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Class Notes

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Celebrating the Infinite Depths of God's Plan

Romans 11:25-36

Romans 9-11: Paul is addressing the question of the Jewish nation, why is it that the overwhelming majority of Jews are rejecting Jesus as their Messiah?

Tracing out Paul's argument:

- It causes Paul tremendous sorrow and anguish (9:1-3)
- The Jews have tremendous spiritual advantages (9:4-5)
- It is not as though God's Word has failed! (9:6)
- Sovereign election: not all Israel are Israel (9:6-
 - God has chosen some, rejected the others
 - God's choice is sovereign, not based on works
 - Non-elect Jews are like Ishmael, Esau, and Pharaoh
 - God has mercy on the elect, hardens the rest
 - The only difference is God's sovereign will
 - God creates the reprobate to teach the elect his glories
- The elect are made up of both Jews and Gentiles (9:24-26)
- Israel stumbled over the stumbling stone (Christ) because they were trying to prove their own righteousness by the Law (9:27-33)
- Paul prays earnestly for the Jews, and seeks to evangelize them (10:1, 9-15)
- Two ways: the righteousness of the Law (self works) vs. the righteousness by faith (Christ's works) (10:5-8)
- Salvation is simple: believe that Jesus is Lord and confess him with your mouth, calling on his name (10:9-13)
- Evangelism to both Jews and Gentiles is essential (10:14-15)

- Sadly, most Jews who have heard have not believed; yet faith comes simply by hearing the Word of Christ (10:16-17)
- Excuses removed:
 - “They haven’t heard” ... Yes they have!
 - “They didn’t understand” ... That is no problem for God, because neither did the Gentiles who eventually believed
 - “They weren’t seeking Christ” ... neither were the Gentiles (10:18-20)
- Tragically: God has been patiently holding out his hands to the disobedient Jewish nation for centuries (10:21)
- God has not totally and finally rejected the Jewish nation (11:1-6)
 - Paul’s own conversion is proof...
 - God is doing what he has always done among the Jews, reserving a remnant who will believe in him
 - Like in Elijah’s day... a remnant chosen by grace, not works
- Summary: the elect are saved, the others are hardened (11:7-10)
 - This hardening is a spirit of stupor, blinded eyes, deaf ears
 - This hardening comes in part by their “table” (prosperity)
- Can fallen Israel be recovered?
 - First, God has a purpose in Israel’s stumble... Gentile salvation (11:11)
 - Second, a “how much more argument” ... if Israel’s fall has produced such richness (salvation for the Gentiles), how much greater riches will come by Israel’s restoration?
 - (Verses 13-16) Follows those same two arguments... Israel’s fall produces Gentiles being saved; Israel’s restoration will produce even greater glory for God... likened to “life from the dead”
 - Part of the Jews are holy, so the whole group is holy (i.e. set apart in God’s mind and purposes)
 - SET APART FOR WHAT??
- Warning to Gentile converts: DO NOT BE ARROGANT BUT BE AFRAID (11:17-21)
 - Paul strongly warns Gentile Christians to be humble

- Healthy fear of apostasy... Jews broken off because of unbelief, Gentiles included because of faith
- So... keep trusting in Jesus! Keep walking by faith until you die! And don't boast over fallen Israel
- Final meditation on God's nature... kindness and sternness (11:22-24)
 - Need to meditate on both constantly...
 - Two great themes of theology (the study of God): 1) God as the father of the prodigal son [LOVE]; 2) God is a consuming fire [HOLINESS]
 - Sternness: God will cut off Gentile unbelievers like he has cut off Jewish unbelievers
 - Kindness: anyone truly grafted into the Olive Tree is there by God's mercy and grace; and God can save anyone, anytime

All Israel Will Be Saved!

Romans 11:25-32 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶ And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. ²⁷ And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins." ²⁸ 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, ²⁹ for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. ³⁰ Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, ³¹ 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. ³² For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

Q: What is the significance of the word "mystery" in verse 25? What does that word mean?

Q: What is the mystery Paul reveals here?

Q: Why is Paul so concerned about the Gentiles being "conceited" or "arrogant" (literally "wise from yourself" or "wise in your own eyes")

Q: What does Paul say about Israel in verse 25? What does he say about the Gentiles in that same verse? What does verse 25 imply about the era of Gentile salvation?

Q: What does Paul say about Israel in verse 26? What is the significance of that statement, "All Israel will be saved?"

Q: Does verse 26 mean no Jews will ever be condemned? How does Paul's "great sorrow and unceasing anguish" in 9:2 prove that individual Jews can and will be eternally condemned?

Q: Does "all Israel will be saved" refer only to the elect or to the ethnic descendants of Israel? (See Romans 9:6, "Not all who are descended from Israel are Israel" for the two possible uses of the word "Israel"). How is Paul using the word "Israel" in verses 25-26?

Q: What verse does Paul use to support his amazing statement, "All Israel will be saved"? What does "the deliverer" do? What is "ungodliness"?

Q: How does Zechariah 12:10 help support Paul's statement here:

Zechariah 12:10 And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they

have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.

- Q: If verse 26 means that, in the future, God will pour out the Holy Spirit on ethnic Israel, causing a huge majority of them (if not every single one of them) to turn in repentance and faith to Jesus, how would that be a stunning and dramatic display of the sovereign grace and glory of God? How would it be a fitting end to the tremendous saga of God and the Jews?
- Q: How does Paul present the future salvation of Israel as a display of God's sovereign grace?
- Q: How does verse 27 support this amazing work?
- Q: What purpose does verse 28 serve in the train of Paul's thought? What concern does verse 28 address? Why is Paul so concerned that Gentile Christians see ethnic Israel properly?
- Q: What does verse 29 mean?
- Q: How do verses 30-32 give insight into one of God's many purposes in human salvation?
- Q: How does Paul argue that God uses human rebellion to serve his ultimate purpose?
- Q: What is stunning about verse 32? What does God do to all people? God seems to lock people in or consign them or bind them over to disobedience... how do we understand that concept?
- Q: Verse 32: How does God save all sinners in such a way that they will give God's sovereign grace and mercy full credit?

Doxology: Oh, the Depth of the Wisdom of God!

Romans 11:33-36 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! ³⁴ "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" ³⁵ "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" ³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

Charles Spurgeon: "I will affirm that there is no man living who can preach from this text a sermon worthy of it. Nay, that among all the sacred orators and the eloquent pleaders for God, there did never live and never will live a man capable of reaching the height of the great argument contained in these few simple words. I utterly despair of success, and therefore will not make an attempt to work out the infinite glory of this sentence. Our great God alone can expound this verse, for he only knows Himself, and He only can worthily set forth His own perfections."

Q: Why do you think Paul stops here to praise God as he does?

Q: What is the link between verse 32 and verse 33? Of do you think Paul's mind is going back to all that he's written about the Jews since chapter 9? Or do you think he is going all the way back to everything he's written so far in Romans 1-11?

Q: What function does the word "Oh" have in verse 33? Interestingly, the Greek letter is Omega... the final letter in the Greek alphabet. When Jesus says "I am the Alpha and the Omega", he means the beginning and the end. And the end of all things is WONDER and AMAZEMENT at God! Forever and ever!

Q: What does Paul celebrate about God in these verses?

Q: What does the word "depth" imply about God's wisdom and knowledge? When we say something is very deep, what do we mean?

Q: What is the significance of the word "riches" in verse 33? How do you see riches in God's wisdom?

Q: What does it mean that God's judgments are "unsearchable?" Or that his "paths are beyond tracing out?" [ESV: "inscrutable"; KJV: "past finding out"] What does this teach us about the mind and purposes of God?

Q: What does Paul mean when he says, "Who has known the mind of the Lord?" Or "Who has been his counselor?" What is the significance of the fact that God accepts no counsel from any created being; no creature can ever teach God anything or give him any needed advice?

Q: How does this point to an eternity of learning the mind and purposes of God in heaven?

Psalm 111:2-4 Great are the works of the LORD; they are studied by all who delight in them. ³ Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever. ⁴ He has caused his wonders to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and compassionate.

Q: What is the significance of Paul's question, "Who has ever given to God that God should repay him?" Why is it important to know that everything in the universe already belongs to God and we cannot give him anything that is not already his? Why is it also important to understand that God will never owe any creature anything, including reward, or an explanation. If God gives reward or explanation, it's only because he chooses to.

Q: Unfold the final statement... "For from him, and through him, and to him are all things. To him be glory forever and ever. What does each part teach you? "From him"? "Through him"? "To him"? "All things"?

Q: What does it mean, "To him be the glory forever?"