

Title: Plight of the Entitled

Text: Romans 11:1

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Place: Decatur Church of God

I have a friend of mine that believes himself to be among the entitled elite of the world. At every restaurant he drives up front believing that there should be a special parking place for him. He should never have to stand in line; he deserves to be at the front.

Unfortunately, as I began to write these words I suddenly felt convicted. It sounds like me!

Maybe you have felt like this as well. Why do you think that is so? What is it that makes us think we are special?

Admittedly, we do live in one of the most blessed countries of the world. We have more “stuff” than over 90% of the rest of the world. My garage is bigger than the houses that most people in the world own. Sure there are bigger homes and more affluent people but I still reside with the elite.

Educationally, we have advantages. In terms of security, we are safer and our hopes for the future are more assured.

Still, are we entitled? Should we, even for a moment, believe that we are spiritually honored above anyone else?

Romans 11:1

I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin.

Israel was a people chosen by God. Paul writes that it was not by their actions but by grace.

I. It is still God's grace.

A. The opportunity to hear about God is ours.

1. Technology is exploding. I have experienced more advancement during my lifetime than all the ancients experienced

together. What I mean is that the world has experienced more technological growth since 1952 than was experienced from the creation of Adam to 1951.

* The Bible was once copied upon the available resources: pieces of pottery, papyri (reeds woven together, then dried to create a writing surface, vellum (dried animal skins), and scrolls.

Then came the advancement of paper and ink. Monks gathered the resources or documents and then began to copy them into books. The printing press was invented and copies of the Bible were made more available.

Initially people knew the Word of God because it was vocally shared with them. After a thousand years the Word was beginning its journey into the hands of the common believer.

Now, we have Bibles in various translations. They come in canvas backed, paper covered, and leather bound editions. The Bible has been recorded and can be listened to on the Radio, or through various means like computers, notebooks, PDA's, and cell phones.

2. Not only is the Word of God an audio event but it is readily available.

a. It is in the languages of many people groups around the world.

b. It is readily available to English speaking peoples.

* The Bible is even in a dramatized form for our enjoyment in reading.

Romans 11:6

And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

B. We have this tremendous heritage of faith.

I. We have the teachers of old.

2. The disciples, early church leaders, and the spiritual giants along our path.

* There was a time when the intelligent people believed that the world was flat. If one started out from Europe and traveled west far enough you would fall off the end of the earth. To say otherwise was not only unwise but could bring a charge of apostasy and maybe even martyrdom.

Still, Columbus believed that the world was round and convinced the royalty to underwrite his endeavor and started out across the Atlantic Ocean. You remember, the Pinta, the Nina, and the Santa Maria were his ships.

Now, intelligentsias will no longer question that the world is round and that we can travel without fear of falling off the edge.

* In like manner our faith has matured and grown through the years as God took the faithful through:

- The Creation and Fall
- Calling a People through Abraham
- Rescuing and Separating a People (the Exodus to the Exile)
- Maintaining God's Holiness (the Exile)
- Saving All People (Jesus in the Gospels)
- Gathering the Church (Acts and the New Testament Letters)
- Renewing All Creation (Revelation)

And it is God who still speaks to us and calls us to committed life of discipleship.

The letter to the Romans is all about that journey. One of the reasons that Paul wrote the letter was to address problems that were arising between the Christian Jews and the Gentiles. Ultimately Paul wanted his readers to glorify God, so his words were an attempt to move them that direction. He wanted them to trust in grace not in their lineage.

II. So where does that put the remnant of Israel?

Romans 11:7

What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened,

- A. What did they seek?
 1. They sought a Messiah.
 2. A Messiah that would reign of national Israel and make them victorious over the nations around them.
 3. A Messiah that would make them superior to others.
 4. A Messiah that would make them the entitled.

- B. What they received.
 1. The Messiah.
 2. A Messiah that was not of this world and a King that would reign over His Kingdom now and for eternity.
 3. A Messiah that made them a servant to the peoples around them.
 4. A Messiah that could make them Sons of God in the pattern of the Messiah himself.

* Eerdman's Handbook of the Bible says this, "As Paul dwells on God's glorious provision for all who are 'in Christ', he is filled with distress for Israel, God's own specially chosen and privileged people. How could they refuse to believe in their own, promised Messiah? The Gentiles responded eagerly to the gospel - but not the Jews. And Paul would have sold his own soul to have had it otherwise."

- C. How can we account for this?
 1. God has not broken his word.
 2. All along God has exercised his sovereign right of choice.
 3. The Maker has an indisputable right to do as he pleases with what he makes.

4. It is only by virtue of his patience and mercy that even a remnant of stubborn, rebellious Israel survived his judgment.

* People of other nations, knowing their failure, welcomed God's offer of acceptance through faith. The Jews, thinking they could earn salvation by keeping the law, refused to consider it.

Romans 11:11

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.

III. Is this misplaced entitlement permanent?

- A. God offers salvation on one condition: an open declaration of belief in the risen Christ as Lord.
- B. Is this the end for Israel?
 - a. That Paul and some of his fellow Jews had become Christians is living proof God has not given Israel up.
 - b. We Gentile Christians owe them a great debt and should not disparage them.
 - c. Our faith, it is hoped, will lead to a turning of faith for those of Jewish heritage.
 - d. God's ways are beyond us, but his purpose is forgiveness through Christ for Jew and Gentile alike.

Conclusion: Are you picking up the message of the morning? The Jews thought they were entitled but without Christ find themselves more lost than ever.

Are you one of the entitled? The list is growing...

- Presidents who believe they have a right to break the law
- Politicians who repeatedly cheat on their spouse
- Clergy who fall into sexual sin

- Men and women who steal from their employers
- Youth who cheat on their papers and tests at school
- Children who want a special toy regardless of who else might be playing with it

Entitlement isn't a problem for only the elite. You and I can get caught up in what we falsely believe is our due. If we give in it leads to ultimate destruction.

To resist, we need Jesus living in our hearts. Are we beyond recovery? Not at all!

History has a record of those who considered themselves entitled...

- Adam and Eve
- Pharaoh
- Nebuchadnezzar
- Samson
- David
- The Pharisees
- Alexander the Great
- Adolf Hitler
- Joseph Stalin
- You and me?

What do you want to do about it?