

## God's Inscrutable Ways

We don't always understand how God is at work in our lives (or the lives of people we care about) or in our circumstances do we? We wished we did, but many times we really don't know what God is doing. In today's passage, Paul confronts people who claimed to know what God was doing with the Jews, when in reality they didn't know. They thought God had rejected the Jews. That was a logical conclusion; but it was wrong. They didn't understand that God's ways are often inscrutable. May the truth that God often does things that are beyond human comprehension help us continue to trust Him even when we can't see what He is doing.

### Read Romans 11:1-10

1. What proof does Paul offer that God has not rejected his people (i.e. the Jews)?
2. What does it mean that there is a "remnant according to God's gracious choice" (v. 5)?
3. What is the big picture point that Paul is making in verses 1-6?

Steve said:

God sometimes works in the lives of people(s) in imperceptible ways. . .The application is NOT, "Let's be optimistic because sometimes things work out." The issue isn't whether or not we're optimistic people; believe it or not, **we** are not the issue. The issue is whether or not God is gracious and whether or not God is at work in ways that go beyond our scrutiny. The application involves trusting God in ways that go beyond what we can see with human eyes and what we hear with human ears. You and I see the behavior of other people; we hear the words of other people. But we don't see what God is doing in the human heart. We need to be careful not to pronounce that God isn't at work in the life of a person or in the lives of a group of people. This morning you might be discouraged about a person or circumstance. As far as you can tell, God hasn't done what obviously needs to be done in that life or situation. Today's passage suggests that in such situations we keep trusting God anyway. God works in ways that are often imperceptible to us. Obviously there is no guarantee that God will do what we want (what we believe to be His will); but God is worthy of our trust.

4. What's the difference between being "optimistic because sometimes things work out" and genuine trust in God?

5. Do you have any situations right now where you need to trust that God is at work in ways that go beyond what you can see? If so, what?
  
6. Theologically, how do you understand the idea the God hardens some people (v. 7-10)?

Steve said:

This theological category of hardening also suggests an application for those who are already believers. If hardness of heart characterizes those who don't know God, those who do know God should have hearts that are soft - responsive and receptive to whatever God wants. I would simply ask whether there is an area of your life in which you have become hardened. Is there an area of your life where you're not even trying to be obedient anymore? Or is there a situation that you know displeases God, but you've just made peace with it?

7. Are there any areas of your life in which you sense you've become hardened and have made peace with something that you know displeases God? If so, what?
  
8. What can we do as believers to not stay stuck in such a place?