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Series: Romans: The Just Shall Live by Faith
Message: Our Merciful God

Transcribed Message
May 15, 2022
Romans 11:28-32

According to some of the latest world population figures there are about 15 1/2 million Jews. that represents about 0.19% of the world population that's getting closer to 8 billion. 0.19% of the world population identifies as Jewish. 51% of those people live in the United States. 30% live in Israel. France and Canada and Russia have about 3%. United Kingdom Germany Ukraine Argentina Brazil have between one and 2%. and so when you look at those numbers you can't help but ask yourself how is it that this little tiny country how is it that this people group that represents 0.19% of the world's population, how is it that world history in many respects and even current events so often intersect through this land and through this people? well if you know your Bible you know the answer is in your Bible. from Genesis all the way to revelation God is in effect giving us the answer to that question how it is that 0.19% of the people group in a world of almost 8 billion people could be so impactful and so important. I believe in Romans nine through 11 Paul especially opens up our understanding to what this looks like and what this means because Israel is at the center of all of these chapters 9,10 and 11. the center of human history as Paul has described it and shown it to us. this morning we come to Romans 11:28 to 32 and this is really the final summary of Chapter 11 for sure but really chapters 9,10 11. This is kind of the wrapup of all of those chapters. and then as you know and we'll see he breaks into this great doxology at the end of the chapter. so this morning God is the Lord of history and he can use and He does use both disobedience and obedience to fully display His grace his mercy and his truth. quick review. we considered the question: what is the present state of Israel? what is the present condition if you will of Israel? and if we answer in Pauline language we have to say it is one of spiritual blindness. It is one of spiritual blindness. they literally cannot see. They've been broken off in large measure from the tree. there's a little remnant all through history. there's been a little remnant that has believed. but the vast

majority of the Jewish people down through history have remained in unbelief and have refused to believe the gospel. but then when we look to the future and the future promise to Israel, those amazing verses that we looked at last week. we unfolded that mystery that Paul talked about, this mystery that yet not been revealed that Paul made known to us, that there was going to be this great grafting back into the tree. there was going to be a great revival among the people of God. I believe there is going to be at a point in time when the world is going to sit up and take notice about what God is doing among his people. I have a pretty good idea (I hope I'm not here for it) but I have a pretty good idea that if the talking heads are still talking on cable news their heads are going to be exploding with what God is doing among the Jewish people. They'll have somebody on every night talking about what is going on among the Jewish people and their turning to Jesus as their Messiah. that's the great promise that we've unfolded here in these verses. so this morning. the glorious goal of history. the glorious goal of history. understand that history is linear. history is going somewhere. from the beginning of God's creative work to the endpoint of the end of Revelation history is linear. it's moving towards a God appointed goal. it's moving towards this goal of history that God has designed from the very beginning. it's not wandering around. It is not going in circles. it's not meaningless. It is not purposeless. it's absolutely purposeful meaningful and God as the Lord of history is showing that to us. in Psalm 67 and verse four: let the nations be glad and sing for joy for you God you judge the peoples with equity and you God you guide the nations upon the earth." that's what God is doing. He's showing to us this glorious goal of history and we get to see it. we get to look at it. and what I want you to see first of all is the faithfulness of God. God is faithful to his promises. when you think about the glorious goal of history, and the foundation under that statement is the faithfulness of God. Paul says in verse 28 that there are only two possibilities. look at that 28th verse again. when you look at that I'm going to fill in the blanks as to who he's referencing. when we read that as regards the gospel they. that is the Jews. they are your enemies for your sake. That's the Gentiles. They're enemies for your sake Gentiles. but as regards elections they the Jews are beloved for the sake of their forefathers Abraham Isaac and Jacob. that gives us a little bit of an overview, a little bit of a picture of this 28th verse. in that verse Paul says there's only two possibilities. and

the first possibility that he sets forward is that in fact they are enemies of God. They're an enemy of God. now clearly as we've said before Paul wasn't up on the PC talk. he wasn't politically correct in a lot of things that he said. God's truth is often not politically correct. and yet here it is Paul telling us the first possibility of these two possibilities is that they are an enemy of God. It is not simply that they are against God. not simply that they are hostile to God. but understand that what this is saying it is saying that God is against them. God is against them. they are as we have seen under God's judgment. they have rejected their Messiah. they crucified him on the cross and are under God's judgment. Jesus said to the leaders of his day in John eight verse 42 if God were your father you would love me. if God were your father you would love me. what is He insinuating? What is He saying? God is not your father and therefore you don't love me because you are in fact an enemy of God. God has opposed you. in this context as we noted in that verse Paul is talking to the Jews. we know everyone in the world all of humanity is in only one of two categories. so it applies to everybody. in this context he is speaking specifically of the Jewish people. but the Bible makes it abundantly clear there are two categories of people in the world today. there are those that are saved and there are those that are lost. there is no third category. you're either an enemy of God or you're a friend of God. James says you can't possibly be a friend of the world and a friend of God. they are diametrically opposed to each other. and that's what Paul emphasizes here. someone might very easily object to that and say I'm not an enemy of God. No. no way am I going to concede that. I'm not an enemy of God. Colossians chapter 1 verse 21. "and you who were once alienated and hostile in mind." what does it mean to be alienated and hostile in mind? It is to be an enemy of God. You're hostile to spiritual things. You are hostile to the gospel. "you who were once alienated and hostile in mind doing evil deeds he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him." You see, my friends, that's the good news. the good news is that heaven is going to be filled with people who at one time were the enemy of God because that was me and that's you. you come to faith in Christ, you look back and you realize you were hostile to those spiritual things. now if you are saved at age four that might look a little bit different but the fact of the matter is you're born into this world separated from God by sin. so our

stories are all different but we are all at one point the enemy of God. now notice the second thing that he said. this is fascinating because as he talks to the Jewish people and he said you are the enemy of God and God is opposed to you. now what does he say? you are the beloved of God. Look at that last part of verse 28: "but." one of our favorite words in Bible study. this adversative that says to us there's something changed. something is different. something new is being introduced. "but as regards election they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers." enemies yet beloved. beloved enemies. beloved by God's choice. beloved by God's selection. beloved by God's election. Israel is in view. the Jews are in view. ethnic Israel is in view. look back at that 11th chapter the way that Paul began that chapter. "I ask then has God rejected his people? by no means for I myself am an Israelite a descendent of Abraham a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. do you not know what the Scriptures say of Elijah how he appeals to God against Israel." Israel is God's chosen people. they are on the one hand the enemies of God because of their unbelief, but they are yet beloved because of their election their selection. that phrase by the way beloved enemies is simply a picture of the human condition. it's a picture of the human condition and of the human experience. beloved enemy. in every one of our lives people we love dearly hurt us deeply at times. beloved enemy. There isn't a marriage represented here that both would not be able to say we have both hurt each other deeply. parents wound and hurt their children at times. children wound and hurt their parents at times. it happens among friends. It happens among work colleagues. this is a picture of beloved enemy. I want you to see you this. Israel is not rejected ultimately by God. that's where that important adversative comes in. but now they have received mercy. God still has a future in mind. he still has a plan in mind. he has not canceled Israel. He has not canceled the Jewish people. His promises still stand. He says they stand for the sake of their forefathers. He does not mean by that that Abraham and Isaac and Jacob were such wonderful guys and they were so good... no, he's saying because of God's promises to Abraham Isaac and Jacob these things will stand. It's all on the faithfulness of God. I came across a great blog just yesterday. it was talking about this very thing, about why you never give up on somebody that you love. this guy comes up with seven reasons why you never give up

on somebody you love. First, because God is still drawing people to himself. Secondly, the enemy wants you to give up. Anytime the enemy wants you to give up you better pay attention and probably go in the exact opposite direction. Third, God loves your loved one more than you do. number four, God's calendar and clock are not the same as ours but they are always right on time. number five God sometimes takes his time responding to us because he wants to do something in us while we're waiting praying. number six God may well be working in your loved one even though you don't see it. we don't always see what God is doing so we don't give up. number seven some of us can speak of God's amazing grace in our lives and in the lives of our loved ones. That is why we don't cancel in that way. Beloved enemies is the way God characterizes this relationship with his people. I want to take just a minute and step out of Romans 11 and simply talk briefly about this matter of Israel and the Jewish people and what's happening today and all of the things related to the land and how is it that were supposed to view Israel today in light of this 28th verse and in light of what we looked at last week in verse 26. all Israel will be saved. so just note here five principles in an issue that is at times complicated and at times is the geopolitical center of our world. right first of all we know that Israel is God's chosen people. that the Scriptures make abundantly plain. there's no discussion no argument no issue there. secondly the land was promised Abraham and his descendents. when God made the unconditional covenant with Abraham He said He would do three things for him. God would give him land and seed and a blessing. the land that God promised to Israel as a nation is right there in that little slice of the Middle East. God gives a very clear description of what the borders of this country would even be. It was a part of God's promise that they would be the recipients of this land. thirdly God's promises are made to believing Israel not to Israel in rebellion. this is the key point of what is happening today. Israel is back in the land yes they are. but they're back in the land in unbelief. They're not returning to the land in unbelief. in fact we probably would be shocked to realize how secular the state of Israel is. you can read some great historical and current books just about that. for the vast majority of Jews living in Israel there is very little regard to the Old Testament. There is very little regard at times on the part of the average Israeli with regard to even archaeological discoveries. they're back in the land in unbelief. now they're back in the

land in unbelief. It is often asked could they be forced out of that land again and then return again in the fulfillment of prophecy? It is remotely possible. I doubt that's going to happen. but notice number four. the secular state of Israel today cannot claim God's blessings. They don't want to but they can't. they're there in unbelief. they can't lay hold of the Abrahamic promises and say God this is what you've promised us and therefore were acting on it. No, their hearts are in rebellion against God. and so what does that mean in a practical way? one of the things it means is we need to be careful in terms of what we see happening in that part of the world. we support Israel of course. They're God's chosen people. but we can't adopt the attitude that whatever Israel does is right and whatever Israel does what we have to support it no matter. They're to operate like any other nation under God. they're to operate out of a sense of justice and righteousness. They're to treat their citizenry and others in that way. and then finally Romans 11. it does promise that Israel is going to be grafted back in when they accept Jesus as the true Messiah. and then the blessings of God will flow into the life in the nation of Israel in a way that they cannot imagine. so first thing Paul said there are two possibilities. second thing with regard to the faithfulness of God. there's only one explanation. look at verse 29. "for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." the word irrevocable by the way is at the beginning of this verse. so if you were to look at the Greek text the very first word of verse 29 is the word irrevocable. and so it literally says irrevocable are the gifts and calling of God. Paul wants to emphasize this matter of there being irrevocable. that is they're unalterable, unchangeable, unbreakable. That is what he is saying to us here and it's all based on the faithfulness of God. and it's all based on the character of God. It is based on the immutability of God. he is God and he does not change. so irrevocable are the gifts and calling of God. What is the practical outworking of that statement? a very short verse but powerful in its application. what does that mean? Irrevocable are the gifts and calling of God. it absolutely says to us God is to be trusted. God can be trusted. whatever is going on in your life in your world in your circumstance God can be trusted. that is the promise in light of all of Scripture. and just think in terms of Paul saying this to the Jewish people. think of their quick review of Old Testament history and what that meant. irrevocable are the gifts and calling of God. God called Abraham and Isaac and Jacob – the patriarchs. They're the

founding guys. They are the forerunners. they were far from perfect. they were failed and frail men. they made mistakes along the way repeatedly. and yet irrevocable were the gifts and calling of God. God is faithful. God raises up a great man like Moses. a man incredibly gifted and given an unbelievable assignment. Just go on out there and lead a few million people through the wilderness for 40 years and see what that feels like. Moses as gifted as he was, as amazing as he was, was a failed man just like you and I. he failed God. he made mistakes along the way. God was faithful. David the greatest of all Israel kings. we don't need to rehearse the story. you know it well. God was faithful to David in the midst of all his brokenness. and you look at the 20 kings of the kingdom of Israel the northern kingdom. all 20 of them are described in the Bible as being evil. Irrevocable are the gifts and calling of God. you look at the 20 kings of the southern tribe of Judah. Of 20 kings 14 of were evil. Irrevocable are the gifts and calling of God. this is one of the most comforting verses in the Bible honestly. Irrevocable are God's gifts and calling. in light of our own failings in light of our own sin in light of our own shortcomings our own inconsistencies God's promises are yes and Amen to us in Christ Jesus. now look at something to consider that Paul mentions then secondly. there is no nation on earth that has been given more gifts than the Jewish people. the first thing that we notice for the gifts is it is irrevocable. and when we read of the gifts it's the word charisma, it's the word grace gift same expression that is used in first Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. he's talking about gifts that God gives out of his grace. when we read that in Romans 11 where do we automatically go? We automatically go to chapter 9 verses 4 and 5. Paul rehearses in those two verses all the promises that God made. after all it was through the Jewish people that we not only have the word and that we have the Savior. Paul recounts all the gifts that God has given to his people. They're irrevocable gifts. we talk often at covenant about our position in Christ. we've even published. you can go to the church app and go to the resource page and you can click on 36 things that happened to you at the moment of salvation. and you can read through every one of those 36 things and say irrevocable is God's promise to me in that. Irrevocable. God's never taking one of them away from you. That is your standing in Christ. the second thing he says no nation has received a higher calling. no nation has received a higher calling. I just think of what Paul said at the end of that

eighth chapter beginning at verse 28: “and we know that for those who love God all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose for those whom He foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and those whom he predestined he called and those whom he called he justified and those whom he justified He glorified.” the gifts and calling of God. God's promise was to change the heart of Israel from a heart of stone and to put within them a heart of flesh. listen to Ezekiel 36 verse 26: “and I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh and I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.” That was looking to the future. that was the promise of the new covenant. my friend, irrevocable are the gifts and calling of God. now that's the faithfulness of God. Paul illustrates this for us. so secondly God illustrates this truth in verses 30 and 31. I want to read those two verses and I just want to make some comments and observations about what's going on in these verses. verse 30: “for just as you Gentiles were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience.” verse 31 “so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy.” two themes come forward in these two verses. the first one is underscored with that word disobedience. you count the number of times and it was four times in those two verses. Paul talked about disobedience. the word itself means unpersuadable. Unpersuadable. you refuse to believe is the essence of that word. then on the other hand you have a counter theme. It is the word mercy. so we have disobedience four times. we have mercy four times. this picture that God gives to us as He illustrates this truth is one of the great words in the Bible is this word mercy. it has been said that we receive grace because we're guilty. we receive mercy because we're miserable. Grace is for the guilty. mercy is for the miserable. and we qualify for both. we qualify for both. we qualify for grace and we qualify for mercy. and grace is God giving us what we do not deserve. I don't deserve eternal life. I don't deserve forgiveness. I deserve eternal punishment. I deserve to remain in my sin. God gives me grace. He gives me what I don't deserve. but he goes beyond that because he also pours out his mercy. and his mercy is God withholding

what I do deserve. I do deserve eternal separation. That is what I deserve. but God withholds that and so we have grace and we have mercy. Ephesians chapter 2 in verses four and five, remember Paul talks about the riches of God's mercy. just think about that. the riches of God's mercy. 1 Peter chapter 1 verse three Peter talks about the greatness of God's mercy. so it's almost as if the writers of Scripture can't come up with enough descriptives. they can't just say mercy. They have to talk about the riches of God's mercy. they talk about the greatness of God's mercy because that's how it is flowed into our life. and as I said before all of this in these summary verses are going to lead Paul into this greatest (can you say greatest) set of verses in Romans in Romans 11:33 to 36. this doxology of praise is unlike anything else almost in Scripture. it's going to be amazing. two other quick observations about these verses. notice what Paul doesn't say. Paul doesn't say you were disobedient but you've become obedient. you were disobedient but I'm so thankful that you've become obedient. He says stuff like that other places but he does not say that here. he says in fact you were disobedient but now you have received mercy. why do you suppose he doesn't say you were disobedient you were walking away from God but now you're obedient and are walking with God. I don't know for sure but I almost wonder if it isn't because in this context in which he's dealing with grace and mercy that he doesn't want to leave any room at all for me saying yeah but now I'm walking in obedience. He didn't want to take any ground from the grace and mercy of God. there's no human effort in this Paul might say. it is a divine work of grace. and then notice the other part of that. disobedience does not surprise God. did you notice that in verse 31. "so they too have now been disobedient in order to pass by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy." in order that. what does "in order that" mean? in order that is a purpose clause. in order that is introducing a thought of what God's purpose is in all of this. and if you're like me and like most people we've all struggled at times with this whole matter of sin and evil in our world. we rightly ponder and wonder how is it that God has allowed for sin and evil in the world in which we live. we want to know where did it come from. We want to know how did it get here. we want to know why did God even allow it. while I think there are some helpful answers to those questions we need to make peace with the fact that God simply has chosen not to tell us. He has not answered that. to me it remains shrouded

in the mystery of God's sovereignty. he tells us two things about that doesn't he. tells us that he is not the author of sin. and he tells us that he even uses sin for good. so he doesn't answer every question that we might have about that. but he does say he is not the author of sin and in his amazing providence he brings good out of it. and that's where we close. with God's glorious purpose in verse 32. "for God has consigned all to disobedience that he may have mercy on all." notice how does this 32nd verse begin? with the word for. We've seen that now three times. these are verses of explanation I think rightly. verse 32 is stepping in and it is explaining verse 30 and 31. it begins with this sense of explanation about what he just said. and he wants us to see first of all an important distinction at the beginning of verse 32. for God has consigned all to disobedience. all people have been disobedient. That is the minimum of what Paul is saying. all people have been disobedient. but here's where we have to press in to. and I went to pay attention and to do good Bible study interpretation because what word now begs for definition. It is that little word all again. remember we saw that last week. we don't read our Bible and see the word all and just automatically make a conclusion about what that word means. we have to discover the context in which that is used. I believe Paul is saying all have been disobedient without distinction. What do I mean by that? all have been disobedient without distinction. in this context he is talking about the Jews and the Gentiles. and I think he is saying all Jews and all Gentiles without distinction have been disobedient. it might be like he would say all free people all enslaved people all men all women all Jews all Gentiles have been disobedient all without distinction. And you say, wait a minute. doesn't the Bible teach that all people without exception have been disobedient. Yes, it does. Paul himself in Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. there the word all means all without exception. here he is saying all without distinction. all people -- Jews Gentiles slave free men and women -- have been consigned to disobedience. that word means to be closed up. it means to be imprisoned. that's what sin does. so where do you go now in Romans to connect with that verse. you go back to Romans one. when God says I have given them over. I have consigned them. they are frankly imprisoned by their sinful choices. that's what sin does. sin imprisons. we see it every day in our lost and dying world. How tragic yesterday in Buffalo New York in a hateful evil act of violence for a

man to take the lives of 10 other innocent people. that is just evil. That is wrong. but that's humanity consigned imprisoned in sin. frankly I say this somewhat ... no, I just say it. I think the United States Congress this week came very very close, they came one vote close to putting into law evil in that particular bill called the women's health protection act. It was literally an attempt on the part of Congress to codify evil. if you don't know what's in that bill you need to read that Bill. It is very much reflective of what the mayor of New York City said yesterday as he marched for abortion and he said a woman should have the right to abort her baby the day before it is born. and that law that we came within one vote of having passed and most certainly signed by our president would've done that very same thing. there is no distinction in that regard. without distinction we are consigned to disobedience. very quickly notice the end of that 32nd verse that he may have mercy on all. Another all. now that he may have mercy on all. this is another important distinction that we need to make. now the second all is also an all without distinction. he will save all. both groups. he will save both Jews and he will save both Gentile. He will save them all. it is not all without exception. what is all without exception. all without exception is universalism. the Bible doesn't teach that. Paul made that abundantly clear in Romans 1 to 3. my friends, again this morning, step back and rejoice in the fact that God is Lord of history in such a way that he uses both disobedience and obedience to fully display his grace and mercy and truth. What do we take away? our salvation is based on God's mercy not on our merit. that puts an end to all boasting in oneself. and we gladly boast in the Lord. we join with Jeremiah in chapter 9 and verse 23 let not the wise men boast in his wisdom let not the mighty men boast in his might let not the rich man boast in his riches but let him who boasts boast in this that he understands and knows me that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love justice and righteousness in the earth for in these things I delight declares the Lord." my friend if you're here this morning and you're trying by human effort and human merit and good works to get to heaven please stop. that is a failed effort. you will never achieve 100% righteousness. and that's what God requires. and that's found only in his son Jesus. Cast yourself on the grace of God on the mercy of God and believe that what Jesus did on the cross was enough and was all that needed to be done. and this morning right where you're sitting right where you're listening believe on the Lord Jesus Christ alone

for your salvation and you will be saved. Let's pray. Father, God of grace and God of mercy, God who has gifted us and given us so many great and precious promises, God whose gifts and calling on our lives are irrevocable. Lord God, call us to be people who rejoice in your mercy and your grace. Lord, open hearts this morning to this glorious gospel. we pray in Jesus's name, amen.