

Romans 11:26–36

A Ministry in the Word

Scripture Reading

And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion a Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

And So All Israel Shall Be Saved

The and so of verse 26 does not mean and then — it means in this manner. By the way described in this chapter — the casting away, the Gentile fullness, the deliverer coming — God is bringing about the salvation of all Israel. This is not every last ethnic Jew alive at that moment. The purging described in Ezekiel 20 — *I will purge out the rebels from among you* — and the Zechariah 13 statement that two-thirds will be cut off make plain that the all Israel here is a purged and godly remnant who will form the nation as established under the new covenant. Isaiah's word confirms it: *they shall all be righteous*. All that remain will be the Lord's, and all will be saved — because the rebels will have been purged out.

The Deliverer Coming Out of Zion — and To Zion

The Old Testament text has the deliverer coming to Zion; here he comes out of Zion. Both are true simultaneously. He will come to Zion — he will descend upon that mountain. He will come out of Zion — his rule and his salvation will proceed from that centre. There is no contradiction; there is a fullness that the two together express. And what he does when he comes is decisive and sovereign: *he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob*. He — not Israel changing their own minds. Not accumulated gospel preaching finally finding a response. The deliverer acts. God takes up the hard task, the task no human programme can accomplish — dealing with the heart of man, removing ungodliness from the root.

The New Covenant — Shed Blood, Not Yet Ratified

The covenant referred to in verse 27 is the new covenant — the covenant of Jeremiah 31, where God says he will remember their sins and iniquities no more. It is an unconditional covenant, entirely from God's side. Its blood was shed at the cross. But it has not yet been put into force with Israel. It is in suspension — waiting for the deliverer to come and ratify it with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, as both Jeremiah and Hebrews 8 say it will be.

Christians drink of the cup that signifies the blood of that covenant. They have the blood, the grace, and the mediator of the new covenant. Paul and his fellow workers were able ministers of the new covenant — they ministered those spiritual blessings. But that does not place Christians under the covenant. What properly constitutes Christianity — being in Christ, seated in the heavenly places, members of the one body — has nothing to do with the new covenant. The covenant is Israel's. The heavenlies are not covenanted anywhere in Scripture.

Beloved for the Fathers' Sakes — Gifts and Calling Without Repentance

Verse 28 holds two things in tension: as concerning the gospel, they are enemies — for the Gentiles' sake. As touching the election, they are beloved — for the fathers' sake. The national election of Israel, grounded in the unconditional promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has not been cancelled. Even when Israel put the Lord Jesus to the cross — even when they had both seen and hated both Him and the Father — the gifts and calling of God were not withdrawn. If anything could have annulled those gifts and that calling, that would have. But verse 29 is absolute: *the gifts and calling of God are without repentance*. They are not subject to cancellation. God foreknew it all, and chose according to His own purpose from the beginning.

Concluded All in Unbelief — That He Might Show Mercy

Verses 30-32 complete the argument by showing that mercy is the universal principle. The Gentiles were not believers — God brought about the occasion through Israel's unbelief by which they obtained mercy. Israel is now in unbelief — God will bring them into mercy through the mercy shown to Gentiles. The principle is exactly equal: neither deserves anything. Darby's rendering of verse 32 is graphic: *God hath shut up together all in unbelief*. Proud Jews would not want to be shut up together with Gentiles. Proud Gentiles would not want to be shut up together with Jews. God has done it — so that He can show mercy to both on the same ground. No difference. This is the no-difference doctrine of Romans 1-8 applied to God's dispensational ways through history.

The Doxology — Of Him, Through Him, To Him

Verses 33-36 are not a separate appendix to what precedes — they are the natural outburst of a soul that has traced the sovereignty and wisdom and knowledge of God through three chapters of the most profound doctrinal exposition in Scripture. *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!*

We have been tracing something of those riches. But we cannot get to the bottom of them. Unsearchable judgments, untraceable ways — not in the sense that we learn nothing, but that what we learn only opens out into a greater depth beneath.

Three prepositions in verse 36 compress everything: *of him, and through him, and to him, are all things*. Of him — all things have their source in God. Through him — all things are carried out through His agency. To him — all things are for His glory, not man's. The chapter closes not with man benefiting but with God glorified. The Amen of verse 36 is the correct punctuation mark — not the comma that men would put there, leading on to what they get out of it, but the full stop of God's own glory as the only adequate conclusion. *To him be glory for ever. Amen.*

— Study ends —