

GOD'S PEOPLE? SAVED! (PT. 2)
ROMANS 11:28-32

I like a good “who dunnit?” Sunday evenings, our family has enjoyed many hours of watching Masterpiece Mystery — Foyle’s War, Sherlock, Inspector Lewis, Miss Marple, Poirot, and Endeavour among them. I have read quite a few Agatha Christie mysteries, and other similar fare.

In the Bible, there are not many “who dunnits?” but there is one massive “will He do it?” or “why’d He do it?” There is a “mystery” in the Bible (it’s not about a secret code with numbers); the “mystery” in the Bible is about salvation, and especially about the Jews. (Remember that a biblical mystery is a little different than the way we think about a mystery — it is something that has been hidden, but is now being revealed.) And the grand revelation about salvation in the NT is not just that God is saving the Jews (and is being faithful to that promise), but that He is also saving Gentiles, folding them into the promises made to Israel, without replacing those promises to Israel.

In his ultimate chapter on God’s sovereignty in salvation, Romans 11, Paul culminates his argument in this chapter and section (chs. 9-11) by saying in vv. 25-32 —

ISRAELITES HAVE REBELLED AGAINST GOD. BUT GOD WILL YET SAVE HIS PEOPLE, ISRAEL.

Last week we saw three truths about the “mystery” of Israel’s salvation (vv. 25-27); in this passage (vv. 28-32), Paul **reveals five characteristics of God**, who is behind the mystery of salvation. This mystery not only explains something more about our salvation, it also reveals something more about our God...

1. This Mystery Reveals God’s **GRACE** (v. 28a)
2. This Mystery Reveals God’s **LOVE** (v. 28b)
3. This Mystery Reveals God’s **IMMUTABILITY** (v. 29)
4. This Mystery Reveals God’s **MERCY** (vv. 30-31)
5. This Mystery Reveals God’s **IMPARTIALITY** (v. 32)

Lessons Learned:

1. This Mystery Reveals God's GRACE (v. 28a)

- There is very little new information about the “mystery” in vv. 28-32. But there is new and expanded information about God who has produced this mystery of Gentiles and Jews together in salvation.
 - ✓ In v. 28, Paul says, **from the standpoint of the gospel**... That is, “from the perspective of the progress of the gospel.” As the Romans consider the gospel and how they came to know it, there is a particular reality behind the gospel that has been given to them.
 - ✓ That reality is that the Jews are **enemies**. We know from 5:10 that all men are sinners, and as sinners, all men are enemies of God and the gospel. How is Israel the enemy of the gospel and God?
 - *They are active enemies of God* — they hate Him. They are disobedient, rebellious, and stubborn (e.g., 9:31-32; 10:3, 14-21; 11:11-12).
 - *They are passive enemies of God* — they are hated by Him. God has hardened Israel and individual Israelites — keeping them (allowing them to persist) in their hatred of Him (11:7ff).
 - *The gospel does not make them God's enemies*. The mass of Israel (with the exception of the remnant, vv. 1-2) are already enemies because of their rebellion against God.
 - ✓ And in the mystery of God (the truth that God is now revealing), God kept them as enemies.
- The reason that God has kept Israel as enemies, is **for your sake** — lit., “for you,” that is, for the sake of the Gentile Roman readers.
 - ✓ In Genesis 12:3, God promised that Israel would be a spiritual blessing to the nations.
 - ✓ Israel was called as light to the Gentiles — to spread the gospel to the nations (Is. 42:6; 49:6; 60:3).
 - ✓ When Israel failed to believe in God/Christ by faith, they also failed to fulfill their calling to the nations. But God had not given up on the nations — so he used the rebellion of Israel to take the gospel to the nations. We see this in Paul's ministry in Acts (Acts 13:46; 18:5-6; 19:8-9; 28:28).
 - ✓ Because Israel rejected God and Christ, God sent the gospel directly to the Gentiles (rather than through Israel).
 - ✓ This is *grace*. We who were outside have been brought in through the rebellion of Israel.
 - ✓ Once, when the girls were little, one of them was disobedient. When I went to discipline her, I couldn't find the instrument of discipline. Her sister helpfully came to me and said, “Daddy, here is the spanking spoon. I'm being good.” (It's hard to discipline children while you are laughing!)
 - ✓ That's not quite the way it worked for us as Gentiles. While Israel was an enemy, we also were enemies of God — and He still folded us into the promise of salvation, making it available to us.
 - ✓ We know the doctrine of substitution — Christ's death for our sin; here is another substitution that is just as gracious for us — Israel's rebellion so that God could grant us salvation.

2. This Mystery Reveals God's LOVE (v. 28b)

- You are familiar with the term “unrequited love” — love that isn’t reciprocated. *Psych Today* suggests 98% of adults have been part of an “unrequited” relationship. Here are its suggestions for responding:
 - ✓ Explore various ways of being more desirable and attractive to them.
 - ✓ Sometimes it is hard to tell when others like us. If they show genuine interest, it may be possible to establish a real relationship. Try being a little less “nice” in ways that might lead to you being taken for granted.
 - ✓ If you are more in love with *being* in love than with the actual person, you may want to check yourself for various relationship biases....Being curious about the actual person you are “loving” can help reduce your fear and avoidance of real relationships. Decide on the features you really want in a partner and see whether they are compatible with this person.
 - ✓ No one has experienced more unrequited love than God at the hands of Israel.
 - ✓ How did God respond to His rejected love? (Aren’t we glad he didn’t follow *Psych Today*’s advice?)
- Paul notes that as we think about Israel, we need to think of her the way we think of the Gentiles — as the object of God’s grace; and God’s grace is manifested in two ways —
 - ✓ The first thing Paul reminds us is that they are the object of **God’s choice**. That is, God has elected and chosen them as His covenant people. It reaffirms God’s sovereign choice of v. 2.
 - ✓ Just as God chooses sinners to salvation, so God chose Israel to be his people and chose Abram to be the head of that people (Gen. 12:1-3; Dt. 7:7).
 - ✓ God knew what Israel was and would be — and He chose them anyway. This was His forever plan.
- As we consider God’s plan to save Israel, what else (2nd) should we think of them? **They are beloved...**
 - ✓ **They are loved.** They are objects of God’s love. They have not merited that love; God loves them because He does, as an expression of His divine nature — to be gracious (4:16-17).
 - ✓ Notice also *who* is loved — **they**, i.e., not the remnant (v. 5), but the nation (v. 26).
 - ✓ Why are they loved? **For the sake of the fathers**...i.e., for the sake of the patriarchs — for the sake of God’s promise to the patriarchs. Because God chose Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the 12 patriarchs, he will continue in that covenant promise. Because of His covenant promise to them, He will persist in loving the nation of Israel.
 - ✓ How far will you go in your love? When will you stop loving someone? When will you give up on your commitment to a relationship, friendship, family member? Absolutes are often overstated: but it is probably safe to say, “we *all* have points at which we will give up loving.” Not God.
 - ✓ Why does God preserve His promise to Israel after so much rejected love? To put *His love* on display — to demonstrate the fullness of His love for enemies and sinners.

3. This Mystery Reveals God's IMMUTABILITY (v. 29)

- The word “immutability” means God is unchanging. The word Paul uses in v. 29 is **irrevocable**. It means that God will not be sorry for what He does; He does not regret or take back His gifts. Once God has granted something, it cannot be refuted, denied, or lost. What can't Israel lose from God?
 - ✓ **The gifts** cannot be lost — the word is broad and general; it is derived from the word “grace.” God does not go back on any of His acts of grace.
 - ✓ **The calling** cannot be lost — this is a specific act of God's grace: His calling them as His people. His irresistible, elective call as His chosen people cannot be lost.
 - ✓ Everything God granted to Israel was confirmed by and through Christ (15:8); it is all irrevocable.
 - ✓ God is unchanging; once He has made a promise, He cannot revoke it (Ps. 110:4a; 135:4).
- God's commitment to His people is unchanging, which means that His people can trust Him.
 - ✓ Cf. Micah 7:18, 20; Ps. 31:12, 14; 71:10-11, 14; 86:14-15.
 - ✓ “...just because Israel has not believed, *‘it is not as though’* God is not faithful...Israel still has a place in God's plan *because* God is faithful.” [Moo]
 - ✓ God is unchanging and can be trusted.

4. This Mystery Reveals God's MERCY (vv. 30-31)

| Verse 30 — Gentiles | Verse 31 — Israel |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| just as | so |
| you | these |
| once | also now |
| were disobedient | have been disobedient |
| now have been shown mercy | because of the mercy shown to you |
| because of their disobedience | may now be shown mercy |

- **Just as...so** = There is a correspondence between Jews and Gentiles in the way they have been (and will be saved) — they are not so very different.
- **You...these** = the Roman Gentiles and the nation of Israel
- **Once...now** = not just a single time of rebellion, but a reference to all their former time of rebellion; what the Gentiles were in the past corresponds to what Israel was currently in Paul's day (and today).
- **Were disobedient...have been disobedient** = in the NT, this is always disobedience against God
- **Because of their disobedience...because of mercy** = Here is one slight difference; it was the disobedience of Israel that led to mercy for Gentiles, but it was because of mercy to Gentiles that Israel will receive mercy. Both Jew and Gentile were both rebelliously disobedient to God. They committed different sins but they had the same rebellion.

- **Have been shown mercy...** = The word **mercy** means to be compassionate toward; to withhold the wrath that would be appropriate to pour out on them. The chiastic structure emphasizes **mercy**.
 - ✓ *Why was Israel kept in sin?* To create an opportunity to grant mercy to Gentiles.
 - ✓ *Why were Gentiles given mercy?* To make Israel jealous to lead them to faith and grant them mercy.
 - ✓ *Why were Gentiles and Israelites shown mercy?* To demonstrate the glory of God (vv. 33ff).
 - ✓ The disobedience of Israel was not the final word. The disobedience of Gentiles was not the final word. God's mercy is the final word. At the end of the day, God will speak — to all men...

5. This Mystery Reveals God's IMPARTIALITY (v. 32)

- Verse 32 serves as Paul's conclusion to chapter 11 as well as chs. 9-11 and God's sovereignty. What is God doing with man's sin, His wrath, and His salvation?
 - ✓ **God has shut up all in disobedience** = God has enclosed/imprisoned all sinners (all mankind) in the net of their sin and rebellion against Him.
 - All mankind has rebelled against God (3:9) — both Gentiles (1:21, 24, 26, 28) and Jews (2:3).
 - Some of those God has hardened in their belief to accomplish His purposes (9:17-18)
 - ✓ Why does God do this? **So that** (purpose) **He may show mercy to all**. God's wrath is not (necessarily) the end of the story. He convicts sinners of their sin and exercises wrath to demonstrate His mercy. There is no mercy without wrath (9:23); mercy is only merciful when we are spared from wrath. The greater the wrath the greater the mercy that spares us from that wrath.
 - ✓ *This mercy is made available to all men*. God does not save all men, but all men are responsible for their sin and have had mercy made available to them.
 - ✓ God is impartial in that He has made salvation available to all men, while also saving Israel.
- Here we complete the picture and come back to the beginning of God's involvement in salvation:
 - ✓ God has sovereignly ordained salvation for individuals (chs. 9-11).
 - ✓ And He has also ordained salvation for Israel, and has not overlooked or forgotten or rejected Israel.
 - ✓ God has used Israel's rebellion for the purpose of enfolding the Gentiles into to Israel.
 - ✓ By grafting Gentiles into the promises, God also bring about the final and ultimate salvation of the entire nation of Israel — so that all (Jew *and* Gentile) have had the mercy of salvation made available to them and no man has an excuse for his rejection of God (1:20).
- What will we do with these truths? In addition to rejoicing in these attributes of God...

Lessons Learned:

- ✓ **Sin doesn't inhibit God's grace.** It took sin to bring about the Gentiles' salvation. It took sin to provide a Redeemer — it took the greatest sin ever committed (the unjust crucifixion of Christ) to bring about salvation. God uses sin to accomplish His purposes. Don't sin to get grace (6:1-2). But recognize that sin is no encumbrance to God's grace to Gentiles, Israel, you, or your loved one.
- ✓ **Sin will not be unpunished.** Either I will pay for my sin (and I can't, which is why Hell is eternal), or Christ will pay for it. If you have not trusted Christ, I urge and compel you to repent of your sin and trust Him today. You and I don't deserve it, but He has made it available anyway. Believe. Today.
- ✓ **God is always, unendingly, perfectly, unchangingly faithful.** What He says, He will do. What He says, He *must* do. What He promises, He cannot not do.
- ✓ **Give thanks for God's people Israel** — and always pray for and as you have opportunity evangelize. They are the reason you are saved. Can we live in such a way that will provoke them to faith?
- ✓ **Salvation is for God's glory.** We weren't in His choice of Israel; in His grace He brought us into that plan. The only appropriate response is not pride, but worship (vv. 33ff).
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BENEDICTION: **Romans 11:33-36**