

## “Irrevocably Yours”

### **Scripture: Romans 11**

Graphic: none

Key Verses: 29 for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Theme: God’s promises and provision are trustworthy. If God has not given up on the nation of Israel, God certainly is not going to revoke the promises, gifts, and calling in your life. God will use your faithfulness to bring other to Christ, for His sake and the Kingdom.

### **1) Introduction**

- a) Have you ever said something and instantly wished you could take it back? Sometimes the mouth works faster than the brain and you want to hit “Pause,” rewind a bit, and say the whole thing differently. Do-overs. If you play golf it’s what? (A mulligan)
- b) Can you guess what my favorite key on the keyboard is? One that I push more than any other key? BACKSPACE...followed only by DELETE
- c) When I was a youngster, I loved the Choose Your Own Adventure books – remember those? Each story ends with two options: a narrative fork in the road where one choice usually continues well while one ends poorly. So if you chose to fight the three-headed space alien and met your death by his plasma ray-gun on page 83, you could just go back and choose to flee on your spaceship to Moonbase Alpha by turning to page 86. It was always “happily ever after.”
- d) But nothing is forever, right? We love do-overs. Options, choices, second chances. In fact, it’s one of the marks of our culture. As a generous and forgiving society, we like to be able to give people a second chance, and on a consumer level, there’s just about nothing that we can’t throw out and “do over,” or get another one.
- e) Referees’ judgment calls don’t always stand because football coaches have red flags...and extra officials are assigned to video replay every call. Because the customer is always right, we have 30-day return policies on widescreen televisions. Typewriters and white-out have been replaced by the DELETE arrow on the Edit drop-down menu.
- f) Even bigger events in life can be reversed as well. Marriages end in divorce more often than they survive. Unplanned pregnancies can be aborted. If you don’t like your name after all these years, you can legally change it.

Unhealthy consumer debt can be erased through bankruptcy. If you want more kids, the billboard by the freeway says you can even reverse a vasectomy.

- g) In an interactive world, we can review our choices and change our choices after we've already made our choices. Little is permanent. Little is irrevocable.
- h) That's a strong word. So final. So it comes, out of the mouth, with a thud. Irrevocable. Done. Final. That's it.
- i) As we turn to the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Romans, Paul writes to the Gentiles in Rome and reminds them that even though it seems like everything in this life is revocable, the promises that God made to the people of Israel are not...they are irrevocable...
- j) When it seems like nothing else in our lives is permanent and trustworthy...God's gifts and calling are irrevocable.
- k) Open your Bibles with me to Romans, chapter 11...this morning we are going to blaze through this whole chapter, so be ready to pay attention...
- l) Let's pray...

## 2) Scripture

### a) Read verse 1-2a

- i) Now, remember, Paul is writing to the Gentile believers in Rome...and Paul was a Roman citizen, but he was a Jew and not a Gentile...
- ii) The Gentile Christians in Rome were sort of perplexed because it SEEMED that God has rejected the people of Israel and given grace and favor to the people in other parts of the world...from other cultures.
- iii) Why else would those who were NOT Jewish have favor with God? God promised all this great stuff to the Israelites...and now PAUL comes along and says, "It's not only for the Jews, but for the whole world!"
- iv) And so the only conclusion the Gentiles can make is, "Well, then, it must be that God has rejected his chosen people."
- v) To that, Paul says, NO WAY! God did NOT reject His people...

- vi) Look at ME...I'm one of them...and I'm not rejected...I'm part of a remnant.
- vii) If I go to the carpet store, and I ask for a remnant, I get a left-over piece of unused carpet...something of value, but usually smaller...a trace of what used to be something bigger.
- viii) Look at verse 2 again...

**b) Read verses 2b-6**

- i) There's a remnant...there are SOME LEFT...God has not totally rejected His chosen people...and they were chosen by GRACE.
- ii) Now, that's an interesting phrase...chosen by grace. They were chosen people by God. And yet, NOW, they are chosen BY GRACE. And when Paul says that, he means they have been chosen by God because they have received the free gift of grace, which is given to them by faith in Jesus Christ.
- iii) This remnant, which Paul is a part of, are Israelites who have accepted the good news about Jesus Christ and his salvation. No longer is righteousness earned through works – through the Law – but now, only by grace through faith in Jesus.

**c) Read verses 7-10**

- i) They – the people of Israel – TRIED to gain the salvation that they were rightfully seeking by works of the Law. But it didn't work because the Law was hijacked by sin.
- ii) Some, Paul says, obtained it...those who believe in Jesus – the elect.
- iii) The rest – and you don't want to be in this group – were hardened.
- iv) Now, let me make this clear. God does not harden the hearts of people. The sin in our lives is what leads to the hardening of our hearts...God may allow it for a season, but the hardening goes along with our natural inclination to sin.
- v) We have eyes that don't want to see...sluggish spirits...ears that don't want to hear.

- vi) And this comes up in our lives when we want to DO something, or go in a direction, that God does not want us to go.
- vii) It's when God is shutting every door...and we get frustrated. And we're inclined to think that God has left the building...that we are on our own.
- viii) But there's a bigger picture that we can't see.
- ix) Look at verse 11...

**d) Read verses 11-16**

- i) First of all, verse 11, tells us that even though the Israelites are stumbling, there was no falling. Anyone catch the first pre-season Bills game last night? Oh yeah...we're into it now, baby! So many times, there's stumbling, but no falling. No falling, no problem.
- ii) The Israelites were stumbling, but God had not allowed them to completely fall. They aren't too far gone. What God promised was still valid, except now, they had to believe in Jesus to receive it...
- iii) AND, because of their transgressions – their screw-ups – salvation is now available to everyone. Every see those commercials for smoking, where they show you a nasty aorta that's all clogged up...DON'T DO WHAT THAT PERSON DID BECAUSE IT'S NOT HEALTHY. That's what Paul is saying...
- iv) But what would it take to get them to listen?
- v) Think back to high school for a minute...did anyone hear ever date someone just to make some ELSE jealous? It's like, if I date HER (who I don't really want to date) then it'll make HER wake up and want what the first girl has...which is ME.
- vi) That's exactly what Paul is saying, SORT OF. He's glorifying – he's making it known...he's showing the Israelites his really cool ministry to the Gentiles (who the Israelites can't stand), in order to WAKE THEM UP and make them see what the Gentiles have – righteousness (a right standing with God which they couldn't earn)...
- vii) And then Paul turns and looks DIRECTLY at us...GENTILES! LISTEN!

viii) (LOUDLY) Because they screwed up, God sent Jesus to the world (remember, God promised to be faithful, even when we are not). They are the dough...they are the root.

ix) What are we? Verse 17...

**e) Read verses 17-24**

i) Look, you and I are not the ones who God originally intended to have a relationship with. I know that seems harsh, but it's true. The people of Israel were God's chosen people. Now, in the omnipotent mind of God, who is outside of time, He knew that we would be His people too...but when God spoke to Abraham, it was all about the Jewish people.

ii) Paul is reminding the Gentiles and us that we are not the pure root...we are wild olive branches grafted in...

iii) The people of Israel STILL have the place of honor, because they are the root...

iv) And it's only by God's kindness and your faith in Jesus that saves you. AS LONG AS you keep that faith...and remain faithful to Christ.

v) And ANYONE who believes can be grafted in...

vi) Paul goes on in verses 25-28 to talk about the mystery in the fact that Israel has rejected Christ in part to help save the Gentiles...

vii) But that true Israel, those faithful to God through God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ – will be saved.

viii) And then we read verse 29...where we are going to stop in this chapter...

**f) Read 29**

**3) Application**

i) I had two experiences this past week that reminded me that God's gifts and calling are irrevocable...

ii) The first one was shared by some of you as we spent the better part of three days building a wheelchair ramp for a couple in Panama.

- iii) The couple, who are Christians, don't attend worship at a church anymore because the wife is restricted to a wheelchair. She barely gets out of the house.
- iv) For three years, she has been basically a prisoner in her own home, which is on the second floor of their house.
- v) We spent hours working on the ramp and we had a great time.
- vi) But yesterday afternoon, after just about everyone had gone home for the day, I was reminded that God never gives up...
- vii) I stood alone at the bottom of the ramp, collecting tools and scraps and garbage...and I looked up the ramp and saw the husband wheeling his wife down the almost-completed ramp for the first time...
- viii) And she had a tear in her eye and a grin on her face knowing that some special people built that ramp with love, even though it wasn't perfect. For her, it was perfect. And she was free at last...
- ix) God never gives up...even when all seems hopeless.
- x) The other experience took us to the Panama Baptist Church last night. I sat in the back row, like any Methodist preacher would do in a Baptist Church.
- xi) Last night, the Panama Baptist Church held a commissioning service for the Cook family who, you may remember, is on their way to Portugal for several years to plant churches.
- xii) The Cook's story is an amazing journey of stops and starts, preparation, and perseverance.
- xiii) But as a group of people laid hands on them, praying over them, and sending them out at the end of this month, I was reminded again that the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.
- xiv) Six months ago, Pastor Andy told me that he didn't think they would go this year because the funding just wasn't there. He expressed frustration and impatience...
- xv) But God had other plans, because by September 1<sup>st</sup>, the five Cooks will be in Portugal and ready to start God's work there.

#### 4) Conclusion

- a) When the people of Israel heard from the Lord through Abraham, Moses, Aaron, David...prophets like Isaiah (we read last week)...all they ever heard was, "You are my people"... "Be my people and I will be your God"
- b) Over and over again, God proved to them that He was faithful and wanted nothing but the best for them. Over and over they heard, "Serve me and know me."
- c) Yet, over and over again, they tried in vain to follow the sin-hijacked Law and it just wouldn't work.
- d) Paul is pleading with the Romans to look long and hard into the story of God's people and then fall on your knees in gratitude that all we have to do is repent of our sin and put our faith in Jesus to be saved.
- e) Salvation offered to us Gentiles is the ultimate example of God's gifts and calling being irrevocable.
- f) Bottom line, perhaps pastor Dennis J. Meaker put it best when he wrote, "God does not give up on his commitments simply because they do not seem to be working out as planned."
- g) And that is good news for the world.
- h) Things may not seem to be working out as planned right now for you. A marriage breaks up...kids go in directions we don't want them to go...friends that we thought were trusted and true turn on us and walk away...Financial hardship and disease and unforeseen tragedy cause us to wonder where God is in all of it...
- i) That doesn't mean God is giving up on commitments made, promises offered.
- j) God is God...
- k) Where in your life today are you thinking that God has walked away and taken back His mercy?
- l) Where have you been tempted to believe that God doesn't want to use you for His mission to love Him, introduce people to Jesus, and help those relationships grow?

- m) The gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable...they will NEVER be taken back...
- n) Live your adventure today knowing that God never makes mistakes, and can use even the most hopeless situation for good...
- o) There is one more person free from a second story prison because of it.
- p) There is one more family headed into the great unknown counting on it.
- q) There's a God who wants you to know that every promise He ever made was made for you to be able to trust him with YOUR future too...
- r) Let's pray...