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## ROMANS 10:14-11:36

Romans Series: How God Changes People

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we thank you for the privilege of worshiping you today. We know that we are among so many churches that are meeting today. Not only here in Mercer County, but also in New Jersey and the United States and then North America and throughout the world, people are worshiping you. People are coming to know you. We are part of something very big and we are very grateful that you care about us individually and you love us. Lord, I pray this morning for each child, young person, adult, that you would teach us and guide us this morning through your word. That we would learn some valuable things and that you would help us to understand more about who you are and who we are and what your plan is for us. Be honored, Lord, in this next thirty minutes or so. As we open your word we do so expectantly, asking you to speak to us. In Jesus' name, amen.

We're studying the book of Romans today, as we have been for the last several weeks, and we will continue for the next several weeks. As we do, we are studying a particular theology as it applies to how God changes people. I am convinced that if we understand good theology it changes us. And so Romans is full of some great theology.

We talked in Romans 5 about how *there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*. That really affects how we view ourselves. We talked about how *nothing can separate us from the love of God*. That affects how we view ourselves. We talked about how *God works all things out for good to those who love him or are called according to his purpose*. That affects how we view our future. It affects our emotions about how we present ourselves in the course of our day or time or whenever.

I'm convinced that the theology that we learn in God's word affects us, it changes us. That's why we have as our motto "take Jesus home." When we leave here we take back with us some theology that's going to change our lives, change how we live in our neighborhood or at work or in our homes.

When Paul gets to chapter 9 of Romans, verses 9-11, he's really asking a significant question about the promises that God made to Israel and what those promises are and what they're all about. You see, Israel had made a major mistake that they had missed the significance of Jesus Christ as the sacrifice, as the Messiah that was predicted in the Old Testament. They missed the cues. There were a number of cues given in the Old Testament, prophecies that were made of the Messiah yet to come. But they missed it. They didn't see the cues and therefore missed something very significant for their lives. The theology didn't incorporate Jesus and they missed that and they missed something very important.

People all around us miss that same theology. There are cues about who God is and what He's doing, but people miss that. If they would get it, and many do, when they get it, amazing changes take place in a person's life.

The most important change thing that can happen in our lives is that we accept Jesus Christ as part of our theology and personally apply that into our own lives and accept Him into our own hearts.

Now Paul knows that this is the most important decision that anybody could ever make and he has dedicated his life to this decision in sharing the gospel with others. That's why we come to this challenge in verses 14-15 of Romans 10. So turn there to Romans 10:14-15.

*Verse 14: How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"*

We're going to talk about this idea of *bringing good news* and the last part is *how beautiful are the feet*. So we could talk about how beautiful everybody's feet are who share good news, but I want to focus on what he's saying here. He's talking about taking this message. See, the key is somebody has to believe. If they're going to believe, they have to hear. And in order to hear, they have to be preached to. If they don't want to be preached to, they have to be sent.

So this becomes, really, a motto for all of us, certainly as pastors who are sent, as missionaries as we go to Brazil or we go out teaching somewhere. Our desire is when we go out and do this, we are presenting theology to people so that people can incorporate theology into their practical lives and it will change who they are. That is the objective.

I speak most every week around the country. I'm off right now. After we get back from Brazil I have a couple weeks home and then I start. Every week I'll be traveling again some place in the United States and talking about theology. I talk about a theology of parenting.

So when I go into a church and I share information with parents about how to work with their children, considering the fact that God has given them a heart, their repentance is about a change of heart, that God gives us guidance and understanding about how He made up a person that affects how we work with children. There are a lot of people who came to a parenting seminar that said, "I just thought I was going to learn how to discipline my kids differently or learn a consequence or a new technique." But they learned theology.

See, I go out there and I share theology with people and it impacts them and they go away saying, "Wow. This is so significant. It's going to change my view of family. It's going to change the way I work with my children.

And I think the same thing that Paul is saying here is when people understand this theology about Jesus Christ it changes them. They need this message. It's the great challenge that we all

have. Not just pastors and missionaries, but every one of us can have beautiful feet as we go out and share the message of the gospel.

Now many people in their lives today who are not believers yet realize that something is missing. They just don't know what it is. There are many people out there today who know they need to be connected to God, they just don't know how. And so when we come along and we show them how, that is very important. When we explain to them how important it is that this good news that we're talking about is very significant, they're going to need that.

Now this word *good news* in the Greek is the word *euaggelion*. The word *euaggelion* is the word that's translated 'good news' or it means the gospel or we get our English word 'evangelism' from this. The idea is we are on a mission to share good news with other people so that they can get the message and they can understand it.

Evangelism is the purpose, one of the purposes of God's church. I don't just mean the church as a structure; I mean the church as people. That's part of our job. We're out there telling people the good news, something that they need to know. Because God has done this. It is God's purpose that every believer help get others into heaven. That's God's purpose.

You and I have a message. We have a significant message. If you're a child today, you have a message today. A message that Jesus Christ rescues us from sin and allows us to have a personal relationship with Him. If you're a young person today, you're praying and you're talking to the Lord. You have a relationship that you can share with someone else. God has allowed us to be part of that process. It means we share this good news about Jesus all around the world.

Why is it so important for us to do this? One, because apart from Jesus Christ there is no hope. Oh yes, there's little hope. There's hope that we'll have a present at Christmas, a hope that we'll have a job next year, a hope that you might find the mate that you're looking for. Those are small hopes compared to the huge hope that changes our lives, the hope of Jesus Christ. If we have that hope, it modifies how we think and how we respond to life situations. Because theology changes people.

But that's not the only reason we share the gospel. We share the gospel, not only because it's the hope for every person, but because the primary way that God has chosen to get His message out through all of the world is that you and I as individuals are here to share the message. Otherwise, maybe God when we get saved would just take us up to heaven. But he's not. He's left us here for a purpose. And that purpose is to spread the word, to share the message with others, that other people can know Jesus Christ the way we know Him.

Now I believe that God not only wants us to be able to share what's happened in our own hearts, that I've accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, but He wants us to be able to share with people that Jesus is the only way. He's the only way, He's the only one who saves. We're sharing with people it's logical to go and follow Jesus. Now there's a part of this where the logic ends and we still have faith to take that leap and trust Him, but it's logical to pursue Him. It's logical to search the scriptures. When we do we understand more about who Jesus is, it's important for us to learn theology.

That's why the emphasis here in this passage is how are they going to hear unless someone goes and tells them? So this idea of having *good news and beautiful feet* is a very important idea for all of us.

Witnessing is not just living the good Christian life. People need to see kindness and gentleness, but witnessing isn't just opening the door for someone else so they can go first. Witnessing is sharing the message, a message that Jesus Christ died on the cross. Witnessing is not just telling people about your church. Although I think opening the door for someone or telling people about your church can be good introductions to sharing the gospel. The primary thing we're trying to do is communicate to people that when they call on the name of Jesus Christ they will be saved. All who call on the name of Jesus Christ will be saved. That's the last verse that we looked at last week.

Here's a quote from Paul Little's *How to Give Away Your Faith*. "Witnessing is that deep-seated conviction that the greatest favor I can do for others is to introduce them to Jesus Christ." We do people a favor by sharing Jesus Christ with them.

That's the whole emphasis here that's being shared in this passage. People are fearful today. They're concerned. They've got problems. Some people have tried to change. They need God in their lives in order to make some significant changes.

People all around us with desperate needs in their lives, they need good news. They need the message. Some people are going through tough times and what they don't need just to hear is "suck it up," "get it together," "hang in there," or "come to our church; we have great music." They need to hear Jesus loves and cares for them.

Did you know that many people make choices to come to Jesus Christ at turning points in their lives. When a marriage is in trouble or when people just got married. Or when a baby's on the way. Or when someone gets to a place in their life when they realize this habit is taking control of them and they've got to do something about it. Or their job situation is a challenge. All of those transition times are great times for people to reevaluate their lives. Many times people are open then to understand and receive the gospel of Jesus Christ. So we want to be people who are ready with the good news, with beautiful feet ready to share it with them so that they can get it and understand.

On verse 16, let's go on because now he's going to take us back to the challenge of the Israelite people. *But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.*

So salvation is going to come the same way to those people who are Jewish, to those people who are Chinese, to those people in Brazil, to those people in Kenya or Peru. Wherever they are, the message is going to come the same way. It comes by hearing the message and through faith in Jesus Christ.

Verse 18: *But I ask: Did they not hear? (talking about the Jewish people) Of course they did: "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."* That's a quote from the Old Testament.

Verse 19: *Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, "I will make you envious."* Now I'm going to come back to that word *envious* because it's used three times in our passage. So I want to elaborate on it in a moment. But envious – you know what it means to envy after something. It means you want something that somebody else has.

*"I will make you envious by those who are not a nation."* Those are referring to the believers, those who have accepted Jesus Christ. They are not a nation. They accepted Christ in their life and God has now embraced them into His family line. And so he's saying the Israelites will be envious of them. That's the idea.

*"I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding."* That is us. We don't have this understanding of the Jewish traditions and the religious rites that they had and the law and all that. We don't have all of that understanding, but God has invited us to live in His life tree.

Verse 20: *And Isaiah boldly says, "I was found by those who did not seek me (so we're not Israelites, but we were found by Him); I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me."* So God revealed Himself to us. *But concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."*

So there is this choice that we make to respond to God, whether you're Jewish or Gentile. To respond to God's call or to be obstinate and disobedient. We know people are obstinate and disobedient. So what Paul is saying is I wish that they would be envious.

Envious. That's when you see something in someone else that you want. We usually use the word envy in a negative sense, as coveting something or wanting something that we shouldn't have or that someone else has that isn't ours. But we want to be the kind of people that someone says, "I want what he has." We want to be the kind of church that they have something that I want. So when someone comes into our fellowship they see something that is attractive and they say, "I want what they have there," whether that be our worship or it be our fellowship or our teaching.

I spend a significant amount of time each week choosing and preparing the worship songs that we're going to sing. Now someday in God's timing He will likely provide for us a live worship team that will lead us in worship. But until then, we have video worship that we're enjoying.

We are really enjoying it and a number of people have said how much they appreciate the worship here at Calvary Chapel Living Hope. Our worship leaders are Chris Tomlin and MercyMe and all these different music groups, some of them recommended by some of you folks that we turn into worship songs that we really enjoy. So the quality of the worship leading by these musicians is really special and we just lift up our voices in the midst of that. It's a special thing that people enjoy when they come to Calvary Chapel Living Hope is the worship.

I don't believe that the worship songs that we sing are warm-up for the teaching, which is the main act, or something. I believe that the worship is a primary experience that we have as we come together. That it's in that worship experience that we have that God might speak to a person louder than He might in a sermon.

In fact I also believe that the fellowship time that we have is very significant because the most important words that are said today might come out of your mouth as you talk to someone before or after the worship service. That there's something powerful going on. When we get together and we be the church that God wants us to be, it's fun, it's exciting, it's enjoyable. But it's amazing to see what God does. Envious.

Let's go into chapter 11. Verse 1 says, *I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means!* That's very strong language he says. *By no means!* Then let's ask this question. How did God demonstrate that He related to Israel? Let's continue on in verse 1. He answers this by saying, "Look at me. I'm an Israelite, but I made a personal decision for Jesus Christ." *I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin.* So first he's saying, "Look, God is calling the Jews one by one. He's not forgotten about His people. He's calling them to accept Him as their Lord and Savior." So that's his first example.

Verse 2 he says, *God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what Scripture says in the passage about Elijah.*

Oh we've got to stop there because I don't know if you know the story about Elijah. So before I read it... Paul, of course, is a Pharisee, he's a man who understood the law. He understood the Bible. He was a student of God's word. So he could just pull a story out of the Old Testament and he could share with people. But you may not know that story, so I'm going to jump into the middle of the Elijah story, tell it to you, and then go back to the passage.

Elijah at one point in his life was very discouraged. He says to the Lord, "God, I am the only one left in Israel and they're trying to kill me." So God, in His loving care, has Elijah cared for by the brook and provides him with food and drink for a while.

And then He wants him to see Him. So He has Elijah come up before the cave and God has this dramatic thing happen, the storm. The Bible says God was not in the storm. And then He has this lightning come down, and God was not in the lightning. But then finally there was a whisper and he says God was in the whisper.

Now this comes after this story about Elijah going up on the mountain and the 850 Baal prophets there. Fire came down from heaven and consumed Elijah's sacrifice as he prayed, but the Baal prophets were not successful when they prayed to their god. Nothing came out of heaven. So that was a battle on the Mount Carmel there and Elijah and his God won, proving that Jehovah was the God.

All the people, the Israelites around killed all those 850 prophets of Baal and Elijah ran all the way to Jezebel to tell her. Thirty miles across the Jezreel Valley to tell Jezebel that the Baal prophets are dead. And Jezebel says, “I’m going to kill you.”

So Elijah gets discouraged. He runs away by this brook. God wants to communicate something very important to him. He says, “Lightning came down, the storm is there, the whirlwind was there, but I wasn’t in that. I was just in the still small whisper. I’m not always in the dramatic stuff. It’s not always the big stuff that you find me in. It’s just in this still small whisper. And by the way, Elijah, I want you to know this. There are 7,000 prophets that have not bowed the knee to Baal in Israel.”

In other words what he’s saying to Elijah here is, “Elijah, I want you to know that there are things going on behind the scenes that you’re not aware of, that you do not understand. These things that are going on behind the scenes are people who are turning to me, who are committed to me.”

Now if you take that story and that application that God is giving to Elijah and we take it back in our passage now, in verse 2 it says, *Don’t you know what Scripture says in the passage about Elijah—how he appealed to God against Israel: “Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me.”*

We used to live in a world where Christianity was not only accepted, it was admired. When stores would be closed on Sunday. When the Bible and other religious kind of elements would be displayed in government circles. But now we live in a postmodern era where Christians are looked at like the enemy. We start sometimes feeling like, “Boy, we’re the only one. What’s going to happen?” And we start putting ourselves somewhere behind there like Elijah, I think. “I’m the only one left and they’re trying to kill me.”

*And what was God’s answer to him? “I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.”* What God is saying is there’s so much going on behind the scenes, folks, you guys are concerned about Israel and whether they’re going to get saved, but I want you to know many people are part of this remnant (the word remnant is going to be used in the next verse, so I’m bringing it in here now) that are trusting God as their Savior. They’re coming to the Lord behind the scenes. And that is true today in our world. God is doing amazing things behind the scenes in our world.

I want you to bring up this live website. You can look this up and if you’re listening to this on the tape, this is [GreatCommission2020.com](http://GreatCommission2020.com). This is a live website.

On this website you will see three different markers come up on the map. One of the markers are people who are making visits and sharing the gospel with people. In real time today so far, gospel visits 247,528. Those are the blue ones. The ones that are more of an orange-ish color are people who have indicated a decision to receive Jesus Christ today. Okay, this is a live interactive map of what’s going on today. And those who’ve requested materials for further discipleship are in the green color.

Now as you watch what's going on, we are seeing a part of the world now that's awake. So that's why you're seeing a lot of activity taking place in Europe and Africa. But if you were to look at this map over a course of a day you would see things popping up all over the place as people today are making decisions for Jesus Christ.

We are a part of something that's amazing. We're a part of something that's very big. I'm going to leave this up here while I talk for a while. I know it's going to distract you, but maybe that's the message you need to hear as we continue to read the passage today and see all the activity that's happening for the cause of Christ at this very moment.

Verse 7 in Romans 11: *What then? What the people of Israel sought so earnestly they did not obtain. The elect among them did, but the others were hardened, as it is written: "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that could not see and ears that could not hear, to this very day."*

*And David says: "May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever."* So what he's making a case for here is that the ones whom God has chosen are making a response.

If you missed our message last week about understanding the elect in God's chosen, the fact that He's sovereign, and comparing that with man's responsibility and how we try to put those things together, but it confuses our comprehension at some point, then you want to get that message from last week if you missed it. You can get it on our app and you can listen to that sermon where we're talking about the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man, and how they dovetail together in God's perspective.

Now Paul is drawing back again to that idea here to show that the people who are responding to God are the elect who are choosing to respond to Him.

Verse 11: *Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all!* Again, strong language. He's going to talk about the need for anyone to come to Christ is humility. That's what we must do. We must come to Christ with humility in our lives.

Verse 11 continuing – *Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious.*

There's our word *envious* again. They have something we want. The problem is the Jewish people are very proud because of what God has done in their lives so far. We're missing something around them. In order to see what God was doing, they needed humility and they needed to say, "I want what's over there. I want what God is doing in their lives." What will attract people to God? It's this envy of these other people that God has left here on earth to experience God and say, "I want something that they have."

Let's go on to verse 12. *But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!*

*I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles (so Paul is this apostle to the Gentiles), I take pride in my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them.*

There's our third use of the word *envy*. He's saying I'm working with the Gentiles so the Jews will see they've got something and they'll make a change in their lives. *For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?*

Verse 16: *If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy.*

Now I better step back and explain the Jewish tradition here. Which is the idea that if we dedicate a part of the bread, the dough to the Lord, then that makes the whole thing holy. If we dedicate a portion of the roots of the tree, that's going to make the whole tree dedicated to the Lord.

It's out of that idea that we get the tithe or the tenth that when a person brought a tithe to the Lord it was a statement whether it was their firstfruits offering or whatever, it was saying I want my everything I am, everything of who I am to be given to you.

So when we give, whether you give a tenth or a tithe or not, when you give to the Lord, you're saying, "Lord, I'm giving a portion. I know everything I have belongs to you, but I'm giving a portion to your work as a dedication or a statement of the fact that I want all of this to be dedicated to you." So that's the idea behind this and now he's going to apply this to the roots and the branches and the tree in continuing on.

In verse 16 it says, *If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.*

Verse 17: *If some of the branches have been broken off (that's the Israelites who didn't trust in Christ. The idea is they're broken off, they're not receiving, they're not in God's living tree), 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 (so we, those of us who have accepted Jesus Christ are grafted into God's living tree), do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. We're no better than somebody else. We're all part of the same tree. If you do, consider so great (the next phrase says): You do not support the root (remember), but the root supports you. We get our energy, our sustenance from God Himself.*

Verse 19: *You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief. What's the key to being part of God's branches, His tree that's growing there? Unbelief is what got them out of there and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. It's just an amazing privilege we have to be grafted into this tree of life that God has provided.*

Verse 22: *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. 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!*

In other words the key element here is faith. When we have faith in Jesus Christ we're grafted into this tree and enjoy that. It's never too late for us to trust in God, whether you're Jew or Gentile or any other nationality be grafted into this tree.

*Verse 25: I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, 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 in this way all Israel will be saved.*

The idea of *all Israel*, remember we talked last week about the spirit of Israel. All Israel in this sense, all those who are part of the nation, are the people who get saved. They're part of God's family.

*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."*

See Israel thought they deserved mercy. They were entitled to this and they missed out on something very important. They needed that gratefulness that says I cannot get this by works alone. I need God in my life. I need to trust God. It's that faith component that's so important.

*Verse 28: As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for your sake; 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 were 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. For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.*

None of us deserves anything. Mercy is in this sense that we deserve something else, but God is giving us this special thing to be grafted into this living tree that He has produced for us. It's just such an amazing thing to see how people respond to the gospel all over, that we're part of something very big.

God is doing something amazing that is often behind the scenes that we can't even see is just so amazing to Paul that at this point as he's writing this he stops his writing and he enters into several verses of doxology or praise to God. God, this is just so amazing.

Let me read these verses to you. He explodes with praise right here in the midst of this. I think that's what happens. That's why I chose a lot of songs today in our worship that are about praising God for who He is, what He's done.

Here's his praise. Paul says, starting in verse 33, *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 them?” For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.*

In the Christmas story they're singing *glory to God in the highest* and in this passage Paul is saying *to him be the glory forever*. It's this message of praise that comes when we get a glimpse of this awesome plan of God, the tremendous mercy of God.

We are not owed anything. We don't earn our salvation, but rather it comes by God's mercy that we're able to trust in Him and receive that grace and to be changed people. Because theology changes people. We understand it. It's amazing and we just want to lift up our praise to the Lord.

Maybe today as you're looking at this, this is stunning to you. Maybe you want to be one of those people that indicates a decision and say, "I want to accept Jesus Christ as my Lord today. I want to ask Him to come into my life." People are doing this all over the world today. It's a decision that you can make in your own heart to ask Jesus Christ to come into your life, allow Him to change you to be the person that God wants you to be.

If God is speaking to you in that regard today then we're going to have prayer counselors on the side when we sing this next praise song. When we do then I want to invite you to go to the prayer counselors and pray with them and ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart today. What a beautiful opportunity, what a beautiful time of year to ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart this Christmastime.

Would you stand with me? Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we come before you now. We're so grateful for you. There's some parts of this passage that are challenging for us to understand, some of the details that it's talking about there about grafting in and branches broken off. But Lord, we come before you and we come thankful. Thankful that you've chosen us and allow us to be part of your kingdom, to be part of the tree, this living tree, fed by the roots of Jesus Christ. Lord, we praise you and we worship you today. In Jesus' name, amen.