

SERMON NOTES

SERIES: Romans: God's Power for Salvation
TITLE: Theology Becomes Doxology

SCRIPTURE: Romans 11:1-36

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The book of Romans is a masterfully written exposition of the gospel of God. Without a doubt, it is the foundation of authentic Christianity and the most articulate, systematic understanding of our faith found in the Bible. Countless lives have been changed by the truth found in this ancient letter, and it continues to change lives today. Interestingly enough, Romans was written to Christians. So, while the good news found in Romans can certainly bring people to faith in Jesus, the actual focus is on how the gospel helps Christians think rightly about God, life, faith, and Christian community. If you want to grow to know God more personal and intimate way, this letter is for you!

To understand what Paul is trying to tell us in Romans 11, we need to be able to follow his flow of thought through the entire chapter. Remember, what Paul writes here, he wrote *to* Jew and Gentile Christians in the church of Rome in the first century. He wrote *to* them, but he also wrote *for* us. Even though there are no direct parallels to the Jew and Gentile Christian problem in the Roman church, there are things that we can learn today about how God has worked to bring his predetermined plan of salvation to pass and how God works in ways that don't always make sense to us. The question then is: What do you do with a God you cannot fully understand? But, before we can answer that question, we've got to answer the questions the apostle Paul addresses in this chapter. Here's what I see as his flow of thought...

1. Has God rejected his people? No, by his grace, a believing remnant of Jews continues to experience his blessings because of their faith in Jesus. Those who did not believe were hardened (11:1-10).
2. So, as a nation, is Israel's failure final? No, even though it might seem like God has given up on Israel, he hasn't. God is using Israel's current unbelief to extend his plan and promise of salvation to the whole world (11:11-24).
3. What God has done and is doing for Israel is a "mystery," but what is clear is that, in the future God's favor and blessing will once again rest on Israel as a nation (11:25-32).
4. When we see the mystery of how God has worked to save all people through faith in Messiah Jesus, our theology will become doxology (11:33-36). We need to get comfortable with the fact that some of God's ways of working can't be forced into the dimensions of our ways of thinking.

What do you do with a God you cannot fully understand? You _____ him and _____ him and you _____ that his judgments are true and his ways are always right for you.

For Discussion—When you listen to Bible teaching, you should be listening with an ear to learn, but also with an ear to share with others what you are learning. Keep that in mind as you discuss today's message. How do you need to internalize this message so you can share this Good News with someone God might bring across your path this week who needs to hear it?

Read back through Romans 11. Then as you discuss the questions below, and point back to specific verses to highlight the answers you give.

1. Has God permanently set Israel aside?
2. At the present time, how is God remaining faithful to his covenant promises he made to Israel?
3. Put into your own words how God is using Israel's current unbelief to open a door of salvation to the rest of the world. Point to passages in Romans 11 that make this point.
4. Why do we say that our faith today is based on what has come to us through the Jews? (Hint: there are several things in this text that answer this question)
5. What in this passage warns against anti-Semitism?
6. Look at vv. 21-22--What does this warning about "being cut off" mean? Is Paul talking about individuals or groups of people? Give biblical support for your view...
7. What does Paul mean when he says in vv.25-26 that a "*partial hardening has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come and at that time, all Israel will be saved?*"
8. How does God's mercy factor into this whole discussion about God's plan of rescuing all people and one day?
9. Charlie said, "The fact that God will keep his promises to Israel reassures us that God will keep his promises to us." How so?
10. What causes Paul's theology to become doxology?
11. Are you going through something right now--or has there been a time in the past--when God's ways seemed incomprehensible to you?
12. What should be our response to a God we cannot fully understand? Especially when what we can't understand, seems to bring hurt and confusion into our daily lives?

OR try this approach -- After reading Romans 11 ask, "From what you heard in Charlie's message or what we just read right here—*What are some of the "AHAs" you took away from what you learned?* ...When someone volunteers an "AHA"...ask follow up questions to dig deeper and to keep the discussion going. Ask the group, "*Anyone else have this same "AHA"--what do you think about this insight?*" After you've exhausted topic. ...Throw the original question back out to the group--"*Who else had an "AHA?"* Repeat the pattern above. Follow up questions then get input from the group. ... If someone says, "*I didn't really have an "AHA," it's more that I don't understand*" Then go that direction. ...Ask follow up questions to help them clearly articulate the issue then ask the group for input. "*Anybody else think about that/struggle with that?*" ..."*So, how would you answer that question?*" Whoever answers--ask follow up questions, ask for input from the group on that answer (*What do you think about that?*), etc. It's been my (Charlie) experience that you can have a great discussion around this approach to community group conversations