

The Plan and Glory of God
Romans 11:30-36
December 1, 2021

Review and Context

Theme of Romans: The gospel of God (1:16-17)

Chs 9-11 The gospel and Israel

- In 9:1-5, the apostle in a very personal way introduced the problem (from the human standpoint) of Israel's unbelief (rejection of the Messiah)

- *Thesis:* 9:6a "But it is not as though the word of God has failed."
 - The OT's numerous promises to the nation of Israel, of spiritual salvation through the Messiah

 - Examples include Deut 30:6; Eze 36:24-28; Jer 31:31-36; Zech 12:10-13:1

- The apostle proves that the word of God has not failed, using five arguments that center on the following:
 1. God's sovereign election of some individuals and not others (9:6b-29)
 2. Israel's reliance on works rather than faith (9:30-10:21).
 - Israel is responsible for their failure to believe in Christ
 3. The remnant of believers within Israel (11:1-10)
 4. God's temporary rejection of Israel (11:11-24)
 5. Israel's future salvation (11:25-32)

Question: What terms are repeated in 11:30-36? What has Paul taught about these terms earlier in chapters 9-11?

The sovereign saving plan of God for Israel and the Gentiles in summary (30-32)

Continues to talk about "you" (Gentile believers) and "they" (the nation of Israel), as Paul has done since **verse 13a**

Sums up the process that the apostle has described in several different ways in verses 11-29, according to which God works out His purposes of salvation history through an oscillation between Israel and the Gentiles.

Verse 30 is the first half of a comparison

1. Before Christ came, the Gentiles were “disobedient to God”
 - **2:8** "but for those who are self-seeking and **do not obey the truth**, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury."
2. But now the gospel has been sent to the Gentiles, and elect Gentiles are receiving the mercy of salvation “because of” Israel’s disobedience
 - **CSB** “through their disobedience”
 - Because of Israel’s unbelief, Israel as a nation was temporarily set aside and the gospel was extended to the Gentiles

Verse 31 is the second half of the comparison

1. Christ has come and been rejected by Israel, and God has now hardened them in unbelief
2. God’s purpose is that by the divine mercy shown to the Gentiles, Israel would be aroused to jealousy and “may now receive mercy,” being drawn by sovereign grace to Christ
 - “now” speaks of the imminence of Israel’s future salvation
 - Paul has clearly taught that Israel as a nation is not currently receiving mercy, but will receive mercy in the future (verses 12, 15, 24, 25-26, 28-29)
 - With Gentiles receiving the saving mercy of God, Israel is now positioned to receive mercy

The comparison in vv 30-31 speaks of the similarity between God’s sovereign plan for the Gentiles (30), and God’s sovereign plan for Israel (31).

1. Both groups have been disobedient
2. God has sovereignly determined to give both groups mercy
3. Both groups will receive mercy as a result of the other group’s condition

This is summarized even more succinctly in **verse 32**

1. “all” in context means both groups about whom Paul is speaking—Israel and the Gentiles—which together comprise the whole human race
2. God “has consigned” all to disobedience
 - **CSB** “has imprisoned all in disobedience”
 - **NIV** “has bound everyone over to disobedience”
 - **NKJV** “has committed them all to disobedience”
 - This word means to confine to specific limits
 - Here, refers to hardening men in their suppression of the truth and unbelief (9:18; 11:7, 25). Compare the phrase, “God gave them up to,” in 1:24, 26, 28.

3. God consigned Israel to disobedience that He would have mercy on the Gentiles. And God consigned the Gentiles to disobedience that, in later having mercy on those who had been outside His mercy, He would bring Israel into His mercy

There is a consistent divine purpose that God is fulfilling in redemptive history

Adoring praise to God in light of His unsearchable, inscrutable plan (33-36)

Question: How are verses 33-36 related to what Paul has taught in chapters 9-11?

33a "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!"

1. "Oh" introduces an exclamation
2. "riches" probably has in mind the riches of God's mercy and grace (11:12)
3. The depth is infinite!

33b "How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!"

1. "How" introduces two more exclamations
2. "unsearchable" means unfathomable
3. "judgments" does not have its usual meaning of judicial decisions, but here means sovereign decisions, and refers to God's sovereign decisions about the direction of salvation history
4. "inscrutable" literally means "not to be tracked out"
 - Brings to mind,
Psa. 77:19 "Your way was through the sea,
 your path through the great waters;
 yet your footprints were unseen."
 - Means incomprehensible
5. No human could devise or implement such a wonderful plan, a plan that so magnifies God's mercy and leaves no room for boasting in man. The revelation of it blows our mind!

verse 34

1. **Is. 40:13–14** "Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD,
or what man shows him his counsel?
Whom did he consult,
and who made him understand?
Who taught him the path of justice,
and taught him knowledge,
and showed him the way of understanding?"
2. The question about knowing the mind of the Lord connects back to the depth of the "knowledge of God" (33)
3. The question about being the Lord's counselor connects back to the depth of the "wisdom" of God (33)

verse 35

1. **Job 41:11** "Who has first given to me, that I should repay him?
Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine."
2. We cannot place God under obligation. He owes the Gentiles nothing, and the Jews nothing.
3. God is sovereign, self-sufficient, and free from any obligation except those He places on Himself
4. It is only by God's grace that we receive the depth of riches that His plan is designed to freely give

36a "For from him and through him and to him are all things."

1. In creation and providence, and also in salvation
2. God is the Source, Sustainer, and Goal
3. God is at the center of the universe, and the center of salvation

36b "To him be glory forever. Amen."

1. *MacArthur*: "Like a mountain climber who has reached the summit of Mt. Everest, the apostle can only stand awestruck at God's beauty and majesty."¹
2. Our response to the revelation of God's plan and purpose in Romans 9-11 should be great praise and worship!
3. This is the apostle's culminating comment on chapters 9-11, and really chapters 1-11
4. After traversing all the great realities of salvation, the apostle erupts in doxology

¹ John MacArthur, *Romans 9-16*, 135.

Conclusion

The great subject of the Bible is God!

The proper study of God's Word and meditation upon it leads to deeper knowledge of God and higher praise of God.

We should never conclude time in God's Word without praising Him.

The next verse is the hinge of the epistle, as the apostle will turn to answer the question, "How then shall we live?"