfilment of the covenant with Abraham was never in jeopardy as the promises of God remain unconditional upon human merit although there may be an element of accountability on the part of the participants. His commitment to accomplish His plan for the salvation of Israel was seen to be irreversible. This does not indicate that an unconditional covenant has no human contingencies. God took all these factors into consideration when He made the covenant which was irrevocable once ratified. This once again highlights God's independence to act irrespective of the shortcomings or

human characteristics portrayed by Abraham. Nor could Abraham place any stipulations upon God before he acted in faith and obedience to God's command.

It remains God's prerogative to choose Abraham and all who come to faith in Him. The fact of God's right to do so remains foundational for any theological understanding of the biblical covenants and God's predetermined course of action. What was done could not be undone by anyone's subsequent actions. It must not be overlooked that God always entered into His covenants from the standpoint of His own authority without attention being paid to any human stipulations or response (Edersheim 1995:50-51; Pawson 2009:81).

### **3.3. PROMISES TO ABRAHAM IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS.**

When God made His covenant with Abraham, He did not give Abraham reasons or explanations; rather as the recipient of the covenant, Abraham received promises. In this regard Essex (1999:194) attests to the significance of promises upon which the whole purpose of God's predetermined redemptive plan to bless and to save is based. God made His intentions clear through the promises stated in Genesis 12:1-3 just how He planned to bless and to save mankind through Abraham. These promises need to be clearly defined so that there is no doubt as to which promises apply personally and contextually to both Abraham and the nation of Israel, and which must be understood universally and eschatologically.

Here Ryken (1998: 177); Childs (1979:151) and Kaiser (1978:100) attempt to dispel any uncertainty as to which promises were made and to whom. In commentary on Genesis 12:1-3, they clearly categorize personal blessings to Abraham and to his descendants, as consisting of the basic strands of land and seed. What is important to note from their findings is that the promise of land and descendants in this instance must be understood as literal and contemporary to Abraham and the nation at that time in their history. This is highly significant because it is an attempt to counter opposing views by those (see 3.3.1. below) who particularly define the promise of land as an ongoing physical inheritance for all generations of Israel.

Essentially the promises God made with Abraham and his descendants are the means by which He will restore broken humanity to Himself. The key to understanding the covenantal agenda resides in the realisation that the promises are more than blessings; they declare God's intention to deal with the effects of sin. In this way, the promises made to Abraham and his offspring function as a prelude to the distant future and the culmination of the divine purpose (Gen 49:1). The promise of blessing to all other nations has a spiritual connotation in line with God's plan to include believing Jewish and Gentile individuals in His Church as substantiated by Wenham (2006:249-250) and Goldingay (1980:11-12).

### **3.3.1. Personal blessing of Physical Land (Gen 12:2)**

Although the land promise is given in Genesis 12:1-7, specific reference to land allocated to Abraham is found in Genesis 13:15-17, that 'all the land you see will be given to you and to your seed forever'. God instructed him to go and walk through the length and breadth of the land being given to him. The fact that Abraham was exhorted to survey the land in all directions indicates that it is a literal, geographic piece of real estate promised as an everlasting possession. The boundaries to this land were set down in Genesis 15:18-20 and were vast from the Nile River to the Euphrates River (Gen 13:15-16) (Pieters 1950:19-20; Turner 2004:01-02; Edersheim 1995:51-52).

It may appear to be self evident - that the land referred to was a physical property - however Walvoord (1959:195) and Guthrie (1959:195) see a danger in biblical interpretation that Christians tend to ignore, namely that the Old Testament ideals of a literal land of Israel cannot be transferred to a nonterritorial and international people of God. In other words, there is a misconception that the spiritual seed of Abraham (Gal 3:29), namely the church, fulfils the promise to Abraham of natural seed, whereas the promise was restricted to Abraham and his natural seed, only through Isaac and Jacob. As Israel remains a biblical fact and exists as a historical reality, the promise of land is not fulfilled in the church as the land is never promised to the church or Gentiles, but to Israel alone. The land promise must therefore be

discerned as a national, literal promise to the physical descendants of Abraham as an everlasting possession (Gen 12:7).

In reference to the guarantee in Genesis 12:7 that Abraham's offspring will possess the land, Pentecost (1975:94) and Ryrie (1999:528) also add their weight in support of a literal fulfilment of the land, the present occupation of the land of Israel being indicative of the partial fulfilment of God's intention to ultimately and permanently give the people the land. For Kaiser (1978:124-125) it is the many Old Testament references by the prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, to the promise of future restoration to Abraham and his descendants which confirm the Lord's gift of the land of Israel. In restoring His people, God will keep His ancient promise to Abraham that his descendants would be a nation. This would be proof that He has not rejected His people. The promise of deliverance from captivity spoken of by Jeremiah in chapter 30 provides comfort for the generations to come. The prophet forecasts the restoration of the nation to their own land as a final re-gathering of the people, never again to be removed.

McConville (200:696-697) fuels the debate on the land issue further. Although he acknowledges the numerous repetitions throughout the Old Testament to 'an unending covenant', he meaningfully discredits a literal reading of the promise in Jeremiah 30:3 that the Lord would bring the people back to the land He gave to their forefathers to possess it. This is because it does not refer to the land of the present country of Israel. It was rather a promise made to the children of Abraham as spiritual descendants and not as children of the flesh. The children of Abraham are not children of the flesh, and as natural and ancestral Jews they have nothing to do with the identity of "the Israel of God" today (Gal 6:16). According to McConville If the kingdom foreseen in Jeremiah 33 is the new covenant, interpreted by the New Testament, then although the terms may be taken from the Abrahamic covenant it must be seen merely as a vehicle for the essential assurance that God would, in the end be faithful to his promises, aimed originally at the salvation of the whole world (Gen 12:3).

However, Jeremiah 33 does suggest that the prophet is confirming the promise of the restoration of the Jews to their land. If the message in Jeremiah 33 is meant to be one of comfort for the generations to come of a joyful restoration, cognizance must be taken of the original context and audience to whom the message is addressed. In view of the fact that there always will be an Israel, the ultimate literal restoration of God's people cannot be overlooked and dismissed out of hand. What is important to remember as Henry (2008:990) and Pawson (2007:584-585) point out is that Jeremiah Chapter 31's prediction of a new covenant deals with individuals and not nations which leaves room for God to act according to His pledge to the nation of Israel. It also cannot be denied that Paul makes the point in Romans 11:1-2 that God has not rejected His people nor cast them away. Nowhere in the New Testament does it indicate that Israel has been disinherited from her land.

### **3.3.2. Personal blessing of Natural Seed (Gen 12:2b)**

Not only was Abraham personally promised land and a good name, prosperity, abundant livestock and victory in battle (promised in Genesis 14:1-24) he was also assured that a great nation would be formed out of him. To be the father of a multitude was the great reward God promised Abraham. The Lord gave the promise to him of numerous natural descendants, a people coming from a common ancestry inhabiting a particular land and comprising a great nation (Gen 10:5-20; 31-32).

In tracing the outworking and fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant it is necessary at this point to distinguish between the recipients of the promises. Differentiating between natural seed as the physical descendants of Abraham and spiritual seed is important so that the issue is settled as to Abraham's natural offspring being referred in verse 12:2b and not the spiritual progenitors to the promise (see 3.5.1). As the 'seed' image often denotes human lineage or heritage, it suggests that reference is made to his natural heirs who would be more numerous than the stars in the heavens (Gen 15:4-5; 13:15-16; 17:4-6) and as the dust of the earth. Therefore in this particular context, these descendants must be defined as his natural seed or heirs who would together with Abraham; enjoy a special covenantal relationship with God and live in the land of Canaan. This is in line with the establishment of the

covenant in the change of his name from Abram to Abraham as Arnold (2003:204-205) and Ryken (1998:770-771) point out.

### **3.3.3. Personal blessing of a great name (Genesis 12:2c)**

Abraham was assured of a great name, exalted status and authority and divine blessing would rest solely upon him. When God took him from his own people he would become the head of another country which he would be given. Other nations and kings would also come from the line of Abraham (Gen 17:6). Following on from renouncing his national identity, Abraham was promised to be made the father of a great nation. There is a profound meaning to the promise given Abraham to be the father of a great nation. This is due to the fact that fulfilment of this promise is not through Abraham as the biological father of many nations – rather Abraham is the source of blessing to those who are not his physical but his spiritual descendants. Such a finding provides the link to the New Testament concept of believers as Abraham's heirs and which corresponds with the findings referred to in 3.3.1.above.

To Alexander (2000:769-770) and Goldingay (1980:13-14), there is the additional, special circumstance which exists in which God shows His ongoing favour upon Abraham. Even today the patriarch's good name and reputation is preserved without tarnish. God's regard for Abraham is evident in the principle that those who bless Abraham are in turn blessed and likewise, those who treat him with contempt or lack of respect are cursed.

### **3.3.4. Universal blessing of Spiritual Seed**

Although the gift of land and literal offspring is acknowledged as an integral part of the Abrahamic covenant, it is not the main focus of research. Rather as Edersheim (1995:51); Fruchtenbaum (1993:698-699) and Goldingay (1980:15) observe - it is the universal promise that through Abraham and his descendants, all the families of the earth will be blessed (Gen 12:3; 18:18 and 22:18). The universal promise relates to all the Gentiles, who like Abraham, (and the Jewish remnant) are justified through faith in the Messiah, "The Seed". The universal promise is dealt with more fully under



3.4. below, in preparation for a more extensive exegesis of the Abrahamic covenant in the New Testament which follows.

### **3.3.5. Genesis 12:4-7 land promise reiterated**

The promises are developed each time they are repeated, making them more detailed and specific. Harman (2000:36-37) and Wenham (2006:249-250) refer, for instance to 'a land' in Genesis 11:1, which becomes 'this land' in Genesis 12:7 and 'all the land' in Genesis 13:15. In Genesis 12:4-7 the land promise was reiterated and further revelation given of both the land and seed with the words, *to your seed will I give this land*. In Genesis 13:14-17 Abraham is exhorted to survey the land in all directions; the dimensions being recorded in Genesis 15:18-20. Abraham's obedience is portrayed in verses 4-6 that he travelled through the land of Canaan as instructed. It was here that the nation of Abraham's physical descendants would live. The theme of 'the land' continues to be one of major concern because of the conviction that the inheritance of Abraham's descendants only relates directly to the present state of Israel (see 3.3.1.) It needs to be considered that God was dealing with Abraham, not in a private promise of land but rather towards the future dwelling place for all mankind. The emphasis must be correctly placed once again on the promise of land in figurative terms to express God's kingdom amidst all the nations of the world if allowance is to be made for the future.

### **3.3.6. Genesis 15:1-21 - land and seed promise restated**

The ongoing relevance of the covenant is indicative in the many repetitions of the main aspects to it of land and seed. Although God in Genesis 12:2-3 and 13:14-17 gave some of the promises, the covenant was not formally established and ratified until Genesis 15:7-21 (also clearly stated in Genesis 18:18 and 46:3). The making of the covenant with Abraham is recounted with the words in verse 18, *on that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, "to your descendants I will give this land"*.

The land specifically identified in verses 18 to 21 is intimately linked with Abraham's many descendants. But the uncertainty of the covenant being fulfilled was

nonetheless present. As Alexander (2000:367-369) and Lee (2004) point out, Abraham was childless (Gen 13:16) and it did not seem possible that he could then head up the great nation promised in Genesis 12:2. Although childless, Abraham is assured that he will have a natural heir and is comforted to know that his seed will be more numerous than the stars in the heavens. Interestingly in Romans 4:18 the same promise of innumerable descendants (Gen 12:5) is used by Paul to indicate that against all hope, Abraham believed and so became the father of many nations. Further elucidation of the covenant is found in Genesis 22 (and Gen 18) and is the Lord's final verbal communication to Abraham.

It is Edersheim (1995:63-64) who highlights the significance of the oath ceremony recorded in Genesis 15:9-21 to further place the Abrahamic covenant beyond dispute. The sign of an ancient covenant involved the cutting in half of animals so that the pledging parties could walk between them affirming that the same should happen to them if they broke the covenant. In this instance, Abraham was put to sleep so that he could not walk through the carcasses as an equal party to the covenant. As it was, only God passed through the pieces as a pledge, which indicates strongly that it is always God who engineers the covenantal terms. No equality ever exists between the parties, not even with Abraham. If that is the case, the unconditional nature of the covenant is again endorsed.

### **3.3.7. Genesis 17:1-8 promises repeated, sign of circumcision instituted**

Assurance is once again given to Abraham regarding his position as the head of a great dynasty and the Covenant revealed to be an everlasting one. At ninety nine years old, the Lord spoke again to him about the covenant and he received the changed name from Abram ("father of high places") to Abraham ("father of a multitude"). Importantly the Lord commanded Abraham to circumcise every male of his household as a sign of the covenant. It was a personal sign and not one to be shown to people in general. Appropriately the sign is found in the body of those individuals with whom it deals, namely Abraham and his natural descendants. An interesting comparison is drawn that whereas the sign of the Abrahamic covenant is a personal one, the sign of the Noahic covenant, the rainbow, was made universally

with mankind. Looking ahead, the New Testament teaching will reveal how important it is to have a personal seal. It is not the seal of circumcision but rather the seal of the heart, namely the Holy Spirit given individually. The ceremony recorded in Genesis 15:7-21 together with the sign given in Genesis 17:1-21 finalized the Abrahamic covenant (see commentary by Henry (2008:33); Liroy (2006:91); McComiskey (1985:146-150); Waltke (2007:320) and Wenham (1970:72-75).

### **3.3.8. Genesis 28 and Genesis 35 promises reconfirmed**

Now both Pawson (2009: 76-77) and Roberts (2002:52-54) enlarge on the revelation which was reconfirmed in Genesis 28:13-14. *“I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring”*. The same promise God gave to Abraham and confirmed to Isaac of heirs was renewed to Jacob once again in Genesis 35:9-12.

## **3.4. THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT IN THE REST OF THE OLD TESTAMENT**

The Abrahamic covenant was not only stated and enforced in the book of Genesis, but the theme of covenant continues throughout the rest of the Old Testament. The importance of continuing to trace the Abrahamic covenant is to place on record how God through repetition reinforces and reminds the people of His commitment to Abraham and Israel. The evidence of this is seen in the fact that despite the long history of disobedience and frequent discipline, Israel as a nation would always survive on the basis of the Abrahamic covenant.

### **3.4.1. Exodus through Deuteronomy**

The Abrahamic covenant was still in effect and continuously restated after the death of Abraham and the people were committed to God according to the terms of the Mosaic covenant given at Mount Sinai. Straightforward repetition occurs in these Books to stress two important factors relating to the covenant. Firstly, God will never

forget or renege on His covenant with Israel. Secondly, there is a parallel response expected from the people to live lives worthy of the covenantal God.

#### **3.4.1.1. The Book of Exodus**

Exposition of the book of Exodus by commentators such as Kaiser (1987:83-95) and Alexander (2000:98-99) helps to clarify God's ongoing dealings with the nation of Israel in the early years of their history, from the exodus from Egypt, the wilderness experience and entry into the land of Canaan. The recurring theme to emerge in Exodus is that God remembered His covenant with Abraham and was true to the promises He made. Several generations after Joseph, when the people of Israel were enslaved in Egypt, Moses was told by God that He remembered His covenant with Abraham and was committed to the people in terms of that covenant (Ex 2:24).

The Abrahamic covenant is again reaffirmed to Moses in Exodus 6:2-8 with the words, "*I am the Lord, I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty*" (v2). It is through their deliverance from Egypt that the Israelites know that the Lord is their God and they are His people. Once again the message is clear, that not only were the people delivered from bondage and oppression in Egypt in accordance with the Abrahamic covenant, they would also inherit the land of Canaan, promised to Abraham and his descendants. The fact that God was the faithful Covenant maker comes through in Exodus 20.

Running parallel to the story line is, as suggested by Waltke (2007:390-391), the all important legislation set down by God concerning godly living. Alongside the declaration from God was the call to the nation to turn back to God so that they would be blessed in the land of Canaan and delivered from captivity. The people of Israel were the beneficiaries to the Covenant, and must therefore be single minded in their devotion to God, for His deliverance. Israel's physical and spiritual deliverance go hand in hand.

#### **3.4.1.2. The Book of Leviticus**

God spoke to Moses to remind him of His promises to the patriarchs, namely the gift of the land of Canaan, willed to the people by divine decree. Leviticus chapter 11:45

also stresses the command to be holy because God is holy. It must not therefore be ignored that the laws given here were given with the purpose of helping the Israelites worship and live as God's dedicated people. When the Abrahamic covenant features in Leviticus 26:42, God clearly again indicates that He will remember His covenant together with the land promised to the people. Gracious promises are given when the people return to God with remorse, repentance and godly sorrow, emphasizing God's expected response to His covenant. The submission called for here is seen as a foreshadowing of the call placed upon all who would come to Christ in faith and submission to the justice of God in all His deeds. Henry (2008:140) and Wright (1970:156-157) affirm a Christian perspective in the restoration reflected in this passage because of God's faithfulness to His own Covenant. Just as God fulfilled his promises to Israel in the past, He will do so again in the future as He remembers His covenant with Abraham.

#### **3.4.1.3. The Book of Deuteronomy**

The book of Deuteronomy is acknowledged by Achtemeier (1900:10-11) to be one of repetition of both the history and the law contained in the foregoing books. God again patiently repeated through Moses His message to the people of Israel that the reason He acts against them is because of corrupt and idolatrous living (4:25-31). Yet Moses is able to reassure the people that despite their sinfulness, God would not forget the covenant He had made with Abraham.

The land aspect of the Covenant is expanded upon in Deuteronomy 30:1-10 and this second repeat of the law is restated with additions for living a godly life in the land of Canaan. The same message is clear that upon repentance and return to God the people would be blessed. Throughout when the greatness of God is stressed it is not as an object of fear and terror but as a source of blessing and comfort and for their own good. The two interwoven strands are evident of God's faithfulness coupled with blessing through obedience, which is exactly how Von Rad (1966:182-183) deals with this pericope. He stresses how the people were instructed to choose life, love and obedience to God; so that they may dwell in the land the Lord has given to their fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses was addressing the very same people,

the descendants of Abraham who would depart from God, as predicted and be scattered from the land of Canaan and who would be given the chance to return to Him later. Yet he was able to assure them that God would not fail them because of the Abrahamic covenant which He swore to their fathers.

### **3.4.2. First Chronicles and Nehemiah 9:7-8**

It is recorded in 1 Chronicles 16:15-18 that David believed that the Abrahamic covenant was still in effect. David exhorted the Jews to be mindful of God's covenant so that they may know that the covenant was still active. God is spoken of as the One who chose Abram and 'God's friend' in 2 Chronicles 20:7, the One who made a covenant with Abraham to give him and his seed the land. The perspective of the Chronicler is to convince the people that the expected salvation has been realised already and they must be open to the Law of God. Alexander (2000:370) and Williamson (1970:438) make mention of the fact that the link to Jesus Christ as the 'Restorer' is portrayed in Nehemiah and the covenant further reaffirmed in Nehemiah chapter 9:7-8. The same message is consistently relayed that it is the Lord God who chose Abraham and called him out of Ur of the Chaldeans. Nehemiah speaks in reference to the covenant entered into in Genesis 12:1-3 and the promises given to his descendants. It was because of Abraham's faithfulness that the covenant was made with him.

### **3.4.3. Psalms 105 and 106**

The Psalmist wanted to remind his readers that the Abrahamic covenant lies behind all that God, the creator of all things did for Israel in the past. In Psalm 105 the Lord is praised for His loyalty and His covenant with Abraham (vv1-10). The Covenant is also the very foundation for Israel's hope for what He will do in the future in relationship with them. God remembered His covenant as an everlasting one for a thousand generations, a long time which would encompass the remainder of human history. Goldingay (2008:214-215) and Motyer (2000:554) clarify the far reaching implications of the oath God swore to Abraham (vv8-9) as follows - racially, Abraham is the father of all Jews; spiritually he is the father of both believing Jews and

Gentiles, the spiritual descendants of Abraham being referred to by Paul in Romans 4:11-12.

Writing on the Old Testament, Wiersbe (2007:989-992) indicates that despite Israel's rebelliousness, in Psalm 106 the Psalmist calls upon the Lord to deliver him and the nation to the land; to bring prosperity in accordance with the Abrahamic covenant (Ps 106:45). The promise guaranteed by the covenant was a binding declaration of the Lord's intention to do something for Abraham and his seed, irrespective of the behaviour or acceptance of the people, once again highlighting a covenant not based on conditions.

#### **3.4.4. Isaiah 53: 1-12 and Isaiah 55:3**

It is in the Isaiah 53 pericope that the prophet deals with his own personal pardon from sin. Christ, as the sinless, silent sufferer came to die for each person who would come to faith in Him, repent of their sins and be justified as Abraham was. It is only they which are of faith, who are the children of Abraham. This would suggest that the prophet is keen to teach that salvation is an individual matter of choice and not one of national selection. If Christ died as the suffering substitute for the sins of the world, the way is open for individual redemption through the blood of the Saviour. The eschatological significance is evident, as borne out by Ladd (1993:188-189) and Brueggemann (2003:175). Isaiah makes the promise (42:5-7) that one day there would be a better sacrifice to deal with sin, namely the suffering servant, Jesus Christ.

Webb (2000:210-212) and Schultz (2006:341-342) observe how the expectation of the Messiah is set forth and the coming spiritual deliverance through Him is announced. For now, He would restore Israel as a covenant people, who were in fact anticipating the coming of a physical king. The prophet's teaching is therefore very relevant in that he not only deals with events during his lifetime, but is also concerned with the future. Isaiah's message serves to enhance the progressive covenantalism flowing as it does out of the Old Testament Abrahamic covenant into the new covenant in Christ. The New Testament finds in many of these passages in Isaiah, fulfilment of the prophecies about the Messiah, especially His suffering. The

essential expression of the Abrahamic covenant in the New Testament is that the same God of Abraham will also be the God of all who believe on Him.

### **3.5. THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

Although the Abrahamic covenant is confirmed throughout the Old Testament, it does not mean that it finds total resolution in the time of Abraham, as already referred to. To reiterate, only promises relative to him personally were fulfilled in his time. Abraham received blessings in prosperity and many descendants. The people of Israel were also blessed as a nation, living in the land of Canaan which God had promised to give them.

Consequently, as Henry (2008:27) and Ladd (1952:78) acknowledge, any research into a biblical perspective regarding the existence of the Jewish remnant is incomplete if the Abrahamic covenant is only dealt with as a declaration of Abraham's assets. With the main agenda in mind to sustain a perspective in support of the remnant coming out of Abraham, an in depth exegesis of Romans chapters 9 to 11 is scheduled. Paul treats Abraham as an example of righteousness and thereby provides the link back to Genesis. God's atoning sacrifice is no different for any Gentile or Jew who trusts in Christ alone for their salvation. As God's eschatological purpose through the Abrahamic covenant was only finally completed in the new covenant, it is important to grasp its salvic implications. Christians as the seed of Abraham are entitled to the same inheritance of blessing and salvation as promised to Abraham. The patriarch is the father of not only physical ancestors, but also of the wider family of those who like him, enjoy faith in Christ.

The Genesis statement (12:1-3) therefore (Alexander 2000:772) looks forward in hope and paves the way to the climax in the blessing to all the families of the earth through Abraham. The New Testament does the same by pointing out that Jesus Christ; Abraham's Seed (the genealogy of Jesus Christ as the son of David, the son of Abraham is confirmed in Matthew 1:1) will make possible the final fulfilment of that covenant in the future. Examples are found in John 1:11 and Luke 23:18 where the statement of Isaiah 53:3 is reiterated that Christ came to His own but they rejected Him, opening the way for the inclusion of Gentiles into God's kingdom. Reference is



made consistently to the blessing of Abraham coming on Gentiles through Jesus Christ, so that those who believe may receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. John 12:38 and Galatians 3:13-14 also make reference to Christ's death by drawing on the words and phrases of the passage in Isaiah 53. In Matthew 22:32 Christ infers from the fact that God is called the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that those patriarchs are in possession of eternal life.

The covenant is therefore repeatedly stressed in the Old Testament for good reason. Clear reference is made to the work of Christ in the Old Testament which lays the foundation for the coming of the Messiah, the Saviour of the World. There is accordingly a theological unity between the Old and the New Testaments and the progressive unfolding of the eternal Covenant is endorsed by Eichrodt (1961:1:517); Lioy (2006:81-102) and Guthrie (1990:249). The Abrahamic Covenant may therefore be defined for good reason as the precursor to the New Covenant God made in Christ.

### **3.5.1. Literal versus Spiritual Seed of Abraham**

Differentiating between the natural offspring of Abraham and his figurative or spiritual heirs is important if a biblical argument for the reality of a Jewish remnant, made up of individual believers is to be sustained. As the New Testament builds on what has already transpired in the Old Testament, it is possible to cross reference between them so that God's unfolding eschatological plan becomes apparent through a right understanding of the text. Edersheim (1995:54-57) for instance, highlights how references to the "seed of Abraham" in Scripture reveal that the expression is used in three distinct senses. First, there is the natural use, referring to the physical descendants of Abraham, narrowing it down specifically to Isaac and Jacob and the twelve tribes of Israel. Second, the expression "the seed of Abraham" is used in special reference to the spiritual lineage coming from Abraham, that is, those in Israel who trusted in God, who kept the law, and qualified for many of the blessings of the covenant. Thirdly, the spiritual seed is Gentiles who inherit the promised blessing through Abraham (Gen 12:3) which extends to all the families of the earth. The distinction between natural Israel and spiritual Israel is revealed in such major

passages as Romans chapters 9 and 10 (with special reference to Romans 9:6-8) as a subsidiary exposition of these chapters will show.

### **3.5.2. Spiritual Seed of Abraham as the Remnant of Israel**

Following on from a more general study into the literal/spiritual heirs of Abraham, it is necessary to investigate the spiritual seed as the Jewish remnant specifically. Throughout this Chapter reference is made to the spiritual connotation to the promise of heirs. Abraham is found to be in a right standing with God, justified through his personal faith in God. If a case is to be made for the existence of a remnant of Jewish believers is to be sustained, it requires a thorough research of the New Testament perspective on God's plan of salvation for all who come to Christ in faith. Grieb (2002:110) draws attention to the significance of Christ's death in God's plan. Yet it is more than that, as the important rhetoric of righteousness in chapter 3:21-26 reveals. Christ's death is the definitive eschatological revelation of the saving righteousness of God, which calls for a response. This is because all humanity, including Israel, stands in need of salvation. There is however, also the responsibility on the part of individuals to believe in Christ and embrace the gospel message of faith in the Messiah. To keep the law, circumcision or good works can never be the vehicle of salvation for anyone.

An in depth exegesis is planned of Paul's controversial statement in Romans 11:28 that 'all Israel shall be saved'. It is here that Christians and scholars alike differ. Opinion is divided as to whether or not it is a literal 'all' Paul has in mind or in reference only to those elect Jews - all of whom, together with the chosen Gentiles shall be saved. Once again, interpretative opinions are gleaned from ROMANS (2009:204-205); Wiersbe (2007:69) and Wenham (2006:251).

### **3.6. CONCLUSION**

The thesis research into the Jewish remnant is based on the promise of future heirs given to Abraham. To justify the Abrahamic covenant (recorded in Genesis 12:1-3) as a foundational document for research into the remnant, the promises contained therein need to be understood and defined correctly and this is the main aim of the

chapter. Subsidiary investigations revolve around the character of the covenant and the promises given to Abraham which were literal and personal to him. The repetition of the covenant in the whole of the Old Testament is also noted, together with the link established to the New Testament where Abraham is affirmed and used as an example of a man justified by faith in Christ.

To enforce God's position as sole initiator of the covenant with Abraham, the character of the covenant is to be defined as totally unconditional or allowances made for the conditions which saw Abraham's behaviour as having an impact on the covenant. To highlight the importance of the covenant to the Israelites, the Covenant is continually restated in the entire Old Testament. However, bearing in mind, the future dimension to the promise of spiritual descendants, the importance is also manifest in the promises which were personal to Abraham were partially fulfilled in his lifetime. These include the assurance of a good name and reputation, that he would prosper both in battle and in his possessions and that he would be a blessing to others. Abraham enjoyed many descendants who occupied the land as an inheritance from God. The land was a material one and given as an everlasting possession to the people of Israel. Extended dimensions were given in detail in Genesis 15:18-21 to define the boundaries of the land, around which Abraham was instructed to walk.

The national blessing to Abraham meant that he shall be the father of a great nation and other nations shall come forth from him, even kings (Gen 17:6). To be the head of a great dynasty Abraham was promised both land and heirs in a literal fulfilment of personal and national blessing. Despite scholarly differences in this regard, the land must be understood to exist physically and be restricted to Abraham and his natural seed, and cannot be spiritualised to mean the Gentiles or the church. It was a promise to the nation Israel as Abraham's natural seed, dwelling in the land of Canaan.

A subsidiary investigation into the conditional or unconditional character of the covenant reveals that the outworking of God's covenant was a covenant free from contractual conditions for its accomplishment. This ensures that no credit may be

given to Abraham for the final fulfilment of the promises. Although Abraham responded to the call upon his life, and the covenant was honoured because of Abraham's obedience, God based the covenant on Himself alone. Although no human conditions exist, the faithful obedience of man is recognised in determining who participants in the covenant and the timing of its completion. Although debate was strenuous as to the character of the covenant, the consensus of opinion was that the covenant was unconditional as otherwise it would be subject to human behaviour instead of the grace of God.

The ongoing relevance of the covenant is observed when it is traced throughout the Old Testament and fully endorsed and enhanced with each repetition. The seriousness with which the Prophets viewed God's message to the people of Israel cannot be overstated. In essence each restatement affirms that God remembers His covenant which He made with Israel. In addition to which, the people are instructed to obey God's law at all times so that they reap the full blessing promised to them.

There is a future connotation to the promise given to Abraham of spiritual heirs. To investigate the spiritual heirs of Abraham more fully the link is first made between the Abrahamic covenant and the New Testament teaching on the doctrine of salvation. This is due to the fact that Paul's teaching in the book of Romans stresses that salvation is only possible through individual faith in Christ; the Messiah. By citing Abraham as an example of one justified through faith, Paul does two things - he affirms the scriptural view that to be saved involves a personal encounter with Christ and he dispels any notion of national favouritism which may supersede the command for personal commitment to Christ. Paul therefore endorses the existence of the Jewish remnant. Paul also builds on the message contained in Isaiah. Isaiah 53 is highly significant as the prophet foretells the coming of the Messiah, not as a physical king, but the Redeemer, the One who alone can save.

As far as other nations are concerned, Abraham was given a universal promise that through him all Gentiles shall be blessed. The universal blessing to Abraham is applicable only to those Gentiles, who like Abraham, and the chosen remnant are justified by faith. The outcome portrayed here is that God justifies believing Gentiles

so that they, along with Abraham and the chosen remnant complete God's plan of salvation for the world. It is in this context that they as righteous Gentiles ultimately are identified as the spiritual seed of Abraham as not every individual is promised blessing in Abraham.

Whereas the land promise is restricted to Abraham and his physical seed, the spiritual seed constitutes an eternal and not a literal people. It is this promise which is the capstone of God's entire programme to redeem Israel and the nations. The issue of literal heirs versus figurative heirs evokes debate as a contentious matter due to the implication that not all the promises are to the physical seed of Abraham. The Seed of Abraham is the Messiah Himself, of the genealogy of Abraham and David, and who has become the blessing to all the nations, through salvation and the revelation of God.

It is clear that the importance of this covenant lies in the far reaching eschatological plan God initiated not only for the Jews but for the Gentiles as well. It is acknowledged that the promise central to the Abrahamic covenant is spiritually fulfilled in the New Testament when individual Jews and Gentiles who like Abraham, are reconciled to God through faith in Christ as Messiah. It is therefore feasible to base an argument in favour of the elected Jews as the remnant, using the Abrahamic covenant as a foundational document. The spiritual descendants of Abraham constitute the remnant and represent all of Israel who shall be saved.

## CHAPTER 4

### OVERVIEW OF ROMANS CHAPTERS 1 to 10

#### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

God's plan to redeem Israel is evident in the existence of the remnant of believers. Research into the Jewish remnant began with the Old Testament Abrahamic covenant where the promise of heirs in the context of spiritual offspring was established. The matter is finally resolved in Romans chapter 11 where Paul, God's divinely appointed apostle, delivers a strong and specific message, identifying all of those Israelites who shall be saved.

Before that, however, chapters 1 to 10 need to be considered as these chapters provide a necessary bridge between the Abrahamic covenant and the conclusion to the matter in the chapter to come. This is because it is here that Paul sets out with great emphasis, his doctrine of salvation. Paul is intent on showing how salvation is a personal matter of faith and has nothing to do with any kind of national preference. Even the remnant will be seen to consist of individuals who have come to faith in the Messiah on a personal basis. He accordingly instructs both Jew and Gentile on the only means by which anyone – Paul uses Abraham as an example - can be saved by faith in the Lord and made righteous before God. Salvation comes down to individual justification by faith in Jesus Christ alone. Research into the remnant chosen by God is therefore further advanced when understood against the background of the rich doctrinal teaching in chapters 1 to 10.

The continuity of Paul's message in this pericope lends itself to a chronological study of each chapter. The recurring theme throughout these chapters is the message that righteousness comes only through justification by faith in the Lord. Chapter 1:16 reveals the clear intent of the book, is to make the most comprehensive statement of the gospel of salvation to all who believe, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Paul

develops the theme that all people are sinners and therefore need God's salvation, only possible through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is important for Paul to let his readers know that salvation is only available by faith and complete obedience to Him and not by any other means.

In chapter 1, Paul reveals the problem of God's wrath at unrighteousness and provides the only solution. He expounds his principal doctrine of salvation through justification which is attained through personal faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Chapters 1 to 4 in fact reveal the heart of the gospel and God's anger at the sin of humankind is addressed. It is however chapter 4 which deserves fuller treatment. Paul now refers directly to Abraham and his faith. Abraham is held up as a prime example of one who is fully restored to a right relationship with God, according to faith and not obedience to the law (including circumcision).

The far-reaching implications are set down in chapters 5 to 8 of the choices open to all Jews and the nations of the world. For Israel, there is no claim to dispensation based on their previous standing before God as a nation in terms of God's eschatological plan for all people. The consequences of individual sin result in alienation from God and this is in contrast to the reward of righteousness which results in the freedom to enjoy God. There also exists for all who believe a unity in Christ as the true descendants of the patriarch.

As with Abraham, in the Genesis account, it is individual faith which is the prerequisite for salvation. Paul is alerting Israel as a nation to the implications of this. If the act of faith is a personal one, salvation cannot be based on obedience to any law, favouritism or exemption from the penalties of separation from God. The principle of justification through faith alone therefore needs to be fully grasped so that there can be no doubt about the acceptable way to obtain salvation. It also needs to be remembered how the promise of heirs given to Abraham translates into future spiritual descendants of the patriarch, seen to come through the remnant and confirmed in chapter 11. The promise given to Abraham of heirs is acknowledged to go beyond natural descendants as Abraham was assured that he would be the

father of many who come to faith. This status supersedes his standing as the Jewish patriarch.

The controversial role of God in the salvic process is now dealt with more fully by Paul in chapters 9 and 10 where he explains the divine election of those preordained individuals who will be saved. Whereas up to now, Paul has as his focus the freedom of individuals to choose to come to faith or reject it, he now makes a marked shift in emphasis. It is here that the apostle broadens his message from personal accountability and choice to bring God into the equation. He is in fact endorsing the existence of the remnant. Paul makes it clear that salvation is in the domain of God Himself who divinely elects those individuals who shall be redeemed. It remains God's prerogative to elect both Jew and Gentile individually; although paradoxically, Israel as a nation is not rejected out of hand (the controversial subject of God's prerogative to elect His own is examined under the section Literary Review).

Paul not only refers back to the past, he also looks forward. What began with Abraham in covenantal relationship with God, and is built upon by Paul here, is carried over and extends into the next chapter. Having established the basic doctrine of salvation through faith in Christ, Paul now consolidates his teaching and builds on his argument in chapters 9-10 to prepare his readers for his ultimate revelation in chapter 11 where he presents the biblical perspective on the Jewish remnant. These chapters are therefore pivotal in the way in which they serve as a bridge between the Abrahamic covenant in the book of Genesis and chapter 11. In the final analysis, the remnant is made up of individual believers who together with Abraham bring resolution to God's plan to redeem Israel.

The thesis statement that Israel is redeemed through the remnant can therefore only be endorsed and advanced biblically with the contribution of this overview in conjunction with that of the Genesis account of the Abrahamic covenant. God's eschatological programme to redeem Israel is best understood when seen in the light of the on-going revelation as scripture continues to unfold; culminating in Paul's clarification of the standing of the Jews in Romans chapter 11.



## **4.2. PERSPECTIVES ON THE BOOK OF ROMANS**

In line with normal exegetical procedure, a brief outline of the general background to the book of Romans is an appropriate first step to expounding the letter to the Romans (Moo: 2000:1115). As Carson (2000:1114) points out, writing a letter is the established means of both private and public communication and an inexpensive means of keeping in touch with believers scattered around the Roman Empire. Romans is a letter addressed to the church at Rome and occasioned by the situation Paul is confronted with there. Rome was the world capital of the pagan empire and paganism hindered Paul's ambition to preach the gospel there. The occasional nature is revealed in the limited selection of theological topics as Paul addresses a specific audience in a certain historical context with a definite and limited purpose. The book of Romans is primarily a work of doctrine regarding the need for righteousness and God's provision of it. There is little historical material included.

Paul starts his letter by looking at the sinfulness of the city of Rome. At that time, there was a great barrier between the Gentile community and the other communities in the temple in Jerusalem. There was also a great barrier between the Gentile community and the other communities in the temple in Jerusalem. In a population of over one million people, many were slaves. In a majestic city, there were also slums. Importantly, in chapters 1 to 8, Paul cuts across the socio-cultural and economic status of the people with his reminder that both Jews and Gentiles are both sinners in need of salvation in Jesus Christ. The epistle serves as a comprehensive and systematic statement of the relevance of the Christian faith and is an explanation of how God justifies the sinner. More specifically, it is the link Paul forges with Abraham which aids the direction in which this paper is heading – to focus on the biblical evidence for the continuing existence of a Jewish remnant in right standing before God.

### **4.2.1. Author and Date of Writing**

It is universally accepted that this letter was penned by Paul and there appears to be no reason to doubt authorship. Reference is made to this by Osborne (2004:109) and Barnett (2005:7-8) who draw attention to the opening salutation. Here Paul

speaks with authority about himself and presents his credentials to the Roman believers. In his opening address in chapter 1:1 he introduces himself as a servant or slave of the Lord Jesus Christ, an apostle, set apart to preach the gospel of God, and as one who acts with divine authority (Acts 9:15). Paul further associates the letter with himself when he admits that this epistle must suffice as a substitute for his long-delayed visit to Rome in order to minister there personally. Another confirmation of Pauline authorship is found in the fact that he arranged for his letter to be brought to Rome by Phoebe, a deacon from a nearby church (Ro 16:23). Nor should the reference to Tertius who did the actual writing in Romans 16:22 give cause for concern as it was standard practice at that time to employ a scribe.

Historical background supplied by Barnett (2003:8-10) and Schnabel (2012:1223-1224) with regard to the time and place of writing is based on the record in Romans 15:23-29 and Acts 20:1-3. They point to Paul's circumstances at that time being influenced by Emperor Claudius' expulsion of Jews from Rome, effectively blocking his plans to visit Rome in person. According to the date line of these events, and comparing Paul's plans to go to Jerusalem and then on to Rome before going to Spain in chapter 15:14-19 with Luke's narrative in Acts, it is safe to conclude that Paul wrote his letter at the end of his third missionary journey. This puts the date of writing at about AD57-58. Furthermore, according to the account in Acts he wrote from Greece while in Corinth.

#### **4.2.2. Composition of the Church**

Although it is unknown when and by whom the gospel was first introduced to Rome, when Paul wrote this epistle he seems to imply that the church was already long established. It is noted however, that scholars hold different views regarding the origins and composition of the church in Rome. For instance, both Guthrie (1990:406) and Moo (2009:1889) dispute the notion that based on Acts 2:10 the church was founded by Roman Jews converted on the day of Pentecost, who upon returning to Rome (Acts 2:10) brought their faith back home to the synagogues. Nor is it conceivable that Peter was the founder of the church as this is inconsistent with the statement given in Acts.

Witherington (2004:08) counters such a view of the composition of the church. He indicates that Paul has a mandate, a special commission to the Gentiles. He was therefore addressing a church composed mainly of Gentile believers or those of Gentile origin. This is clear in chapter 1:5 and in verses 12 to 14 where Paul includes the Gentiles among the readers and compares them with the "other Gentiles". Also in chapter 11:13 he indicates that he is talking to Gentiles. First Corinthians 10:1 likewise makes the point that Paul speaks in reference to a Gentile church. The view that the church in Rome would have comprised a majority of Gentiles and only a few Jews therefore seems acceptable. Paul is therefore primarily addressing Gentile Christians because he feels that they need exhorting to change their attitude towards the Jews. Even Roman society did not embrace the Jews because Gentiles were in the majority. Gentiles therefore formed the nucleus of this and other churches in the Roman Empire; more so than the Jews who had separated themselves from the Jewish synagogue.

By contrast however Hodge (1994:36) holds with the view that based on the salutations in chapter 16, the recipients of the epistle are identified specifically as Jewish Christians. He bases his presumption on the fact that the expulsion of Jews from Rome suggests that Jewish Christians were predominant up to that time, meaning that the first Christians were in fact Jews. It was only on their return that they found that the Gentiles had established themselves, resulting in an overall Gentile majority in the church with few Jews.

Another perspective is presented in ROMANS (2009:16-17) which differs for good reason. The consistency of the church may not have been either exclusively Gentile or Jewish, as there were many Jewish converts too. In similar vein, Peterson (2000:291) points to Acts 28:17-29 where reference is made to some Jews in Rome who were believers, but the majority were not. Barnett (2003:09) has the final word as he highlights a significant fact - Paul did not address the epistle solely to the church at Rome; rather, he wrote more generally to all believers. Barnett therefore, based on his understanding of Romans 1:7, considers the primary addressees to be 'all who are beloved of God in Rome'; with a far wider audience in mind when he wrote the epistle.

### 4.2.3. Purpose

The Pauline letters are all written against a specific background and with a specific purpose and each must be understood in the context of his writing according to Guthrie (1990:408-409). Paul's theology starts from the assumption that God has accomplished redemption as part of a historical process. The Old Testament and God's dealings with Israel recorded in it, leads inevitably to Christ, the climax of history. It is God's intervention in Christ which may be regarded as the centre of his theology and the motivation and purpose behind his writings.

It is Moo (2000:1118) who opens up the debate further by presenting several possible reasons for Paul's Roman epistle being written; these reasons are legitimately based on the contents of the book of Romans itself. For instance, the Apostle writes to sum up his own theology in chapters 1 to 8; then he progresses to a rehearsal of his speech that he plans to give in Judea when he brings the money he has been collecting from the Gentile churches to the poor Jewish believers (Ro 15:25-33). Nonetheless, even though Paul had desired to visit the church at Rome for many years according to Romans 15:23, there does not appear to be anything to suggest that there was any single issue that Paul dealt with in his letter (Ro 1:8). There were no dominant problems that he needed to address, such as correcting wrong theology or rebuking ungodly living. The position was quite the reverse, as there was a sense of spiritual well being in the community of believers. Yet a tension existed between the Jews and the Gentiles in the church. Instead of accepting one another they were looking down on each other. The Jews insisted on their privileges and customs; and the Gentiles disregarded and even despised the scruples and prejudices of what they regarded as their weaker brethren. Gentile Christians were also behaving arrogantly towards the Jewish believers because the gospel had largely been rejected by the Jews and instead spread among the Gentiles (Ro 11:17-32).

Hodge (1994:37-38) notes that Paul had to contend with firmly entrenched beliefs and set opinions of the Jews. He points out how the community was divided over the degree to which the Old Testament law should continue to guide believers, resulting

in confusion and conflict. The minority of Jewish Christians insisted on adherence to the law as they placed their chief dependence upon the covenant of God with Abraham and the peculiar rites and ordinances connected with it. If salvation was secured by connection with Abraham, then none who were not united to their great ancestor could be saved; hence their belief that they were superior to the Gentiles and all blessing belonged solely to them. In their contempt for other nations, they insisted on circumcision and legalistic obedience to the law. Connection with the family of Abraham was thought to be sufficient to secure the favour of God.

It is against this context, referred to by Berkhof (1994:520); Bryan (2006:699) and Reno (2006:749-750) as one of disunity and ignorance that Paul deals with the fundamental Christian principle of 'righteousness' as contrasted with the Jewish approach of nationalism. The issue of Jewish-Gentile relations forms the theological backdrop and he wants to include the Gentiles in God's plan of redemption. He had a revolutionary and powerful message to deliver that the new covenant transcends the Old Testament law. He wanted to effect reconciliation between the Jewish and the Gentile Christians and to bring unity to the church at Rome.

It is worth mentioning at this point, that individual believers form part of the Christian community and as such do not enjoy their faith in a vacuum. Anyabwile (2008:67) speaks of the essence of true discipleship for believers. He singles out the command in John 13:34-35, to love one another as Christians, so that the world will know that they are His disciples; members of the body of Christ - the church. The corporate life of the church is a vast subject on its own, but the necessity for it needs to be acknowledged. Christianity is more than a personal relationship with God but also entails reconciliation between Jew and Gentile, and by extension, between all those who believe in Jesus Christ (Eph 2:14-16).

The practical implications of the outworking of the believer's faith, both individually and corporately is touched on briefly under 5.11 below. The main focus of the research into the Jewish remnant is somewhat contained in the first eleven chapters of Romans. For a more in depth study into the practical ramifications of faith, it is suggested that Romans chapter 12 on, would serve as a very apt vehicle. It is here

that Paul now focuses on the various areas of day-to-day living. As ROMANS (2009:217-218) agrees, Paul now exhorts his hearers to obey the principles which he has already set down that should hallmark the believer's life. To reiterate, Paul has already made it clear that salvation is for everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile (1:16). To do so, he dismisses any notion of preferential national salvation. Rather, the apostle addresses the corporate salvation of all believers, consisting of individual Jews and Gentiles who form part of the Christian community.

Moving on, both Longenecker (2011:81-83) and Pawson (2007:1022-1023) draw attention to the fact that to accomplish his mission, it was necessary for Paul to proclaim the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ by teaching doctrine. This was so that believers should be encouraged in their faith. In fact it is clear from Romans 1:16 and 17 - the only possible solution to the problems of humankind is found in God's justification of the sinner through Christ. Paul's doctrine of individual salvation based on personal faith is taught and the power of God to save revealed. His purpose is clear - to refute those doctrines of the Jews which were inconsistent with the gospel and to present his salvic message. Romans therefore contains more than theology as Grieb (2002:14) explains. The righteousness of God that is identified with the fullness of Christ, who was willing to die on the cross, contains both ethics and the call for praxis. There must be a practical outworking of the message of salvation as the recipient/hearer is exhorted to live a godly life.

#### **4.2.4. Theme**

Paul's purpose in writing to the church at Rome establishes the main theme of his letter which is to declare the message of salvation. In chapter 1:1 he introduces the main theme of his epistle, namely, "the Gospel of Jesus Christ" and then proceeds to make a profound and comprehensive presentation of the Christian doctrine of salvation. He points out that salvation is based on the mercy and grace of God alone and is the divine response to the human acceptance of the gospel through faith. He is not ashamed of the gospel message to which he bears witness because it is the power of God to save everyone who believes, including both Jew and Gentile alike (1 Cor 15:1-4). Paul declares the entire world guilty before God and unable to save

itself. Reconciliation and redemption are found through faith in Christ alone (Bruce 1966:58; Longenecker 2011:381-382).

An important consideration is that it is a personal and not a collective response of faith which the gospel demands. That being the case, the nation of Israel should understand that there is no room for believing that they are redeemed merely on the basis of presumed merit resulting from a physical relationship with Abraham. By contrast, Paul's teaching in Romans highlights Abraham as a prime example of one who believed and was declared righteous in Genesis. As both Barker (2002:2314) and Mead (2007:1196) observe the notion of living a personal life of faith was fully consistent with Old Testament theology. Not only is salvation a personal matter of faith, it is not subject to obedience to any law or conditioned upon any works. Paul teaches the scriptural perspective that works follow faith for without works, faith is dead (Acts 2:26). The significance of this is obvious when seen in the light of the Pharisees who considered themselves just and righteous according to their own standard of righteousness and adherence to the Law.

Paul's doctrinal message of salvation however cannot be seen apart from the revelation of God's righteousness (1:17-18). The importance of the revelation of God's righteousness is accordingly endorsed by Cranfield (1975:199) and Guthrie (1990:427) as the power of God to save. It is in proclaiming the gospel message that the righteousness of God is presented, as the gospel declares both man's sin and God's purity. What begins with the initial act of faith in response to the call of the gospel results in the believer being declared righteous and legally justified by God (Ro 3:26-28). God's righteousness is therefore not separate from the gospel message of salvation and the consequence of being justified means restoration to favour with God. Righteousness is therefore a desired aim and expected outcome in the salvic process as stated by Burge (2012:1228-1229) and Ridderbos (1997:166).

There is also a scriptural basis for justification as a main theme according to Romans 8:30. Paul gives an overview of the process by which God applies salvation to those whom He predetermined; those whom He called, he also justified and those whom he justified he glorified. It may legitimately be said that above all else the Book of

Romans is an explanation of how God justifies the sinner and Carson (2000:1114) and Ladd (1993:482-483) promote the notion of justification by faith as the main theme in the epistle. It is God alone who declares a person just and in line with the New Testament, a just person is one who meets God's standard for his life.

But although justification is the centre of Paul's thought in the sense that it marks the turning point in the personal restored relationship to God, Moo (2000:24-26) disputes the idea of the existence of any one central theme in the book of Romans. He argues on the grounds that there is no one overarching theme as it oversimplifies biblical books to do so. When Paul discusses such issues as the sinfulness of humankind and the need to be right with God, he does so under the same doctrinal message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Perhaps the best way forward is to acknowledge the primary theme of the basic gospel as this does embrace such related ideas as the righteousness of God and justification. All other themes such as sin, law, faith and the place of both Jews and Gentiles in the purpose of God are all brought together under the one main theme of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Dunn 2008:8-9; Grudem 1994:724-726).

#### **4.3. ROMANS CHAPTER 1: GOD'S WRATH AGAINST HUMANKIND**

It is Witherington (2004:58-61) who helpfully maps out Paul's rhetorical strategy in Chapter 1:18-32. The writer comments that Paul's audience is mainly Gentile Christians and it is their entrenched attitudes and behaviour Paul is concerned about changing. As the apostle is not addressing his fellow Jews, he needs a rhetorical strategy which will work to persuade them in such a situation. Witherington comments further how Paul's foundational arguments have a levelling effect, to put both Gentile and Jewish Christians on the same footing. This is important as it raises the status of the Jewish Christians who are currently at a disadvantage in Rome. Paul will argue in his letter that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Any attempts by Gentiles to portray themselves as inherently better than Jews or Jewish Christians or more favourable to an impartial God, will then not work. In addition to which, God's plan of salvation by grace through faith, does not mean that God will



renege on promises already made to the Jews, with whom He is already in covenantal relationship.

Moo (2000:1123-1124) keeps in mind Paul's status as the anointed apostle to the Gentiles as he pens his ambassadorial letter to the Christians in Rome. After the greetings, salutations and introduction; he proceeds to inform them of their position of condemnation in God's eyes. In this chapter the objective is to direct the same charges against the Jews which have just been levelled against the Gentiles. God is angry and it needs to be understood that the Jews too were exposed to His wrath. It is not just an outburst of indignation, but rather the divine response of a holy and righteous God who finds sin abhorrent and who constantly reveals and uncovers sin.

Here Cranfield (2004:87-88) and MacArthur (20005:1505-1506) pick up on the sense of urgency behind Paul's message. There are simple principles governing judgment and these same principles need to be conveyed and applied to the Jews. The implications of alienation from God and the reality of the wrath of God which is against all ungodliness and unrighteousness need to be understood. No one is righteous and the only way to change and be reconciled to God is through faith in Jesus Christ. To enable restoration to take place, Paul presents the basic Christian gospel message of salvation in Christ as the Messiah. It is a gracious God who has made the proviso that redemption is only possible for those who come to faith in Christ. God's saving power is available for all who believe and is extended to the Jew first and also for the Greek.

So the apostle weaves his theme (already established above) of the gospel of Jesus Christ around the need to be reconciled to God. He was deeply concerned that his readers understand not only the consequences of being separated from God but also how sinners may be received by a righteous God and the positive implications such acceptance brings for living a life of righteousness. He wanted the Christians at Rome to understand that he was once alienated from God but is now in a right relationship, being justified through faith in Christ. The Gospel is the revelation to all of God's provision for salvation and that is why Paul is not ashamed of it as the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

The Gospel is also the revelation to men of God's righteousness (v17) and needs to be proclaimed. The wrath of God is the antithesis to the righteousness of God in verse 17. To further make his point Paul draws attention to the fact that the message he brings is in fact not a new one (v2) as God's promised eternal plan was revealed in the Old Testament. He refers to Jesus Christ as a descendant of David as well as being the Son of God. He is the promised Messiah who demands the obedience of faith. The fact that Christ is the only king to rise from the dead should be enough to testify to His divinity and must demand a response (Morris 1988:35, 100; Romans 2009:26-27; Schreiner 2006:28-29).

With regard to this portion of scripture, commentary is largely drawn from Berkhoff, Evans, Grudem and Ladd as representative of sound biblical exposition. They comment on Paul's forceful dealings with the issue of sin in chapters 1 to 8 by reminding both Jew and Gentile that they are sinners. All have sinned and instead of glorifying Him, the worship of idols is exchanged for the worship of the true God. This is because they have turned away from God's revelation of Himself. He also speaks to the Jews as the religious, outwardly moral persons, who exacerbated the situation further by regarding themselves as saved by virtue of their status as God's people. The main message is clear, that there is none righteous and the only way to be made right with God is to be justified by faith in Christ alone. Paul accordingly delivers a harsh message to the Gentiles as he expounds the great doctrine of the Christian faith and the rules governing Christianity.

Paul endeavours to show that without God's righteous favour, those who reject Him will only know His wrath. Their position is further exacerbated by having God's anger revealed to them, with no excuse for ignorance. After all, as demonstrated by Paul in chapter 3:9-20, all people alike deserve God's judgment. The unrighteous Gentiles referred to in verses 18-32 have their sinfulness revealed as Paul addresses them as irreligious, immoral pagan, likewise he addresses the outwardly moral Jews in the same way (vv1-32). Due to the importance of his message, Paul therefore persists in his focus on the consequences of ignoring the gracious offer of God to be redeemed and presents the gospel as the only solution. As Bruce (1963:60) says, it is the response to this powerful epistle that is life changing.

#### **4.4. ROMANS CHAPTER 2: GOD'S WRATH AGAINST THE JEWS**

In the previous chapter, Paul has set down the reality of God's righteous anger against all who reject Him and established his gospel message, explaining His gracious provision of salvation through His Son. But the problem of God's wrath at unrighteousness persists, as there is no excuse in God's eyes. Everyone is under God's wrath because of the wilful rejection of Him. Everyone has turned away from God in favour of things of the world. By ignoring Him, people would no longer be alive to God but dead in their sins and have no desire for God (Ro 8:1-11). Carson (2004:120) and Ladd (1993:487-488) encapsulate the seriousness with which God regards sin. They observe from this passage that the nature of the problem is not first and foremost one of failure or inappropriate use of the law, but rather the wrath of God directed against every human being, Jew and Gentile alike. It is the fact of sin and not the degree of sin that constitutes guilt as God's righteous anger is elicited by human wickedness.

Paul is aware of the privileged status with which the Jews view themselves and now presents his case against them as God's chosen people. A Jew may be forgiven for thinking that by virtue of the fact that they are given His law, they are in a preferential position over the Gentiles. But their blatant rebellion against God cannot be excused on any grounds, even that of ignorance for they, like the Gentiles are under condemnation. There is no covenantal status to hide behind to protect them, nor is there any guarantee of salvation for all Jews, even taking into account the special relationship enjoyed between God and Israel. In fact, the Gentiles' humble obedience to the Law should serve as a stern rebuke to the Jew who, in spite of his great advantage, lives in disobedience. The true Jew, the true child of God, the true spiritual seed of Abraham is the one circumcised in the heart. It is not the outward rite that is of value, unless it reflects to the inner reality of a heart separated from sin to God (v29) (Barnett 2003: 50-51; Cranfield 1975:156; Moo 2009:1894-1895).

Wright (2001:137) comments on how Paul has a unique approach in his critique of his fellow Jews. He is mindful that the whole of ethnic Israel is the people of God and

her possession of the law demonstrates that. But the problem is that Israel in fact boasts in her possession of the law and is smug about being set apart from the nations. In verses 12 to 16 Paul makes it clear that it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. This means that the Jew cannot rely on either the law or circumcision to protect him from the judgment of God (vv17-19). Furthermore, in terms of lawbreaking, he accuses them of using the law as the covenant badge which would keep membership within that covenant limited to Jews only (vv 21-23).

The message Paul delivers is also direct in that the Jews could not be justified by the Law of Moses, anymore than the Gentiles by the law of 'nature', in reference to that which the Gentiles have by birth, namely uncircumcision (v27). ROMANS Commentary (2009:50-51) is useful in this regard. There will be a day of judgment and even those who have not had the Law will be judged by the law of God written on the heart or by conscience (vv14-16). It means that both the Jews and the Gentiles will stand condemned by God's fair judgment. Neither the people's heritage, nor their knowledge, nor pleas for ignorance will protect them from God's righteous judgment - including their covenants such as circumcision (vv17-24).

The Law continues to feature in Paul's address to the Jews. He offers further instruction that if someone has sufficient knowledge to judge others, they condemn themselves by that very claim to know. This is because an innate awareness of God's Law exists and Paul urges believers not to violate that conscience or cause others to do so. In condemnation of others, they overlook their own sins in a deadly self righteousness. Just as the Jews were given the first opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel (1:16), they will be first to receive God's judgment if they refuse to obey Him and that is the seriousness of their position. If the Jews transgress the law, they will face judgment and cannot think that they will not be judged merely by possessing the law and circumcision. The Gentiles who do not have the revealed Law of God, are nevertheless able to do by nature what the Law demands, and so they will be judged on their obedience or disobedience to their limited knowledge. The Jews and the many Gentiles who had access to God's moral

law will be accountable for their greater knowledge (Hodge 1994:83-84; Schreiner 2006:137-138).

#### **4.5. ROMANS CHAPTER 3: GOD'S SOLUTION**

This is a critical point in the letter according to Moo (1996:206). Not only does Paul conclude that no one is righteous, as all are under judgment because of sin (vv9-20), he also reveals a righteousness from God apart from the Law. This righteousness is revealed by God through faith in Jesus Christ and is available to all who believe. In the previous section he has pointed out to the Jews that they are as guilty before God as the Gentiles. They too have no excuse for rejecting God and are under His judgment. There are no exceptions to the rule as both Jew and Gentile will be judged according to their guilt in rebellion against God. Therefore no one can claim exemption from His wrath.

Now Paul continues to expound God's solution to the problem as he expresses God's perspective regarding sin (v26). But as Barnett (2003:56-58) comments such a harsh message of condemnation understandably raises doubts as to God's integrity. If, as the Jews believed, the Old Testament covenants attest to His commitment to them as His historical people, then such a guilty verdict against His own people seems to give the lie to these covenantal promises. The basic issue is this: if there is no advantage in being Jewish, and if God can seemingly reject His own people, how can it be said that God is true to his covenantal promises? The Apostle is aware of the dilemma his message may pose and continues to deal with the issue of the Law which has not saved, but rather exposed wrongdoing. He sets out to show, against this background that God is just in His deeds. By the works of the Law no one is justified before God whereas the righteousness of God is being displayed and is for all who believe. The Law condemns but all are justified freely by His grace.

Paul resorts to asking rhetorical questions concerning the status and advantage of circumcised Jews and the privilege that entails as God's chosen people. What advantage is there in being a Jew and what value is there in circumcision? The answer is encouraging – they have 'everything', as people who have the knowledge

of God entrusted to them under a divine revelation. But Paul is adamant that as no one is righteous, in condemning the Jews; God nonetheless still remains faithful and just. Even in judgment, He is true to His word (vv3-4). To further make his point, Paul refers to Psalm 51 to remind the people how even David confessed his guilt and acknowledged that God's judgment against him was deserved and right (Hodge 1994:106-107).

Paul continues in his diatribe. It is written in the Old Testament, that those who are under the Law, (the Jews) received the written Law through Moses whereas the Gentiles have the works of the law written on their hearts. Paul has all along insisted and repeatedly endorsed his teaching that even the Law is powerless to save them. Again he stresses how everyone, including the Jews, is guilty (vv9-20). There is no justification in God's sight by works of the Law because through the Law the knowledge of sin is revealed. If a man's righteousness served only to condemn him before God, by contrast God's righteousness in the person of Christ saves from the wrath of God. God is righteous in judgment. All have sinned and there is no righteousness found in the Law. What man could not do to please God, God has provided in Jesus Christ, who satisfied all the requirements of the Law. He bore the penalty and punishment for sin and provided righteousness acceptable to God, which is the main thing. So in this section, which extends into chapter 5, Paul again teaches that God's justifying act is directed to all those who believe in Jesus Christ and his sacrificial death for them. Both Jew and Gentile are declared righteous before God in exactly the same manner, namely faith apart from the works of the Law. This is important and far thinking in Paul's teaching because of the inherent danger of making salvation a works ethic. Both groups are therefore alike to God (Bruce 1985:120; Mounce 1995:97-98; Romans 2009:59-60).

Similarly Carson (2005:86-88); Cranfield (1990:21 and Wright (2002:404) observe how it cannot be ignored that the same rules apply to both Jew and Gentile alike. They draw attention to Paul's famous phrase, recorded in Romans 3:23 that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God", meaning that both Jew and Gentile are in need of deliverance from sin. No Jew should therefore boast except it is about what God has done for him. The only difference which ever existed between Jews and

Gentiles is what God did. In every other respect, Jews and Gentiles are alike (Ezek 16:3). There is therefore no gain in boasting as all are justified by faith and not the deeds of the law (v28). What began in the previous two chapters is now summarized by Paul - justification is the promise of God's righteousness, and that is the only solution to the sins of the world. The imperative message delivered by Paul is clear - the only criterion to be restored back to God's favour is through personal faith and not national selection. Having introduced God's solution to the problem, it is clear that God is Himself righteous and able to make people righteous too. Paul points to Abraham who prior to his circumcision, believed God and was declared righteous. He is now ready to directly connect his teaching up to this point to Abraham in the pericope to follow.

#### **4.6. ROMANS CHAPTER 4 - ABRAHAM AN EXAMPLE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**

It is appropriate at this juncture to reiterate the thesis statement that God redeemed Israel through the remnant of Jewish believers. Research into the existence of the biblical remnant commenced with an overview of the Abrahamic covenant. It is there that the significance emerged of Abraham as a man of faith, in right standing with God. In addition to which, it is here that Abraham received the promise from God of spiritual heirs. He was given the assurance that he would be the head of a spiritual dynasty. It is worth noting that salvation in Old Testament times was based on the promise and fulfilment of that promise. God pledged to send the Messiah and it was faith in the coming Messiah, based on the revelation of Him at any given time, which was the basis for salvation.

What is significant is the fact that faith is always the prerequisite for salvation; the object of salvation always being God. Waltke (2007:334) clarifies the position that Genesis 15:6 is the foundational building stone in Pauline theology – that Abraham believed the Lord and it was counted to him as righteousness. It is upon this verse that the apostle builds the doctrine of justification by faith instead of by works also see Gal 3:6-14). This is because Abraham places his entire trust in the prophetic word that promises salvation. The Old Testament sacrificial system therefore points to the day when Jesus Christ would shed His blood in sacrifice for sinful humankind.

Abraham could in any case, not have been saved by keeping the Law because he lived over 400 years prior to the giving of the Law. Likewise David, in Psalm 32:1-2 was saved by faith, based on God's pledge to send the Saviour.

In the progressive unfolding of God's plan to redeem Israel, Paul in his epistle to the Romans, has devoted the first three chapters to prove that the whole world is guilty before God and unable to save itself from God's righteous anger. He has also been at pains to show God's graciousness in providing a way to counter His anger as he expounds his doctrine of salvation. In Romans 3:26 it is clear that justification is obtained in Christ so that whoever believes is made right with God. Now Paul is able to use Abraham as a model to prove justification by faith because the Jews held him up as the supreme example of a righteous man. Barnett (2003:90-98) in confirmation, draws particular attention to chapter 4 because of the focus on Abraham's faith and the implications this has on the Jews.

Paul understands that in Jewish thinking, Abraham, the father of all Jews was entitled to be declared righteous by his works. So he sets out to show that even Abraham was made right by faith which was then complemented by his actions. Paul uses Abraham to show that there was nothing the patriarch could do to earn his good standing before God. God simply took His own righteousness and credited it to Abraham as if it were his own. Not only is Abraham right with God, but Paul teaches that Abraham is also the father of all those who have faith, whether they are his natural descendants or not (vv9-12). This is important because if Abraham believed what God said to him then, so too would his spiritual children believe what God was saying to them now. In verse 15 where Paul makes reference to the promised heir of the world, he speaks in the context of Jesus Christ's fulfilment of the covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants. Through Abraham's seed the entire world will be blessed. In other words, it is believers in relationship with Abraham as their forefather who inherit the promise to become heirs or children of Abraham according to Romans 4:23-25. It is not those connected through his genes in natural hereditary (Cranford 2012; Schreiner 2006:70-71).



It was always God's intention to include Gentiles among His people (vv29-30) and Paul exhorts the Gentiles who believe to trust God in the same way in which Abraham did. Abraham knew that his sins were finally going to be blotted out even though there was no such thing as washing away of sins in the Old Testament. Every sin that was confessed and turned from was forgiven only on the condition that Jesus, the Messiah was coming and would cleanse through His death according to John 8:39 (Ladd 1993:480-481; Bryan 2006:700-701).

#### **4.6.1. Justification through faith and not the Law**

What is important for the Jews to remember is that Abraham was made right before God, in his own capacity as an individual who believed; he was redeemed and not the nation of Israel. It was his faith which made salvation a reality and not the Law. As Bryan (2006:697-698) comments, Paul wanted to dissuade his hearers from a view of God's relationship with them that sees it as being founded on anything except God's justice and grace. If, in the bigger picture of God's eschatological programme, Abraham is more than the father of the Jews, but the forefather of all who believe the uniting bond between them is their justification through faith and not the Law. Justification as the means of salvation is a vast subject as is evident from the scholarly debate already noted under Literary Review in reference to Abraham as a man of faith. When called by God; he believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness. What is important to note in the context of Paul's current argument is that Paul knew the Law as a Pharisee and was able to appreciate how important it was to the Jews. Such knowledge now stood him in good stead when he has to confront them about their faith in God as opposed to rigid adherence to the Law.

As the apostle's understanding of the gospel was however heavily influenced by his reading of the Abrahamic narrative in Genesis, the Pauline doctrine of justification can best be understood against an Old Testament background. In verses 13-15 the original recipients of this letter may have believed that God's purpose was focused on Moses and the Law given at Mount Sinai, but Paul again echoes the words, 'the righteousness of faith' from Genesis 15:6. The Old Testament witnesses to the liability of the Jews who possess God's Law yet continue to sin under the

misconception that one who is righteous is one who conforms to the Law. Deuteronomy 25:1 however, states it well and in line with Paul's teaching that to justify is to declare or cause to appear innocent or righteous (Grudem 1994:723-724; Jewett 1991:266; Romans 2009:81; Wright 2002:548).

Paul makes a logical argument in verse 2 that Abraham could not boast about anything he did before God as his righteousness was not according to his works but his faith. If Abraham's own works had been the basis of his justification, he would have had every right to boast in God's presence. Furthermore, if righteousness is the standard God has decreed for human conduct to meet the divine requirement, then to declare the guilty innocent can only be God's work. This cancels out any human effort or obedience to the Old Testament Law. Paul wanted to show that Judaism with its 'works righteousness' is a deviation from the faith of the Jews' patriarchal ancestors. Scholars such as Cranfield (1975:229); Moo (1991:264) and Wenham (2006:251) endorse the biblical perspective that the key element of Paul's teaching here is the graciousness of God. Acknowledging that justification by faith is an act of God's mercy should guard against the Jewish attempt to make works of the law the basis for salvation. The Law brings about wrath; justification by faith alone, according to God's grace brings about salvation.

#### **4.6.2. Abraham was justified by faith and not circumcision**

Another important aspect addressed by Paul concerns the need to be circumcised. If Abraham was justified by his faith alone, why did God implement the command to be circumcised? He explains that both the circumcised (Jews) and the uncircumcised (Gentiles) are declared righteous before God, irrespective of the physical rite of circumcision which counts for nothing when it comes to salvation. To Paul the sequence of events in the Abraham story is all important since Abraham was counted as righteous prior to being circumcised. Nor was Abraham personally circumcised as a sign of the covenant with God, as it happened more than 400 years before the law was given to his descendants. Romans 4:13-20 clearly indicates that Abraham was not justified through the physical act of circumcision, nor by keeping the Mosaic Law (Edersheim 1995:52-53; Mounce 1995:38-41).

The deep significance of a 'sign' is made clear when seen against the inner one of the new covenant and not an external and public demonstration of covenantal commitment. Circumcision was merely an outward sign or seal to Abraham of the inner reality of faith that brought salvation to him. It should be emphasised that Paul was not intent on denigrating national Israel in dealing with the deep spiritual truth that Jews and Gentiles alike can be justified only by faith (Kruse 2000:635-636; Lioy 2006:91).

#### **4.7. ROMANS CHAPTER 5: Blessings of Righteousness**

The blessings of being justified and reconciled to God are declared by Paul in this chapter. He began his argument in Chapter 1 by asserting that all are under God's wrath because of sin. Instead of worshipping God, they turned to their own way. The Jews were given the Law by Moses, but continued to break it and even the Gentiles have no excuse for their sin (2:17-19). Paul has also delivered a forceful message of hope that God justifies sinners on the basis of faith. He has used Abraham (chapter 4), revered as the patriarch of old as a powerful example to get his readers' attention. He is clear - salvation is not a collective setting aside of any nation, but a personal matter before God (ROMANS 2009:26-27).

Having dealt with the Jewish objectors to his gospel he now turns to the genuine believer, whether Jewish or Gentile with a message of reward. The teaching on justification and righteousness now continues as Paul builds on his doctrine of salvation through Christ, to highlight the blessings of righteousness which flow out of the legal act of being made right with God. As indicated by Ladd (1993:493), reconciliation to God by the death of His Son in verse 10 holds a profound meaning. This includes the acquittal from being held guilty and accountable, the peace and joy received from God now, and safety from the coming judgment. That a believer may enjoy peace with God in a restored relationship, was something unthinkable to the Old Testament Jew who thought that it was impossible to know God. God's love is in fact poured out; resulting in the confidence of knowing one belongs to God, whereas unregenerate sinners are spiritually dead and far from God.

Due to the sacrifice of His Son in a substitutionary role for mankind, reconciliation is made possible. Therefore being justified leads to blessings in Christ and peace with God. Paul's teaching is radical because of the righteousness both now and in the future which he announces. There is no death penalty for the believer who has been restored to God (vv4-5). But those – both Jew and Gentile - who reject Paul's Law-free gospel and seek to reinstate the keeping of Law for justification, will find that it is not a remedy for sin (Barnett 2008:50-51; ROMANS 2009:26-27).

To deal further with the universal effect of sin, Paul uses another Old Testament example. Instead of Abraham, this time it is Adam as he draws a parallel between Adam and Christ in verse 12. Cranfield (1985:118) and Murray (1965:192) make an important observation that after noting that Adam is a 'type' of Christ, Paul does not elaborate on the similarities between them. Instead he makes the contrast between them to distinguish between the consequences of life or death. In verses 12-21, he uses the condemnation brought by the trespass of Adam, to demonstrate, by contrast, the salvation and life brought by the righteous deed of the one person, Jesus Christ.

Paul's important lesson bears restatement, for the difference in outcome is enormous. Whereas Adam brought death and condemnation, Christ reverses all of this and brings grace and justification. In Adam there is condemnation, in Christ justification (vv18-19). On the one hand, the universal effect of sin is evident in Adam, bringing death into the world through sin. All were affected by the consequences of Adam's sin, even before the Law was given (vv13-14). On the other, Jesus Christ brought justification and made righteousness possible through the grace of God to all who believe in Him and belong to Him. Just as the actions of Adam's sin brought death, Christ's sacrifice results in life for all who believe. For those who are justified, there is the assurance of salvation and future glory. Being justified through faith ensures safety from condemnation and God's wrath. Being justified by faith also overrides obedience to the works of the Law (vv1-8). Therefore Adam's descendants are subject to death because of sin whereas in Christ, it is not universal death but eternal life which is guaranteed (Kruse 2000:635-636; Moo 2000:1133-1134; Waltke 2007:149-150).

#### **4.8. ROMANS CHAPTER 6: Dead to sin, alive to Christ**

Sampley (2003:ix) defines rhetoric as the art of persuasion, oriented towards the future performance and behaviour of the audience. This is important as the instructions given by Paul here are directed not only to his primary audience, but to all who will listen down through time. Paul attempts to inform and instruct his audience, both ancient and modern as he uses frank speech to guide them to live out the gospel more fully and amend their ways. Paul now tells the Romans that they are, and must be slaves in a rhetorical dialogue with his readers, asking questions and answering them. He does so all in the context of an extended metaphor of slavery. The metaphor of master and slave is a fine example as Paul builds on chapter 5:14-21 to make his point. Everyone is a slave to something (or someone). The illustration using slaves is designed by Paul to obviously strike a note with his hearers. Slavery was a social reality as many of the population were either slaves or former slaves so they could relate to the concept of obeying a master.

Jewett (2007:424) continues to challenge on a personal level, when he indicates how easily the old master of sin will continue to try to assert authority in the believer's life. Nonetheless, enslavement to Christ leads to ever increasing holiness in the slave/Christian's life. The death to sin described in verses 1 to 11 of chapter 6, is the beginning of the new life under the new master, namely Jesus Christ. Being dead to sin means being alive to God; sanctification means a new slavery to righteousness found in Christ. Sanctification therefore demonstrates God's righteousness. So the call to commitment to Christ continues to challenge in any era. The idea of believers being transformed and made righteous endorses some important facts relevant to the research into the salvation of Israel – (a) to be a believer necessitates a personal commitment to be a slave to Christ. It is therefore not a collective matter as this would negate the responsibility for a personal response. The outworking of personal faith must be lived out corporately in unity between Jew and Gentile in the body of Christ, the church; (b) the only way in which salvation is possible is through the new life under the new master, namely Christ. There can be no credit for works of obedience to the Law; (c) as not all will come to faith in Christ, the remnant hypothesis is again endorsed.

Paul has discussed the possibility of a life characterised by peace with God, joy and a sense of freedom from condemnation, in stark contrast to the life lived under God's wrath. He has painted a picture of both Jews and Gentiles in sinful alienation from God and dealt with the vast subject of justification as the only solution to sin - in other words, to be dead to sin means being alive to Christ. Now in chapter 6, he deals with the particular problems that both Jew and Gentile have with the gospel he has already declared to them. In this regard Guthrie (1990:428-429) indicates that the Gentiles were prone to licence, believing that freedom in Christ allows them to ignore divine law, and the Jews to legalism as if the keeping of the Law gives merit before God and mitigates their accountability.

There is continuity to Paul's message as once again he refers to righteousness in the individual's life. Now he applies faith, rather than works, to the symbol of baptism, which he interprets as reflecting death to sin and identification with new life in Christ (vv1-14). Hodge (1994:317-318) clarifies what obedience to the law entails. He indicates that obedience to Christ is not intended to be understood as a slavish obedience or obligation to fulfil the law of God as a rule of duty as the condition of salvation. Being now under grace, means gratuitous justification with works as evidence of such justification. The old bond of the Law is dissolved, leaving the believer free in a union with Christ. Paul advocates slavery to Christ, rather than to the Law. The present post-baptismal way of life of the Roman believers stands in stark contrast to their previous pre-Christian manner of living. Paul does not conclude his teaching with the doctrine of justification – the declaration that the sinner is righteous – and thereby imply that the process of salvation is complete.

Paul explains the practical outworking of the initial act of justification is evident in the process of sanctification. Sanctification should be understood as God's ongoing work of producing the righteousness he requires. In spite of past sins, Paul encourages his hearers with the assurance that all who are justified will experience personal holiness. Paul alerts his readers to the danger of assuming that it is then acceptable to continue to sin (v1). He realises that because of his past as one who persecuted believers and adhered to the law, he was not able to present a different message. Yet he is now justified through the free gift of God's grace and can testify to being

transformed from a legalistic Pharisee to one redeemed through faith in Christ alone, and not works or obedience to the law (Barnett 2003:149-151).

Paul embraces sound Christian principles of being dead to sin because of Christ's death in his place and being also alive with Him. The transformed life being dead to sin buried with Christ and united to Him through faith in newness of life in the resurrection. The 'old man', the unregenerate self, is powerless against sin. The 'new man' continues the battle against sin continues; the 'new man' is no longer under its domination (v6). There is now no more penalty for sin as Christ met the legal demand for justice. There is now no more desire to sin but to live a godly life to His glory.

#### **4.9. ROMANS CHAPTER 7: Freedom from the Law**

Paul's soteriology flows from chapter 6 as he continues to deal with the reality of being dead to sin and alive to Christ. Paul continues his message of salvation by faith alone. He teaches that the whole world is guilty and the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ as Lord. So the theme is evident throughout of justification in the ongoing need to find a solution to sin. So throughout Paul's argument, the theme of justification as the solution to the problem of sin is evident. He builds on his teaching in chapter 5:12-26 about the death of sin in Adam and reminds his Jewish critics that it is Jesus Christ who has delivered Gentiles from the past sinful life. Like the Gentile believer, the Jewish believer has also been raised to new life, being justified through faith in Christ (Barnett 2003:156-157).

Scholars see chapter 7 as a difficult one to understand and have debated it for several reasons. Firstly, Paul's theology in verses 14-25 has raised questions as to the identity of the writer. Secondly, questions have been raised as to the identity of the wretched man he describes. Although some scholars may consider the issue of Pauline authorship to be contentious, in this thesis, Pauline authorship has consistently been accepted. Moo (2000:424-426) for instance sees Paul writing in a primarily autobiographical way of his own experiences to which everyone could relate. He looks back on his own plight and that of the Jews living under the Law.

This understanding of authorship is shared by Bruce (2000:139), Schreiner (2008:365) and others.

The other concern is in reference to what “Law” Paul is actually referring to here. The Apostle defends a Mosaic-Law-free gospel as he addresses the Jews who know the Law of God. They know that keeping the Law has failed to rescue them from the power of sin. As a Jew himself once under the Law, he knows the futility of attempting to relate to God through the Law. But both Jews and Gentiles must understand that knowing God depends on believing in Christ crucified and risen for one’s righteousness before God. His Jewish critics objected to a Law-free gospel saying it leads to lawlessness. So Paul has responded by reminding them of the life-changing impact the gospel has on Gentiles, who were previously unrighteous. Like the Gentile believers in their baptism (vv5-6), these Jewish believers have also been put to death by His crucifixion (Barnett 2003:153-154).

Whereas Mounce (1994:411) argues that in this context Paul speaks of ‘law’ in terms of its fundamental character rather than as a reference to the Mosaic legislation, such a view is contested by Bruce (2000:138). He points out that it is immaterial whether it was known by the people to be in the form of Jewish or Roman law. Yet it does seem that Paul is making specific reference to the Mosaic Law, which was given to Israel, and understood to be so by the people. Paul has an Old Testament background. He knew the Law well and in reference to Abraham asserts the fact that Abraham was not under the Law. It is therefore in this context that the ‘Law’ is the primary focus. Nonetheless, as Paul continues with his theme of the gospel of Jesus Christ, he does dwell at length on the all too human tendency to break the law and to sin. He is therefore principally concerned with the death to sin, symbolised by baptism in verses 4-14. This should result in a different kind of slavery, to righteousness and Christ and not to obedience to the Law. Paul knows how hard it is to not sin and the Law was the means by which he came to know sin (v7). In view of this, he confesses to having been a prisoner to the law of sin in the past.

Paul knew his readers would have many questions about how the Law relates to their faith in Christ. He therefore set out to explain the relationship of the believer to



grace, rather than to the Law. The Law can no longer condemn a believer, nor can it deliver a believer from sin, yet believers can fulfil the Law. So the Law continues to feature as Paul teaches in verses 1 to 6 that believers are discharged from the legalism of the Law. He is not against the Law, teaching antinomianism. The Law is in itself not evil as it reveals the divine standard against which to identify God's standard. Confronted by God's Law, sin has no appeal.

For the Jews, there is the double dying to self and to the Law. As Jewish Christians, the Law is dead to them and they are dead to the Law, so that they are now free to belong exclusively to the risen Christ. Even though it may anger his fellow Jews in Rome, Paul makes the bold statement that as a Jew who is in Christ, he is discharged from the Law (v6). So Paul makes it clear that God's promises are now being fulfilled through Jesus Christ. Jesus liberates from the Law and accomplishes what God has promised in the Old Testament. The judicial act of God whereby those who put faith in Christ are declared righteous in his eyes and free from guilt and punishment unites all who acknowledge the free gift of salvation. Essentially all believers are one in Christ and delivered from bondage to sin in a life characterised by freedom from the Law's condemnation. This is because the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ (Moo 2000:443-445; Romans 2009:134; Schreiner 2006:2-6).

#### **4.10. ROMANS CHAPTER 8: Deliverance from the bondage to sin**

Chapters 5 to 8 are regarded as the formal centre of the Epistle to the Romans by scholars such as Wright (2002:609) and Bruce (1985:166) who see in this pericope, a logical conclusion to the arguments laid out by Paul in the preceding few chapters. The vocabulary (the use of the word 'therefore') and the context of verse 1, confirms the link back to the end of chapter 5 that where sin abounds, grace reigns through righteousness. There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. In opening in such a manner, Paul is concluding what he has been saying all along: no one is right with God. The only way to be made right is to be justified by God, based on faith in Christ, which means freedom from the bondage of sin and the gift of eternal life in the Spirit.

So as Moo (2000:1139-1140) explains, the main focus of this chapter is the assurance of eternal life that the Holy Spirit brings to secure a freedom from the consequences of sin for the believer. The Holy Spirit confers on the believer, eternal life (vv1-13); adoption into God's family (vv14-17). The latter concept is rooted in the biblical picture of God graciously choosing a people of His own. There is also the certain hope of glory to come in verses 18-30 as believers are set free from the condemnation produced by Adam because they are now joined to Christ.

Paul brings together the results of his teaching in the first seven chapters that justification is by faith alone on the basis of God's overwhelming grace. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ, meaning that God has lifted the guilty verdict of sin which demands the death sentence. The guilty penalty of death was paid in full by Christ. This entitles all who (like Abraham) believe, to enjoy a restored relationship with Him in a way in which the Law of Moses could not provide. Paul has already devoted the whole previous chapter to the Law as he discusses the Old Testament Mosaic Law. He is faced with Judaisers on the one hand who sought to impose the Law on Gentile Christians and Gentile Christians on the other, who downplayed the importance of the Israelite heritage. Cranfield (1975:373) and Kruse (2000:636) make the vital link between chapter 8:1 and chapter 7:6-7 in terms of the tyranny of the Law to once again show the continuity and progression of Paul's teaching. All sins are forgiven and punishment removed as believers are without guilt in Christ. God justifies through faith and not through the works of the Law. Whereas the Law judges, there is now no condemnation for those who are freely justified. Believers are more than conquerors because the victory is in Christ.

The point is rightly made by Dunn (1988:510) and Moo (2000:284-285) that the Law as a covenantal ordinance for Israel at that time in their history was not given to make or keep anyone righteous. It is the Spirit (vv2-4) who enables the believer to fulfil God's Law and who indwells to do what the Law could not – deliver from the penalty of sin. Chapter 8:31-39 is a passage in which Paul skilfully addresses crucial concepts regarding the Christian faith. It is a powerful message that nothing can separate the believer from the love of Christ. That God did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over to death signifies His great love.

There is of course the dual blessing of knowing God in the present together with a future glory through the Spirit (vv18-25) which will transcend all present suffering and persecution. The heirs of Abraham will enjoy the full inheritance promised to him in fellowship with God. Paul's Christology speaks of being 'in Christ' to designate being in fellowship with Him. In proclaiming the gospel, he speaks of peace and reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ; he reveals the universal foundational story of how sin and condemnation entered the world by one man, Adam, and by another, Jesus Christ, grace, life and righteousness have been brought in. All of which is set against the reality of God's elective process and dealt with more fully in the following segment as the love of God in verses 28-31 revolves around those whom he called, justified and predetermined (Longenecker 2011:406-407; Moo 2000:295-296).

#### **4.11. ROMANS CHAPTER 9: God's prerogative revealed**

Paul has a change of emphasis in this pericope. He ends Chapter 8 proclaiming his absolute confidence in God's future salvation of His people. Nothing can stop God from fulfilling His promise to do so. In the previous eight chapters, he has concentrated on the doctrine of salvation. He has focused on the requirement to be made right with God on a personal basis and the only manner in which redemption is possible. Paul has deliberately used Abraham, who is respected by the people, as an example of one justified by faith in Christ. Now the apostle shifts his focus to God's prerogative to elect those who come to faith in Christ. Although Israel has rejected God, there is consolation for the nation as within that rejection, God has a purpose. Election may be a highly debatable topic but God has chosen a people, namely the church of Jesus Christ for salvation, made up of those individuals elected by Him (Schreiner 2000:452-453).

The significance of chapter 9 becomes evident for the salvation of Israel when seen in the light of the remnant of Jewish believers chosen by God. The remnant is the biblical fulfilment of His predetermined plan to redeem Israel, and which culminates in chapter 11. Paul's anguish for his people is revealed in chapter 9. He begins this chapter with the strong assertion that he speaks the truth in Christ and is not lying

and his conscience is clear. The revelation of the great sorrow and anguish to which Paul refers is revealed in verses 3 and 4. The apostle could wish himself cursed and cut off from Christ if it would result in his people turning to Christ. Just as Moses offered himself up for Israel in Exodus 32:32, so too is Paul willing to be cut off from salvation, if such were possible, if it meant that his people could be saved. Paul is convinced that without Christ, Israel is headed for destruction, despite all their advantages such as their adoption to sonship; the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Two further Jewish advantages are listed in verse 5, namely, the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah (Barnett 2003:219).

Grudem (1994:68-682) discusses at length the idea of election to point out that because a choice is caused by God, it does not mean that it is not voluntary and personal. A choice need not be absolutely free in order to be genuine or valid. According to early Jewish discussions; both divine sovereignty and human freedom are affirmed. God's elect comes from Old Testament language about the people of God as a group in Romans 3. But the early discussions are more about a collective and corporate entity known as Israel, as the people of God. In essence this means that Paul does not want the audience in Rome to think that God has outrightly rejected Israel as His people whom He foreknew (Ro 9:27). The national salvation of Israel is accordingly delayed and not displaced and Paul's theology in regard to Israel should not therefore be seen as supersessionist. The Gentiles in Rome believe that God has by and large replaced his first chosen people with another one. Paul must deny what appears to be the case, and make it clear that the Gentiles' status is 'grafted in wild olive branches'. God was not taken by surprise when the Jews rejected the Messiah, for this was foreknown by Him.

Nonetheless, Witherington (2004:246) fuels the debate about the fate of Israel in Romans. He agrees with Wright (1991:621) on the issue of election in chapters 9 to 11. The consensus is that according to early Jewish discussion, full allowance is made for both corporate election and the meaningful choices of individuals, who may commit apostasy and opt out of the people of God. The writers conclude that the only reason that Israel was destined to stumble was so that the elect Gentiles might

rise, but also so that all Jews might rise up too by the grace of God. To do so they endorse the destiny of Israel more as part of God's historical purpose for Israel than their personal salvation. The idea of corporate salvation of Israel is not a concept with which I can come to grips in Paul's letter to the Romans. It is more comfortable to focus instead on the status of the individual Jews who reject Christ. It is this rejection which has prompted Paul to wrestle with an answer about God, about God's salvation plan, and about the future of his own kin according to the flesh, his fellow Jews.

Morrison (2004) enquires if Israel has all these blessings and advantages over the Gentiles, is there a problem? Now Paul makes use of rhetorical questions to highlight the issue. He moves his argument along and makes use of a persuasive technique to convince the people that since the Jews have rejected Jesus, they are missing out on salvation. Paul's argument is summed up in verses 30 to 31 when Paul asks, "What then shall we say"? The Gentiles have obtained a righteousness (by faith), which they did not pursue; but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness, have not attained their goal. Instead, the genetic children of Israel stumbled over the 'stumbling stone', namely Jesus Christ. They mistook Jewish law for the means of salvation.

There is hope for Israel as God has not entirely cast the Jews aside. Paul teaches that eventually the Jews will come to express faith in Jesus Christ, enabling God to fulfil His promised plan to redeem the nation of Israel. Though the large majority of Jews have currently rejected Christ, it does not mean that God has rejected them. God's faithfulness is evident in His dealings with Israel in the past, namely, the wilderness wandering period. However, as the whole thrust of this research is to prove that salvation for Israel is individually and personally defined, resulting in the remnant. This means that the 'collective' salvation of Israel gives way to the existence of individual Jews who come to faith in Christ.

Paul's emphasis on personal faith therefore has a significant purpose. No nation can presume on God's favour by virtue of seemingly preferential selection in the past. As verses 14-18 indicate, it is God's right to show mercy on the one hand, and liberty on

the other to choose Israel or put her aside. In response to the accusation that such a teaching about God's sovereign election is inconsistent with His fairness, Paul cites Exodus 33:19 to remind the people of God's words to Moses that He will have mercy and compassion on whom He will (Wenham 2006:251; Edersheim 1995:54-55).

#### **4.11.1. Israel is not rejected**

In view of such a forceful lesson on God's authority and power, it is necessary to acknowledge that God has not rejected Israel. It is understandable for Israel to cast doubt on the reliability of God's character as if He has gone back on His promise to the Jews. Although research into any future salvation of the nation of Israel did not form part of this study it still warrants a brief mention as Paul addresses Israel's unbelief and rejection of God. Even though the Apostle continues to refer to the Old Testament to cement his teaching on salvation by grace over against obedience to the Law, nowhere does he intimate that these great privileges of separation to God have been annulled, forfeited, or cancelled. On the contrary, one of the purposes of Chapters 9 and 10 is to emphasize that God has not cancelled His promises to Israel or transferred them to some other people. Even though it seems to the contrary, God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. So although Israel has turned away from God, Paul is at pains to assure them that He has not forgotten them (Fanning 1993:572-574; Romans 2009:173-175).

#### **4.11.2. Gentiles who are in Christ (the spiritual seed of Abraham)**

Once again, Paul's message is a hard one as he now makes the all important distinction between natural Israel and spiritual Israel in verses 6-8. Paul again makes reference to the true identity of Israel and declares that not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. On the contrary, as affirmed by Cranfield (1990:226-229), it is not the nation of Israel who are God's children but rather it is the children of the promise (namely of future spiritual heirs) who are regarded as Abraham's true offspring. Paul suggests in keeping with the Old Testament 'remnant' theology, a spiritual Israel within a larger ethnic Israel exists. An explanatory note is made by Moo (2000:1143) in this regard. He refers to Galatians 6:16 where Paul refers to "Israel" to denote the entire people of God, both Jew and Gentile, but here he is

referring only to the Jews. Chapter 4:23-25 has also already revealed how the relationship to Abraham is not through physical descent and it is the children of the promise given to Abraham spiritually who are the true seed. This means that although the everlasting promise to Israel of a physical land is a collective blessing, the promise of spiritual descendants to Abraham is not and depends upon the individual Israelite who believes.

Edersheim (1995:50-51); Guthrie (1990:249) and Ryken (1998:3-4) write on a complex matter to clarify Paul's position. Paul does not ignore the privileged status of those who are descended from Abraham. But he does teach that not all of Abraham's descendants belong to the physical people of God (or national Israel). The Jews will give way to the Gentiles who believe and constitute His people. Gentiles become heirs to the eschatological promises of the Abrahamic Covenant as spiritual seed and not biological seed (vv6-9). There is only one conclusion to be drawn from such a dynamic and paradoxical finding - God's people are always defined by His choice and not by ancestry.

#### **4.12. ROMANS CHAPTER 10: Jesus Christ is the end of the Law**

Up to now Paul has clearly presented his message that God saves people by His sovereign grace through the atonement of Jesus Christ. The progressive unfolding of the theme of the gospel of Jesus Christ as commented on in ROMANS (2009:173-175), continues to be evident - with chapters 9 to 11 forming an integral part of Paul's gospel message. It is worth restating (see 4.11.1) that Paul clearly teaches that God has not rejected Israel. The problem lies with the Jews, who have rejected Jesus Christ as their Messiah. The Old Testament promise to redeem Israel is therefore not rendered invalid even though the people have resisted God's plan. It does mean however, that since Israel (apart from the remnant), has opposed Jesus; they have placed themselves in the position of the enemy of God. Paul persists in driving home the fact that salvation is for all people. Even Israel, who rejected God, still needs the gospel.

In confessing Jesus as Lord, Paul is correct because as Schreiner (2006:544-548) suggests, confession confirms what is in the heart. The two prerequisites for

salvation identified in verse 9 by Paul, are confession and faith as true Christians publicly identify with Christ. Paul's argument is strengthened as he points out how Christ came and was raised from the dead. Faith comes from accepting the preached word about Christ, but Israel would not accept it. The only conclusion to be reached is that Paul is heavy hearted because the Old Testament promise of salvation for the collective people of Israel will now only be fulfilled through individual Jews who, like Gentile believers, embrace the Messiah.

The Law continues to feature in Paul's argument as he explains in verse 2 how the Jews are hindered in their quest for salvation due to a misguided zeal for God. Their zeal is misdirected since it is not in accordance with the fact that Christ is the Messiah. The new covenant has superseded the old covenant, established on the Mosaic Law. Paul tries to impress upon the people their lack of knowledge of Christ, and the righteousness of God's character. Paul was himself once a prime example of misguided zeal in his attempts to obey the Law and persecuted believers. Paul has revealed that a mere remnant will be saved in chapter 9:27 and he once again reminds his hearers of the reason for this. It is the persistent seeking after a Law-based righteousness (Barnett 2003:225-226; Cranfield 1990:514; Hodge (1999:341).

Again in verse 4 Paul makes the point that Christ is the culmination of the Law. Belief in Him ends the futile quest for righteousness through any imperfect attempts by trying to obey the Law. Unlike the Gentiles, the Jews have not obtained righteousness because they tried to do so through obedience to the Law. Not only is ancestry no guarantee of salvation, in verses 5 to 13 it is clear that the Old Testament teaches that righteousness is by faith and not the Law. Faith comes from accepting the preached word about Jesus Christ (vv14-17) but Israel would not accept it. Israel heard and was able to understand but they continued to reject God. Therefore, He turned instead to save the Gentiles (vv18-21). Those who are not a nation, namely the Gentiles, who were not a part of God's special chosen nation, are in fact now included into God's family through faith in Christ. As difficult as it is to accept their Gentile brethren as equals in the kingdom of God (Ro 3:9 and 29), Barnett 2003:240; Cottrell 2005:387 and Schreiner 2011:418-419 all concur - Paul



instructs all believers to win the Jews to liberty in Christ and for the Jews and the Gentiles to love and understand one another.

Now, in chapter 10:9-13, the implications of Paul's strategy of rhetoric are clear. There are consequences to Paul's use of the Old Testament. For instance, in verses 9 to 13, his theme is that faith comes by hearing the gospel. This raises the question of whether Israel's unbelief is due to the fact that they have never heard the message. Paul refutes such an idea with a quotation from Psalm 19:4 that the voice of the prophet has gone out to all the earth. The heavens declare the general revelation of God's nature and majesty. Since the creation of the world, His divine nature is clearly seen, being understood through what has been made (Ro 1:20). Sandy and Headlam (1902:289) make the important statement that God does not leave Himself without a witness, adding to the case against them of pleading ignorance. The apostle laments Israel's rejection of the gospel that would have made them righteous before God.

In Chapter 10:16-11:10, Paul cites a large collection of Old Testament passages to explain Israel's unbelief in Christ which unbelief has far reaching consequences for the nation. For instance, Paul leaves his hearers with no illusion that they have any excuse. They have heard the gospel. To accomplish his mission, the apostle makes use of rhetorical questions which he answers with quotations from scripture to get his point across (examples of which are given below). Paul respects the original meaning of the biblical passages that he cites and presents theological implications and practical applications of the principles taught in the passage. Ellis (1957:218-219) for instance, explains how Paul's questions primarily come out of the contemporary situation with Israel as he applies the Old Testament text to the people.

Ellis, together with Dodd (1952:126) and Young (1972:3:339) aim to show how the biblical principle of the Old Testament passage is used by Paul as an example of the concept he is teaching. For example, Paul asks the question – who has believed our report in Romans 10:16, quoting Isaiah 53:1? Is it possible that Israel is God's chosen people, yet the majority of Jews reject Jesus as the Messiah? Paul is

assured that it is not the promise to Abraham's descendants that has failed (Ro 9:6), but the people who have rejected the Messiah. The promise is for the true Israel, the elect of God. Again, in Romans 10:19, using Deuteronomy 32:21, he applies the same principle that Israel is disobedient and God provokes them to jealousy through the Gentiles. Paul therefore shows that scripture anticipated Israel's unbelief and rejection of the Messiah and the blessing of the Gentiles. Paul uses Isaiah 65:2 to show how Israel's obstinacy and disobedience to God is the explanation as to why the Israelites do not understand that God is now working through Jesus the Messiah (Ro 10:21). Since God judicially hardened Israel (Deut 29:4; Ps 69), this explains why Israel has not obtained the righteousness and divine acceptance they seek in Romans 11:7-10.

In similar vein, Dunn (1988:603-609) and Moo (2000:1146) also make mention of the above-mentioned notable feature of Chapter 10. Paul makes use of quotations from (more than alluding to) the Old Testament to further strengthen his message that righteousness is attained by faith and not based on the Law. For example, the quotes from Deuteronomy 30:14 and Joel 2:32 offer further assurance that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Likewise, the confession of Jesus' Lordship in verse 9 has its background in the Old Testament concept of calling on the name of Yahweh to be saved. Again in verses 20-21, the quote from Moses given in Isaiah 65:1-2 has a succinct and poignant message - God revealed Himself to those who did not want to know Him; yet He continued all day long to stretch out His hands to a disobedient and contrary people. He goes on to quote Isaiah 28:16 to demonstrate again that salvation by grace through faith alone has always been God's salvation plan. Paul therefore deals strongly with Israel's lack of legitimate excuses. He points out that although the people claimed to be ignorant of God's righteousness as revealed in the Law, they should have realised that the same Law showed them their own unrighteousness. They should also have understood from the Law that righteousness comes from the Lord on the basis of faith.

There are then theological implications of Paul's rhetorical argument. He makes the link back to the Old Testament text, to reveal the implications for the people in a contemporary situation. The implication is clear, Israel has not accepted the good

news about Jesus foretold in the Old Testament (Isa 53:1), resulting in a judicial hardening and rebellion (Ps 69). The apostle's presuppositions about the people of God, the gospel and the Messiahship of Jesus, govern and influence his application of the various passages. In other words, the apostle appropriates the relevant Old Testament text as the yardstick against which to measure the people's status before God. The meaning and implications of these Old Testament scripture citations are therefore at the heart of his argument. In Romans 10:1, Paul expresses his heart's desire and prayers to God for the salvation of his brethren. Yet his anguish and sorrow is very real as he could wish himself accursed and separated from Christ, if it would mean that they come to faith in the Messiah (Ro 9:1-2). Paul would rather go to hell himself, if it would persuade the Jews to come to Christ.

What is resonant here is the need for the people to grasp the reality that there is in fact an end to the power of the Law. The need for symbols of religious devotion, such as circumcision and strict adherence to various laws such as dietary rules has passed. The Law always pointed to salvation by faith, and also indicated that obedience to it would result in blessing, while disobedience to it would result in a curse. The purpose of the Law therefore was always to point beyond itself, to show that there is no possibility of reaching God's standard of perfection as only God can make one righteous. Israel's unbelief is not God's fault; it comes from Israel's rebellion. They have heard, so there is no excuse to say they have not. In rejecting God's righteousness the election of only a remnant (see chapter 11), should come as no surprise to an obstinate and disobedient people who have rejected the righteousness of God (vv1-3) (Cranfield 2000:445; Moo 2000:648).

#### **4.13. CONCLUSION**

Research into the existence of a biblical Jewish remnant has its roots in the Abrahamic Covenant where two important facts are recorded. The first is the promise given to Abraham that he would be the father of future heirs. These believers, like him would constitute the remnant that have faith in the Messiah and are saved through the grace of God. The second is Abraham's personal faith, constituting individual and not collective justification before God. It is the reality of

Abraham's faith which is used by the Apostle Paul in chapters 1 to 10 of his Epistle to the Romans to promote his doctrine of salvation. He builds on the Abrahamic Covenant to instruct both Jews and Gentiles that they too, like Abraham, must be justified before God through Jesus Christ alone as the Law has no power to save.

An exegesis of each chapter chronologically shows the progressive unfolding of Paul's theological theme of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is powerful to save. Chapter 1 reveals the author's profile as the Apostle to the Gentiles, writing to the church at Rome in around AD57-58. Paul writes to the Christians in that city with the distinct purpose of proclaiming the message of salvation through Christ and not the Law.

Paul reveals God's righteous wrath against all of humankind as he addresses both Jew and Gentile. It is an important first step in his salvic message that in God's eyes, no one is righteous. The consequences of being separated from God who is angry at the total rebellion against Him, leaves no room for compromise with the Law. Paul moves to address the Jews specifically in chapter 2, to continue to enlighten them and warn them of their actual status before God as unregenerate offenders. He deflates their Jewish egos as to their assumed privileged status before God to show their need to become reconciled to Him in the light of their blatant sinfulness.

The theme of justification by faith, which flows out of his gospel message of salvation, is firmly established in chapter 4 as Paul relates personal faith and righteousness before God directly with Abraham. He is aware that to the people, Abraham is highly respected and regarded as one in a right standing before God because of his works of the Law. Less obvious was their willingness to accept the need for personal salvation on the basis of faith in the Messiah and not based on any rite such as circumcision.

Paul encourages his readers as he sets out the blessings of righteousness (chapter 5). Instead of being in direct opposition to God, there is a far greater gain in being reconciled to Him both now and in preparation for the coming judgment. The blessing of being right with God continues to be revealed by Paul as in chapter 6, he makes the comparison of being dead in sin or alive to Christ. To reiterate, the only

solution for sin is to be justified by faith and instead of being like Adam, condemned by sin, there is restoration in Christ.

Paul is constantly aware of the hold the Law has on the Jews' thinking. In their minds, Abraham was worthy of justification by obedience to the Law. As Paul moves on in chapters 7 and 8, he testifies to being free from the Law and the bondage to sin, found in the liberty offered by Christ. Such a revolutionary statement needed clarification and Paul continues to explain that the true Jew is in fact one who is a believer and therefore discharged from the obligations of obedience to the Law.

There is also freedom from the bondage of sin with consequences of blessing. There is no condemnation from God, for without salvation each individual Jew or Gentile remains in a position hostile to God and guilty under the penalty of death. The judicial act of being justified and made right before God supersedes anything the Law could do to redeem anyone. Obedience to the Law must be replaced by obedience to a new covenant in Jesus Christ.

Paul now deviates in chapter 9 to reveal God's position more fully. His doctrine of salvation has so far placed the onus on each individual person to accept or reject Christ. The revelation Paul makes is difficult to grasp, yet it is in line with the Old Testament promise of salvation for all who believe. All those who are saved and come to faith are known to God in His pre-election of them. His promise of salvation is open to all yet, paradoxically He predetermined who they are by His grace. Although Israel is not rejected, it is the spiritual seed of Abraham who are the true heirs, redeemed according to His plan.

Paul again refers to the impotency of the Law to save. He compares in chapter 10 the new covenant in Christ against the old covenant where the misguided zeal for the Law operates. Salvation is only possible when an individual believes in Him and is justified by faith and made righteous as Abraham and Paul were before God. In his discourses on justification by faith, Paul cites Abraham for good reason. It is to consolidate his position that he looks back to Abraham, applying to him the principle of justification by faith and not the Law (Ro 4:1-25). Paul's use of Abraham serves to highlight his soteriological teaching; faith being the cornerstone of this theology. He

reminds his readers of the promise made to Abraham of the inheritance of many nations, not through the law, but by means of saving faith. Furthermore he affirms the assurance which salvation brings that all who believe and are right with God, will share in His glory (Ro 5:1-11). The link is therefore a powerful one binding the Genesis record of the Abrahamic covenant (and the recurring covenantal theme in the Old Testament) to Paul's writings in Romans. Justification can only be fully understood when faith in Christ is acknowledged and not the Law.

The irrelevance of circumcision in terms of salvation is also on Paul's agenda. The Apostle makes the contrast between Abraham as an image of faith in contrast to the law and circumcision with special focus on Genesis 15:6 in Romans 4:25 and later chapters. Circumcision must serve as a seal of the righteousness of faith and not as a stipulation according to the Law (Ro 4:11). If the Jews believed that Gentiles could only enter their company if they would submit to circumcision, they were mistaken as Gentiles are acceptable on the basis of personal faith.

Although chapters 9 and 10 form part of the doctrinal teaching, Paul now makes a shift in emphasis. This pericope presents a right and fitting understanding of God's plan for Israel. Paul is intent on presenting God's position in the salvic process. As much as individual faith matters, nothing can influence God's election of those who shall be saved through faith in Christ. As he admonishes his readers and warns them, neither sin (6:1-23) nor can the Law (7:1-25) prevent God from accomplishing His purposes for the believer. The enormity of such a teaching becomes clear that God has the prerogative to select His own and no nation is guaranteed collective salvation on any other basis. Paul, in chapter 3, clearly dismisses any idea of preferential treatment for the nation, based on merit or self-worth. There is also no exemption from the penalty of undeclared sin.

This pericope (chapters 1 to 10) continues to flow out of the Old Testament Abrahamic covenant and continues in the covenantal theme. The covenant may not be as explicitly stated in the New Testament as it is in the Old, but it is implied; proof that the covenant motif surrounding Abraham expands beyond the Old Testament. The Abrahamic covenant continues to be significant in the New Testament. With the

coming of Jesus Christ, the New Testament substantiates the Abrahamic covenant as the coming of the Messiah is in accordance with the covenantal promise. Jesus is the deliverer of Israel from her enemies according to His promises to Abraham (Lk 1:54-55).

Significantly, when Paul interacts with the Old Testament Genesis text and uses Abraham as an example of one justified by faith, not only does he stress the importance of the covenant, he also makes the point that the text applies to the spiritual, rather than to the natural, heirs of Abraham. In so doing, he affirms Abraham as the father of all believers and such a designation transcends his role as the Old Testament physical patriarch of the Jewish people.

With the ultimate aim of extending the promised seed of Abraham to the remnant, it is clear that these chapters serve as a vital bridge linking Abraham to Paul's teaching. They serve as an all-important precursor to the exegesis of Romans chapter 11 that follows. Paul not only refers back to Abraham to get his message across, he is also forward-looking in Romans 1 to 10 to chapter 11 where he cements his teaching on salvation as it applies specifically to the nation of Israel. This pericope, together with the Abrahamic covenant, serves the subsidiary aim of providing the platform for the climactic next segment in the epistle.

The first ten chapters serve as an introduction which leads up to Paul's address to the Jewish people in chapter 11. It is recorded in these initial chapters how Paul makes clear his doctrine of salvation with the proviso of faith and not the Law. Chapter 11 marks the culmination in Paul's ultimate message regarding God's predetermined redemption plan for the nation of Israel. It is the elected individuals justified through faith in Christ who, together with Abraham, constitute the Jewish remnant. So although an overview of the first ten chapters, as a unit, is conducted as a relevant backdrop to chapter 11, it cannot be said that this pericope can stand alone as a separate entity. The entire book of Romans contains Paul's salvic theology in general principles and Israel's salvation in particular. Paul's theology is the cornerstone of Christian doctrine for both Jew and Gentile and final research into the remnant will complete his teaching.

Having established the basic doctrine of salvation through faith in Christ, Paul then builds on this to expound his theology that even Israel must be saved as individuals. There is no claim of dispensation based on their previous standing before God as a nation in terms of God's eschatological plan for all people. Chapters 1 to 10 therefore serve the dual purpose of informing on the doctrine of salvation and providing the unbroken connection back to the Abrahamic covenant. This pericope forms an important foundation for Paul's ultimate message in Romans 11. The context of the remnant is best understood and strengthened against the backdrop of the Abrahamic covenant combined with his teaching in this pericope. The purpose of conducting an overview of the first ten chapters is twofold. In the first instance, it is important to gain a biblical perspective on Paul's principle of salvation, namely justification through faith in Christ and not works. In the second, the process is helped along by building on the previous segment where the promise is given to Abraham of offspring who, together with Abraham as a man of faith are saved through faith.

This then is the purpose of the subsidiary research into Paul's treatment of salvation in chapters 1 to 10: it is to build on the Abrahamic covenant, where Abraham is depicted as a man of faith and given the promise of being the father of all who believe. Paul's main theme of the gospel of Jesus Christ and justification by faith continues throughout this segment and repeatedly teaches the inadequacy of the Law to save. He balances his teaching of personal faith against the controversial topic of election to ultimately reveal the existence of all those who constitute God's saved remnant. This theme, which is the culminating climax of this research, receives attention in the next chapter. Chapters 1 to 10 are therefore a bridge between the Abrahamic covenant and chapter 11 where the existence of the saved remnant of individuals is finally fully exposed. The findings of such implications are clear, that the people of Israel have brought God's judgment upon themselves because of their disobedience to Him. They have no defence against His judgment and the only hope is to repent and turn to the Messiah.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **AN EXEGESIS OF ROMANS CHAPTER 11**

#### **5.1. INTRODUCTION**

This research project revolves around the Jewish remnant. The aim is to consistently provide biblical evidence to sustain the existence of the Jewish remnant. The thesis statement is that it is only a set number of Jews who will be saved. This is in accordance with God's plan to redeem Israel. The reality of the remnant originates with the Abrahamic covenant, where Abraham is promised spiritual heirs. The patriarch's inheritance is however only fulfilled in the new covenant.

The remnant theme continues in the epistle to the Romans. Paul develops his explanation of God's salvation purposes for the Jewish people in Chapters 1 to 10. He makes the pivotal link back to Abraham to illustrate his teaching on personal faith. It is on the basis of Abraham's faithful obedience that God bound Himself by covenant to bring to pass His promise of spiritual heirs. Paul's primary agenda is the gospel message of salvation in Jesus Christ. Deep truths are divulged about salvation through faith on an individual and not a national basis. The reason so few Jews are saved is because of their rejection of the Messiah.

Chapter 11 is the culmination of Paul's teaching on salvation. He continues in the same remnant theme to address the Jews directly regarding their salvation. It is anticipated that an exegesis of chapter 11 will further clarify and endorse the Jewish remnant. The salvation of Israel is a complex issue because of the mystery surrounding God's divine plan to redeem His people. Paul reveals how God engineers a partial hardening of the Jewish people. In time, the blindness imposed on Israel, will be lifted. The gospel message will be embraced by those Jews who come to faith in Jesus Christ. But in the interim, the gospel message is taken to the Gentiles.

Paul's ultimate message regarding the remnant reaches its conclusion in verses 25 and 26. He makes the controversial statement that all Israel shall be saved but points profoundly to the remnant. Paul reveals that the salvation of the Jews will take place according to the elect number of God's predetermined plan. Paul does so to signify that it is in such a manner that the full number of Jews will be saved. He confirms that from God's perspective, not all ethnic Israel are God's chosen people.

## **5.2. PERSPECTIVES ON ROMANS CHAPTER 11**

Chapters 9 to 11 form a literary unit within Paul's epistle. Barnett (2003:205) draws particular attention to these chapters. It is here that Paul reflects theologically on the role of ethnic Israel in salvation history. These chapters therefore fit into the whole context of the book of Roman. God's dealings with Israel permeate the whole book. Paul addresses the problem of Israel's rejection of the Messiah. There are far-reaching consequences this rejection has for the salvation of Israel as well as for the Gentiles.

Paul reveals God's wrath against both Jews and Gentiles. He presents a strong warning of God's anger at the total disregard shown to Him. The doctrine of salvation in Jesus Christ is set out as God's solution to the problem of sin. Sources are consulted for the contribution they make to the remnant research. Scholars, who find for the Jewish remnant, are frequently referred to. Those with opposing perspectives, still enhance the study. Merkle (2000:710-712) for instance, elucidates on the significance of the Old Testament background to Paul's message. Abraham is the forerunner of all, who like him are saved under the new covenant in Christ. The reference to Abraham is also important bearing in mind that the Abrahamic covenant is the foundational document in this research into the remnant.

On the other hand, it is noted how Witherington (2004:266-267) places less emphasis on the set number of the elect or remnant who like Abraham are declared righteous. He rather interprets Paul's teaching to point to the eventual salvation of the whole nation of Israel after a temporary lapse of disobedience and rejection. Jewett (2007:702) also presents a plausible explanation for a literal salvation of the whole nation in a kind of apocalyptic conversion. This all inclusive salvation

perspective presents a challenge to my remnant view, based on God's special relationship with Israel. Paul assures his brethren that God has not rejected them so somehow God's love will find a way of bringing all His people into unity with Him. God is able to save them on a basis different from that of Gentiles. The mystery of the hardening of the Jews in chapter 11:25, is only therefore in part or until the full numbers of the Gentiles have come in. Bruce (1986:209) presents another aspect that when Paul talks about the remnant of Israel in chapter 9, he alludes specifically to the eschatological event of Jesus' first coming as the Messiah in Israel. The remnant exists only in Paul's time. To therefore ascribe the remnant of Israel a continuous existence throughout Christian history is to draw ethnic boundaries which are foreign to Paul's thought. However, Paul does not indicate that the hardening of Israel is temporary and will be reversed one day. Whilst it is a fact that God will never forsake His people, it is clear that in chapter 11:26, Paul is talking about the salvation of ethnic Israel which will take place throughout the history of salvation. God has not rejected Israel, but the 'proof' of this lies, not in the conversion of the whole nation, but in the existence of the remnant. God wants to save all the people, but according to my understanding of Romans, this is only possible if they all turn to Jesus as the Messiah. The only provision made for this to happen is through the jealousy the Gentile ingathering provokes.

With the concept of a Jewish remnant in mind however, in chapter 11, Paul builds on his teaching up to this point to specifically apply salvation to the Jewish remnant. God's eschatological plan for Israel through the remnant reaches its climax in verses 1 to 32. Here the Commentary on ROMANS (2009:199-200) helps to decipher what must appear to the Jews to be a complicated message. Paul picks up on the idea that he wrote about in chapter 9:6-8. The word of God has not failed and salvation is not assured for everyone. Paul makes the profound statement that not all Jews are Abraham's heirs, by virtue of ancestry. It is not those who are of the flesh who are the children of the promise. They are not all Israel who are descended from Israel. In other words, from God's perspective, His people are defined by His choice rather than through birth. This is an important distinction which Paul makes between the nation of Israel and God's chosen people.

The impression must be dispelled that the promise of descendants to Abraham is based on national identity. The children of the promise are found in the spiritual realm. They are not the physical children of the flesh. In essence, 'true' Israel consists of the elect few who come to faith in the promised Messiah. Moo (2000:1146-1148) gives food for thought when he comments that God never actually promised to save every individual Jew. Bruce (1983:181) and Cranfield (1989:445-446) concur in reference to chapters 9 and 10 that God has always saved only a remnant of Israel.

Hodge (1994:589) disagrees on the grounds that Paul means to convey the message that the whole nation of Israel shall be saved. He gives two reasons for his opinion – (a) to do otherwise is not the actions of a loving God. But it must be remembered that God is also righteous in judgment against sin and Paul has indicated this in the early chapters of his epistle; and (b) it is contrary to God's promise to redeem Israel which is not limited to the select few. Here too, Paul indicates in chapter 11, that God has the right to show mercy or to harden whomsoever he chooses. The process of inflicting spiritual blindness on the Jews so that the Gentiles may be saved is however, controversial and open to debate.

The manner in which the promise of salvation for the Jews is to be fulfilled is a difficult subject and the existence of the remnant remains controversial. As already mentioned, scholarly sources are continuously cited for backup. For now, it is Grudem (1994:671) who reliably provides support for the Jewish remnant as the only biblical reality. Israel has always rebelled against God, but there is always a remnant of Jews, chosen by grace (v5). Israel's disobedience will in no way interfere with the outworking of God's promise to redeem Israel. The concept of a full restoration of national Israel is a vast subject on its own and although touched on, does not influence the research into the remnant.

### **5.3. VERSES 1 to 6: God has not rejected His People**

Paul allays fears that God has rejected His covenant people and uses himself as an example. He is an Israelite, from the tribe of Benjamin and a descendant of Abraham. He is also a member of the believing remnant as a Christian Jew, having

recognised the Messiah in chapter 9:32-33. He reminds his readers that God has not rejected the people whom He foreknew, even though it appears that way. It is the Israelites who, on the whole have rejected God and are without excuse. They had an opportunity to know of God's salvation plan for them. They had the chance to embrace the Messiah as God's solution to the problem of sin (chapter 3).

Now, in verse 5 Paul offers proof of God's intervention in their lives. Yet he presents a difficult message as Longenecker (2011:414) and Schreiner (1998:582-583) point out. Instead of giving assurance of a national salvation, Paul points to the remnant as God's act of grace. Paul compares the situation in his own day to that of Elijah to show how God always acts towards Israel. Elijah, like Paul spoke out against the defection of Israel from the true worship of the Lord. When the prophet begged God to act against Israel, notably God's response was to show mercy. The outcome was not a full restoration of the nation, only a remnant. Elijah was given the assurance that a solid core of 7,000 true believers still existed (1 Ki 19:10-18). It is necessary, says Barnett (2003:261) to always bear in mind that God is working His purposes out in mercy and not revenge. The first six verses of chapter 11 therefore serve as a defence of God's grace in establishing a believing remnant. These verses add up to the conclusion that God is not done with the Jews. He has not cast them off as a nation and there is still a faithful remnant reserved by Him.

#### **5.4. VERSES 7 to 10: A hardening in judgment**

Paul has made the statement that God has not cast His people aside. The remnant is the harsh reality implicit in Paul's message. God always selects a small number of people to inherit His blessing. Paul now explains how the remnant will come about. He refers to the divine initiative to blind many Jews to the truth regarding personal faith. God may appear vindictive with His judicial hardening against His own people for rejecting Jesus Christ. Moo (2000:1147) and Harrison (1995:176-177) throw positive light on a difficult situation. Firstly, the hardening in judgment is temporary and over a select number only. Secondly, it is during this time of hardening that the gospel message is taken to the Gentiles. If God has only set aside a number of chosen Jews, then it is by God's hand that some are chosen and the rest are

hardened in judgment. God is as Edersheim (1994:764) reminds, sovereign in grace. It is in God's power to do with His own, as He wills. The hardening is a controversial topic as is evident in the following analysis of two prevailing views. The issue surrounds the extent/duration as opposed to the nature/manner of the hardening with different consequences for the remnant.

#### **5.4.1. The extent of the hardening**

As already mentioned above, Paul continues to explain the purpose behind God's deliberate blinding of His own people. It is so that the Gentiles may be saved during this time; thereafter the Jews will again be given the opportunity to come to faith in Christ. If Paul is referring to the extent or duration of the hardening, this means that the whole nation is blinded for a while, after which all the people of Israel will be saved. This is the interpretation favoured by Dunn, Hodge, Murray and Ridderbos who advocate a partial hardening of the whole nation of Israel. Hodge (1994:45, 371-372) confirms this when he anticipates a great and general conversion of the entire nation. He bases the assumption of a collective salvation on God's previous dealings with Israel which affected the whole nation. In the same manner in which the whole nation was rejected; the whole nation will be restored. Paul does not however, teach that the whole nation of Israel will be saved from God's righteous judgment. Paul even refers to himself as a member of the chosen remnant. He uses Abraham to illustrate the point that it is the patriarch's personal faith response which brought about his salvation.

Further support is garnered for the existence of the remnant from Hendriksen (1981:34). He dispels the notion that all the people are spiritually blinded for a time only. This is because Paul does not refer in verses 25 to 27 to a time-frame for the hardening, after which the whole nation of Israel will literally be saved. Hendriksen makes the point that, in every age, only some Israelites are hardened, and in every age only some Israelites are saved (Ro 9:27; 10:16, 21). Reference has been made to God's dealings with Elijah. It was only a few who remained faithful to God. The whole purpose Paul makes reference to Elijah is to drive home the point that God

always chooses a few who are true to Him. Paul's teaching on the election of the few is in accordance with his theology of the remnant.

#### **5.4.2. The manner of the hardening**

The aim of this research thesis is to provide evidence to justify the existence of the remnant. The process is assisted by the contribution of those scholars who acknowledge the Jewish remnant, based on the context of Paul's message. Cranfield (1979:561) and Morris (1988:420) challenge the findings of Dunn and Hodge referred to above, who advocate a partial hardening over the whole nation. This leads literally to the salvation of the whole nation. Cranfield and Morris refer back to chapter 9 where the election of a predetermined remnant is confirmed. They note how Paul now continues in the same vein to explain the manner of the hardening. Paul does not want his hearers to be ignorant of the fact that Israel has experienced a hardening in part. It is not a partial hardening of all Israel. The apostle explains that there is a partial hardening over part of the people until the full number of Gentiles is saved. In verse 17 there is a numerical sense to Paul's message as he refers to some of the Jews being hardened. Similarly, looking ahead to verses 26 and 27 there is also a quantitative aspect. Paul refers to only some of the Jews being saved and this is synonymous with the remnant. Paul therefore presents a strong message that the blindness to which he refers, relates to the degree or extent (partial) of the blindness.

#### **5.5. VERSES 11 to 16: God's process of salvation**

It is my aim to continue to make a strong argument in support of the Jewish remnant, based on biblical data. It is necessary to do as the issue of the remnant is a contentious one. There are those who dispute the idea that God could only save a few Jews and opt instead for a national salvation of Israel (discussed under

5.7.below). The concept of 'remnant' has its beginnings in the Old Testament. One example of this has already been touched on and is found in 1 Kings 19:10-18. It concerns Elijah and the few who remain faithful and are saved. Hendriksen (1981:378); Hodge (1994:373) and Ridderbos (1981:358-360) also offer their support for the principle of remnant from an Old Testament perspective. They make the timely reminder of the promise made to Abraham of spiritual heirs. This promise results in two remnants, consisting of both Jewish and Gentile believers, who like Abraham, come to faith in Jesus Christ. Further evidence of God's plan to redeem both Jewish and Gentile remnants is given in Deuteronomy 32:21. It is here that God indicates that He will use those who are not a nation (the Gentiles) to provoke His people to jealousy.

The outcome of this Old Testament divine initiative continues in the pericope now under review. The concept of 'remnant' is again endorsed in Romans 11:14 with regard to the salvation of the Jews. The coming of Jesus Christ to Israel gave the nation the opportunity to accept or reject the message. But they preferred the Law, the religious practice of Judaism rather than the faith option. Their rejection will result in a time of blindness in judgment against them. The Jewish transgression has opened the way for salvation to come to the Gentiles as Paul and others preach the gospel to them. Yet God's hardening of Israel (vv11-12) does not mean the end of God's plan for them. On the one hand it brings salvation to the Gentiles but on the other; it provokes the Jews to jealousy. Paul's message is that Israel has not stumbled so as to fall. Barnett (2003:249-250) and Cranfield (2004:554) pick up on the repetitive nature of Paul's message to constantly keep the remnant to the fore. There is still hope for the salvation of Israel. But it will only be accomplished through the divine process of the elect remnant. Paul does not indicate that every Jew will be saved. He refers only to those who will be aroused to respond to Jesus Christ. It is God who is behind the hardening as the means by which some Jews will respond to the gospel and be saved. God, in His wisdom did not make salvation available to the Gentiles at the same time as the Jews. This only adds to the mystery of His ways.

#### **5.6. VERSES 17 to 24 – further warnings against Gentile arrogance**



Paul repeats his caution (Ro chapter 3) to the Gentiles to be mindful of their position. He continues to admonish the Gentiles to not be arrogant towards Jews. Their salvation is only possible because of the Jewish rejection. The place of privilege which they occupy is only possible because of the unbelief of Israel. To illustrate his point Paul makes use of metaphors – wild branches and natural branches, which are synonymous with the unbelieving Gentiles and the unbelieving Jews respectively. As Morris (1988:409-410) explains, the natural branches which were broken off consist of the unsaved majority of Israelites who rejected Jesus Christ. The wild branches consist of those Gentile Christians who are grafted in amongst Jewish Christians. It does not mean that Gentiles believers are then classified together with the Jews to be “Israel” (dealt with under 5.7.1.). Alexander (20002:371) goes a step further when he correctly defines both saved Jews and Gentiles as the church. This is based in reference to the argument in verse 17. Believers are identified as the spiritual seed of Abraham. Abraham is acknowledged in chapter 4:16 to be the spiritual father of all who believe. Now under the new covenant these two remnants become joint partakers of the promised blessing to Abraham of heirs.

#### **5.6.1. Gentiles – the wild branches**

The Gentiles are defined using the metaphor of ‘wild branches’ for good reason. As already mentioned, they only partake of the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant by virtue of being grafted in. Paul continues to make the status of the Gentiles clear. Thielman (2004:573-574) refers back to the pericope 9:30-10:21 where Paul reminds the Gentiles that they have no grounds to feel superior. They must exercise caution as their position is reversible. If the Jewish blindness is initiated by God and lifted by Him, it is no more difficult for a Jew to be saved than for a Gentile. It is in fact easier for Jews to be re-grated in according to verses 23 and 24. The Gentiles’ status does not change as already mentioned. Barnett (2003:261-162) confirms that the grafted-in Gentiles are not part of Israel and never will be. Although both partake of the blessings under the Abrahamic covenant, they cannot be identified collectively as “all Israel”. This is an important distinction as an exegesis of verses 25 to 27 will show.

#### **5.6.2. Israel – the natural branches**

In contrast to the wild branches, verses 16-21 reveal the 'natural branches' as the rightful heirs and recipients of the gospel. If the Jews do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted back into their own tree (v23), the olive tree (the symbol to define and trace the development of the people of God). There is the assurance that the natural branches will be readmitted back into God's eschatological programme. The Jews must however, turn back to God from unbelief as they were always supposed to do in the Old Testament. Salvation is conditional upon calling on Jesus Christ, described as the stumbling block to Jews in 1 Corinthians 1:23. Bruce (1985:204) and Waltke (2007:325-326) point to two important facts which continue to emerge in Paul's teaching. Firstly, salvation is only possible through personal faith in Jesus Christ. Secondly, as not all Jews will be reconciled to God, the Jewish remnant is the only outcome. Paul's position is clear – even though ethnic Israel is largely unfaithful to God, He will again bring His people into their rightful place. This will not happen by means of a national conversion, but through the election of the remnant.

#### **5.7. THE SALVATION OF ISRAEL: VERSES 25 to 27**

This section sees the climax of everything Paul has written about the salvation of Israel. The foundation is laid in chapters 9 to 11 where Paul states that God will restore Israel to her former position as a covenant nation. The progressive unfolding of the covenantal theme as defined by Liroy (2006:81-106) is now evident in verse 25. It is here that the theological link between the Old and the New Testaments is fully established. Paul goes back to the Old Testament to support his argument that God is going to save Israel and turn away any ungodliness or lawlessness. He affirms that the Jews will be reinstated. God has not cast them away as though He has forgotten His people. The promise of spiritual heirs given in Genesis 12:1-3 and confirmed throughout the Old Testament, is only fully resolved in the New Testament.

The importance of the Abrahamic covenant cannot be overstated. What began with Abraham is finally fulfilled under the new covenant. Oswalt (2000:222-223) highlights Paul's approach to a serious subject in chapters 9 to 11. The writer draws attention to the key themes of Isaiah of judgment and hope used by Paul in his discussion of

the fate of the Jews. Paul quotes Isaiah 59:20-21 and 27:9 to remind Israel of her propensity to sin, in contrast to God's determination to redeem His people through the promised Deliverer.

All along the thesis has been moving towards this point to cement the Jewish remnant as God's plan to redeem Israel. It is in this pericope that the matter is resolved. Verses 25 to 27 are pivotal to all that has gone before with regard to the argument for the remnant. Yet the issue of Israel's redemption remains a perplexing one. Paul admits his concern (v25) that his hearers not remain ignorant of the mystery which surrounds their redemption. Paul makes it known that it is God Himself who is responsible for the indifference to Him. It is God who has engineered the partial hardening of Jewish hearts and the salvation of the Gentiles. The issue of the remnant is a complex one even for scholars, and one which invites conflicting views. Barnett (2003:254) and Waymeyer (2005:57-59) draw attention to two main schools of thought who are opposed to the concept of the Jewish remnant. It is therefore appropriate at this point, to scrutinise these perspectives. A fair assessment must be undertaken to establish why they do not satisfactorily negate Paul's remnant theology.

#### **5.7.1. The Church, inclusive of both Jews and Gentiles**

Under this view, "all Israel" in verse 26 is defined by Paul to include the combined numbers of both redeemed Jews and redeemed Gentiles. Ladd (1993:608) observes how this view is based on the perspective that there is no clear passage which teaches the restoration of national Israel. The Jews no longer enjoy the place as the special people of God; this place has been taken by the Christian community. In terms of any hardening, it is a partial one on ethnic Israel. John Calvin (Horne 1978:331-333) is supported in this view by Ridderbos, Robertson, Waltke and Wright. In the context, however of verse 26, Paul deals specifically with the Jewish remnant to denote the full number of Jews who come to salvation in Jesus Christ. There is a remnant of believing Jews still being saved throughout the present age.

Hendriksen (1968:37); Morris (1988:409-410); Schreiner (1998:582-583) and Waymeyer (2005:57) all dispute the idea that the reference in verse 26 is to both

Jews and Gentiles. If the Jews are in fact distinguished from the Gentiles throughout chapters 9 to 11, the identity of “all Israel” cannot now be changed to reflect the church. To claim that Paul is now advocating that God’s irrevocable promises given to Israel are fulfilled in such a manner is an unlikely scenario. For the church to be regarded in the context of all Israel is unscriptural. It would be contrary to the Old Testament history of Israel as a chosen nation to suggest otherwise. The nation of Israel has not lost her identity to the church (made up of believers only). Paul’s message is clear. He predicts the salvation of some Israelites only as he deals with the ultimate salvation of national Israel. In addition to which, Paul goes on immediately to refer to the Jewish remnant, which indicates that Gentiles are not under discussion at this point. He notably maintains a distinction between Jews and Gentiles throughout the chapter. A consistent reading of both the Old and the New Testaments requires that the Jews and the Gentiles be distinguished from one other.

#### **5.7.2. Ethnic Israel - a saved nation**

According to this view, the salvation of the whole ethnic nation of Israel is secure. In which case, the reference to ‘all Israel’ in verse 26 must be understood literally to include all natural Jews. God’s faithfulness to His covenant people translates into a future literal salvation of the whole nation. Nothing must be seen to deter God from the salvation of His people. This is the belief of many Jews and has held central stage throughout the history of the Jewish nation (Deut 7:6-8). The existence of the elect remnant is then made null and void as the final fulfilment of God’s redemptive plan for that nation (concession is nonetheless made for human freedom to choose to accept or reject Christ). The end result is that not every single Israelite will in any event, be saved. This is a popular view amongst scholars such as Bruce and Hodge who concur that ‘all Israel’ should be translated in such a manner. Moo (2000:1147) agrees with them that a collective salvation is the inference Paul makes as he predicts a great and general conversion of the Jewish people.

As far as the current hardening is concerned, Dunn (1985:209) explains this to be a partial blindness which will persist until the end of the present age, until the full number of saved Gentiles has come in. At that time, the divine hardening will be

removed, and in this manner, the ethnic nation of Israel as a whole will turn to Christ and be saved. This perspective is understandable in the light of the Jews position as God's chosen people. But it is unacceptable for various reasons. God has the right to elect some individuals and harden others. He has decreed that there is only a number who will be saved as a divine imperative in His plan to redeem Israel. If this is the case, Paul cannot be promoting a concept of Israel as a redeemed nation, literally. Guthrie (1990:428-429) and Munck (2005:1544) add their weight to the argument. They confirm that the promotion of a national salvation would override and contradict the strict doctrine of salvation stipulated by Paul. In the light of Paul's teaching, Israel cannot take her salvation for granted. To reiterate, Abraham was justified and made right before God because of his personal faith. Paul seems to have anticipated opposition down the road to his theology. He has repeatedly stressed individual faith all along. Salvation is not guaranteed without personal commitment to Jesus Christ.

#### **5.8. "ALL ISRAEL" SIGNIFIES THE REMNANT (Verses 25-26)**

Chapters 9 to 11 reveal that God has not failed regarding His purpose and love for Israel. There is then the expectation that the whole nation of Israel will be redeemed as God's covenant people. Ideally, that is the interpretation placed on Paul's words in these verses. But it is not the message conveyed by Paul when he indicates that God has a plan to redeem Israel. An exegesis is on record of this major pericope with the literary assistance, amongst others, of Barnett, Cranfield and Moo. The crucial question all along is how Israel's salvation will be accomplished and whether or not there is enough evidence to support the Jewish remnant.

So far the pros and cons of two possible solutions have been dealt with. Firstly, there is the view that Paul's teaching is in reference to both saved Jews and Gentiles. It is however, only the church and not Israel which consists of both groups. Alternatively Paul teaches an inclusive salvation for the entire people of Israel. This assumption is based no doubt on the fact that God has not cast off His people, even in their ongoing disobedience. As already mentioned above, the latter is the view favoured by Moo, Bruce and Hodge. Barnett (2003:210-211) and Berkhoff (1994:699) express

their legitimate concern. It is doubtful whether scripture warrants the expectation that Israel will, as a nation, turn to Jesus Christ. The salvation of Israel will not come through a national conversion. Paul does not expect his efforts to bring about the eschatological turning of the entire nation to Christ. Nor can the promises to Israel be reconciled with the rejection of the greater part of Israel. To suggest otherwise implies that God condones and overlooks the sin of Israel in a preferential way.

The study into the Jewish remnant has gone according to plan. The Genesis account of the Abrahamic promises merges into Paul's message in his epistle. To recap, Paul, a direct descendant of Abraham, is proud of his Jewishness in chapter 1. All along he conveys the necessity for personal faith, irrespective of nationality. He uses Abraham's faith to illustrate his doctrine of salvation as an individual act of God's grace. Paul is able to affirm his faith and his election as God has not cast him aside (2 Cor 11:22; Gal 1:13-14). Riddebos (1975:354-355) and Robertson (2000:179-180) in fact, make a compelling case for the remnant from the Old Testament perspective. They reiterate how in Romans chapter 9:8, the link is established back to the Abrahamic covenant. Paul makes the comparison between natural children and the children of the promise. It is not the natural offspring of Abraham who are God's children in a collective salvation of the nation. It is the children of the promise who are to be saved, as a result of the sovereign choice of only some individuals. Israel has rejected her Messiah as they stumbled (9:32), have not believed (10:16-17) and refused to turn to God.

To recap - the Jewish problem is addressed in verse 1 with the question, has God rejected His people? Horne (1978:320-334) draws attention to the pertinent issue here, which is – who constitutes God's people! Paul deals at length in chapter 9 on the schisms in Israel to demonstrate the fidelity of God, in spite of the incredulity of so many Jews. If Paul makes the distinction between 'Israel of the flesh' and 'Israel of the spirit', the latter must consist of the elect within ethnic Israel. In the context of chapters 9 to 11, these elect are equivalent to the remnant, for they are not all of Israel who are descended from Israel (9:6). Munck (1998:36) makes the point that Paul does not here visualize "Israelites" who do not belong to the physical Israel as being within the Church. Rather, that claims cannot be made on the basis of physical

descent, since descendants of the patriarchs with exactly the same claims were allotted different destinies.

In chapter 10, Paul marshals further arguments to indicate that God has not reneged on his promise to his people and John Murray (65-66) is very helpful in his commentary in this regard. He does so in reference to the apostle's appeal to his identity as a Jew. Since Paul is an Israelite, his acceptance of God affords proof that God has not completely abandoned Israel. Also, the appeal to his own identity is the reason given for the vehemence against the notion that God has cast off his own people. So although Israel as a whole has been disobedient, yet a remnant is left and the rejection is not complete.

It is through the redemption of the chosen few that the evidence exists to show that God has not totally rejected His people. His promises were always intended to apply solely to the believing remnant within the nation as a whole. Further support for the Jewish remnant comes from Cranfield (1979:561) and Morris (1988:409-410). They defend Paul's teaching on the remnant as the only feasible solution to the problem of Israel's salvation. Their argument is based on an understanding of the hardening from Paul's perspective. The hardening to which Paul refers is a partial one over only a part of Israel. After the hardening, he expects the conversion of only some individuals. The conflicting views in this regard, have already been addressed in 5.4.2. above.

The salvation of a small remnant from the total mass is ample proof that God's true people are not cast off in terms of His love (11:5-6). Although Israel as a whole has been disobedient, yet a remnant is left and therefore God has not forsaken His people. This is the important conclusion also reached by Horne (1978:331) that Israel's rejection is not yet complete and according to verse 11 nor is the rejection final. A partial and not total or final but temporary viewpoint, both support the proposition that God has not cast off His people. His purpose regarding spiritual Israel is that the promise is yet to be fulfilled. In the interim, their stumbling has brought salvation to the Gentiles. The salvation of Israel through the remnant obviously remains a contentious issue, no matter the evidence to support it. The

apostle Paul even seems to contradict himself in verses 25 and 26 when he infers a national salvation of Israel.

But the remnant as the resolution of God's programme to redeem His people is the only biblical one. Verses 25 and 26 hold the key to understanding God's eschatological fulfilment for Israel through the remnant. It is therefore crucial to exegete these verses in the context of Paul's message regarding the salvation of Israel. To this end verse 25 may be paraphrased as follows – 'so the nation of Israel is experiencing a partial hardening in that some Jews, who are appointed for salvation, are temporarily broken off so that the full number of elect Gentiles may come in to Israel by being 'grafted in' (Bryan 2006:702; Ladd 1993:106-107). Waltke (2007:442-443) and Alexander (2000:769) also reach a conclusion in line with Paul's teaching on salvation on two fronts – (a) it is specifically only Gentiles and Jews who believe, who receive the promised inheritance to Abraham of heirs, and (b) it is only some Jews who are saved who constitute the Jewish remnant. This means that "all Israel" therefore refers to ethnic Jews only, who are saved.

It is noted however, that Witherington (2004:272) is amongst those who disagree that Paul refers to only a few Jews and contends that the whole nation of Israel will be saved. If the mystery which is the Jewish remnant is understood in spiritual and not physical terms, this presents a problem to me. If Paul is advocating individual faith and not national selection, redemption is a spiritual issue. The ongoing significance to the Jewish nation is as Paul defines it - God has a predetermined plan to save Israel through the remnant. Any future Jewish dispensation may then be left out of the Romans equation. In this regard, Moo (2000:1149) and Motyer (2000:586) endorse this perspective and maintain that if a spiritual emphasis is maintained, the epistle to the Romans contains a biblically sound message.

Another real soteriological problem is exposed when confronted with the dual-covenant approach, briefly referred to previously. Franz Rosenzweig (1953) is credited with being the first serious proponent of this bi-covenantal approach in which Christianity and Judaism are both seen as legitimate religions and approaches to God and to reality. Vanlaningham reports that dual covenantalists such as Lloyd



Gaston (1987; Krister Stendahl (1976:38) and John Gager (1983) maintain (a) that to Paul, the Jewish people have always been rightly related to God and that Jesus Christ is the saviour only of the Gentiles, not the Jews; (b) the Jews, having always enjoyed, as they continue to enjoy, a right standing with God because of His covenant faithfulness to them as promised in the Torah and through their own faithfulness in keeping the Law – do not then require salvation in Christ. This presents a shocking scenario that the death of Christ has relevance only for the Gentiles. Gentiles, through His death, can receive the same position of righteousness before God that the Jews possess by virtue of the Law. The Jews are then, by implication, never criticised by Paul for doing ‘works of the Law’ in order to be justified in Romans 1:13-17. Paul only complains that the Jews are unwilling to recognise that in Christ the Gentiles could have the same standing before God that they enjoy through the Torah (Ro 10:1-21). never urged by Paul to embrace Christ as their Messiah. Such an interpretation of the scriptural position of the Jews highlights the need to stand firm on my own understanding of the scriptures. The statement by Stendahl, for instance, cannot be accepted that all Israel will be saved without any acceptance of Christ. There is a remnant as the true means by which God’s redemption of Israel is complete. The salvation of Israel therefore unfolds through the reality of the remnant. As not all Jews will turn to Christ, the existence of the remnant is once again proven.

#### **5.8.1. In this way – verse 26**

Verse 26 continues to be significant in Paul’s endorsement of the remnant for a defining reason. Paul makes the highly charged statement that it is ‘in this way’ that the redemption will come about. The phrase is significant and flows easily from his previous declaration concerning the salvation of all Israel. Paul intends to convey the message that after the hardening over part of the Jews has been lifted, it is in such a manner that the remnant shall be saved. Cranfield (1979:576) confirms the New Testament use of the Greek phrase *kai houtos to* mean - “and in this way” or “in this manner” that Israel shall be saved. Similarly, according to the explanation given in the Liddell-Scott-Jones Lexicon of Classical Greek (2010:1276-1277: ref C.V.), what follows consequently is a result of what has gone before. In other words, in verse 26,

there is continuity with verse 25 as Paul demonstrates a chronological sequence of events. There is no break in Paul's statement in verse 25 that all Israel shall be saved in this way.

The salvation of Israel is to take place in such a way, namely through the remnant. It is then not technically correct to interpret Paul's words to mean 'and then' or 'after that'. This is because Paul does not describe a subsequent and separate next event. Both Dunn (1998:681) and Longenecker (1989:96-97) do however hold such a view. They place the emphasis of verse 26 on the manner or pattern by which God will save Israel. However, according to the context of verses 25 and 26, God is not going to save every Israelite. There is no change in context of Paul's statement. Even though God has not forsaken the Jews entirely, there is only the select number saved from within this rebellious people. Only then and not before and in this way, shall the salvation of Israel be fully accomplished. Berkhof (1994:699) sums it up well. 'All Israel' is to be understood as a designation not of the whole nation, but of the whole number of the elect out of the ancient covenant people. It is in such a manner that the redemption of Israel will be brought about.

### **5.8.2. Salvation through faith in Jesus Christ**

To reiterate, the overriding theme of the letter to the Romans is the gospel of Jesus Christ, powerful to save by the grace of God. God's solution to the problem of sin is first recorded in chapter 3. It is here that Paul teaches that righteousness is only available through faith in Jesus Christ. The significance of Paul's doctrine is revealed in the previously noted exegesis by Barnett, Carson, Cranfield and others. They support Paul's doctrine of salvation as it endorses salvation as an individual's free act of faith. Personal faith in turn, dispels any notion that salvation is possible in any other way. This means that there can be no national exemption for Israel based on their status as God's covenantal people.

In the ongoing commitment to sustain the Jewish remnant, further sources are referenced. This is because of their evangelical stance on the scriptures, with specific focus on the book of Romans. Both Guthrie (1990:427) and Harris (2000:766) endorse Paul's doctrine that salvation. Guthrie (1990:427) acknowledges

the theme of righteousness obtained by faith in Christ, based on the doctrinal exposition in Romans 1:16-8:39. Paul's doctrine of salvation in the early chapters has enforced the need for personal faith as the only way in which redemption is possible for anyone. Similarly, Harris (2000:766) refers to Paul's calls for a confession of faith in Christ in chapter 10:9-13. God has made no proviso for deliverance from His judgment to be accomplished in any other way than already set down by Paul. There is therefore no way around Paul's doctrine of salvation. Paul is clear that it is equally necessary for Jews to put their faith in Christ to be saved as it is for Gentiles. As most people reject God's offer of salvation, God's choice of a remnant of His people is then the most sound and plausible explanation behind the debate on verses 25 to 27.

#### **5.8.2.1. Gentiles in Christ, the Spiritual Seed of Abraham**

The issue of the Gentiles' standing before God has already been discussed in 4.11.2. above. Further pertinent thoughts are now generated in connection with verses 25-29. Paul again refers to the mystery surrounding the hardening in part of the Jews until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. So although the main focus is on the salvation of the Jewish remnant, it is necessary to include the Gentiles into God's redemption programme. The significance of this is noted by Edersheim (1995:51); Fruchtenbaum (1993:699) and more recently Barnett (2003:257) in their defence of the Jewish remnant. They reflect back on the Abrahamic promise of heirs. Abraham's descendants do not include only Jewish but Gentile heirs in the spiritual realm. Although in this pericope (Ro 11:25-26), it is the context of Paul's message concerning the salvation of Israel, which is the main focus; Paul again acknowledges that even Gentiles will come to faith in Christ. It translates into the reality that all believers then constitute Christ's church. Salvation is available equally to all who come to faith in Christ. The sequence of events in chapter 11 reflects the Jewish position - they will be saved to the full measure and extent after God has revealed Himself to the elect Gentiles. Gentiles therefore play a big part in the overall plan of God to redeem not only Israel but the world.

Both Jewish and Gentile believers are referred to in the New Testament as ‘the seed of Abraham’. Both qualify for the blessings of their faith as joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. But the important distinction between Gentile and Jewish believers is picked up by Cranfield (2004:87-88); Maccini (2000:814) and Moo (2000:1123-1124). Whilst the composition of the church may include both groups of believers, the (Jewish) remnant does not. If God’s plan to redeem Israel is through his elect remnant, the remnant cannot be inclusive of Gentile believers. The distinction between Jewish and Gentile Christians may seem trivial yet it is an important one in the context of the remnant. Scholarly debate on verses 25 to 27 is fuelled between those who (a) favour a strictly Jewish remnant, and (b) those who attempt to justify an understanding of “all Israel” to refer to the church (see 5.7.1).

#### **5.8.2.2. Jews in Christ, the Spiritual Seed of Abraham**

Whereas the New Testament initiates the salvation of the nations, the Old Testament records God’s special covenantal relationship with Israel. Many scholarly contributions are acknowledged in relation to the Abrahamic covenant. It is there that God’s eschatological commitment to redeem His people is first stated. The promise is given to Israel of natural heirs as well as universal spiritual descendants. Furthermore, the promises to Abraham continue to feature in the book of Romans. The distinction between natural Israel and spiritual Israel is revealed in such major passages as Romans 9 to 11. Chapter 9:6-8 records a cryptic message that they are not all Israel that are of Israel; neither because they are Abraham’s seed does it mean that they are his offspring. Reliable sources such as Cranfield (1975:156), Moo (2009:1891) and Ryken (1998:177) provide extensive exegesis of Romans to convey Paul’s message.

Ultimately, being the physical seed of Abraham does not guarantee experiencing the salvation associated with the promise of salvation given to Abraham. An Israelite must, like a Gentile, come to faith in a personal encounter with the Messiah. For Berkhof (1994:698) and Merkle (2000:709-710), the requirement for personal salvation once again demolishes the argument for salvation of literal Israel. Roberts (2002:108) and Ryken (1998:177) agree. This is because Paul makes a clear

distinction between corporate and individual in his treatment of Israel's salvation. Salvation is not secured for the whole nation. It is only the remnant of faithful Israelites who represent the full number of saved Jews, and it is in this manner that all Israel shall be redeemed.

### **5.9. VERSES 28-32 - God's mercy to Jews and Gentiles**

In this segment, Paul continues to address both Jews and Gentiles. As far as the Gentiles are concerned, God is now reaching out to them. They are given the same opportunity as the Jews to be justified before God. They are grafted in as believers, through God's grace and not because they are worthy. Bruce (1963:223) and Murray (1965:100) elucidate on the substance of God's mercy. As far as the Jews are concerned, in a mysterious way, their hearts will be hardened to the truth of the Messiah until the elect number of Gentiles is saved. Thereafter the elect number of Jews will be complete.

From the standpoint of the gospel, the Jews are enemies of the Gentiles; from the standpoint of God's choice, the Jews remain beloved for the sake of the patriarchs. There is great significance to the identity of the Jews as 'enemies' as Hultgren (2011:184-186) and Ridderbos (1997:356) explain. The Jews are subject to God's wrath. They have not only rejected Jesus Christ (Ro 9:30:10:4), but they have also dismissed the idea that salvation should come to the nations. Israel is therefore treated as an enemy by God under judicial hardening (already discussed) as the gospel message spreads. Paul has repeatedly cautioned the Gentiles not to be arrogant about their position. He appropriately delivers another special warning to them in verses 30 and 31. This time Paul puts the emphasis on God, who is responsible for the hardening and not the Jews. So Gentiles must be very careful not to become critical of God for planning to bless the Jews in the future.

Controversy however surrounds Paul's profound statement in verse 32. Paul seems to suggest that God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that He may have mercy on everyone. This is the stated creed of Universalists. Stetson (2008) writes on Christian Universalism as the good news for all people. One of the principles adopted by the Christian Universalist Association in 2007 is that there will be an

eventual reconciliation to God, for everyone without exception. Universalists base their beliefs on a literal translation of scripture, such as verses 30 to 31 to secure salvation for all people. The problem here is that, as comforting and reassuring as it may be that God is merciful, Paul is not preaching a universal atonement. As Barnett (2003:256-258) enlightens, the triumph of mercy in these verses does not suggest that mercy overrides the need for justification. There is a penalty for sin and in chapters 1 and 2 Paul records God's wrath and righteous judgment against sinful humankind. In chapter 3 the apostle reveals Jesus Christ as God's only solution to the problem of sin, which is indisputable.

It is therefore not safe to assume that God's grace and mercy will override His righteous judgment against sin, disbelief and rejection of Christ. Although God's mercy and salvation is freely available to all, not everyone accepts it. There is the freedom to accept or reject (as the majority of Jews do) the righteousness which is from God. Such a finding, reports Schreiner (1998:624), is at odds with a view which embraces salvation for all, unconditionally. The only conclusion to be drawn is that God will show mercy to all without distinction, not all without exception.

Paul persistently preaches salvation through faith in Christ alone. The familiar and often quoted John 3:16 comes to mind to further substantiate God's provision of salvation. Kostenberger (2000:284-285) together with Ladd (1993:22), relate John 3:16 to Romans 5:8 where the same message is conveyed by Paul. God demonstrates His love for humankind by giving His Son, Jesus Christ to die for sinners. The same applies to both Jews and Gentiles. Paul like John differentiates between those who do and those who do not believe, with different consequences. The one is saved, the other is not. There is no hint given by either John or Paul, that salvation is attainable by any other means than through personal faith and commitment to Jesus Christ.

To recap, Paul expresses concern for his unbelieving fellow Jews. In Romans 9:1-4, he speaks of his great sorrow and anguish as he longs for and prays for their salvation. He is concerned that they do not believe and are not saved. He dispels any suggestion of a universal or national salvation. Paul specifically affirms the

irrevocable salvation of the remnant, which he has just announced in verses 25 to 27. The remnant is the basis for Paul's hope that some Jews will be saved during his ministry. The principle that a "remnant" will remain throughout every age is the strong message echoed by Hodge (2009:590) and Kruse (2012:416-417).

#### **5.10. VERSES 33-36 - the Doxology**

Paul has identified himself as a servant of Jesus Christ and faithfully delivered the message entrusted to him. God's wrath at unrighteousness is revealed, together with God's mercy. Salvation is available for all who believe in the Messiah, according to divine election. Paul presents his doctrinal teaching on how unrighteous human beings can obtain salvation. The offer is an open one, to repent or reject Jesus Christ. No one can accuse Paul of not explaining the doctrine of salvation with care. According to Barnett (2003:259-260) and Cranfield (1975:349), God is vindicated because He provides the solution to sin, in spite of ingratitude. They explain this idea against the backdrop of Paul's teaching in chapters 9 to 11. It is on this wise plan of salvation that Paul reflects and gives praise to God. God's knowledge testifies to His ability to construct such a plan (v33). His wisdom is His ability to arrange His plan so it results in good for both Jews and Gentiles and for His own glory.

Hultgren (2011:430-43) uses the same concept of vindication from the perspective of God's specific plan for Israel. Even though Israel has rejected God, nothing will undermine His predetermined plan to redeem the nation. Paul agrees with Isaiah (Is 40:13-14) in verses 34 and 35 that no one can know the mind of God. His judgments, decrees or plans (Ps 119:25) to redeem the world through Jesus Christ are a mystery. So although His ways are unfathomable, nothing will thwart His sovereign plan for His people and the elect Gentiles. As Paul acknowledges God's purposes to redeem the world through Jesus Christ, he quotes from Job 5:9 and 9:10. God's ways are praised for being so unusual and inscrutable. His ways are gracious beyond expectation.

Paul has completed his divinely appointed assignment. All that is left to him is to offer praise and thanks to God for His faithfulness and love. God is worthy to be praised. He is merciful to reveal His plan of redemption for the world in the

scriptures. God's glory is acknowledged and His grace revealed. God's mercy is almost inconceivable when seen in the light of His deserving wrath and anger against unrighteousness. God is the source from which all things come, the means by which all things happen. He is the rightful end of everything that exists. Even though God's ways are shrouded in mystery, Hodge (1993:273); Moo (2000:1149-1150) and Schreiner (632:633) point to the fitting end to chapters 1 to 11. It is then only right that Paul concludes his message with a hymn of praise to God for the depth of the riches both of His wisdom and knowledge.

### **5.11. FINDINGS AND APPLICATION**

Paul concludes his theological exposition of how unrighteous human beings can obtain the righteousness of God in chapter 11. In contrasting chapters 1 to 11 with chapters 12 to 16, perhaps the most important distinction is that noted by Barnett (2003:289-290). Whereas the first part (chapters 1 to 11) deals primarily with God's actions for humankind, the last part of the epistle deals with people's actions in response to God's. This is because doctrine is more than theological knowledge and must be put into practice. It is especially important since the Christian is no longer under the regulations of the Mosaic Law but the new covenant of faith and commitment.

Although it is only in chapter 12 that Paul details the practical outworking in the lives of individual believers, there are already principles set down in chapters 1 to 11. For example, Paul teaches about spiritual leadership in chapter 1:8-15 and divine judgment in chapter 2:1-16. He is adamant about the need to be justified by faith alone in chapter 3:21-4:25. Bruce (1985:213); Cranfield (1990:324) and Moo (2000:1150-1156) are again consulted as authoritative and reliable sources. A past review of existing literature by these scholars and others used throughout this research (a) confirms personal presuppositions and (b) informs on a deeper level. Now their input is further appreciated when it comes to the guidelines for spiritual formation and practical living called for in chapters 12 to 15, to live in a manner which brings glory to God (the subject for another study).



In an effort to sustain the implications of my findings for the overall message of Romans, I reiterate my position. The collective salvation found under the Old Testament covenant with the people of Israel, does not apply to the message of Romans. Paul is at pains and has a heavy heart, because he wants to get the message across that salvation is an individual matter for both Jews and Gentiles. There does not appear to be a blanket cover for any nation in terms of the new covenant under Christ. Paul has set out his doctrine of justification by faith alone. He has repeatedly taught that without faith, it is not possible to please God. God's ultimate resolution of His promise to redeem the people of Israel is fulfilled in the remnant and the remnant is made up of individuals who come to faith in Christ. It is therefore necessary to grasp the significance of God's intention to save the whole Jewish nation at this juncture in history, in and through the existence of the elect Jews from within that nation, as with any other nation. Jews do however, remain God's special people but the people of God in the new covenant is the church, which consists of individual Jews and Gentiles of faith.

Witherington (2004: xii, 58; 229-232), together with Hays (1989:66) however debate such findings in a thought provoking manner as they define their theological position on Romans from a different perspective. Witherington deals extensively with the issue of predestination and its meaning in his exegesis of Romans chapter 9. His conclusion, together with Hays, is that the destiny for Israel is pre-destined. In other words, there exists a final redemptive transformation of the whole nation of Israel, in line with God's predetermined historical plan. The emphasis is then not on the fulfilment of God's redemptive plan for the nation, fulfilled in the salvation of a remnant. The connotation of predestination is therefore collective and has nothing to do with the election of some to be saints, as he puts it - out of a mass of unredeemed humanity, as though the choice is determined purely on the basis of God's fiat. Reference is made back to 4.11 where the issue of God's prerogative is discussed. In the same way, Roberts (2002:16-17) also writes extensively in support of the concept that God's intervention in history is traced throughout the whole of scripture. This is not disputed as God's bigger picture for the world unfolds through scripture. Roberts does mention that Paul believed that the Old Testament points to Christ as the culmination of God's plan to redeem the world. Moo (2000:292-293)

agrees, God's redemption plan as a historical process is fully accomplished. The issue of God's future intentions for Israel falls out of the scope of the current study of the remnant in the letter to the Romans.

In a reaction to a supposed overemphasis on the legal category of justification, Wrede and Schweitzer are mentioned further by Moo (2000:293-294) for their view that Romans is more about the history of God's dealings with different people groups. Generally speaking, the first era of history focused on Adam, obedience to the law, sin and its consequences of separation from God and death. Correctly, under the new covenant everything changed with the coming of Jesus Christ. This surely means that righteousness, justification by faith and eternal life accompanies faith in Christ as the Messiah. Salvation is then about personal accountability more than national history.

Hays (1989:81-82; 1996:36) offers a thought provoking perspective as he presents a resolutely corporate focus. He holds a view of collective salvation, but his idea of a communal salvation points to the church and not to the nation of Israel. Commenting on Romans chapter 12:1-2, he argues that God transforms and saves a people, not individuals. He bases his perspective on the often overlooked relevance of reading the Old Testament as God's address to the Christian church as His eschatological people. To Hays, Paul understood the Old Testament as God's address to the church and which word is disclosed only to those who turn to the Lord. Paul's exegesis of the Old Testament is therefore oriented towards the church and is ecclesiocentric rather than christocentric. Paul sees the fulfilment of prophecy not primarily in events in the life of Jesus but in God's gathering of a church, composed of Jews and Gentiles together. Nonetheless, it is my understanding that, whilst Paul addresses the Jewish-Gentile relationship, his main focus is on the need for individual salvation and accountability, irrespective of nationality. The key theme lies in Romans 1:16-17, reflecting the power of God to save every individual Jew or Gentile who comes to Christ. The need for righteousness is personal to all who believe and will be saved. In the first eleven chapters of the epistle, Paul sets out his doctrine concerning the way of salvation. Justification is by faith in Christ, without works of the law. This is freely available for both Jews and Gentiles without favour.

The practical advice found in chapter 12 instructs both the church as a corporate body as well as individuals who constitute the church. The new covenant in Christ is specifically for believers, which includes both Jews and Gentiles, unlike the Old Testament covenants specifically with the people of Israel.

As salvation is a personal and individual matter, this does call for caution to suggest there can be corporate salvation in mind in the book of Romans. Based on my findings in Paul's theology in Romans, the righteousness of God is all about individual and personal relationship with God and not national redemption. The apostle goes to great length to present the righteousness of God. He calls on his hearers, in a personal and private act of faith, to accept the offer of God's grace in the gospel. This accounts for Paul's anguish that he is unable to persuade every Jew to come to faith in Jesus Christ as he did. If there was security in a national salvation, Paul's anguish would not be so in evidence. Furthermore, there is no excuse - the Old Testament foretold the coming Messiah, which the new covenant confirms. God's part is complete in the sending of His Son, Jesus Christ; humankind (both Jew and Gentile) has the responsibility to respond to or reject God's offer of salvation. As most do reject Christ, and in the context of the salvation of Israel, it is only the few, namely the remnant, who are saved.

The practical outworking of redemption is to be found in chapters 12 to 16 and is applicable to the church as a body as well as to Christians individually. As already indicated, this pericope does not form part of the research into the existence of the Jewish remnant (see again 4.8. above with the specific injunction to believers to live godly lives). The question of God's sovereign right to select only those who will be saved, is a difficult concept to grasp but has been my understanding of God's right to do so, for His own purposes – to build His church.

On a practical note, the election process of the remnant is not yet complete, so the role of Christians to evangelise Jews is raised as a valid concern. In a quest to gain some insight into evangelism from a Jewish Christian perspective, the views of Martin Pakula (2001) are referred to. He is selected for several reasons. Firstly, he is representative of those Jews in favour of missionary outreach to Jews. Secondly, he

makes his case for Jewish evangelism, based on the injunction to do so in Romans chapters 9 to 11. Gratitude to God and obedience should spur Christians on.

Pakula makes an example of Paul who is not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew then for the Gentile (1:16). In His divine wisdom, God has designed a programme to provoke the Jews to jealousy so that they too, may be saved (Ro 11:11). Pakula is sensitive to the negative response by some Christians to witness to Jews and the antagonism which exists towards Jews in general. Guthrie (2008) helpfully sheds light on this. He makes the salient point that Jews require particular treatment in line with the injunction in Romans 1:16. It is the suggestion of actually 'targeting' of Jews which is offensive (not investigated further).

Even though God has blinded His people, the onus is still on the church to evangelise the Jews. The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism (2004) agrees in general terms on Jewish evangelism. The conviction is expressed by them that the New Testament mandates Christians to bring the gospel to the Jewish people. John Hagee for instance, is strongly criticised by David Becker (1998:3-4) for promoting a Two Covenant theory (a covenant of election for the Jews and a covenant of grace for the Gentiles). This is unscriptural as the message Paul conveys is direct and addressed to both Jewish and Gentile believers. The church must continue to be faithful to the mandate to take the gospel to the Jews. The lack of consensus within the ecumenical community as to whether or not Christians should attempt to evangelize Jews is indicative of the complexity of the question. But it is the subject for some other debate. Although the implications of righteousness are not part of this research into the remnant, they nonetheless complete Paul's message.

## **5.12. CONCLUSION**

The research into the Jewish remnant culminates in Romans chapter 11. There is a sense of accomplishment that the argument for the existence of a biblical Jewish remnant is sustained. The findings are that the remnant is the legitimate means by which God will redeem Israel. The investigation into the Jewish remnant followed the proposed plan, which began with an in depth overview of the Abrahamic covenant.

This is because the remnant has its beginnings in the promise to Abraham of heirs. Paul use of Abraham as an example of personal faith is deliberate. If the people will not listen to him, perhaps they will relate to the patriarch.

Paul has himself declared his faith in God's Son, Jesus Christ. It is not possible to be declared righteous and justified before God in any other way. It never happens that an entire nation comes to faith. It is incorrect to imply that the nation of Israel is somehow exempt. It is also incorrect to teach that in terms of the new covenant, which is strictly based on Christ, that God will overlook Jewish sinfulness because of the relationship enjoyed with Him under the old covenant. The promise extends to all who come to faith in the Messiah and which promise finds resolution in the New Testament. In his epistle to the Romans, Paul makes the strong connection to the Abrahamic promise. It is for that reason; his letter is the focus of the research into the Jewish remnant. In addition to which, Abraham is held up as the example of one who is redeemed and made righteous before God.

Paul approaches the Jews to specifically explain that there is no exception for them, based on their status as the historically chosen people. In chapter 2 Paul speaks to the Jews specifically regarding their rejection of God. The wicked have no excuse against God's righteous judgment. Paul reveals Jesus Christ as the only solution to sin, irrespective of nationality or obedience to the Law. In His mercy, God provides the way to be declared righteous and forgiven through faith in Jesus Christ (chapter 3). God has ordained that there is always a remnant only of those who come to faith in Christ. There are no mitigating circumstances or exemption for anyone. Ultimately, there will only be a select number of Jews who come to faith in Christ.

Paul begins chapter 11:1-6, as he did in chapter 1 with the reminder that it is the Jews who have rejected God. It is not the other way around. Paul offers assurance that he is secure in his identity as a descendant of Abraham, and more importantly, as a follower of Jesus Christ. Paul's reference in verses 7 to 10 to God's judgment is not an easy one to come to grips with. For the Jews, it must be difficult to reconcile God's promise to redeem them against the strict demands for justice. On reflection, it must seem that God has forgotten His Old Testament covenantal pledge to save

them. All too often, God is only appreciated for His graciousness and love which implies that He will overlook sin and not demand righteousness.

The rejection of God brings about a time of judgment against Israel. God always works in a mysterious way, and it is the case here. It is a mystery to unravel as God may appear to be unfaithful to His covenant people. The perception is that the whole nation is secure in the knowledge that God will redeem them. They are exempt from the New Testament judgment and demands of faith and obedience to Christ. The judgment will manifest itself in a divinely initiated blindness to spiritual truths. God's providential plan to save Israel revolves around the hardening in judgment. The extent of the hardening is explained by Paul to be limited to part of Israel only. After a time the elect few shall have their blindness lifted so that they recognise their Messiah. The issue of the hardening is a perplexing and contentious one as it gets right to the heart of Israel's salvation.

There is vigorous debate regarding the duration and extent of the hardening. If the hardening is only over a portion of the people for a time, then the remnant is the result as only a few will embrace salvation in the Messiah. On the other hand, if a total blindness blankets the whole nation, a conversion of the entire nation is secure. The latter view discredits the existence of the remnant. Verse 26 is then interpreted to indicate a national redemption of all Jews. However, a literal translation of God's promise does not balance with Paul's teaching on personal commitment to Christ (chapter 3). The context of Paul's message does not lend itself to a full restoration of the nation. A far more fitting explanation of the time frame is that linked to the elect number. Paul indicates that it is during this time of Jewish inertia, that the gospel message is taken to the Gentiles. It is the manner of their salvation that after a time, their Jewish spiritual eyes will be opened. It is worth remembering that there never is a nation which is totally Christian. In His wisdom, God works within the constraints of the remnant. As with the Gentiles, not all Jews express interest in or commitment to Christ.

Verses 11 to 16 continue in the same theme to endorse the reality of the remnant as God's process of salvation. Paul repeats how the blindness and hardening already

referred to; serve God's salvation purpose for both Jews and Gentiles. Several examples exist of the hardness of the majority against the faithfulness of the few in the Old Testament. At no time in their history has every Jew come to accept faith in the Messiah. The concept of remnant is again traced back to the Old Testament (this time not to Abraham) but to Elijah. The prophet was assured that there would be a few who would remain faithful to God.

Paul presents a serious message as he continues to caution the Gentiles in verses 17 to 24. They are warned to not gloat about their elevated status as believers. Salvation is only offered to them by the grace of God who has hardened the Jews. As with the Jews, there is no merit to speak of. It is worth restating that it is God who engineers the hardening of the Jews. He is also behind the whole process of deliverance of the Gentiles. To illustrate the point, Paul makes use of metaphors. Gentiles are the wild branches, grafted in to enjoy God's original blessing together with the natural branches, the Jews. Paul reveals how God will cause His elect Jews to not understand His salvation plan until the elect number of Gentiles is saved. After that time, the Jews will be restored to their rightful place, represented by the remnant.

The Gentiles do however; retain their identity as believers, apart from Jewish believers. It is an important distinction as there are those who include them into the designation of 'all Israel' in verse 25. The extent of the debate into the Jewish remnant becomes clear with two possible perspectives on verses 25 and 26 which both discredit the biblical remnant. There are those who take Paul's words literally to mean that God is faithful to His covenantal relationship to redeem the entire nation of Israel. But a national redemption cannot be possible because the doctrine of salvation in chapter 3 suggests otherwise. Most Jews, together with some scholars, do however persist to dispute Paul's teaching that personal faith is the criteria for salvation. Others again favour "all Israel" to reflect the inclusion of both Jewish and Gentile believers. This perception needs to be corrected as it is the church which is inclusive of all believers. Paul is careful to keep the distinction between the two groups in the context of his message to Israel. Paul repeats his concern that the Jews do not remain ignorant of their plight. He has taught that without personal faith

like that of Abraham, who is made righteous before God, it is impossible to please God.

The heart of Paul's remnant theology is therefore reached in verses 25 and 26. He makes what appears to be a contradictory statement that all Israel shall be saved. The challenge is to exegete Paul's words in the context of his previous message, and what follows in verse 26. "All Israel" is then correctly understood to represent the Jewish remnant as Paul addresses the Jews in this instance. If the context of Paul's message is taken into account, verses 25 and 26 can only point to the Jewish remnant. All Israel shall be saved in this way, through God's remnant programme. This is confirmed with the use of the Greek phrase, *kai houtos* which translates as "in this manner" or "in this way". There is no break in Paul's message in these two verses - under the new covenant the only way in which anyone is made right with God is through the personal act of faith in Jesus Christ. This is true for both Jews and Gentiles without exception. God knows that most people will reject Christ, and choose instead to continue in a life of unrighteousness. There will always be only a few who are saved and it is in this way, through the remnant, that God's promise to redeem Israel is complete.

Scholarly perspectives set down under the Literary Review, are appreciated, especially those who reliably support a biblical remnant. In instances where the views may differ from those in favour of the remnant, two observations are made. Firstly, it is necessary to keep an open mind, so that the views of others may be respected. Secondly, contrasting, divergent opinions help to clarify personal presuppositions regarding the scriptures.

Paul ends the pericope, chapter 1 to 11 with a song of praise to God for His love and mercy. The doxology in verses 33 to 36 acknowledges God who reveals Himself in His word. God is merciful but He also demands justice against those who reject Him. The elect remnant of Jews, like Paul and all believers, rejoice in His provision for their salvation. The only fitting end to his letter is one of praise.

The practical outworking of faith is not part of this study into the Jewish remnant but form part of Paul's message. In chapters 12 to 16, there is the call for Christians to



live a godly life out of gratitude and obedience to Jesus Christ. Gratitude to God demands a response of faith. Faith translates into works, which raises the issue of evangelism to the Jewish people. Mention is briefly made of two points of view. On the one hand, there is the commitment to take the gospel message of salvation in Jesus Christ to the Jews. This is in line with Paul's injunction to preach to the Jew first in chapter 1:16. On the other hand, there is the sentiment that as God's chosen people, He will ensure that the preordained remnant is redeemed.

To reiterate, God reveals His grand plan of salvation for all who will listen, respond and believe in Jesus Christ. This is equally true for Israel. The progressive unfolding of God's set plan to redeem His people points to the remnant. It is important to understand the significance of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone. It dispels any preconceived ideas of preferential treatment and transcends human understanding. A merciful God still demands justice. As far as Israel is concerned, as with any nation, salvation is individually determined. Paul's message is that God will redeem Israel but not in the expected manner. He declares that Israel will be saved in this way only (through the remnant) as the provision God has made for salvation. In his statement that it is in this manner that Israel will be saved, Paul therefore endorses the existence of the remnant.

Verses 25 and 26 bring Paul's argument to a close. The promise to redeem Israel has come full circle. The aim of the thesis is satisfied that from a biblical point of view, God is true to His word to redeem Israel. It is not in the manner in which Israel anticipates. Salvation is conditional upon personal faith. At the same time, God's prerogative to elect His own is acknowledged, as the two strands of faith and pre-election are inextricably linked and the subject of some other study. God is merciful to Jews and Gentiles. The Jews are hardened and indifferent to God in a mysterious way. Verses 28 to 32 also reveal that in a way, the Jews are enemies of God because of their rejection of Him. In verse 32 Paul does not infer that God caused everyone to be disobedient so that everyone can be saved but salvation must involve Jesus Christ. The hardening was only over part of Israel. If that is acknowledged, the remnant is also acknowledged.

Based then on the accumulation of strong biblical evidence, I am therefore satisfied that the thesis statement is fully sustained and the biblical argument for the Jewish remnant worth defending. God is true to His promise to redeem Israel. He has not forgotten His promises to them under the Abrahamic covenant. A Jewish remnant exists in fulfilment of that promise. The future dispensation for the whole nation of Israel remains a research subject for some other time. The only response to God's revelation, mercy and grace, wisdom and knowledge is like Paul, one of praise, adulation and obedience to Christ and not the Law.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **6.1. INTRODUCTION**

The history of Israel is steeped in conflict. The world has always shown antagonism and contempt for the Jews. Even the Old Testament record of an ancient people gives an account of ongoing hostility towards them by enemy nations. God reveals

Himself to them, but they have repeatedly rejected Him in the worship of idols. Yet God has a sovereign plan to redeem Israel and enters into a covenant with Abraham. The patriarch is given the promise, that through his descendants, all the nations of the world will be blessed in a spiritual inheritance. The fact that God will save Israel is such a broad statement. It may suggest that there is a special dispensation for the Jews, whereby they are saved without the new covenant stipulation of faith in the Messiah. The need to clarify the position from scripture prompted this research into the redemption of Israel. The main aim of the study is to show that, according to scripture, there is no national salvation for Israel. There exists only a remnant of Jewish believers and it is in such a manner that all Israel shall be saved.

The thesis follows the format outlined in the research proposal. There is a sequence of chapters; each building on the previous one in a progressive unfolding of the remnant theme. Before the main research into the Jewish remnant can be conducted, it is necessary to establish the origins of the promise to redeem Israel. The Abrahamic covenant is the subject of the first supplementary study because it is there that the promise is given to Abraham of future heirs. In addition to which, Abraham is himself referred to by Paul as a prime example of someone who has faith in the Messiah. An overview of the covenant in the book of Genesis, traced throughout the Old Testament, forms the sound basis upon which to proceed. The Old Testament promise of redemption is only complete in terms of the new covenant in Jesus Christ.

Without this background knowledge, it is impossible to establish the covenantal link to the New Testament. The next subsidiary step in the research process is to expound Romans chapters 1 to 10. The epistle to the Romans is selected because of Paul's focus on the redemption of Israel and the link he establishes back to Abraham in the process. It is here that Paul teaches his doctrine of salvation and applies his teaching to Abraham. It must be possible to point to scripture to show that even for the Jews, salvation is about personal commitment and not national exemption. At the outset, an important review is conducted of existing literature in the field of Israel's redemption. The main scholarly contributions are drawn from the

exegesis of the Abrahamic covenant and the book of Romans. Contrasting opinions are also appreciated and are cited as and when they relate to the particular subject under discussion.

There is one remaining area of investigation, which is not preliminary to the main research into the Jewish remnant. A brief consideration of the practical implications of the believer's faith is only possible at the end of the main exegesis of chapter 11. Although not part of this research, the call to obedience to Jesus Christ and not the Law is an important addendum. A debatable issue emerges regarding the need to preach the gospel message of salvation to the Jews, which is dealt with under 'Findings and Application' (see 6.6. below).

## **6.2. FIRST SUBSIDIARY OBJECTIVE - OVERVIEW ABRAHAMIC COVENANT**

The first subsidiary objective looks at the origins of the promise to redeem Israel and the world. It is important to establish the Old Testament foundation upon which the promise is built. The promise to redeem Israel is given under the old covenant, but it is only fulfilled under the new covenant in Jesus Christ. God always entered into covenants with Israel at different times in their history. Under the covenant with Noah, for instance, God reaffirms His original creation intent. The Mosaic covenant maintains the unique divine-human relationship between Yahweh and Israel with the giving of the Law. An overview of the Abrahamic covenant is then a good starting point. The significant promise to redeem Israel dates back to the covenant recorded in Genesis 12. God calls Abraham as he would Paul in due course, to serve Him in a particular way. The patriarch is instructed to leave his family and land of Ur to go to some unknown destination. He responds to God in faith and is assured that he would be the father of many descendants. Generations of Jews will qualify for a stake in the physical land as natural heirs of Abraham. The covenantal promise God entered into with Israel, is then accomplished with an overview of the Abrahamic covenant.

It is not difficult to accept that the patriarch enjoys natural, literal heirs. His descendants are clearly defined as all Jews. The real issue is the acceptance of a far more difficult teaching. To suggest that God's special people are no longer defined by nationality, but by spirituality is a difficult concept to grasp. There is a special

group of descendants who may not be of the line of Abraham. They may not necessarily dwell with entitlement in the land of Israel. These are the future heirs in the context of a figurative or spiritual seed. They qualify for an eternal inheritance, based on the universal promise of spiritual heirs given to Abraham, the recipient of the divine promise. Like Abraham, they are justified before God. The promise that all the families of the earth will be blessed appears in Genesis 12:3 and is repeated again in chapters 18, 22, 28 and 35.

Repetition is the means to enforce biblical truths. The fact that the rest of the Old Testament continues to repeatedly endorse the Abrahamic covenant, is further indication of its significance. It also forms part of this secondary goal, to trace the covenant with Abraham throughout the Old Testament. In Exodus 2:24, Moses is told that God always remembers His covenant with Abraham. Deuteronomy reveals God's anger at sin, idolatry and corruption. The people are also reassured that God will redeem them in spite of their unrighteousness. The same theme of God's faithfulness continues in First Chronicles and Nehemiah. David refers to the "Restorer" who will come as promised under the Abrahamic covenant. Even the Psalmist (Ps 105/106) offers a reminder that the covenant is behind everything God has done and will do for Israel.

Limitations are placed on the study to confine it to an investigation into the existence of a Jewish remnant. There are nonetheless, important observations which arise out of the study. As far as the Abrahamic covenant is concerned, two difficulties emerge - (a) the perception exists that the natural, literal descendants of Abraham are all saved. Otherwise it raises the question as to whether God has rejected Israel as a nation. The existence of an elect Jewish remnant is then disputed as a contentious issue. God's possible future provision for Israel's national salvation is a subject which invites a separate study. God's prerogative to predetermine those who are saved must however, be factored in, and (b) the perception exists that the fulfilment of the covenant is subject to Abraham's obedience even though there is strong evidence to support its unconditional character. There are those who regard the covenant as conditional upon Abraham's obedience to God. Others again deny such a view on the grounds that God did not negotiate an agreement with anyone. In no way can

human response influence or change the divinely appointed plan to redeem Israel and the world.

### **6.3. SECOND SUBSIDIARY OBJECTIVE - EXEGESIS CHAPTERS 1 TO 10**

The covenantal promise is unconditionally given, but it is faith in the Messiah and not obedience to the Law upon which the promise is based. The promise to redeem Israel, initiated and recorded in the book of Genesis, is only fulfilled under the new covenant. Abraham is given a promise which calls for a response of faith in the Messiah. This highlights the progressive unfolding of the covenantal promise which began with Abraham, and which only finds resolution in the New Testament teaching on salvation. The important objective here is to endorse the requirement of personal faith, without which it is impossible to please God. Personal faith negates any idea that the Jews may hold that they shall bypass the strict biblical stipulations on personal salvation. Paul establishes the link back to the Old Testament as he uses Abraham as a prime example of one who is redeemed through faith in the Messiah.

Paul, like Abraham, is called for a specific mission and like Abraham, is a faithful servant of God. The main focus is in Romans chapter 11, where Paul deals specifically with the salvation of Israel, based on his principle of personal salvation in the promised Messiah. Now the apostle not only addresses Jews, but also Gentiles as his doctrine of salvation applies equally to both. As already mentioned, there has always been hostility towards the Jews and it was the same in Paul's time. The Gentiles despise the Jews. The Jews are too set in their customs and adherence to covenantal rites and ordinances. Against such a backdrop, Paul speaks with authority as one under divine appointment. He is set apart to preach the gospel message of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Paul is unable to be in Rome personally and writes from Greece to address the Christians in Rome around AD 57-58. Paul's theme is the gospel of Jesus Christ, powerful to save. The message Paul brings is not a new one. The Old Testament announces that the Messiah is to come. Paul in fact reverts to Psalm 51 in reference to David, who confesses his guilt, and acknowledges God's righteous judgment

against him. Paul comes to the conclusion that God will save a remnant of His people in fulfillment of the commitment to redeem Israel.

In chapters 1 and 2, Paul gets to the heart of the problem. God's divine and righteous anger is against all people for their sinful disregard of Him. For the Jews, there is no preferential treatment. The Gentiles will not escape either because of their arrogance and sense of superiority over the Jews. Paul continues to address his kinsfolk more particularly in chapter 2. They have no guarantee, as God's chosen race, that they will be saved. God is angry at them for the blatant worship of idols and not Him. Knowledge of the Law condemns because there exists an inner awareness of God's Law, which demands obedience. As it is, the Jews were the first to hear and be given the opportunity to respond to the gospel (1:16).

Chapter 3 is taken up with the same theme. Both Jews and Gentiles are without hope and need deliverance from sin. God's solution to the problem of sin is revealed. Salvation is freely available for all who come to Christ in repentance. The Jews are no better in God's sight as all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (3:9;23). Paul is able to testify to his alienation from God at one time. He is now able to witness to his salvation in Jesus Christ. If salvation is conditional upon faith for everyone, it once again dispels any notion that a national salvation is at all possible. If the whole nation is to be redeemed, the biblical concept of remnant is then destroyed as an unsound concept. Paul seems intent to demolish such a view which allows for collective redemption of the nation.

Abraham is named in chapter 4 as an example of a man, justified and made righteous before God. Abraham is not only right with God, he is the father of all those who like him, have faith in Christ. The issue of justification through faith and not the Law is the important message contained in chapter 4. Paul deals at length on the need to be justified and this cannot be emphasised enough. The provision of God's grace through His Son is the only stipulated and acceptable means of salvation for both Jews and Gentiles. Faith is not adherence to any law. Even in the Old Testament, as Deuteronomy 25 states, to be declared righteous, is to appear innocent. It is not natural hereditary which ensures salvation, but Jesus Christ. Paul

confirms this when he goes on to express his concern that the Gentiles believe as Abraham believed.

In chapter 5 of his letter, Paul sets out at length the blessings of righteousness. There is restored fellowship with God and freedom from condemnation. There is joy and the assurance of an eternal inheritance as joint heirs with Christ. In verse 12 Paul draws the parallel between Adam and Christ. The contrast between them is that for Adam, there is the condemnation for sin. Adam's natural descendants are subject to both physical and spiritual death. In Christ, there is eternal life through His obedience to God in His own death. It is however, a difficult concept for the Jews to embrace that it is possible to know God.

The apostle continues in the same vein with his teaching that sin is death, and Christ is life. Chapter 6 reveals how the new life is initiated through the act of baptism, which is the first step for the believer. To be made right with God, or justified, is just the start of the ongoing process of sanctification. It is God's work of transformation in the inner person, irrespective of past sin. Paul can testify that to be dead to sin, is to be alive to Christ. Chapters 5 to 8 then contain the most important teaching on salvation. Paul builds on the earlier segments to stress that it is possible to be free from the Law. Paul shows in chapter 7, the difference between Christ's grace in salvation and the rigid obedience to the Law. Paul contrasts obedience to the Law of Moses to which every Jew religiously adhered, with obedience to the 'law' of Christ. The slavery to Christ is different from the slavery to sin in the world. It is now the inner sign of the Holy Spirit which defines the believer, and not the outer one of circumcision, reflected in obedience to the Law.

The assurance of eternal life and the deliverance from the bondage of sin is the main focus of chapter 8. Nothing can separate the believer from the love of Christ. God did not spare His only Son, but delivered Him over to death in the greatest act of love and mercy. There is now no condemnation for those who believe. The guilty verdict which demands a death penalty is lifted. All, who like Abraham believe, are fully restored in relationship with God. Paul's use of repetition suggests that this is done



purposefully to get his message across. No one can turn around and accuse him of failing to tell them the truth about salvation and sin.

As mandatory as personal faith is, paradoxically, it is God who elects those who will believe. God elected Abraham, as He did Paul. But it needs to be made clear that on neither account would their disobedience have impacted on God's predetermined plan. If God elects, there can be merit for works or entitlement to redemption. Although faith is stressed as the human response, it is God's right to elect His own. He does not select nations, but individuals. The issue of election is the substance of chapter 9. God has a divine plan to redeem a set number of people who will come to faith in His Son. Romans 9:14-18 indicates that it is God who shows mercy at will.

The divine intervention through election raises another debatable issue, which is out of the scope of this study. Sovereign election is, however, not inconsistent with His mercy. As with Moses in Exodus, the same message is relayed that God will have compassion on whomever He will. An overview of chapters 1 to 10, together with an overview of the Abrahamic covenant is undertaken as a necessary precursor to the main study of chapter 11. It is there that the doctrine of salvation in Jesus Christ impacts more specifically on Israel's redemption.

#### **6.4. ROMANS CHAPTER 11:1-24**

The research into the remnant is now finalised with an exegesis of Romans chapter 11. Chapter 11 is the pivotal link between the Abrahamic promises and Paul's final message in confirmation of the Jewish remnant. In verses 1 to 24, God's process of salvation is revealed for both the Jews and the Gentiles. As far as the Jews are concerned, the assurance is given in verses 1 to 6 that God has not rejected disobedient Israel. He has a plan to redeem the nation, proof of which is found in the existence of the remnant. The prophet Elijah's situation is cited as an example of a remnant preserved by God.

It is in verses 7 to 10 that the final proof of God's process of election of a remnant is found. God will implement a hardening over part of Israel in judgment against them. In a divine initiative, God blinds His people to the spiritual truths which Paul has

continuously stressed in the previous ten chapters. The hardening is only temporary until the divine plan is fulfilled for the Gentiles, then it will be lifted. Israel shall be saved, but significantly not in the way in which it is expected. If God is responsible for the spiritual blindness, He is also responsible for lifting it. The extent of the hardening is, according to remnant theology, over part of Israel for a time only. After which the remnant will acknowledge their Messiah. This is the mystery of His great plan to redeem the world. Blindness followed by revelation and faith for the few whom He predetermined to save. For those who favour a full restoration of the nation of Israel, the spiritual blindness blankets the whole nation. It is lifted so that full redemption takes place.

The momentum continues to build as God's process of salvation through the remnant is repeated again in verses 11 to 16. The coming of Jesus Christ to Israel gave the Jews the opportunity to embrace salvation but they rejected Christ. God purposed that through this, the Gentiles would be given the same opportunity. The process of salvation is a mystery and is further explained by Paul in verses 11 to 16. There is a divinely appointed blindness to spiritual truth over part of Israel. It is during this time that the gospel message of salvation in Jesus Christ is to be preached to the Gentiles. The elect Jewish remnant will then have the blindness lifted, so that they too, may be saved. As far as the Gentiles are concerned, the same mercy extends to them. Yet they are constantly warned by Paul to not think too highly of themselves. They have done nothing to earn their salvation which would not have occurred if the Jews had not rejected Christ. To illustrate this, Paul metaphorically refers to the Gentile believers as the wild branches who are grafted into Israel, the natural branches. Together, both Jewish and Gentile believers qualify to be called the true seed of Abraham.

#### **6.5. ROMANS 11:25-26: ALL ISRAEL SHALL BE SAVED**

The most significant announcement with regard to Israel's redemption is found in verses 25 and 26. The words, 'All Israel shall be saved in this way' hold the key. This phrase portrays the existence of the Jewish remnant in fulfilment of God's promise to redeem Israel. It is in this way, through the remnant that all Israel shall be saved.

Paul has taught that salvation requires personal faith in Jesus Christ. He has also explained how God ensures who will be saved. It is therefore, God who will again restore Israel but not through a national salvation but a limited one – the remnant. No amount of obedience to the Law can be a substitute for faith. Paul makes the point in chapter 10 that Christ is the culmination of the Law. It is futile to seek after a Law-based righteousness. There is no longer any need for rituals or symbols of religious devotion. But Israel will not accept such a difficult truth even though the Old Testament teaches the same thing.

The words of Paul that 'all Israel shall be saved' invite controversy on two counts. Firstly, these words may be taken literally to mean just that, that redemption of the whole nation of Israel is secure. As with the Abrahamic covenant, the promise of redemption literally covers all Jews. In other words, there is nothing to suggest that a loving God could act any differently. It also means that God overrides His demand and stipulation for salvation through faith in the Messiah. The fact that Christ died for the sins of all, as revealed in chapters 1 to 10, will then only apply disproportionately to Gentiles. If however, Paul's words are seen in the context of the whole message of his letter to the Romans, this clearly is not the message Paul intended to convey. Paul's revelation that salvation is found in Jesus Christ dispels any alternative divine agenda. There is no favouritism or national redemption apart from faith in the Messiah.

Faith in the works of the Law is without merit and national heritage counts for nothing in terms of salvation. Secondly, despite this, there is a passionate denial by some that a loving God would permit only a few to be redeemed. To do so, suggests that God breaks His covenantal promise to redeem His chosen people. This gets to the very hub of the remnant's existence in chapter 11:25-26. Israel is not forgotten, but two important facts needs to be remembered; (a) only those individuals who acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Messiah are guaranteed salvation, and (b) it is by divine decree that they are chosen. God has not reneged on His promise to redeem Israel, even though He seems to contradict Himself. As there are however, always only relatively few who commit to Christ, the same must be true of the Jews. Stated briefly, salvation is conditional upon personal faith in the Messiah, irrespective of

ancestry. There is no ethnic salvation, only individual. The subject is not pursued any further, as it is felt that there is sufficient evidence to support the main claim of the Jewish remnant.

As the exegesis of chapter 11 unfolds, the words 'all Israel shall be saved' produce another area of contention. The view is expressed that saved Gentiles are incorporated, together with saved Jews to reflect all Israel; even though Paul always keeps the clear distinction between the two in his teaching. He cannot then suddenly portray the Jewish remnant to be classified in such a way. The biblical perspective is that it is the church and not Israel, which consists of both groups of believers. Further research is beneficial to examine on what grounds any other interpretation is justified, and to investigate the ramifications this has on the scriptural position.

## **6.6. THIRD SUBSIDIARY OBJECTIVE: FINDINGS AND APPLICATION**

Any theological study is incomplete without some reflection on the practical implications of its findings. The same principle applies at the end of the present study. The one remaining subsidiary goal is to consider the practical outworking of faith, which flows from the exegesis of chapter 11.

The findings of the research prove to be more beneficial than first anticipated. Not only is the presence of the remnant secure, its significance is twofold. In the first instance, it is possible to challenge with full conviction, any pre-existing views which may turn out to be detrimental to the Jewish people. Paul reveals the state of alienation through sin. He provides God's only solution to the problem, namely personal faith in Jesus Christ. The call for obedience to Christ and not the Law is further endorsed by Paul in chapters 12 to 16. Nowhere is there any exemption given or preferential treatment shown to the Jews individually or as a nation.

But it goes even deeper than that. There is the injunction to evangelise, beginning with the Jews. The apostle reminds that the gospel message is to be preached first to the Jews. To do so dampens any complacency on their part that their salvation is guaranteed based on the covenants God made with Israel. But this presents a challenge. There are those who see it as the church's mandate to do so. Others are

opposed on the grounds that God will ensure that His elect have the spiritual blindness lifted from them. Evangelism of the Jews is a contentious issue and one which warrants a separate investigation. As far as the church is concerned however, there is no place for the prejudice which the world displays towards the Jews. In the second instance, personal faith in Jesus Christ goes beyond academic discourse. Salvation is undeserved and acknowledged to be an act of God's grace.

## **6.7. CONCLUSION**

This study ends with a fresh sense of reverence that God has a great plan to redeem Israel and the world. To trace the inception of the promise in the Old Testament, to its ultimate climax in chapter 11:25-26 leaves the strong impression that God's promise has come full circle. Paul's message is complete. Even though the Jewish people have rejected God, He has not rejected them. He comes in mercy to reveal Himself through His word. He also speaks through His servants, Abraham and Paul. Salvation is available for both Jews and Gentiles who as believers, qualify to be called the true seed of Abraham. The Gentiles are given the chance to hear the gospel message for the first time. The Jews are given a second chance.

It is fitting that Paul concludes chapter 11 with a song of praise to God for His grace, wisdom and mercy. His ways are a mystery, but if Israel's redemption is understood in spiritual and not physical terms, there can be no misunderstanding. There is not a literal salvation of all of Israel. The thesis statement is safely upheld and biblically sustained. The existence of a Jewish remnant is evidence of God's redemption plan for Israel.

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