

With Children

- Ever felt like the only one?
 - boy at a party full of girls or vice versa?
 - only one who has not done their homework?
 - only one who **has** done their homework?
 - only one who doesn't understand the work the teacher is explaining?
 - only one who goes to the Scripture Union group, or church, or whatever?
- Not a nice feeling!
- Great when we find we are not alone - even if only a few others!
- Will often feel alone following God
 - but there are others
 - and there is hope, even if we have to struggle along for a while alone

Introduction

- Templeton Woods murder trial:
 - I was aware of it, but not having lived here in Dundee at the time, nor really been of an age to have been really paying too much attention... it passed me by
 - it didn't seem relevant - **for others, but not for me**
 - then one of the staff at one of the local undertakers was called as a witness
 - not a significant, major witness, but called nonetheless
 - someone I knew, someone I have spent time with in cars being driven to and from various funerals...
 - it was no longer abstract and far away, but directly affecting someone I knew - it had relevance for me!
- Do we read this passage and think:
 - "well, interesting... **for Paul and the Jewish people and the early Christians in the 1st century Roman context.... but not really anything to do with me!**"
 - need to look again and see that it does have direct relevance to us, affecting people we know and care for!

What was Paul on about?

- Israel was never perfect! (vs.1-10)
 - always a remnant within the wider nation who had faith
 - it was always by grace, not by works (background, upbringing, habit of worship - but by receiving God's gift)
 - why did not all Israel respond to God's call, with all their advantages of up-bringing and background? God had allowed their hearts to become hard...
- But Israel was never totally excluded, falling beyond redemption (vs.11-24)
 - rather, various things flowed out of their imperfect response to the gospel...
 - salvation has come to Gentiles (us!)
 - indeed, Paul's preaching to Gentiles - he hopes - will in part stimulate the Jews to faith, seeing the Gentiles coming, almost acting out of envy...
 - and Paul holds out the prospect of "if this much good (good news to Gentiles) comes from the Jews **unbelief**, how much more good will come if/when they do turn to God?!"
- Analogy of the grafted branches:
 - and warning to we who have been grafted in - we are no different from the Jews, now with all the advantages.... what will we do with them?
- God's gift is greater than current Jewish unbelief (vs.25-32)
 - huge debate over the years about whether there will one day be a wholesale

turning to God of the ethnic Jewish people...

- trouble is there are times in Bible when Israel, Jewish, Jacob, etc are used to mean ethnic Jewish nation, and times when they are used to speak of those who are marked as God's into eternity, who respond in faith to his mercy...
- whatever we say - and I don't particularly hold a very high place for, say, the contemporary Israeli state - God's mercy is the main thing!

Doxology (vs.33-36)

- Paul caused by all this simply to praise God
 - gospel is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe
 - the greatest sinner...
 - the most proudly religious and self-sufficient person in the world...
 - **all who believe!**
- *To him be the glory!*

So what for us today?

- Remnant chosen by grace in the wider, visible church today
- Not fallen beyond recovery
- Care not to be arrogant, that we are OK
 - seek God in repentance - cf Daniel
- Possibility of salvation is still there, for us to hold out to others - eg this Christmas...
- *And oh, the glory of God!*