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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes

INTRODUCTION

Today I want to talk about how God can change rejection into rejoicing or reconciliation. Romans, 9, 10, and 11 is the section of Romans where Paul is dealing with Israel, with the Jews. To review the entire scope of the book of Romans I am preaching through, Romans, 1-8 is God's righteousness described. But people say, "If God is righteous, what about the Jews?" Well, Romans 9 through 11 is God's righteousness defended. Paul is defending the way God has and is dealing with the Jews today. Then, when we get to chapter 12 in a couple of weeks, chapter 12 through the end of the book is a very practical section on God's righteousness displayed. Some have said before you can really understand Romans 9 through 11 you have to think with a Jewish mindset, and they do have a little different way of thinking.

Ray Stedman was the pastor of Peninsula Bible Church in Palo Alto, California for many years. He went to visit a Jewish rabbi and said, "I really want to understand the Old Testament the way a Jewish person understands the Old Testament. The rabbi said, "Well, that's probably impossible because you just cannot think like a Jew." Ray said, "Well, I think I can. Help me now." The rabbi said, "All right. I'll ask you three questions. If you can get these three questions correct, you can think like a Jewish rabbi thinks. Question number one, "Two men fall down a chimney. One of them comes out dirty. The other one comes out clean. Which of the two men washes himself?" Ray Stedman said, "Well, that's pretty simple. The dirty one washes himself." The rabbi said, "Wrong. See, you're not thinking right. What happens is the clean one looks at the dirty one and thinks he is dirty the dirty one looks at the clean one and he thinks he is clean. So, it's the clean one who washes himself." Ray Stedman said, "Ok, I think I am getting it." The rabbi said, "All right. Let me ask you another question. Two men fall down a chimney. One comes out clean; one comes out dirty. Which one washes himself." Ray Stedman said, "All right. The clean one." The rabbi said, "Wrong. What happens is that the clean one looks at the dirty one and says to the dirty one, 'You're dirty'. The dirty one looks at himself and sees he is dirty, so he cleans himself." Ray is getting a little more confused. The rabbi said, "One more question. Two men fall down a chimney. One comes out dirty; the other one comes out clean. Which one cleans himself?" By this time Ray Stedman doesn't know how to answer. So, he says, "It's either both of them or neither of them." The rabbi said, "Wrong. You're totally wrong. See, you are not thinking like a Jewish rabbi. The answer to that question, first of all, is ridiculous and impossible, because two men cannot fall down a chimney and one of them come out clean and the other come out dirty So, Ray Stedman walked away and said, "I probably am never going to understand the Old Testament the way the Jewish mind set understands it." I want to remind you that the apostle, Paul, was a Jew, himself. He was an Israelite, and he is writing this, reasoning to a certain conclusion.

I. GOD HASN'T REJECTED HIS PEOPLE (1-4)

Now, I want us to read here beginning in verse 1 of chapter 11, and please keep your Bible open because we are going to look at the verses in chapter 15 section by section. Paul writes, "I ask then: Did God reject his people?" [meaning the Jews] "By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what the 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." And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal." Keep your Bibles open this is the first thing Paul is saying here God hasn't rejected his people. God has not rejected his people, the Jews. Obviously, today the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, and Christianity is being embraced more by Gentiles (that's who we are) than Jewish people, but yet the Bible still says God is not through with the nation of Israel.

1. Human proof: Paul

Paul is going to give us some proof here. The proof is Paul himself. He says, "You want an example that God is not through with the Jews. Look at me." He says in verse 1, "I am an Israelite. I am a descendant of Abraham. I am of the tribe of Benjamin and God is still dealing with me. So, God is not through with the Israelites." Marv Rosenthal, who is a Jewish Christian in America, estimates there are fifty thousand Jewish believers in America. He estimates there are at least two hundred and fifty million Jewish believers around the world today. We are going to see in just a moment that God has this group as a remnant.

2. Historical proof: Elijah

Here's the second proof. Not only is there human proof, which is the apostle, Paul; he gives us an historical proof and that is Elijah. Elijah. What Paul is saying here is that there was a time when Elijah got so discouraged he thought he was the only one, and God said, "Wrong, Elijah. I have a whole bunch of people; in fact, I have seven thousand people who haven't bowed their knees to Baal. That's fourteen thousand knees that have not bowed before a fertility god so, Elijah, you are not all alone."

3. Current proof: Israel

Here's the third proof, and to me this is the most conclusive proof. I call it the "current proof," that God has not rejected his people. The answer is one word, and the word is Israel. If you look at any map or globe 75 years or older, there is no Israel. Go to your home right now, pull out a modern map, look at a modern globe and you'll find a nation called Israel. That today, in the time in which we are living, is the greatest proof God hasn't rejected his people. God is still active in the nation of Israel today even as I speak. Have you ever thought about the miracle that the Jews have maintained their identity down through all of these centuries? Try to find me an Edomite. Find me a Jebusite. You can't find those anymore. Those groups of people passed away from the scene of human history, but you and I both know there are millions of Israelites still around today.

Frederick the Great was the King of Prussia. Two hundred and fifty years ago he and his chaplain were discussing the Bible and whether or not it was true. Frederick the Great asked his chaplain, "Can you prove to me in one sentence that the Bible is true?" After thinking about it for a while the chaplain said, "I don't need an entire sentence. I only need two words to prove that the Bible is true and that God does not lie. Those two words are the Jews!" The Jews still have some kind of identity after all of these thousands of years.

Would you agree with me that it seems as if they have had an adversary, an enemy that has been trying to erase them from the face of the planet, Earth? Why do you think Hitler instituted the Holocaust that killed at least six million Jews? He didn't come up with that. He was inspired to do that by the devil himself who was trying to wipe out God's people so he could thwart God's plan. But, he's never done it and he will never do it! In spite of tremendous persecution and discrimination through the centuries there is a nation of Israel today. If you don't believe this book, just turn to CNN. If you don't believe this book, read your daily newspaper. There is a nation of Israel. What I want to get you to understand is that every time I travel to Israel I am moved as I see prophecy being fulfilled today. Did you know the Old Testament prophesied that one day the desert would bloom and blossom? I could take you to Israel today and I could show you what just fifty years ago was nothing but barren desert—today it is filled with date palm groves, beautiful orchards of fruit, agricultural stations everywhere. That prophecy is being fulfilled even as I am talking to you. Did you know the prophet Isaiah predicted Israel's fruit would one day fill the whole earth? Did you know today Israel exports its citrus fruit to every continent on the planet? That's a prophecy that could not have even been fulfilled until our generation, and it has. You want another example? Look at Amos, chapter 9. This is God's promise to the nation of Israel. "I will bring back my exiled people, Israel. They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them". They have done that. I have seen it with my own eyes. "They will plant vineyards and drink their wine, and make their gardens and eat their fruit." They've done it. I've seen it with my own eyes. He says, "I will plant Israel in their land never again to be uprooted," that's the key: "never again to be uprooted from the land that I have given them," says the Lord, their God.

Now, some Dr. Wigglejaw who is writing your Sunday School commentary will tell you that scripture is all about Israel coming back from the Babylonian captivity. The only thing wrong with that did you notice it says, "never again to be uprooted?" Yes, Israel came back from the Babylonian captivity but I promise you they got uprooted again. For eighteen or nineteen hundred years they were uprooted. Did you know after 70 A.D. when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, there was no Israel? There was a time when there almost wasn't even a Jerusalem. In the Middle Ages Jerusalem was nothing but an obscure little village with no more than 14,000 residents. We're talking like Jacksonville, Texas here. The great city of God: 14,000 residents. It just passed off into obscurity, but God had a plan all along.

Do you remember what happened in 1917? (I hope none of you remember that far back) In 1917 the British gained control of Palestine from the Ottoman Turks. They issued what historians call today the Balfour Declaration, named after Arthur Balfour. The Balfour Declaration declared in 1917 that at least there was the possibility of a future state of Israel, but for the next thirty years from 1917 to 1947 the British botched it big time. One day they played to the Arabs, the next day they played to the Jews. They didn't know what to do. So, finally in 1947 they handed the whole mess over to the United Nations. For once, the United Nations did something I think halfway made sense. On May 15, 1948, the United Nations chartered the nation of Israel. Many of us in this room have been alive during a time when we have seen Old Testament prophecy fulfilled. There is a nation of Israel. They exist today. God is not through with the nation of Israel. In 1948 all they got was a little sliver of land over there on the Mediterranean Sea, Tel Aviv. In 1967, in only six days, if you don't believe the hand of God was on the Six Day War, you need to read it again. The enemy had four times as many warplanes and three times as many soldiers—and in

only six days the Israelites captured Jerusalem again. For the first time in two and a half millennia they were an independent state in control of Jerusalem. You say, "Why do you say two and a half millennia? Why didn't you say 2,500 years, pastor?" I'll tell you why. Because, truly, when you read your Bible, Israel had not been an independent state since about 600 B.C. When they were re-established after the Babylonian exile even during the time of Jesus they were always living under the control of some super power, whether it was Syria, or Egypt, or Rome but it wasn't until the time in which you and I are living today that they became an independent nation once again. If you don't see the hand of God on that, you had better open your eyes wider! God is not through with his people.

You are saying, "Pastor, are you saying that all the Jewish people are going to be saved?" No, I'm not saying that. That's not what the Bible says. I'm saying God is not through with the nation of Israel as a people. Now, Romans 11 is an entire unit, and I am sorry I have to break it off in the middle, but next week is the continuation of it and next week I am going to tell you what God is going to do with the nation of Israel in the near future.

II. GOD HASN'T CHANGED HIS METHOD (5-6)

Next, I want us to read verses 5 and 6. He says, "So too, at the present time there is a remnant." That's a key word underline it "a *remnant* chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; and if it were, grace would no longer be grace." Do you notice the repetition of the word grace? Here's the second thing Paul is saying here. God hasn't changed his method. He hasn't changed his method of salvation. God is the same yesterday, today and forevermore. It's not like he used to have Plan A and Plan A didn't work so he came up with Plan B. That's not it at all. There are basically two methods people try to use to be saved and they are mutually exclusive.

1. Man's method—Salvation by works "I can earn God's favor"

Let's talk about the first one. I call it Man's Method. It is salvation by works. This is what this method says: "I can earn God's favor!" What does he say there in verse 6? "If it is by grace, it is no longer by works." There are still some people today we call them legalists, who think God's love and acceptance of them is based upon how they perform. It's a performance-based religion. It never has worked and it never will work. Let me just ask you a question. If doing good works could save you, what work could you imagine doing that would be good enough? It takes more than helping a little old lady across the street. Do you understand that? It's more than giving money to the church. More than reading the Bible. Can you think of any work you could do that would be good enough?

Let me give you an example. Most of you are familiar with Mother Theresa of Calcutta. This wonderful woman of God devoted her entire life, or most of it, to working with hungry, dying people in Calcutta, India. Do you know she labored for many years in total obscurity before she became discovered and got a lot of attention? One day, late in her life, somebody asked Mother Theresa this question: "How can you do these good works that you do?" Her reply was a classic reply. She said, "It's not my works." She said this "It is only by the grace of God that I can get out of bed every morning." Now, I want you to think about that. Here's Mother Theresa:

anybody in this room done anything better than that? I mean, devoting all your life to helping the hungry, dying people of Calcutta? And, even this woman, who did all of these good things says, "I'm not trusting in what I have done. It is the grace of God alone!" So, it's not by works.

2. God's method—Salvation by grace "I can only accept God's forgiveness"

Here's the other method, not only man's method but I want you to consider God's method, and it is salvation by grace. This is what salvation by grace declares. "I can only accept or reject God's gift of forgiveness." Now a lot of people think God sort of messed up along the way, that he sort of had Plan A. You know that was salvation by keeping the law, and then when that didn't work God went "Oops! Guess I'd better go to Plan B and that's going to be salvation by grace." NO! God knew from the very start nobody could be saved by keeping the law. I assure you there are two words not in God's vocabulary. God never said "Oops" and he has never said "Uh oh!" So, it's not like God had a Plan B. The Bible tells us Jesus Christ is a Lamb who was slain before the foundation of the world. This was all part of God's plan. Sure, Jesus came to the Jews and as an entire nation, the Jews did not receive him, but God didn't say, "Oops! I guess I'd better give it to the Gentiles." No. From the very first when God called Abraham, he said, "Abraham, I want to use you and your descendants to be a blessing to the entire earth." You study Old Testament history, and do you know what happened? They got so inwardly focused on themselves, they put God in a little box and they forgot about the rest of the world! God said, "Well, even if you do that, I'm still going to bless the rest of the world through you because, ladies and gentlemen, whatever you can say about the Jewish people, Jesus was a descendant of David. He was born into a Jewish home and Jesus was a Jew himself. So you see God is blessing the world through the descendants of Abraham. So, salvation is by grace.

III. GOD HAS TURNED THEIR REJECTION INTO OUR RECONCILIATION (7-15)

There is one other thing Paul is saying here and this is the culmination of this message. Number three, God turned their rejection into our reconciliation. He has turned their rejection, meaning the Jews' rejection, into the Gentiles' reconciliation. Now, let's read verses 7-15. "What then? What Israel sought so earnestly" What is that? Salvation. "it did not obtain, but the elect did." (those who received it by grace) "The others were hardened" I need you to look at the word "hardened" intensely. It's the word *pyrosis*. They were hardened, as it is written: Here's a quotation from Deuteronomy 29: "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear to this very day." And David says in Psalm 69: "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."

Verse 11. "Again I ask: Did they" meaning the Jews "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 (notice how many times he's going to use this word *riches*) "riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!" Now he writes, "I am talking to you Gentiles." that's good because just about all of us in here are Gentiles "Inasmuch 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." and, here's the summary "For, if their rejection is the reconciliation of the

world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?" You say, "Pastor, are you saying that one day Israel will accept God's plan? Absolutely!"

1. Israel's loss: They didn't recognize Jesus as Messiah

Notice the two things here, first of all, Israel's loss. In verse 12 he says, "their loss" what was their mistake, what was their loss? They didn't recognize Jesus as the Messiah. That was their big problem. Then you read verse 7 and 8 and you read verse 9 and it confuses you because you say, "Wait a minute! How could God harden the hearts of these people? How could God blind their eyes?" Well, look at verse 7, "the others were *hardened*" It is the word *pyrosis*. In the Greek in which the Bible was written there were two words for hardened. Some of you in the health care industry will recognize the word *sclerosis*. We call arteriosclerosis an inner hardening of the arteries. *Sclerosis* means like an inner hardening. But the word here is *pyrosis*, which means a callous, almost like a cataract on the eye, a hardening. In other words they were hardened in their hearts and in their eyes and they didn't see Jesus. They didn't recognize Jesus. The Bible teaches that a hardened heart is a dangerous thing. The New Testament says to us Christians, "Beware! Be careful lest there be in any of you a hardened heart."

The week after Easter, a lady came to me, she was weeping. She said, "Oh, pastor. I can't understand it. You preached the gospel plainer than I have ever heard it preached on Easter Sunday. Believe in your heart God's grace and confess it with your mouth." She said, "I just know there were a lot of lost people here and I can't believe nobody trusted Christ. It breaks my heart." I said, "That's the difference between you and them. It breaks your heart and it should. But, their hearts have become hardened. Did you know many people in America have made the same mistake the Jews made? We have people in America who are "gospel-hardened." You've heard it on television. You've heard it on radio. You've seen it on billboards. You have just handled it so much. Just like calluses on your hands will be formed when you handle something over and over again, you've heard the gospel so many times that your heart is hardened to it. You have to pray for God to break the hardness of your heart so that you won't make the same mistake the Jews did. Listen Jesus is here. He is right here, right now, in the presence of his holy spirit, but some of you just don't recognize him. The same mistake the Jews made. For 33 years Jesus walked visibly in their midst. He spoke to them in ways they could hear with their ears. He performed miracles, but they missed it.

Look at Matthew 23:37 to what Jesus said. This is just a few days before he died. He looked at the city of Jerusalem and said, "Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem. You who killed the prophets and stoned those who sent you how often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing." Listen to me, Israel was not blinded because they rejected Jesus. Israel rejected Jesus because they were already blinded. What did Jesus say they had already done there? He said, "You have already been killing the prophets. You have already stoned those that God has sent." In other words the hardness had already begun. Let me ask you. When it comes to your life and the life of the Jews, is this hardening, this *pyrosis*, this blindness, this callused eye and callused heart, is it permanent? Is it irreversible? Not really.

I want to give you a little preview for next Sunday. Just glance down to verse 25. This is an amazing statement in the Bible. It says, "This hardening [*pyrosis*] is in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in." Come into what? Come into the family of God. Come into the kingdom of God. Then, what's going to happen? Verse 26. "So, all Israel will be saved." Let me tell you an amazing thing. I'll talk about this more next week. God has already pre-determined all the Gentiles that are going to be saved. Do you know what happens when the last one comes into the family of God? It could happen this morning. I don't know when it will happen. Do you know what's going to happen when the last one comes in when all the Gentiles the full number of Gentiles has come into the church, the bride of Christ? Then something is going to happen! Jesus Christ is going to split the sky and that's when he's going to come back and take his church home. Did you know that during the time of tribulation just about every Israelite on earth is going to turn to Jesus Christ? We know for sure one hundred forty four thousand are and many, many others. That's what he's talking about. It's going to happen in the future.

2. Our gain: We may receive the riches of reconciliation!

But, right now it's their loss. That leads to the second thing: our gain. Their loss is our gain, because it says we may receive the "riches of reconciliation." Look at what it says in verse 15: "If their rejection is our reconciliation" Oh, it's the riches of reconciliation. Do you know what reconciliation is? Well, have you ever balanced your bank statement? You want to make sure that this number is reconciled with this number, in other words, these numbers agree. That's what reconciliation is. When God who is holy is in agreement and in the right relationship with we who are sinful. Look at Colossians 1:19-20, "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him" that is Jesus "and through him to reconcile to himself all things. Whether things on earth or things in heaven by making peace through his blood" that was the price "shed on the cross." Here's reconciliation. God is holy and we are sinful. We have to work out some kind of transaction so that we can get together.

This Bible word *reconciliation* is the word *katalasso*, which literally means the exchange of coins in a business deal. It's somebody who is carrying on a business deal with somebody else and when the price has been agreed on and the price has been paid, you say, "Are we square? Are we good? Is it a done deal?" And, when the two parties agree together, the price has been paid and it's a done deal that's the word *katalasso* reconciliation. Here's God in all of his holiness and here we are in all of our sinfulness. Do you know what God required? The payment for our sins and for our salvation he required a sinless substitute a spotless Lamb of God to die in our place. If there is anybody in this room who is totally sinless, you may qualify, but I don't. I had to have someone stand in and take my place and his name is Jesus.

If I could just explain it so even the kids could understand. Just imagine for just a moment you are living in poverty. You don't have any money. You don't have a place to live. You are out in the weather. You don't even have clothes to keep your body warm. Let's say you are walking along and you see a beautiful mansion on a hill. There's a man standing there, and the man says to you, "You know, I have been waiting for you. I know who you are, and I know there's no reason for me to love you, but I just want you to know I love you. You are very precious to me. In fact, I want to show you how precious you are to me. I have built this mansion and it's all yours. All you have to do is give me one million dollars and that mansion is yours." Well, you

are probably going to be in despair aren't you? You're going to pull out your pockets or maybe you'll think, "Maybe I can go to work. Maybe I can do some things to earn all this money." You can't. But as you are in despair and thinking about how you can never pay enough to earn that suddenly this man says to you, "By the way, I have a check here for one million dollars I'm going to give to you, and I'm going to give you this check so you can give it back to me, and that mansion is yours."

Do you remember me telling you last week that even faith is a gift from God? It's all from God. When you just humbly accept God's gift and you receive what God has for you, and you trust that it was the blood of Jesus Christ that paid the price God says to you, "Are we square? It's a done deal?" I don't know about you, but I fall on my knees and I say, "Thank you, Lord." and I spend the rest of my life serving that man who showed me that kind of love and mercy. I don't work for Jesus to earn my salvation. I work for Jesus because I love him. I finish with this little poem:

I cannot work my soul to save that work my Lord has done
But, I will work like any slave for the love of God's dear Son.

OUTLINE

I. GOD HASN'T REJECTED HIS PEOPLE (1-4)

1. Human proof: Paul
2. Historical proof: Elijah
3. Current proof: Israel

"I will bring back my exiled people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them," says the Lord your God. *Amos 9:14-15*

II. GOD HASN'T CHANGED HIS METHOD (5-6)

1. Man's method—Salvation by works "I can earn God's favor"
2. God's method—Salvation by grace "I can only accept God's forgiveness"

III. GOD HAS TURNED THEIR REJECTION INTO OUR RECONCILIATION (7-15)

1. Israel's loss: They didn't recognize Jesus as Messiah

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under wings, but you were not willing" *Matthew 23:37*

2. Our gain: We may receive the riches of reconciliation!

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. *Colossians 1:19-20*