

Ministry of Grace Church

Romans 11:25-36 – Isn't Our God Awesome?!

Sermon Notes



Introduction

For the past few months we've been going through the book of Romans, Paul's letter to the 1st century Christians in Rome. So - let's review a few of the things he's told us in this letter. In **Romans 3:10** he told us, "There is none righteous, not even one." And, in **Romans 3:23** he said, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." In other words, we are all sinners, every one of us. Then, in **Romans 6:23**, we learned that, "The wages of sin is death ...". So, because we are sinners, we deserve to die.

But Paul didn't leave us there. In **Romans 5:8** He said this about God's love: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Notice that God didn't wait for us to clean-up our act. Christ died for us while we were still sinners! And in the second half of **Romans 6:23**, we were told, "... the gracious gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." So, this gift of eternal life is freely given to us.

So, how do we acquire this gift? In **Romans 10:9**, we were told, "... if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." And **Romans 10:13** says it again, "whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Now, because we have acknowledged our sinfulness, having believed that Jesus is Lord and that He died to pay for our sins, and - we have confessed that He is our Lord and Savior, therefore "... having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (**Romans 5:1**) And, because we have been justified (declared to be without sin), "... there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (**Romans 8:1**)

That's a quick synopsis of what has come to be known as the Romans Road. But Paul didn't leave it there, either. He went on to show us that God is Sovereign, that is, He does whatever He wants to do. In **Romans 9:15**, he put it this way, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." Again, in proclaiming God's sovereignty, Paul said:

So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? Will the thing molded say to the Molder, "Why did you make me like this"? Or does not the potter have authority over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? (**Romans 9:18-21**)

Now, in this eleventh chapter of Romans, Paul teaches us that God's chosen people, the Jews, rejected their Messiah. As a result, God turned to the Gentiles with this message of salvation. He will now

explain to us why God has seemingly rejected the Jews and why He turned to the Gentiles. He explains it as a mystery.

Romans 11:25-27

For I do not want you, brothers, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “the deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.” “And this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins.”

This verse starts off with a classic Paul-ism; “For I do not want you ... to be uninformed.” What he means is, “You currently are uninformed (ignorant) of something, and I am going to inform you.

What is it that these Roman Christians were uninformed about? It is “**this mystery.**” The thing previously unknown is that blindness has happened to part of Israel. So, the mystery that Paul is revealing is that part of Israel (a large part) has become mentally hardened so as not to perceive the truth of the gospel until the fullness (or completion) of the Gentiles has come in.

What Paul is telling us is that the sovereign hand of God had prevented many of the Jews from believing in the Messiah during His first advent, so that the gospel message could be spread abroad to the Gentile nations. Now, at some time in the future (very near, perhaps) all of the elect Gentiles will have been gathered in by God. Then, He will once again turn to the Jews.

He says that at that time, “All Israel will be saved.” This phrase has been debated for centuries. There are some who claim that Paul is asserting that all Jews of all time will be saved. This is clearly as absurd as saying that all of mankind will be saved. What Paul is referring to is a point in time in the future when all who are Jews will recognize that their Messiah has already come and they will accept Him as their Savior.

So, the question is, “When will all of Israel be saved?” And the answer is, “When the Messiah returns.” This return will occur at the end of the seven-year Tribulation (Daniel’s 70th week) described by the Apostle John in the book of Revelation. This coming of the conquering Messiah at the final battle of the Tribulation, commonly referred to as Armageddon, is described in **Revelation 19:11-16**. Immediately after this battle, the sheep and goat judgment will take place (**Matthew 25:31-46**) in which unbelievers will be cast into Hades and the believers will be ushered into the thousand-year reign of Christ upon this earth, commonly called The Millennium.

These are promises which were well known among the Jews. It is clear that God has promised the Jews that at some future time He will gather the remnant of Israel to Himself, and they will all believe at that time. Paul does not say when that time will be because even he did not know exactly when it would happen (and neither do we).

The point he is making, remember, is that we Gentiles should not become arrogant about the gospel having been delivered to us as a result of the unbelief of the Jewish people. If God was able to graft us into the good olive tree, we who were from a wild olive tree, then he can certainly graft in branches from the good olive tree again.

And - this is precisely what God will do. At some time in the near future, the Messiah will return and will gather the remnant of the Jews to Himself, and they will all believe just as He has promised them. He will take away their sins just as he has taken away the sins of all who have believed on Him in the Church age.

Romans 11:28-29

From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Paul has been explaining that it was the rejection of the Messiah by the Jews that occasioned the gospel (good news) to be proclaimed to the Gentiles. He starts off the current verse with, “From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies ...” He is not saying that the Jews are the enemies of Christians. He is saying that the Jews are enemies of the gospel message; they hate the message regarding Jesus being the Messiah and that salvation and the righteousness of God are obtained by believing that Jesus died to pay for the sins of all mankind.

But Paul goes on to say that they are beloved because of God's covenant with the patriarchs. God chose the Israelites as His special people and though they rejected their Messiah, God will one day turn back to them and restore their position of blessedness because of the covenant that He made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Paul has just said, “From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake” Now he says, “but from the standpoint of *God's* choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers.” The word “choice” here is from the Greek *eklogen*, which means “the act of choosing.” Paul has used various forms of this word several times in this letter. In each case he is referring to “election unto salvation” whereby God chose who would receive His free gift of grace.

Paul now expands on the concept of the “election.” He says, “For the gifts ...” that is, those gifts of grace whereby sinners are chosen to believe the gospel and to be forgiven of their sins. Paul then couples those free gifts with God's calling.

He now tells us something about this election and its associated calling. They are irrevocable. God does not regret having chosen anyone, and He will not change His mind regarding His selection and calling. So, Paul is actually saying that this free gift of Grace and the associated irresistible calling of sinners to Himself are done by God without regret and without changing His mind. In other words, once God chooses a sinner to be saved, He does not change His mind and revoke that calling unto salvation.

Think about this. Since your salvation is God's choice and completely dependent on His actions apart from any action on your part, and since God does not change His mind regarding this choosing, if you are truly saved then you cannot become unsaved. It simply can't happen! You can't do anything to change God's mind, not a single thing, zero, zip, nada!

Romans 11:30-31

For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy.

OK, it's time for another short Greek grammar lesson. The grammatical construction that ties verses 30 and 31 together is the use of the Greek word *kai* in both these verses. This word is most often translated as “and” or “also.” But in the case of these two verses, the use of *kai* in both verses represents a construction called “correlative conjunction.” That means that the ideas in the two verses are tied together. This correlative conjunction is sometimes translated as “both ... and ...” Paul is going to show us that our ability to believe is a direct result of the Jews' lack of belief.

The word translated “disobedient” is *apeitheō*, which literally means “to not persuade.” When used in the passive voice, as it is in this verse, it means “not willing to be persuaded, not willing to believe, or unbelieving.” This really gives a different meaning to this verse. It could then be translated as:

For as you were once unbelieving in God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unwillingness to believe.

In other words, there was a time when we Gentiles did not believe in the one true God, therefore we walked in our own ways instead of God’s ways. Yet we who previously did not believe in God now can believe in God and walk in His ways. And our belief is a direct result of the unbelief of the Jews who rejected the Messiah when He first came.

In the same manner these Jews are unbelieving now. They are still rejecting the Messiah, the Christ, who came to save them. But now, because we believe, they can receive salvation through belief in His sacrificial death on the cross.

That’s pretty complicated, though, isn’t it? So, let me say it more simply. Because of the disbelief of the Jews, we Gentiles have found God’s mercy, and because of that, the Jews will also receive God’s mercy through our belief and our witness to them. And, to put it even more simply, “We now have it because they rejected it, and some day they will have it again because we received it and gave it back to them.”

The underlying principle is that God has had a plan throughout the ages for mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, and nothing is a surprise to Him. Not only does God have a plan, but all is going, and will continue to go, exactly according to that plan.

Romans 11:32

For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.

Now, let’s look carefully at this verse so that we get the true meaning. First of all, this verse does NOT say that God has caused all people to be in a state of unbelief, and it does NOT say that God will show mercy to all people. Let’s see why.

This verse says that God has put people in a kind of prison. And, here again, the word translated disobedience is *apeitheō*, meaning “disbelief.” So, this prison is the prison of unbelief and the “who” is all of mankind. God has not caused this unbelief but, because He found all to be in unbelief, He has left them there where they cannot get out by themselves.

“But if all are imprisoned in unbelief, how can they believe so that God’s mercy can be shown?” Only God can release a sinner from the prison of unbelief, and it is strictly by His choosing (His grace) and not from any action on our part.

Throughout this eleventh chapter of the book of Romans, Paul has been demonstrating why it was necessary for the Israelites to be rejected. But he also teaches that they will someday be brought back into the fold. Paul will now step back to acknowledge and admire the wisdom and sovereignty of God.

Romans 11:33-36

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For Who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be repaid to him? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

The Apostle Paul now proclaims that no one can completely search out or fully comprehend God's judgments, nor can anyone discover the fullness of God's way of doing things. This can surely be applied to God's plan of election. We certainly can't understand why He chose whom He did, especially since we know that none of us deserves it.

We who are in the Church age should consider ourselves quite fortunate that we have as much insight as we do into God's redemptive plan, both for the Gentiles and for the Jews. Many of the truths that are contained in the New Testament were foretold by the Prophets of old, and yet they didn't understand fully even that which they were prophesying about. Not only that, but we are privy to the truth of God's grace in a way that even the angels of heaven can't experience and yet they are desirous of looking into and learning about these things. Both these facts are pointed out in [1 Peter 1:10-12](#) which says:

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, made careful searches and inquiries, inquiring to know what time or what kind of time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He was predicting the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been declared to you through those who proclaimed the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.

At the risk of using a word which is heavily overused and barely understood, let me ask, "Isn't our God **awesome?!?**"

Paul is teaching us that God is infinitely wiser and more knowledgeable than any man. No one can teach God anything nor could anyone ever give counsel to the infinitely wise God. He sits alone on His throne, ruling over all His creation with total knowledge and perfect wisdom and total power.

So What?

Before we were saved, we didn't know God's mind, His intentions, or His plans. It is only since we have received His gift of grace that we now have "the mind of Christ" as we see in [1 Corinthians 2:16](#). Therefore, who are we to question His plan of pruning out the Jews and grafting in the Gentiles until the fullness of the Gentiles comes? Who are we to question why He will once again turn to the Israelites and lead them in the ways of salvation? Who are we to question why God allows some to suffer the consequences of their sinful ways and bestows His grace on others, choosing us to be saved when we don't deserve it? Who are we to ask Him "Why?" when He allows sorrow or heartbreak or tragedy to come into our lives? Who are we to question anything that God does?

Instead of trying to make God's words say what we want them to say, let's accept His teaching as truth - God's truth! Instead of questioning our Almighty God, let's humble ourselves before Him, submitting our will to His will and committing ourselves to living His way as much as we possibly can.

What Paul is pointing out is the fact that God is not indebted to any one of us. He does not owe us a thing! There is nothing that we have done or that we could do which would force God to take any action apart from His eternal plan. There is nothing that we have produced that God did not already own. There is nothing we can give Him that is not already His.

Think about this! There is nothing that we can do that will require God to take action of any kind. He is not indebted to anyone!

Now, apply this to what Paul has been teaching us in this and the previous chapters of this letter. God was not forced to turn to the Gentiles when the Jews rejected Him, He chose to do so. And God is not required to save anyone from their sins, He chooses to do so and He chooses whom He will save. It is His choice, and it is of His own free will, it is not our choice. There is nothing we can do that will require God to save us.

Neither is God required to bless anyone whom He does not choose to bless, nor is He required to answer in the affirmative any prayer. He is not our Genie in a bottle, He is not a puppet that we can control by pulling the right strings or by reciting a magic mantra. God responds to our prayers according to His will. We are totally at His mercy and we are totally subservient to Him. The sooner we realize this and submit to His authority and will, the sooner we will know the peace that only He can provide through His spirit.

Paul ends this chapter of Romans with a doxology that we would all do well to meditate on. He says that everything which exists, both physical and spiritual, has its source in God and God alone. Everything that exists is here through God's instrumentality, that is, it has come into being as a result of His creative action. In summary, everything that exists belongs to God and will be laid at His feet, and all creatures will give Him the glory. We see this in the heavenly scene painted for us by the Apostle John in the book of the Revelation:

the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created." (Revelation 4:10-11)

Now, instead of focusing any of our time and effort on trying not to lose our salvation, we can focus all of our time and effort on submitting to God and serving Him. You don't have to worry about losing your salvation. It can't happen! Let's take a moment to thank God and give Him praise.

We have a treasure of truth contained in the Scripture: the truth about Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah. Jesus is the one promised to the Jews as their Redeemer, but He is also promised to us as our Redeemer. Let's not squander this treasure, let's give it away freely to everyone. The rest is up to God. And He will get the glory!

Do you realize the extreme value of your salvation? Even the richest person who has ever lived could not purchase a "Get Out of Hell Free" card. And yet, we who have believed God's truth about our sinfulness and Christ's sacrificial death will not have to pay the penalty for our sins. God has paid it for us.

So – the next time life throws us a curve, instead of asking God, "Why?" we should ask, "What? What do you want me to learn from this, Lord? Teach me, for I am here to do Your will, O God!"

Finally - remember, Jesus gave His all for us. What can we possibly do or say to give the proper thanks to Him? Think about this as you celebrate Thanksgiving later this month.

Isn't our God awesome?

Let's pray