

To Him Be Glory Forever. Amen.
Romans 11:1-36

A few weeks ago at a youth camp, I was telling some of the staffers that we were studying Romans. One of the guys said that his church was studying Romans also. But when they came to Romans 11, the Pastor said, “Romans 11 is just too hard. I don’t know what to say about it, and our VBS is coming up, so let’s just pray about that, and pick up with Romans 12 next time.” So they totally skipped Romansh 11!

Well, I can sympathize with that pastor. It’s a difficult chapter, but it’s also a very profitable chapter. I have learned a lot in my preparation, & have been eager to dive in.

- **And let this be a reminder that we shouldn’t run from “hard things.”**
- But rather “learn hard things” & “do hard things” (as we tell our kids -- & ourselves!).
- Peter said, “Some of the things Paul wrote are hard to understand!” He may have been reading Romans 11 when he said that!
- It’s okay to think this is hard -- but don’t let that keep you from *engaging* in this study -- whether you are a *mature* Christian, a *nominal* Christian, or *not* a Christian -- let’s dive in together.

What’s this about? **This passage is speaking about the outworking of God’s saving purposes in redemptive history, with particular emphasis on the future of Israel.**

You may wonder, “How is this lofty concept practical?” Here are 4 app. for Xians:

A. **Evangelism** – You can’t read chapter 11 as a whole – and Romans 9-11 for that matter – without feeling **Paul’s absolute passion for people to be saved!** This entire discussion is based **on a burden, a concern, for people to be saved.** If Romans 9-11 doesn’t lead you to zeal for evangelism, **you are ignoring Paul’s example & burden.**

B. **Unity** –Romans is written to a church (or churches) made up of both Gentile and Jew, w/ the majority being Gentiles. **So if you ask, why is ch 11 important for me, a Gentile, realize that Paul apparently thought the Gentiles needed to hear it!** Why? Because desires unity in the church.

- The following chapters will draw this out (chs.12-16).
- This chapter helps lay **the foundation** for that unity.

C. **Hope** – This text should give us hope for the future. God is in control of human history, including the affairs of our day, and that should encourage us!

D. **Worship** – It all ends in 11:33-36. Paul bows before the infinite wisdom and matchless mercy of God and worships. So should we.

Context

- “God is holding out his hands to stubborn Israel” (10:21)
- Now, he **addresses the future destiny of** the Jews.
- **11:1-10** - the present situation of Israel – There is a remnant of believing Jews.
- **11-32** - the future hope of Israel – “All Israel will be saved” (11:26).

- Paul ends with a glorious doxology in 33-36.

3 Truths

#1: God has a people, chosen by grace (11:1-10)

V. 1: Paul begins with a question, “Has God rejected his people?”

- After all, they have stumbled over the stumbling stone. Is it over?
- Answer: “**By no means!**” (*me genoito*). **God will never reject Israel totally.**
He then gives **3 proofs...**

A. A Personal Example (1b)

- Paul grounds that answer in the fact that **he himself is an Israelite!**
- Other Jewish kinsmen had also embraced the Messiah....

B. A Theological Truth (2a)

“God has not rejected his people **whom he foreknew.**”

- From Ps 94:14 and 1 Sam 12:22, w/ the additional words, “whom he foreknew.”
- **Foreknowing** involves God’s choosing; a relationship / God’s commitment to His people.
- God can’t “unknow the people whom he knows are his” (Rom 8:29, Bird)
- God is working out his electing purposes in history. (Cf, 9:6) – an Israel w/in Israel.

C. Scriptural Example (3-6)

3: Paul appeals to Elijah. In Elijah’s day, the majority of Israel had turned away from God. After Elijah’s mighty victory on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18), he fled from Jezebel to Mt. Horeb... Elijah gets depressed, and laments that he is the “only one” left in the midst of disobedient Israel. (1 Kings 19 - **sleep broom tree, FudgeRound, cake, voice, vision**)

4: The Lord assured Elijah that He had preserved **7,000 men** who had not bowed the knee to Baal – even though the majority of Israel had indeed rebelled against Yahweh.

5: So, just as God preserved a **remnant** in Elijah’s day, **He has a Messiah-embracing remnant now, even though the vast majority has rejected Him.**

- **What was true in Elijah’s day was true in Paul’s day.**

It leads to the **larger question of unbelieving Israel?** Is there any hope for them?

- The answer is actually hinted at in **the very idea of a remnant.**
- Schreiner points out that the ‘remnant’ **never ends with the remnant!**
- The remnant is an anticipation of something more.
- It’s a promise of complete and final victory.
- The remnant of Israel will one day become “a **fullness.**” (11:12)
- The chapter starts with a remnant and expands to include many more Jews, as we will see.

App: When we gather, we don’t feel as if we’re **the only believer**, but in some contexts you may feel that way: **overseas, in public school, college (ex: football player at camp), workplace, military, basketball camp (ex: Joshua).** Be encouraged by Elijah’s story!

- Listen to God’s Word of grace, & be faithful even when it seems like you’re alone.
- We must preach to ourselves, rather than listening to ourselves!

6: Paul underscores the nature of grace: It is God's unmerited favor.

- **It ceases to be grace if someone tries to mix it with works.**
- If anyone is ever saved – Jew or Gentile – it's by the sheer grace of God, not merit.

D. A Recap of Israel's Failure (11:7-10)

7: What does the remnant idea have to say about Israel as a whole?

- He alludes to **9:30-32**, where Israel wrongly pursued works-based righteousness.

7b: The elect obtained righteousness because they trusted in X (9:30; 10:6, 8-11; 11:20)

8-10: Those that have not believed are said to be "hardened." A judicial act of God.

- The citations of Deut 29:4; Isaiah 29:10; & Ps 69:22-23 show a kind of spiritual blindness to the work of God.
- didn't appreciate the work of God in Christ, but persisted in **stubborn unbelief.**
- As Paul writes, **this is the present condition – the vast # of Jews don't believe on X.**

App:

- You can only be saved by God's grace (Eph 2:8f).
 - People try everything to get **rid of their guilt**; to deal w their **unsettled conscious.**
 - **Therapy, exercise, diets, medicine and countless other remedies.**
 - You can't drink your guilt away;
 - You can work your guilt off with plank walks and jumping jacks and yoga
 - You can't work it off with performance at work, school or religion.
 - Some try to **dismiss** their guilt.
 - **These solutions only lead to pride or despair**

We are saved by undiluted grace, God's unmerited favor to those who repent.

- Christian, stand in grateful awe that He extended grace in Christ to you.

#2: God will continue working out his saving purposes in the future (11:11-32)

In verse 1, Paul asks, "**Is Israel's rejection total?**" In verses 11-32, he asks "**Is it final?**" Again the answer is "**no.**" They have not fallen to irreversible ruin.

A. God's Purpose in Israel's Rejection: The Gentiles' Salvation (11:11-15)

11a: "Did they stumble in order that they may fall?"

- **Are they down for the count?** Is it a permanent fall?
- **Answer:** "By no means!" (*me genoito*)
- Israel's fall (ethnic Israel) doesn't mean they have no hope in the future.

11b: Paul shows **the interlocking destinies** of both Jews and Gentiles.

- **Israel's rejection** of the Jesus has given **occasion for the Gentiles to believe on Messiah and be saved.**
- Ex: the **preaching in Acts** (Acts 13:44-52; 14:1-3; 18:4-7; 19:8-10; 28:23-29):
- Grace made them mad. Jesus as "the way, truth, and life" made them mad.
- Nothing has changed - The gospel gladdens or hardens...

11c: Borrowing from Deut 32:21, Paul says that the Gentiles' salvation is **not the end of the matter**; it's intended **to make Israel jealous!** (cf., 10:19)

- This is a positive form of jealousy.
 - Not sinful jealousy, **"I wish that I had Jesse's girl!"** (Rick Springfield)
- **But a gospel jealousy: "I want in on the riches of Christ!"**
- What sticks out here is that **God really does want to save Israel.**

12: Paul continues by saying that **Israel's full inclusion** will bring greater blessings to the Gentiles.

- If Israel's loss meant the Gentile's gain, Paul infers that the Israel's future gain will bring mega-gain to the Gentiles!
- The **Gentiles won't lose out when Israel turns enters the Messiah's family**, but will be blessed!

13-14: Paul adds to the point about **gospel jealousy** by talking about **his own ministry.**

- Paul desires to make them jealous (14).
 - **The spiritual riches of the Gentiles may serve to provoke the Jews to belief.**
- He wants to "save some of them" (14)
 - That's the passion of Paul – to see people saved. (cf., 1 Cor 9:20-23)

15: back to the main argument; the interlocking destinies of Israel and the Gentiles.

- **Israel's rejection** will give occasion for the Gentiles to be reconciled to God – a blessing for the nations.
- Israel's later acceptance by God (salvation) will mean **"life from the dead."**
 - This phrase is quite mysterious.
 - It could carry an apocalyptic message – Israel's acceptance will usher in the **resurrection**. I don't think that's what it means.
 - I think Paul would have said "resurrection" if that's what he meant.
- Most likely, Paul is saying that Israel's coming to faith will be so dramatic that **it will be like a resurrection.** (Bird)
 - **In either case, more hope for the future is held out.**
- And **their inclusion will mean even greater blessing for the Gentiles.**

App: Gospel Jealousy

There is a sinful form of jealousy. James calls it "demonic" (James 3:13ff)

- I think Paul was jealous of Stephen.
- The passage in Acts 13 demonstrates that kind of hostile jealousy.

But this "gospel jealousy" may also **create a sense of longing** in another person.

- This should have been the reaction of the older brother to the younger brother's return to the Father – **"I want in on that!"** But instead it made him angry.
- We set out to create this longing for the riches of Christ when we **preach** – to portray Christ as being so lovely, satisfying, and sufficient, that unbelievers say, **"I want what they have!"**

- Piper puts it, “Lead them to repentance through your pleasure.”
- “Taste and see the Jesus is good!”
- We do this when we **sing** – we are hoping to create longings in unbelievers.

Question: Are you taking so much pleasure in Jesus that other people want what you have? Is your faith attractive to others?

- I don’t mean being boastful – Paul will rebuke us for that sin in the next few verses.
- I mean genuinely adoring Christ so much that others want to know your Messiah.
- **Acts 16 – Paul and Silas singing in Prison – “what must I do to be saved?”**

B. God’s Purpose and Gentile Arrogance (16-24)

Paul continues talking about Israel’s “savableness” w/ an illustration of **an olive tree**.

- The olive tree represents **the people of God**.
- The root **is the patriarchal promises**.
- The natural branches refer to **ethnic Israel**.
- The **wild olive shoot refers to the Gentiles**.

Paul attempts **to address the Gentile’s attitude toward Israel** – a real problem.

V. 16: Paul begins with some language about **botany and bread** to prove that what is true of the part of something is **true for the whole**.

- This is **transitional thought**, as Paul continues talking about the interlocking destiny of Jew and Gentile, and the upcoming analogy of the olive tree.

17: Some of the branches (ethnic Israel) may have been broken off, but the wild olive shoot (Gentile Christians) have been grafted into the share in its nutrients (salvation in the Messiah).

(The olive tree was the most widely cultivated tree in the Mediterranean area).

Gospel Humility

18: Don’t gloat Gentiles! Don’t gloat over unbelieving Israel.

- Instead you should see their role in your salvation.
- **You stand on the shoulders of the patriarchs.**
- As Christians, we love the patriarchs, the Old Testament, and most of all, the Jewish Messiah, Jesus!
- There should be **no smugness toward unbelieving Jews, just broken-hearted evangelism that says**, “My friend, we have found your Messiah. Will you trust Him?”
- **The gospel should lead us to humility before everyone**

19-20: Paul addresses a rebuttal. “The branches were broken off so that the I could be grafted in.” He grants that argument (20a), but **denies a replacement theology (20b)**.

- **The church has not replaced Israel.**
- **Nor is the church is a “parenthesis” in God’s plan, entirely separate from Israel.**

- There's only one olive tree, whose roots are planted in the OT, and whose branches include believing Jews and Gentiles (Moo)

20b-22: Instead of pride, the Gentiles should have a sense of healthy fear of God.

22: This is one of the most serious warnings in the NT about continuing in the faith.

- The Gentiles should appreciate the kindness/grace of God – for he has grafted them into the people of God...
- And they should also tremble at the severity of God. .
- These are the attitudes of the Christian resulting in a life of *persevering faith*.

23: We get to the future hope of ethnic Israel – Israel can still be saved if they will not continue in unbelief, but will actually have faith in the Messiah.

- Paul also magnifies God's power to bring them to faith! God is able!

24: Paul defends verse 23 with a harder-to-easier question.

- If God can bring pagan Gentiles into the people of God, how much more can he incorporate the Jews.
- Israel – by faith in the Messiah – can come back to their own olive tree.

C. God's Future Purposes for Jew and Gentile (11:25-32)

25-27: To avoid **conceitedness**, “wise in your own eyes” (a very practical concern in the middle of a complex theological passage), Paul says the Gentiles should remember that Israel's hardening was **temporary**, allowing the Gentiles to be saved, and that God would save more Israelites in the future. (**Read**)

25a: Paul summarizes the olive tree metaphor, saying that he doesn't want the readers to be “**ignorant**” of God's plans, or this “**mystery**.” This plan involves making both Jews and Gentiles part of the Messianic people of God.

25b-26: At the heart of this mystery is the idea that Israel's hardening is **temporary**; and would enable the Gentiles to be saved, and then “**all Israel**” will be saved.

- Almost every word is debated in verses 25b-26!

26: “**All Israel will be saved.**”

Bird: “Whole schemes of theology, complete with charts, modern prophecy, novels, and theo-political groups for the US policy in the Middle East, hinge on these few words.”

There are several questions here: **Who** is Israel? **When** does Israel get saved? **How** does Israel get saved?

Now, it's not my purpose to tease out all the niceties of this debate.

Two caveats:

1. The interpretation of any biblical prophecy is given its fullest and clearest meaning *only when that prophecy is fulfilled* (Ferguson).
 - Therefore, we must exercise **caution** when we explore texts about the future.
 - We should approach them **humbly** and **charitably**.
 - All of our questions will only be answered when the reality is revealed.
2. *Whatever our conclusion is, this passage should give us a zeal for evangelism.*
 - The goal is not to make you an armchair theologian, but given you a passion for the salvation of the world!

25b: “a partial hardening”

- So there’s a **temporary** hardening on most of Israel.
- That’s what he has been saying in chapter 11.
- Most of Israel haven’t believed on Jesus across history.

“the fullness of the Gentiles has come in”

- Chapter 15 – a fullness of his ministry among particular groups (15:19)
- I think this has to do with the gospel going to the nations.
- When the gospel goes to the Gentiles in fullness then something will happen...

26: “And in this way All Israel will be saved”

“All Israel” does not mean every single Israelite without exception – who has ever lived or whoever is living at a particular time in history.

- **It means Israel as a whole. Ethnic Israel in a general sense.**
- This is how it’s used in the OT: 1 Sam. 12:1; 2 Chron. 12:1; Dan. 9:11.

Moo, “The phrase ‘all Israel’ occurs over one hundred times in the OT with a range of meanings. But most often it refers to some Israelites as representative of the whole.”

Morris: “Particularly instructive is a passage in the Mishnah which assures the reader that ‘All Israelites have a share in the world to come’ (Sanh. 10:1) and then goes on to give a considerable list of Israelites who “have no share in the world to come,” sometimes mentioning classes such as those who deny the resurrection of the dead and sometimes individuals such as Jeroboam and Balaam. Clearly *all Israel* indicates the people as a whole, but it leaves open the possibility that there may be exceptions.”

Some think it means the elect from Jews and Gentiles (Gal 6:16 – the church)

- But I don’t think it means that here based on the verses *surrounding* it.
- **Verse 25** clearly means the nation Israel, as it does in the chapter.
- **Verse 26** -- “banish ungodliness from Jacob” refers to national Israel.
- **And it’s really not a “mystery” that God will save all elect Jew and Gentile!**
- **Nor is it a “mystery” that God is saving elect Jews throughout history!**
- **Something different in the future is being projected for ethnic Israel – something mysterious, a plan that no one would see.**

- It's a divine plot twist! Israel – a great number of them -- gets saved by faith in Christ around the return of Christ!!!
- This is why Paul calls this a “**mystery**,” and **why he ends praising God for his infinite wisdom**. Most Jews and Gentiles wouldn't have worked out such a plan.
- Paul has been **wrestling with the burden** of his Jewish kinsmen being lost, and he gets to this point, and he is marveling at the promises and purposes of God to them.
- He's in awe of God's plan.

When the gospel has penetrated to the ends of the earth – the Gentile world – and the fullness of the Gentiles has come in – then in God's mysterious saving grace, God will lift the veil of his ancient people, and multitudes of them will seek Jesus as their Savior.

Boomerang: Jewish rejection leads to Gentile salvation, and then will work back to the Jews for their salvation.

- Isn't this what was alluded to in this olive tree illustration?
- God in his power will bring life from the dead to the Jewish people.

God has a remnant throughout history, and at some point in the future many more Jews will believe on Jesus.

Please note, that they won't be saved **in some other way**, other than **faith in Jesus**.

- There is one way of salvation (see all of Romans!)

You see what this means – God is working out salvation in the midst of the earth!

- Our God reigns!

26b-27: Biblical Testimony

Paul does his thing again – quoting an OT verse.

The issue here is “**when**” Israel gets saved.

- Obviously, some will be saved **across history**, as the gospel is preached.
- But this text also points to something else, **an event or events in the future**.
- **The Deliverer** refers to Christ and the event relates to the **second coming**.
- **Yet Paul doesn't seem to know of a mass conversion of Jews to Christ as a kind of catalyst for the second coming, as some dispensationalists contend.**
- Even so, there's definitely **a future look to the return of Christ, and the Jews coming to faith in greater numbers.**

Paul changes a word from Isaiah 59:20-21, The Deliverer is coming “**from**” Zion, rather than “**to Zion**.” (There's a similar change in Ephesians 4).

- The Deliverer (cf., 1 Thess 1:10) will come **from** Zion, meaning the Messiah's return will mean that Israel will finally experience salvation – enter into the new covenant (v. 27), and experience the forgiveness of sins.
- Paul is talking about something at the time of the return of Christ.

When exactly? I'm not sure. **Paul leaves it unspecified.**

- I'll know it when the event happens!
- **The point:** The number of the remnant will be expanded to include a much larger number.
- **The hope: Jesus wins! Christ will triumph! On that, there is agreement!**
 - **ESPN Classic -- We win, we can relax;...**

28-32: Paul wraps up the argument in chapters 9-11 by reminding us of some of the most basic points in the argument.

28: Israel currently refuses to believe the gospel and are labeled as “enemies of the gospel.”

Yet, because of “election,” Israel is beloved – because of the promise made to the patriarchs.

29: God's gift and calling are “irrevocable.”

God will not withdraw His promises to the fathers.

30-31: Mercy. Paul gives us the gospel boomerang again.

The Jews rejection lead to the Gentiles' experience of mercy; and the Gentiles of mercy will eventually lead to the Jews' experience of mercy.

32: All of humanity, Jew and Gentile, are condemned in Adam (Rom 1:18-3:20).

- **“All”** here refers to Jew and Gentile
- But in Messiah, the new Adam, the true Israelite, the curse will be reversed.
- One day more Israelites will be saved along with believing Gentiles, and they will rejoice in God's mercy.
- Here then is the grand aim of history – **that the nations glorify God for his mercy!**
- Paul begins chapter 12 with “in view of God's mercy...”

#3: God Deserves the Glory Forever (11:33-36)

This is a stunning doxology, and a fitting conclusion to such a section of Scripture.

A. A Celebration of God's Wisdom (33)

- The gospel magnifies God's majestic character.
- His grace is rich, and his wisdom is unmatched.
- God's judgments and ways cannot be fully fathomed by finite people.
- “Unsearchable” means “untraceable.” You can't track His ways.

B. Two Biblical Citations (34-35), from Isaiah and Job

- God's infinite wisdom means that he doesn't need any help!
- He has no need of any counselors!
- He first quotes **Isaiah 40:13** to make this statement.
 - A context where God's power to save Israel from exile is described.

- God describes the nations, like the super-power Babalyon, as a “drop in the bucket,” and like little “insignificant grasshoppers.”
- God doesn’t need help. God doesn’t need advisors.
- His plans aren’t thwarted by the Babalyonians or others.
- In verse 35, he quotes from **Job 41:11**.
 - In this context, God asks Job over 60 questions related to God’s sovereignty over all things!
 - And God is not in our debt!
 - Be careful in thinking that when you serve God, he owes you something!
 - He doesn’t owe you a nickel!
 - He doesn’t need you or me; we need Him. 1
- The point, **no one is like our God**.

C. A Celebration of God as Creator and Sustainer of All Things (36)

- God is the **source** of all things – “from him.”
- God is the **agent** by which **all things are created and sustained** – “through him.”
 - Cf., Col. 1:15ff.
- God is **the ultimate end** for which he made all things – “to Him.”
- Therefore -- To him be the glory.
- This is a great summary statement for one’s **worldview**.
 - God is the origin, sustainer, and end of all things.
 - We are called to align ourselves with this great purpose.
 - “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” (Westminster)
 - “We glorify God by enjoying Him, loving Him, trusting Him, and obeying Him.” (New City Catechism)

Conclusion/Response:

1. Evangelism – Do you long for people to be saved?

2. Unity: Are you maintaining the unity of the Spirit, or actually creating dis – through things like lack of attendance, service, financial contribution, criticism, gossip, murmuring?

- Paul makes the desire for unity very tangible later in this letter as he urges the Gentiles to give a financial offering for the Jewish Christians.
- He says the Macedonian and the churches of Achaia were pleased to give (15:26)
- Unity always expresses itself in practical acts of love, and we will see that in chapters 12-16 big time.
- This chapter lays the foundation for that unity – it’s in the gospel.

3. Hope – Have you lost sight of our glorious future?

- We have a glorious future, friends. Live in light of it.
- Tolkien, “Sad things will come untrue”

- **Dreams:** My greatest fear is something happening to Kimberly... I don't sleep great, and occasionally I have nightmares, which usually include something happening to her... but then the greatest thing happens... I wake up! I say, it's only a dream!
- That sad thing has come untrue... that nightmare is over... I was just asleep.
- One day, saints, the pain of this life will be over... “all sad things will come untrue” ...
- The morning will dawn...
- The glory of God will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.
- Jesus will have his people – His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.
- This text shows us how glorious our future hope is!
- Your life may seem like one big nightmare, but take heart, Jesus is your Messiah.

4. **Worship** – Does this text fill your affections for the glory of God?

- Let us join Paul in this great doxology.
- Our God is an awesome God! Our Deliverer is coming!
- Nothing in this life will ever satisfy you, except the One who made you for Himself.

Speaking of hymn writers, a unified hope, and evangelism, I close with this.

- As a young man, he was bemoaning the state of the church's songs.
- His dad, says, “**Do something about it.**”
- So he went home and wrote a hymn. The **following Sunday, they sang the hymn.** (Begg)
- For the next 54 years, **Isaac Watts** wrote over 650 hymns, “Oh God Our Help in Ages Past,” “The Wonderful Cross,” and of the greatest songs written by the great Isaac Watts was “**Jesus Shall Reign.**”

*Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
does its successive journeys run,
his kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
till moons shall wax and wane no more.*

That's what they sang at the train station M Eric Liddell, the Olympic gold medalist, was leaving to give his life for the gospel in China. Mn

- Thousands saw him off at the train station.
- Eric Liddell put down his window and began singing this song, and thousands joined him in the song until the train passed over the mountains.
- He died in China of a brain tumor... an Olympic gold medalist, an intellect of great caliber.
- Buried in China.

Gripped by an all-consuming passion for Christ and His Kingdom.

Romans 11 should give us that kind of vision.

He shall reign forever.

To Him be the glory, forever.