

Romans

PART 18

HAS GOD REJECTED
HIS PEOPLE?

O The Depth Of God's Wisdom!

Chapter 11 will continue to discuss God's election by grace. Although most of Israel disagreed with the gospel, those who are humble to His plan can't help but praise His ways. His plan is not to be questioned by humans pridefully judging Him. Some themes of chapter 11 include: God's relentless covenant faithfulness to Israel, His delight in mercy, His kingdom reigning in grace, guarding our hearts against thinking we're more special than others, and the response of awe and reverence for God that we should have to the gospel plan.

4 SECTIONS OF CHAPTER 11

VS 1-10	VS 11-24	VS 25-32	VS 33-36
The remnant of Israel by grace	Gentiles grafted in by faith	The Mystery yet to be seen of Israel's future	Doxology of praise

Chapter 10 Highlights

VS 1-5

Israel had a zeal for God but not according to knowledge. They had the gospel right in front of them, but they refused it, even though God had stretched out His arms to them. So chapter 11 asks the question, "Has God cast off His people?" Historically, God took Israel back every time they rejected Him. So is He rejecting them back this time? In a predominantly Gentile church, not long before a time when Jerusalem would be burned down and all Hebrew records would be destroyed, it could seem like God forsook them, right? **God forbid!** Paul himself was an Israelite, and he was saved. But why were there so few of them saved? In Israel's history, God often preserved a remnant of the nation, even when it looked like they were completely wiped out. For example, when the majority of Israel worshiped Baal, even Elijah appealed to God against them. Elijah had hopes for Israel's restoration and repentance, yet they doubled down in their rejection of God. Though Elijah was ready to give up on them, God saw the remnant of Israel that believed, even if it was a tiny minority. So now too there is a remnant of Israel by grace.

VS 1-5

God is working beyond what we can see, and His mercy is constant toward people even when they are unfaithful to Him. God foreknew the hardness of heart Israel would have, but is also planning for a future revival and reconciliation of Israel. He will not abandon His people, and we must not miss His grander purposes because of the temporary evil He allows.

VS 6-10

The standard for God's choosing is grace, not by works. If grace was mixed with works, humans would have something to boast about before God, and the pride of flesh would not have to stumble over the cross. But then grace would not be grace if it was partially earned. God chose for salvation to be by faith in Christ, and those who were on board with that humbly accepted the gospel, but the rest of prideful Israel chose to reject it. Therefore, they were hardened, as spoken of in Isaiah 29:10, which is quoted here in verse 8. Their eyes were closed to the truth, and descending into foolishness, God gave them over to their own darkness through judicial hardening, as we learned about in chapter 9. Paul goes on to quote verses from Psalm 69, as if to say, "Even King David speaks against you!" In Psalm 69, David speaks of the darkened hearts of Israel's enemies, and Paul applies these verses to what Israel is now doing in rejecting the gospel. Psalm 69 also contains Messianic prophecy about those who, in their pride, killed God's anointed King. David cries out to God for justice— for their eyes to be darkened and for their feast table, the very thing that was meant to be a blessing for them, to become a stumbling block to them. From this, we can see that **God's purpose for those who reject Him is to allow them to fall into darkness so they would reach an end of self, and cry out for God's mercy too.** This is what often happened with Israel throughout the Old Testament.

VS 11-15

So, is the purpose of Israel's stumbling for them to be utterly destroyed? NO! **God has designed salvation for the entire world, and He is using their stumbling to bring about good.** Salvation has come to the Gentiles, which in turn provokes Israel to jealousy. In Acts, when synagogues rejected the gospel, the apostles turned to the Gentiles, presenting opportunities for Israel to repent as well. So if Israel's stumbling means eternal riches for the Gentiles, how much better would it look for Israel's full inclusion to come? If what God is working with only a remnant of Israel is this good, just think what God could do with a full majority-saved Israel? What a blessing that would bring to the world! (Which will happen someday, as we shall see.) However, for now, if only a few Jews believed, Paul was happy to go through all he went through in his ministry in order to save some. As an apostle to the Gentiles, he knew that the more Gentiles believed, the more opportunity there would be for some Jews to be saved.

VS 16-24

Here, Paul uses an extended allegory to explain to Gentiles that their inclusion as a people into God's covenant does not change God's original, unilateral promises to Israel. He compares the true Israel to an olive tree with roots that cannot be changed (this is significant as the olive tree was a symbol of nationalism for Israel.) The promise of the blessing wasn't for Gentiles at first, but they were shown mercy in that they were grafted into that tree by grace through faith. Typically, in olive tree husbandry, one would graft cultivated branches to cultivated trees, not wild branches. But it is the followers of the gospel that are truly God's nation, so even outsiders can be legitimately grafted into the same promises as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, there are still natural branches attached to the root, and ones yet to become attached. The only reason the majority of Jews became broken-off branches that hadn't received the blessing was because of unbelief. Therefore, it was important for the Gentiles not to arrogantly think of themselves as more special than Israelites. They didn't earn it either, and they needed to guard their hearts against pride. Individuals can't be cut off once they believe, but speaking broadly of nations, Gentiles can be broken off just as easily as they were invited in. In other words, **you can't think that just because you're a member of a denomination or category of people, you're safe.** Each person must confess Jesus as Lord to abide in him.

As mentioned before, in husbandry there would be no reason to tarnish the value of a young, healthy olive tree by grafting in a wild olive tree. However, if an old cultivated tree ceased to be productive, you would risk grafting in a wild olive tree in order to shock the system and get it to produce fruit again. Then, once healthy, you could regraft in natural branches. This is much like the larger gospel plan. **"If you Gentiles can be grafted in, how much more can the restoration of Israel come, grafted back into their own tree."**

VS 25-32

Paul introduces a "mystery" in verse 25. There are many mysteries revealed in the New Testament, and the word "mystery" is used to mean a secret rather than a puzzle that needs solving. In I Corinthians 15, the mystery of Jesus Christ's return for the church is revealed so that we don't grieve as though we have no hope. Here in Romans, the reason for revealing this mystery is so that we don't get conceited. Blindness has happened to Israel in part until the fullness of Gentiles has come. In other words, after the time of Gentiles coming into salvation has reached its fullness, the time of the majority of Israel being blind will be over.

THERE ARE OFTEN 3 LAYERS OF FULFILLMENT TO PROMISES MADE TO ISRAEL:

1. In the immediate fulfillment of when it was said.
2. In the first coming of Christ to establish the kingdom of God.
3. A fulness yet to be seen, when the king of kings returns to reign on earth.

VS 25-32 CONT.

This mystery will come to pass in the third sense, when the King of kings reestablishes Israel, reigning from Jerusalem with the whole earth blessed in him. In that time, all Israel will be saved. This isn't in the sense of every Israelite of all time individually, but in the sense that the majority of the nation will repent and believe the gospel. Paul also quotes Isaiah 59 to reference the coming generation of Israel that will not see Christ as a stumbling block but as a deliverer, so their sins will be taken away. Now is a season where the covenants and blessings of Israel are extended to the Gentiles, which will in turn provoke some of Israel to jealousy so that they are blessed. But there is a time coming when Israel, in faith, will be re-established and their restoration will, in turn, bless the whole world. As Gentiles, we praise God that we were grafted in, but God has certainly not cast off His people. Though much of Israel had become gospel enemies, God's calling is irrevocable and He will not change His mind about His covenant faithfulness. Verse 32 is the conclusion of the whole argument: God has shown mercy to Gentiles even though they were disobedient, so that by the mercy shown to them the Israelites who are now disobedient may also be shown mercy. In other words, God has concluded all under sin, so that he can show mercy to all, as we learned from the opening chapters of Romans. All can believe the gospel and be credited with the righteousness of Jesus Christ by grace. **He is rich in mercy to ALL who call on him, and God still has plans for Israel.**

Conclusion

VS 33-36

Knowing the scope of God's plan should cause us to stand in awe of His wisdom. He has revealed Himself by the gospel, and these truths cause Paul to cry out in praise. This marks the end of his sweeping treatise about salvation to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Chapter 12 will begin to deal with practical matters to the Christian church living in the Roman empire.

Romans 12:1 appeals to us to live for God on the basis of the depths of God's mercies, and having seen His mercy thoroughly on display in the context, this will ring all the more true. "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever, Amen."

Romans

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