

**IT'S WORTH REPEATING ONE MORE TIME
ROMANS 11:25-32**

By Pastor John Carlini, D.Mn

M.I. USUALLY KNOWLEDGE PUFFS PEOPLE UP AND MAKES THEM PROUD. HOWEVER, THE MORE WE GET TO KNOW GOD AND THE MORE WE UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPT OF ELECTION, THE MORE HUMBLE WE ARE BEFORE GOD, ... AND THE MORE GRACIOUS WE BECOME TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER.

I. GOD'S FAITHFULNESS (Vs. 25-27)

ONCE WE UNDERSTAND THAT WE HAVE BEEN SAVED NOT BECAUSE OF OUR GOODNESS, BUT RATHER BECAUSE OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS, WE WILL LET GO OF ALL OUR PRIDE AND HUMBLY LOVE GOD.

A. GOD'S PLAN IS MYSTERIOUS (V. 25)

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ONCE WE REALIZE THAT WE ALL RECEIVED SALVATION THE SAME WAY, WE WILL HUMBLY LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

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Here we are at the end of this section on predestination. These 8 verses summarize what chapters 9-11 are about. Throughout the centuries, scholars have debated this topic of predestination. The occasion for the debate is that there seems to be two conflicting views; on one hand, it seems God predestines people and nations, but on the other hand, the Bible equally emphasizes human free will. I have said all along that I don't think I have the intelligence to solve this debate. However, I have read a lot on both sides of the debate and don't find any of them satisfying. I feel that those who emphasize God's sovereignty as He predestines, don't give full importance to the free will of human beings and those who emphasize the free will of human beings, don't give full force to the sovereignty of God.

I have approached these two seemingly contradictory ideas by giving them both the full weight of their assertions, and not trying to reconcile the two. Both are true. God is absolutely sovereign and we are free to make choices.

I have maintained that in all this talk about election and predestination, Paul's intent is to level the playing field between all Christians. We all came to Christ the same way ... by grace through faith. There is no other way to be reconciled with God. It doesn't matter what race we are, what our ethnic background is, it doesn't matter if we are educated or uneducated, rich or poor, and no other distinctions matter as well.

How do we get to that kind of unity of mind and spirit with one another? Humility! Humility is the only characteristic that allows this blended church in Rome, and this blended church here on Devon Avenue in Chicago, to function as a unified body in Christ.

I titled this sermon “It’s worth repeating one more time,” because it seems to me that Paul has hammered home two points over and over again in these first 11 chapters. The first is that none of us are good. It doesn’t matter how religious we are or how many good works we do; none of us are good. We must humbly accept this because unless we do, we cannot receive salvation. Which brings us to Paul’s second point; which is all of us are undeserving of salvation and it is only by grace through faith that we are saved. When we come to God admitting that there is nothing good in us, and we throw ourselves on the mercy of His court, Jesus takes away our sins and we are reconciled with God.

You see, once we realize that, we are then humbled and we can start to love one another without prejudice. Since I have been preaching through Romans, I think I have become aware of how deeply sin affects me. This is what my prayers sound like these days.

“So far today God, I have done all right. I haven’t gossiped, I haven’t lost my temper, I haven’t been grumpy, greedy nasty, or selfish. ... I’m really glad about that. But in a few minutes God, I’m going to need a lot of help ... because I’m just about to get out of bed. Amen.”

Is that your story as well? The more we experience God’s grace in our lives, the more gracious we are with others.

Paul wants us to be informed. He doesn’t want us to be ignorant: **NOW USUALLY, KNOWLEDGE PUFFS PEOPLE UP AND MAKES THEM PROUD. HOWEVER, THE MORE WE GET TO KNOW GOD AND THE MORE WE UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPT OF ELECTION, THE MORE HUMBLE WE ARE BEFORE GOD ... AND THE MORE GRACIOUS WE BECOME TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER.** Like I said before, Paul wants to make sure no group has power over another at the church in Rome. The fact that

God chose us for no good reason hammers home the idea that I am no better and certainly no more deserving than any one else.

I. GOD'S FAITHFULNESS (Vs. 25-27)

ONCE WE UNDERSTAND THAT WE HAVE BEEN SAVED NOT BECAUSE OF OUR GOODNESS, BUT RATHER BECAUSE OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS, WE WILL LET GO OF ALL OUR PRIDE AND HUMBLY LOVE GOD.

As described in verses 25-27, our salvation and our reconciliation with God has everything to do with God's faithfulness: **YOU SEE, ONCE WE UNDERSTAND THAT WE HAVE BEEN SAVED NOT BECAUSE OF OUR GOODNESS, BUT RATHER BECAUSE OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS, WE WILL LET GO OF ALL OUR PRIDE AND HUMBLY LOVE GOD.** That has been the message of Romans so far from chapter 1 on.

In verse 1 the Apostle Paul describes God's plan as mysterious. The very first thing I want to draw our attention to is the connection between pride and ignorance. Paul says I do not want you to be ignorant because I don't want you to be conceited. Actually the literal reading of conceited is "wise in your own eyes." You see, sometimes we sit back and think that we are pretty good and pretty successful. We attribute that to our own hard work and personal sacrifice. We tend to think we are pretty good because we decided to give our lives to Christ and now we do a lot of good works in the church. If you think doing church stuff, giving money, serving on the board, or teaching or any church work guarantees your salvation ... Paul says you are ignorant. We may be able to fool others by doing religious stuff... but we cannot fool God. Jesus can smell a hypocrite a mile a way. Pride, arrogance, conceitedness, prejudice, thinking we are good or wise in our own eyes, makes us ignorant in God's eyes. I don't know about you, but I'd rather look good in God's eyes, rather my own eyes or to others around me. All out humility is connected to true wisdom. I think that's true in our faith journey. The closer we come to God, the more we realize how unholy and unrighteous we actually are. The more we

realize this, the more grateful we become for Jesus' death on the cross on our behalf. Also, we become less judgmental of others.

So Paul's goal in this section is to keep everyone in the church humble. Now you will remember from last week that Paul is talking to the Gentile Christians in the church at Rome. He said that God's chosen people, the Jews, had experienced a hardening of their hearts so that Gentiles would be given the opportunity to be reconciled with God instead of them. Paul also brought up two things about this hardening of Israel; first, it was not total, there was a remnant of Jews who did choose to follow Christ Jesus. And second, the hardening was not permanent; there will be a time when Israel's heart is softened towards Jesus as Messiah. Now here is where the mystery comes in, in the Bible, a mystery is something that was previously hidden or camouflaged, but now made known, God had planned from the beginning to make one family out of faithful Jews and Gentiles. God had planned out salvation for people from every tribe, every tongue, and every nation. God's intention was to redeem people from every nation.

From the time of Abraham, God chose to work through the Hebrew nation. He chose Israel to be His special people. However, they never quite lived up to their calling to be a blessing to all nations. When Jesus came to Israel as their promised Deliverer, they rejected Him. And so, God used that occasion to turn to the other nations of the world. Through the Apostle Paul, God was now offering a personal relationship to people of all other ethnicities besides the Jews. The Gospel message was wide open to anyone who would listen and salvation was available to all.

Since the Church of Rome was rapidly growing primarily with Gentile converts, it was in danger of being hijacked by Gentiles to the exclusion of Jews ... which by the way, happened later on in history. That's why this passage is so relevant for us today. The Christian church has

been and still is anti-Semitic. We need to hear Paul's warning here as if he were talking directly to us as well.

A. GOD'S PLAN IS MYSTERIOUS (V. 25)

First, he says that the Gospel is primarily for the Jews. We are late comers in this whole salvation history saga. Secondly, look at the end of verse 25. This hardening of Israel will come to an end. When? When the full number of Gentiles has come in to salvation! Again, there is a lot of debate over this phrase, some scholars argue for a specific number of predetermined Gentiles who will be saved. Some argue for a time period. I would paraphrase this something like, "Israel will experience this partial and temporary hardening towards Jesus, until this Gentile stage has run its course." In other words, there was a time in salvation history when the Jews were the focus and location of God's saving work. From Abraham to Jesus was approximately 2,000 years. Then there was a stage in salvation history where God shifted his focus to the other nations of the world. This stage from Christ to present is also about 2,000 years. So Paul's point to the Gentiles, to us, is that we are not to become proud or ever look down on the Jews because our stage will run its course as well. In the future, God will again focus on His people, Israel.

B. GOD'S PLAN IS CERTAIN (V. 26)

This brings us to verse 26 where we learn that God's plan is certain. The quotes in verses 26-27 are taken from Isaiah 59. That chapter deals with the future restoration of Israel. Now look carefully at the first phrase in verse 26, "And so, all Israel will be saved, as it is written." Paul is saying that there will come a time in the future when God will come back to finish the job He started with the nation of Israel. It does not mean that God will save every individual Jew just like God does not save every individual Gentile. But the salvation movement will come back and be centered on Israel as an ethnic group scattered throughout the world and as a nation.

Think about it. God started with the Israelites, swung over to pick up Gentiles, and now circling back to pick up the remaining Jews.

There is going to come a time in the future where Israel will be the center of the Gospel movement. The Isaiah passage says that the deliverer will come to Zion. Here Paul says the deliverer will come from Zion. Jesus will come from the Heavenly Zion to the earthly Zion. Salvation comes from the heavenly Jerusalem to the earthly Jerusalem. In the Isaiah passage the redeemer is Jehovah, God Himself. In this passage, Paul identifies Jesus as Jehovah God the redeemer.

We know that Satan blinds the eyes of unbelievers. There will come a time when God steps in and removes the blinders from Israel. They will turn away from their rejection of Jesus and understand how Jesus is the complete fullness of the Hebrew Scriptures and the Hebrew history. There will come a time when Jews as a people will embrace and receive the Gospel.

C. GOD'S PLAN IS SALVATION (V. 27)

Look at verse 27. God's plan is salvation. This was the promise from the beginning. God will take away their sins. In the Isaiah passage God promises to put His Spirit in them and the Spirit will not depart from them. He promises that He will put His words in their mouths and His word will not leave them ... not them, their children... or their children's children. He will be with them forever.

Let's think about the message in this section. God has elected the Jews from the beginning. By grace, God is now working through Gentile election, but this stage in salvation history is drawing to a close. Once again God will pick up His covenant with Israel.

Here are some of the ramifications. First, nobody has anything to be proud of. We are all totally saved because of God's grace. Second, there is urgency for evangelism. Our time is

running out. Our stage in history is drawing to a close. If that is the case, then we should fervently be witnessing to unbelievers. Their window of opportunity to receive salvation may be closing quickly.

But even more than that, we as Christians should be praying for the salvation of Israel. Sometimes I hear people say, “I don’t know what God’s will is.” God’s will is that His chosen people, Israel, come to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. We are to be praying for the day when God once again turns towards Israel.

How can any of us be proud of anything once we realize how bad we are and that we are simply lucky to be chosen by God? I don’t know why God chose me for salvation, I don’t understand it and I certainly don’t deserve it ... but I’m glad He did: **YOU SEE, ONCE WE UNDERSTAND THAT WE HAVE BEEN SAVED NOT BECAUSE OF OUR GOODNESS, BUT RATHER BECAUSE OF GOD’S FAITHFULNESS, WE WILL LET GO OF ALL OUR PRIDE AND HUMBLY LOVE GOD.**

II. GOD’S FAMILY (Vs. 28-32)

ONCE WE REALIZE THAT WE ALL RECEIVED SALVATION THE SAME WAY, WE WILL HUMBLY LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

Humility causes us to love God, but humility also causes us to love one another. In verses 28-32 the Apostle Paul reminds us that we are all part of God’s family: **ONCE WE REALIZE THAT WE ALL RECEIVED SALVATION THE SAME WAY, WE WILL HUMBLY LOVE ONE ANOTHER**, since we all got here the same way, there is nothing really to brag about.

A. OUR SALVATION IS CERTAIN (Vs. 28-29)

In verses 28-29 we gain confidence that our salvation is certain. Look at verse 28. It is written in a form of Hebrew poetry, each part has three components. Talking about the nation of

Israel, Paul says, A. As for the Gospel, B. they are enemies, C. because of you. Now look at the second section A. As for election, B. they are loved, C. because of the Patriarchs. Do you see that? The Gospel is contrasted with Election. In one sense the Jews are both enemies of God but loved by God as well. And finally, the Gospel is now for Gentiles, election is based on the Patriarchs.

In order that we Gentiles could become part of God's family, He used Israel's disobedience and rejection as an occasion to offer salvation to us. So in a sense, God allows that hardening to remain for our benefit. However, God still yearns for a reconciled relationship with His chosen. God made a promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He loved them and nostalgically looks back on that love and on the promises he made to them. He loves Israel because of them. There will again be a time when God picks up with Israel and they become the dominant force in salvation history. They will become the dominant force in the world through which God will defeat evil.

Look at verse 29. God's gifts and His call are irrevocable. Salvation is a gift. Calling is a gift. If God has called us and if we have authentically been saved, then God will never go back on His promise. Like Paul said back in chapter 8; there is nothing in this world or the next that can ever separate us from God's love in Jesus. Our salvation is certain because God is the one who put it into effect.

B. GOD'S SALVATION IS MYSTERIOUS (Vs. 30-31)

But just as certain our salvation is; it's just as mysterious as described in verses 30-31. It is really important to see how Paul totally levels the playing field. He says to the Gentiles, "Remember, at one time you were disobedient to God; that made you enemies of God. But now, only because the Jews stumbled, God extended grace, mercy, and salvation to you." Keep in

mind that meant that the Gentiles had to humbly admit they were nothing. They were immoral, sinful, and alienated from God. The Gospel message was that the only way to get right with God was to believe in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Now Paul points out that Israel as a people will come to salvation the same way. Just like the pre-conversion Gentiles, the Jews were now a nation who disobeyed God and found themselves as enemies of God. However, there will come a time when they too will repent of their sins and find salvation in God. How this will happen is a mystery. Somehow God will remove the blindness from their eyes and they will come to recognize Jesus as their Savior, their Redeemer and their Messiah.

Paul's point is this: All of us were born into this world the same way, physically alive but spiritually dead. We were all alienated from God. We were all God's enemies.

For some strange reason God chose us, He elected us, He predestined us to be saved. I say for some strange reason, because Paul has already informed us that there is no human logic or reason to God's choices. Don't miss the force of this. If we are here this morning saved as believers in Christ, it had nothing to do with our being good, or being wise, or being sincere. We are saved because of God's extravagant love. There is no other explanation.

Now please, think about this. At the church in Rome, as this letter was read, Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians had to look each other in the eyes, and view each other as special gifts from God. God brought them together as family and if God brought them together as family, then it was imperative they get along.

C. GOD'S SALVATION IS CONSISTENT (V. 32)

Which verse 32 emphasizes and that it reminds them God's salvation is consistent. Here Paul feels it is worth repeating yet one more time. Because we are born into to sin, and because of our own personal sin, we are disobedient to God, therefore becoming objects of His wrath.

And likewise, we become objects of His love simply because of His mercy. When we receive Jesus as Lord and Savior, we are transformed from death to life. We all come to Jesus the same way ... by grace through faith. You see: **ONCE WE REALIZE THAT WE ALL RECEIVED SALVATION THE SAME WAY, WE WILL HUMBLY LOVE ONE ANOTHER.** Salvation by grace through faith, have we heard that before? You see, Paul has set the tone for the rest of the letter, which will describe how we are to live in community with one another. The reality is: **USUALLY KNOWLEDGE PUFFS PEOPLE UP AND MAKES THEM PROUD. HOWEVER, THE MORE WE GET TO KNOW GOD AND THE MORE WE UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPT OF ELECTION, THE MORE HUMBLE WE ARE BEFORE GOD, ... AND THE MORE GRACIOUS WE BECOME TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER.** Today we are celebrating communion. Think about it. There are no Italian-Americans here. There are no Japanese, African, or other hyphenated Americans here. There are no poor, middle, or upper class people here. There are no privileged or underprivileged here. Titles, positions, and status mean nothing here. We are all children of God ... and we all got here the same way, by the broken body and shed blood of Jesus. That's one of the meanings of communion. We are family. We are reconciled with God and reconciled with one another. The attitude we are to come here with, and to live with, is humility. We are servants.

The Navigators are well known for their emphasis on having a servant attitude. A businessman once asked Lorne Sanny, president of the Navigators, how he could know when he had a servant attitude. His reply? ... "By how you act when you are treated like one.

That's a real reality check. Isn't it? Are we proud, arrogant, and judgmental ... or are we humble, gracious, loving, authentic Christians?