

EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



From My Window

Roger Olson wrote a compelling chapter in *The Story of Christian Theology*, on Athanasius, the Bishop of Alexandria (328-375 AD). He was known as the “saint of stubbornness” for his stand against Arianism—“there was a time when the Son was not.” He endured the intermingled duet of politics and theology, and the majority of leaders and people did all they could to defeat this one they pejoratively called “the Black Dwarf.” Athanasius was clear: The fundamental issue of salvation is the Son of God is God, not merely a being like God. His life was full of heartache, exiled five times for a total of seventeen years. However, the Church emerged stronger because Athanasius would not compromise truth. Do we value peace over truth? May we kindly employ Jude’s words: *Earnestly contend for the faith.*



A Message from Chaplain (MAJ) Bret Perkuchin

Graduating from VBTS in 2018 with my MDiv prepared me for my current role as the Army Liaison Chaplain in Dover Air Force Base. My primary role in honoring the “fallen” is to care for their loved ones within 48 hours of them receiving the notification of their soldier’s death. I also take the lead in meeting the spiritual and resiliency needs of those precious team members of Armed Forces Medical Examiners System (AFMES), who have the responsibility of assisting with autopsies. My time at VBTS made it possible for God to use me in a way that puts Him first and serve in the military which protects my rights to do that. Thanks to all the professors, staff, and church members that gave my family the love that made my military service possible.

The place of Romans 9–11 In Paul’s letter

Dr. Daniel K. Davey, President VBTS

Romans is the Apostle Paul’s unique exposition of *the gospel of God* (1:1). Its value is beyond doubt to the Christian community, and John Piper sums it up well: “Romans is the greatest letter ever written.” However, his third essay (9–11) has been puzzling to many, and for centuries students of this letter have expressed in some form what the Scottish theologian, James Denney, wrote in 1900, there is “no formal link of connection” or “logical relation” between this essay and the ones before or after it. On the surface, it may seem that the letter would have been better served if Paul had immediately jumped from 8:39 to 12:1—nudging his readers from instruction to exhortation. However, a careful appraisal will not allow such a leap, and here are three reasons to view these chapters as “an important and integral part of the letter” (Moo, 547).

First, Paul connects Jesus to the OT Messianic prophecies calling Israel to faith. For example, he develops Jesus as Isaiah’s promised *stone of Zion*, and explains why Israel *stumbled* over this (9:32). He opened his letter by stating *the gospel of God was promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures* (1:2), and he amasses thirty-four OT quotations in 9–11 to unfold God’s mercy to Israel—*all day long I stretch out my hands to disobedient and contrary people* (10:21).

Second, he demonstrates the place of Israel in God’s redemptive plan. In his theme (1:16–17), he states the gospel is *to the Jew first*, granting Israel a superior place over the nations. While the OT describes Israel as God’s *firstborn son*, this must be clarified in light of the universal offer of the gospel which includes the Gentiles (e.g., 4:11–12). Also, Paul names all who receive Jesus, *adopted sons of God* (e.g., 8:15). Therefore, does being a *son of God* completely obliterate ethnic distinctions? Or to put it another way, does God still consider the nation of Israel in a class by itself? Paul addresses these significant questions, and his answers are vital if all believers are to unify around the gospel message (e.g., 15:7–9).

Third, he establishes the reliability of God’s promises. In Paul’s first essay, he describes the Jews as “privileged people” because to them *were entrusted the oracles of God* (3:1–2); however, most of them have been unfaithful to the word God gave them (v. 3; cf. 2:23–24). This strikes at the heart of Israel’s problem, and questions the reliability of God’s word. Must God modify his OT promises to Israel because they have rejected his Son as their Messiah? If so, can Gentile believers in the gospel really be sure that God will keep his promise of grace to them, if indeed, he alters his “everlasting promises” with Israel? Paul, therefore, responds to these inquiries for they are fundamental to the integrity of *the word of God* (9:6), and his answers both protect and underscore God’s ancient pledges to Israel.

These points Paul addresses make Rom. 9–11 an essential part of the letter with its emphasis on God’s good news of hope to *all who believe* (10:11). When we properly digest Paul’s ninety verses in these chapters, we are encouraged on two fronts. First, God is faithful to his word—he always keeps his promises. Second, while forming a family of faith through the gospel, God has not rejected Israel nor revised his promises to them; in fact, one day *all Israel will be saved* (11:26). How God works his perfect plan is the beauty of Rom. 9–11, so let me exhort you to “take up and read”—your faith will be greatly strengthened!