**ROMANS 11:13-36**

**HOW MUCH IS “ALL?”**

A

cardiac surgeon is picking up his sports car at the shop as the mechanic speaks. “I tuned up that herd o’ horses under your hood. Now she runs like her tail’s on fire. You do that with people’s hearts, doc, but you charge a ton more than I do.” The surgeon says, “Yeah, but I do it while the engine’s running.”

**Romans Recapped**

Paul gives God’s diagnosis of and prescription for the human heart in his A.D. 57 letter to Rome. His diatribe writing style was common in religious and philosophical debates. **Plato** claimed there was no God. **Gnostics** held that all *is* God, that self-enlightenment – not God’s forgiveness -- is our salvation. **Stoics** believed submitting to destiny brings happiness. **Rabbinic Judaism** gave equal weight to keeping the Ten Commandments (in their Torah) and observing kosher diets, Sabbath, feasts, circumcision et al (in their Talmud).

Today the pop philosophy might be **Syncretism**, i.e., *“You decide what’s right and wrong. Do your best, and maybe you’ll be okay in the afterlife, if there is one. Just keep your morals to yourself.”*

God calls man’s wisdom “foolish, worthless, as empty as the wind” (Isaiah 41:29). Paul says, “Sin brings unending separation from God, but He freely gives you life with Him forever” (Romans 6:23).

Although God never changes, His methods do. First, He required **blood sacrifices** (Leviticus 17:11; Hebrews 10:1-18); **circumcision** next (Genesis 17:10-14); then obedience to the **Law** (Exodus 19:5-6; Romans 10:5-8); then “the **baptism** of repentance” for forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38-41; 1 Corinthians 1:17). Today we’re “saved” by **faith** in Christ” (Romans 4:5). In the Tribulation God will bring back Israel’s temple **worship and sacrifices** (Ezekiel 40-48; Daniel 9:20-27).

When God welcomed Gentiles into His family, many Jews felt He’d forsaken them, but it was they who had abandoned God to create their own righteousness-by-good-works (Galatians 3:6-14).

Prior to Paul, Gentiles came to God by converting to Judaism, but Israel’s edge as “God’s chosen” was set aside by the “mystery” gospel which the risen Christ gave to Paul (2 Corinthians 12:1-10).

We “get right” with God on His terms (John 14:6). Sin makes Him our Judge; the cross makes Jesus our Savior (2 Corinthians 5:17-21). As the only sinless sacrifice, Jesus took our place so that we could be forever forgiven (Colossians 1:25-27).

DISCUSS: Give examples of “bootstrap religion” and “saved by faith.”

Let’s read Romans 11:13-36 (p. 844, NIV).

**Jesus, Jealousy and Jews**

**Romans 11:13-16**

Paul hopes his fellow Jews would envy Gentiles and accept God’s new, big-tent message (Matthew 21:43; Acts 13:46; Galatians 3:6-9, 19-25). The olive tree represents Israel’s spiritual history. Branches broken off are unbelieving Jews. Remaining branches are Jewish believers. The root is Abraham. Wild olive tree branches are Gentile believers. Translation: the Jews’ rejection of the Messiah allowed Gentiles to come to Christ, requiring no religious middleman.

When Israel at last honors Christ, He’ll rule the earth and bless all people, as pledged to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3). This belies the idea that the two divisions of Scripture are the Old and New Testaments. They are, in truth, (1) Prophecy: God’s promises to the Jews regarding “the gospel of the Kingdom” (Matthew 3:1,2; 4:17; 10:1-7, 15:21-24; 24:3-51; Acts 3:21). And (2) Mystery: something heretofore unrevealed, i.e., “the gospel of the grace of God” (“the secret”) given by the risen Jesus to Paul for this current age of Israel’s hardness while God populates “the Body of Christ” with Jews and Gentiles who put their trust in Jesus (Romans 16:25; Galatians 2:1-10; Ephesians 3:1-12; Colossians 4:2-4; 2 Peter 3:10-16).

All of the Bible is *for* us, but Paul’s key to distinguish Prophecy from Mystery is to *orthotomeo* (“make a straight cut,” “dissect correctly,” “rightly divide”) the Word of Truth (2 Timothy 2:15, 3:15).

DISCUSS: What happens if you confuse or mix Prophecy with Mystery?

***Branching Out***

***Romans 11:17-24***

By faith alone Gentile believers were “grafted” into God’s promise to Abraham to bless the world through his line (Genesis 12:1-2). “Saving faith” is God’s gift to all, not a prideful reward for right living or ethnic superiority (Ephesians 2:8-9).

DISCUSS: What is the purpose of Moses’ Laws before Christ and now?

***Promises, Promises***

***Romans 11:25-32***

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God condemns all mankind as hell-bound sinners so that He can offer mercy to all people (Ephesians 2:11-16). Sin is putting anything in God’s place. When we rely on what Christ’s death and resurrection accomplished for all of us, God declares us right with Him (Galatians 2:15-16; 1 Peter 3:18a).

Now we wait for Jesus to “*deliver* us from the wrath to come.” When all the Gentiles whom God has called have trusted Him, Christ will return “in the air” (the Rapture) to take believers, alive and dead, to be with Him always (1 Thessalonians 1:10, 4:13-18). Seven years later He’ll destroy evil at Armageddon and bring Israel home (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Zechariah 12). This, Christ’s “second coming,” ends the Tribulation, opening His 1,000-year reign on earth.

DISCUSS: How is the world preparing for these apocalyptic events?

Those who deny that Jesus is Messiah are God’s “enemies,” yet He loves Israel as His “treasured possession” (Deuteronomy 7:6). Exhibit A: He gave the land between the Nile and Euphrates to Isaac’s progeny, not to the Arabs (Ishmael’s offspring) (Genesis 15:18-20, 17:7-8, Ezekiel 47:13-23).

God guides history to prove that (1) He is God and (2) we aren’t (Daniel 2:21, 4:34-35). He has set aside Israel for a time to include Gentiles. It’s about relationship, not religion. Thanks to the cross, God swaps our rebellion for right standing with Him! Such a deal!

DISCUSS: What are indications that God is guiding history today?

***“How Deep Is Your Love?”***

***Romans 11:33-36***

God’s riches, wisdom and knowledge know no limits (Ephesians 3:8-12). He owns the universe (Deuteronomy 10:14; Psalm 24:1). And does with it as He pleases (Psalm 9:7-8). He knows everything from quarks to galaxies (Colossians 2:3). He *spoke* all into existence (John 1:3)! He wants to be worshipped by all of it (Philippians 2:9-11).

Your options: (1) trust yourself and try to be “good enough” or (2) accept God’s invitation to know Him personally (Matthew 7:13-14).

We have no clout to bargain with God. Get real … “what do you have that you didn’t receive?” (1 Corinthians 2:14, 4:7)? All you need to know about Him is in the Bible (Deuteronomy 29:29). He gives you breath and pulse. He loves no one more than He loves you. One day you’ll meet Him as either your Savior or your Judge. Is He *in* your life? He’s moved heaven and earth just to be invited in. If you’re still unsure, challenge Him: “God, if You’re real, show me.

His Deal

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