

Romans 11 v. 17-36

Now sudden change of direction to warn Gentiles and to confirm hope about Israel already expressed. Gentiles need to have feeling of great regard for Israel even though present condition of Israel is so sad. Gentiles need to remember own former state and this should lead them to have true-hearted fear. If rejection had come on such a highly privileged people as the Jews, it is far easier to happen against Gentiles. Gentiles not to boast because they have been grafted in, because root of Gentile life is Abraham. Not to be proud of position. Gentile continuance is due solely to faith and not merit. Picture of wild olive branch grafted onto garden olive.

God can be both gracious and severe. Good to those who abide in His love, and severe to those who reject His grace. God is able to graft in Jews again because of their original relationship to God. God's favour is still on them as the people of His promises. Easier to graft Jews in than to graft Gentiles in, because that is contrary to nature (v24).

Re-emphasis on bright future in store for Israel, despite present failure of most of them. So far, stress on probability of Israel's restoration. Now the emphasis is on the necessity and certainty of Israel's restoration, based on direct Divine revelation. Note the word "mystery" (v25). In New Testament this means something that was once hidden and which is now revealed – a secret told. Could never be discovered by natural faculty, and is dependent on revelation. Contrast this with modern idea of mystery as something mysterious or hard to understand.

μυστηριον is used in New Testament about Gospel union of Jew and Gentile in Christ, union of Christ and church, eventual restoration of body, and the future conversion of Israel, as here.

Here again, God's revelation is intended to produce humility and abolish conceit. At present there is partial hardening of Israel (not complete, for there are some Jewish Christians) Then, the fullness of Gentiles will come in, i.e. complete number of Gentile believers will be made up. After that, all Israel to be saved, i.e. not every individual Israelite, but nation as a whole – as distinct from present conversion of individual Jews. This event will happen in fulfilment of Scripture (Isaiah 59 and 27). Also it is consistent with Divine plan, which is that mercy is extended to all. Because of hostility of Jews at present, Gentiles have had their chance. Then opportunity will be restored to Jews. God's gifts and calling of Israel is subject to no change on God's part. Still object of God's love.

God's purpose is to lock both Jews and Gentiles up in prison house of disobedience that He might have mercy on all alike. Therefore God can use sin in service of mercy. Thus the suggestion here is that at close of present era there will be new and fresh experience of God's grace. Frederick the Great asked his chaplain for strongest evidence for Christianity. In a sentence, the chaplain replied, "The Jews, sir".

Conclusion of passage with great and moving doxology (vv33-36). Adoring wonder at marvel of God's grace and mercy. Caused by the remarkable way in which God's will

is accomplished and evil over-ruled in the purposes of God. The A.V. is not to be preferred here. R.S.V. is better **O the depth of riches and wisdom and knowledge of God** (11:33). Hence three Divine attributes are set forth here (not just two, as in A.V.). “Depth” speaks of inexhaustible fullness, and also unfathomable mystery. His secret decisions are beyond power of human explanation. Cannot track His ways by human discovery. Initiative has always been God’s – He is the source (**of Him**), means (**through Him**) and end (**unto Him**) of all things (v36). He is never in debt to man. They are in infinite debt to Him.

Hence we have beautiful expression of adoring awe in doxology, as Paul contemplates God’s working in providence and grace.

Practical lessons from this passage

1. Importance of Jews. Never forget what we owe them. How deeply rooted our Christian faith is in teaching and promises of the Old Testament. Christ was a Jew. So were all the Apostles. All New Testament writers, except Luke. God still faithful to promises made to Israel.
2. Necessity of faith, fear (**be not high-minded, but fear** v20) and faithfulness.
3. Glorious picture of God. His goodness and kindness. And also His severity, for He is righteous and not indifferent to sin. Never think His free grace modifies His standards and holiness. His ability **God is able** (v23). This is our supreme encouragement. His power is exercised on behalf of all willing to put selves unreservedly in His hands.

Need to have great views of His greatness, goodness and glory. View also His far-reaching purposes. Anticipate glorious future for Jews and Gentiles in Christ. The wild olive and the garden olive are to be one. As with Paul, end with adoration **To whom be glory for ever, Amen** (v36).