

The Mercy Motive
Tom Rempel – Faith Bible Church
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Romans 11:1-32

Good morning, Faith Family, you obviously could notice as you came in that we are headed in to what is my personal favorite week of the year here at Faith Bible Church. Vacation Bible School, is just an incredible opportunity to plant seeds of the Gospel in the hearts of children and to water the seeds that are there. We pray that God would be gracious enough to give us a spiritual harvest in the thing.

Anyway, we had a limitation on the number of children that we're able to minister to this year, and by God's grace we hit the maximum back in May 23rd. We have ninety leaders that will be working with those two hundred-plus children, and if you're one of those that are going to be ministering this week in VBS, would you please stand. I just want to pray for you that God would use you, empower you, so, all four of you if you would stand. There were as many in the other service as well.

Lord, I thank you that the work that is being done this week is not an expense, but it's an investment of time and lives. I thank You that it is the work of the Spirit and not the flesh. You said that the flesh accomplishes nothing, but the Spirit brings life.

So, I'm asking for each of these leaders that You would empower them, fill them with Your Holy Spirit, give them the confidence that Your Word which is authored by the Spirit Who with the teacher would work through them so that all the investment of this week would not return without accomplishing that for which it was intended.

So, bless them, give them physical strength to endure the week. Give them spiritual strength to stand against the assault of the Adversary as he pushes back. And give us a great delight to look back next week and see how You showed up in a powerful way in the lives of children for your glory. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thank you. Would you just continue to pray for the team this week as they minister.

We're in **Romans 11**. We've come to the last chapter of what is called the Great Divide of **Romans**, and again, I don't believe that this is a parenthetical or a free-standing, but the longer I grapple with it, the more I'm convinced that it picks up a thread that is started in **Romans 8** and carries through. The younger Tom Rempel would have taken at least six sermons on each of these chapters. But I didn't want to lose the connection or the flow. Sometimes we get so lost in the weeds we can't figure out where we are or where we're going. I was hoping that maybe in this process that we could keep the threads tied together.

A young pastor friend from town at the Juvenile Justice golf outing on Thursday came to me, and he said, "My friends from your church are giving me a lot of grief because I've been a year and a half preaching **Romans**, and I'm not even close to where you are in the book."

I told him, I said, "Well, at my age you don't have eight years to get to chapter eight. You don't know if you'll be around that long, so you gotta just keep the accelerator down."

So here we're in **Romans 11** that I think raises the question, it continues to answer the question, "Can God's Word be believed? Can God's promises be trusted?" And that comes out of **Romans 8** where he begins by saying, "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus," and it ends by saying, "There is now no separation for those who are called according to His purposes." There is no condemnation, no separation, but that's based on God's promise. And then the question comes, "Can God be trusted? Does God keep His word?" Circumstantially it has a tendency to look like perhaps it doesn't.

What Paul has done is he has explained that God's promises and purposes for the nation of Israel have not failed because if God did not fulfill, and here you have a colony of heaven planted in the heart of "Sin City," and as they are there together, the majority of their small group, worship group are Gentiles rather than Jews.

But what happened to the purposes of God, the plan of God that He chose a holy nation and through them would bless all the nations of the world. Did God fail in that?

And so, Paul has spent **Romans 9, 10, and 11** explaining that no, God's plan and purposes have not failed. In these particulars, we've come to the last of these three, and he outlines it for us with two questions ...

Romans 11:1a

I ask, then ...

... typical of Paul he anticipates a pushback. He has had so much argumentation with Judaizers and others about God's purpose for Israel and where do the Gentiles fit into the picture that he knows in advance what they're going to say. It's kind of like it's different to do marriage counseling after forty-five years because I have to bite my tongue because I know, I can tell you what they are going to say next. And the next thing they're going to say, "We weren't really in love when we got married. We just did it for ... , and therefore it's justified to walk away."

I mean, it's kind of like the Apostle Paul. He goes, "I know what the Judaizers are going to say, next." So, he throws the question out, and the question is ...

Romans 11:1b

... has God rejected his people?

Then he picks it up, again with another question in ...

Romans 1:11a

So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall?

On the basis of those two questions, "Did God reject His people," and "Have the people rejected Him to the point that they cannot be restored," he gives the strongest pushback possible. Both times He says, "By no means!" God has not rejected His people, and they have not so fully rejected Him that there is no hope remaining for them.

There is raised the serious question about Paul's loyalty to his own people. If he is a Jew and he cares about the salvation of the Jews, how is it then that the Apostle Paul exerts so much of his ministry time and energy

reaching out to the non-Jews, to the Gentiles? Notice that he has already defended himself in ...

Romans 9:3

... I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

If anybody doubts my concern for my own people that the chosen people of God would become the intimate, related people of God, then just simply, I would be willing to be eternally separated, condemned by Christ, removed in order that they would be saved. That's a very humbling thing, again, because you read that, and you say, "Who do I love enough that I so desperately want them to know Jesus that I would be willing to not know Him so that they could?"

Then he says in ...

Romans 10:1

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.

So Paul defends himself and says, "No, this ministry to the Gentiles is not because of a lack of love or a heart for my own people, but I do it because it's going to reveal in **Romans 11**. It's God's plan to reach my people is reaching into the Gentiles.

Now I think that **Romans 9, 10, and 11** pick up a thread, not only do they answer the question, "Can God be trusted? Can we take Him at His word? Does He break promises that He makes?" But I think it also, as I said before, is an illustration of **Romans 8:28** which we have a tendency to tell people, "Just write that on a Band-Aid, put it on your forehead, read it every morning in the mirror, "God causes all things to work out for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purposes."

I have to tell you when you go through trials, that verse quoted to you by somebody who is not in the dark with you is more offensive than it is encouraging. It's like, "He does, we know that," but in the moment you don't feel that. I think that what Paul's doing is illustrating ... what does that mean? What does it mean that God "causes all things to work together for good?" All things, even the rejection of Israel, of their savior. God takes that bad thing, and He multiplies the bad, and He makes the good.

God always wins the battle because He takes the thing that the enemy uses against Him, He spins it to make the win. So that's what he is saying is, "Even this bad thing of Israel failing miserably in their mission and their call, God took that. It's not God's Plan B. It's not like God had Plan A, I'm going to choose a nation, through that nation I will broadcast My glory to all the world so all the ends of the earth can hear the Good News, "Repent and come and follow Me."

Darn, that plan didn't work. I gotta come up with Plan B. What's Plan B?

"Well, maybe if I reach some Gentiles, it'll work."

No, it was His plan from the beginning. That's the explanation that Paul gives.

So let's come to ...

Romans 11:1

... has God rejected his people?

Let me read the first five verses ...

Romans 11:1-5

¹ I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. ² God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? ³ "Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and (now) they seek my life." ⁴ But what is God's reply to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." ⁵ So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.

God's answer to the question, "Has God rejected His people?" The answer is, not Totally ... not totally.

And then Paul gives some illustrations. He gives basically four illustrations of the truth that God is still saving Israelites, descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Number one is his own personal testimony.

Romans 11:1c

... For I myself am an Israelite ...

... that is my ancestry, Ancestry.com. Check it out.

Romans 11:1d

... (I am) a descendent of Abraham ... not only that
but I am also a descendant from the tribe of Benjamin.

You want to read his bio, you read **Philippians 3**, basically starting in the fifth verse. It says, "If anybody has a claim to having a right relationship with God on the basis of what you could do in the flesh by obedience to law, check me out. I've got all the pedigrees from my birth, and I have all of the resume from my life of behavior, and that was not good enough." He says, "I am an Israelite, and I am a follower of Christ; therefore, God has not totally rejected all."

The second one that he gives us is the story of Elijah. "Has God rejected His own people?" Remember the story of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel. You remember that story in **1 Kings 19** where Elijah is stirred by the fact that the queen of Israel, Jezebel, is funding the staff for all the worship of the false god of the Baals. Finally, he calls them out on Mt. Carmel, and it's 450:1, and I love it. Most people don't read the Bible accurately. The Bible has all kinds of trash talk in it when these competitions are going on.

And so he calls them up, and he says, "Here's what we're going to do. We're going to build two altars. You build one. I'll build one. We're going to put an offering on top," and the True and Living God of Israel is the One Who brings down fire from heaven.

It takes 450 prophets to build one altar to their gods, and it takes Elijah himself on this sunbaked mountain. He builds his own altar with his own hands.

They lay their sacrifices on the altar, and he says, "OK, you guys go first. If this works, if you call down fire, I'm off, you win."

And so they begin to call out to their gods, "Bring down fire from heaven and accept the offering," and nothing happens.

And the day wears on and the sun gets hotter and hotter, and then it said ... Elijah begins to trash talk them a little bit. He goes, “Hey, perhaps your god at this time of the day had to go in the bathroom to relieve himself. Perhaps you should cry out louder, and then he will hear you.” So in despair they start slashing their bodies, and they start crying out, and they exhaust themselves, and nothing happens.

Finally, Elijah steps forward, and he says, “All right, I want you to build a trench around my altar. Now I want you to go get buckets of water and pour upon it.” Now you understand there has been a drought in the land for three years. Having those buckets of water, he says, “I want you to douse it. Now do it again. I want you to saturate the altar. I want you to saturate the sacrifices. I want you to fill the trenches around.”

And then he prays ... and God shows up ... and fire comes down from heaven and it consumes the sacrifice, the altar, and the water in the trenches. And then Elijah personally takes a weapon, and he executes, rightfully so in obedience to the law, 450 prophets of Baal. He does that himself.

And he prays that God would break the drought, He would send rain. He sees a little cloud in the sky, and he says to everybody, “You better get down off of this mountain, because it’s going to rain.” And he starts to run.

What he gets is a word from the queen who is not happy that he has just executed all of her religious staff. She said, “As their lives are, so your life will be by the time sun sets today.”

And in despair, he outruns his servant, he outruns the chariots. He finds himself a hiding place, and there he cries out to God in utter depression and despair. He says, “There’s no reason for me to go on living. Just take my life.”

So God seeing his condition, God meets his need. He feeds him and puts him back to sleep. He feeds him again. He puts him back to sleep, and he does that until he’s been refreshed.

And then God appears to him in a still, small voice, and He says, “Elijah, you’re not the only one. I still have seven thousand who have not yet bowed the knee to Baal.”

There’s also the historic and the situational. God is doing this great work. In the theological it says that God says, “I have these people whom I have foreknown,” we talked about that in **Romans 8**. To foreknow, **Romans 11:2**, means that God has chosen to love them in advance before their mothers and fathers were even created or fell in love or created a child or whatever. He says, “Of the nation of Israel I have chosen to create a nation that I would pour out my love on them; therefore, it’s secure.

And then the last one is just the situational ...

Romans 11:5

So, too, at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.

The remnant, you read about in **Acts 26** where the Apostle Paul comes back from his missionary journey, and he wants to be in Jerusalem for the Holy Days, and when he arrives there, he connects up with James, the half-brother of Jesus, and the elders, and they say to him, “Look how many thousands of Jews have become followers of Christ in your absence.” He’s been so busy circling the world bringing the Gospel to lost people, the Gentile people, that while he’s been doing that, and we usually read **Acts** and just jump right over that. Literally thousands of Jews are trusting Christ.

Paul says, “Have they completely been rejected by God with totality?”

The answer is “No,” no. He gives four illustrations.

Here’s the principle, I think, that grows out of this, and lots of need it. It’s this:

Our situation is never as bad as it looks
because God is never as weak as he seems.

Some of you need that in your current situation that you’re just almost overwhelmed and hopeless, but the reality is that from God’s perspective ... see that’s the problem, we have a tendency to measure the size of our God by our perspective on the size of our problem. God on the other hand asks

us to look at the size of our problem on the basis of the size of our God. And our situation is never as bad.

Elijah, Paul, all of them thought, God's not saving His people, but the answer is that He is.

Notice in **Romans 11:6-10** he talks about the blindness, the callousness, the hardness of the heart of the nation of Israel. So how do we explain this? **Romans 9** talks about the sovereign, saving grace of God. **Romans 10** talks about the human responsibility. So, God chooses, and He saves, so why are so many Gentiles being saved? Because God's choosing them. So why are so many Jews not being saved? Because they have been presented with the opportunity, and they said, "No."

Romans 11, he takes those two, the sovereignty of God and salvation, and he takes the human responsibility, and he weaves them together, and here he explains it.

Romans 11:6

But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works

You see the problem is that the Jews thought that they could perform up to a standard that would make them loveable and acceptable by their God. They wanted grace, but they wanted works as well, and the two are totally in conflict with each other. They cannot cohabit, they cannot coexist. If it's by grace, it cannot longer be on the basis of works, otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

I want you to notice that this chapter begins with grace, and it ends with mercy, and we've said before, grace is God giving to us what we do not deserve, and mercy is God not giving us what we do deserve. Here he says God has given to them what they do not deserve. He has chosen sovereignly to give that to them. But ...

Romans 11:7

(Has) Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking (?).

They were desperately looking. Paul's own testimony ... **Philippians 3**. He was looking for a relationship, and he settled for ritual. He had the rites down. He had the obedience down, but he didn't have the intimate relationship he was seeking for. They were looking for it by good works. "If I behave myself, then He will love me. He will invest myself in me. He will walk with me."

The elect on the other hand obtained it, but the rest of those were hardened. He said there are some in Israel who did obtain the relationship with the Living God, but the others were regrettably hardened of heart. They continued to resist.

You see the problem with the nation of Israel is the same problem. It's like, I said I absolutely love VBS and the opportunity that we have for the Gospel, but the scary thing about children's ministry is there is no generation so vulnerable to hardness of heart as the third generation of believers. The first generation is alive with the reality that God in grace saved me. The second generation hears the story of the first generation, but the third generation just becomes over-Christianized and not convicted.

It doesn't mean that we shouldn't do children's ministry that we shouldn't continue to teach the Gospel. But what the Scripture tells us is that every time you are given an opportunity to believe the Truth and you say, "No," to it, another layer of callous forms upon the soul.

That's why I ask you to pray for VBS this week that God would find ready soil for the seeds of the Gospel to be planted in, and that we wouldn't just be callousing children's hearts. No one is more difficult to lead to faith in Jesus than somebody that knows all the Bible stories. They've been around it their whole life, and they suddenly are concluding that they don't need what everyone else needs.

He talked about it. Here he quotes the Old Testament ...

Isaiah 29:10

God gave them a spirit of stupor,
eyes that would not see
and ears that would not hear,
down to this very day."

Psalms 69:22-23

David says,
²² "Let their table become a snare and a trap,
a stumbling block and a retribution for them;
²³ let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see,
and bend their backs forever."

There are just a host Old Testament texts that could be referenced, but I read for you ...

Isaiah 29:9-10

⁹ Astonish yourselves and be astonished;
blind yourselves and be blind!
Be drunk, but not with wine;
stagger, but not with strong drink!
¹⁰ For the Lord has poured out upon you
a spirit of deep sleep,
and has closed your eyes (speaking to) (the prophets),
and covered your heads (speaking to) (the seers).

The darkness of understanding the hardness of heart is because God gave them every opportunity, and they continued to give him “the Heisman,” and finally He said, “OK, I will honor your decision, and I will make it possible not to see or to hear Truth.”

Deuteronomy 29:2

... Moses ... said to them: “You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt”

... all those great miracles. Then he goes on ...

Deuteronomy 29:3-4

³ the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders.
⁴ But to this day (forty years later, Moses said, “to this day”) the LORD has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear.

Regrettably, lots of us fall into that category. We have seen God do jaw-dropping things of grace all around us and even in our own lives, and yet, we just write them off as circumstantial, “That’s not the hand of God.”

My bride in December prayed that God would end this year, do things in our family in such a way that our grandchildren would be in awe at God’s intervention. She didn’t tell me she had prayed that until in January. I said, “You know what that means, don’t you? That means that hard times are going to have to come to paint the backdrop from which God does jaw-dropping things.”

Last week we sat down and wrote out a list of those things that God has done. In every other situation you would just say, “Oh, that was coincidental, that was circumstantial.” But when you’re looking for God’s hand in things, suddenly you see it with clarity. He said, “You saw, first-hand experience. Here we are, forty years later. You still don’t get the point.”

Jesus picked this up in **Matthew 13** when the disciples came to Him and said, “Lord, why are you talking to them in parables. They haven’t got a clue what You’re talking about, and, quite honestly, if You don’t explain it, we don’t either.”

... and He quoted from **Isaiah 6** ...

Matthew 13:14-15

¹⁴ ... in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled ... :

“You will indeed hear but never understand,
and you will indeed see but never perceive.”

¹⁵ For this people’s heart has grown dull,
and with their ears they can barely hear,
and their eyes they have closed,
lest they should see with their eyes
and hear with their ears
and understand with their heart
and turn, and I would heal them.

He says that God has seen their rejection of Truth, and as a result of that, He has confirmed their decision, and He has blinded them. He has calloused their hearts. He has deafened them to the Truth.

This one in **Psalms 69**. This is one of David’s imprecatory prayers. There are, I’m sure all of you have found a whole list of imprecatory prayers, that people that offend you, you pray this over them on a regular basis. David prayed this against his enemies. The problem is that God took his prayer, and He answered it, but he answered against his own people, the nation of Israel.

Psalms 69:22

Let their ... table ... become a snare (and a trap);

... that is, their dining room where they are enjoying their luxury, their peace, and their comfort. Everything is safe and secure. Make it a snare and a trap. Make it a stumbling block and a retribution for them. Take what they think is good and awaken them to the fact that it’s not good. They are living there on the basis of their own confidence, not on the basis Then he says ...

Romans 11:10

let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see,
and bend their backs forever.”

In other words, if they are not going to believe the message when it comes, then would You work in such a way that they no longer can see the Truth. And “have their backs bent forever” is basically blind people walking around groping to find their way in life. That’s always a graphic picture to me because my grandmother, as I have told you before went blind, and I was small enough that she went to her grave thinking I was still cute. So, the blindness, they were searching for the Truth. Make that ... they have rejected Your Truth; therefore, make it impossible for them to discover it, again.

Here’s a principle to take to heart:

When you hear a truth it is important that you do something with it or you will soon discover you have lost your capacity to recognize Truth when you see it.

The time to respond to the Gospel and to the work that God is doing in your heart is on the day when He stirs your heart.

Every time you say, “No,” every time God stirs you to some action of faith, every time God reveals a new Truth to you, and you just turn your head away and you walk away, you make it more and more possible for you to recognize Truth when you see it.

And then this next section. Living a life worthy of imitation. Suddenly now he explains what this whole thing on Gentile salvation is. But why is it that so many Gentiles are being saved? **Romans 9**. Why is it that so many Jews are not being saved? **Romans 10**. And he explains it here in ...

Romans 11:11a

So I ask (you), did they stumble in order (to) fall? By no means!

... in other words, was their fall fatal? Was it final? Have they said, “No,” to God enough that God is now saying “No,” to them? Had God rejected them? **Romans 11:1ff**, no.

Have they rejected God so much that God says, “I am done with you? No more hope?” And He says, “No, absolutely not.”

Romans 11:11b

Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.

What he does here, Paul gives five arguments for the future godliness of the nation of Israel. He said there are five biblical reasons that I believe that God will ultimately restore Israel.

Reason number one, he says, is that salvation is designed by God to reach Israel. “Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.” Over here he says ...

Romans 11:7

... (they) failed to obtain what (they were) seeking.

They were looking for it the wrong way. They thought if we just obeyed the law and were good people, He would love us, He would forgive us. He was gracious. They didn't find it, yet the Gentiles who weren't even looking for it as he says at the end of **Romans 9**, they found it.

Why is that? Here's the reason: Because God does a jaw-dropping work of transformation in the lives of total pagans, idol-worshippers in such a way that the Jews who have the Scriptures and they have the prophets and they have all of those things, they see in them what they don't have in themselves, and they're jealous. They want it.

Now the question is, “What did they see?” Why the Gentiles knew the freedom of sins forgiven. They had a peace about them. They had a lack of a fear of the grave. They had the ability to love those that are hard to love, in fact are easier to hate. They had a sense of joy that could not be quenched in the midst of trying circumstances. They had peace. They had a gentle response they ought to want to deck. They were transformed from the inside out.

One author put it this way ...

One of the best ways to make a man desire to become a Christian is to let him see in an actual life what becoming a Christian can do.

Sometimes you are the only Bible a lost person will ever read. And that's what he's saying. God's plan for the Gentiles was still not to replace Israel with them, but through them to create a jealousy which doesn't sound ... but, you know, jealousy's not always wrong, it's just if you're coveting, if you want what they have for the right reasons. He uses that to glorify the Gospel.

So, the question is, “What do people see in us?” Are we joyful in hard times?

You know, the **1 Peter** thing where it says, “Be ready at all times to give an answer for the hope that is in you,” is in the context of when you are suffering for the sake of the Gospel, not because you were stupid and you had it coming, but you are suffering for doing the right thing, then in that situation, be ready to give an account, an answer for the hope that is in you.

Do they see in us a sense of peace in the midst of the storm? A sense of joy in the dark hour? Do they see a hope that is unquenchable?

He talks about world-wide blessings will only come when Israel returns to the Lord. There has to be an Israel national repentance before God can fully bless. He said to Abraham He said, “Through you I will bless all the nations of the world.” How’s that going to happen? Before that can happen, Israel has got to turn back to their Messiah.

Romans 11:12a

Now if their trespass means riches for the world ...

... in other words, when the Jews said, “No,” to the Gospel, if that then blessed the rest of the world ..

Romans 11:12b

... and if their failure means riches (to) the Gentiles,
how much more will their full inclusion mean!

If God could bless the Gentiles while the Jews are rejecting Him, see what’s going to happen when the Jews embrace their Messiah.

Romans 11:13

Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as
I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry ...

... so, why do I do ministry to the Gentiles? Because I still have a heart for my lost people. I still have a heart for the Jews. But I know that if you live out the Gospel, if you embrace it and live it out, that will create a jealousy, a longing. They will want what you have, and for that reason, they will come as a nation to repentance.

Romans 11:13b-15

^{13b} ... I magnify my ministry ¹⁴ in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. ¹⁵ ... if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?

He said when God pours out blessing through the nation of Israel, when God rescues, turns the heart, brings to repentance His rebellious, His rebel people. When that happens, it will be as jaw-dropping as someone coming alive from the grave. Amazing thing.

The Apostle Paul back in the book of **Acts 13**, he has been ministering to the Jews. Everywhere that Paul went, you'll notice as you read **Acts** that when he would come to a community, the first thing that he would do was he would look for a synagogue. Are there twelve heads of household, Jewish here, that they have established a synagogue. If not, he went to the place of prayer where the Jews would go and gather on the Sabbath, and he would always go and preach the Gospel first to the Jews, and he would preach it there until they said, "We don't want it." And they would shove him out, and then he would turn and go to the Gentiles.

That's why it says in our theme verse ...

Romans 1:16

¹⁶ ... I am not ashamed of the gospel, (because) it (that Gospel) is the power of God (to) salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and (then) also to the Greek.

In ...

Acts 13:46

... Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the Word of God be spoken first to you (That is, to the Jews in a synagogue). Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves to be unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.

Acts 13:48a

And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the Word of the Lord ...

... the very word that the Jews who had it, heard it, and didn't want it, they were pushing away. The Gentiles heard it. They felt themselves totally unworthy, unprepared for it, but God brought it to them ...

Acts 13:48b

... (They rejoiced and) as many as were appointed to eternal life believed!

The whole story of **Acts** ends with Paul actually in fellowship with this church to whom he writes this letter. He got there at government expense. He was sustained in his own home under house arrest, and hundreds of people were coming to him regularly here, mostly Jews, wanted to understand, "How do you explain this Old Testament and this Christ?" "How do you find this Christ in there?"

Then he says ...

Acts 28:26a

You will indeed hear but never understand

They were walking away disbelieving. He said ...

Acts 28:26b

... you will indeed see but (you will) never perceive.

Acts 28:28a

Therefore, let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles ...

... why? Because ...

Acts 28:28b

... they will listen!

And when they listen, God uses the transformation in them to create a magnet for the Jews, and ultimately, he says that the Jews as a nation will repent and believe. And if it's a blessing to the world that the Jews have said, "No," to the Gospel for a season so that you and I can be believers, think what it's going to be when we join them. What's going to happen with that is what our children will be taught this week.

Revelation 7:9

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb ...

The way that happens is that not only the Gentiles receive the Gospel but when the Jews receive the Gospel, then there is this great national blessing and the promise made to Abraham that “through you and your descendants, all the nations of the earth will be blessed” becomes a reality.

The third argument is found in ...

Romans 11:16

If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump ...

... this whole principle of the firstfruits, we don't have time to unpack it from **Numbers** and **Deuteronomy** and the **Psalms**, but the basic principle is this: Whenever you would harvest from your field, the first wagon load or the first basket load of the harvest, you would take it and present it to the Lord as a thanksgiving for His provision. And you did it by faith believing, “I will give this to Him, and He will replenish it over and over in the harvest.”

If you baked a loaf of bread, you would take the first lump of dough, and you would give it to the Lord as a testimony to your gratitude for the bread that He would put on the plate.

Now the principle was this:

If God accepts the firstfruit and blesses it, then everything else that comes from it, that follows it, would be blessed as well.

So, his testimony is this, God blessed Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They are the firstfruit. As a result of His blessing to them, what follows will also be blessed. What follows? It's the nation of Israel, Ancestry.com, they traced it back to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God is going to bring about a restoration to the nation of Israel because He blessed their forefathers, their patriarchs.

And then he comes to this whole thing on the olive tree and the root and all.

Romans 11:17-21

^{17a} But if some of the branches ...

... back in **Romans 11:16**: and if the root is holy, so are the branches. So what grows up is the same life, the same vitality, it is the same DNA as what

is in the roots. If the root is holy, so are the branches ... but if some of the branches are ...

Romans 11:17b

^{17b} ... broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree ...

... the life of the plant is in the root, the supply of the life of the plant is in the root, he talks about a miracle here. I'm not a horticulturist, I just have a – Linda signed me up for Plant/Shrub-Movers Anonymous because I just like landscaping, and I move it year by year – I don't understand how this whole grafting stuff works, but I went online ... hey, if it's on Google, it must be true, right? It says you can't take a wild olive and graft it in to a nurtured olive tree and get good fruit. It doesn't work that way. And yet, God said, "That's what I'm going to do. I'm going to take that which will not work when you graft it in, it will not produce rich fruit, right? I'm going to do that with the Gentiles, I'm going to put them in. But I want you to notice that you're also being supported ...

Romans 11:18a

do not be arrogant toward the branches.

... you Gentiles who have been grafted in ... in the Old Testament, the olive tree is the portrait of Israel, and you have been welcomed in to the relationship that they have with God by His choice of them. You are a branch that doesn't belong there, should never produce fruit, but you're grafted in. You need to remember that it is not you that supports the root, but that the root supports you. In other words, you are not a blessing to the root, the root is a blessing to you. You have been by God's grace ... have I just lost ninety percent of your right there? Just go to Google, use our public wi-fi and you can figure this one out.

Romans 11:18b

... the root... supports you.

What is he saying? That the spiritual life and vitality that the Gentiles have is a direct result of the fact that they have been brought in to a relationship with the Jewish Messiah. The Savior is a Jew. The Gospel begins with "the Jew first and also to the Greek," that our vitality is found in the right relationship to the root.

Romans 11:19

¹⁹ Then you will say, (The) “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.”

... that ought to move you to a deep level of gratitude and humility.

He says in **John 15** every branch in Him that does not bear fruit, he purges it, he removes it, so that the tree would bring forth more fruit. There were lots of branches in this olive tree of God’s that were not fruitful, so He wisely removed those. But then He took a wild olive branch, and He grafted it in, and suddenly, miracle of miracles, it became fruitful. I am only there because there was room for me because the branch that was there refused to be fruitful. So you removed it.

Romans 11:20a

(This) is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith.

... so why am I one of the descendants of the blessing to Abraham? By faith alone. Why are they not receiving the blessing of being the heir of Abraham? Because they refuse to believe. They had their own gospel message. They had their own way. They wouldn’t accept His.

But on the other hand, he says, “Keep an attitude of humility ...

Romans 11:20b-21

^{20b} So do not become proud, (but rather be humbled and live in) fear.

²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you.

So if He would look at a branch and say, “It’s unfruitful,” and remove it, and it belonged there, if you are a miracle, wild branch grafted in and you don’t become fruitful, why do you think He will not remove you to make room for the others. The whole perseverance of the saints is a sermon all its own. A younger Tom would have taken a month and preached that, but we’re going to press forward.

The miracle of the olive tree.

Romans 11:22a

Note then the kindness and the severity of God: (the two sides) severity toward those who have fallen ...

... the nation of Israel given the opportunity, and they said, “No.” Was their falling final? No, but individually, yes. As a nation He still has a plan, but the individual who heard the Good News and said, “No, I don’t want the Good News,” notice that God’s judgment is severe. But toward you the Gentile who had no merit, no claim, no right to His grace, His ...

Romans 11:22b-23

^{22b} ... kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. ²³ And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again.

He removed them, but when they come to their senses, when they spiritually repent, the same God that could produce a fruitful life from a wild branch is able to take one that already belonged, had been removed, but if it shows life, He can put it back in, and it can be fruitful, again.

Romans 11:24

... if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.

Is God finished with Israel? The answer is, “No.” It looks like it’s impossible ... it is, but with God all things are possible. His five arguments for the ultimate godliness of Israel are ...

The principle of jealousy.

The principle of world-wide blessing.

The principle of firstfruits.

The principle of life from the root.

The principle of the miraculous grafting in.

God will take that which has been removed, and if it shows a willingness and a life, He grafts it back in.

And now he brings us to his conclusion. All of **Romans 1** through **11** has been building to this final wrap. Paul, the way he writes, he spends the first half, usually it’s just about divided in half, he spends the first half of his letters talking about doctrinal foundation, doctrinal truths, “This we believe.” Then he has a hinge in the middle, and he moves to the second half, and he says, “Now it’s your duty.”

This is what we believe. This is how we behave. He is going to make that hinge at ...

Romans 12:1

Therefore, I urge you ...

... the “therefore” ties us back to these eleven. Here he wraps up the first eleven chapters with this conclusion.

Romans 11:25

Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers ...

... what is the “mystery?” That there is a unity, there is a purpose in the diversity, that the wall of distinction between Jew and Gentile has been torn down, and there is a salvation that is by faith alone in Christ Jesus alone for Jew and Gentile alike, that God in His sovereign, saving wisdom has created a partial hardening, callousing of the heart upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, until every tribe, tongue, and nation, all the unreached people groups of the world have had the opportunity to hear the Gospel and say, “No,” to the Gospel. Until that is done, God will continue this sovereign darkening of their eyes, deafening of their ears, hardening of their hearts.

Romans 11:26a

And in this way all Israel will be saved

God says that their fall was not final, that He still has a plan for the nation of Israel:

Romans 11:26b

“The Deliverer will come from Zion ...

... He will be a Jewish king, a Jewish liberator ...

Romans 11:26c

... he will banish ungodliness from Jacob ...

... He will take that decadent situation, and He will cleanse it, He will revive it ...

Romans 11:27a

and this will be my covenant with them ...

... again, the reason for God's promise to Abraham was not a sub-tweet. If God said to Abraham, "I will bless you, I'll make your name great. All the nations of the earth will be blessed through you," but what He really meant was not, "That's not what I really meant, you misread what I meant," then I can't be sure that when He says that there's no condemnation and there's no separation that He meant that, too. Perhaps he meant something different. He says, "This is my covenant with them."

Again, yesterday in pre-marriage counselling, when a married couple come together, they don't sign a contract. I mean, they should have one because they're all fallible people. It's like, "We're going to have this agreement, and I'm going to hold you to it because I expect your to break your part of the bargain, and we should have it witnessed and stamped and all of that."

But a marriage is a covenant. It depends on the promise of the one who makes it, and that's it. No matter how the other person responds or behaves in the future. So, God is saying here, "This is My covenant. This one's based on My character on My promise. How you respond, how Israel responds is not the issue. This what I said, "Take it at His word?"

Can God's word be trusted? Yes, because He keeps His word in a covenant. To do that, in order to graft them back in, He says ...

Romans 11:27b

... I (will) take away their sins."

They didn't know they had sins that needed to be removed. They didn't know they had sins that needed to be cleansed. They thought that they were performing fairly well, and when He offered them salvation through Himself, they were not interested in that.

Romans 11:28a

As regards the gospel (the Good News. I'm not ashamed of the Gospel, it's the power of God), they are enemies for your sake.

... Why did they give the Heisman to the Gospel? For this reason: Had they not, then you would not have had the privilege of hearing the Good News and believing. For your sake they became enemies ...

Romans 11:2

... but as regards the election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.

I will continue to reach out to them. I will continue to draw them. I will continue to call them. Why? Because I gave my word to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And on the basis of my promise to them, I will do for these sinful people what I promised them. The reason is ...

Romans 11:29

(Because) the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

The wonderful plan of God is simply this, that all of redemptive history is God's unfolding plan and purpose to pour out mercy on the repentant rebel. It's as simple as that.

Romans 11:30

... just as (they) were at one time disobedient to God but (they) now have received mercy because of their disobedience ...

... they needed mercy. They didn't know that. "But I am pouring out, I am giving to them not what they deserve, I'm giving them grace what they don't deserve ...

Romans 11:31

so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you ...

... that is, the Gentile. God gave you what you didn't deserved, that is He gave you grace, and as they see that, they may also now be prepared to receive mercy. They have to, first of all, be convinced that they need it.

So that's his wrap ...

Romans 11:32

For God has consigned all to disobedience, in order that he might have mercy on them all.

Why does he say that "There is none righteous, not even one? There is none that seeks after God." Why does he have to go through the heathen are condemned and the hypocrite is condemned and the Hebrew is condemned? He has to go through that. He has to convince all of us that when He says that He has "consigned us to disobedience." It literally means

that He has cast us into a dungeon from which there is no escape. And the only escape is this: We all realize that the only way I get out of here is that if somebody gives to me what I do not deserve.

And suddenly by His grace, he sends somebody to unlock that dungeon door and to call your name, and you are exited from that bondage. God has to convince all of us that we have been sentenced to an inescapable dungeon so that in desperation we cry out to Him for mercy.

So, we come back to where we began. Can God's promises be trusted? Can His Word? And the answer is simply this. God's Word can be trusted because God always keeps His promise. If God spoke in a twisted tongue or had His fingers crossed behind His back when He made the covenant with Abraham, then we have no confidence that there is now no condemnation, and that there is no separation. Our confidence in our eternal relationship with Him is based on the fact that He is a God who gives His word based on His character not our performance, and He will do what He promised.

His ultimate motive in redemptive history is to show mercy to the repentant rebel. Anyone can come. Everyone can come. Even you can come.

It's possible that there are some here who have felt like they could do it their own way, that they didn't need a savior, that they could pay off their own eternal debt in their own good works, and that you have now been reminded through our stumbling through these thirty-two verses that you are bound as a prisoner in an inescapable dungeon and unless He pours out His mercy and grace on you, you are hopelessly and helplessly lost. God's invitation to you is, "Will you come?"

Let's pray.

Father, I thank You so much for the clarity of Your word. I thank You for the beauty of the Gospel. I thank You that it is not a Plan B, that You are not always acting and recovering from failed plans but from the very beginning you chose that a people that were especially created to be the light to the world, that through their failure You would take that Good News in Your own way, and you would bring it to those of us that were outside of the nation, outside of the prophets, outside of the promises, and You would give to us the grace that saves.

For my brother or sister who might be here this morning who is continuing to flounder in a hopeless dungeon of bondage and sin, that You would stir their hearts to cry out to You for mercy and grace, and according to your plan and purpose and for Your glory, would You save them for Jesus' sake, we pray. Amen