

EXPOSITION OF ROMANS

Message #39

Romans 11:1-12

One of the greatest theological studies one can ever undertake is the study of the Sovereignty of God. It is high, it is holy and it is honorable.

When we study the Bible, what we must conclude is, it is not possible for finite, sinful man to outsmart or out choose or defeat the sovereignty of God. Man's will cannot ever overtake God's will.

God has the power to prevent things, to permit things, or not permit them. God directs and determines things and no mortal man will ever be able to beat His sovereignty.

As we come to this text in Romans today, that is really the main point Paul wanted to communicate concerning the nation Israel. In Romans 10:21, we learned that Israel had obstinately rebelled against the grace of God. Preachers went to Israel proclaiming the wonderful grace gospel, and she had refused and rejected.

THE PRESENT CONDITION OF ISRAEL IS PERFECTLY CONSISTENT WITH THE SOVEREIGN PLAN AND PROGRAM OF GOD.

SOVEREIGN FACT #1 – God has not abandoned Israel. **11:1-6**

This central point comes from **11:1a** - Has God “rejected” His people? Has God abandoned Israel because of her obstinate disobedience and rebellion? The answer, “May it never be!” There are those who will tell you that the church has replaced Israel. This is absolute heresy. God has not replaced Israel, nor has He abandoned Israel, nor has He rejected Israel. Truth is, what has been happening to Israel for the past 2000 years is perfectly consistent with His sovereign plan and will. Paul offers four main proofs of this reality:

Proof #1 - The proof of direct statement. **11:1a**

The words “may it never be” ends the argument once and for all. It will never happen; God will not ever abandon Israel.

The real theological issue at stake concerning Israel is whether or not God can ever go back on His word.

Proof #2 - The proof of Paul's conversion. **11:1b**

The essence of what Paul is saying here is that I am proof that God does not and has not given up on Israel, because God saved me, an Israelite.

Paul was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin. That means he was a member of the smallest tribe of the twelve and a member of one of the most faithful tribes of the twelve.

After the death of Solomon, the twelve tribes split and Benjamin stayed with Judah and did not get involved in the apostasy and remained faithful to God. Paul is saying: Here I am one of the members of the smallest tribes in the nation and God saved me and that is proof that He has not abandoned the Jew. By the way, **Paul always credits God with saving him.** We never find Paul trying to take credit for him coming to Christ.

Proof #3 - The proof of God's sovereignty. **11:2a**

The argument here is that God is not about to cancel His elective purposes when all of His promises were rooted in His foreknowledge. The basic idea behind foreknowledge is God knowing everything before it happens, including everything that He will do.

What this means is that when God made all of His promises to Israel, He did so completely aware of the fact that she would rebel against Him. He elected her anyway. Why? This is a prerogative of Divine sovereignty. God cannot go back on His own elective purposes.

Donald Gray Barnhouse said, "As far as I am concerned, if God does not bring the Jews back into Palestine ... then the Bible is not a trustworthy book." He goes on to tell the story of the King of Prussia who was discussing whether or not the Bible was true. He was arguing with a chaplain and the king said, "Prove to me in one word that the Bible is true" and the chaplain said, "Israel" (*Romans*, Vol. 4, pp. 106-107).

Proof #4 - The proof of Elijah's experience. **11:2b-6**

This illustration comes from I Kings 19:9-18. Elijah is in a cave all alone and totally depressed. He thought he was the only one left who was faithful to the Word of God and who had not worshipped Baal. Elijah wanted to die. Actually, he wanted God to kill him, so God says to Elijah, "There are 7,000 Israelites who have been faithful to My Word."

The point is that even in a time when it appeared as though God's program was down to one, God still had a group, a nucleus in Israel, with whom He was sovereignly working.

Now Paul applies the illustration in **verses 5-6**. Paul says the "same" is true with God's saving work in Israel in the Church Age. There is a remnant in Israel whom God has graciously chosen. There are those He has elected in His grace. He did not elect them on the basis of their works but on the basis of His pure grace.

Now in verse 6, Paul wants to drive home a key theological point that combats every man-made system of religion, including those misguided people who believe in Lordship salvation.

- 1) If one believes he is saved by God's grace, then that eliminates the possibility of ever being saved by human works.
- 2) If one believes he is saved by human works, then that eliminates the possibility of being saved by God's grace.

If any human works are added to salvation in any way, it is not God's grace. This is simple mathematics - if the debt is entirely paid by God, then there is nothing left for us to pay and we are no longer obligated to pay anything.

SOVEREIGN FACT #2 – God has blinded Israel. **11:7-12**

The question now comes to Paul, “Well, Paul, if God has not abandoned the nation, and He has this sovereign plan for her, what is going on now? How come we do not see a massive number of Jews coming to Jesus Christ? Why is it that most Jews reject Christ as the Messiah?”

The answer is God has given Israel a temporary hardening. God has hardened hearts in Israel.

The word “harden” is a medical term. If you cut yourself, eventually a scab or callous will form and it becomes so hard that you cannot even feel the cut anymore. That is what is happening right now with most of Israel. God has so hardened hearts that they cannot even feel or sense the truth anymore. When God hardens people's hearts, truth escapes them. They cannot see it and they cannot sense it because God will not let them see it.

Point #1 - The blindness is partial . **11:7**

Every once in a while, God's grace will touch a Jew, so God is not hardening every Jew. Some are saved and the rest are hardened.

Point #2 - The blindness is God- ordained . **11:8**

Make no mistake about this - God is the One who has given this blindness to Israel. He is the One who has the key to the heart. It is a dangerous thing to continually reject the Grace of God. Notice carefully 11:20-21, God can blind and harden hearts of Gentiles just as He did with Israel.

Point #3 - The blindness is for rebellion . **11:9-10**

Paul is quoting a Messianic Psalm of David - Psalm 69. In that Psalm, David is speaking about the fact that Israel rejected the Messiah and so God judges her for her rebellion.

Point #4 - The blindness was for the Gentiles . **11:11-12**

(Connection #1) - The Gentiles have an opportunity for salvation . **11:11a**

(Connection #2) - The Gentiles will provoke Israel to jealousy . **11:11b**

God is a gracious, sovereign God. If you have never responded to His Grace, believe in Jesus Christ now and you shall be saved.