

## **God's Sovereignty and the Jewish Restoration** **(Romans 11:25-36)**

God has a future for His chosen people, the Jews. In Genesis 12:1-3 God made a covenant promise with Abraham, and God always keeps His promises. In that covenant, God promised to multiply and bless Abraham's descendants and to bless the nations through Abraham's ultimate descendant, Jesus Christ. In the first century the Jews had largely rejected Jesus as their Messiah. Paul explained that, in His sovereignty, God began to work among the Gentiles in such a way that His chosen people will eventually become jealous of His blessings on the Gentiles and turn in faith to Jesus. There will be a future restoration of the Jews to a place of faith and favor. As Paul states in Romans 11:26, "All Israel will be saved." Paul concludes this section with an outburst of praise to our sovereign God. God is faithful to His promises and worthy of our praise.

**God is a God of salvation—  
He has a future for His chosen people (11:25-27).**

God has a heart for the lost. He cares deeply about our spiritual condition and provided everything necessary for our salvation. He has reached out through His Son to rescue us from our hopeless situation and bring us back into His fellowship through faith in Jesus Christ. His love includes, of course, His chosen people. God has a future for the Jews.

***Understanding God's mystery regarding His redemptive work counteracts personal pride (11:25a).***

Addressing the mixed audience in the church at Rome as "brothers," Paul warned against harboring any arrogant attitudes. Ignorance about God's ways tends to make people "wise" in themselves, that is, to be preoccupied with themselves—conceited. Therefore, Paul introduced the "mystery" of God's workings among His chosen people. A mystery was a truth received by revelation, something new, a fresh disclosure about God and His purposes on earth. The Jewish situation of rejection followed ultimately by acceptance of Jesus constituted such a mystery.

***God's mystery regarding His redemptive work includes spiritual hardening on the part of the Jews (11:25b).***

The Jews had rejected Jesus and became spiritually hardened, a condition that God perpetuated over time (compare Romans 11:7). This spiritual hardening, however, was neither total nor permanent. Paul mentions that this spiritual hardening was "in part," excluding the Jewish remnant that had turned to Jesus by faith (compare Romans 11:5). Furthermore, this

spiritual hardening would last only “until the fullness of the nations.” The Gentile nations, now the focus of the gospel, will increasingly respond to Jesus Christ until their number reaches the level determined by God’s sovereign plan.

***God’s mystery regarding His redemptive work includes a future major spiritual revival among the Jews (11:26-27).***

When the full number of Gentiles comes to faith in Jesus Christ, God will initiate a new work among His chosen people. “And so all Israel will be saved.” The future holds not only the possibility, but also the promise of a Jewish spiritual revival. The phrase “all Israel,” of course, doesn’t refer to every individual Jew but to the nation of Israel—a vast majority of Jews alive at the time of this great outpouring of God’s grace. (Paul never uses the term “Israel” in Romans to refer to Gentile believers, so Jewish ethnicity is at the heart of this promise of salvation.) Salvation here refers to a spiritual work of God in the hearts of His chosen people. Their acceptance of Jesus Christ will result in spiritual, eternal life (compare Romans 11:15). Paul cites the Old Testament to reinforce the promise of a national Jewish revival. Drawing apparently from such passages as Isaiah 27:9 and 59:20-21, Paul writes that “the deliverer will come from Zion” and that this deliverer “will turn impiety away from Jacob.” This saving work of God on behalf of His chosen people constitutes a covenant promise, a promise to “take away their sins.” A national revival of Jews, a promise that God reveals in this mystery, will be an astounding work of God. God is a God of salvation.

**God is a God of faithfulness—  
He does not rescind His blessings (11:28—29).**

God has promised to save His chosen people, and God is always faithful to His promises. He will fulfill His covenant with Abraham and He will rescue the Jews from spiritual death to spiritual life.

***Currently the Jews are at enmity with God in spite of God’s love for them (11:28).***

The present spiritual condition of the Jews is one of enmity with God. Paul couples Israel’s situation as spiritual enemies of God to the gospel itself and to those who have received the message of the gospel, particularly Gentile believers. The grace-based gospel was a stumbling stone to the Jews (compare Romans 9:30-33). Their rejection of the gospel put them at odds with God and brought about a spiritual renewal among the Gentiles. In contrast to their condition as enemies of God, the Jews are still deeply loved by God. Paul couples God’s love for Israel with His sovereign election and their relationship to the patriarchs. God never stopped

loving His chosen people, even though they put themselves in a position of opposition to Him by rejecting His Son.

***God does not revoke His gifts and His calling (11:29).***

God did not withdraw His love for the Jews; neither did He abandon His promise to bless them. Simply stated, “God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable.” God’s gifts may refer to the privileges that the Jews enjoyed (Romans 9:4-5) and His calling may emphasize their position in God’s redemptive plan. God never rescinds these promises—they are “irrevocable” (a word that couples a negative prefix with a verb for caring or regretting). God never stops caring for His people. He is faithful.

**God is a God of mercy—  
He offers mercy to all who have disobeyed (11:30-32).**

Mercy is at the heart of God and at the heart of the gospel. We need God’s mercy to rescue us from our sins. Mercy goes hand in hand with grace. By His mercy, God withholds the judgment we deserve. By His grace, God grants us the blessings we don’t deserve.

***Disobedient Gentiles received God’s mercy because of the disobedience of the Jews (11:30).***

Once again Paul points out the spiritual contrast between Jews and Gentiles. Prior to the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, Gentiles had been “disobedient” to God, living according to their own standards and designing their own gods. But through the gospel Gentiles obtained God’s mercy, in part because the Jews had disobeyed the gospel (compare Romans 1:5).

***Disobedient Jews will receive God’s mercy because of the mercy received by the Gentiles (11:31).***

Just as the Gentiles had been disobedient to God, now the Jews had become disobedient. Their disobedience put them in the position of needing God’s mercy, just like the Gentiles. Jews and Gentiles alike have always needed God’s mercy, but the Jews’ need for mercy became more evident as a result of their disobedience to the gospel and the Gentiles’ reception of the gospel. Paul includes the word “now” with the Jewish reception of God’s mercy to imply that the Jewish revival is imminent—it could break into redemptive history at any moment. God is eager to bring about the spiritual revival of His chosen people when the time is just right.

***All people groups are confined in disobedience so that God can distribute His mercy to all (11:32).***

All people, Paul concludes, are “bound together” in regard to disobedience. In other words, we’re all in the same boat. Our disobedience to God places us in a position in which we desperately need His mercy. God is ready to show His mercy to all, to Jews and Gentiles alike, based on faith in Jesus Christ. God is a God of mercy.

**God is a God of glory—  
His sovereign ways deserve our reverent praise (11:33-36).**

Romans 11:33-36 constitutes a climactic doxology of praise to God, the sovereign God of Romans 9-11 and, in fact, the righteous God of the entire first eleven chapters of Paul’s epistle. Having delved into the depths of God’s character and work, Paul releases a cry of “glory” to our inscrutable God.

***God is infinitely wise—His ways far surpass our limited comprehension (11:33).***

“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” God is rich in both wisdom and knowledge, and that spiritual wealth is deeper than the human mind can plumb. “How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!” God’s verdicts in regard to His people are inscrutable, beyond our abilities to discover them by searching. God’s ways are likewise untraceable—beyond our greatest abilities to track and discover them. These two words, unsearchable and untraceable, are synonymous and, in the original Greek, begin with a similar sound. Paul is poetic in his description of God’s inscrutable ways. God’s ways far surpass our limited comprehension.

***God is wholly free—He doesn’t depend on us for advice or support (11:34-35).***

“Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?” Paul here quotes Isaiah 40:13 to underscore the thought that God is not dependent on His creation in any way. God is totally independent. He is existentially free. We can’t comprehend His omniscient mind, and He doesn’t need our advice! “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?” Paul draws this thought from Job 41:11 where God states that He is not dependent on or obligated to anyone. No one has given anything to God that puts God in debt. We’re in debt to Him for everything, all we are and all we have. God is wholly free. He doesn’t depend on us for advice or support.

***God is totally sovereign—all glory belongs to Him (11:36).***

“For from him and through him and to him are all things.” God is sovereign over His creation. Everything that exists outside God Himself came from His creative hand (“from him”). He sustains all things by His omnipotent power (“through him”). He is the end, the object of all glory and praise (“to him”). God is above all things. “To him be the glory forever!” God is above all things and He deserves all praise throughout all time and eternity. Such is the nature of the God of the gospel, the sovereign God, the God who came in the person of Jesus Christ to rescue us from our sins. God is faithful to His promises and worthy of our praise. “Amen!”