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Romans

**For this is My covenant with them,
When I take away their sins. Romans 11:27**

As with the preceding verse, this one needs to be taken in context. It is tied directly to the thought of verse 26 and should be read as a whole -

"And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

'The Deliverer will come out of Zion,
And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;
For this is My covenant with them,
When I take away their sins.'"

More than just a quote tied to another quote from a different passage of Scripture as Paul often does, the citing of verse 27 follows directly after the previous quote from Isaiah 59 which was used in verse 26. Here is the entire original citation from that chapter -

"'The Redeemer will come to Zion,
And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,'
Says the Lord.

'As for Me,' says the Lord, 'this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your

descendants' descendants," says the Lord, "from this time and forevermore."
Isaiah 59:20, 21

Paul is stating that what was spoken to Isaiah was future to Isaiah's time. But even more, it was future to Paul's time as well. As Paul is the apostle to the gentiles and because his epistles are doctrine for the church age, then "when I take away their sins" must be yet future to us even now. National Israel will be delivered, according to God's "covenant with them."

If one reads commentaries from great scholars of the 17th - 19th centuries, it is evident that they, long before Israel was re-established as a national entity, felt that this was speaking of a future time of Jewish acceptance of Christ. Albert Barnes felt that "God will doubtless convert the Jews, as he does the Gentiles, by human means, and in connection with the prayers of his people..." He couldn't foresee this as an actual return to the land, nor an actual return of Jesus to them, but he understood that the Jews would be converted in a massive way in the future.

Adam Clarke said that, "It may not be amiss to subjoin here a collection of those texts in the Old Testament that seem to point out a restoration of the Jewish commonwealth to a higher degree of excellence than it has yet attained." After stating this, he cites 32 Old Testament passages which he says specifically applied to national Israel and which will be enjoyed by them in the future. He understood, because the Bible teaches, that these promises were never intended for the church.

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown states the following concerning this: "Those who believe that there are no predictions regarding the literal Israel in the Old Testament, that stretch beyond the end of the Jewish economy, are obliged to view these quotations by the apostle as mere adaptations of Old Testament language to express his own predictions [Alexander on Isaiah, &c.]. But how forced this is, we shall presently see." These scholars clearly understood that replacement theology is "forced" and unnatural. It is a contrivance of man and not of God.

The list of such scholars continues on with the common element among them that they believed in a literal interpretation of these passages. The main principle concerning such interpretation is, "If a passage can be taken literally then it should be taken literally, unless there is a compelling reason for it not to be so taken." Unfortunately, though this is a principle element of biblical interpretation, and even though there is no "compelling reason" for dismissing a literal interpretation of Romans 11:26 & 27, far too many people simply dismiss the passage as "spiritual."

And this, inexcusably, continues on even after the miraculous return of Israel the people to Israel the land. Their current state of disobedience is irrelevant. The covenant was from God and therefore it is inviolable. He is working in the world, preparing them in advance, for the fulfillment of these sure promises.

Life application: Romans 11 is to be literally interpreted. Accept and believe.

Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. Romans 11:28

"Concerning the gospel..." Because of their rejection of the good news (meaning Israel as is evident from the preceding verses), it is determined that they "are enemies for your sake."

As Paul is writing to the gentiles, this tells us that the bond of fraternal love found in Christ is severed towards those who reject Him, including those from His select and special group of people. Their selection is noted, for example, in Deuteronomy 7:6 -

"For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth."

However, on another level, that of "election," Paul goes on to say that "they are beloved for the sake of the fathers." The "fathers" are those to whom the promises were made. They include Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve sons of Israel. If one considers Paul's use of "fathers" as the same concept as the "patriarchs," then this would also include David who is, along with the others, termed a patriarch in Acts 7:8.

This verse seems internally contradictory, but "enemies" is being used in opposition to "beloved" to show a distinction between the two which is reflected on different levels. They are cut off from the holy tree for the purpose of corporate blessing, and yet they are still viewed with an end-purpose in mind. God will continue to keep them as a people as He covenanted with them -

"Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, nor shall I abhor them, to utterly destroy them and break My covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God." Leviticus 16:44

The context of Leviticus 26:14-43 shows that God in no way approves of their conduct during their time of exile, but the covenant bond (26:44) is stronger than the consequences of their disobedience, extreme as those consequences may be. To be sure, God does not possess changing human emotions as we do. Rather, these terms are applied to Him who is unchanging to show exactly that; His character doesn't vacillate as we move in relation to Him.

Regardless of whether the church is now in God's favor and Israel is currently an "enemy" for the sake of the gospel, it is unthinkable that those promises made to His chosen people should ever be revoked, fail, or be replaced by another group. What He has promised to Israel must stand, and in fact it will stand.

Life application: When you called on Jesus, the Bible says that you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Just as God will never reject His people, even when disobedient, He will never reject you, even if you fall from whatever position of obedience to His word that you once held. In the end, rewards and

losses will result based on your conduct, but your salvation will never again come into question.

For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. Romans 11:29

In context, this verse is speaking of Israel's national election, not individual matters concerning God's people. The word for "gifts" here, charisma, is also applied to individual gifts throughout the New Testament. Such gifts include the spiritual gifts given by God to his children for the benefit of the church - ministry, wisdom, healing, etc. The term "calling" is likewise used elsewhere when speaking of the calling of individuals; the invitation extended to come and partake of His gift of salvation.

It is true that such gifts and calling may be irrevocable towards the individual, however, this is not the context of Romans 11:29 and so the context should be maintained. It would be a stretch to use this verse as a stand-alone to justify eternal salvation of the believer or the surety of maintaining the gifts which have been bestowed. Rather, such concepts must be found elsewhere to support those tenets. Only if such is the case (and it is) can the wording of Romans 11:29 be applied to individual matters.

Paul has been speaking of the covenantal promises made to Israel. In this, God has spoken and therefore the thing He has promised, He will fulfill. He will never entirely cut Israel off from being a people or from receiving His graces. They have been called and therefore the calling stands, regardless of their conduct.

Life application: Like Israel who continuously failed to live out their calling and yet has never been cast off, we will also at times fail to live out our own calling. However, the Bible fully supports the notion of eternal salvation. Truly, like national Israel, the individual gifts and calling are irrevocable when we are in Christ.

For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience,... Romans 11:30

Romans 11:30-32 are "mercy verses." Four times in three verses the concept of God's mercy is revealed in His dealings with man. The section begins with "for" which means that it cannot be separated from the previous thought, but instead explains it. We have been shown the state of the Jewish people in relation to the gentiles concerning both the gospel and election; they are enemies of God in one respect, but beloved by Him in another. The reason for this is that regardless of their state of obedience, they are "beloved for the sake of the fathers."

In the United States, there is a law - the US Constitution. The office of President is defined in this law. If a president adheres to the precepts of that office, then he is a "friend" of that law. If he fails to adhere to it, he is an "enemy" of that same law. The law hasn't changed, but he has changed in relation to it. This however doesn't mean that all presidents will be enemies of the law. There is a process for electing presidents, removing presidents, etc. For the sake of the presidency, the office of the president is "beloved" of the constitution even if the current president is its enemy.

This is somewhat like what is going on with Israel and this is what the "for" in Romans 11:30 is explaining. "For you were once disobedient to God..." is speaking of the gentiles. There was nothing to draw them close to God. They had inherited their first father's sin and there was no covenant to bring them into a binding relationship. Only Israel had such a mark of distinction. Outside of them, God in "bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways" (Acts 14:16).

However, because of Christ, the gentiles could be brought near to God in a new way. We "were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience." The Jewish people as a whole were disobedient to the New Covenant found in Christ, desiring to remain under the Old (see Luke 5:36-39). But the Old only pointed to the New and so by rejecting the New, the curses of the Old came upon them.

During this time of disobedience, those who were once far off (the gentiles) have been brought near. We have obtained the mercy of Christ which would otherwise have gone directly to Israel, thus ushering in the Kingdom Age. But God, knowing they would reject Jesus, ordained an entirely separate dispensation during their time of being cast off, the Church Age. This is why Paul says that "through their disobedience" we have obtained mercy.

And yet, at the same time, the Old Covenant guaranteed that they (as a collective whole) would remain beloved of God regardless of their obedience or disobedience. This was because of the promises made to the fathers, which is actually recorded in their covenant.

When America has a disobedient president, there are provisions for impeachment and removal of that individual, but these don't affect the status of the office itself. When Israel is collectively disobedient, there are provisions for punishment (Leviticus 26/Deuteronomy 28), but these don't affect the status of the promises made to the fathers. Again, just as the Constitution is fixed and unchanging (not an "organic" document), even when the president changes in relation to it, so is it with Israel and the promises of God. The promises don't change, but the people may change in relation to them.

Understanding this concept should keep the church from error, but the church has failed to grasp it and in many denominations she still fails to grasp it. What is written of Israel is binding and it is unchanging. Unlike the US Constitution which can be amended, God's word is eternal. We err when we ascribe the change which has taken place in Israel to the covenant. When we do so, several things happen -

- 1) We misinterpret God's plans for the nation of Israel
- 2) We misunderstand the church's place in redemptive history
- 3) We ascribe (whether we admit it or not) fault to God's covenant instead of where it rightly belongs. And by doing so,
- 4) We call into question God's integrity by indicating that His covenant isn't reliable

Paul is showing us this sequence of events for a reason and asking us to pay heed to it. If God isn't reliable toward His beloved but disobedient people Israel, then He won't be reliable to His objects of mercy during this point in history either. God forbid that this would ever be true!

Life application: God doesn't change. God's word is a reflection of who He is. God's word is unchanging and reliable. Stand firm in your faith and in the surety of the words of Scripture.

...even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. Romans 11:31

The reciprocal of verse 30 is now given. Placing both verses side by side will provide clarity -

"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."

The disobedience of the Jews led to mercy upon the gentiles (verse 30). However, this isn't the end of the story as so many in the church seem to believe. Instead, Paul says "even so..." The Greek word for "even so" indicates "in this manner." And so, in the same way as verse 30 was explained concerning the gentiles, it can now be shown true with the Jews.

"These also have now been disobedient..." In the ages past, God's mercy was shown on the Jews, calling them, and giving them His covenant and its associated care, protection, and blessings. During this time, the gentiles were mostly excluded from that favored status. However, the covenant contained stern warnings for disobedience. There was a first exile which was intended as chastisement for correction. This was a 70-year exile to Babylon. However, disobedience followed again after restoration; Christ was rejected and crucified.

And even after the resurrection, the ultimate proof of His Messiah-ship, He was rejected. A second time of punishment would come.

How long would this punishment last? The Bible tells us specifically. In Ezekiel 4, the times of punishment are spelled out in detail by using the prophet as an object lesson. He was told to lay on his side. Once he was to lay on his left side for 390 days (Israel's punishment). Then he was told to lay on his right side for 40 days (Judah's punishment). This is a total of 430 days. He was told each day equated to 1 year. Therefore, Israel (the combined nation) could expect 430 years of exile. The Bible and history record the Babylonian exile which lasted 70 years. That left 360 years of exile for continued disobedience.

However, there is a caveat found in the curses of Leviticus 26. In verse 18, it says - "And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins."

If the first exile didn't have its intended effect, the second term would be multiplied by 7. Therefore, 360 years multiplied by 7 comes to a total of 2520 years. From the dating of the original exile (God's mercy is evidenced in the times of punishment running concurrently) until 14 May of 1948 (Israel's reestablishment) it was, as history records, 2520 biblical years. A biblical year (also called a "prophetic year") is 360 days, not 365 days. Exactly as God determined in ages past, Israel was reestablished as a nation 907,200 days after its original date of exile - perfection in the details of Scripture which match what occurred in history.

This doesn't mean that Israel is again in a state of obedience, but that God was faithful in that "through mercy shown to you they may obtain mercy." The Church Age has been a time of God's mercy upon the gentiles during Israel's time of rejection. Now, the Church Age is nearing its end and God is readying Israel to take its rightful place in redemptive history; the Kingdom Age anticipated by the apostles in Acts 1:6 is just ahead of us. Israel of today is not an aberration, but a part of God's perfectly detailed and perfectly executed plan for the people of the world.

Life application: We don't need to guess or speculate about fulfilled matters of redemptive history. They are exactly and precisely detailed in God's word. What we need to do is keep our noses in that word and draw out what He has so meticulously conveyed to us... read your Bible!