

# Romans (11:28-32)

*For Mercy's Sake*

Part 56 - December 4, 2005

## ENEMIES ... ON ACCOUNT

Today we wrap up the body of Romans 11.

Paul sums up his main point about redemptive history: The unbelief of Israel was a means of salvation for the Gentiles. And the salvation of the Gentiles, in turn, will be a future means of salvation for Israel. And God has sovereignly guided all of it - both the obedience *and* the disobedience - to display and magnify the reliability and magnificence of His loving-kindness and His mercy.

As far as the gospel is concerned, [the Jews] are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all. - *Romans 11:28-32 NIV*

When Paul says: "[The Jews] are enemies", he doesn't mean that they're enemies of the *Gentiles*. He means that they're enemies of the *Gospel*: "As far as the gospel is concerned". And by this Paul simply means that by rejecting Jesus as their Messiah, they've severed their relationship with God as Father.

Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God ..." - *John 8:42 NIV*

Now, notice that Paul's emphasis is not on the fact that they are God's enemies; but that: "They are enemies" ... "on your account". Gentiles shouldn't have attitude toward the Jews for their rejection, but gratitude toward God for strategically using it to spread the gospel (and his mercy) to the non-Jewish world.

## LOVED ... ON ACCOUNT

And then Paul says, you Gentiles must remember that:

As far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs (11:28b)

Though Israel as a nation has rejected Jesus, they're still in God's plans because of *His* oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

These original covenants can't be broken for two reasons:

- A. The men God made them with can't break them (they're dead!)
- B. God can't break them, because He'll never violate His Word.

(And so, Paul says) For God's gifts and his call [to those patriarchs] are irrevocable. (11:29)

God doesn't change His mind; God's not shortsighted; and God never underestimates the opposition He'll encounter in the pursuit of His ultimate objectives.

- [Therefore] God's plans can never be upset by human failure.

The original covenants were all about what *God* would do. Whereas the Mosaic covenant (the Ten Commandments and all) was about what *His people* would do. And that thing was broken before Moses even got off the mountain! He comes down with the stone tablets and the Israelites are already worshipping a golden calf!

You see, because the Mosaic covenant is based on what humans do, it's impossible to keep. That's why it came with a sacrificial system (built right in to it) for *when* they disobeyed. And that's why the Mosaic covenant had to be replaced with the "New Covenant" which was written in the blood of God's own Son.

- Now *every* covenant is based on what God can and will do!

Ezekiel, just before he wrote about the Valley of Dry Bones, prophesied the new covenant:

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. - *Ezekiel 36:26 NIV (also see Ezekiel 11:19)*

Q: How does the death of Jesus turn hearts of stone into flesh?

Animal sacrifice and religious service can't make disobedient hearts righteous enough to serve as a residence for God. But through *His* perfect sacrifice, Jesus is able to impart a holiness that allows us to house His Holy Spirit!

And we literally become the temple of God! His Holy Spirit dwells in this clean heart that Christ creates within me; and my nature is re-birthed with a new Spirit-sensitive capacity because He has taken up residence within me! Righteousness is imparted, not manufactured!

And now, listen to how John the Baptist scolds the Jewish officials who would embrace religion but not repentance:

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that **out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.** - *Matthew 3:7-9 NIV*

Being Jewish does not automatically make someone a true child of Abraham; nor does being religious make someone righteous. The evidence that a Jew or Gentile belongs to Abraham comes from the “fruit of repentance”: allowing God to replace a heart of stone, with a heart of Spirit-dwelt, Spirit-sensitive flesh.

Q: Is your heart of stone being increasingly and progressively softened to seek His will and His ways for your life?

## FOUR STAGES

I want to look at the four stages of salvation history that Paul covers in chapter eleven, and sums up in these verses.

### 1. The time of Gentile disobedience

Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God (11:30)

Paul is calling attention to the generations when God allowed the Gentile nations to go their own way, accumulating sin.

In the past, he let all nations go their own way. - *Acts 14:16 NIV*

The idea here is that God has “quantities” and “deadlines” in view when it comes to how much sin He will tolerate.

... for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure. - *Genesis 15:16 NIV*

We may think we’re getting away with our sin, but it will always catch up with us.

It’s like a dog running on a long zip-line. There’s a short period of time where the dog feels so free! But ultimately he’s going to hit the end of the rope, and end up flat on his back!

Because every sin has a deadline!

The next stage in salvation history was:

### 2. The time of Jewish disobedience

So they too have now become disobedient (11:31)

The decisive disobedience of Israel was her refusal to worship Jesus as the Christ (Messiah), which amazingly resulted in the spread the gospel to the non-Jewish (Gentile) world.

[As Jesus said] The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. - *Matthew 21:43 NIV*

Paul sees this as the third stage of salvation history:

3. The time of mercy toward Gentiles

You who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience (11:30)

God humbles a proud Israel, by using their disobedience as the means of Gentile salvation. And He humbles the proud Gentiles, by reminding them that their salvation is meant to act as a lure to bring Israel back home.

Which leads to the fourth and final, future stage:

4. The time of mercy toward Israel

They too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you (11:31)

## PLANNED DISOBEDIENCE

Q: And what is left when all pride is humbled?

A: A focus on God's loving-kindness and mercy.

The Lord has carefully, sovereignly guided all of salvation history, to exclude self-reliance and self-exaltation, in order to highlight His incredible, undeniable mercy to the world.

For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all. - Romans 11:32 NIV

Let's close with a closer look at that line:

He's bound all men over to disobedience (11:32)

Some versions say He's "committed" or "consigned" all men to disobedience ... which makes it sound a little sinister.

Let's say you're in a huge pit. If I have the means to rescue you (a big ladder!) but I don't - even though I didn't put you in the pit - I've "committed" or "bound" you to it. God didn't coerce or cause man to sin, but He did consign all men to the curse of their own sin.

But when the timing was right, and His mercy could be perfectly displayed, He offered a "big ladder"!

However, we must receive the rescue that is offered