

# Romans 11 - Israel in the Future: Accepted

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## Romans 11

(3) Israel in the future: Accepted (11:1-36)

(A) Israel's rejection is not total (11:1-10)

(a) Paul as an example (11:1)

**1** I say **then, God has not rejected His people, has He? Far from it! For I too am an Israelite**, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

**1** I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

**1** So I ask, "God has not rejected his people, has he?" Of course not! I am an Israeli myself, a descendant of Abraham from the tribe of Benjamin.

**1** I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

- God has not rejected the Israelites, even though they have, on the whole, rejected Him. Paul himself is proof that God has not abandoned them.

— Paul believed, and is evidence of, what the OT repeatedly affirms: God disciplines Israel, only a remnant may remain, but God will never break His covenant.

— If God broke His promises, He would not be righteous. In fact, He would not be God.

- "...then" - connects v1 with Rom 10:21, which portrays Israel in unbelief; it also shows that the people of 10:21 (national Israel) must be the same as 11:1

- "...God has not rejected His people, has He?" - this question is based on the statement in Rom 10:21, and shows that the people of these two verses must be the same: national

## Israel

- "...Far from it!" - *Me genoita*, the strongest negation in the Greek language
- Paul cannot stress his refutation of this question any stronger than the use of this phrase
- A rhetorical question followed by *Me genoita!* is a literary device Paul uses regularly to indicate a change of subject (Cf. v11)
- Has God permanently and totally rejected Israel to the extent that He will no longer keep His covenant promises to her? Has He withdrawn His offer of righteousness by faith in the Messiah to every individual Jew? Has He turned exclusively to the Gentiles in this age? — The answer to all these questions is NO!!
- "...I too am an Israelite" - Paul uses the reality of his miraculous coming to Christ in faith as living proof that God has not rejected His people, the Jews
- If there was ever anyone who did not deserve God to save them, it was Paul...
- God's forsaking of the Jews is not complete. There were in OT times, during Paul's day, and even today, Jews trickling into the church through their belief in Jesus Christ by faith. Paul says that because there are still a few Jews, even today, coming to Christ, this proves that God has not completely forsaken the Jews.
- The fact that Israel rejected Jesus as the Messiah does not mean that God has rejected Israel. Even in unbelief, they are still His people. If He had cast off His people, no single Jew could ever be saved. That fact that there are born again Jews today is proof that God has not completely rejected Israel. The fact that Paul was saved is further proof.
- If God could save Paul (Acts 9:22,26), He certainly could save other Jews (1 Tim 1:15-16)

The question Paul raised in v1 shows that some were claiming that since Israel rejected the Messiah and only a minority believed, indicated that God has cast off the people of Israel (early seeds of Replacement Theology?). The point of the Elijah example is to point out that the Northern Kingdom, which would have had a Jewish population of about two million people, only had 7,000 believers. Yet no one was saying back then that God was through with the Jewish people. By the same token, the existence of only a minority of Jewish believers now is not a sign that God has cast off Israel but a sign that He has not cast off Israel. The existence of the Remnant of Israel, no matter how small, will be evidence that God has not cast off Israel.

Paul gives two illustrations to show that God has always had a believing Remnant within Israel, in spite of her national unbelief:

1. Paul Himself (v1) - Paul did not surrender his Jewishness when he became a believer in Jesus Christ. He was proud of his racial and religious ancestry (Phil 3:4-6). Paul then affirms this key doctrinal statement in v2: "God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew." All believers are "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Peter 1:1-2). All foreknown, chosen believers are likewise predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ, called, justified, and glorified (Cf. 8:29-30). In eternity past, God sovereignly knew us as His own distinctive people even before He worked out His redemptive purpose in time in our individual lives. In like manner, God knew Israel as His beloved, chosen, covenant nation even before He promised Abraham or redeemed Israel of her Egyptian bondage (Deut 7:6-10). Thus, both elect Israel and elect believers, both Jewish and Gentile, can be confident that God will never cast them away.
2. His Foreknowledge (v2a) - the very concept of the foreknowledge of God forbids the concept of the casting off of Israel. Since Israel was chosen, God could not cast them off.
3. The 7000 present with Elijah (v2b-4) - God provided a remnant of 7000 believers within the idolatrous northern kingdom of Israel, even though Elijah thought that he was the only one.

(b) Existence of the remnant (11:2-10)

(i) In Elijah's day (11:2-4)

2 God has not rejected His people **whom He foreknew**. Or **do you not know** what the Scripture says in *the passage about* Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?

2 God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in *the passage about* Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?

2 God has not rejected his people whom he chose long ago. Do you not know what the Scripture says in the story about Elijah, when he pleads with God against Israel?

2 God hath not cast away His people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias [Elijah]? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying,

- Paul uses a great OT event as another proof that God has not abandoned Israel (1 Kings 18:16-19:18)

- "...whom He foreknew" - *proginōskō*, to have knowledge before hand; "have a meaningful relationship with"

— The relationship between God and His people is that of foreknowledge. God, in His foreknowledge, chose Israel in spite of the fact that He "foreknew" that Israel would reject Jesus as the Messiah.

— God had chosen Israel as His covenant people from eternity past and entered into a relationship with them that will never be destroyed. [Stiffler points out: Israel is the only

*nation* He foreknew (Amos 3:2)]

Amos 3:2: You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

Jer 31:37: Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD.

- Paul now begins to develop the doctrine of the remnant...

— Paul's second proof that God has not rejected His people was taken from Israel's history during Elijah's ministry. The prophet was deeply depressed, having fled for his life from Jezebel.

- "...do you not know" - from Paul's perspective, all of these issues are due to a lack of knowledge. Every topic he raises in this book Paul blames on a lack of knowledge.

— Another phrase Paul uses often is "have you never read." Paul consistently points his readers back to the Word of God.

### **The Calling of the Remnant**

While Israel as a nation has failed to attain righteousness, their rejection is not total; there are Jewish people who believe and attained the righteousness of God. So instead of using the existence of a minority of believers as evidence that God has cast off His people, in reality it is evidence that He has not.

3 "Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE."

3 "Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life."

3 "Lord, they have killed your prophets and demolished your altars. I am the only one left, and they are trying to take my life."

3 Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.

- Paul then quoted Elijah (1 Kings 19:10,14). Elijah wrongly considered himself to be the only believing person left in Israel.

— The point is to show that God has always had a Remnant, although the Remnant may have been quite small at times

— While apostasy was general, it was not universal among the Jews. Paul uses the example of Elijah that what is true today has always been true: it is the Remnant that comes to saving faith.

4 But what is the divine response to him? "I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL."

4 But what is the divine response to him? "I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

4 But what was the divine reply to him? "I have reserved for myself 7,000 people who have not knelt to worship Baal."

4 But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to *the image of* Baal.

- Quoted from 1 Kings 19:19...

- Elijah had a rough time because he was prophesying to wayward kings at a time when Ahab and Jezebel were running the kingdom

— After awhile, Elijah got very discouraged, and felt like he was the only righteous and faithful person left in Israel. Miraculously, God was not limited to one fearful, depressed prophet; He had reserved for Himself a godly Remnant in Israel that numbered 7,000 (1 Kings 19:18).

— If God preserved a faithful remnant during Elijah's day, it is a hint of an even greater work coming in terms of a future national restoration of Israel

— If God had disowned Israel, there would've never been a believing remnant of 7,000 people in Elijah's day, and Paul himself would've never come to faith in Christ

The people of God had turned their backs on the Lord and worshipped Baal. Elijah challenged 450 prophets of Baal to a contest: Baal's prophets would sacrifice to Baal and Elijah would sacrifice to the Lord. No one would light an altar fire. The god who answered by fire was the true God. Baal's altar remained unlit, but the Lord sent fire to consume Elijah's sacrifice. Elijah had the false prophets killed, and news of Baal's defeat enraged Jezebel, queen of Israel. Jezebel ordered Elijah killed and he fled into the wilderness. When God asked Elijah what He was doing there, he responded that he was alone in serving the Lord. After some back and forth, God told Elijah that He had reserved for Himself 7,000 (the Remnant) who had not bowed a knee to Baal. Elijah was not the only faithful Israelite left, as God's grace extended far beyond just him.

(ii) In the present day (11:5-10)

5 **In the same way then**, there has also come to be at the present time a **remnant** according to **God's gracious choice**.

5 In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to *God's* gracious choice.

5 So it is at the present time: there is a remnant, chosen by grace.

5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

- "In the same way then" - "In the same way" is the comparison and "then" is the inference; what was true then is true now: there is a Remnant according to the election of grace

— There was always going to be a Remnant: the 11 disciples, the 3000 who came to faith on Pentecost, the Apostle Paul, and most of the early church (up to Acts 13) are only some of many elected to faith from the people of Israel. In every generation of the Church "a remnant chosen by grace" has been called from among the Jews.

- "...remnant" - a small part that remains after the main portion is gone

- "...God's gracious choice" - by declaring it is an election of grace, Paul gave the standard according to which the Remnant comes into existence. It's not on the basis of the Law (v4), but on the basis of grace.

— Paul uses the Greek perfect tense, which shows that the Remnant has existed in the past and still exists in the present

6 But if *it is* by **grace**, *it is* no longer on the basis of works, since *otherwise* **grace is no longer grace**.

6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

6 But if this is by grace, then it is no longer on the basis of actions. Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace.

6 And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be* of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

- "...grace" - unmerited favor; favor that a believer has before God, which is not deserved

— Paul is describing the means by which the believing remnant came to faith in Christ...by grace through faith, not through works

— It is the grace of God, not the works of the Remnant, that is the real cause of their condition (Cf. 4:4-5; 9:30-32)

— Believing Jews are not superior, just greatly blessed

— The concept of grace is 180 degrees removed from the concept of works, thus you cannot mix both grace and works for salvation because the two concepts are mutually exclusive

— Lost humanity in our fallen state has a very difficult time accepting the concept of grace. We're always trying to add some type of human work to what God did.

— This appeals to the pride of man because in our fallen state, we always want to earn something from God. God paid for dinner, but we want to leave the tip.

— Religion says Jesus did 90% of it, but we have to do the last 10%. Grace says God did 100% and you were not able to do even 0.001%. He did it all.

- If you're living under this mindset you are not functioning under grace because grace by definition is the opposite of works
  - Justification is not a process; it's not something that is worked for and earned over the course of your life (Roman Catholicism). It is a moment in time when you go from unbelief and not trusting in what God has done for you in Christ, to relying on it (trust/faith) for your eternal salvation.
  - "...grace is no longer grace" - if some other message/gospel is given, it's no longer grace. If we insert anything else, other than faith, into the equation for salvation, then I've just unintentionally created a merit system, and grace is no longer grace.
  - Reformed Theology hopelessly mixes grace and works. They teach that salvation is by grace but assurance is impossible apart from works. Thus, a believer can be sure that God has been gracious to them only if they work hard for Him. God's goodness to them in Christ is thus held hostage to their performance for Him.
  - It is this process that Paul is saying that grace is no longer grace
  - It is pure sophistry to argue that what is meant in such theology is only that works are produced by grace and are simply its necessary results. On the contrary, if I cannot get to heaven apart from the regular performance of good works, those works become as much a condition for heaven as faith itself.
  - It is inconceivable that an experience so utterly divorced from our performance (salvation) must be verified by our performance
- [Rom 4:4]

**7 What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;**

**7 What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;**

**7 What, then, does this mean? It means that Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking, but the selected group obtained it while the rest were hardened.**

**7 What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded**

- "...it has not obtained"- Israel, for the most part, wanted the righteousness of God but they did not come to God in the way He ordained to come to Him and receive Christ's righteousness

— Israel sought the full blessings of God through the Abrahamic Covenant, but it did not obtain them because it sought them on the basis of works

— However, the "elect" obtained the spiritual blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant because those Jews received the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ alone



- The distinction here is not between Israel and the Church, or between Jews and Gentiles, but between believing Jews (Remnant) and non-believing Jews
- In Rom 10, Paul explained very clearly what went wrong: Israel pursued righteousness by Law (works) rather than by faith; they ignored the teaching that righteousness is by faith rather than works; and, Israel refused many opportunities to receive God's righteousness by faith.
- Israel ignored God's spiritual laws in how to come to Christ. God has immutable laws for all kinds of things in the physical world (i.e. the law of gravity). You can rebel against the law of gravity if you wish, but you will always lose.
- God also has spiritual laws, and one of those is how to obtain the righteousness of God. You can rebel against that law if you'd like, which is what the Jews did, but you'll lose. God's law says that people will come to Him by way of faith, or they won't come at all. God doesn't give us options or avenues to come to Him...it's His way or the highway.
- This is a principle that goes back to Gen 4 (Cain and Abel); Abel's sacrifice was accepted, Cain's was rejected, because Abel came by way of faith and Cain came by way of works. Cain may have been very sincere with his offering, he may have put everything he had into it, yet at the end of the day one brother's sacrifice was accepted and the other was rejected because one honored a law that God had established and one did not.
- Religion will always persecute faith: Cain murdered Abel; the Pharisees killed Jesus Christ; Saul murdered Christians (before he became Paul)
- "...those who were chosen obtained it" - that which Israel the whole failed to obtain, Israel the Remnant did obtain because they came by grace instead of works; they came to Christ in the way the Creator has established in v5-6
- The same point is made in 1 Peter 2:1-10; while Israel the whole failed to obtain the righteousness of God, there is a Remnant within Israel that has not failed
- As we study the doctrine of the remnant, we learn that the small number of Jews who are coming to the Lord today, as in Paul's day, are just a "firstfruits" of a larger harvest to come
- "...the rest were hardened" - in contrast to the "elect," the rest of Israel was blinded because they rejected Jesus Christ as their promised Messiah (Cf. Luke 19:41-44). This is the majority; these were the ones who stumbled over Christ (Cf. 9:30).
- "hardened" - *eporothesan*, a special "hardening," with the result that the hardness renders the person more difficult to get through to from then on. It pictures a callousness that built up over the Israelites, which made them less sensitive to God.
- This is a different Greek word for "hardening" than Paul used in 9:18 (*sklerunei*)
- It speaks of judicial blindness that was imposed on the majority of Jews, who came to God by way of works (religion)

— The Jews zealously sought to be accepted by God on the basis of works and the righteousness of the Law (Cf. 10:2-3). However, they were not accepted by God; only the elect were accepted, because of God's sovereign choice by grace. The others were hardened (Cf. 11:25).

This postponement in Israel's history is not so much an interruption of redemption as an extension of predicted hardening. The Exile, which was a punishment for national disobedience, has therefore been prolonged during the present age until the appointed time for Israel's national (and spiritual) restoration (Acts 1:7; 3:21; Rom 11:25-27). In Rom 9, Paul used four OT passages from God's prophets to prove the God's plan of restoration always included Israel's rejection of Jesus (Hosea 1:10; 2:23; Is 1:9; 10:22-23). Now, Paul provides more OT support (v8; Deut 29:4; Is 29:10; v9-10, Ps 69:22-23).

8 just as it is written: "GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, **DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY.**"

8 just as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, Eyes to see not and ears to hear not, Down to this very day."

8 As it is written, "To this day God has put them into deep sleep. Their eyes do not see, and their ears do not hear."

8 (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.

- Paul now explains what this judicial hardening is (v8-10) by giving two quotes from three OT passages to support his point of the spiritual blindness of Israel. This blindness was anticipated in all three divisions of the OT.

— This quote from Deut 29:3-4 (Law) and Is 29:10 (Prophets) indicates that hardening involves spiritual drowsiness (*katanuxis*), blindness and deafness

— These Jews have become spiritually dull, they lack insight and understanding of spiritual things; they are insensitive to the things of God

— God hardened the nation because of its hypocrisy. This can be seen in Is 29:13:

Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men.

— This passage was later quoted by Jesus and applied to His ministry (Matt 15:7-9)

— This hardening is a spiritual insensitivity that takes over the mind of the religionist as a penalty that God has imposed for those who will not honor the principle that one can only come to God through faith

- "...DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY" - Paul says that this judicial hardening from God was still blinding Jews during his day, and it continues on even to the present time

— There are some Jews today who come to Christ through faith, but the vast majority do not. In Israel today, the majority of Jews are atheistic in their worldview.

9 And David says, "MAY THEIR **TABLE** BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP, AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM.

9 And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, And a stumbling block and a retribution to them.

9 And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a punishment for them.

9 And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompense unto them:

- Quoted from Ps 69:22-23 (Writings)...

- "...TABLE" - a place of blessing (Cf. Ps 23:5); a metaphor for their blessings from the hand of God, which should have led them to Christ (Cf. Gal 3:24), became the occasion for their rejection of God ("a snare and a trap, a stumbling block;" Cf. 9:32-33) and "recompense"—God's judgment on them.

— Maybe the biggest blessing that Israel received was the Law of God, which revealed to them the character of God

— Yet this "table" that God had purposed for good became perverted and twisted beyond what God had intended. Consequently the very thing that was designed to be a blessing to Israel became "a snare and a trap" because they (the Pharisees) used the Law of God as a guide to works righteousness, which is a use for which the Law was never intended.

— The Law of God was not given to redeem a people, it was given to a redeemed people: Israel was redeemed at Passover by applying the blood to the doorposts and lintel of the doorway. As they left Egypt after crossing through the Red Sea, they "believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses" (Ex 14:31).

— Often it is our greatest blessing that becomes our downfall. Satan will target the area that God has blessed us with the most, whether it be finances, intellect, etc.

— This quote demonstrates that the divine provision/blessing for Israel ("their table") became a basis for judgment because it (Israel) did not respond in faith and thanksgiving to God

— Their advantages increased their moral accountability. Their rejection at His first advent caused their back to be bowed under the weight of their guilt and national punishment.

— The blindness of Israel in this present age simply continued the blindness of the nation in the OT era

10 "MAY THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT, AND **BEND THEIR BACKS CONTINUALLY.**"

10 "Let their eyes be darkened to see not, And bend their backs forever."

10 Let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and keep their backs forever bent."

10 Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back away.

- Quoted from Ps 69:23...

- Another OT quote that Paul uses to describe Israel's present day blindness

— These are not the only passages describing Israel's blindness:

1. Matt 12 - the Jews attributed Christ's miracles to Beelzebub; in Matt 13, Jesus begins to explain the blindness that Israel was under now, and how it is different than the spiritual sight that the remnant has (Matt 13:11-16). Jesus quoted from Is 6 in Matt 13, the famous "calling" section of Isaiah, where God told Isaiah that he would preach things that by and large the nation would reject.

2. 2 Cor 3:14-16 - the Jews hearts are veiled, but when they turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

- "...BEND THEIR BACKS" - because they refused to receive God's truth (Cf. Is 6:9-10; John 5:40), their backs will be bent under the weight of guilt and punishment

- "...CONTINUALLY" - *dia pantos*, means continually (rather than forever). Later in this chapter, Paul explains that Israel's obstinacy and bondage would not last forever (v25-26).

— God brought upon the Jews what David had prayed would happen to his persecutors

Paul quoted three passages (Deut 29:4; Is 29:10; Ps 69:22-23) in v8-10 to prove the following: The Israelites did not follow God faithfully—even though they saw God's miraculous deliverance from Egypt, experienced His preservation in the wilderness, and heard the warnings of the prophets. God gave them a "spirit of stupor" because they failed to respond to the numerous blessings He gave them.

Paul seems to have in mind how Israel came to trust in the advantages God gave them (Cf. 9:4-5) rather than God Himself. When blessings do not lead to personal trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior, hearts grow hard and sin flourishes. As is often His way, He gave them over to the natural consequences of their actions.

### **The Purpose of Israel's Stumbling (11:11-15)**

Paul now sets aside the Remnant and deals with Israel as a whole. Even while Israel resists God's plan centered in the Messiah, the Lord is at work bringing Gentiles to salvation. Gentile salvation really depends upon Israel's covenant relationship with God, as Paul illustrated with the olive tree. The salvation of Gentiles in the present dispensation not only magnifies the grace of God, but it will also provokes Israel to jealousy and lead her ultimately to return to the Lord.

(B) God used Israel's rejection to bless the Gentiles (11:11-15)

(a) Introduction (11:11a-b)

(b) God used something negative for something good (11:11c-12)

**11** I say then, **they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? Far from it! But by their wrongdoing salvation *has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.***

**11** I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation *has come* to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

**11** And so I ask, "They have not stumbled so as to fall, have they?" Of course not! On the contrary, because of their stumbling, salvation has come to the gentiles to make the Jews jealous.

**11** I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but *rather* through their fall salvation *is come* unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

- Paul now goes on to explain how God used Israel's rejection of their Messiah to bless everyone else

— In other words, God took a tragic event in world history (Israel's rejection and murder of their Messiah) and turned it around for something positive

- "...they did not stumble so as to fall, did they?" - after discussing the spiritual blindness of the Jews in v8-10, Paul now asks whether this spiritual blindness is permanent. Has Israel gone so far in their rejection of God that they are unretrievable? Is the unbelief of Israel something that can't be fixed? Has Israel committed the unpardonable sin in regards to rejecting their own Messiah? Has God erased what He promised He would do through the patriarch Abraham?

- This "stumbling" (not a permanent fall) served at least four divine purposes:

1. To offer salvation to the Gentiles (v11b)

- The rejection of Christ by Israel led to His crucifixion and resurrection, the very basis for "salvation to the Gentiles."
- God told Abraham that through him, all families of the earth would be blessed (Gen 12:3). This is a spiritual blessing for both Jews and Gentiles.

2. To make Israel envious, lit. "to provoke them to jealousy" (v11c; Cf. Deut 32:21; Rom 10:19)

- Isn't it strange that Gentiles can know more about the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob than their physical descendants?
- God's purpose is for the believing Gentile to come alongside an unbelieving Jew and cause the Jew to become jealous because of what the Gentile believer has, so that the Jew becomes a believer in the Messiah also.

3. God will enrich the world in the future through the "fullness" of Israel's blessings (v12)

- Paul anticipated a greater spiritual blessing for the Gentiles in the future because he knew that God would one day fulfill all of His promises to Israel. That day will occur when He returns to establish His Messianic Kingdom on the earth.

4. Paul knew his major ministry was to the Gentiles (v13)

- Nevertheless, he wanted to use the salvation of Gentiles as a means to bring jealousy to the Jews and to "save some of them" in this age (v14). The Jews who are saved in the Church Age constitute "the elect" within Israel and are part of the true Church, the spiritual body of Christ.

— "fall" - *piptō*, they did not stumble so as to fall *permanently*; Cf. NIV: "beyond recovery"

— The tense of the verb "fall" and its contrast with the verb translated "stumble" imply the idea of falling beyond recovery, or a "complete and irrevocable fall."

— Once again, the question in Greek was worded to elicit a negative answer, and for the 10th and last time in Romans, Paul responded, *me genoito*, "May it never be!" or "Perish the thought!"

— When Israel rejected Jesus Christ as its Messiah, did it suffer a permanent, irreversible fall? Was the purpose so that God could reject and cast off His people? Did God replace Israel with the Church in His creative, redemptive purpose? Are all of the covenant promises given to Israel being spiritually fulfilled in the Church? — All of the answers are: NO!!

— Unfortunately, the vast majority of American churches teach this very thing. It's called Replacement Theology. It is the idea that Israel did indeed stumble and fall, thus God has permanently forsaken Israel and now will be fulfilling all of His OT promises to Israel through the church.

— Most churches teach this theology, in complete ignorance of this very verse. And most Christians attend churches that teach this theology, although they are likely unaware of it.

- "...Far from it!" - *Me genoita*, the strongest negation in the Greek language

— Paul's answer to every single one of the questions posed in the note above is: No way, absolutely not, not ever!!!

- "...their...them" - unbelieving Israel

- "...salvation *has come* to the Gentiles" - Paul now tells us that because of Israel's rejection of Jesus Christ, God was up to something greater...

— God took Israel's bad choice (Cf. John 19:15-16) and turned it around for something positive. It's just like God to do something just like that...he can (and does) turn our terrible choices into something good. God is great at turning lemons into lemonade.

— When Israel rejected Christ and handed Him over to the Romans to be crucified, it appeared that the entire program of God had been derailed

— But God providentially knew this would happen, and He providentially attached the sin debt of the world to the 2nd Member of the Trinity. So as Israel was turning Jesus over to the Romans and as Christ was dying on that cross, while the rebellion of Israel reached its height, the sin death of the world was being paid for.

— The crucifixion of the Messiah by Israel was the mechanism that was used by God to pay the sin debt of the world. From that tragic event, something great came to reality: salvation and the ability for sinful man to enter into a right relationship with a Holy God came out of it.

- "...to make them jealous" - Paul revisits the topic of Jewish jealousy of Gentile salvation, first discussed in 10:19

— Another benefit of Christ's death and resurrection, other than salvation coming to the Gentiles, is the fact that this very salvation is designed to make the Jews jealous

— The Jews were the centerpiece of God's program since Abraham, but after Israel's rejection of Jesus Christ, God has set Israel on the shelf temporarily and has turned His focus to the church

— As Gentiles are saved in droves during the Church Age, God is using that to spur jealousy in the Jews because they want to return to their place of prominence in God's program (which they will someday, Cf. 11:16-36)

God, as Father, is simply rewarding one of His children (Gentiles) for being obedient, and withholding a reward from the other child (Jews) who have been disobedient. The intent of this treatment is, in part, to motivate the disobedient child to become more obedient (Cf. Matt 22:1-14; Luke 14:15-24).

12 Now if their wrongdoing *proves to be* riches for the world, and their **failure**, riches for the Gentiles, how much more *will* their **fulfillment** *be*!

12 Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!

12 Now if their stumbling means riches for the world, and if their fall means riches for the gentiles, how much more will their full participation mean!

12 Now if the fall of them *be* the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness [will be]?

- If Israel's rejection of Jesus Christ blessed the entire world (through the paying of its sin debt), and blessed the Gentiles with salvation, Paul says how much more blessed will these groups be when Israel recognizes her Messiah and comes to faith in Christ?

— Grammatically this is an argument from the lesser to the greater...something tremendously positive happened when Israel rejected Jesus Christ, and if God can take that tragedy (rejection/death of Christ) and turn it into something so great (sin debt paid, Gentile salvation), how much greater will the blessings be when Israel accepts Christ!

— The blessing ("fulfillment") that Paul is referring to is the long-awaited inauguration of the kingdom of God upon the earth

- "...failure" - numerical word; not all are rejected. The grammar requires "they will have"; they will be coming into their fullness. Not saying "if"; it's "when."

- "...fulfillment" - *plērōma*, suggests that this "fulfillment" is attained through a numerical process

— Paul is suggesting that the present "defeat" (status) of Israel, where they have been numerically reduced to a small remnant, will be reversed by the addition of far greater numbers of true believers

#### (c) Paul's ministry to the Gentiles (11:13-14)

13 But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Therefore insofar as **I am an apostle of Gentiles**, I magnify my ministry

13 But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry,

13 I am speaking to you gentiles. Because I am an apostle to the gentiles, I magnify my ministry

**13** For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

- "...I am an apostle of Gentiles" - God designated Paul with the special position as being the apostle to the Gentiles (Cf. Acts 9:15; Gal 1:16; 2:7-8; Eph 3:8)

— Twice already in his ministry Paul had turned away from unbelieving Jews to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46; 18:6), and he would do so at least once more in Rome (Acts 28:25-28)

14 if somehow I may move my own people to jealousy and save some of them.

14 if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them.

14 in the hope that I can make my people jealous and save some of them.

14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation *them which are* my flesh, and might save some of them.

- Why did Paul become the Paul we know today, a prolific evangelist and writer of 13 NT books?

1. He was called by God to be the apostle to the Gentiles (Cf. v13)

2. Paul knew that Jewish rejection of Jesus Christ brought in the gospel to the Gentiles as a blessing, so Paul decided to evangelize as many Gentiles as he possibly could

3. Paul also had a deep heart for the Jewish people (Cf. 9:2-3)

4. Paul understood the concept of jealousy, the work of the Spirit whereby God would lavish His blessings upon the Gentiles, provoking national Israel to a place of jealousy, causing them to desire that place of spiritual privilege back.

— The purpose of Israel's stumbling was Gentile salvation, and the purpose of Gentile salvation is Jewish salvation. This is the methodology by which God has chosen to work.



The Gentiles are not saved merely for their own sake, but for the sake of God's election of Israel.

— God will water that seed of jealousy in order to bring in a tremendous end times regeneration of national Israel that Paul describes in v16-36

### **What is Your Motive for Serving God?**

Have you ever asked God to reveal to you why you do what you do for Him? Ask Him to reveal any impure, carnal motives you may have, and ask Him to replace those carnal motives with righteous motives. If your motives before God are right, your service for Him will be stronger and greater. If we're serving God out of carnal motives (fear, to gain favor, etc.) then your service for Him will be weak and ineffective. Paul was who he was because of the motivations that were in his heart.

(d) Israel's reconciliation will bless the Gentiles further (11:15)

15 For **if their rejection** *proves to be* the **reconciliation of the world**, what *will their* acceptance *be* but life from the dead?

15 For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will *their* acceptance be but life from the dead?

15 For if their rejection results in reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance bring but life from the dead?

15 For if the casting away of them *be* the reconciling of the world, what *shall* the receiving *of them be*, but life from the dead?

- Same point Paul made in v12...another argument from the lesser to the greater

- Israel's reconciliation before God will bless the Gentiles even further. How can that be? If the Gentiles have the gospel today, they are already rich...can't be any more blessed by God. Then what is this "extra blessing" that will come upon the world when the Jews are reconciled to Christ? The kingdom.

— The kingdom will be a time when all of the world's poverty/wealth problems are solved, all of the world's wars ended, all of the world's sickness and disease are done away with, and all of the world's famine and hunger problems are gone.

— The kingdom will be a time in history where believers today will be ruling and reigning with Jesus Christ over the entire earth. Christians today are destined for kingdom authority (Rev 5:10).

- "...if" - 1st class condition ("and it is"; "since"); Cf. v12 and v15 (climactic)

- "...their rejection" - the stumbling of Israel

- "...reconciliation of the world" - salvation (reconciliation) of the Gentile world

— This does not mean that all men will be reconciled. The scope of reconciliation is the whole world, and the instrument is the gospel.

- Could be translated: "If, by the fall of Israel, the Gentiles received the gospel, how much more will the Gentiles be blessed by Israel's return."
- This is an argument from the lesser to the greater. If the Gentiles have received this much blessing by virtue of Israel's stumbling, just think how much more blessing the Gentiles will have when Israel is saved.
- God's blessings on humanity now ("reconciling of the world") will pale by comparison with what the world will experience then (during the Messianic Kingdom)
- If the Lord can make something good come out of a tragedy, think of what He can make out of something good...

The point Paul makes in this section is that it was God's plan for Israel to reject the Messiahship of Jesus; for awhile, the gospel would go out to the Gentiles, during which time they were to provoke Jews to jealousy; until eventually, all Israel is saved.

Paul builds upon Is 49:1-13 where Isaiah taught the same thing: that the Messiah would come to Israel, Israel would reject Him, and the Messiah would then, for awhile, become the light to the Gentiles. But eventually, Israel will return to Him and be restored.

Paul does not say anything new in this passage of Romans; he just points out the way Isaiah 49 is being fulfilled to this day. In v1-10, Paul taught that there is still a Remnant coming to saving faith. Now in v11-15, he states that the primary way Jews now come to faith is by being provoked to jealousy by Gentile believers.

(C) Israel's covenants guarantee her future restoration (11:16-24)

(a) First piece and lump of dough (11:16a)

16 If the **first piece of dough** is holy, **the lump** is also; and **if the root** is **holy**, **the branches** are as well.

16 If the first piece of *dough* is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too.

16 If the first part of the dough is holy, so is the whole batch. If the root is holy, so are the branches.

**16** For if the firstfruit *be* holy, the lump [root] *is* also *holy* : and if the root *be* holy, so *are* the branches.

- "...first piece of *dough*" - the covenants God made with Israel (unconditional, eternal, unfulfilled)

- "...the lump" - national Israel

— Because the first piece of dough (the covenants) was holy, the lump (Israel) will also one day be holy

— God started Israel on the right track, with promises, and because pays for whatever He orders, whatever He promises will come to pass

- "...if" - the connecting word "if" or "now" provides the reason for believing in a future national restoration
- "...the root" - the covenants
- "...holy" - they are holy because they were separated and consecrated by God for a divine purpose
- "...the branches" - national Israel
- Same point made as in the first part of the verse: because the root (covenants) are holy, the branches sprouting from that root (national Israel) will also one day be holy
- Paul is communicating that the foundation of something (i.e. a house) is bad, the entire house is bad. Doesn't matter how nice the furniture or how great the view. But if the foundation of something is good, the entire thing is good (Cf. Phil 1:6).
- That is what Paul is saying referring to Israel: they may be in unbelief today, but their foundation is good, it is holy, therefore the entire "house" of Israel is good and holy. Because their foundation is right, it's just a matter of time before God makes good on His promises to Israel.
- God has not forgotten about Israel, although Israel has forgotten about God

(c) Natural and unnatural branches of an olive tree (11:17-24)

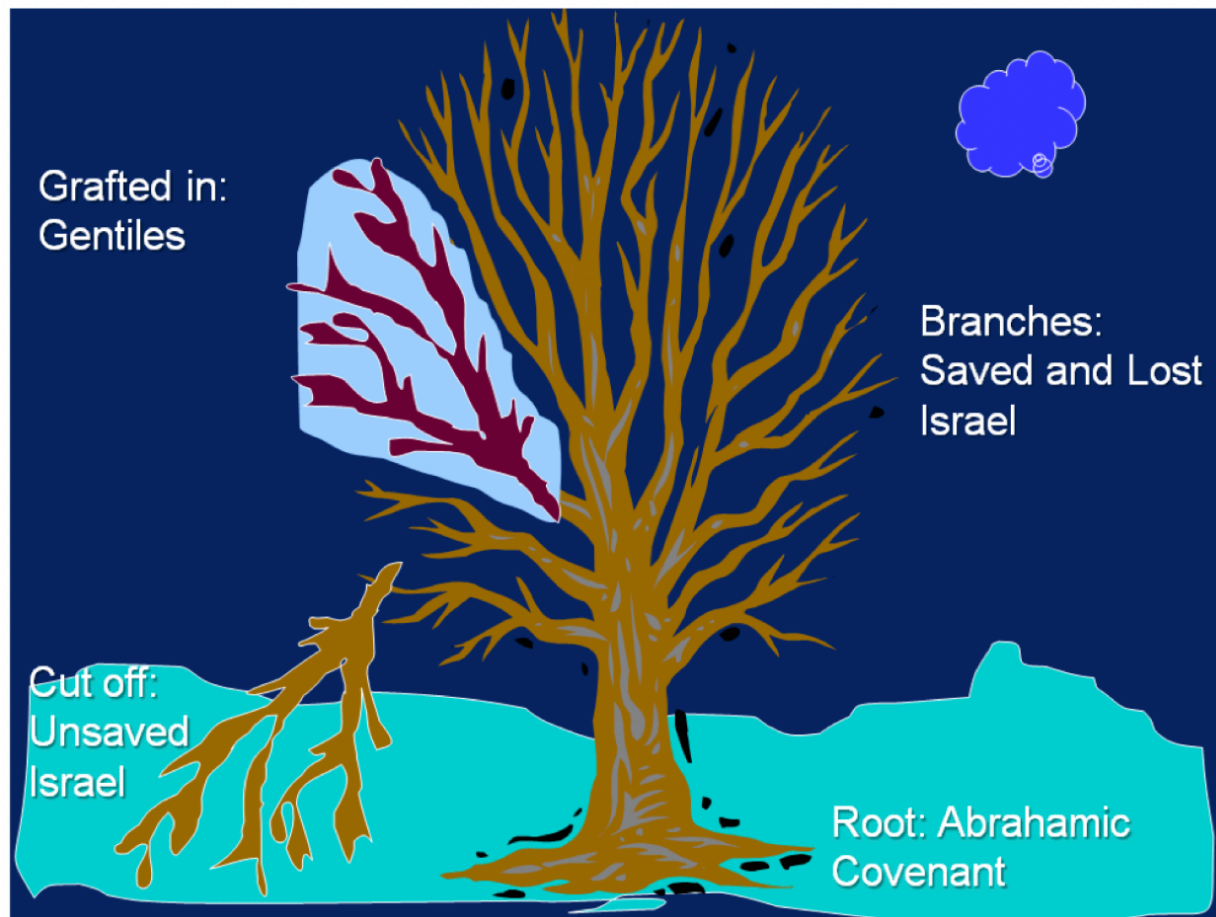
(i) Warning against Gentile pride (11:17-22)

(a) Fact of Gentile inclusion (11:17)

- 17** But if some of the **branches were broken off**, and **you, being a wild olive**, were grafted in among them and **became partaker with them** of the rich root of the **olive tree**,
- 17** But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree,
- 17 Now if some of the branches have been broken off, and you, a wild olive branch, have been grafted in their place to share the rich root of the olive tree,
- 17 And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;
- Paul issues a strong warning to Gentiles (v17-22) to not be arrogant because of the fact that God has moved His focus temporarily from His chosen people (the Jews) onto the Gentiles (the church)
  - "...branches were broken off" - a reference to Jewish unbelief
  - Because of their rejection of Christ, they have been removed for a season from the blessings of the olive tree (Abrahamic Covenant)
  - Because they sought Christ by Law/works rather than by faith (Cf. Rom 10), these branches have been temporarily cut off from the "nourishment" (spiritual blessings) of the Abrahamic Covenant (olive tree)

- "...you, being a wild olive" - Gentile believers who have trusted in the very Messiah that national Israel rejected; taken against nature, made partakers of the sustenance
- The olive tree is not the Church, or the so-called "new Israel," in which God has united Jewish and Gentile believers in one body. The "wild branches" retain their own identity as Gentiles, even though they benefit from blessings that come through Israel.
- "...became partaker with them" - Gentile believers today have become partakers in the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant because of our faith in Christ
- "partaker" - Paul will explain this concept in 15:25-27; we are co-receivers of the soteriological benefits of the Abrahamic Covenant
- Gentiles, by their faith, have now become *partakers* (not *taker-overs*) of Jewish spiritual blessings contained in the Abrahamic Covenant.
- Paul makes the same point here that he made in Eph 2:11-16 and 3:5-6. These grafted-in Gentiles do not become part of Israel, they simply partake with Israel of the blessings of the root (Abrahamic Covenant).
- The predominant view of the church over the past 1600 years is that Gentile believers in the church are not "partakers" in the Abrahamic Covenant blessings *along with* Israel, but "takers-over" of the blessings, to the *exclusion* of national Israel
- This view is called Replacement Theology, the view that the church has replaced Israel in God's program, they have taken over the tree. It's the idea that the church has taken over the position of blessing from Israel, and that God will never bring the natural branches back. Their belief is that the church has taken over *all* of the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant, not just the soteriological ones. So the Land promises, according to this belief, now belong to the church. These literal OT promises given specifically to Israel are spiritualized and brought over into the church.
- Interestingly, God promised Israel both blessings (for obedience, Deut 28:1-14) and curses (for disobedience, Deut 28:15-68), but replacement theologians only bring over the blessings to the church, they forget about all of the curses (those remain on Israel)
- "...olive tree" - the Abrahamic Covenant, the covenant that God entered into with Abraham that promised Land, Seed, and Blessing
- See [Covenant, New](#) and [Woods-What is the Relationship of the Church to the New Covenant?](#) for an overview on how the Church obtains the blessings of the Jewish Covenants through the New Covenant.
- In this verse, Paul talks of grafting wild olive branches into a good olive tree. Horticulturists will tell you that it is unnatural to graft a wild olive branch into a healthy olive tree.
- This is the exact point Paul is making...it is unnatural for Gentiles to be grafted into this place of blessing that comes out of the Abrahamic Covenant. In fact, in v24, Paul states that this is "contrary to nature."

— Normally, such a graft would be unfruitful, but his point is that God is doing something “unnatural”...bringing Gentiles into the place of blessing based on the Jewish covenants.



A common misunderstanding of this figure is that the olive tree is a symbol of all believers throughout history, all the people of God. The natural branches, in this view, represent Israel, and the grafted in branches represent the Church. The OT use of the olive tree as a symbol for Israel argues against this view. Furthermore, this verse says “some of the” natural olive branches (Israelites, according to this view) “were broken off” the tree. And if the tree represents all believers, this must mean that some believing Israelites have ceased to be part of the people of God. This of course cannot be true.

The breaking off of the natural branches (Israel) and the grafting in of the wild branches (Gentiles) occurs only during the present Church Age, an intercalation in God’s prophetic program for Israel (Dan 9:24-27; Rom 16:18). For Israel, the spiritual dilemma is only partial because Jews are being saved in this age of Gentile spiritual blessing. For Israel, it is also temporary because God will graft the natural branches back into the cultivated olive tree when Christ returns to the earth.

Paul argued that Israel only needs to believe in order to be restored to national and spiritual blessing. He wrote: "And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again." (v23). Later, he added: "...how much more will these who are the natural *branches* be grafted into their own olive tree?" (v24) Thus, Israel's present spiritual condition is partial and temporary. Israel will be restored to complete and permanent blessings after the present era of Gentile salvation has run its course. Israel will be saved when the promised Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, returns to the earth.

(b) Warning against Gentile pride (11:18)

18 do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, *remember that* it is not you who supports the **root**, but the root *supports* you.

18 do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, *remember that* it is not you who supports the root, but the root *supports* you.

18 do not boast about being better than the other branches. If you boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

18 Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

- Paul gives the grafted in branches (the Gentile-dominated church) a severe warning to not be arrogant, thinking we are special, toward the natural branches that have been broken off (Jewish unbelievers)

— The bottom line problem with replacement theology, bigger than poor hermeneutics and bad theology, is pride. Paul says it is rooted in the arrogance of the Gentile heart which says we are now in the place of blessing, and God is never ever going to bring Israel back. Replacement Theology has more to do with the attitude of the heart than with anything else.

— Gentile believers should not come from a place of arrogance or pride toward the broken off branches (unbelieving Jews) because God began His redemptive program through Israel, not the church (Gentiles)

— In Gen 12:3, God told Abraham "in you" all the families of the earth will be blessed. God decided, in His sovereignty, to usher in His blessings through a chosen group, the Jews (national Israel).

— Today, there is not a single spiritual blessing that did not come to us (the church) outside of Abraham/national Israel. Every single spiritual blessing we have today came to us through the Jewish nation:

1. The patriarchs (Abraham, Issac, Jacob) revealed to us the walk of faith
2. The 10 Commandments and the Mosaic Law, the perfect revelation of God's character, telling us what God is like

3. The Prophets and all of their teachings
4. The Scriptures came to us through the Jews (Cf. 3:2). Every book of the Bible was written by a Jew, with the possible exception of Luke).
5. "Salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22)
6. And last but not least, Jesus Christ was as Jewish as they come. The Messiah was Jewish. And the vast majority of the early church, that first generation that wrote the NT and passed on Christian truths to the next generation, then were martyred for their faith, were Jews.

— This is why Paul can tell us to remember that it's not the Gentiles/church that supports the root, but the root supports us. Because of this, we should not develop an attitude of disrespect, derision or pride to those natural branches who have been broken off.

— In arrogance, Gentile believers may conclude that their salvation is what was responsible for the continuing existence of Israel; however, it is actually God's faithfulness in honoring the Abrahamic Covenant that is responsible for that

- How has the church done keeping Paul's command in v18 to not be arrogant toward unbelieving Jews? F-minus

— Michael Brown wrote a book called *Our Hands Are Stained With Blood* that traces the history of anti-Semitism within the church. He quotes primary sources from the 1st century all the way through today to illustrate how poorly the church has kept this command. Cf.

[Martin Luther](#).

- "...root" - Abrahamic Covenant, and by extension, God's covenantal blessings. The root of the tree is the source of life and nourishment to all the branches; Abraham is "the father of all who believe" (Cf. 4:11-12,16-17).

— So Gentile believers are linked to Abraham; in one sense they owe their salvation to him, not vice versa [Origen tried to make the Church the root (?)]

— This passage does not teach that the national promises to Israel are now being fulfilled by the Church. Paul said Israel's fall is temporary.

— While believing Gentiles share in the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:3) as Abraham's spiritual children (Gal 3:8-9), they do not permanently replace Israel as the heirs of God's promises (Gen 12:23; 15:18-21; 17:19-21; 22:15-18).

#### (c) Warning against Gentile misconception (11:19-21)

19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in."

19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in."

19 Then you will say, "Branches were cut off so that I could be grafted in."

**19** Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

- Paul now addresses a possible misconception of what he addressed above...

— Were unbelieving Jews broken off so that believing Gentiles may come to faith in Christ?  
Yes! (v20)

— However, the Gentile believer who may feel superior to the unbelieving Jew should remember that the only reason he (the Gentile) is where he is (partaking in the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant) is because he has simply believed God

— The Gentile is not in that place because of some merit on their part, which would be a grounds for boasting

20 Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, **but** you **stand by your faith**. Do not be conceited, but fear;

20 Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear;

20 That's right! They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you remain only because of faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid!

20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:

- "...but" - stands in contrast...Paul is saying that you're taking the right premise (v19-20a), but drawing the wrong conclusion (v20b-21)

- "...stand by your faith" - you believing Gentiles/church were grafted into the tree because you came to Christ in faith

21 for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare **you**, either.

21 for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either.

21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, he certainly will not spare you, either.

21 For if God spared not the natural branches, *take heed* lest he also spare not thee.

- If God can reject the Jews (natural branches) because of unbelief, He can certainly reject Gentiles who remain in unbelief

— Paul is speaking hypothetically here...if God broke off the natural branches, His chosen people, then hypothetically He can also break off the entire Church if He wanted to

— God's whole program and our relationship with Him revolves around faith...if the Jews will not honor the principle of faith, they are broken off; likewise, if the Gentiles do not honor the principle of faith, they can be broken off as well

- You have to be careful with v21-22 because if you're not, it appears as if you can lose your salvation. Arminianism builds much of its argument that you can lose your salvation on these two verses.

— Paul here is not talking about a loss of salvation because in Rom 8 Paul locked down eternal security for the believer, so he can't be contradicting himself here. Rom 8:31-38 is the strongest passage in the NT on eternal security.



- "...you" - second person pronoun; used here in the plural, not the singular (same goes for "you" 3x in v22)
- If "you" was in the plural, Paul would be addressing many individual Christians that are already in faith. But the "you" is in the singular, which means that Paul is addressing Gentiles as a whole. If Paul was teaching a possible loss of salvation here, he would've used the singular "you," not the plural.
- So Paul is addressing individual Christians who are already saved; rather, he is talking about the relative position of Jews and Gentiles as a group, as a whole, in the stream of divine blessing
- If the Gentiles as a whole stop honoring the principle of faith, just as the Jews did, then they will no longer enjoy the central place of blessing in God's program. Paul is speaking at a corporate level, not of individual believers.

(d) Conclusion (11:22)

22 See then the kindness and **severity** of God: to **those who fell, severity**, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His **kindness**; for otherwise **you** too will be cut off.

22 Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.

22 Consider, then, the kindness and severity of God: his severity toward those who fell, but God's kindness toward you—if you continue receiving his kindness. Otherwise, you too will be cut off.

22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in *his* goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

- Paul here summarizes his whole discussion of God's sovereign choice in temporarily putting Israel aside corporately and proclaiming righteousness by faith to all mankind

- "...severity" [2x] - Israel entered a time of discipline because of unbelief

- "...those who fell" - unbelieving Jews, whose branches have been cut off

- "...kindness" - the Gentiles entered into a time of blessing from God because they honored the principle that salvation comes by faith alone in Christ alone to the glory of God alone

— God is not playing favorites...He is simply honoring those who honor His Son. The Jews, by and large, are not doing that so they are in a place of severity with God. The Gentiles, by and large, are doing that, so they have moved into a place of kindness and blessing from God.

— But Gentile unbelief will lead to severity from God, just as Jewish unbelief as done

— We will experience either kindness from God or severity from God based on whether you come to God in faith. If you come to God by way of faith, the kindness spills over; if you

come reject the principle of faith and come to God some other way, all of a sudden God becomes very severe.

— This is why the church is in the place of blessing from God and the nation of Israel today is in the place of severity. But while they are currently in the place of severity, God has not forgotten them.

- "...you" - believing Gentiles

— Why should God have more patience with us than He did with faithless Judaism? God's continuing goodness to the Gentiles depends on them continuing in His kindness.

— If Gentiles do not continue in God's kindness, they also will be cut off. This does not suggest that a Christian can lose his salvation; it refers to Gentiles collectively (suggested by the singular "Thou") turning from the gospel, much as the nation of Israel had done.

(ii) Anticipation of Jewish salvation (11:23-24)

(a) Contingency for Israel's salvation (11:23a)

(b) Two reasons for Israel's restoration (11:23b-24)

(1) God is able (11:23b)

23 And **they** also, if **they** do not continue in **their** unbelief, will be grafted in; for **God is able** to graft **them** in again.

23 And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

23 If the Jews do not persist in their unbelief, they will be grafted in again, because God is able to graft them in.

23 And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again.

- "...they...their...them" - unbelieving Israel

- God leaves open a contingency: "if" the discarded branches that were removed from the tree do not continue in their unbelief, but come to belief in their Messiah by faith, God will graft them onto the tree again

— Belief is what resulted in God grafting in believing Gentiles (v17) and belief could (will) result in Him grafting in Jews (who come to belief) in the future

- "...God is able" - the first reason Paul gives for believing Israel's "re-grafting" into the tree is that omnipotent God is "able" to do this. It's not too difficult for God to re-graft back in the "normal" branches that were previously removed.

(2) God brought in the unnatural branches (11:24)

24 For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and **contrary to nature** were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural *branches* be grafted into **their own olive tree**?

24 For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural *branches* be grafted into their own olive tree?

24 After all, if you were cut off from what is naturally a wild olive tree, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much easier it will be for these natural branches to be grafted back into their own olive tree!

24 For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural *branches*, be grafted into their own olive tree?

- An argument from the greater to the lesser...because God grafted in unnatural "wild" branches, it's not too hard for Him to re-graft in the natural branches

- "...contrary to nature" - God has already done a agricultural miracle by grafting in unnatural branches (Gentiles) into the olive tree (Abrahamic Covenant). Since He has done this miracle, it should be no problem for Him to re-graft back in the natural branches.

— It is easier for God to bring back in the natural branches to their own tree than it was for Him to graft in the unnatural branches. If He's already done the much more difficult thing, He will certainly be able to do the much easier thing.

- "...their own olive tree" - Paul gives the reason why all should expect Israel to be restored...it is *their* olive tree! The olive tree, the place of blessing, belongs to Israel.

— This "ownership" is based upon the four unconditional covenants God made with Israel (Abrahamic, Land, Davidic, New). Since these are Jewish covenants, made with and given to Jews, the place of blessing rightfully belongs to the Jews.

— Gentiles are merely partakers, sharing in their covenant blessings. Because of this, one should expect Israel to be restored into it.

(D) Israel's certain restoration (11:25-32)

(a) Israel's hardening is temporary (11:25)

**25** For I do not want you, brothers *and sisters*, to be **uninformed** of this **mystery**—so that **you will not be wise in your own estimation**—that a **partial hardening** has happened to **Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in**;

**25** For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

**25** For I want to let you know about this secret, brothers, so that you will not claim to be wiser than you are: Stubbornness has come to part of Israel until the full number of the gentiles comes to faith.

**25** For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of

the Gentiles be come in.

- This passage (v25-32) is a description of exactly how God is going to re-graft in the natural branches: that is, how God is going to restore and regenerate national Israel in faith. We already know from many other passages that God *will* do this, but this passage explains to us *how* God is going to do it.

- "...uninformed" - *agnoeō*, without knowledge; where we get the term agnostic. It means to be ignorant (does not imply stupidity; you have the ability to obtain knowledge, but you don't have it and you couldn't understand [the topic] even if you wanted to)

— Paul says that he doesn't want his readers to be without knowledge (uninformed) about something Israel's partial hardening (blindness), so he is going to unveil a mystery so you can understand something that has been clearly disclosed, but which prior generations could not grasp.

- "...mystery" - *mystērion*, an unveiling of a truth that was previously undisclosed; not a puzzle to be solved or a secret that can only be revealed through diligent study or divine interpretation. It is a truth previously unrevealed by God (and therefore unknown), but that is now revealed and publicly proclaimed.

— Paul further defines what a "mystery" in 16:25-26 as something that has been kept secret from eternity past, but is now revealed through Scripture (the NT)

— Prior generations were unaware of this mystery, and could not understand it. This is the opposite of the meaning of mystery in English, which is something obscure or unclear, which must be searched out. In Greek, the word "mystery" means almost the exact opposite: it means that the curtain has been pulled back, the veil has been removed, and God is revealing a truth that you can plainly see, which prior generations could not see.

— It does not mean something that is incomprehensible. There are aspects in the Scripture that are deliberately hidden from the unbeliever until purposely revealed elsewhere in Scripture.

— Paul's argument passes from logic and Scripture to authoritative revelation direct from God Himself

— The "mystery" is not Israel's national salvation since the OT revealed that truth in numerous passages. The "mystery" is that a partial, temporary hardening of Israel lasts until reaching the "full number" of Gentiles.

— God's plan to set the nation aside temporarily should not make Gentile believers think too highly of themselves; God designed this plan to display His own glory

— In this verse, Paul was building on Acts 15:13-18 where James said that first God was going to take a people for Himself from the Gentiles and then He would turn again to Israel. The Greek word translated "take" literally means "to take for oneself for the purpose of carrying away." It's a reference to the Rapture, and indicates it will take place before the 70th Week of Daniel begins.

— Therefore, the Rapture will take place when the fullness (full number) of the Gentiles has been reached. This is the total number of believers who will be part of the Church. After that God will turn back to Israel to complete the last week of Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy (Dan 9:24-27).

- "...so that you will not be wise in your own estimation" - if there is no disclosure from heaven on this truth about Israel, the only thing we would have left to draw upon is human wisdom, thus we would be wise in our own estimation

— Believers in every age have believed that their dispensation will continue on forever; this is the notion that Paul is refuting here

— Even after the Church began at Pentecost, the Jewish believers did not think that Gentiles could become believers without proselytizing to Judaism. This was true until God saved a Gentile named Cornelius (Acts 10).

— In response, Peter had to travel to Jerusalem and convince the Church leaders that yes, a Gentile named Cornelius actually did become saved (Acts 11). The reason Peter had to do that was because of the early Church's belief that the Dispensation of Law would continue on forever.

— Paul tells us in this verse that Gentile believers should not "be wise in your own estimation" (like the Jews of the early Church did) and think that the current Dispensation of the Church will continue on forever, and that God cannot/will not do a saving work among the Jews.

- "...partial" - the judicial blindness that Israel has been under for the past 2000 years is not permanent or full. Israel may appear to be irretrievable to man after they committed the worst sin you can commit (unbelief in Jesus their Messiah), but they are not irretrievable to God.

— Their blindness is partial and temporary (Cf. "until" below); God will do something in history to restore them

- "...hardening" - *porosis*, obtrusiveness of mental discernment, dull perception; Cf. v7-10 where Paul describes the judicial hardening (blindness) that was imposed on the majority of Jews, who came to God by way of works. They have eyes that can't see and ears that can't hear.

— There is a small remnant that has trickled into the church, but the majority of Jews remain in unbelief

— Differs from the verb *skleruno* used of Pharaoh to speak of stubbornness (Rom 9:18)

— Israel's blindness was declared by Christ (Luke 19:42); "...this thy day" (Luke 19:44): Jesus was holding them accountable to know Dan 9:25. Their blindness will last only *until* the event in Rom 11:25.

- "...Israel" - refers to national Israel. Used 70x [KJV] in the NT, it always refers to *national* Israel. There's no reason to deviate from that interpretation in this verse, since it fits the

context.

— We must be careful not to equate the modern State of Israel with the Israel of Scripture. Today, Israel is primarily a secular society that is not enjoying the abundant blessings God promised to bring upon them. These blessings will flow when Christ returns to re-establish Israel as the people of God and reign over them as their Davidic King (Cf. Zech 12-14).

- "...until" - implies that a contingency that must be fulfilled before God turns His sights back onto Israel; it applies a condition to God's program for returning focus on Israel

— Three "Until's" of Israel: three conditions for restoration:

1. Matt 23:37-39: "Until they say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord..." (Cf. Hosea 5:15)
2. Luke 21:24: The times of the Gentiles started with Nebuchadnezzar and will end with the Antichrist
3. Rom 11:25: Israel has been set aside by God until the full number of Gentiles have become saved

— We learn throughout the OT that Israel will be regenerated. In Hosea, God divorced Israel, but if you keep reading God remarries Israel and in Hosea 14 we read of a restoration of Israel.

— So if we already know this, then what is the mystery? The mystery is "until"...Israel will remain under judicial blindness/hardening "until" a condition is met

— In God's mind, there is a condition that must be fulfilled before He will remove the hardening/blindness from Israel

— It is Scriptural that human response can influence the timing of fulfillment of some biblical prophecies. While the certainty of God's purposes are sure because of God's sovereignty, from the human side of the divine/human curtain, the timing of fulfillment of some prophecies can be influenced by human obedience or disobedience (Cf. 1 Kings 11:38; 2 Kings 20:1; Jer 18:7-10; Jonah 3). A parallel passage is 2 Peter 3:12.

- "...the fullness of the Gentiles has come in" - in His omniscience, God has in mind a specific number of Gentiles who will come to Christ in the Church Age

— The Greek word *plērōma* refers to that which is (has been) filled; it's a maritime term used to describe a ship that is fully manned with sailors, rowers, and soldiers, etc. It implies that a specification is complete.

— If you study how "fullness" (*plērōma*) is used in the NT (Cf. Mark 6:43; 8:20; Gal 4:4; Eph 1:23), it's clear that it represents a number. This number is known only to God...it is nowhere revealed in Scripture.

— There is a fullness for Israel (Cf. 11:12) and a fullness for the Gentiles. God is now "taking from the Gentiles a people for Himself" (Acts 15:14). This "calling out" will continue until the "fullness" (that set number of Gentiles) is reached.

- When the very last Church Age Gentile has come to faith in Christ, at that point the Body of Christ will reach its fullness (be made complete). Once that happens, God will translate/Rapture His Church to heaven, indicating that the Church has completed her mission in the world.
- Once the Rapture occurs, God, who has not forgotten His promises made to Israel back in ~2000 BC will put His hand back on Israel and begin to work through that nation in a supernatural way, just like He is doing for Gentiles today, to fulfill His promises.
- Gentile believers will be coming to Christ in droves after the Rapture (the "fullness" of the Gentiles only pertains to the Church Age). After the Rapture, God will work through Israel to bring droves of Gentiles to Christ (Cf. Rev 7).
- But God will not begin to perform His miracle with Israel until every last Gentile has come to faith in Christ in the Church Age and He translates the Church from the earth into heaven via the Rapture
- This is why Satan hates personal evangelism...this is why it is so hard for most Christians to share the gospel with their neighbors, coworkers, friends, family, etc. Satan knows that every time someone comes to Christ, it is one step closer to the Rapture of the Church, which is one step closer to his ultimate demise.
- Satan is not a liberal theologian...he knows the Bible, he knows it accurately lays out history in advance, including his ultimate demise, so he does everything in his power to stop God's program from progressing on every level
- Satan will allow Christians to do anything except personal evangelism because he knows the threat that if the church began to evangelize as they should, people would get saved and the number of Gentiles in Christ will become complete, then his days are numbered.

(b) Israel's restoration is coming (11:26-27)

(i) Prediction (11:26a)

(ii) OT proof (11:26b-27)

26 and so **all Israel** will be **saved**; just as it is written: "**THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE** UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB."

26 and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob."

26 In this way, all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion; he will remove ungodliness from Jacob.

26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

- Loosely quoted from Is 59:20-21, and weaved in thoughts from other passages (Ps 14:7; Is 27:9; Jer 31:33-34)

— This quote not only confirmed Paul's assertion, but also hints at the timing of this revival...when Messiah will come out of the heavenly Jerusalem (Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22), at His Second Coming (Zech 12:10).

- Once the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, once every last Gentile of the Church Age has come to Christ, God will remove the blindness/hardening imposed on Israel

— God will do this by putting Israel, not through a tribulation, but through *the* Tribulation (Jer 30:7)

— The specific event during the Tribulation that God will use to wake Israel up will likely be the abomination of desolation, where the Antichrist goes into the temple in Jerusalem and declares himself to be God (Dan 9:27). At that time, he will end animal sacrifices, he will outlaw the Scriptures and their prayer books, and he will begin to persecute them with a vengeance.

— This already happened to Israel previously (predicted in Dan 11:31)...in 167 BC Antiochus Epiphanes did the same thing as the Antichrist will do in the future. It was a dark time in Israel's history, and it is still commemorated today with Hanukkah.

— When Israel sees this happen, their hearts will be broken before God because they will have put their faith and trust in the Antichrist, and he will betray them

- "...all Israel" - a reference to the believing remnant, which will be one-third of the Jewish race at that time (Zech 13:8-9); a full two-thirds of the Jews will perish due to unbelief at the hands of the Antichrist or the Tribulation judgments. Only the Remnant will survive, the "escaped" of Is 4:2; 10:20; 37:31-32; Joel 2:32; Obadiah 17.

— The remaining one-third become believers, so at that point "all Israel" and the "remnant of Israel" will be one and the same, as Micah 2:12-13 explains

— According to Is 10:20-23, only the Remnant will be saved. Paul states here that "...all Israel will be saved." This is not a contradiction if understood in the context of Israel's national salvation.

- "...saved" - delivered; after "the fullness of the Gentiles" the partial hardening of Israel will be removed and "all Israel will be delivered" from the terrible Tribulation by the Messiah, "the Deliverer."

— In the OT "saved" often means "delivered"; to confirm this, Paul quoted from Is 59:20-21 and 27:9

- "...THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION" - a reference to Is 59:20, looking back to the Davidic Covenant; this looks a lot like national salvation for Israel

- "...WILL REMOVE" - future tense; since Isaiah wrote centuries before Jesus' birth, it could refer to either His first coming or second coming

— Paul quoting it here, after Jesus ascension, confirms Isaiah looked to a time of future faith and blessing for Israel at Jesus' second coming



## **"All Israel"**

According to Zech 12:10, sometime during the Tribulation the Lord will pour out His Spirit of grace and supplication causing the eyes of the Jewish people to be opened to the realization that Jesus has been their Messiah all along. In that day, the Messiah will destroy the political foes of Israel (Zech 14:1-4). Christ Himself said that Jerusalem would remain desolate until she sees Him and shouts: "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" (Matt 23:39). In 11:25-27 Paul confirmed this will happen after the Church is gone. So yes, all living Jews will have the opportunity to receive Jesus as their Savior.

### **27 "THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS."**

27 "This is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins."

27 This is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

27 For this *is* my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

- "THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM" - quoted from Is 59:21; Gen 17:4 speaking of the Abrahamic Covenant

- "...WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS" - quoted from Jer 31:34, speaking of the New Covenant

— When Paul quotes from passages that refer to the Abrahamic Covenant (v27a), the Davidic Covenant (v26b), and the New Covenant (v27b), he is saying that through this time of distress (the tribulation), God is going to fulfill His promises to national Israel

— The great mistake of the Christian church is the belief that God's covenants with Israel have been canceled, since these covenants have not yet been fulfilled. Just because the fulfillment of these covenants have not yet materialized doesn't mean that God will not fulfill them in the future.

— Because God will one day fulfill these covenants with Israel, God is a covenant keeping, trustworthy God, and because of this, Christians today can confidently put our trust in God by faith, knowing that God does not make promises He does not keep.

So in this passage, Paul is re-emphasizing the OT covenantal structure with Israel, showing that this structure furnishes the basis for a future kingdom. Kingdom Now will spin these verses to mean that it's just talking about a bunch of Jews getting saved at the end of the Church Age. However, Paul refers to the covenantal structure in this passage (v25-27), specifically the New Covenant.

Paul is not saying that a bunch of Jews will get saved at the end of the Church Age. By quoting the different aspects of the covenantal structure, he's reaffirming that God will do exactly what He promised to do in the Abrahamic Covenant and related sub-covenants. So this is a key NT passage that confirms that the kingdom is future, earthly, and that God's promises to Israel in the OT are eternal, and will be fulfilled.

(c) God's promises to the patriarchs guarantee Israel's future restoration (11:28-29)

What support for Israel IS NOT:

- It is not approval of Israel's current secular spiritual state or talmudic Judaism.
- It is not callous disregard for civilians in Gaza or other areas.
- It is not the position that Israel is an exemplary moral and God-fearing nation.
- It is not the idea that Jews are inherently superior to any other race.
- It is not blanket approval of every Israeli foreign or domestic policy, or geopolitical decision.
- It is not belief or agreement on Dual Covenant theology.
- It is not a denial of sociopolitical corruption within Israeli politics.
- It is not a denial of potential malignant Mossad operations internationally.
- It is not the understanding that Israel cannot or has not committed war crimes to varying degrees.
- It is not support for the idea of establishing a world order based on Jewish supremacy.
- It is not a denial of the need for repentance and faith in Christ as the only hope for the Jewish people.
- It is not a free pass to gloss over or deny legitimate grievances regarding Israel, whether they are geopolitical or religious in nature.

What support for Israel IS:

Support for Israel is recognizing that God Himself, for His own namesake and glory, has chosen a people/race, not because of anything inherently good that they are or have done but out of His sovereignty. He has preserved, will preserve, has regathered, and is in the process of regathering, the Jewish nation as a peculiar and identifiable sign to the nations of His covenantal fidelity (God delights in making and keeping His promises), in the face of abject sin, which has previously been dealt with at the cross of Christ. And God's promises to that nation will be made manifest and applied to a repentant Jewish remnant after a terrible chastisement upon that nation (the great tribulation).

(i) Although enemies, loved by God (11:28)

28 In relation to the gospel **they are enemies on your account**, but in relation to **God's choice they are beloved on account of the fathers**;

28 From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers;

28 As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for your sake, but as far as election is concerned, they are loved for the sake of their ancestors.

**28** As concerning the gospel, *they are* enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, *they are* beloved for the fathers' sakes.

- "...*they*" - the Jews

- "...enemies on your account" - in the 1st century, unbelieving Jews were the primary persecutors of the church

- Throughout Acts, Paul endured hardship and persecution at the hands of his own countrymen, unbelieving Jews. The Jews stoned to death Stephen, the first Christian martyr (Acts 7), and it was all downhill from there.

- Even today, unbelieving Jews are enemies of the gospel. They reinterpret all of the messianic passages to remove any reference or prediction of Jesus Christ at all (Cf. 1 Thess 2:15-16).

- Here Paul summarized God's dealings with Israel and with the Gentiles: In order for God to bring "the gospel" to Gentiles, He had to deal with Israel corporately as "enemies."

- The alienation of Israel in spite of the covenant promises is God's way of bringing Gentiles to Himself. As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for the Gentile's sake.

- If any people deserved to forfeit the blessings of God because of their hostile rejection of the gospel, it was the Jewish people. However, God's future salvation of Israel is not based upon her past or present unbelief. Rather, God has chosen Israel to be His distinctive covenant people because He has set His love upon her through His unconditional promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Cf. Deut 7:6-8).

- "...God's choice" - refers to Israel's national election as the Chosen People of God

- In relation to God's selection of Abraham and His covenant with him and the patriarchs, Israel is beloved

- Because God chose Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Cf. 9:6-13), He loves the nation and will carry through on His promises. This is another reason Israel's hardening must be temporary (Cf. 11:15,22-25) and she must finally be saved corporately: God chose her, and His name is on the deal.

- "...on account of the fathers" - while unbelieving Jews have been "enemies" of the gospel for 2000 years, they are loved by God because of His covenant with Abraham

- God looks at unbelieving Israel through the lens of His covenant, and He sees within them a chosen people. They are a wayward people, backslidden, Christ rejecting persecutors of Christians, but God sees them as beloved because of His covenant with Abraham.

- Pragmatically and practically, they are enemies of the Christian church, but through the lens of God, these unbelieving Jews are chosen and beloved

- Replacement theology looks at Israel today through a human lens, not the lens of God. They look at their spiritual condition today, they look at what they've done for the past

2000 years, and the Christian church by and large says that because they are enemies of the gospel, God is finished with them.

— But that is looking at Israel through a human lens, not through the lens of God's covenant. God sees Israel as one day being restored unto Himself.

— The Abrahamic Covenant was unconditional, thus it is not based on some specific performance on the part of Israel in order to be fulfilled. The fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant rests fully and completely on the honor and faithfulness of God to keep His promises.

[Jer 31:35-37]

#### (ii) Unconditional covenants (11:29)

29 for the **gifts** and the **calling** of God are **irrevocable**.

29 for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

29 For God's gifts and calling never change.

29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

- "...gifts" - *charismata*, "grace gifts"; the Abrahamic Covenant promises of Land, Seed and Blessing. Covenantal promises that are the result of His election.

- "...calling" - the covenantal structure that God gave to Israel

— In the case of Israel, they received the calling to be His chosen people. Even in unbelief, that status has never changed.

— Even while the Jews were rejecting the Gospel, Paul did not assume God would revoke His covenants ("gifts") or His call. The reason is: Paul knew the character of God. God does not change, so His promises and plans do not change.

- "...irrevocable" - a simple term in contract law: if person A (offeror) offers something to person B (offeree), person A can "revoke" (take back, withdraw) the offer before person B has accepted the offer.

— However, there are certain offers in contract law are irrevocable (cannot be revoked/withdrawn) by the offeror. It is not dependent upon the payment, performance, or acceptance of the offeree.

— God always keeps His word. He is faithful to His promises. He does not give and later take back. The future salvation of elect, ethnic Israel is as secure as the immutability of God (Num 23:19; Mal 3:6).

— God did not choose Israel for her goodness, and He will not abandon her for her badness

— Paul said virtually the same thing about the security of individual Christians (8:31-39)

- The whole point of Paul's premise here in Rom 9-11 is that because the gifts and calling of God cannot be withdrawn, cannot be revoked, cannot be taken back, then the promises God made to us in terms of our foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and ultimate glorification cannot be revoked, taken back, or withdrawn either.

— God's call, which puts His plans into action, is irrevocable

(d) God's plan of providing mercy for all (11:30-32)

(i) Mercy to the Gentiles (11:30)

30 For just as **you** once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of **their** disobedience,

30 For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience,

30 For just as you disobeyed God in the past but now have received his mercy because of their disobedience,

30 For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief:

- These verses are a warning to Gentile believers. Gentiles should beware of becoming critical of God for planning to bless the Jews in the future. We should also beware of arrogance because we are presently the special objects of God's favor.

- The Gentiles to whom Paul wrote were at one time disobedient to God, but in this Age of Grace, Gentiles (you) have now received mercy. Now Israel is in disobedience, so the Jews have been put on the same level as the Gentiles were previously, where they are eligible for mercy.

— The Gentiles, however, received divine mercy through the disobedience of Israel (v30). In fact, the unbelief of Israel has given God a chance to reveal His mercy, not only to the deserving, but also on the undeserving.

- "...you" - Gentiles

- "...their" - unbelieving Jews

- Paul is referring back to what he said in v11-15, where God took Israel's rejection of their Messiah and turned it around to make it into something great (paid the sin debt of the world), which opened salvation to the Gentiles

— Because of this tragic event, Israel's rejection and subsequent crucifixion of their Messiah, mercy has come to the entire world

(ii) Mercy to the Jews (11:31)

31 so **these** also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to **youthey** also may now be shown mercy.

31 so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy.

31 so they, too, have now disobeyed. As a result, they may receive mercy because of the mercy shown to you.

31 Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.

- "...these...they" - unbelieving Jews

- "...you" - believing Gentiles

- Paul is referring to the idea of divine jealousy, discussed earlier in 10:19; 11:11,14

- Since Israel's rejection of Christ, God has been pouring out spiritual wealth and blessings in tremendous proportions. These blessings are primarily directed to the church, not Israel. We today are the blessed people of God.

- While God is lavishing these blessings on the church, Paul says that God is secretly creating jealousy in the hearts of the Jewish people because they are no longer the centerpiece of God's program

- They know enough of their history to know that they at one time were the centerpiece of God's program. They were given the covenants, the temple, the Shekinah glory of God...of the blessings that Paul described in 9:1-5. Yet because of Jewish unbelief, they are not in the place of blessing today.

- However, the "dogs" (what Jews called Gentiles), the unwashed masses, are in the place of blessing today. Yet Israel knows enough of their history to know that those blessings belong to them. And there is a desire and a yearning on their part to have those blessings back. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the unbelieving Jews today.

- God is going to use this hunger and jealousy on their part to lead them back to His Son during the tribulation period

- So the mercy that God shows to the Gentiles today will lead into God showing mercy to the Jews in the future

- The disobedience of the Jews translated into blessings for the Gentiles; the mercy of God on the Gentiles, which prompts a hunger and jealousy within the Jews, will lead to the conversion of national Israel. Just as the Gentiles were blessed, the Jews will be blessed in the same way.

### (iii) Mercy to all (11:32)

32 For God has **shut up** all in disobedience, so that He may show mercy to all.

32 For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.

32 For God has locked all people in the prison of their own disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

32 For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

- "...shut up" - *sugkleio*, concluded, enclosed (of a shoal of fishes in a net); to shut up on all sides, to enclose completely

- God is allowing people to be disobedient so that at a future point in time, He can come upon them and manifest upon them His mercy and grace that they don't deserve

- God's ultimate purpose is to have mercy on all. To do so justly, God has "enclosed, shut in on all sides" all men over to disobedience.
- He will show mercy to all without *distinction* (Jews and Gentiles alike), not all without *exception* (Cf. 9:17). Paul is not teaching universal salvation.
- This is what is happening right now, and for the past 2000 years, in the Gentile world. The same thing will happen for national Israel during the Tribulation period.
- Every person at one point was disobedient to God; every person was out of a relationship with God; every person did not have faith in God's provision
- Yet the program of God is to reverse this: first the Gentile (v30), then to the Jews (v31) who are currently desiring that space of divine prominence back. Then in the tribulation, mercy will come to the Jews.
- The big picture is that both Jews and Gentiles are shown mercy. Both are in a trajectory of unbelief, to faith, to mercy, to riches. God desires to show mercy everyone because God desires all men to be saved (1 Tim 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9; Cf. Ezek 18:23,32).
- When the Gentiles rejected God and disobeyed Him (Rom 1:17-21), God chose Abraham and his descendants as His special people. Now the disobedience of the Jews enables God to show mercy to the Gentiles. Then, when that purpose is achieved, He will again show mercy to Israel corporately.
- Thus, God will use the salvation of the Gentiles in the present Church Age to bring about the salvation of Israel during the Tribulation, prior to the Second Coming.

The national confession of Israel (see Hosea 5:15–6:3; Is 53:1-9) will fulfill the prophecy of Israel's salvation in 11:25-32. When God tells us His plans for the future, it is so we may build our lives on Him today.

***The divine principle is clear: Through human disobedience, God can manifest His divine mercy. Out of His love and grace, God withholds from men, both Jews and Gentiles, what they deserve.***

(E) Concluding doxology (11:33-36)

As Paul reflected on God's plan and program in relationship to Israel, how He brought Israel into this state, how He is calling out from among the Gentiles today to bring many of them to salvation, and how this Gentile calling will come to an end some day, and how God will again deal with Israel to bring them all to salvation, he concludes with this tremendous doxology. This doxology extols the wisdom of God and the riches of God in that wisdom. Once a person fully understands God's dealings with the Jewish people, if he clearly understands God's plan and program for Israel, and if he appreciates it from God's standpoint, he, too, will have to say "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

In the doxology at the end of Rom 8, the emphasis was on the people of God; here, it is on the plan of God.

(a) Depth and riches of knowledge and wisdom (11:33a)

(b) Unsearchable judgments and unfathomable ways (11:33b)

**33** Oh, the **depth** of the **riches**, both of the **wisdom** and **knowledge** of God! How **unsearchable** are His **judgments** and unfathomable **His ways**!

**33** Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

**33** O how deep are God's riches, and wisdom, and knowledge! How unfathomable are his decisions and unexplainable are his ways!

**33** O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

- A doxology is a hymn that glorifies God...

- Having concluded his discourse on God's righteousness in His sovereign choices, he bursts out with praise. Only God could purpose and complete such a complex, paradoxical program for both Israel and the Church. Only He could work in and through the actions of men, both good and evil, to accomplish His ultimate goal—His own glory and the blessing of His people.

— Paul cannot contain himself...he has to shout out in glory to God for these truths that he has been shown by the Holy Spirit and is sharing with us

— Worship is a response to truth...the truth of God's Word is so great, so magnificent, so unbelievable that it blows our minds and we can do nothing other than give a response of worship to God

— The truth of God's Word is so profound, if taught and understood correctly, that upon hearing it and synthesizing it in our hearts, the only response of our human body and mind is to blare out in praise and worship to the Lord

— In v33-36, Paul magnifies God for who He is and what He does...

- "...depth" - the Bible is simple enough for a child to understand, yet deep enough for a theologian to drown

— One of the biggest evidences for divine authorship of the Bible is the fact that elderly theologians, who have studied the Bible upside down and backwards, written books, pastored, etc. will tell you that every time they come to the Bible, they learn something new. You can never exhaust Scripture.

- "...riches" - what if the richest man in the world offered you a partnership...everything that is yours is theirs, and everything that is theirs is now yours

— The God who created the universe *ex nihilo*, through His Words, says the same thing to us. He says I want a relationship/partnership with you...My wealth is now your wealth.



- "...wisdom" - knowledge applied; taking the truth we know and applying it to our lives, living it daily. Here, it is God's ability to arrange His plan so it results in good for both Jews and Gentiles, and His own glory.

— His wisdom is more than perfect knowledge. His wisdom is practical, taking His complete knowledge and applying it rightly to every situation.

— Romans displays God's wisdom in justification (Rom 1-4), sanctification (Rom 5-8), salvation (Rom 9-11), and the Church (Rom 12-16). Only the all-wise God could accomplish these great matters perfectly.

- "...knowledge" - accumulation of truth; a wonderful pursuit, but only a first step. Here, testifies to His ability to construct such a plan; His divine ingenuity. God has no need or desire to discover anything—He knows all things. What does God know?

— Everything that has happened, is happening and will ever happen

— Whenever things happen; wherever they happen—on earth, a distant galaxy, in heaven or hell

— Everything about every person, being, thing, situation, circumstance and event

— Every cause and effect, attitude and action; every secret thought, all words and deeds (2 Chr 16:9; Luke 8:17)

— Those who do evil and those who do right, things done and left undone, every excuse and every motive

— What people would have done in different circumstances or with different opportunities (2 Sam 23:9-13; Matt 11:21)

— Each need and all desires of every living thing

— He knows everything about us personally—our DNA (Ps 139:13-15), the number of hairs on our heads (Luke 12:7), every tear we have shed (Ps 56:8), and the number of days in our life (Ps 139:16).

- "...unsearchable" - *anexereunetos*, which means "incapable of being traced by footprints"

— In Eph 3:8, its only other use in the NT, refers to the riches of Christ

— We need the Holy Spirit indwelling us to be able to understand God (1 Cor 2:14-16).

Unless there is an omniscient member of the Trinity indwelling us and controlling us, we cannot understand the Bible.

— The Bible was written by an omniscient God, so we need an omniscient God to help us understand it

- "...judgments" - *krimata*, typically refers to God's judicial decisions regarding the wicked (Cf. 1:18,28; 2:1-16; Heb 9:27; Acts 17:31; Rev 14:7; 16:5-7; 19:2; 20:12), but in this case it refers to God's eternal decisions (Cf. 14:14b; 1 Cor 2:2; 7:37; 11:13; 2 Cor 2:1; Titus 3:12)

— God's judgments flow from His infinite knowledge and perfect wisdom

— His decisions spring from logic that extends beyond human ability to comprehend

— This refers to the way His judgments happen in human history. At the end of the day when God judges, no one will be able to second guess or question the rightness of His judgments (Rev 16:5).

- "...His ways" - His procedures ("ways") are so complex that humans cannot discover them without the aid of divine revelation

God is not like us. In fact, God is not like anything we can experience or know. When we talk about God, we often compare Him to someone or something else. But the closer we get to God and the better we understand Him, we see that comparisons cannot fully honor God or express His inexpressible greatness. God is indescribable. This is why God prohibits the crafting or use of any object to worship it as if it were God. God can never be represented by any created thing.

God has chosen to specifically not reveal Himself by pictures or other created objects, but by words of Scripture. We cannot know everything about God, yet He has revealed in the Bible everything we need to know about Him.

(c) God cannot be known or counseled (11:34)

34 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR **WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR?**

34 For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor?

34 Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become his advisor?

34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

- Quoted from Is 40:13, speaking of the unfathomable ways of God (v33)

— Paul was one of the most educated men in history on the Bible; He was educated by God Himself in Arabia, and was raptured to the third heaven (2 Cor 12:1-10) to hear things that man should not be allowed to hear.

— There has never been a man walking on the earth who has known more about the ways and thoughts of God than Paul

— Despite all of these credentials, Paul makes this statement: who has known the mind of the Lord?

- "...WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR" - what man could've come up with God's plan of redemption?

— We know the Bible was written by God because the plan that was developed to bring mercy to all through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. What man would've thought up this plan?

(d) Grace (11:35)

35 Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM, THAT IT WOULD BE PAID BACK TO HIM?

35 Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again?

35 Or who has given him something only to have him pay it back?"

35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

- Quoted from Job 35:7; 41:11, speaking of God's attribute of grace, by which we stand

— We cannot do anything to put God in debt to us. God relates to me and manifests

Himself to me completely on His attribute of grace, not because He owes me anything

— Grace is unmerited favor...undeserved favor and benefits that God gives us when He owes us nothing

- Job observed that God has never needed to depend on human assistance, which would put Him in man's debt (Job 35:7; 41:11)

— The fact that God makes people His partners in executing His will in the world does not mean that He cannot get along (accomplish His will) without human agents. He can.

— We have nothing that we have not received from God (1 Cor 4:7). We cannot add to who God is or what He does. God does not need us.

- No creature could improve upon God's eternal counsel

— God is indeed the Sovereign of all things, the One to whom all creatures are accountable and whom all should glorify. He is under no obligation to repay anyone, for no one has ever given Him anything.

— God blesses our efforts to understand what He is doing in history and in our own lives. But God's infinite wisdom and knowledge have depths we will never reach. We are finite. We cannot know God apart from revelation.

— God is not answerable to our ideas of what is wise or just. God owes us nothing, yet He rescued believers from sin and made us His beloved children.

The three questions in v34-35 show us our smallness and God's greatness. None of us even begins to come close to knowing what God knows. His knowledge is infinitely beyond ours. No one can possibly advise God so He can govern the world more efficiently, justly or mercifully.

### **Three Lessons to Grow in Wisdom**

Whatever we know, we know it only because God has revealed it to us. Apart from God, our knowledge is foolishness (1 Cor 1:20). Yet, we are not designed to remain ignorant: God invites us to seek wisdom from Him (Ps 90:12; Prov 3:13-14; 4:4-7; 16:16-17).

1. There is no true wisdom except in God (Prov 9:10). Because God knows, we can know; He is wise, so we can acquire wisdom.
2. Our plans may fail, but God's never do (Is 55:8). God's wisdom and knowledge direct God's actions. Therefore, His purpose always prevails (Prov 19:21; Acts 2:22-24).

3. Trust in the Lord with all your heart (Prov 3:5-6). True wisdom consists in learning to trust and follow God. He gives us the wisdom we need, when we need it, exactly as He has promised (James 1:5).

(e) Glory to God! (11:36)

(i) God is to be glorified forever (11:36b)

(ii) Why? (11:36a)

(a) He is the source of all things

(b) He is the sustainer of all things

(c) He is the goal of history

36 For **from Him**, and **through Him**, and **to Him** are **all things**. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen.

36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen.

36 For all things are from him, by him, and for him.

Glory belongs to him forever! Amen.

**36** For of him, and through him, and to him, *are* all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen.

- God deserves glory forever...Why?

- "...from Him" - because He is the source of all things (John 1:3; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2; Rev 4:11)

- "...through Him" - because He is the sustainer of all things (Col 1:17)

— He is not only the Creator, He is the Sustainer. He didn't just create the universe, He holds the universe together. He isn't just the Creator of the respiratory system, He's the one who sustains it every day of our life.

- "...to Him" - because He is the goal of history (Heb 1:2; Rev 22:13)

— This verse shows us the God's purpose in history is doxological...God works in history to glorify Himself

— God is the first Cause, the effective Cause, and the final Cause of everything

— He is the Source, the Means, and the Goal of all things

— His deep ways are beyond man's discovering (v33); beyond man's knowing (v34a), beyond man's counseling (v34b), and beyond man's giving (v35)

- "...all things" - come from Him and by means of Him (John 1:3; Col 1:16a; Rev 4:11), and are for Him and His glory (Col 1:16b)

- God is the only proper One to magnify (1 Cor 1:31; Cf. Rom 15:6; 16:27; 1 Peter 4:11; Rev 5:12-13)

- The danger among believers today: a pride of race; a pride of face; a pride of grace

— Paul said he had nothing to glory in. If *he* had none, then certainly we have none! Seek righteousness—and meekness.

God alone deserves all the glory for the present salvation of Jews and Gentiles within the Church and for the future salvation of His covenant people, Israel.