

ROMANS – LIVING BY FAITH
GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY & MAN’S RESPONSIBILITY – Chapters 9-11

LESSON 39 – ISRAEL’S LOSS IS THE GENTILE’S GAIN – Romans 11:11-36

“Every cloud has a silver lining.” I’m sure all of you are familiar with that quote. This is the world’s way of hoping that something good will come out of something bad. The great thing for the Christian is that with God, there is no hoping...only knowing. The Jews are a perfect example of the meaning of Romans 8:28. Out of their failure has come...and will continue to come...blessings for the world.

We’ve already discussed that God has set Israel aside for a time and opened the door for millions of Gentiles to be saved. The body of Christ is growing all over the world. The explanation for this change in God’s plan is the focus of Paul in Romans 9-11. In this lesson we get even further insight into what God is doing with the Gentiles in relation to the Jews...and why.

When we get to Romans 12 in a few weeks, the reason for our knowing all this detailed information will become more clear than it is at this point in our study. It all has to do with the mercy of God. It is God’s mercy that preserves Israel and God’s mercy that opened the door of salvation to the Gentiles. It is mercy that caused His plan of redemption to be in place so the Gospel could spread around the world.

So we begin this lesson learning that even though Israel has stumbled...it will not fall.

Israel’s Failure Is Not Fatal

Again we see Paul’s emphatic, “Not at all!” when talking about the Jews being removed from God’s plans. Israel might have stumbled but it has not fallen. Paul’s rhetorical question in verse 11...“Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery?” ...forms the basis for the rest of chapter 11. He explains that Israel’s failure to accept their Messiah was a costly decision but not a fatal one.

Israel’s Failure Is Not Futile

Paul gives us two reasons why Israel’s existence is not futile...

The Effect on the Gentiles – In the simplest terms possible, because of the temporary setting aside of Israel, “salvation has come to the Gentiles.” The effect of this is that Gentiles...like all of us...are able to be included in the Body of Christ. Israel rejected Jesus so the offer of salvation was extended to the Gentiles.

In the Old Testament, if a Gentile wanted to know God, it was not an easy thing to do. They essentially had to become a Jew. But at Pentecost, when the Gospel was preached, every person heard the Gospel in their own language. Anyone who wanted could believe and have full access to God through Jesus Christ.

The Effect on the Jews – Paul says that God’s plan is for Israel to be drawn back to God out of jealousy over the Gentile’s inheritance of blessings they once enjoyed. Now that raises some questions... What kind of evangelism is that? Evangelism by jealousy? Would God really use jealousy to win His chosen people?

The key to understanding this is to NOT compare this jealousy to what we normally think of as jealousy. In Israel’s case, the joy and blessing of a covenant relationship with God belonged to them in the first place. The jealousy Paul is describing is simply creating a hunger in Israel for something that was

rightfully theirs but they had rejected. When Paul preached, Jews began to come to the Messiah also. Why? Because they saw the reality of the spiritual blessings the Gentiles were enjoying. It was a minority...a remnant of Jews who believed...but some did believe.

Israel's Failure Is Not Fruitless

Paul spends some time talking about Israel's temporarily being set aside by God as well as explaining his own ministry. He uses some extreme contrasts to make his points.

Israel rejected the Messiah and it resulted in riches for the world. Now that being true, imagine what it will be like when they finally accept Him. Extreme contrasts. When the fullness of God's blessing comes to His own people, the overflow of blessing to the rest of the world will be tremendous. Everything good the Gentiles have is a result of Israel's fall and failure. Imagine what will happen once their fullness is realized during the Millennial reign of Christ.

The only way Paul can think to describe Israel's return to God is a resurrection from the dead. Just as a resurrection is a miracle, that's how Israel's conversion to worship Jesus as the Messiah will be. God is not finished with the Jewish people. Their covenant with God will one day be renewed and they will have spiritual life again...raised from spiritual death.

Paul then gives us some insight about his own ministry. He wants his readers to understand why as the apostle to the Gentiles, he's spending so much time talking about the Jews. By talking about the Jews and how the Gospel has now gone to the Gentiles, he is showing the contrast between the past and present situation within God's plan. The very fact that he is the apostle to the Gentiles is a sign that the Jews have been set aside. Paul's prayer is that more Jews will be made aware of God's true plan of salvation and receive Christ.

Israel's Failure Is Filled With Application

God's Promises Are Unfailing – Time after time in the Old Testament we find Israel failing to maintain covenant obedience to God but God never disowns them. He will not go back on His promises to His people because His promises are unfailing. It should be a comfort to all of us to know that God doesn't go back on anything He's promised to us.

God's Providence Is Unfathomable – When we look at all the ways God works to accomplish His will, we have a hard time understanding them. This entire situation with Israel is a great example of Romans 8:28. We need to remember it the next time we wonder what God is doing in our lives through circumstances we don't understand.

God's Purpose Is Unchangeable – It seems Israel has tried everything to change God's plan for them. But God's purposes for Israel are unchanging. God's ways may change, but His purposes do not.

God's Power Is Undisputed – God's power is always working behind the scenes. God's power rules over everything and no situation is beyond His knowledge and control. His power goes beyond anything we can imagine.

God's Plan Is Unfinished – There was a popular phrase a few years back that said, "Please be patient, God is not finished with me yet." God is definitely NOT finished with His chosen people and He is not finished with us either. God is a God of promises...to Israel and to us.