

Series Title: Truth Unashamed, Part 4

Sermon Title: Week 6: The Mystery of God's Grace

Date: 02-10-19

- **Here we are in Romans 11! Deep/challenging... why are we spending time on this? Because a foundation of our faith is that scripture is God's word, and it is GOOD, even when it is hard- to understand, and even accept. That said, ONE MORE REVIEW...**

† So, in a nutshell...

In Romans 9:1-9:29, we saw the great Truth that God is SOVEREIGN.

Emphasis is on GOD'S CHOICE of how, when, and through whom He works, always according to His MERCY.

In Romans 9:30 through chapter 10, Paul's emphasis moves to OUR CHOICE of how we respond to God's mercy.

We are called to respond in FAITH, and faith comes from HEARING

Romans 10:17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.

- **To understand Romans, we must hold at the same time – in tension- the realities of God's sovereignty and our free will. Somehow, both are true. But for all the argument that has surrounded this topic for centuries, if we step back, they both point to the greatest attribute of God, the attribute that sums up God's sovereignty, his mercy, his love, his very nature... the GREAT MYSTERY of GOD'S GRACE**

† As we move into chapter 11, Paul turns to the great mystery of God's GRACE.

- **We talked about this in depth back in chapters 5-8. That's God's GRACE is about much more than just forgiveness and mercy. His GRACE is the fullness of his presence, his goodness TO US, and his activity through us. TWO PASSAGES....**

Colossians 1:25-27 I have become its (the church) servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—²⁶ the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. ²⁷ To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

- **Glorious riches of mystery of God's grace- Christ is in you. AT WORK in you- thus we live in the PRESENT HOPE of God's glory- his presence**

Ephesians 2:4-9 But because of his **great love** for us, God, who is **rich in mercy**,⁵ **made us alive with Christ** even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. **(how much power does a dead person have to make themselves alive? NONE)**⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift **(faith!)** of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

- **We must hear. This truth of God's Grace that Paul is going to demonstrate today is one of the hardest things for us to really accept, because it requires us to lay down control, but it is at the same time the doorway into the freedom and courage to STAND and PREVAIL in life with PEACE the midst of this storm we are in.**
- **HEAR! God invites us to CHOOSE to RECEIVE HIM, by faith, and we are CALLED TO TELL so that others may have the opportunity to HEAR and receive. AND... inseparable from God's call to us is reality that... There is NOTHING we can do to enter into God's LIFE apart**

from HIS GRACE making it happen. Likewise, it is by His GRACE we experience the goodness of HIS LIFE TO US, as we walk each day by FAITH- in a relationship with him.

- NOW, as we enter chap 11, Paul brings us to the great reality of God's grace as he circles back to the question of WHY ISRAEL didn't accept Christ, and he directly asks the question he has implied several times....

✠ Did God reject Israel?

Romans 11:1-2 *I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. ² God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew.*

- Paul says “look at me! I'm an Israelite with great credentials. God hasn't rejected me, and he hasn't rejected his people.”
- FIRST POINT: Israel still plays a part in God's plan...
- SECOND: God doesn't choose a people, and then reject them. He hasn't done that to Israel, and he doesn't do that to believers. This entire passage is strong statement as to the security of the believer.
- Paul continues with example to his own question...

Don't you know what Scripture says in the passage about Elijah—how he appealed to God against Israel:

✠ Elijah's cry, our cry

Romans 11:3 *“Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me”?*

- Story of OT prophet Elijah... some of most dramatic stories of OT involve Elijah... but here, he is losing hope. Surrounded by enemies of God on every side, he basically cry's out... GOD! Don't you see what is going on! A little help!
- QUESTION... have you been there? Surrounded by events that don't make sense to you? Because even though very different time and context, God's answer to Elijah also is God's answer to us when we look at our present and future and recognize that we ARE NOT IN CONTROL... ANSWER OF GOD'S GRACE

✠ The great answer of God's Grace

Romans 11:4-6 *And what was God's answer to him? (Elijah- everyone has abandoned) “I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.”*

- Baal- idol of OT. No Elijah, it may seem like everyone has abandoned me, but that isn't the case.
- I HAVE RESERVED for myself seven thousand (likely symbolic number) who have stayed faithful. KEY!! It is GOD who took the initiative to insure this remnant of His people remained faithful. It was no fortunate accident. ELIJAH- it may seem like all is out of control, but I AM IN CONTROL, and all is not lost!
- NOW, Paul brings the example into his present tense.

⁵ So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. ⁶ And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

- Speaking of Israel, Paul proclaims that God's people had not completely rejected Christ. But that God- as an act of His Grace- had chosen for there to be a remnant- a small number- of Israel who DID believe.
- HERE PAUL IS EMPHATIC. The ONLY REASON this small number of Israelites believed is because of God's GRACE to them. It had NOTHING TO DO WITH them deserving, being smarter, more creative, able to do more for God because of their ability to WORK, to produce for him... THIS FIRST GENERATION OF JEWISH BELIEVERS chose to respond to

the GOOD NEWS OF JESUS because GOD CHOSE TO ACCOMPLISH HIS WORK through them.

- *THINK OF THIS... in the first years of Christian movement, TONS HAPPENED.*
 - *Peters sermon at Pentecost*
 - *Activity of all the believers in Jerusalem as church grew*
 - *Peter and John on trial, put in prison, delivered from Prison*
 - *Stephen preaching and martyred*
 - *All the while Paul persecuting the church, then God calls Paul to be the missionary to gentiles*
 - *All of Pauls journeys, new churches, new believers,*
- *HUGE STORY INVOLVING MANY PEOPLE who all were hearing and receiving the Gospel, their lives being changed, themselves beginning to follow Jesus.... AND NONE OF IT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED APART FROM GOD'S GRACE. Somehow, in every new believer, every work of these real people- just like you and me- God's grace was at work, as God daily took the initiative, moving in their lives.*
- *CHURCH! This is FREEDOM. When you chose to believe, it was because of God's grace at work in your lives.*
- *In your story, whatever is happening, you are not alone. Your story has eternal significance, because CHRIST IS IN YOU, working out his plan for you. Things may be HARD NOW, but God is at work. WE CAN TRUST...*
- *This FREES US to live in the NOW, to focus on how God is shaping us, healing us, teaching us, stretching us, working through us, RIGHT NOW.*
- *THEN- rather than looking into the future with crushing weight of uncertainty, we can step into each day with certainty that there is a bigger picture that WE DON'T HAVE TO CONTROL, but that God is leading us into. WE CAN TRUST HIM*
- *I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO GET FURTHER WITH THIS TEXT TODAY, BUT NEED to STOP HERE. WANT TO DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT....*

- **GOING TO SPEND TIME IN PRAYER**
- **How is God speaking this truth into your life?**
 - **You might be like Elijah... sense of helplessness of dynamics in your life. OR, you may not feel helpless, but the future is full of uncertainties.**
 - **GOD'S GRACE invites you to consider everything you can't control. TRUST THESE... lay these burdens down**
 - **GOD'S GRACE at work in you... what can you INFLUENCE, right now?**
 - **Compassionate presence**
 - **Boundaries**
 - **Generosity**
 - **Listener**
 - **Invite someone to speak into your life- maybe God's grace is about conviction, learning, surrendering, stop fighting**
 - **Take the next step**
 - **GODS GRACE invites you to engage the challenge of TODAY, (with prayer, leadership of God's word, leadership of his spirit)... with the peace and freedom of trusting God with TOMORROW, because HE IS AT WORK.**
 - **Paul summed this up in Philippians 1 when he said "for me, to live is Christ, to die is Gain". This is not fatalistic sentiment, but a perspective courage.**
 - **IT MAY BE you have not taken the step to receive Christ by faith. Romans 10:9-10... if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is LORD, believe in your heart that God raised him from the Dead, you are saved. IF YOU ARE WRESTLING with this, it is because God is already at work in your life**