

I.N.I.

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost  
September 15, 2013  
Romans 11:13-15; 29-32

In Christ Jesus, , Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Last Sunday we talked about Paul's anguish of heart and soul over the fact of Israel's rejection of Jesus. His love was so great for his fellow Jews that he wished, if it were possible, that he be damned, so that they might be saved. That was chapter 9.

Paul continued that same thought in chapter 10 where he wrote: **BRETHREN, MY HEART'S DESIRE AND PRAYER TO GOD FOR ISRAEL IS THAT THEY MAY BE SAVED. FOR I BEAR THEM WITNESS THAT THEY HAVE A ZEAL FOR GOD, BUT NOT ACCORDING TO KNOWLEDGE. FOR THEY BEING IGNORANT OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND SEEKING TO ESTABLISH THEIR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS, HAVE NOT SUBMITTED TO THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.**

Although as a people, they are very "zealous for God," that zeal was sadly misplaced and misdirected. The majority believed they could bring righteousness to God, be good enough to merit God's love. That is impossible, for God demands perfect righteousness, perfection in thought, word and deed. The only way to have that perfect righteousness is through Jesus.

That is why Paul in chapter 10 also writes this: **THAT IF YOU CONFESS WITH YOUR MOUTH THE LORD JESUS AND BELIEVE IN YOUR HEART THAT GOD HAS RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD, YOU WILL BE SAVED. FOR WITH THE HEART ONE BELIEVES UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND WITH THE MOUTH CONFESSION IS MADE UNTO SALVATION.**

This thought then leads Paul to write this in 10:17: **SO THEN FAITH COMES BY HEARING, AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF GOD.**

Paul is leading up to this main theme or thought: It is by GRACE alone that one receives the righteousness that can stand before God. A righteousness that comes only through Jesus.

Paul begins chapter 11 by showing the amazing grace of God in His dealing with the Jews, the majority of whom rejected the Gospel of Christ. Paul states that the Lord will always maintain a remnant of the elect, "chosen by grace," to prove that this salvation is by grace and not by works. These elect, are from both Jew and Gentile.

Paul notes that the rejection by the majority of the Jews is a fulfillment of prophecy. The hardening of their hearts toward the Messiah, Jesus was foretold by Moses and Isaiah. The Lord proved Himself to be faithful to His word.

But in the rest of this chapter Paul moves on to another consideration that is most intriguing. The rejection of the Gospel by the majority of the Jews resulted in the gospel moving on to others: the Gentiles. Yet, this does not mean that the Lord has completely abandoned the Jews. No, the Gospel's success among the Gentiles is to serve to make the Jews envious or jealous. Paul explains this in the first verses of our sermon text: **FOR I SPEAK TO YOU GENTILES; INASMUCH AS I AM AN APOSTLE TO THE GENTILES, I MAGNIFY MY MINISTRY, IF BY ANY MEANS I MAY PROVOKE TO JEALOUSY THOSE WHO ARE MY FLESH AND SAVE SOME OF THEM.**

Paul is directing these words to the Gentile believers of the church in Rome. This is personal. Words from the Apostle to the Gentiles. Paul is showing these Gentile believers where they fit in God's plan of salvation.

Paul magnified his ministry, which means he worked zealously and tirelessly in his ministry to the Gentiles in order to teach the Gospel to as many as He could so that they would be won for Christ. But there was also a second result. The greater the number of Gentiles being brought to

faith, the greater would be the Jewish reaction. Yes, there was the backlash of bigotry and animosity toward the non-Jew by the Jews, but Paul is hoping for a resulting reaction of envy and jealousy when the Jews see the joy and blessings that their Gentile neighbors have in Christ. This envy might be an occasion for the Jew to rethink his rejection of the Gospel, since its power would be clearly seen in the lives of the believing Gentiles.

I witnessed something of this in my ministry in Saginaw. We had a very faithful member who worked at the GM plant. A fellow worker who knew him for years saw how he read his Bible at break time, how he reacted to problems and trials in his life and was impressed. When this man was going through a devastating divorce, he spoke with our member and asked him what he could do. Where could he turn to have the same confident joy, contentment and peace that our member had? He was jealous, envious of our member's faith and trust. The member directed him to Jesus and to the Word and asked if he would like me, his pastor to speak with him. He said yes he would.

I went to speak with him and the result was that he learned to know Jesus as his Savior, confessed Jesus, took Adult classes and joined our congregation. God worked in his heart first by his seeing the result of faith's work in his neighbor's heart.

That is what Paul is speaking about here. And that is our theme for this morning:

### **SEE THE WONDERS OF GOD'S AMAZING GRACE!**

#### **I: Envy is turned into Salvation.**

Paul earnestly desires the salvation of his own people but he also knows the Old Testament prophesies when they speak of only a remnant being saved. He is totally committed to reaching out to the Gentiles, but also hoping that in so doing it might provoke to jealousy the Jews--- **THOSE WHO ARE MY FLESH**---as Paul puts it.

He realizes that this Jewish jealousy will result in the salvation of only **SOME OF THEM**. Paul never envisions a mass conversion of all the biological descendants of Abraham, all the Jews by race.

But this secondary result to Paul's ministry to the Gentiles should not be a cause of concern for the Gentiles, or to make them feel they have been slighted in any way. It should be a cause of great joy for again Paul writes in vs. 15: **FOR IF THEIR BEING CAST AWAY IS THE RECONCILING OF THE WORLD, WHAT WILL THEIR ACCEPTANCE BE BUT LIFE FROM THE DEAD?**

#### **II: Rejection is turned into Reconciliation.**

Paul points out that there are no losers here. The rejection by the majority of the Jews to the Gospel because of their unbelief has meant that the Gospel of reconciliation has gone out to the Gentiles, into all the world. If such a great blessing as that was brought about by their rejection, what should be expected if a remnant of the Jews should be received back into His kingdom?

Paul answers his own question. **LIFE FROM THE DEAD!**

The reception back into His kingdom of those Jews who once rejected His Gospel, who now have had faith worked in their hearts, would be another proof of God's amazing grace to sinners: it would be like rising from the dead to life.

Paul continues to show how all this fits into the Lord's plan of grace to mankind. We read vs. 29-32: **FOR THE GIFTS AND THE CALLING OF GOD ARE IRREVOCABLE. FOR AS YOU WERE ONCE DISOBEDIENT TO GOD, YET HAVE NOW OBTAINED MERCY THROUGH THEIR DISOBEDIENCE, EVEN SO THESE ALSO HAVE NOW BEEN DISOBEDIENT, THAT THROUGH THE MERCY SHOWN YOU THEY ALSO MAY OBTAIN MERCY. FOR GOD HAS COMMITTED THEM ALL TO DISOBEDIENCE, THAT HE MIGHT HAVE MERCY ON ALL.**

#### **III: Disobedience is turned into Mercy for all.**

As a result of Jewish disobedience, the Gospel was taken to Gentiles who themselves **WERE ONCE DISOBEDIENT TO GOD**. These disobedient Gentiles were not looking for the God of

the Bible. They had no inherent worth or merit, they brought nothing to God that would make God love them. It was all Grace and Mercy.

God sent the Holy Spirit into their lives through His Word to lead them to repent of their sins and be led to believe in the righteousness that Christ earned for them through His perfect life and atoning sacrifice on the cross.

Remember the Parable of the Wedding Banquet. The Master sent His servants out to those who were invited to come, but they made excuses, ignored the invitation and didn't come. So the Master told His servants to go out into the highways and byways to invite all to come into the Wedding Banquet.

We are those who have been invited after the Jews rejected the invitation. God's mercy has invited us disobedient people, who have no merit of our own. In fact as Paul writes: **FOR GOD HAS COMMITTED THEM ALL TO DISOBEDIENCE**, both Jew and Gentile, all of us have been convicted of disobedience. But even as all have been disobedient, God's mercy and grace is given to all.

Paul wrote in 3:23-24: **FOR ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALL SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD, BEING JUSTIFIED FREELY BY HIS GRACE THROUGH THE REDEMPTION THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS.** No merit on our part. No boasting on our part. Only falling to our knees in repentance and looking in thankful love to our Savior for forgiveness, life and salvation.

Do we **SEE THE WONDERS OF GOD'S AMAZING GRACE**, His persistent will and desire that all be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth? If we do then we will not be apathetic in our response to the Gospel message. We **WILL** pass that Good News on down to our children and our children's children. We will rekindle our zeal, which sometimes smolders under excuses, busyness and indifference, to a roaring fire by consistently hearing and reading God's Word. We will not be lethargic, but "Let's go!"

When we show the love of Christ in our words and actions, when we display a confident, joyful and contented heart and life to the unbelieving world, it may provoke them to jealousy, to envy and they may want to find out why we are different from them. What is it we know that they do not? What a blessed opportunity then to reach out to them with that same Good News that we had given to us.

We are spiritually rich in a world of bankrupt people. Let us show off our riches in Christ, so that others will realize how bankrupt they are and be moved to want this spiritual richness.

Amen.