

Romans 11

[Is. 65:1](#) ¶ "I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask *for Me*;
I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me.
I said, 'Here am I, here am I,'
To a nation which did not call on My name.

[Is. 65:2](#) " I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people,
Who walk *in* the way which is not good, following their own thoughts,

[Is. 65:3](#) A people who continually provoke Me to My face,
Offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on bricks;

[Is. 65:4](#) Who sit among graves and spend the night in secret places;
Who eat swine's flesh,
And the broth of unclean meat is *in* their pots.

[Is. 65:5](#) "Who say, ' Keep to yourself, do not come near me,
For I am holier than you!'
These are smoke in My nostrils,
A fire that burns all the day.

[Is. 65:6](#) "Behold, it is written before Me,
I will not keep silent, but I will repay;
I will even repay into their bosom,

[Is. 65:7](#) Both their own iniquities and the iniquities of their fathers together," says
the LORD.

"Because they have burned incense on the mountains
And scorned Me on the hills,
Therefore I will measure their former work into their bosom."

- With this quote, Paul slammed the door on any possibility that Israel would return to embrace Jesus in his readers' day
 - They heard the message, they had ample opportunity to understand it, and they rejected it
 - And as Paul quoted, that rejection was according to God's prophetic plan
 - Going back to chapter 9, Paul explained that Israel's past proves that God is always making choices and assigning outcomes concerning Israel
 - They were called at a point in the past, but yet not all have been called
 - This is God's prerogative
 - And He exercises it freely

- Then in chapter 10, Paul moved to a description of Israel's present circumstances
 - They have rejected the Messiah, plain and simple
 - They heard the message, they had only to believe and confess with their mouths
 - But they didn't subject themselves to God's righteousness
 - And though they heard, they didn't believe
- So now, we have the pre-eminent chapter of the New Testament for understanding the doctrine of Israelology – the truth concerning God's plan for Israel
 - The future of Israel

[Rom. 11:1](#) ¶ I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

[Rom. 11:2](#) God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in *the passage about Elijah*, how he pleads with God against Israel?

[Rom. 11:3](#) "Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE."

[Rom. 11:4](#) But what is the divine response to him? "I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL."

- Paul has walked his readers to the brink of concluding Israel extinct
 - And now he backs them down
 - God has not rejected His people, has he?
 - Isn't this whole the reason for chapters 9-11?
 - Paul began this three chapter sidebar to address the problem of Israel's circumstances
 - In chapter 8 Paul taught that there is eternal assurance for the adopted sons of God
 - He who God foreknew, and predestined, and called, and justified, and He will certainly glorify

- But if this is true, what about Israel?
 - Wasn't Israel called and chosen
 - But they seem to have been rejected
 - How can we trust God's assurance if He turned His back on His promises to Israel?
- Here we are at the crucial question
 - God has not forsaken His people
 - What does it mean to be His People?
 - If someone called "His" can later be rejected, then how can we rest in our status as adopted sons of God?
 - So Paul asks the question again, Has God forsaken His people?
 - And now with the background of chapters 9 and 10, Paul can begin to fully unravel His reason for why the answer is "may it never be"
 - Paul's first proof is a simple one
 - Himself
 - He is a Jew, converted to belief
 - Remember Paul's argument in chapter 9
 - Not all who are of Israel are Israel
 - If Paul's readers were going to conclude that Israel has been forsaken, they need to realize that Paul is a Jew who has come to faith
 - And there are many more like Paul...like the Jews in the Roman church
 - So right away, we can't say that God has forsaken His people, because some Jews were coming to believe

- In verse 2, Paul calls those who have come to faith in Christ a remnant
 - A remnant are those believing followers of God who exist in any given time of history in contrast to a larger population of apostate (i.e., unbelieving) people
 - Paul describes himself to be a member of the remnant in his day, and cites this fact as proof that God is not forgetting His promise to Israel
 - God's promises never implied He would preserve a specific number of Israel at any given time
 - So as long as there is at least one believing Israelite remaining, God can be said to be faithful to His promises to the nation
 - For God's promises were extended to a national entity, Israel,
 - And not to a certain group of people
 - So, Paul's life is itself proof of God's faithfulness to Israel
- Then Paul calls to mind an interesting example from Israel's past
 - The prophet Elisha from 1Kings 19
 - Elisha defeats the priests of Ahab
 - But then he finds the nations continues in apostasy
 - Then the king's wife, Jezebel, threatens to kill Elijah
 - So he runs to Mt Horeb to demand an audience with God
 - When he gets his audience, here's what Elijah says:

[1Kings 19:9](#) ¶ Then he came there to a cave and lodged there; and behold, the word of the LORD *came* to him, and He said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"
[1Kings 19:10](#) He said, " I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."

- From Elijah's perspective, he was the last person following after God
 - It was a pity party

- Elijah had adopted a very man centered perspective on what it means to follow and honor God
- He had convinced himself that he was the victim here
 - And God was without anyone else who followed Him
- Elijah's statement reveals an assumption that he had made concerning what it takes for God to obtain a following
 - Elijah had just performed miraculous signs before the people
 - He's assuming that God receives followers because they can be convinced through signs and wonders to believe and follow
 - And that if fire from heaven comes down, revival breaks out
 - But instead of a revival, the people simply returned to their idolatrous ways
 - Elijah was upset and pouting that his ministry was going nowhere
 - And if fire didn't work, nothing would
 - So all was lost, so God had no choice but to take Elijah home too
- Is that how God calls and preserves a people for Himself?
 - Like the Jews of Paul's day
 - Should we conclude that God forsaken His people simply because the nation was apostate and had rejected their Messiah?
 - Maybe Paul and the Jews in Rome should tell God that they were all that was left like Elijah
- Look at God's response to Elijah in that cave

[1 Kings 19:11](#) ¶ So He said, "Go forth and stand on the mountain before the LORD." And behold, the LORD was passing by! And a great and strong wind was rending the mountains and breaking 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.

[1Kings 19:12](#) After the earthquake a fire, *but* the LORD *was* not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of a gentle blowing.

[1Kings 19:13](#) When Elijah heard *it*, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold, a voice *came* to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

- God gives Elijah an object lesson in the ways of God
 - Elijah had assumed that great and mighty works by God were always intended to result in a great response of faith among His chosen people
 - Look what God did to disprove Elijah's assumption,
 - God has Elijah stand in the place Moses stood to see His glory pass by
 - God first sends a strong wind that broke rocks into pieces
 - But God was not in the wind
 - Then an earthquake
 - But God was not in the earthquake
 - Then a great fire
 - But God was not in the fire
 - You do you get the point that God was making to Elijah?
 - Not every great sign or wonder or work of God in his creation is automatically intended to reveal God to His people
 - Just because God empowered Elijah to do a great work by bringing fire down from heaven, that doesn't mean it was intended to convert a nation
 - Just as in the Israel of Paul's day, the appearance of the Messiah was accompanied by great signs and wonders and miracles
 - But that doesn't mean it was intended to result in the conversion of the entire nation of Israel
 - How does God finally appear to Elijah?

- A gentle breeze
 - Then Elijah heard the voice of the Lord
- The point is that often times the true work of God in revealing Himself to His people is a quiet work visible only in the shadows
 - God didn't intend that Elijah's great work would result in the conversion of the people of Israel
 - God was working quietly in the shadows of Israel

[1Kings 19:14](#) Then he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."

[1Kings 19:15](#) ¶ The LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you have arrived, you shall anoint Hazael king over Aram;

[1Kings 19:16](#) and Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.

[1Kings 19:17](#) "It shall come about, the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall put to death.

[1Kings 19:18](#) "Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him."

- God had preserved 7,000 people in Israel who were still faithful followers
 - It's obvious from the way God announced it that this was news to Elijah
 - These men were being preserved by God quietly with no special supernatural display required
- Paul's application of this passage is easy to understand now

[Rom. 11:5](#) In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to *God's* gracious choice.

- In the same way,
 - Meaning was quietly at work maintaining a small group of believing Jews to preserve the true believing Israel
 - All according to God's gracious choice, as it has always been

- Paul emphasizes the fact that this process was entirely according to God's eternal plan

[Rom. 11:6](#) But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

[Rom. 11:7](#) ¶ What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;

[Rom. 11:8](#) just as it is written,

“GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR,
EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT,
DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY.”

[Rom. 11:9](#) And David says,

“LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP,
AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM.

[Rom. 11:10](#) “LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT,
AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER.”

- If we define grace as God's choice to elect men into the family of faith
 - Then by that definition, grace excludes any act of man, any work, from the process of salvation
 - Otherwise grace is no longer grace
 - Therefore, we must conclude that what Israel was seeking, in their Messiah, they didn't receive
 - But some received the Messiah because they were chosen to do so
 - Remember God's statement to Elijah
 - 7,000 were preserved (God says he "kept" them)
 - Isn't that an interesting number?
 - If faithfully following God were simply a matter of human choice and will
 - If we were the ones who determined whether we remain faithful or reject God
 - Then what would the odds be that exactly 7,000 people would choose to remain faithful to God – not one more nor one less
 - And the number 7 stands out also

- God says he kept 7,000 specifically so that we would understand it was by His choice and power that these believers remained
 - This is why Paul says that it must be by grace that God chose some to receive the Messiah while hardening the rest
 - This is the definition of grace – an act of God to bring some to faith
- And this was always God's plan
 - First from Deut and then from Psalms, Paul cites evidence that God's plan was to see His people turn their backs on the Messiah when he arrived
 - The people of Israel were destined by God to reject the Messiah when he came for them
 - Instead, God would call only a small remnant of Jews to believe
- Now here's that question again...why, Paul?
 - Why did God cause the nation to stumble in this way?
 - It's so confusing to hear that His own people were intended to reject the Messiah sent to them
 - And so Paul writes...

[Rom. 11:11](#) ¶ I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation *has come* to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

- When the Jewish nation stumbled, by rejecting the Messiah, Paul says that transgression meant salvation for the Gentiles, to make them jealous
 - This was the meaning of Rom 10:19
 - God had determined long ago that one of the ways He would bring punishment to the nation of Israel for their sin was to prevent them from receiving what they claimed to want
 - While allowing an ignorant group to receive it – Gentiles

- Then Paul moves into the heart of the chapter by explaining how this plan is supposed to play out

[Rom. 11:12](#) Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!

[Rom. 11:13](#) But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry,

[Rom. 11:14](#) if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them.

[Rom. 11:15](#) For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will *their* acceptance be but life from the dead?

- Paul says if the wrong actions of the Jewish people result in the world receiving the riches of salvation
 - A failure led to Gentile riches
 - Then what can we expect from their fulfillment (pleroma – fullness)
 - Meaning, what good things can we expect once the nation of Israel does receive their Messiah?
 - The term fullness carries the sense of a complete number
 - Once the total of Israel receives the Messiah
 - Lesser to greater argument
 - If our salvation was made possible by Jewish stumbling
 - Then what glories will the world experience when they finally receive their Messiah
 - Paul clarifies what he's saying
 - I am speaking to you who are Gentiles
 - As an apostle sent to Gentiles, Paul says he magnifies his own ministry when he manages to move some Jews to jealousy
 - And as a result of his work among Gentiles, he brings some Jews along also
 - However strange it may sound, the way to salvation for Israel is by a mission to the Gentiles, in that the Gentiles are not saved merely for their own sake but ultimately for the sake bringing God's elect in Israel to salvation

- Paul then concludes that if God appointed the nation's rejection of the Messiah as a means of bringing reconciliation to the world
 - Then what can we expect from their acceptance of the Messiah except resurrection?
 - We're talking about the rapture
 - Paul is connecting the future acceptance of Israel of their Messiah with the promised resurrection
 - The events of the last days that will result in the resurrection of all souls are the result of Israel coming to accept their Messiah at last
- Paul has introduced this concept that the fate of one group is intimately connected to the other
 - So he goes on to explain the nature of the relationship between Gentile and Jew
 - And in doing so, he brings the entire discussion of what about Israel to a final and dramatic conclusion

[Rom. 11:16](#) If the first piece *of dough* is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too.

[Rom. 11:17](#) ¶ But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree,

- Paul uses a couple of analogies to describe the relationship between the Gentile and the Jew
 - Remember, we're still talking about nations or people groups – not two individual people
 - You can test what I'm saying by considering what Paul has been saying so far
 - Paul said the national rejection by Israel of their Messiah allowed other nations to receive Him instead
 - But that doesn't mean that God rejected every Jewish person

- Nor does it mean that every Gentile person will be saved as a result
 - Similarly, Paul is going to elaborate on the relationship between the fate of the Jewish nation and Gentile nations
 - Not on the fate of an individual Jewish person vs. an individual Gentile person
- In verse 16, Paul uses a couple of analogies to set the picture in our minds
 - If the whole of something is holy, than any small part separated from it will share in that nature
 - A piece of dough compared to a small lump removed from it
 - The root compared to the branch
 - The second example of the cultivated olive tree becomes Paul's example for describing Israel
 - The olive tree was a classic picture of Israel in scripture
 - Israel is the beginning of everything in God's plan, the root in other words

[John 4:20](#) " Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you *people* say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

[John 4:21](#) Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

[John 4:22](#) " You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.

- But God elected to break off some of the branches of Israel
 - Branches refers to those in Israel at the time of Jesus and continuing into today who God cut off by their rejection of the Messiah
 - And in their place, Paul says "you" were grafted in as wild olive branches
- Remember the "you" are the Gentiles, as Paul specified in verse 13
 - They are wild olive branches in that they can join themselves to something begun within Israel
 - Yet they are not natural to the root

- They are foreign
- But yet they remain a separate graft
 - Just in the way real farming can graft a foreign branch into a tree
 - It remains foreign and continues to behave as a distinct plant
- But it gains its nourishment and life support from the root
- It acts as one body, but the distinction isn't entirely removed
 - Remember, we're talking about nations believers
 - The converted Jews is a member of the Body of Christ
 - Yet that Jewish believer remains a part of the remnant that God has promised to maintain as He did in Elijah's day
 - The tree is not the Church, but rather the relationship between the Jewish nation of believers and the Gentile nations of believers
 - They are joined together in faith but they do not share an equal relationship
 - The Gentile believers are dependent on God's promises to the Jewish nation
 - God has never extended any promise to Gentile nations
 - He has only extended a promise to Israel
 - But for a time, Gentile nations are being grafted into the root of Israel's promises

[Rom. 11:18](#) do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, *remember that* it is not you who supports the root, but the root *supports* you.

[Rom. 11:19](#) You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in."

[Rom. 11:20](#) Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear;

[Rom. 11:21](#) for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either.

- Paul then warns against Gentile believers becoming arrogant toward Jews, whether believer or unbeliever
 - You are literally attacking your own support system
 - And if you dare to say, yea but they were broken off for my benefit
 - Paul says don't forget that you are the unnatural member of the tree
 - And if God can cut off his own people for the sake of unbelief
 - Then He is equally capable of cutting off the unnatural branches in the same way
 - Here again, we're talking about nation verse nation
 - God has placed Israel outside His grace at this time and extended His grace to a foreign people
 - But how foolish we would be as Gentiles to assume that's the end of the story
 - If God did not spare the natural branches, then He has the capacity to do the same in reverse
 - That is, return to extending mercy to the Jewish people – the natural branches – while removing His invitation from the Gentile peoples

[Rom. 11:22](#) Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.

[Rom. 11:23](#) And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

[Rom. 11:24](#) For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural *branches* be grafted into their own olive tree?

- Take note of both God's kindness and severity, Paul reminds his Gentile readers
 - Gentiles will continue to be included in God's plan only as long as God's kindness permits
 - Once He chooses to show His severity to the Gentiles, then Gentiles will find themselves outside of grace looking in

- Likewise, if a day comes when the nation of Israel receives God's call into faith, then they too will return to a place of prominence – God can do it easily (verse 24)
 - So arrogance would be a very stupid thing on the part of the Gentiles
 - Yet many have taken on this exact arrogance – replacement theology

[Rom. 11:25](#) ¶ For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery — so that you will not be wise in your own estimation — that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

[Rom. 11:26](#) and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written,
 “ THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION,
 HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.”

[Rom. 11:27](#) “ THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM,
 WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.”

- Here's the revelation of the mystery of Israel's future
 - Paul wants us to understand this mystery
 - The hardening upon Israel is both partial and temporary
 - Partial in that there is always a remnant
 - Temporary because it last only until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in
 - The word for fullness is pleroma, the same word as verse 12
 - A completing of a total number
 - Once the last Gentile appointed to faith happens
 - This comment reinforces the fact that God has chosen His children before the foundation of time
 - And there comes a point when that number is reached
 - Then God's plan for the Gentiles is finished
 - At that point, the hardening is ended and Israel begins to return to their Messiah

[Is. 59:20](#) "A Redeemer will come to Zion,

And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob," declares the LORD.

[Is. 59:21](#) ¶ "As for Me, this is My covenant with them," says the LORD: "My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring," says the LORD, "from now and forever."

[Is. 60:1](#) ¶ "Arise, shine; for your light has come,

And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.

[Is. 60:2](#) "For behold, darkness will cover the earth

And deep darkness the peoples;

But the LORD will rise upon you

And His glory will appear upon you.

[Is. 60:3](#) "Nations will come to your light,

And kings to the brightness of your rising.

[Is. 60:4](#) ¶ "Lift up your eyes round about and see;

They all gather together, they come to you.

Your sons will come from afar,

And your daughters will be carried in the arms.

[Is. 60:5](#) "Then you will see and be radiant,

And your heart will thrill and rejoice;

Because the abundance of the sea will be turned to you,

The wealth of the nations will come to you.

[Is. 60:6](#) "A multitude of camels will cover you,

- Remember Paul's earlier allusion to the resurrection and its connection to Israel's fullness
 - Well from other NT scripture we can begin to put all the pieces together
 - The last Gentile appointed comes to faith and the rapture (resurrection) ensues
 - Subsequently, the promised tribulation will begin (learn that elsewhere)
 - While Israel's hardening is removed
 - Leading to the first fruits of the 144,000 Jews who come to faith
 - Finally, at the end of tribulation, the promise to remove ungodliness from Jacob is delivered
 - Zech 12