

**ROMANS: CHARTER OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH**  
**"Part XV: A Wake Up Call For INDIVIDUAL Faithfulness"**  
**(Romans 11:1-10)**

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

We occasionally are taken off guard at the spiritual, moral or ethical failures of people we might have thought were above it:

(1) CNSNews.com reported in its October 26, 2000 web site that a New York Torah Court in Brooklyn, New York has excommunicated Connecticut U. S. Senator Joe Lieberman, the Democratic vice presidential candidate for, among other things, "misrepresenting and falsifying to the American people the teachings of the Torah against partial birth infanticide . . ." **We wonder HOW an Orthodox Hebrew like Lieberman violate his own, essential Old Testament belief on the value GOD places on infant human life?**

(1) The October 21, 2000 issue of the Republican-American ran a story about former President Jimmy Carter's resignation from the Southern Baptist Convention. In a letter on this move, he wrote: "the group's . . . recent decisions barring women pastors and declaring that wives should submit graciously to their husbands violate the *basic premises* of my Christian faith." (Loc. cit.)

**How can this man whose Evangelical faith was prominent in his presidency COUNTER Ephesians 5:22 which says, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord"?**

(2) The Answers in Genesis organization ran a story in its June-August 2000 issue of Creation Ex Nihilo, p. 8-13 about a book that has come out by Charles Templeton, entitled, Farewell To God: My Reasons For Rejecting The Christian Faith. The author once worked in the 1940s with Billy Graham as a "Gospel-preaching duo." In fact, "in 1946, he was listed among those *best used of God* by the National Association of Evangelicals." (Ibid., p. 10 which cites p. 110 of W. Martin's work, A Prophet with Honor: The Billy Graham Story) He led **150** people to faith in Christ **per night** during his evangelistic campaigns according to secular newspaper articles, Ibid.

However, in his 1996 book, Farewell To God fifty years later, that same Charles Templeton wrote: "I believe that there is no supreme being with human attributes -- no God in the biblical sense . . ." (Ibid., p. 12, citing Templeton, Ibid., p. 232)

**HOW could a man who started out working with so much spiritual promise END UP DENYING the EXISTENCE of GOD?!** (We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

***Need: "When I see spiritual slippage' occur in people I once felt might NEVER fail the Lord, I wonder if I myself could get entangled in such defeat. If so, how do I stay blessed by God and escape falling into failure and experience a loss of His blessing?!"***

- I. **The Apostle Paul revealed that his nation of Israel as a WHOLE was missing God's salvation and blessing, Romans 10:1-3.**
- II. **Yet, lest one conclude that all Hebrews were doomed to miss God's blessing, Paul revealed he as a Hebrew had been saved, Rom. 11:1.**
- III. **To show WHY Paul was BLESSED and his NATION was NOT, he claimed GOD ENHANCED the CHOICE EVERY person makes about God's truth, and that with CONTRASTING results, 11:2-10:**
  - A. On the **one** hand, God has enhanced the blessings of those disposed to **accept** His truths *throughout history*:
    1. Paul revealed God had not rejected those whom He foreknew from eternity would heed His truth to become His people, 11:2a; 8:29.
    2. Then, He illustrated this from an Old Testament event (11:2-3):
      - a. In citing 1 Kings 19:10-18, Paul referred to a time of apostasy in Israel where the nation tottered between following idolatrous Baal worship and following the Lord, cf. 1 Kings 18:21.
      - b. Elijah had defeated the prophets of Baal in a competition by calling fire down from heaven, so the people of Israel had all admitted the Lord was the true Creator God, 1 Kings 18:37-39.
      - c. Nevertheless, when wicked Queen Jezebel found out about his destruction of her false prophets, she threatened Elijah's life; Elijah, feeling intimidated by Jezebel and discouraged, had fled and complained to God that he was the only true follower of the Lord's left alive, 1 Kings 19:10 with Romans 11:2b-3.
      - d. God replied to Elijah that there were 7,000 other Jews who at **least** had not **bowed** to Baal, Rom. 11:4; 1 Kings 19:18. Thus, God foreknew these people would follow Him although they were then just **barely leaning** in His **direction**, and so He had graciously made room for their faith to arise for blessing!
    3. Similarly, throughout history, God has had a remnant of such people who will eventually heed Him, and so He has worked in grace to make room for their discipleship advance, Rom. 11:5-6.
  - B. However, since the **majority** in Israel had **rejected** the truth, **GOD** had **reacted** to this by **blinding** them *further* for **judgment**, 11:7-10:
    1. Though the godly remnant has always found God's blessing, Paul cited Isaiah 29:10 to show God has responded to Israel's failure to heed Him by even **blinding** the nation **more** for **judgment**, 11:7-8.
      - a. Israel in Isaiah 29 had practiced an artificial form of worship: she had drawn near to God with her mouth in praise while her heart was removed from obeying His Word in life, Isaiah 29:13.

- b. Accordingly, God had worked to **blind** the nation against accepting His truth so it would perish in judgment, Isa. 29:10, 6.
- 2. Similarly, he quoted Psalm 69:22-23 to speak of the **judgment** God would pour out on those who performed the atrocity of giving Jesus vinegar on the cross to drink (Ps. 69:21) out of their blinded rejection of Him as Messiah, Romans 11:9-10.
  - a. Paul's citation of Psalm 69:21-23 in Romans 11:9-10 records a judgment to come on those who fed vinegar to the Messiah.
  - b. That judgment was fulfilled during the Roman invasion of Israel in A. D. 70, cf. Psalm 69:22-23 with Romans 11:9-10.
  - c. Such a judgment would come because Israel had rejected Jesus, and God had **reacted** to this rejection by letting her become **INCREASINGLY blinded** and **hardened against** Jesus so He could judge them for rejecting Him, Matthew 13:10-15.

IV. **Such a divine ENHANCING of our spiritual choices -- good OR bad -- applies to CHRISTIAN believers as WELL, Hebrews 4:7, 1:**

- A. We **Christians** are not to "**harden**" *our* hearts to God's Word, 4:7.
- B. If we do, we must **fear** God's severe discipline, Hebrews 4:1!
- C. In this context, that judgment is not a loss of the soul's salvation, but physical death, Hebrews 3:7-11; 12:6, 29 with Numbers 14:28-30.

**Application:** (1) We must examine our **OWN hearts**, and, **IF necessary**, (2) believe on Christ as Savior from sin to receive eternal life, John 3:16. (3) If as **BELIEVERS** we see we are "**coasting**" in our spiritual walk, we are **ALREADY growing CALLUSED to truth**, and heading for God's severe discipline, Heb. 4:1-3. We must repent, and **NOW**, Heb. 4:1, 7. (4) If we see **others fail**, check **ourselves** and adjust if need be, Gal. 6:1.

**Lesson:** We must **ALWAYS** be careful **HOW** we react to **ANY** exposure to Scripture, for there is **NO "neutral" spiritual ground: EITHER we HEED God's Word OR we RESIST it, and GOD is CURRENTLY responding by ENHANCING either choice toward intense discipline OR great blessing!**

**Conclusion:** (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . . )

(1) As an illustration of divine **hardening**, in the sermon introduction, we noted a book by Charles Templeton, a man who began working as an evangelist alongside Billy Graham only to end up denying the very existence of God.

According to the Creation Ex Nihilo article cited earlier, the drift in Mr. Templeton began with his reading of books on evolution that cast doubts in his mind on the truthfulness of the Bible's creation account. In time, Charles Templeton felt he could no longer accept the literal interpretation of Genesis. He even warned Billy Graham it was "intellectual suicide **not** to question the Bible and to go on preaching God's Word as authoritative." (Ibid., Creation Ex Nihilo, p. 10)

Templeton next attended Princeton Theological Seminary where his doubts about the validity of Genesis only increased, and he took a position with the ecumenical National Council of Churches. However, he finally resigned all work in Christendom, denouncing the Christian faith and the existence of God due to his **atheistic** beliefs.

(2) As an illustration of divine **enhancing**, Dr. Bolton Davidheiser, with a Ph. D. in Geology from John's Hopkins **started out** stating he could not believe in Christ because he had been taught evolution as a fact. But one night in a church in South Dakota, he believed the simple gospel he heard preached. Later, while performing cancer research in Baltimore, he found that the premises supporting evolution in scientific journals were not scientifically factual, and came to defend the pure creation stance in his own writings. God has since blessed his faith and his ministry as a result! (Bolton Davidheiser, Evolution and the Christian Faith, "A Personal Testimony" section)

**No party is ever in a "neutral" position in his spiritual pilgrimage. He EITHER is slipping down a slope of increased hardening against the truth unto divine discipline, OR he is growing toward coming to Christ or growing in Christ! (1) Thus, if NOT saved, we must believe in Christ and be saved and thus be eternally secured by God's grace in that salvation position. (2) If we are a BELIEVER, we must CONSTANTLY EXAMINE our thinking to handle growing doubts and hardness against the Bible's truth that we might grow in obeying God to be blessed!**