

Paul on Romans 11

Given at C3, Maroubra

5 October 2014

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Shalom friends at C3. I'm privileged to speak with you today and to be part of your family of faith. I was first with you 6 years ago and you were generous to me and financially supportive of our work among the Jewish people and many have been ever since. I don't take that lightly and appreciate your belief in the Gospel of Jesus going to all people, including the ancient people of the Covenants. As I share with you this morning, about a very problematic biblical passage, and see what God has to say about Israel from Romans chapter 11, perhaps this will clarify some theological sticking points and may give you cause to rejoice, or so I hope, that God is ever looking after us, ever challenging us, ever calling us to Himself. I believe as a result of this sermon today that you will trust God all the more, and isn't faith what it's all about?

By the way, you have received a white card this evening inside the most recent newsletter from Jews for Jesus, and I hope that while I'm speaking you will fill that out and turn it in at the book table or in an offering to us, and we can continue to send you (or begin sending you) our newsletter which we prefer sending to you via email. Thanks.

Preamble: Romans 9-10

To put this in context, Paul the Apostle is teaching the Roman church in his letter to the Romans about God's Sovereignty and about His choices, so that the believers can be comforted, when challenged by their own lack, their own insufficiency, their own sinfulness. In light of all that, and the assurance that Paul wants for the Roman believers, the Apostle then turns his attention on the obvious question, 'What about the Jewish people?' If God chooses the believers,

and they have nothing to worry about, what about the Jewish people, who were also chosen by God? Are they still in God's consideration? Does He notice them?

And what about Jews who don't believe in anything at all? Are they still chosen? And what about an eternal plan for them and for Israel?

Paul deals with what might be called "the problem of Israel" from two standpoints. In chapter 9 he teaches the sovereignty of God; how God chose my people for himself back in Abraham's day. In chapter 10 he deals with Israel's failure to respond to God's righteousness, ending with the announcement that they are "a disobedient and obstinate people" (10:21). Ouch.

If this were so, then how does Paul resolve the obvious tension? Will Israel's disobedience win, in the battle with God, or will God find a way to deal with the situation so as to safeguard his purpose? This is the challenge as chapter 11 begins. Paul will answer this by looking into Israel's past, present, and future, which actually brings us into today's message and our world today in a clear and visible manner.

I. HAS GOD REJECTED HIS PEOPLE? (1-10)

a. Paul is the example today

Paul's answer is no, and he uses his own life as evidence of this. God is not done with the Jewish people because God saved Paul. If God were done with Jews, then Paul, a Hebrew of the Hebrews would be dismissed and not saved either. So in answer to the question, did God reject all the Jewish people, the apostolic answer is NO!

b. Elijah is the example back in the day

Then Paul continues with the evidence from back when. Against the backdrop of serious whinging by the prophet Elijah, the Bible (1 Kings 19) says that there were 7,000 people who stayed faithful, at the time of Elijah the prophet. In the same way, God has preserved from within

Israel, a remnant of people who love Jesus. Some get this mixed up, and think the term *remnant* applies to the Church, that is, that the Church of Jesus has replaced the Jewish people. But that's exactly not what the apostle is saying. The evidence of God not rejecting the *Jewish* people is Jewish people in the Church. So the remnant is the believing Jews, or what we call Jews for Jesus. That the church believes, well and good, but that's not a fulfillment of the promises of God to Abraham. See what I mean? Online folks, Paul may have been thinking of

Psalm 94.14

כִּי | לֹא-יִפָּזַשׁ יְהוָה עַמּוֹ וְנִחַלְתּוֹ לֹא יֵעָזֵב :

c. There is a remnant (5-10)

Then Paul asks, since Jewish people are mostly rejecters of the Messiah Jesus, have they fallen too far? Did their rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus cause them to fall irreparably? Absolutely not, he shouts. He quotes from Isaiah 44 (They do not know, nor do they understand, for He has smeared over their eyes so that they cannot see and their hearts so that they cannot comprehend. Verse 18) and Psalm 69 (*May their table before them become a snare; and when they are in peace, may it become a trap. May their eyes grow dim so that they cannot see, and make their loins shake continually. Verses 22-23*) He says that the majority of Israel's rejection of her messiah was predicted and it should not surprise us. God uses parables to prevent hearing and He uses the Truth of Scripture to hide truth from those who are hardened against it. So that most Jewish people then (and dare I say, today) continue in unbelief is actually a testimony of God to choose a remnant.

II. GENTILES GET IN ON IT (11-24)

Then in verse 11 and following Paul says that God's purposes for you Gentiles were helped along by most of Israel saying 'no' to the Gospel message. Without Israel

knocking back Yeshua as Messiah, Gentiles would never have had a chance to hear and believe. You are welcome.

a. Chosen by grace

He has already made a case for the choice of the remnant being made on the basis of grace and not by works. And now he emphasizes that yet again. (5-6) And he makes sure that the Gentiles who are not the remnant, and yet brought near, understand that they are also 'in by grace.' He uses two images, one of the lump of dough and the other of wild olive branches. Verse 21 makes his point so clear, "for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you."

"For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience."
(Verse 30)

b. Gentiles have a ministry-- to make Jews jealous

Paul says the Gentiles in the community of faith, which altogether is nicknamed the Church, have a role to play and that's to make Israel jealous. Listen, your new car won't make a Jew jealous. He already has two in his garage. Your money and glamour are irrelevant to a person with more wealth. They know science. They lead the way in technology and movies. There is one thing the Gentile believer in Jesus has that would make the ordinary Jew jealous... your faith. You have a relationship with the Almighty. You know the Living God. (John 17.2) And that, and that alone is what I hope you share with Jewish mates and work colleagues. When you see them and they are in turmoil, offer to pray with or for them. Attend to their home when they have lost a loved one. Sit with them. Comfort them. Demonstrate the peace of God, which passes all understanding. When you can attend their son's Bar Mitzvah or wedding, let them see your calm and your patience. Let them know you know the God of peace. That will help make them jealous!

c. Don't be conceited, but fear

In verse 18 we read that Gentiles should “not be arrogant toward the branches.” I guess that would be a natural thing to do. You might think, “aha, those Jews had their chance, and they knocked back the Messiah Jesus, so now it's my turn.” In a way you are right, but the attitude of arrogance will come back to bite us if you are not careful.

One of my favorite and least favorite verses in the Bible is verse 22. “Behold therefore the Kindness and severity of God.” The two poles of His hands, or if you will, the two hands of God. The right hand is the hand of mercy; the left is the hand of judgment. He is not a one-handed deity. He offers mercy in His first coming; judgment in His 2nd coming. The warning: don't be conceited but fear.

III. THEN IT'S THE JEWISH FULLNESS TIME AGAIN (25-32)

a. What time is it? Jews en masse coming to faith

The apostle says that this hardening condition on the Jewish people is temporary. That's good news for the Jews. We read, “*a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in*” (.25) so there also seems to be a time frame which ends for Gentiles. Whatever fullness might mean, it's clear that whatever that is, that this fullness will trigger the end of the time of the hardening. In other words, Jewish people will soften again to the Gospel of Grace and will receive Yeshua en masse.

But Paul has already indicated that in the key passage earlier in verse 15: “*For if their rejection be the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?*”

Let me see if I can unpack that one. Paul says that it was necessary for Jewish people to say ‘no’ to Yeshua so that Gentiles could have opportunity to experience eternal life. But then God will open our eyes, remove the stupor from our blindness, and cause us to see Him, whom we had pierced,

and we will accept Him. That's not only a theory; that's a promise from heaven. And when that happens, Paul says, buckle your seatbelt, the end is nigh. The phrase, "resurrection from the dead" implies that very culmination of global history.

b. Redeemer comes to Zion: (Isa 59:20-21)

When Jewish people en masse receive Jesus as Saviour and Lord, when Jews for Jesus are abundant throughout the world in cities and countryside alike, when every tribe and kindred and family and tongue includes Jewish people who have become believers in and followers of Jesus, then buckle your seatbelt. The end is near. That's when the Redeemer will come (in verse 26) In fact, people ask me all the time about signs of the times. About blue moons and about earthquakes and famines and about Israel becoming a nation again after 1900 years away. Look, there's one sign that is clearer than any other sign in the Newer Testament. That sign is the sign of Jewish people saying 'yes' to Yeshua and that's exactly what is happening across the world today. In the 19th century, over 200,000 Jews joined the church. Since 1967 probably another 200,000 have been grafted back into the olive branch. To be fair, there are 13 million Jews worldwide and 6 million of those in the Land of Israel, so there is much work to do, and we are doing that work, but a significant threshold of Jewish numbers has been reached. Is it enough? I'm not going to announce anything except that the sign is visible. Reach for your seat belt; the end is near.

c. Who is "All Israel?" (v. 26)

Verse 26 is a sticky one. Paul writes, "All Israel will be saved." So who is "all Israel?" Some say this is the Church. Although I appreciate that members of the church are certainly saved and will be saved, the text in front of us doesn't allow us to switch from Jews to something else without warrant. The apostle has been speaking for 3

chapters about Jewish people and to be consistent he must be continuing to do so. Thus, the Church is not in view.

Nor is this all Jewish people alive throughout history or even at the time of Messiah's return. That would mitigate against evangelism and would take away free choice... both of which are inconsistent with biblical history. Being Jewish has never been enough to save us; it's merely a calling and a dramatic one at that, but it was never salvific.

The key is again the use of the term 'remnant.' A remnant of carpet is part of the original that is still in place after the rest of the carpet has been dislodged and replaced. When I think of this imagery, there is only one meaning for the remnant and that's Jewish believers in Jesus. In that way, with God being faithful to the remnant, He is faithful to the original covenant and faithful to His promises, all the while still consistent with His call to include others in the 'new carpet.'

When you read about the remnant (Isa 28.5), think of Jewish believers in Jesus like me, like Jews for Jesus, like others in Israel or New York City. And know that God keeps His promises.

IV. FINAL DOXOLOGY

Verse 33: "*the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!*" When you see God's hand, can you do anything else? Praise and doxology, that's what should come out of our being. He is the God of wonders and He has called and kept Israel, even in our times of disobedience. He will call us again, and maybe now is that time. And He has reserved 7,000 in the time of Elijah, and 100,000 in these days, and how many more are yet unknown to you and to me. He is the God who calls, keeps and saves to the uttermost. All we can do is praise Him. He is worthy of all praise, amen?

Final thoughts:

Let me end my talk this morning highlighting the work of Jews for Jesus in a couple places. I was in Moscow a couple months ago and our teams there handed out a quarter million gospel tracts and over 400 unsaved Jewish people gave us contact information, wanting to hear more from us about Yeshua. That's awesome.

We had teams in Berlin and Budapest also this year doing things very similar. Also in Israel in the very dangerous south, our teams are working. I'm so proud of our volunteers and staff worldwide. I'm humbled to be part of our outreaches, even in Sydney where I've lived for 16 years. Your support keeps us out there. Your prayers strengthen us and don't miss this; they open the hearts of Jewish people to hear us. Thanks for being part of our teams. Every Jew who hears us owes you great thanks as well.

Pastor Ian, God bless you and the team here at C3. Thanks for standing with us.