

Romans 11

I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. ² God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, ³ “LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life”? ⁴ But what does the divine response say to him? “I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” ⁵ Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. ⁶ And if by grace, then *it is* no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if *it is* of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.

⁷ What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. ⁸ Just as it is written:

“God has given them a spirit of stupor,
Eyes that they should not see
And ears that they should not hear,
To this very day.”

⁹ And David says:

“Let their table become a snare and a trap,
A stumbling block and a recompense to them.

¹⁰ Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see,
And bow down their back always.”

¹¹ I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation *has come* to the Gentiles. ¹² Now if their fall *is* riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!

¹³ For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, ¹⁴ if by any means I may provoke to jealousy *those who are* my flesh and save some of them. ¹⁵ For if their being cast away *is* the reconciling of the world, what *will* their acceptance *be* but life from the dead?

¹⁶ For if the firstfruit *is* holy, the lump *is* also *holy*; and if the root *is* holy, so *are* the branches. ¹⁷ And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, ¹⁸ do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, *remember that* you do not support the root, but the root *supports* you.

¹⁹ You will say then, “Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.” ²⁰ Well *said*. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. ²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. ²² Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in *His* goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. ²³ And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. ²⁴ For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who *are* natural *branches*, be grafted into their own olive tree?

²⁵ For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

²⁶ And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

“The Deliverer will come out of Zion,
And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;

²⁷ For this *is* My covenant with them,
When I take away their sins.”

²⁸ Concerning the gospel *they are* enemies for your sake, but concerning the election *they are* beloved for the sake of the fathers. ²⁹ For the gifts and the calling of God *are* irrevocable. ³⁰ For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, ³¹ even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. ³² For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.

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

³⁴ “For who has known the mind of the LORD?

Or who has become His counselor?”

³⁵ “Or who has first given to Him

And it shall be repaid to him?”

³⁶ For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things, to whom *be* glory forever. Amen.

Introduction

So far in our series we have looked at the promises that God has made with Abraham and all his descendants.

This was supported by the prophets, and also by Jesus who made an appearance to Joshua before he began his campaign to conquer the promised land.

We have also studied Romans Chapter 9 and 10 and discovered that Israel’s rejection of the Gospel was due in some part to the rejection of faith in Jesus and His work on the cross.

It was also part of God’s plan to offer Grace and Mercy to the Gentiles.

Jesus was a stumbling block to the Jews.

However in support of the Jews, **at least they knew that they needed God’s acceptance, but they were going about it in the wrong way.**

They were trusting in God’s Law and not in God’s Grace.

We now come to Paul’s final word on the subject of Israel’s rejection of the Gospel. I have decided to finish the series here and have a two part message for my final farewell to O.I.C.

After some consideration and prayer I felt that Revelation and some other prophecies concerning the future of Israel would take more than one message and I felt it important to leave behind the most important message of all, that Jesus left behind with His disciples. **That is the Great Commission from Matthew 28: v. 16-20.**

Chapter 11 of Romans makes it very clear, that God has a future plan, designed by Him, to save His people, Israel.

I will divide the chapter into two parts.

Part one is a summary of the present situation of Israel and part two is the future plan of God.

There are lots of challenges in this chapter to those Christians who feel that God has replaced Israel with the Church and that He no longer has a purpose and plan for His chosen people.

Therefore we need to simply believe God’s word here and not worry too much about how God is going to work out His plan, or His timing in working out that plan.

We can leave that to God Himself.

1. The Present situation of Israel – v. 1-10.

The first thing that we discover in v. 1 is a question asked by Paul. The question is **“Has God cast away His people?”**

Paul gives a definite answer, **“Certainly not”.**

Perhaps Paul is echoing the Psalmist in **Psalms 94: v. 14. “For the Lord will not cast off His people, nor will He forsake His inheritance.”**

Paul amplified his answer by **presenting four pieces of evidence.**

These are as follows;

- a) **Personal evidence** – Paul put forth **himself a Jew as evidence** that God had not forsaken His people.

Paul was the worst example. Although he was very educated, spoke several languages, and trained under the best teacher, he persecuted Christian believers, and stood by as Stephen was stoned to death.

If God was going to forsake His people, He would surely have rejected Paul.

- b) **Theological evidence** - The second bit of evidence that Paul gives us is **theological.**

He talks about the **“Foreknowledge of God”.**

This word, **“Foreknowledge”** means that God, in the past, made a sovereign choice, to save Israel as a people and a nation.

The word **“Know”** in the verb refers to God’s election or God’s choice.

This suggests strongly that God’s choosing of Israel took place before any action or status on the part of Israel, that might have qualified Israel for God’s choice.

In other words, God’s choice of Israel was not about anything that they had done to deserve God’s choice.

The issue here from Paul is this: “How can God reject a nation that He has sovereignly chosen to bless?”

Basically this would be impossible! This is a very important point that Paul makes here and we would do well to think about that!

- c) **Biblical evidence** - Paul now gives evidence from the Old Testament to prove his point. He focuses upon the story about Elijah.

We need to go back into the Old Testament to discover more about this story involving Elijah.

1 Kings Chapter 19 in N.K.J. – read whole chapter.

And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. ² Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So let the gods do *to me*, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.” ³ And when he saw *that*, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which *belongs* to Judah, and left his servant there.

⁴ But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, “It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I *am* no better than my fathers!”

⁵ Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, “Arise *and* eat.” ⁶ Then he looked, and there by his head *was* a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again. ⁷ And the angel of the LORD came back the second time, and touched him, and said, “Arise *and* eat, because the journey *is* too great for you.” ⁸ So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.

⁹ And there he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the LORD *came* to him, and He said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

¹⁰ So he said, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.”

¹¹ Then He said, “Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD.” And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces 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; ¹² and after the earthquake a fire, *but* the LORD *was* not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.

¹³ So it was, when Elijah heard *it*, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice *came* to him, and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

¹⁴ And he said, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.”

¹⁵ Then the LORD said to him: “Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael *as* king over Syria. ¹⁶ Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi *as* king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint *as* prophet in your place. ¹⁷ It shall be *that* whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. ¹⁸ Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”

¹⁹ So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who *was* plowing *with* twelve yoke *of* oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him. ²⁰ And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, “Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and *then* I will follow you.”

And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?"

²¹ So *Elisha* turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen's equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant.

Elijah thought that he was the only person left in Israel that had been obedient to God, but God said that there were 7,000 other people like Elijah who were faithful to the God of the Bible. This is very interesting because the teaching about God's remnant did not begin until the time of Isaiah. This statement is about 100 years before Isaiah.

So this means that God has always protected a remnant of His people throughout the history of Israel, and He will continue to do so until He pours out Revival blessing about His chosen people Israel.

- d) **Contemporary Evidence** - Paul's fourth bit of evidence refers to the present situation of God's remnant, according to the election of grace.

We discover this in v. 5. Just as in Elijah's day there was a remnant of 7,000 Jewish faithful people, there was also a remnant in Paul's day of faithful Jewish people who honoured God's word.

At this time there were many thousands of believing Jews, and almost everybody in the early Church was a Jew.

Grace is God's gracious kindness to the undeserving.

Therefore if it is by Grace then it can NOT be by works.

In v. 6 Paul is making it very clear what he is trying to teach.

v. 6 in N.L.T.

⁶ And since it is through God's kindness, then it is not by their good works. For in that case, God's grace would not be what it really is—free and undeserved.

In v. 7-10 Paul explains the reason why only a select number of Jews have received God's grace.

From v. 7 it is clear that the **elect people of God received His grace, but the others were blinded.**

Paul then quotes two passages of scripture to prove his point.

These are Isaiah 29: v. 10 and Deut. 29: v. 3-4. & Psalm 69: v. 22-23.

Why did Paul quote from these scriptures?

Well, in verse 8 we have a mixture of Deut. 29: v. 2 and Isaiah 29: v. 10.

In Deut. 29: v. 2 Moses tells the Israelites that they have witnessed his wonders, and yet he has not given them a mind that understands, or eyes that see, or ears that hear.

From the Isaiah text Paul quotes the first sentence to prove that God had given the Jews a complete loss of spiritual sensitivity.

This was because it was **self-induced before it became a divine judgement.**

Paul goes on to say that **this situation continues today in the contemporary world.**

The second quotation comes from **Psalm 69** which portrays a righteous persons experience of persecution.

Jesus applied it to Himself.

(They hated me without reason – **John 15: v. 25.**)

This imagery is not easy to interpret and understand.

However the "table" is a symbol **of security.**

The words "Back bent" or "bowed down back", **is a symbol of carrying a heavy load.**

So if we put these two symbols together we could conclude that **Israel had a sense of security, being God's chosen people, but that had become their stumbling block and it had caused a heavy burden upon them as a nation.**

It is not hard to see this played out upon the nation of Israel over the last 100 years in our contemporary history.

2. The Future plan of God for Israel – v. 11-32.

We now come to the Good News about Israel.

In v. 11-32 Paul teaches us that **God has a future plan for Israel as a nation and as a people group.** He goes on to tell us what that plan is and why at this present time He is delaying that plan.

a) **The present blessing of the Gentiles.**

In v. 11 Paul asks a question again. He says, “**Did God’s people stumble and fall beyond recovery?**” (N.L.T.)

The answer Paul gave was, “ **Of course not! They were disobedient, so God made Salvation available to the Gentiles. But He wanted His own people to become jealous and claim it for themselves. (N.L.T. – v. 11)**

Paul is saying that the **first step towards God’s future plan is the blessing to the Gentiles. God planned it this way!**

The failure of the Jewish nation as a whole to embrace God’s New Covenant has brought blessing to the Gentile world.

Paul was chosen by God to preach the Gospel to the Gentile world.

He should know more than anybody else the reason for the blessing upon the Gentiles to this day!

b) **The future blessing of Israel as a nation and as the chosen people of God. v. 15-36.**

In v. 15-36 Paul tries to explain to us the whole picture concerning the nation of Israel and their future.

First of all in v. 15 Paul explains himself very well in the N.L.T.

(v. 15 in N.L.T.)

¹⁵ For since their rejection meant that God offered salvation to the rest of the world, their acceptance will be even more wonderful. It will be life for those who were dead!

When God starts to bless the nation of Israel and His chosen people with Salvation **it will seem like they had been risen from the dead.**

Today God’s people, by this I mean the Jewish Nation, are spiritually dead in the main, but at some future date, they will become alive spiritually.

It will be the most wonderful miracle that the world has ever seen.

The most wonderful miracle that can ever happen is that a person can be born again and receive God’s Holy Spirit and become a child of God.

Therefore for a disobedient Jew to become a child of God it is an even greater miracle.

For millions of Jews to get saved and be born again will be the greatest Revival the world has ever seen.

This is definitely going to happen one day. We don’t need to worry about the timescale for this event.

Illustration from Nature

In order to make his point Paul gives us an **illustration from nature.**

He chooses an Olive Tree, perhaps because it is one of the trees that live for hundreds of years and has very strong roots.

In Israel the Olive tree was cultivated in groves or orchards all over the land. **The Olive tree was an accepted emblem of Israel.**

(Jeremiah 11: v.16 in N.K.J.)

The LORD called your name,
Green Olive Tree, Lovely *and* of Good Fruit.
With the noise of a great tumult
He has kindled fire on it,
And its branches are broken.

(Hosea 14: v. 6 in N.K.J.)

⁶His branches shall spread;
His beauty shall be like an olive tree,
And his fragrance like Lebanon.

However what we must realise is that Paul was NOT giving us an agricultural lesson. It was a spiritual lesson.

The reason for this is that if you were an Olive grove farmer you would not normally, except in special circumstances, graft into an Olive tree, a wild olive branch!

You would nearly always graft a cultivated Olive branch into a cultivated Olive tree.

However Paul tells us about the exception to the agricultural normal procedure as we will see in a moment.

1. **The cultivated olive tree** is the people of God, God's chosen people, whose root is from Abraham. The stem represents the continuity of God's chosen people over the centuries.
2. **The broken off branches** represent the unbelieving Jews who have been temporarily discarded.
3. **The wild Olive branches** represent the Gentiles who are grafted into the good Olive Tree.

So Paul is telling us that God put the wild olive branch into the cultivated tree. **This is not the normal procedure.**

However in 1905 Sir William Ramsay wrote an interesting article which is still quoted today. He received his information from both ancient and modern agricultural history. This is what he says;

" The process that Paul described was still in use in Israel in exceptional circumstances. It was and is customary to reinvigorate an olive tree which is ceasing to bear fruit by grafting it with a shoot of the wild-olive, so that the sap of the tree enables this wild shoot and the tree to bear fruit."

(The article appeared in W.Robertson- Nicoll, the Expositor, 6th series, Vol.11, Hodder and Stoughton, 1905)

So we see that Paul's reference here is not the ordinary process of grafting the young olive tree, but to a method of invigorating a flagging or non- healthy olive tree.

So in this case what is contrary to nature is not the grafting but the belonging,

The shoot has been cut from the wild olive to which it naturally belonged. It has been grafted into the **cultivated olive tree that it does not naturally belong to.**

Q. Why does Paul use this allegory?

He does this to teach us two very important lessons here.

1. **A warning to the Gentile believers not to presume or feel proud about their position.**
2. **A promise to Israelite, Jewish unbelievers that one day they can and will be restored.**

Let us now explore these two things.

1. **A warning to the Gentile believers.**

The warning here is not for the Gentiles to boast about their position.

The Olive tree has experienced both pruning and grafting.

Some branches have been cut out of the olive tree. This represents some Jews who have been rejected, and in their place a wild shoot has been grafted in.

This means that some Gentiles have been welcomed into God's Covenant people.

The Gentiles are told that their **dependence is on the root**, because the branches have NO life in themselves.

We are told in v. 18 that the Gentiles do not support the root. **It is God's chosen people Israel that are the root and they support them.**

In other words the **stability of the Gentiles faith alone in Jesus is their only stability.**

In other words, the **Gentiles are only getting God's grace, until the Jews return** in a massive Revival at some future date.

We are told that the time of the Gentiles is limited.(v. 25) God's grace to them has a cut off date at some future time!

2. **A promise to the Jewish people and Nation.**

There is a promise in v. 26 that tells us that at some future time, all Israel will be saved.

This statement always causes controversy among Bible scholars and theologians. I personally take it literally because when God makes something clear in the Bible, we should endeavour not to make it complicated.

We know that it is God's will that nobody should perish and that all people should come to faith in Jesus and get saved.

We also know that we are dependent upon God's Holy Spirit for a Heaven sent Revival.

Therefore I have absolutely no doubt that at some future date, probably just before or at the second coming of Jesus that God will save all of those Jewish people that He intends to save.

God says ALL and God means all.

On that note I conclude this three part series on God's plan for His chosen people. I hope that some of this has been helpful.

Next week I start my last 2 part sermon from Matthew Chapter 28: v. 16-20.