

Romans Part 29 (11:1-8)
Tuesday Night Bible Study, January 15, 2007

--11:1a: "I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not!"

--Paul continues his pattern of rhetorical statements... in answer to those who would interpret Paul's teaching about unbelief in Israel and God's plan to reach Gentiles to mean that God had abandoned Israel, Paul exclaims "certainly not!"

--*me genoito* (translated "certainly not!") is the strongest negative in Greek.

--Paul uses the same phrase in Romans 6:15: "What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!"

--God will not cast away Israel because He made unconditional promises to them...

--when all Israel turned their back on God and worshiped the golden calf, God was one step from destroying Israel as His wrath burned, but Moses, in prayer, spelled out the only reason why God would not destroy them – **"Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self,** and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'" (Exodus 32:13)

--1 Samuel 12:20-23: "Then Samuel said to the people, "Do not fear. You have done all this wickedness; yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart. ... 22 **For the LORD will not forsake His people,** for His great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you His people."

--Israel's rejection of Christ as a nation should have come as no surprise as it fit perfectly in line with the pattern of unbelief all throughout their history!

--Hebrews 3:12-19 compares Israel's rejection of Christ to their rejection of the promise land after being delivered from Egypt.

--in both instances faith in God is replaced by faith in self... the Jewish leaders had faith in their own good works rather than Christ, and at the promise land Israel was afraid to enter because they placed their faith in themselves rather than God.

--and just as Israel as a nation entered the promise by faith when they encountered the promise land a second time, so Israel as a nation will receive Christ by faith when they encounter Him at His second coming.

--11:1b: "For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin."

--Paul himself was evidence that God had not cast away His people, as he himself was a Jew

--in the value system of the unbelieving religious leaders Paul would have every reason to have faith in himself because of his pedigree...

--he was not only a Jew but he was "of the tribe of Benjamin" (v.), which, according to scholars, was one of the most prestigious tribes.

--Philippians 3:4-8: "If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7 **But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ...**"

--11:2-6: "God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah..."

--when Jezebel, the wife of King Ahab, massacred the prophets of the Lord in Israel and established Baal worship throughout all of Israel, Elijah cried out to God, "'I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; because **the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword.** I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.' 15 Then the LORD

said to him: "... 18 Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him." (1 Kings 19:14-18)

--the small remnant in Israel who believed in Christ were like the 7000 people during Elijah's time who did not forsake the Lord.

--there are many examples throughout the New Testament of Jews who believed in Christ...

the 12 apostles, John the Baptist, Joseph and Mary, Simeon (Luke 2:27), Anna the prophetess (Luke 2:37), Philip (John 1:45), Nathanael (John 1:47), Paul, Barnabas (Acts 4:36), and many others.

--it has been estimated that by Acts ch.4 there were at least 20,000 Jewish Christians in Jerusalem alone. (two isolated events recorded in Acts account for roughly 8000 people, mostly Jews... 3000 on Pentecost in Acts 2:41 and 5,000 in Acts 4:4)

--in Romans 11:2-6 Paul cites the example of Elijah: "Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, 3 'LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life?' 4 But what does the divine response say to him? 'I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.'" 5 Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

--11:7-10: "What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. ..."

--"Israel has not obtained what it seeks"

--that is, the religious leaders who rejected Christ because of their lack of faith sought salvation through their own good works, but failed to obtain salvation through their own good works... "For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." (Romans 10:2-4)

--"but the elect have obtained it and the rest were blinded..."

--that is, those who have genuine faith have obtained salvation based not on their own works but on the righteousness of Christ being "credited" (Romans 4:1-8) to their account.

--some might think that the concept of being "elect" or "called" or "blinded" means that we're simply robots and are saved because God programmed us to be saved, but this is a totally warped view that results from our finite minds trying to understand the infinite!

--the abstract concepts of being either one of the "elect" or being "blinded" relate to the fact that God is intimately involved with every aspect of our life from beginning to end... because **we are totally dependent** by nature and **God is all-knowing and all-powerful** (and independent by nature – the "I AM", the self-existent one)

--our physical dependence on God... every heart-beat, every breath, every step we take is dependent on God, **yet we choose** where to go.

--Colossians 1:17: "in Him all things consist..."

--Acts 17:28: "in Him we live and move and have our being..."

--our spiritual dependence on God... likewise our turning to Christ in faith is totally dependent on God, yet in some way **we choose** whether or not to turn to Him.

--1 Corinthians 1:30: "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us **wisdom from God** — and righteousness and sanctification and redemption..."

--we might be tempted to compare ourselves to others and think we have less intelligence and less wisdom... but the only intelligence and wisdom that matters in the big picture is not dependent on our human limitations – Jesus Christ Himself is our wisdom and intelligence! And not only that but He is the source of our "righteousness and sanctification and redemption!"

--1 Corinthians 1:21-22: "**For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God**, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe."

--Romans 8:29-30 describes our spiritual dependence on God from beginning to end: "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son ... 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."

--from God's perspective every step, even our glorification in heaven, is spoken of in the past tense.

--the Old Testament quotes in Romans 11:8 and the concept of being "blinded" are simply the inverse of Christ being our wisdom and God being actively involved to secure our salvation.

--in the words of Romans 1:28: "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting..."

--trying to piece together these concepts in a nice neat picture is like trying to draw a 4 dimensional picture in 3 dimensions! A simple way of summing up our spiritual dependence on God is that our salvation is not left to random chance!

--mankind boasts in their achievements and thinks in terms of "what I have done..." or "what we have done..." – often while ridiculing God and not realizing that without God they could do nothing, and in an instant God could erase mankind's progress as He did at the tower of Babel! (Genesis 11:5-9)

--Hebrews 2:6-9: "[*quoting from Psalm 8:4-6*] 'What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? 7 You have made him a little lower than the angels; **You have crowned him with glory and honor** [*it may seem like stating the obvious but this is a profound point – all the glory of mankind is from God!*], **And set him over the works of Your hands.** 8 You have put all things in subjection under his feet.' For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. 9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone."

--much of mankind's achievement is the result of mankind using the ability God gave them while ignoring the direction God gave them... through both the law written on mankind's heart (Romans 1:19, 2:15, 10:18) and the law written in Scripture.

--one important result of our dependence on God is humility...

--1 Corinthians 1:27-31: "But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29 **that no flesh should glory in His presence.** 30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God — and righteousness and sanctification and redemption — 31 that, as it is written, '**He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.**'"

--Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 **not of works, lest anyone should boast.**"

--the apostle Paul had a heightened sense of humility – "**But God forbid that I should boast** except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation." (Galatians 6:14-15)

--cultivating a deep sense of dependence on God is so counter to the mindset of the world but there is nothing more liberating!

--our greatest possession is nothing in this world.. our greatest possession is the gift of salvation... and we don't ever have to worry about not being good enough or smart enough...

--when we struggle with our imperfections we can say with the apostle Paul in Galatians 5:5 "For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for **the hope of righteousness** [the hope of righteousness! in heaven in our glorified bodies! not in this life!] by faith..."

--"this hope we have as **an anchor of the soul...**" (Hebrews 6:19)