

Romans 11:28-32 From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of *God's* choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.

Paul, in verses 28-32, concludes his exhortation to the church in Rome concerning Israel. Based on context, the “they” in these verses is National Israel; the “you” in these verses refers to the non-Israeli believers.

****We must be careful not to get confused in Romans 9-11 about the discussion of the Gentile church and the Jewish church. ****This section is about Israel and the mercy that God has upon the nations in regard to His administration. The church is made up of individual believers from both Israel and other nations. ****Again, the olive tree parable is not about the church but how God has used Israel and is now permitting other nations to participate. ****The warnings in chapter 11 are to the unit of the nations. We must be careful not to mingle individual identity in Christ with the national identity of Israel and the national identity of Gentile believers.

This does not sum up the eschatological exclamation of 25-27, but is a conclusion of this entire section. We will see that verses 33-36 are actually a doxological prayer after the conclusion of Paul’s Israelology.

As is our custom, we will evaluate the passage to ensure we understand what it says (and does not say). Then we will draw from what it says principles to understand God more clearly.

Beginning in verse 28, we see that Paul begins with “From the standpoint of the gospel....” In both parts of verse 28, “from the standpoint of” is the preposition “**κατά** *kata*.” In this context, it denotes relationship, with respect to, regarding. The preposition is used to discuss two different perspectives. Also there is a “men...de” construction that works with the “*kata*.”

The first perspective is “the gospel.” There is a definite article with “**εὐαγγέλιον** *euangelion* (*you-ahn-ghehl-ee-on*)” which means simply “good report, good news, or good announcement.” The definite article is an important distinction, as we have seen. The gospel (as a noun) has become distinctive among Paul’s writings.

- New Testament has 76 uses; Pauline Epistles 60 uses
- Not used by John except for one reference in Revelation 14:6
- The noun is only used twice in Acts (verb 15x) (15:7)
- The gospel – refers to the entire plan of God (redemption, provision, glory)
- In Romans 9-11 (noun 2x – verb 1x) Romans 10:15-16

From the perspective of the gospel, “they are enemies.” In Greek, this is simply an adjective, “**ἐχθρός** *echthros* (*ehkh-thrahs*).” This adjective means hostile, hated, someone who is at enmity against another, opposing, actively hostile toward an agenda. In Romans, this word is used only three times. The first time (5:10) indicates that we were enemies of God, and while we were enemies (actively hostile to the plan, purpose, love and message of God), Christ died for us. In this text, Paul identifies Israel as an enemy, an enemy of the gospel because of you. The last reference is 12:18-21. I do not think it is appropriate to place “Israel” into verse 20, but it does give us a principle to put back into 11:28-32. Principle: The same way God treated us while enemies, we are to treat those who are our enemies.

The next phrase, “enemies for your sake,” sounds weird. The preposition “**διὰ** *dia*” is used with an accusative. This means “on account of.” So the literal translation of verse 28a is “On one hand, in regard to the gospel, enemies on account of you.”

- No verbs – axiom
- They are enemies of the gospel because of the acceptance the gospel has had among the nations
 - Acts 13:44-45
 - Acts 14:1-7
 - Acts 17:1-5
 - It is clear that unbelieving Israel is hostile toward the gospel because of jealousy.

Now in Romans 11:28, Paul contrasts this enemy status. “On the other hand, in regard to *God’s choice*.” Notice how God is in italics, this shows interpretative value. It is not necessarily wrong, but let us be exact. This is “the selection.” The noun is “**ἐκλογή** *eklogē*” and is a cognate of the verb “**ἐκλέγω** *eklegō*” and “**ἐκλεκτός** *eklektos*.” All of these words have a base understanding of “called out from,” to select, to choose. Let us not read into this any more than what is being said. Israel has been called out for the purpose of God to administer His glory. They are under discipline currently but Israel will be restored and fulfill their purpose. From the purpose established in Romans 9:4-5, they are beloved.

In contrast to enemies, Paul states that they are “**ἀγαπητός** *agapētos* (*ah-ghah-pay-tahs*),” which is “beloved.” This also is an adjective. Adjectives are descriptive; when used substantively, they speak to the character or the true nature of the thing, person, or group. These adjectives are plural. Israel is not to be considered an enemy; Israel is an enemy. Israel is not to be considered beloved; Israel is beloved. This is the dichotomy of present day Israel. Israel is a beloved enemy.

God, through Paul, is not instructing here. This is informing the reader the nature of the situation. God is the one who is making this demarcation, not Paul. This is Israel’s current standing as a nation in God’s eyes.

“On account of the fathers” refers to the fact that if Israel were to stand on its merits, it would have ceased to exist. But because of the promises made in Romans 9:6-13 to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, then to David, Israel will remain forever.

The next verse, 11:29, must be understood in its context, but the principle can be applied greatly. This, again, is an axiom; there are no verbs. This is a truth that God is proclaiming through the writings of Paul. All of the major translations place “irrevocable” at the end, in normal English sentence order. However, the LCV is “For, irrevocable the gifts and the calling of God.”

We well understand the fact that Israel is beloved because it plainly states that what God has promised her will never be cancelled, altered, or given to another. But more than that, “irrevocable” is “ἀμεταμέλητος *ametamelētos* (*ah-meh-tah-meh'-lay-tahs*)” and literally means “not to regret, not to be sorry, not to feel remorse.” As an adjective, this stands in relation to the gifts and the calling. Therefore, not only will God fulfill His promises, the gifts and the calling are promises that God will never regret giving to Israel.

Last hour, we saw how God sees Israel as a beloved enemy. Now obviously, if Paul is informing the readers of a truth, the expectation is that they will adopt the same mental attitude. Also, in the previous section, the command was given not to think of Israel as less than who they are. Israel is the prodigal son of God, the wayward child.

The believing portion of the nations is given the opportunity to serve in the administration of God, but Israel has been and will eventually again be the chosen vessel that God will use in the millennial and eternal programs.

Paul, to be clear, in verses 28-29, states that not only will God fulfill all of the promises to Israel, God does not regret having given them to her. This may cause a sense of bewilderment to the readers, both the original audience and the current one. It certainly looks like God regrets giving those promises. From our perspective, knowing that God is omniscient, why would He have picked a nation that is so obviously difficult, rebellious, and stubbornly unbelieving. Would God not have done better by choosing some other nation. What Paul is going to present next is that Israel and the believers have much in common.

Verses 30-32 will demonstrate that all have been unbelieving. There are four uses of “disobedient,” two nouns and two verbs. In this family, there are three cognates “ἀπειθέω *apeitheō* (verb),” “ἀπειθεια *apeitheia* (noun),” and “ἀπειθής *apeithēs* (adjective).” All three are rooted in the verb “πείθω *peithō* (*pay-thoh*)” which means to convince, persuade. This root verb is used in Romans 8:38; 14:14; 15:14.

The alpha negative of the word does not change the meaning of the root word. So the definition of this family of words is primarily “not persuaded, unconvinced, or unbelieving.” The noun is only used in Romans in these three verses. For those who recognize this word study, you may be asking yourselves, “Why is Will harping on this again?” The answer lies in the fact that translators are bent on demonstrating that the primary sin in the Bible is not doing what God says. But the main problem in the Bible is not believing what God has said, not being persuaded that what God has said is true, not being convinced that God has a good purpose in His promises or instructions.

Hebrews 3:7-19 – Exodus 23:20-31 – Numbers 13:25-14:10

Being obstinate to what is believed is a problem; willfully disobeying what you know to be true is a sin of the flesh and has its consequences. But the greater sin is the sin of unbelief, the sin of not believing God in His promises, not being persuaded by all that you have read in the Word of God.

Our circumstances often take our thoughts from God and place them on ourselves. The pains of this world, losses, illnesses, frustrations, and persecutions have a tremendous impact on us. That is why we must flood our minds with the Word of God so when a circumstance hits, and it will, we will be able to say what Paul did in 8:35-39.

Back to our text — In our evaluation of God’s stance on Israel, we must understand that God’s plan and purpose are not based upon the strength, ability, or fidelity of man. That is why God will never regret what He promised to Israel. Furthermore, we are no better than Israel.

In verse 30, we have the corrected translation of “For just as you were unbelieving in God, but now you have been shown mercy because of their unbelief.”

Mercy is “**ἐλεέω** *eleeō* (*eh-leh-eh-oh*),” which means to have compassion or to be shown pity. This is normally translated “mercy.” In Romans, we have seen that the mercy of God is not in relation to salvation but in His giving the honor of functioning in His administration. Therefore, we were once unbelieving but now we have the honor of being involved in the organization that is the light to the world by means of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.

This next verse needs a full translation overhaul. LCV – “So also these now were disbelieving to the mercy of yours, so that they also would be shown mercy.” This goes back to Romans 10:11-14. What 11:31 is saying is that Israel was not believing the ministry that was given to the believers among the nations, but having seen

the ministry, it is persuading some so that they would be added back into the mercy, back into the administration of God under this new dispensation.

Verse 32 – “Shut up” is not to remain quiet. The word is “**συγκλείω** *sunkleiō* (*soon-khlay-oh*)” and means to lock, shut, close. Luke 5:6 – the fish were enclosed in the nets. When used figuratively, it means that a conclusion has been made, a matter is closed. This then should be understood as God has concluded that all are unbelieving.

The purpose for this conclusion is “so that” all would be shown mercy. “The Gentiles who were unbelieving have now been given this privilege, the Jews who were unbelieving also have been given this privilege.” God in His plan and purpose demonstrates that “He will have mercy upon whom He has mercy.” The fact that we (non-Israel) or Israel have anything to do with the administration of God’s truth is inconceivable in relation to the rationality of Man.

Romans 11:33-36 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen.

Paul concludes with this glory to God, doxology. We can spend a lifetime searching God, reading His word, obtaining the mind of Christ and never fully grasp what He has done for Israel, for us, for the saved and the unsaved. God is truly a God whose thoughts are too great for us to comprehend.