

Musing #66: Romans 11:17-36

We finished our last session with a graphic showing how God has chosen a “remnant from His original “chosen” nation of Israel. Now, Paul helps us understand how God opened the door to Gentiles to join his chosen in the Tree of Life for all eternity.

17 But some of these branches from Abraham’s tree—some of the people of Israel—have been broken off. And you Gentiles, who were branches from a wild olive tree, have been grafted in. So now you also receive the blessing God has promised Abraham and his children, sharing in the rich nourishment from the root of God’s special olive tree.

Thus, Gentiles were placed in God's channel of blessing, where only the Jews once stood alone. Paul wisely addressed the issue from a Gentile perspective.

18 But you must not brag about being grafted in to replace the branches that were broken off. You are just a branch, not the root. “Well,” you may say, “those branches were broken off to make room for me.” Yes, but remember—those branches were broken off because they didn’t believe in Christ, and you are there because you do believe. So don’t think highly of yourself, but fear what could happen. For if God did not spare the original branches, he won’t spare you either.

22 Notice how God is both kind and severe. He is severe toward those who disobeyed, but kind to you if you continue to trust in his kindness. But if you stop trusting, you also will be cut off. And if the people of Israel turn from their unbelief, they will be grafted in again, for God has the power to graft them back into the tree. You, by nature, were a branch cut from a wild olive tree. So if God was willing to do something contrary to nature by grafting you into his cultivated tree, he will be far more eager to graft the original branches back into the tree where they belong.

If we are a true grafted branch, we will produce the fruit of the tree and root, which is why James concluded— “faith without works is not real faith.”

25 I want you to understand this mystery, dear brothers and sisters, so that you will not feel proud about yourselves. Some of the people of Israel have hard hearts, but this will last only until the full number of Gentiles come to Christ.

A set time is coming for the church to reach God’s planned fulness—all of the “who-so-ever will”...will have been chosen.

26 And so all Israel will be saved. As the Scriptures say, “The one who rescues will come from Jerusalem, and he will turn Israel away from ungodliness. And this is my covenant with them, that I will take away their sins.”

I remind you of Romans 9:6-7, that **“they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham.”** William Newell in his Romans Commentary notes, **“...it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God; but the children of the promise”**...as noted in the next verse (8)... **this means that Abraham’s physical descendants are not necessarily children of God. Only the children of the promise are considered to be Abraham’s children.** Paul wrote in his

letter to the Galatian church, **The real children of Abraham, then, are those who put their faith in God. Galatians 3:7.** Clearly, when we read “all Israel will be saved,” Paul is referring to the real, the elect, the spared—those whose names are written in God’s Book of Life.

I would further add the “remnant” will survive the difficult judgement of the tribulation period, and in the closing days will share fully in God’s promise and gift of eternal life.

28 Many of the people of Israel are now enemies of the Good News, and this benefits you Gentiles. Yet they are still the people he loves because he chose their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For God’s gifts and his call can never be withdrawn. Once, you Gentiles were rebels against God, but when the people of Israel rebelled against him, God was merciful to you instead. Now they are the rebels, and God’s mercy has come to you so that they, too, will share in God’s mercy. For God has imprisoned everyone in disobedience so he could have mercy on everyone. Oh, how great are God’s riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways!

We cannot be blinded by the attitude of many toward the Jews. We must pray for them. God never fails to deliver on His promises, and Israel was chosen to be a Holy people (Isaiah 66). God has set His love upon them spiritually and nationally. We Gentiles are God’s example to the world of His divine mercy that allows us to have what we selfishly want so we too can eventually see our own rebellion. An incredible plan when you think about it as Paul did.

34 For who can know the Lord’s thoughts? Who knows enough to give him advice? And who has given him so much that he needs to pay it back? For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory. All glory to him forever! Amen.

Paul, as always, brings us back to God’s ultimate purpose behind everything! Thank you, Father, Lord, Savior, and Spirit!



I have added an interesting note below that serves as a subtle insight to the differences between the way the world mentally reasons, in comparison to the wisdom available to God’s children through the guidance of His indwelling Spirit.

A Romans 11 Xtra

In one of Ray Stedman’s volumes on Romans 9-11 he adds a story that he titles *Odd Logic!* It is worth a couple of minutes as a reminder of the general process of fractured reasoning that is *natural* for the fallen world we live in.

Not long ago I read of an occasion when Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels said to a rabbi, “I understand you Jews have a peculiar way of reasoning when you study the Scriptures, and I want you to teach it to me.”

The rabbi replied, “We have three questions we ask a boy before he begins this study. If he can answer them, we let him in. If he can’t, he has no chance.”

Goebbels said, “Ask them to me. What’s the first questions?”

“The first,” said the rabbi, “is this: Two men fall down a chimney. One comes out clean and the other is dirty. Which one washes?”

Goebbels quickly replied, “Oh, that’s easy. The dirty one washes, of course.”

“Wrong. It is the clean one who washes.”

“How do you reason that?”

“After they fall down the chimney they look at each other. The dirty one sees the clean one and thinks he’s clean too; but the clean one sees the dirty one and thinks he also is dirty, so he washes.”

“All right,” Goebbels said. “That’s strange logic, but give me the second question.”

The rabbi continued: “Two men fall down a chimney. One comes out dirty, the other clean. Which one washes?”

“That’s the same question!”

“No it isn’t, the rabbi said, it’s an entirely different question.”

“Well,” Goebbels ventured, “I think I can answer it. The clean one washes.”

“Wrong,” the rabbi said. “The dirty man holds up his hands and sees they are dirty. So he washes.”

“And what’s the third question?”

“Two men fall down a chimney....”

Goebbels interrupted: “But that’s the same one!”

“No, it isn’t,” the rabbi replied, “it’s entirely different! What’s the answer?”

“I don’t know,” Goebbels admitted.

“Neither of them washes—because it is a ridiculous story to begin with! How could two men fall down a chimney and one come out dirty and the other clean?”

Stedman goes on to use the story to show the futility of living “the law” as a process or necessity for salvation, since neither Jew nor Gentile come into this fallen world “clean.” God’s cleansing only comes through a relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ!