

The Gospel Announced: The Gospel will Succeed

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[0 : 00] So, on page 1138, Romans chapter 11. So, 1138, we're going to read from verse 11 to the end of the chapter, verse 36.

Again, I ask, did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all. Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious.

But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring?

I'm talking to you, Gentiles. In so much as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy.

[1 : 10] If the root is holy, so are the branches. Well, if some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others, and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches.

If you do, consider this. You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.

Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.

Consider, therefore, the kindness and sternness of God. Sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness.

Otherwise, you also will be cut off. And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

[2 : 22] After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature, were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited. Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.

And so all Israel will be saved. As it is written, the Deliverer will come from Zion. He will turn godlessness away from Jacob.

And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins. As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account. But as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs.

For God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. Just as you who are at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you.

[3 : 43] For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all. Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God that God should repay him?

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen. Thanks very much, Ralph.

Well, we're taking out quite a large chunk this morning. We're not going to cover every single verse. And there may be questions that arise. And so, as always, if there are questions that you have afterwards, please do talk with me.

Well, let's pray and ask for God's help for us as we look at this together. Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

[5 : 07] How unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out! Father, as we think about your work in this world and your plan of salvation, there is so much that we cannot get our minds around.

But yet there is so much that you have revealed to us. There are things that you have made clear. And it's to those clear things that we now turn and ask.

That you would make them understandable to our minds. And that you would implant them deep within our hearts.

So that we see the wonder afresh of your amazing grace. The way in which your gospel works to save people.

And we ask, Father, for your Holy Spirit to be at work in us all together now. In Jesus' name.

[6 : 25] Amen. Amen. You may remember the children's story called The Magic Porridge Pot.

Do you remember reading that when you were a bit younger? It's about a little girl who lived with her grandmother. And because they were very poor, grandmother sent the little girl off into the forest to find food.

And while she was there, she meets this old lady who gives her the magic porridge pot. And it came with two very simple instructions. If you wanted porridge, you simply said, cook, little pot, cook.

And you got as much porridge as you wanted. And when you wanted it to stop, you said, stop, little pot, stop. And the porridge pot would stop cooking. And everything was going well.

Everything was fine until one day the little girl forgot how to stop the porridge pot. And the porridge overflowed into the kitchen. And soon the porridge began to overflow out the door and down the road.

[7 : 37] And no matter what she said, the porridge continued to flow. And soon every street in the village and every home, according to my little book anyway, was full of porridge.

And it kept overflowing. But God's grace is like this porridge pot. It continues to overflow to all kinds of people in all kinds of places, especially to those who have rejected his grace.

Look at verse 11. Again, I ask. Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery?

This question here is setting the big theme for the rest of the text. And it's simply this. It's asking this question. People who have gone to church. People who grew up reading their Bibles.

People who know the good news of Jesus, but have now turned their back on God. Are they beyond recovery? Have they fallen beyond grace?

[8 : 53] Have they put themselves out of reach of God's grace? Well, look at the answer.

Not at all. No one is beyond God's grace. In fact, we should never write people off as having no hope.

God's grace continues to flow to all kinds of people in all kinds of places, especially to those who have rejected his grace.

So we're going to look at the way in which God's grace overflows into people's lives. First, the attractive nature of God's grace. Let's read verse 11 again.

Again, I ask. Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all. Rather, because of their transgression, because of their rejection of God's grace, salvation has come to the Gentiles, to people who were irreligious, to people who never went to church or read their Bibles, to make Israel envious.

[10 : 08] You see, God's plan for those who have rejected his grace and turned his back on him is to make them envious and jealous. If you remember the illustration from a couple of weeks ago, it's like the little, trying to give a gift to one of your little children.

You want them to enjoy this gift that you have prepared for them. You want them to take pleasure in it, to open it and to enjoy it because it's good for them. But instead of receiving it from you, they reject it and throw it away in a temper.

So what can you do because you desperately want your child to have this good gift? Well, you take it away from your child and you go next door and you give it to the kid who lives there.

And immediately that child sees how beautiful this gift is and they receive it with joy and they open it, they unpack it and they're delighted with it. And it's only then will your child see its true value and want it back.

Why? Because they have become envious. They've become jealous. They want the gift. And that's God's purpose in making his grace known to other people.

[11 : 30] Look at verse 13. I am talking to you Gentiles in as much as I am an apostle to the Gentiles. I make much of my ministry.

So here's Paul who's grown up with his religious background. But now he says, look, I'm now preaching God's grace to those who are not my loved ones, those who are not my people, those who are not within my family.

And here's the reason, verse 14, in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them.

The hope is that people who grew up knowing God's grace but have now turned their back on it will see God's grace in the life of other people and will say, I want that too.

You see, there is something deeply attractive about a person who has come to experience the grace of God. Not only do you know God's forgiveness and love in your mind and in your head, but you actually are transformed and changed.

[12 : 42] You become incredibly forgiving and loving of other people. Not only do you experience peace with God and an acceptance with God, but you become a person of peace, a person who begins to accept others no matter what their background is.

When we experience the grace of God in our own life, then grace begins to overflow from us to those around us. We display a character that is beautiful and attractive and people will look at your life and they'll want to know, what is the difference with you?

Why do you behave that way? Why are you so different? And they will become envious and jealous and will want what you have.

They will want who you have, the Lord Jesus. So if you are a Christian, God's grace has overflowed into your life so that God's grace can overflow from your life to other people, especially to those who have rejected his grace.

second, the humbling nature of God's grace. Look at verse 17. If some of the branches have been broken off, that is, those who have rejected God's grace.

[14 : 17] If some of the branches have been broken off and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches.

If you are somebody here this morning who has experienced God's grace in your own life, don't sit back and gloat and boast. Don't think that somehow you are better or superior than those who once used to sit here or once had heard God's grace but have now rejected God's grace.

Look at the rest of verse 18. If you do, consider this, you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

The picture is very clear, isn't it? We've got here an olive tree and the only way that that tree is going to live is because of its roots.

The root gives it life. It nourishes it and it feeds it. And if you were to cut a branch off from that tree, it will die because it's not connected to the roots.

[15 : 33] Well, the image is this, that God's grace is the root for our life. It gives us forgiveness. It brings us peace with God.

It's the nourishing sap that feeds us. But if you are cut off from God's grace, if you are taken away from that source, you will die.

Again, look at the end of verse 18. You do not support the root, but the root supports you. If you are a Christian, you are only a Christian because of God's grace in your life.

We have nothing whatsoever to boast about or to gloat over or somehow think I am superior because I have God's grace. In fact, he's saying, look carefully at the way in which God has accepted you.

Look at verse 17 again. If some of the branches have been broken off and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root.

[16 : 47] If you have God's grace, it's only because you have been grafted in. You were once outsiders. Look at the word there.

You were a wild olive shoot. You belonged elsewhere, but you were cut off from that and you were grafted into the tree of life, into God's grace.

And now you are included and welcomed and accepted as one of his children. So, look at the end of verse 20.

Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.

It's a warning. Don't ever become boastful. Don't ever become superior. Be a humble person. Don't ever think that you're somehow better for knowing God's grace than the person who has rejected God's grace.

[17:55] Be careful, he is saying. Verse 22. Consider therefore the kindness and the sternness of God. Sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness.

Otherwise, you also will be cut off. There is no room for an arrogant and boastful Christian.

So imagine then what the community would be like if we were to live humble lives. Not judging and condemning those who have rejected God's grace.

Not pointing our fingers and counting up all their sins and saying, oh, you know what, they weren't there again on Sunday. Or did you hear about what they did last week? Not boasting and gloating over them all the time.

Verse 24. After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature and contrary to nature, in other words, it was nothing to do with yourself, were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

[19:16] By living such humble lives, God's grace will overflow from you to others, especially to those who have grown up knowing God's grace, but at present are rejecting it.

They too, he is saying, can still be grafted in. So there is an attractive nature.

There is a humbling nature that God's grace brings to us. And third, the pursuing nature of God's grace. Look at verse 25.

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may be conceited. He says, look, the mystery is clear.

It's not hidden. It's been made known. And this is what the mystery is, that God's grace overflows to all kinds of people in all kinds of places.

[20:20] It doesn't matter whether you are black or white, whether you are Irish or French, religious or irreligious. God's grace overflows all the time, irrespective of what your background may be.

And his grace continues to overflow, especially to those who have rejected his grace. Look at the rest of verse 25. Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.

He's making it clear that there were those like those of Israel who had grown up knowing God's grace. They'd heard the stories. They'd experienced so much. And in their rejection of it, in their rejection of Jesus, the Messiah, it had now begun to overflow to other nations and to other people. But the point is, God had not given up on them. He didn't turn his back on them. Verse 26. And so, all Israel will be saved as it is written.

The Deliverer will come from Zion. He will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins. God's grace will continue to overflow.

[21:41] He doesn't give up on his people. He continues to pursue them, to chase after them. He doesn't write people off just because they've stopped going to church or just because they don't read their Bibles anymore or because they've had one big failure in their life.

He doesn't write them off. Recently, I cleared out a small box in my study and inside it, I discovered a load of letters, love letters from Kirstie.

Now, I'm not going to read them all. They'll be published in the paper someday. But they were letters of pursuit at a time when I had ignored her love and I wouldn't write to her anymore and I thought she'd done this and, well, you know how it goes.

But in one of her letters, I read this, that while she hadn't heard from me, she would keep writing to me. Her love was still there even though I had pushed it away.

I think that's how it went anyway. You can check that later. But in the same way, God continues to pursue us and to chase after us even though our arms push Him away and reject His grace.

[23:01] That is why we can say with such confidence in verse 26, and so all Israel will be saved. All God's people will be saved.

He will pursue them. He will chase them. He will bring them in. Of course, here in verse 26, Israel here is, I think, an all-inclusive term referring to all God's people.

Go back a minute to chapter 9, verse 6. Chapter 9, verse 6. This is how he started his whole theme out.

It is not as though God's word had failed. It's not that God has given up on His people. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.

You see, the true Israel, the true people of God are defined not by nationality or race, but by their faith in Christ, by their faith in the Lord Jesus.

[24 : 10] So God, as He pursues His people by grace, we can be confident, absolutely assured, that He will save all those He will save.

Go back to chapter 11, verse 29. For God's gifts and His call are irrevocable.

those whom God calls out to. God will save and He will bring to Himself.

God's grace overflows. And let's not lose the focus here. Just because people reject God's grace, it doesn't mean that He will reject them.

Look at verse 30. Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience.

[25 : 14] So again, He's repeating the theme that people who had rejected God's mercy, it now overflows to other people who have accepted God's mercy. But, what about those who did reject it?

What about them? Well, He tells us in verse 31. So they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you.

For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that He may have mercy on them all. He saves everybody in exactly the same way. We're all disobedient.

We've all rejected Him. We've all rebelled on Him. And it's only because of His kindness and His mercy that any of us are His children. Let me make it very practical to us.

If you are a Christian and you have friends or family who have grown up knowing all about God's grace and mercy, maybe you have a close friend, maybe it's a son or a daughter or a spouse.

[26 : 30] But at this point in time even though they have all the wealth and all the knowledge and the understanding they are rejecting it and pushing it away. The point is this.

When they see God's mercy and grace in your life, when they see the way it transforms your life and changes you, you will become so attractive to them.

When they see your humble life, the way in which you don't point fingers and accuse and nag and the way you accept, it will cause their hearts to become soft and they will begin to see the beauty of God's mercy and grace in your life and they will say that is what I want.

I need the one who can make that change in my life. God's grace overflows to all kinds of people especially, especially to those who have rejected his grace.

As we've gone through this section in Romans, it's raised lots and lots of questions for me and I know it's raised lots and lots of questions to you with some of the conversations that we've had and I don't pretend to have all the answers as to why some people accept God's grace and why other people reject God's grace.

[28 : 03] I don't understand how God chooses some and yet we are all responsible for our choices. I don't know why I had the privilege of growing up in a Christian home where I was taught the good news about Jesus while there are many thousands and millions across the world who still haven't heard.

I don't understand it. I can't get my head around it. But yet I do know this and I understand this and it is crystal clear that God's grace continues to flow to all kinds of people in all kinds of places across this world especially to those who have rejected his grace.

He does not give up on his people. And so he concludes verse 33 Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God.

It's amazing just to stand back and see how God works his salvation in so many places and in so many people.

How unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out. None of us could think up this idea this plan of salvation this overflow of grace.

[29 : 27] None of us could create something as wonderful and as beautiful as God's grace towards us in his son. Verse 34 Who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counsellor?

Did God ever come along to you and consult you or me and ask how do I run the universe? Did God ever call into you and ask for advice about how he should rule the world?

So why would we ever think that God would somehow fail in his salvation's plan or that he somehow got it wrong? God knows what he is doing.

Verse 35 Who has ever given to God that God should repay him? The fact that God has saved anyone is incredible and his grace continues to overflow.

Verse 36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. God is the source of all life.

[30 : 41] He is the sustainer of all life. He is the saviour of all kinds of people in all kinds of places and nobody is beyond his limits.

Nobody is so far away, especially those who have rejected his grace. To him won't be the glory forever.

Amen. Let's pray. Let's pray. Amen. Just take a moment or two.

Maybe it's to pray for yourself if you have not yet known God's grace in your own life. Maybe you want to pray for a friend or someone within your family who at this moment in time is rejecting or pushing against God's grace.

Pray for them. That God would soften their hearts. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[32 : 16] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Father God, you are God and we are not. We have many questions about salvation and about faith. Things we just don't understand and things we just can't comprehend. But we stand back in amazement. We stand back trusting you.

And seeing so clearly that your grace continues to overflow. And we pray that by the power of your Holy Spirit, your mercy and your kindness would flow to those who we know and love.

[33 : 23] That they would cry out for forgiveness. That they would find peace with God. And that, Father, you would show your grace to us afresh in a deeper way.

So that we become more attractive. So that we become more humble. And that from the overflow of our lives, people would see the goodness and the grace of God.

And come to trust in him. We ask this for your honour. And for your glory alone.

Amen. We're going to...