

Romans Chapter 11

In this chapter Paul answers the question that logically arises from (10:19-21): "Is God's setting aside of Israel for rejecting Christ permanent?"

At stake is whether God can be trusted to keep His unconditional promises to that nation.

Romans 11:1 "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."

"Cast away":

To thrust away from oneself.

The form of the question in the Greek text expects a negative answer.

Despite Israel's disobedience, God has not rejected His people.

God forbid is the strongest form of negation in Greek.

We see here again, that Paul is proud of his Israelite heritage.

Paul mentions this heritage several times in his writings.

2 Corinthians 11:22 "Are they Hebrews? so [am] I. Are they Israelites? so [am] I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so [am] I." And we also read in Paul's writings:

Philippians 3:5 "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, [of] the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;"

Here Paul is very proud that he was of the physical house of Israel as well as the spiritual house of Israel.

We also see that God never completely gives up on the physical house of Israel even if they have walked away from Him.

Jeremiah 33:24-26 "Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the LORD hath chosen, he hath even cast them off? Thus they have despised my people, that they should be no more a nation before them." "Thus saith the LORD; If my covenant [be] not with day and night, [and if] I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth;" "Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, [so] that I will not take [any] of his seed [to be] rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them."

God is long-suffering and is always ready to forgive them and receive them back.

Romans 11:2 "God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elijah? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying,"

“Which He foreknew”:

Israel's disobedience does not nullify God's predetermined love relationship with her.

This scripture is speaking of God withholding the autumn and spring rains and summer dew which were necessities for the crops of Israel.

The Lord had threatened to withhold these from the land if His people turned from Him to serve other gods.

Elijah had prayed for the drought and God answered.

It lasted 3 years and six months (according to James 5:17).

The drought proved that Baal, the god of the rains and fertility, was impotent before the Lord.

Romans 11:3 "Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life."

1 Kings: 19:10-14 "And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, [even] I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." "And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; [but] the LORD [was] not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; [but] the LORD [was] not in the earthquake:" "And after the earthquake a fire; [but] the LORD [was] not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice." "And it was [so], when Elijah heard [it] that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, [there came] a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?" "And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, [even] I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."

We can see from this that God is interested in just one prophet that belongs to Him.

God will not forsake His own.

Just as any parent will not forsake their children, God will not forsake His own.

Romans 11:4 "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."

After Elijah had finished killing the 450 prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:40), Ahab had told Jezebel all that Elijah had done and she sent a message to Elijah saying that she would take his life by the next day.

He fled for his life and ended up in the wilderness under a broom tree and prayed for death.

It was at this point he was so discouraged and didn't want to go on.

Elijah thought at this point that he was all alone.

As he slept, an angel touched him waking him up.

God had provided food and drink for Elijah in the midst of his distress and the surrounding famine.

That's when God told him:

I Kings 19:18 "Yet I have left [me] seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him."

Paul points to himself (in verse 1), as an example that God did not make a blanket rejection of the Jews.

He then proceeds (in verses 2 to 4), to draw a parallel with Elijah and the 7,000 from among the millions of Israel, who had not served Baal.

Romans 11:5 "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

Paul then writes: "So then also, at the present time, a remnant [of Israel] has come to be by [God's] choosing and unmerited favor."

This "remnant" composed of Jews, by believing in Jesus Christ, became a part of that real "Israel" composed of "true Jews."

Although the nation had rejected Jesus, thousands of individual Jews had come to faith in Him.

Romans 11:6 "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 versus Works".

"Grace" is charis, meaning "favor" or "kindness".

A closely-related word, charisma, means "a free gift."

For a gift to truly be a gift, it must be unmerited and unearned.

Once you mix one particle of work into the transaction, it is no longer fully grace since merit becomes involved.

Israel does not deserve God's continued favor.

Like all who have been chosen by God, the nation Israel, as represented by the believing remnant among the Jews, does not deserve God's continued election.

Paul emphasizes that it is by God's undeserved, unmerited favor, which overcomes the rejection and crucifixion of Israel's own Messiah.

Israel neither earned nor deserves God's favor.

He stands by Israel because of His name's sake (Ezek. 36:20-24).

Concerning the gospel, unbelieving Jews are enemies, but concerning election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Romans 11:28-32).

Ephesians 2:8-9 "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: [it is] the gift of God:" "Not of works, lest any man should boast."

We see from this that we cannot work our way to heaven, Salvation is a free gift.

Truly even the Holy Spirit must woo you, or the desire to come to Jesus would never be there.

Our part in all of this is to reach out and take what God has offered to us.

Truly we have nothing to do with who we are as we read in this next Scripture.

1 Corinthians 15:10 "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which [was bestowed] upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

Romans 11:7 "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded"

In spite of their intense religious zeal, the Jews of Paul's day had failed to obtain God's righteousness.

The Elect are those whom God graciously had chosen in turn sought and found His righteousness.

"Were blinded":

By a judicial act of God, in response to their hardened hearts.

As we learned (in Romans 1), God gave them over to a reprobate mind.

Romans 11:8 "(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.

Matthew 13:14-15 "And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:" "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and [their] ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with [their] eyes and hear with [their] ears, and should understand with [their] heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

These Scriptures leave no doubt that God first must call us and the Holy Spirit has to reveal to us the meaning, or we too, would be blinded.

It is God that opens our ears of understanding to His Word.

He is our source; we must depend on Him.

The beginning of wisdom is to fear God.

This fear is to reverence Him or to hold Him in awe.

Unless God reveals Himself to us, we do not truly know Him.

He loves everyone and wants us all to love Him, but if we choose not to follow Him, He will stop up our ears and eyes and we will not be able to understand.

He does not want us to come to Him with our mind, He wants our heart.

Ezekiel 12:2 "Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they [are] a rebellious house."

Mark 4:11-12 "And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all [these] things are done in parables:" "That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and [their] sins should be forgiven them." This is because of their evil heart that Jesus does not reveal Himself to them.

The first line of this scripture was quoted (from Isaiah 29:10), and the last lines are from (Deuteronomy 29:4).

Romans 11:9-10 "And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompence unto them:" "Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back always."

A person's "table" was thought to be a place of safety, but the table of the ungodly is a trap.

Many people trust in the very things that damn them.

In the 23rd Psalm, we see the opposite of this table.

Psalms 23:5 "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over."

David's table was a blessing and theirs was a curse.

They did not have their heart right with God.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;" "That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;" "Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

We see from these three Scriptures that to whom much is given, much is required.

This does not mean just wealth of money, but has to do with knowledge of the Bible as well.

To know God and His Word and then to sin is much worse than to sin in ignorance.

Romans 11:11 "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."

The form of Paul's question and his strong response confirm that Israel's blindness, hardening and apostasy are not irreversible.

Their "fall" is Israel's rejection of Jesus Christ.

"To provoke them to jealousy":

God intends to use His offer of salvation to the despised Gentiles to draw the nation back to Him.

Salvation to the Gentiles is something the Old Testament had long prophesied.

Acts 13:42 "And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath."

We see that the Gentiles readily accepted the Lord Jesus Christ when the Jews rejected Jesus. God still loves the Jew [the physical house of Israel] and, as we have been reading, He will save a remnant of them.

Romans 11:12 "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 fullness?"

This is just God's way of allowing the Gentile believers to be saved.

We Gentile believers have been grafted in to the family of God.

The failure of the Jews to acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah and be God's witness nation resulted in the Gentile church being given that privilege.

"How much more their fullness":

Meaning the Jews future spiritual renewal.

Israel's "fall" and "diminishing" is temporary.

Romans 11:13 "For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:"

"Office":

Meaning ministry.

Here is what God said of Saul/Paul:

Acts 9:15 "But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:"

You can see from this that his first call was to the Gentile.

I will give you one Scripture of many that shows that Paul was aware of his call to the Gentiles.

2 Timothy 1:11: "Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles".

Eph. 3:8-9 "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;" "And to make all [men] see what [is] the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:"

Romans 11:14 "If by any means I may provoke to emulation [them which are] my flesh, and might save some of them."

Paul was commissioned of God to bring the salvation message to the Gentiles, but he could not quite ever give up on his brothers, the Jews.

Paul in verse 14 above is saying that perhaps, while he is bringing this message to the Gentiles, some of his Hebrew brothers will hear and understand as well.

Romans 11:15 "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?"

This is not speaking of bodily resurrection but the passing from spiritual death to spiritual life.

This phrase also describes the future spiritual rebirth of Israel.

There is no better example of this in the entire Bible than in Ezekiel where the story of the dry bones is found.

In this account, we will see that at the end, God will bring back to life the natural Israelite, and they and the spiritual house of Israel (Christians), will all be part of the family of God.

The 2 sticks that come together are the spiritual and the physical houses of Israel.

Jesus Christ (their Messiah), saves us all.

Ezekiel 37:1-14 "The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which [was] full of bones," "And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, [there were] very many in the open valley; and, lo, [they were] very dry." "And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest." "Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD." "Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live:" "And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I [am] the LORD." "So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone." "And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but [there was] no breath in them." "Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." "So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." "Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts." "Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel." "And ye shall know that I [am] the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves," "And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken [it], and performed [it], saith the LORD."

Romans Chapter 11 Questions

1. In verse one Paul asks, Has God cast away His people, has He?
2. What 3 things does Paul call himself in verse one?
3. He wrote that he was an Israelite in other books, name them.
4. God is _____ and is always ready to forgive.
5. Who had Elijah made intercession for?
6. In verse 3 what 2 things had they done that made Elijah think that he alone was left?
7. In 1 Kings Chapter 19 what mighty things were mentioned that God was not in?
8. What was God in?
9. God will not _____ His own.
10. In chapter 11 verse 4, how many had God reserved who had not bowed their knee to Baal?
11. What Old Testament Scripture is the second witness of this which makes it absolute?
12. This remnant is according to what in verse 5?
13. Why is it not of works that we are saved?
14. Paul says by what (I am, what I am)?
15. In verse 7, we see that who obtained while all others were blinded?
16. Describe the eyes and ears of those who did not receive it.
17. Who opens our understanding to God's Word?
18. What is the beginning of wisdom?
19. God does not want our mind, He wants what?
20. Why does Jesus not reveal Himself to some people?
21. In verse 9 David said for those who reject the truth to have their table be what?
22. In verse 10, what will happen to their eyes?
23. What does recompense mean?
24. In 1 Timothy 6:17, what are those who are rich in this world to do?
25. In verse 11, we see that their fall came for what purpose?

26. In Acts 13:42 when the Jews had gone out of the synagogue who asked that the message be brought to them on the next Sabbath?
27. Who is the physical house of Israel?
28. In verse 12 we see that the diminishing of them be riches to whom?
29. In Romans 8:15 we have received what spirit?
30. When we have been added to the family of God, what should we cry?
31. Who was Paul commissioned to bring the salvation message to?
32. Who did Paul desire to save whatever it took?
33. In verse 15, what does the receiving of them bring?
34. In Ezekiel chapter 37, what does the story of the dry bones bring?
35. Who are the dry bones mentioned in Ezekiel 37:11?
36. What causes these dry bones to live in Ezekiel 37:14?
37. Why is the word whole used in verse 11 of Ezekiel 37?