

A real quick recap of the last couple of chapters in Romans. Chapter 9 tells us that Israel was elected by God to be His people. In verse 8 of chapter 9 we are shown that it is not the physical Israel, but the spiritual Israel God chose. Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated. Remember that in the OT?

Chapter 10 tells us that Israel rejected the savior. They pursued righteousness not by faith but by works. And they miss the boat.

Chapter 11 deals with what will happen with Israel. God's chosen people, but Israel rejects the gospel. Will God then reject Israel?

No group has been so blessed as the Jews. Don't believe in miracles? Ok. Hundreds of years of slavery, and Israel survives. Get this ... Jerusalem has survived 36 wars, 36 destructions. 17 times Jerusalem has been reduced to ashes, 17 times it has been rebuilt. In 70 AD, Rome came in, killed hundreds of thousands of Jews, and deported 1.3 million of them. And of course, Judaism at one time was outlawed – by Constantine . In the year 633 came the rise of Islam and in Arabia & North Africa, most of the Jews there were slaughtered. The Christian crusades in the 11th century bore as a motto "kill a Jew, and save your soul".

Then there was the black plague in Europe which was blamed on the Jews. You all know, 1492 was the year Columbus discovered America, but did you know it was also the year when around 400,000 Jews – were expelled from Spain and her lands. Many died of hunger or exposure. Let's not forget the 6 million annihilated by the holocaust. Today there are 7.4 million people in Israel, 76% of them are Jewish. Over 100 million surround them, and most of those would love to see them wiped out. Why did Israel survive the past? It is truly a miracle isn't it? Israel was and is blessed by God.

The Bible tells us in Genesis 12 that God blessed the nation of Israel through Abraham. Genesis 17 tells us that the covenant was established through Isaac, and in Genesis 35 through Jacob, whose name was changed by God to Israel.

In Genesis 12, God promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation (the Jews), that the Jews would possess a land, and that nation would be blessed above all other nations, and that all nations would be blessed out of Israel. So, from the beginning God reveals that Israel would be His chosen people on the earth, but that His blessing and working would not be limited to them exclusively. Galatians 3:14 identifies the nature of this blessing that would come to all the other nations. It says, "He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit." All the nations of the world, then, would be blessed by Israel, through whom would come the Savior of the world.

Has God had enough of His people? Will God cast away His people? Will Israel last?

Vs 1. Did God reject His people, Paul asks. The answer he gives is no way. 1 Samuel 12:22 *"For the LORD will not abandon His people on account of His great name, because the LORD has been pleased to make you a people for Himself".*

Some would say that God is done dealing with Israel, nationally. They say all the promises that God made will be fulfilled with the church now. Strong disagreement still exists among evangelical Christians over the answer to the question, "Has God rejected His people?"

(chuck smith) *"Now it is unfortunate that there is a certain branch of theologians today who do declare that God has cast away His people. They endeavor to spiritualize Israel to make it apply to the church, and those prophecies that relate to Israel they seek to relate to the church."*

"So the question is, has God cast away His people? Is He through with them forever? God forbid. The whole prophecy picture of the Old Testament dealt with Israel's fall, but in order that they might rise again. Hosea was an interesting prophet. God told him to take a prostitute for a wife, and he began to name the children with prophetic names or names of prophetic significance. And, of course, the one child he called Lo-ammi, which means not my child. His wife had gone out and was engaging in her old practices again even while married to him, and had a child that wasn't his. And finally she just left him completely and her life went down the tube. Until she was a slave, almost destitute and destroyed, and God said to Hosea, "Go take her again, buy her out of her slavery, wash her up, cleanse her, and take her as your wife once more." And the whole life of Hosea with this unfaithful wife became a picture of God's relationship with the nation of Israel, how He took her, espoused her unto Himself, married her, the glories of that first bloom of love. But then how Israel began to turn away unto other gods. They began to forsake the fountains of living waters and worship idols. And how they finally turned their back on God completely, but yet, God's undying love and, of course, bringing them back again, and God's work of restoration, which is yet future but shall be."

Did God reject His people, Paul asks. The covenant, or non-dispensational position, holds that the church has permanently replaced Israel and that all of God's promises to Israel will be fulfilled through the church. In my opinion, this view does not really seem to match up with Romans 11.

In stressing the unity, or continuity, between the two Testaments, this position seems to ignore the distinctions evident between God's dealings with the Jews and His dealings with the church. Dispensationalists say that the two are separate and distinct. But as in the body of Christ, there is both unity and diversity. God's dealings with Israel are consistent with His dealings with the church, but they are not synonymous.

Vs 2-5 Elijah didn't bow down to peer pressure. Remember in 1Kings 18, he challenged these 450 so-called prophets of Baal to show whose God was true. He stood up and stood alone against the flow for his God. He stood alone. Willing to die for his true faith. For us, it is so much easier not to speak out, not to mention God. But here is a guy who stands up boldly - alone against 100's of false prophets. Then when Jezebel the wife of the queen said she wanted Elijah's head, Elijah fled. Ended up in a cave. And as he was standing in the entrance of the cave, the Lord said, "Elijah what are you doing here?" He said, "I have been zealous for God, and they have all turned from You, and I am the only one You have left, and they are seeking my life. God, You are just about out of business; I am Your last one and they have got a contract out on me." Notice at the end of verse 2 in Romans 11, Elijah is said to have pled with God against Israel and not for Israel. Why did he not plead with God for Israel? Because Elijah had given up hope for Israel. Elijah had just dramatically demonstrated the sin of their idolatry. He had presented to them the God whom they must trust and obey. But in spite of his ministry, which proved they were guilty and without excuse, they did not repent and turn to God.

God responded to Elijah, "I have 7,000 who have not bowed their knee to Baal." What is Paul saying here? It is that there is still a remnant.

Remember wherever Paul went, he first went to preach to the Jews. Although many refused, some believed. There is a remnant who believe. Elijah may have given up on Israel, but God didn't. The faithful remnant was still there, and God knew who they were, and God even had them numbered.

It didn't matter that Elijah had failed or even that most of the nation Israel had failed. God was in control. God has a purpose. He had a promise. And that purpose & promise will not be upset by man's failure in his faithfulness to God. So, God preserved for Himself a remnant of 7,000 people. It was through this remnant that God's purposes would be carried out. And God keeps His promises.

Elijah was a prophet, but he was not infallible. He was wrong about Israel's future. He was wrong because he linked the hope of Israel to the works of the Israelites rather than to the grace of God. God always finishes what He starts. Because of this, God preserved a remnant. It was not man's faithfulness which kept the hope of Israel alive, but God's faithfulness.

Vs 6 Wow, what a verse. In other words, grace and works are mutually exclusive. If I am expecting God to accept me by His grace, then there is no work that I can do to make me acceptable. If I am seeking to be accepted by God by my works, then grace has no affect upon my life. They are mutually exclusive, and yet, we so often try to combine the two. Saved by grace, but ... let me do my works. But if it is of grace, then it cannot be of works. But if it is of works, then it can't be of grace. You are never saved by works. But you are expected to do works. You are a new creation. You have a desire to know God, to please God – AFTER you are saved. But that desire is not in you before you are saved -before you know Him. How can it be?

Vs 7-10 God holds out His arms. Some came to know Him, but others had hardened hearts -continually rejecting the means to salvation. (p) Israel's present condition, both at the time of Paul's writing and at this time 2,000 years later as well, is summarized in verse 7. (p)History has shown that Israel has not yet obtained that blessing for which the Jews have hoped.

What did Israel seek to obtain? Righteousness. (9:31). They have not obtained what they seek. Man's righteousness is attained through his own good works. This means of attaining righteousness is not biblical, and it has never worked. It cannot work because as Romans 3:23 tells us "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" It cannot work because "*there is none righteous, not even one.*" It cannot work because the law of God cannot save men but only condemn them (See Romans 3:1-20). Man, by his own efforts, his own works, is not able to save himself. As I mentioned, If it is of works then it is no more of grace; it can't be of both. So Israel did not obtain that acceptance before God, that righteous standing, because they sought it by their works, obeying the laws, making the sacrifices.

In verse 8 Paul quotes Isaiah 29:10 to show that Israel's present hardening is a fulfillment of prophecy. Because of Israel's disobedience, God warns that He will bring upon the Jews a blindness and dullness to the truth. Those who would not obey the truth will become ignorant of the truth. So Paul is showing that Israel is now blinded, unable to understand what God is doing and thus hear or heed God's Word. And this condition is a judgment for her disobedience. And it is a long standing condition – a condition of blindness and dullness which has existed for a long time, and btw exists to this day.

In verse 9-10, Paul is quoting Psalm 69:22-23. It is a psalm of David when he speaks of being attacked by his own people who want to overthrow his reign. He suffers at this time because of his faithfulness to God, and is seeking salvation through God's mercy & grace. So David is pleading to God against his some or his fellow Israelites. By resisting David as King, and his reign, they are in effect resisting God. So David appeals to God to treat them as they deserve. (p) Now, I ask you, if the appeal of David was appropriate, how much more so was this judgment of God upon Israel in Paul's day, after the Israelites had rejected the Messiah Himself?

So now lets talk a little bit about this "table" at the beginning of vs 9. The idea of table refers to feasting – of great prosperity. Great food, celebration, dancing. But eventually they lost the meaning of the feast – it's about God. The feast helps lead them to the Messiah, but they trusted in the ceremony instead. The works of the feast. They tried and still try to obtain righteousness by their works. Except for the elect, they fail to see that one is saved by grace through faith. Boy here it looks though it is all over for the nation of Israel. Have they stumbled so badly and so continually that God is thru with them?

Vs 11-12 Whoa. Almost the same question as in vs 1. In verses 2-6 Paul has said that man's failures cannot hinder God's purposes - God will do what God said He would do. Verses 7-12 go even farther. Here Paul will demonstrate that Israel's failure is not only not hindering God's purpose but in effect fulfilling God's Word. Even when Israel disobeys God, it is seen to have been in the divine plan all along. Rather than hinder God's cause, Israel's failure back-handedly served to fulfill it.

Because of the transgression of Israel, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel jealous. But what about the Jews? Israel rejected Jesus as the Messiah. However, all of the failure is temporary. Note in vs 12 – how much greater their riches will be.

In coming to faith in Christ, Paul says “hey, I am a Jew”. His conversion to Christianity was not a denial of his “jewishness” of his heritage, but an acceptance of the one who is the Messiah, the acceptance of Jesus Christ.

So if Paul is a faithful Jew, what is he doing ministering to Gentiles? If there is still hope for Israel, how can Paul justify ministering to Gentiles rather than to Jews? Paul’s answer is given in verses 13-16. His response proves that his ministry to the Gentiles is completely consistent with His Jewish heritage and hope.

Vs 13-15 Remember, Israel had been chosen to become the source of blessing to all nations. Israel was not only to believe the gospel but to proclaim it to the nations, to the Gentiles. When Paul preached the gospel to the Gentiles, he was simply doing that which every faithful Jew was called to do. So, Paul’s ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles was completely consistent with his calling as a Jew. Paul was confident of this. But they refused the gospel and they resisted its proclamation among the nations. They didn’t want it but they certainly didn’t want the dogs to have it either. To the unbelieving Jews, Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles appeared to be a betrayal of his Jewish heritage. He looked, to the unbelieving Jews like a traitor to the cause of Israel, because he was telling the Gentiles that they didn't need to obey the law of Moses to be accepted by God. All they had to do was believe in Jesus Christ. He was telling the Gentiles that they did not have to offer sacrifices in the temple in order to be saved,

all they had to do was believe in Jesus Christ and, of course, this created quite a conflict between those Jews who were still seeking a righteousness by the law. It was a threat to them and therefore he was a threat to them. But remember, he did actively pursue proclaiming the Word to the Jews, by going to the synagogues and preaching Christ. But he also saw that his ministry to the Gentiles was playing a part in Jewish evangelism too even if it did not appear so.

I got a verse that I thought was appropriate at this point. It is Deut 32:21 and it is the Lord God speaking "*They have made Me jealous with what is not God; They have provoked Me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation*"

And of course, his preaching to the Gentiles certainly did provoke the Jews to jealousy, as we can see in Acts 22:21-22): Let me read that for you "*And the Lord said to me, 'Go! I will send you far away to the Gentiles. The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, "Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!"*" The Jews did not want the gospel, but neither did they want Paul to preach this gospel to the Gentiles.

Vs 16 you probably picked up that this refers to the OT. First fruits. The word holy is "set apart". Numbers 15 speaks of grain offerings. Bring the first portion of the dough and give it to the Lord, and that will sanctify the whole loaf. Paul uses this to describe Israel. So the whole nation will be blessed.

As a nation, because the first fruit was sanctified – the Patriarchs, (Abraham & Jacob) the whole nation is blessed.

Paul points out, not that every Jew will have salvation because they are linked to Abraham, Jacob & Isaac, because everyone is individually accountable for belief in Jesus Christ. But as a nation, because the first fruit was sanctified, then the whole nation is going to be blessed.

Note as we read vs 17-21, consider that the olive tree is the place of privilege that was first occupied by Israel. The fig tree represents the nation of Israel. But the olive tree shown here represents the religious privilege of Israel symbolizing faithfulness and steadfastness. Psalms 52:8 says, "*But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercies of God forever and ever.*" And btw, olive trees can last along time. There is an olive tree in the garden of Gethsemane that is said to be about 1800 years old. But as olive trees age, they lose their "fruitfulness" and younger branches are grafted in and the branch brings forth fruit.

Vs 17-21 The wild branches are the Gentiles, who now occupy this place of privilege because of the unbelief of the Jews. Since Israel is referred to as branches, as well as the Church, it stands to reason that neither group is the "whole tree," so to speak; And of course the branches rely on the root, not the other way around.

Paul shows us two ways which Gentile arrogance may take place. The first way is exposed and corrected in verses 17 and 18, and the second in verses 19-21. A Jewish branch is broken off from the tree. A Gentile branch, which is inferior—a "wild" olive branch, is grafted into the tree. The Gentile branch begins to feel arrogant toward the branches. He fails to understand that he is grafted in among the Jewish branches (verse 17). And Israel's failure is both temporary and partial. It is as though there are no branches, other than Gentile branches. Isn't this ironic? This is exactly how the Jews felt toward the Gentiles. If one were to enter into God's blessings, one had

to become a Jew. And when the Gentile branch realizes that there are Jewish branches, he begins to feel superior to them. Paul feels the need to remind the Gentile branch that he is a “wild olive branch,” an inferior branch, as far as fruit-bearing is concerned.

The second error is in misunderstanding the relationship between the “broken off” (Jewish) limb to the “grafted in” (Gentile) limb. A Jewish limb is broken off. A Gentile limb is grafted into the trunk of the olive tree. The Gentile limb begins to reason something like this: “A Jewish limb was broken off. I, a Gentile limb, was grafted in. I took the Jewish limb’s place. I must be a better limb than the Jewish limb. God removed that limb in order to put me in its place. I am better than the Jewish limb!” Isn’t it a little ironic? The Gentiles were looked down upon by the Jews. Now Paul is saying, don’t think yourselves better than the Jew.

The issue is faith. The Jewish limb was removed because of unbelief. The Gentile limb was grafted in because of faith. Grace, working through faith, does not bring glory to the sinner who is saved by grace but only brings glory to God – the One who is gracious. Since men cannot take credit for their faith, it is to God alone that glory and praise belong.

Vs 22 –24 If God had truly rejected Israel, then the Gentiles would be their replacement. The Gentiles and the church would replace the Jews. God’s purpose was much bigger than this, including both Jews and Gentiles as Paul emphasizes in this chapter. Paul is saying in these verses *Hey, if God set aside Israel for their unbelief, don’t be full of pride, for God is able to graft them in again.* Really, a Christian cannot be anti-Semitic. Israel will be grafted in. It is the nation of Israel that will be saved. The nation as a nation will be saved. But individually they will have to turn to Jesus Christ to be saved. No Jew, just because they are Jewish will be saved.

They will be if they accept Jesus Christ. But there always was and will be a remnant in the great Tribulation. When will they be grafted in? I believe, and this of course is debatable, is in the great tribulation. The 70th week of Daniel. The 144,000 will be sealed and protected by God.

The conversion of many Gentiles bears testimony that Israel's sin has resulted in the fulfilling of God's purpose to save men from every nation. Israel was to be a "light to the Gentiles." It was their privilege and responsibility not only to believe the gospel but to proclaim it to the nations. As you know, they neither believed it nor proclaimed it. Because of Israel's disobedience, the good news of the gospel has been extended to we Gentiles, and many of us have come to faith. All this has happened through Israel as a disobedient people. One can hardly fathom what blessings will come to the world when Israel repents of her sin and comes to faith in Jesus as the Messiah.

Vs 25 Do these Gentiles think they know so much? Then Paul will show them something they are not aware of, something to humble them and lead them to worship and praise God rather than patting themselves on the back.

Now what is this mystery Paul says he doesn't want church in Rome to be ignorant of? That God is yet going to deal with the nation of Israel as the nation of Israel. The Gentiles seemed tempted to conclude that Israel's fall was full and final. They appear, as some do today, to want to think of themselves as having replaced Israel as "God's favorites." Not true! Israel's failure is neither full nor final, but rather partial and temporary. The hardening was partial, because God always preserves a faithful remnant. The blindness of Israel is only temporary, for God knows a specific number of Gentiles who will come to know Jesus as their savior. Until this "full

number of the Gentiles" is brought in, Israel will continue to experience a hardening of heart – at least in part. So Israel's hardening is partial, and temporary. After that, God will then turn again to the Jews.

Notice the words "until the full number of the Gentiles has come in"? What does this mean "until the full number"? There is another phrase in Luke 21, "the times of the Gentiles". That is a little different. Many respected theologians believe that the times of the Gentiles technically was over in 1967, Luke 21:24 says "*Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled*". The times of the Gentiles refers to the recovering of Jerusalem. In 1967 Jerusalem was recaptured. And now we are living in a short period of an age of grace between the times of the Gentiles which was fulfilled and the fullness of the Gentiles to come. Not all the Gentiles that were to be saved were saved in 1967, none of us were, God waited for us. But somewhere is some person whom God has known, and he is the last one among us to be saved. When that last person on earth to be saved is saved, then the fullness will conclude. The Lord will wait until all are in the flock. If you are pre-trib then you believe that the moment that person opens up his heart to Jesus Christ, we are all going to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Won't that be wonderful?

And **verse 26 -27**– Now, when the fullness of the Gentiles is come in, then the blindness will be taken away from Israel.

Vs28-29 God made promises to the patriarchs. God's promises are irrevocable, and spiritual Israel will be restored. (read deut 7:6-13) God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. What a wonderful verse. This shows our God as one who is determined to bless people regardless of their disobedience and nature. He is determined to work with them.

Vs 30-32 Paul says just as God showed mercy to the Gentiles, he will show mercy to the Jews. Paul emphasizes that there is really no distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles in that both were disobedient sinners saved by grace. God has chosen to save both Jews and Gentiles by grace.

Vs 33 -36. Now really, unless it is revealed to us, who has known the mind of the Lord? Who has been his counselor? Let's be honest, we like to tell Him what He should do for us, "God, I have some time now for you, sit down and let me tell you what I think you should do". We are not to be prideful, full of arrogance.

Paul desires that the Roman church respond to God's grace with humility and praise toward God rather than with pride. Paul challenges any potentially arrogant Gentiles to compare their ignorance with God's wisdom. In these last few verses of this chapter, isn't it interesting that Paul shows that God alone worthy of our praise? Men are not worthy. Only God is.

So, Paul concludes by praising God for His wisdom, a wisdom which far surpasses anything men would have ever imagined.

Who would have imagined that the salvation of the Gentiles would have been accomplished through Israel's disobedience rather than her obedience? Yet this was God's way. In achieving His purposes His way, God receives all the glory.

Conclusion: The relationship of Jews and the Gentiles to God's blessings as promised throughout the Old Testament is the topic of Romans 9-11. Paul's conclusion is that in the end God's purpose of saving both Jews and Gentiles will be accomplished. It is part of His plan. Paul shows us that while Israel is God's elected people, we gentiles are grafted in to this olive

tree after Israel rejects the gospel. But we Gentiles are not to be arrogant. We who are saved are grafted in that tree of life. But now he tells us there is salvation for the Jew. It ain't over. Israel's hope is still future, and it is just as certain as God's Word is reliable.

Our failures remind us of who we are in Adam and of our need to cling to Christ. They remind us that we have not arrived, spiritually speaking, but that we are in a constant struggle with the sin which still indwells us. It is allowed and purposed by God to keep us humble and to keep us clinging to Him and Him alone.

We are part of the plan of God. We are here for His glory. He has a plan for us. Each of us. Think about it, you are one of 6 billion people on this earth. We are each but a speck of dirt on this earth, and this earth but a speck in the universe. The world doesn't revolve around us. No reason to be prideful. But a great reason to be humble, no? We are but a speck, but yet God loves us, and each one of us is part of His plan! Amazing, isn't it?

I like the ending Paul has here: *"To him be the glory forever! Amen!"*