

“A Case for Humility”
Romans 11:16-22
(Preached at Trinity, June 27, 2010)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In Chapters 9-11 the chief focus is upon the Jews—the hardness of their hearts towards the Gospel and their condemnation.
Paul expressed his grief over their hardness
Romans 9:2-3 – “That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.
³ For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”
 2. Paul's secondary purpose in these chapters is to promote harmony between the Jewish and Gentile Christians.
There was a tendency for both groups to see themselves as unique and separate
 - A. The Jewish Christians saw themselves as the true heirs of Abraham. They were God's true people.
 - B. The Gentiles, on the other hand, were arrogant that the Jews had rejected and crucified their Messiah. They were now the outcasts.
 3. To the Jews Paul assures them that they were the heirs of promise. The covenant was made with their fathers.
 - A. To the unbelieving Jews
 1. They had rejected and crucified their Messiah. Their hearts are hard and they were forsaking the blessings of God.
 2. But God has not forgotten His promises
Romans 11:28 – “As concerning the gospel, *they are* enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, *they are* beloved for the fathers' sakes.”
Romans 11:1 – “I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.”
KJV **Romans 11:11** – “I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but *rather* through their fall salvation *is* come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.”
 2. They have been separated from the promises. They have been broken off as a branch from a tree. But if they believe they can be grafted back in.
Romans 11:23 – “And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be graffed in: for God is able to graff them in again.”
 3. This is God's work. He is able to graft them back in. As they receive Christ it can be compared to life from the dead
 - B. To the believing Jews Paul tells them not to be hard towards the Gentiles. God is grafting them into the promise. In Christ *they* are now the heirs of Abraham.
4. To the Gentiles Paul warns them not to be arrogant towards the Jews. The Jews were the natural branches. The Messiah was promised to them through their fathers.

- A. God had been merciful and gracious to the Gentiles
 - 1. They were not the natural branches. They were grafted in.
 - 2. Paul reminds them, Israel did not rest on them. They rested on Israel.
Romans 11:18 – “do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, *remember that* it is not you who supports the root, but the root *supports* you.”
 - 3. *Their* fathers did not receive the promises. The prophets were not of them. Christ did not come through them.
 - B. Their arrogance was filled with danger. If God cast off the unbelieving Jews how much more would he cast them off.
Romans 11:21 – “For if God spared not the natural branches, *take heed lest he also spare not thee.*”
 - C. Then Paul asks them to set their minds on something of great importance. It is something that every man, woman, and child upon this earth should consider. It is a two-sided coin. Two equally important truths.
Romans 11:22 – “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in *his* goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.”
5. Consider on one hand the goodness of God. On the other hand consider His severity. This morning I want to focus your attention upon the goodness of God.
- A. It should drive you to your knees. It should humble you.
 - B. The great problem of humanity is they soak up God’s goodness and then proudly shake their fist at God.
- I. God’s general goodness
- A. God has shown amazing goodness to the lost
In **Romans 9** Paul described two distinct groups – the elect and the non-elect. But, oh the goodness God has shown to the non-elect
 - 1. First he describes the contrast between Isaac and Ishmael
Romans 9:7-8 – “Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, *are they* all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. ⁸ That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.”
 - a. Ishmael was not a good man. He cruelly mocked his younger brother Isaac. Moses described his nature
Genesis 16:12 – “And he will be a wild man; his hand *will be* against every man, and every man’s hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.”
 - b. Yet God demonstrated wonderful goodness to Ishmael
When Sarah drove Hagar and her son Ishmael into the wilderness they soon ran out of water and were in danger of death. Ishmael cried out in distress – and God heard him.
Genesis 21:17 – “And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he *is.*”

- c. God also told Abraham
Genesis 17:20 – "And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation."
- 2. Second, Paul describes the contrast between Jacob and Esau
Romans 9:13 – "As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."
 - a. Esau was a wicked man. He took of the Canaanites for wives
Genesis 36:2 – "Esau took his wives of the daughters of Canaan"
 - b. He was the father of the Edomites who were cursed of God.
Malachi 1:4 – "Thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever."
 - c. Yet we find in **Genesis 36** that God blessed him with an abundance of children, and cattle and land.
- B. God's goodness is great to all men – to the righteous and the wicked.
Matthew 5:44-45 – "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."
 - 1. Lost person: Don't be deceived into thinking that your earthly blessings are an indication of God's favor upon you. God is angry with the wicked. You are under the judgment and condemnation of God. His goodness is a act of His mercy.
 - 2. Even in our fallen world God has blessed the earth abundantly. Look at the rich resources—materials we use to make things.
 - 3. Consider the blessings of technology
 - a. Especially, consider the printing press
Place yourself in the middle ages – you would have had no books. You would not have had the Bible
 - b. Consider all of the blessings of creature comforts God has granted to our generation – electricity – appliances, AC, computers, telephone. The means of travel.
 - 4. One moment gazing upon our own bodies should cause us to marvel at God's goodness.
Look at your arms and legs, your eyes and ears, all as expressions of God's goodness
Psalms 139:14 – "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made: marvellous *are* thy works; and *that* my soul knoweth right well."
 - 5. These things are designed of God to humble us
Romans 11:22 – "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in *his* goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

II. God's rich goodness towards His elect

A. God has poured out His rich blessings of mercy upon His people

1. None of us were seeking Him.
NAS **Romans 3:11** – “There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God;”
2. Look back at **Chapter 10**
Romans 10:20 – “I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.”
3. In spite of our wickedness God has showered us with His goodness and mercy
NAS **Ephesians 2:1** – “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places*, in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

B. These blessings ring especially rich for the Gentiles

Ephesians 2:12-13 – “That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”

1. The teaching of **Ephesians 2:12-19** we find the great change of condition for the Gentiles.
 - a. First, Gentiles are described as being afar off.
Verse 12 describes the condition of the Gentiles as one of being:
 - separate from Christ
 - excluded from the commonwealth of Israel
 - strangers to the covenants of promise
 - those who have no hope
 - without God in the world.
 - b. Second, Gentiles are now brought near.
 They are now incorporated into, the commonwealth of Israel.
2. Paul is saying in **Romans 11** that the Gentiles should be humbled at God's rich blessings upon them
Romans 11:21 – “For if God spared not the natural branches, *take heed* lest he also spare not thee.”

III. How do we respond to this?

- A. For the believer it should humble us
1. Pride is absolutely the antithesis of the believer
Paul implies here that those who strut with arrogance may be totally void of God's goodness in salvation
Romans 11:20-21 – "Be not highminded, but fear: ²¹ For if God spared not the natural branches, *take heed* lest he also spare not thee."
 2. Jesus described humility as the heart of Christianity
Matthew 18:4 – "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."
Matthew 5:5 – "Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."
 3. The man who experiences the goodness of God in salvation is humbled
 4. The man who God has blessed this way becomes engrossed in Christ
See the example of the woman at the feet of Christ – **Luke 7:36-50**
- B. For the unbeliever, it should drive them to their knees in repentance
1. To receive the goodness of God demands gratitude
 2. Paul described unthankfulness as a great mark of wickedness
Romans 1:21-22 – "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,"

Conclusion:

1. Every man should fall on his face before God because of His goodness.
Psalms 52:1 – "Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God *endureth* continually."
Psalms 107:8-9 – "Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men! ⁹ For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."
2. Man's stubborn rebellion in the face of God's goodness condemns him.
Romans 2:4-6 – "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds:"
3. Do you exalt and praise God for His goodness? Does His goodness amaze you? Do you recognize His goodness is according to mercy – we deserve nothing from Him.
4. Paul warns us in this passage to pay careful attention
Romans 11:22 – "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in *his* goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."
5. May we bow continually before Him and praise Him.