



**GRACE COMMUNION**  
INTERNATIONAL

**Living and Sharing the Gospel**

**Weekly bulletin**  
**July 18, 2021**

**Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, we will continue to have worship services online through the Zoom platform, until further notice. You are welcome to worship with us on Sunday at 10:30 a.m. If you need information about how to join with us for worship services, please contact Mr. Vautour, minister. The contact information is at the bottom of the bulletin.**

**If you have friends or acquaintances who want to join in the worship service, please do not hesitate to share with them the Zoom links to join with us in the worship our great God.**

**Please note that audio and video sermons and other materials are also available on our local website at [www.gcine Brunswick.org](http://www.gcine Brunswick.org)**

**THE OLIVET DISCOURSE -- SIGNS OF THE END** – an excellent study of Matthew 24 and 25 has been posted on our local website. Other articles are also posted for your benefit and study.

Last article posted on our local website under **Featured Articles: Study of Romans up to chapter 9 inclusively.**

**Offerings:**

1. You can make your donation by cheque; Address: Grace Communion International- Canada, Suite 203A, 2121 Airport Dr., Saskatoon, SK 7S1 6W5.
2. You can call 1-306-653-2705 (GCI Canada main phone number) and make credit card donation.
3. E-transfers to [khorwood@gcicanada.ca](mailto:khorwood@gcicanada.ca) (her full name is Kathleen Horwood). There is no need for a password as the donations are deposited directly into the GCI banking account. In the subject or message line, write the name of your church and your member number. Most banks send an immediate confirmation of successful deposit. If you do not know your member number, please write to Mr. Vautour at the email address below.
4. You can also donate to our GCI Canada website at [Grace Communion International - Canada \(gcicanada.ca\)](http://Grace Communion International - Canada (gcicanada.ca)); click on Donate. In the donation box detail, and under **Fund**, make sure you click on General. In the message box, make sure that you identify your church and your church member number. If you don't know your church number, please contact Mr. Vautour.

**Services next week, July 25 at 12:00 p.m. Atlantic time.** Mr. Bill Hall, Canadian Director, wrote the following: **The following are the instructions to join the GCI international worship service next week, July 25, 2021. The services will be at 12 PM Atlantic time.** That link will not be available until Sunday morning.

People can go to [www.gci.org](http://www.gci.org) and on the banner about the celebration there will be a link to connect, but no information regarding that link will be available until Sunday.

They can also go to our Facebook live on Sunday -

<https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=grace%20communion%20international%20-%20gci> .

**Prayer Meeting:** Our next prayer meeting will be on this coming **Thursday, August 12, 2021 at 7:30 PM.** We plan to resume the monthly Bible study and prayer meeting in August.

To see specific prayer requests from the church, please go to [www.gcinewbrunswick.org](http://www.gcinewbrunswick.org)—under “Members Only” and type the password. If you do not know the password, please contact Mr. Vautour.

Let us pray according to God’s will and as per his instructions: **“1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Ti 2:1-4 ESV)**

- Let us thank God for endless love as He gave us his Son to reconcile the world to Himself and to save all those who place their trust in Him.
- Let us pray not to minimize God’s power to save as He reveals himself to people. Let us pray that innumerable numbers His reconciliation in faith. **“32 For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all. 33 ¶ Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! 34 ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?’ 35 ‘Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?’ 36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”** (Ro 11:32-36 ESV)
- Let us pray to be zealous in His service as we participate with what He is doing in our world.

	<p>You can now register online for the <b>2021 DENOMINATIONAL CELEBRATION (NOW VIRTUAL) AT</b> <a href="#">GCI Denominational Celebration: Register Now! – GCI Update</a> <u>Everyone is encouraged to attend. Dates: Friday July 23 to Sunday July 25.</u></p>
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### Anam Cara (From [gci.org](http://gci.org) July 14, 2021)



Mr. and Mrs. Greg and Susan Williams



Dear GCI Family and Friends,  
 World Friendship Day, also known as International Day of Friendship, takes place on July 30<sup>th</sup>.  
 The original idea for a day of friendship came from Hallmark cards in the 1930s and was originally celebrated on August 2. The cynical public largely viewed the day as a money-making scheme by Hallmark. Sales of friendship day cards did not take

off in Europe and by the mid-1940s the day had faded into obscurity in the USA. However, the idea of a day to honor friendship was adopted by a number of countries in Asia, where it remained a popular custom to reserve a day for celebrating friendships and the exchange of gifts between friends. I’d suggest this speaks to the understanding of the importance of relationships in the Asian culture, which is a strong biblical theme.

The Bible says a lot about the importance of friendship. Here are a few choice verses in Proverbs ESV

- [Proverbs 17:17](#) A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.
- [Proverbs 18:24](#) A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.
- [Proverbs 27:9](#) Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel.
- [Proverbs 27:5-6](#) Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.

The overall theme is that a friend is a companion who can tell you the truth, and who shows up especially in the difficulties of life. The question, “Who can you call at 2:00 am when you are in dire straits?” is quite telling. How long is your personal list?

Having a relationship where you are accepted, understood and well cared for is the most valuable treasure. *Anam Cara* is a concept that I was introduced to when I participated in an experiential graduate class called Celtic Spirituality. *Anam Cara* is a Celtic phrase meaning “soul friend.”

Dr. William P. Ryan describes *Anam Cara* as “compassionate presence,” a person who knows your heart and intent. In the companionship of a soul friend, you are recognized and known providing a deep sense of trust and belonging. Every one of us needs true, genuine friendship for our spiritual development and growth, and especially for our personal sense of worth and belonging.

Personally, I am blessed with spiritual brothers and sisters who “stick closer” than biological siblings. These friendships are like anchors that keep me grounded and stable. The greatest friendship, however, is the shared relationship with my Lord Jesus who calls me his friend. It is he alone who truly knows me to the depths of my being and loves me in spite of my warts and my moods. It is he alone who will never leave me or forsake me. This same promise is true for you.

Proud to be your friend, Greg

*P.S. The upcoming Denominational Celebration will certainly have the fabric and feel of an International Day of Friendship. It will be a time that we can see our GCI friends around the world and hear marvelous stories of what our friend Jesus has been doing in us and through us. I hope to see you July 23-25*

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### **Romans 9:1-5**

#### **Paul's anguish for his people**

Romans chapters 9-11 pose a question: Are these chapters a digression, or an important part of the letter? Paul has stopped describing the gospel, and begun to talk about the role of the Jewish people in God's plan. But this is one of the topics he needed to address for the Christians in Rome. One theme that Paul continues from earlier chapters is that God does not show partiality. Salvation is not just for the Jews — it is for Gentiles, too. But has God given up on the Jews? No way!

#### **Answering objections**

When Paul wrote this epistle, he was in Corinth, hoping to travel to Rome on his way to Spain (**15:23-24**). But first, he planned to take a gift from the Greek churches to Jerusalem (**15:25-29**), and he knew that many Jews viewed Paul and his gospel with hostility.

So when Paul wrote to the Romans, he had one eye on the Gentiles, and another on the Jews in Jerusalem. Paul is not only rehearsing his message to Gentiles; he is also rehearsing what he will say in Jerusalem.

He's answering an objection: If the gospel is promised in the Jewish Scriptures, then why are so few Jews accepting the message? Paul claimed that the gospel was rooted in the Old Testament, but why should anyone believe the gospel if the people who knew those Scriptures best, the Jews, didn't accept the message? The Jewish rejection of the gospel was undermining Paul's message. Had God given up on the Jewish people and turned to the Gentiles instead? And if he did that, can we be sure that he won't abandon the Gentiles, too? Why were most Jews rejecting the free gift that Paul was offering?

#### **Advantages of the Jews**

Paul begins chapter 9 with a strong assertion: **“I am telling the truth in Christ (I am not lying!), for my conscience assures me in the Holy Spirit — I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart” (verses 1-2; NET Bible used throughout chapters 9-11).**

Chapter 8 ended with rejoicing and confidence in God's love, and then all of a sudden Paul says he is full of anguish. He hasn't even said why — he delays that for rhetorical effect until verse 3. He just said that nothing will be able to cut us off from the love of Christ, and yet he says, **"For I could wish that I myself were accursed — cut off from Christ..."** He is making a huge contrast, wishing for something he has just said is impossible.

What has filled him with anguish? It is **"for the sake of my people, my fellow countrymen, who are Israelites" (verses 3-4)**. Just as Moses offered to give himself up for Israel ([Exodus 32:32](#)), Paul also says that he is willing to be cut off from salvation, if such were possible, so his people could be saved.

Why does he begin with a three-fold assertion that he is telling the truth? Probably because some people thought that Paul had abandoned his people, and that God had, as well.

Paul has deep concern for his people, and he is convinced that without Christ, they are headed for destruction, despite all their advantages. He lists some advantages: **"To them belong the adoption as sons, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the temple worship, and the promises" (verse 4)**.

Gentiles had many of these advantages, too — they can be adopted through Christ, given the divine glory, a new covenant and wonderful promises. Paul seems to be referring to special events in Israel's history: when God adopted the nation at the exodus, when God's glory filled the tabernacle, the covenants given to Abraham, Moses, Levi and David, the sacrificial rituals and the promises given through the prophets.

Those things were a head start in salvation, one would think, but they hadn't helped much. The Jews were so proud of these good things that they were overlooking the best thing — Christ. If salvation is in Christ, then it's not in the law and the temple worship, and many Jews were not willing to admit the relative unimportance of something that had always been a central element of their culture and religion.

Paul lists two more Jewish advantages in **verse 5: "To them belong the patriarchs, and from them, by human descent, came the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever! Amen."** This verse is one of the few in which Jesus is called God. The grammar is sometimes debated, but it seems most likely that the Messiah is being called God and given a praise doxology appropriate to God. But that is not Paul's focus here. His main point is that Jesus is a Jew, the fulfillment of the promises given to the patriarchs.

So if Israel has all this, what's the problem? Paul doesn't directly say! But he implies that since the Jews have rejected Jesus, they are cut off from Christ, missing out on salvation, which gives the appearance that God's promises to them have been broken.

### **Romans 9:6-33**

#### **God's freedom to choose**

Paul begins to address the problem in **verse 6: "It is not as though the word of God had failed. For not all those who are descended from Israel are truly Israel."** The root problem is whether God's word is true, whether he is faithful to his promises. Paul then points out that we can't expect all Jews to be inheritors of the promise. Some descendants of Israel are disqualified (as the later rabbis also said).

In **verse 7** Paul gives evidence: **"nor are all the children Abraham's true descendants."** Some of Abraham's descendants are not counted as his children; they are disinherited. Paul quotes [Genesis 21:12](#) as evidence: **"through Isaac will your descendants be counted."** Ishmael was Abraham's son, but he was not counted as a descendant for the purpose of the promise — the promise was given to the children of Isaac.

**"This means it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God; rather, the children of promise are counted as descendants. For this is what the promise declared:**

**'About a year from now I will return and Sarah will have a son' (verses 8-9,** quoting [Genesis 18:14](#)). Only Isaac was a child of promise. But God's selectivity did not stop there — not even all the children of Isaac were counted among the chosen people.

#### **Verses 10-13:**

Not only that, but when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our ancestor Isaac—even before they were born or had done anything good or bad (so that God's purpose in election would stand, not by works but by his calling)—it was said to her, **"The older will serve the younger"** [[Genesis 25:23](#)], just as it is written [in [Malachi 1:2-3](#)]: **"Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."**

The word *hated* doesn't imply hate as we know it — the construction is a Hebrew figure of speech to emphasize the love for the other. God loved Esau enough to bless him, but he did not choose him for the covenant he gave Israel. Instead, the promise was carried through the line of Jacob.

All this supports the point Paul made in **verse 6**: not all the Israelites are God's people. God can choose the people he works with, and when, and for what purpose. He had a special purpose for Israel, and he did not choose everyone for that role. But Paul has not yet solved the problem he began with — if God is not giving salvation to all of Jacob's descendants, what good is it to be a descendant of Jacob? It looks like God is not keeping his promises.

#### **God's freedom to give mercy**

In **verse 14**, Paul approaches the question from a different angle: **"What shall we say then? Is there injustice with God?"** God chooses some people and not others, and this doesn't look fair — especially if you think that God made a promise to save all the Jews.

But Paul answers: **"Absolutely not! For he says to Moses: 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion'"** (verses 14-15, quoting [Exodus 33:19](#)). It's a matter of mercy, not justice. The surprise is not that some people are left out — the miracle is that some people are chosen. God can give mercy to whomever he wants, without being unfair to the others ([Matthew 20:15](#)).

Paul concludes, **"So then, it does not depend on human desire or exertion, but on God who shows mercy" (verse 16)**. Salvation is by grace, not by what we want or do.

#### **God's freedom to harden hearts**

It is easy to show that mercy is fair, but Paul also has to include the opposite, because it seems that Israel is being hardened. He begins with the example of Pharaoh: **"For the scripture says to Pharaoh: 'For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may demonstrate my power in you, and that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth'"** (verse 17; [Exodus 9:16](#)). God tells Pharaoh: "I put you in a position of power so I could show the world that I have far more power. You will be an object lesson of what happens to people who resist my purpose."

**"So then,"** Paul summarizes in **verse 18**, **"God has mercy on whom he chooses to have mercy, and he hardens whom he chooses to harden."** Both of these can be fair. We have to accept what God does, and not judge him by our own understanding. He has a purpose in it.

However, Paul knows that his case is more difficult, so he says in **verse 19**: **"You will say to me then, 'Why does he still find fault? For who has ever resisted his will?'"** The objection is that it's not fair for God to punish people for disobedience when he caused them to disobey. Paul does not say whether the accusation is true — he just says the complaint is inappropriate: **"But who indeed are you—a mere human being—to talk back to God?"** He quotes [Isaiah 29:16](#): **"Does what is molded say to the molder, 'Why have you made me like this?'"**

Paul asks questions that emphasize the gulf between God and humans: **"Has the potter no right to make from the same lump of clay one vessel for special use and another for ordinary use?"** Here Paul refers to **Jeremiah 18**, where God says that he can change his plans for Israel depending on how *they* respond to him. Then Paul asks another "what if" question: **"But what**

**if God, willing to demonstrate his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience the objects of wrath prepared for destruction?" (verse 22).** The marvel is not that God rejects his people — it is that he is so patient with those who reject him. It is not clear how God's patience demonstrates his wrath, but Paul does not address that here.

#### **God's freedom to call his people**

In **verses 23-24**, Paul asks another "what if" or hypothetical question: **"And what if he is willing to make known the wealth of his glory on the objects of mercy that he has prepared beforehand for glory— even us, whom he has called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?"** What if God's patience is designed to help us appreciate his mercy? If God is patient with those who oppose him, how much more is he patient with those who turn to him?

Paul has dismissed the question about fairness and is now moving to statements about God's calling. He starts by showing from the Old Testament that God is saving not only Jews, but also Gentiles:

As he also says in Hosea: **"I will call those who were not my people, 'My people,' and I will call her who was unloved, 'My beloved.'" And in the very place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," there they will be called "sons of the living God."** ([Romans 9:25-26](#), quoting [Hosea 2:23](#) and [1:10](#))

Hosea is talking about the restoration of Israelites who had fallen away, but Paul is adapting the verse to say that God is calling Gentiles, who had never been part of God's people. God can reject Israelites who persistently reject him. He has no further obligation to them — they are in the same category as Gentiles. So, if he can make these rejected Israelites his people again, then he can make anyone his people. He can choose people he previously ignored, just as he did with Abraham and Israel. What God did with the Jews, he can also do with everyone else.

Paul moves into a slightly different idea when he quotes [Isaiah 10:22](#): **"And Isaiah cries out on behalf of Israel, 'Though the number of the children of Israel are as the sand of the sea, only the *remnant* will be saved, for the Lord will execute his sentence on the earth completely and quickly'" (verses 27-28).** The word *remnant* is important.

**"Just as Isaiah predicted [in [Isaiah 1:9](#)], 'If the Lord of armies had not left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, and we would have resembled Gomorrah.'" The surprise is not that many Jews reject the message, but that some accept it. If we were left to ourselves, Paul says, we would be desolate. But because God has been merciful, a remnant of people are responding. God's word has not failed — Isaiah's prophecy has come true. A portion is being saved.**

#### **Israel missing the goal**

**"What shall we say then?"** Paul asks in **verses 30-31**. **"The Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness obtained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith, but Israel even though pursuing a law of righteousness did not attain it."** The Jews were trying hard to be righteous, but they failed, and the Gentiles, who were not aware of it, were given righteousness by God.

Why did Israel not attain their goal? Because they were trying to be righteous through the law. They had a good goal, but they were pursuing it in the wrong way. **"They pursued it not by faith but (as if it were possible) by works" (verse 32).** The Jews focused on their advantages, but those things are ineffective in salvation. What we need is faith in Christ. They focused on the law that made them distinctive and rejected Christ because he did not meet their expectations.

**"They stumbled over the stumbling stone" — Christ (verse 32). "Just as it is written, 'Look, I am laying in Zion a stone that will cause people to stumble and a rock that will make them fall, yet the one who believes in him will not be put to shame'" (verse 33,**

quoting [Isaiah 28:16](#)). The Scriptures predicted that the people would stumble against Christ, and that came true. But the person who believes in Christ will be saved. A remnant will be saved.

In this chapter, Paul stated the problem—explaining that only a few of the Jews accept Jesus as the Christ. This should not be surprising, for it was predicted in Scripture. But that is not the end of the story, as we will see in the next two chapters.

### Things to think about

- Have I ever wondered why Jews don't accept Jesus?
- How concerned am I for the salvation of my people? (verse 3)
- What advantages do I have in salvation? (verse 4)
- Is it fair for God to save some people and let others continue walking toward disaster? (verse 14)
- Is God fair, or are we even allowed to ask the question? (verse 20).
- If God saves a few Jews, does that solve the problem, or do I still have questions? (verse 27).

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Author: Michael Morrison, 2004, 2015



Sherwin Scott, Deacon in the Lewes, UK congregation GCI

### Jesus, the game changer (From GCI Words of Life Daily Devotional)

**“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”**

**Acts 4:12 (ESV)**

One of the biggest mistakes that anyone can make is to think or believe that Jesus Christ is irrelevant. He is no ordinary person – Jesus is the beloved Son with whom the Father is well pleased. ‘He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.” ’ (Matthew 17:5).

Jesus, the beloved Son is God incarnate: ‘For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,’ (Colossians 2:9).

This is another important reason why we cannot take Jesus lightly or for granted, or think that he is irrelevant.

As part of the triune relationship, he is our

Maker, the Creator of the universe and all life here on earth. And this great and amazing part of the Trinity loves us with all his heart, soul, strength and mind. That has already been proven by his life, death, resurrection and ascension.

Jesus has been on a mission to rescue humanity ever since the Father sent him: **“For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak.”** (John 12:49). This is why we have been clearly instructed to listen to him. And because Jesus is the Faithful One, he always succeeds in what he sets out to do; that is very good news for those who believe in him and do not consider him to be irrelevant.

In spite of the pain, sorrow, suffering and death that we see in this present age, there is hope for humankind because Jesus is a game changer. All authority in heaven and *on earth* has been given to Jesus (**Matthew 28:18**). Humankind's rule, under the influence of Satan, is going to come to an end – that is guaranteed. We hurt when we see or hear about the wickedness and the resulting suffering of people in the world, and we ask ourselves how long will it continue?

The prayers of many for **‘your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven’** have been heard by our triune God, who is working things out for us at this very moment.

Jesus the game changer is in control, he will bring it about.

**Prayer: Father in heaven, thank you for sending your Son to bring us home to you. Please enable us to do as you instructed and listen to Jesus. In his name we pray, Amen.**

**GCI principal website and Moncton Websites**—a) [www.gci.org](http://www.gci.org), b) [www.gcinewbrunswick.org](http://www.gcinewbrunswick.org), c) [www.gcicanada.ca](http://www.gcicanada.ca);

For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace, and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website.

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