

## English Bible Study: Romans 11:1-17:

### Introduction

Paul almost certainly wrote this letter from the City of Corinth between 53 and 58AD. He had been a Christian for 20 years. He was planning a trip to Jerusalem and then to Rome. He knew that he would be facing some difficult times and that he would die in Rome. The letter is the result of his most mature and highest thought as a Christian. He wanted to record what he thought and believed as an Apostle of Jesus. It is very "theological", because Paul is thinking about his life-in-God. The word 'God' appears 153 times in this letter. The words 'Christ' and 'Lord' together appear 108 times. "Sin" and "law" appear 72 and 48 times. This is because Paul is wanting to make a clear statement about who God and Jesus are, what Jesus has done for us and what we need to do.

In the letter to the Romans, Paul gives a very sound theological basis for his faith. This opening passage is very concise and precise. It expresses Paul's "theology" in very clear and direct ways. Today, most Christians don't have a thought-out theology. If they do, they don't express it so directly. We like to be "open-minded" and "tolerant" of other views. In fact, Paul often debated with people of other views calmly and openly. One of the great qualities of a Christian is to be able to have and express your commitment while being gracious and accepting of others. Today we are just going to look at key words in this passage and what they mean.

### Key Words

*Theology*: "the study of God and God's relation to the world." Greek "God" + Latin "Word"

*Servant*: Paul was first a servant; complete and utter devotion to the Master, not a slave.

*Apostle*: any one of the 12 men chosen personally by Jesus Christ as in the Bible. Greek = to send

*Set apart*: This can mean "to separate oneself from", "to be a separatist" or sectarian. Paul does not mean "isolate from". He is "set apart" for the Gospel. This means in fact that he is appointed to *engage with*, people and not *isolate* himself from them. He is an ambassador of Jesus Christ who came to us. Paul must go because he is sent to others.

### Questions

1. Do you think that Christians can or should "separate" themselves from others?
2. Is every Christian called to be a "theologian"? If there are no apostles alive today, what are some of the names we can ourselves today?
3. Do you think being "open-minded" and "tolerant" are good things to be?
4. The world desperately needs the Gospel which means "good news". What is the "good news" and what is the "challenge" of the Gospel?
5. The salvation comes from the Latin to heal or save, rescue, such as "salve" (an ointment used to promote healing of the skin or as protection) and salvage. What does this tell us about 'salvation' in Jesus?

### Conclusion

In the opening 6 verse, Paul has summarise the essential points of the gospel. Firstly, Jesus Christ did not just "appear" unannounced. He was no "surprise package". In the Old Testament, God carefully and consistently told His people that one day a "Saviour" would come. The question is whether people would

recognise him when he arrived. He was not what they had expected. His “way” and gospel” were a surprise. As Christians, we need to be clear about what we believe and hold firmly to: and yet we need to be “open-minded” about what Jesus might say to us and where he might lead us. Secondly we received grace from Jesus. That means we have no right whatsoever to judge others. We were sinners who have been saved *through* Jesus and *for* Jesus. A song about a suicide ends ‘Oh my grace, I have no hiding place”. Jesus is all grace. He is our hiding place. He then sends us to comfort others and announce the good news; there is no need to hide: Jesus is the light and love of our lives.