



Finer Grounds Bible Study

Romans

Lesson 18: Romans 11:25-36

Beginning in chapter nine Paul has been focusing on reconciliation: God’s reconciliation of the Jews, God’s reconciliation of the Gentiles, and God’s desire that the Jews and Gentiles reconcile with each other. As we conclude chapter 11 Paul is also concluding this line of thought. As we begin this section keep in mind the greater context and the illustration Paul has just given of branches being grafted into an olive tree.

Before You Begin read Romans 11:25-36 and mark any key words or phrases found in this section.

Read all of chapter 11 to re-familiarize yourself with the context in which Paul is teaching.

Read Romans 11:25

This verse is hotly contested, and many interpretations are offered. However, we must remember our first rule of Bible study: context, context, context. Paul is continuing the same thought process he had in 11:13-15: some of the Jews were faithful while others hardened their hearts to the gospel. Paul’s hope is that as the Gentiles (basically everyone in the world not born a Jew) accept the truth of the Messiah, their influence will soften the hearts of the Jews.

“Mystery” is an often misunderstood word in this context. While we generally consider a mystery to be something that is impossible to understand, the original language provides a vital caveat to this definition, “made known by the revelation of God,” (Zodhiates). Paul is not telling them that there’s information they can’t possibly

understand, he’s telling them that the purpose of all of this is to bring them to full understanding.

God’s desire is for them (and by extension us) to understand the things that, prior to Christ, mankind just couldn’t grasp. All the puzzle pieces have now been put together, the rug has been woven, and now God is helping us turn it over to see the unimaginable beauty of the other side: His complete plan from the beginning of time.

What are the two purposes Paul states for what he is teaching here?

According to the context, what is the mystery to which Paul is referring?

What is the warning Paul is giving the Gentiles? (Paul is repeating this warning from verse 18.) How can we also learn from this warning?

Read Romans 11:26-27

Here Paul writes, “And in this way all Israel will be saved.” This is once again a hotly contested and widely interpreted verse. Once again, to properly understand this verse we must keep in mind the greater context of what Paul has been saying. At the very beginning of this section



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Paul provided us with an understanding of Israel, “But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring” (9:6). Continuing on in verse eight, “This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.”

Many want to use 11:26 to teach that everyone who is a Jew by birth will automatically be saved. However, we must ask what this would mean for the justice of God? Does the character of God demonstrate that He will save those who have blatantly rejected Jesus? As Paul would say, “By no means!” Keeping in mind the greater context, and even verse 25 where Paul emphasizes that the hardening of hearts was only partial, Paul is simply re-iterating that there will be those of Israel who are faithful. There have always been and always will be a faithful, obedient remnant.

This is confirmed by the quote from Isaiah 59:20-21. From the beginning God’s plan was that the Deliverer, the Messiah, would come from Zion (Jerusalem.) When the Deliverer would come, he would separate the godly from the ungodly and establish a new, eternal covenant with those who would be faithful to Him. Yet even in this quote God plainly stated that He would banish the ungodliness from Jacob.

Stop and consider how many times Paul has quoted the Old Testament throughout Romans. Even as an inspired apostle Paul felt the necessity of his teachings being backed by Scripture.

Are we as diligent in this as he was, or are we content to offer our own thoughts and opinions?

Read Romans 11:28-29

In these verses Paul is drawing a pretty stark comparison: in regard to the gospel the Jews are enemies, however regarding election they are beloved. How can this be? In verse 29 we also see the words, “gift” and “calling.” The word “gift” here is frequently translated, “grace.” And “calling” also means, “invitation.” Paul isn’t saying that these individuals have an irrevocable place in Heaven, but rather they have an irrevocable invitation to accept the “calling” or “invitation.” To accept God’s grace through obedience. God’s grace will be extended until our time on this earth is over, however just like the Jews it is ultimately our decision if we will accept His invitation by living in obedience or harden our hearts.

Keeping in mind the context of chapters 9-11, explain how the Jews are both enemies and beloved?

Read Romans 11:30-32

As he has done all throughout this section, Paul is reminding his readers that all are equal before God. The Gentiles were disobedient and needed God’s grace, and the Jews were disobedient and needed God’s grace. The word “consigned” here means “enclosed.” We have all been enclosed together in disobedience, but we have also all been offered grace to save us from the consequences of our disobedience.

How can we apply verses 30-32 to ourselves and how we interact with each other?



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Read Romans 11:33-36

Once again, we see Paul quoting from the Old Testament, with Isaiah 40:13 and Job 35:7. He has spent three chapters emphasizing the brilliance and intricacy of God's plan to reconcile both Jews and Gentiles to Himself, and Paul concludes this section by offering the praise and adoration that God deserves.

Do we take time to focus on the big picture of all God has done? Do we take the time to offer the praise He deserves?

Set aside time this week to focus on all God has done from the dawn of time to reconcile us to Himself, and then spend time in prayer specifically praising Him for His amazing plan.

Set aside time this week to specifically focus on all God has done for you and in your life. Be as specific as possible, and then spend time in prayer praising Him for the ways He has worked in your life.

Spiros Zodhiates, The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000 n.page).