

Romans: Verse-by-Verse

Romans 11:28-32

Study Notes:

- **A Survey of Romans 11:**

Verses 11–12: A progression of Israel's fall to the salvation of the Gentiles. The process of making Israel envy of the Gentiles eventually turn to "the much greater riches".

Verses 13-16: Paul's ministry to the Jews. Israel's rejection would eventually lead to the reconciliation of the world as well as Israel's "life from the dead".

Verses 17-24: The allegory of the olive tree. The breaking off of the natural branches was followed by the grafting in of the wild shoot. A time is coming when the natural branches will be grafted back in again.

Verses 25-26: The "mystery" of Christ. Israel's partial hardening will one day result in "All Israel" being saved.

- **Next: A well-crafted conclusion** to all that Paul has said in this chapter. This passage includes a marvelous set of doxologies as well.

As Paul rounds out this chapter, he is still describing the fall of Israel and the inclusion of the Gentiles. He has not lost focus on how all of this ties into God's end-times plan for both parts of the "New Man" he is creating in Christ.

Paul is going to express his reasons for being confident that God has not totally rejected his ancient people: 1. They are God's elect. 2. God's mercy.

Notice two very important descriptions in this passage that specifically apply to Israel. Paul says they are “enemies” and they are “loved” by God.

- **Enemies, Yet Loved:** verses 28-29:

“As far as the gospel is concerned, they 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.”

They are “enemies” and they are “loved” by God. John Stott: These are “... Two contrasting ways of evaluating the Jewish people. The essence of the antithesis is in the words ‘they are enemies’ and ‘they are loved’.”

See 2 Corinthians 11 for Paul’s candid recount of his relationship to the Jews as he preached the gospel.

Were the Jews “enemies of the gospel”? We have only to do a quick survey of the opposition Paul and his companions faced as they preached the gospel. See: Acts 9:23; Acts 13:45; Acts 13:50; Acts 14:2; Acts 17:5; Acts 17:13; Acts 18:12; Acts 23:12.

The story of Israel does not end here. Paul: “...But as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable.”

The Jews are still God’s “Chosen People”: God has made certain promises to Abraham that he cannot revoke; that he cannot go back on. As far as election goes – meaning Abraham’s selection by God – the Jews are still the focus of God’s covenant promises.

- **Irrevocable Blessings:**

A strong statement at the end of verse 29: “... For God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable.” The gifts and privileges that God gave Israel are

still in force – not matter how he has to work all of these things out in his planning and timing. See: Romans 9:4-5; Numbers 23:19.

A Second Reason for Paul's Confidence in Israel's Future: "Mercy".
Verses 30-31: "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."

Paul reminds the Gentiles that at one time they were – as a people group – disobedient to God. He's referencing what he said in Romans 1:21.

As a people group, the Gentiles were at one time disobedient. How was their estrangement from God remedied? Paul says it was the outcome of God's mercy.

Going back to his prior parallel, Paul says this mercy was extended (in part) because of Israel's disobedience. Again, Israel's failure to live out the requirements of her covenant with God provided the door to "mercy" that the Gentiles needed but were not seeking.

If God's mercy was extended to those who were not God's Chosen, can it not be also be extended to those who are?

- **A Common Prison: A Common Deliverance:**

Both the Gentiles and the Jews share a common experience: Human disobedience followed by divine mercy. The only real difference is that while the Gentiles have already been shown this mercy, the outcome for the Jews is still future.

Verse 32: Paul makes a revelatory statement that truly wraps up what he just said about mercy for both the Gentiles and the Jews: "*For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.*"

Figuratively, all humans have been placed in God's prison, so that all humans can only be released by the same mercy that God provides.

Verse 32 dispels the theory of a "two-covenant". Both the Gentiles and Israel have been incarcerated in the prison of their disobedience. There is only one key that will allow their release: The grace and mercy of God expressed in Christ.

As Peter put it on the Day of Pentecost:

"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." – Acts 2:38