

Romans 11 (2017)

- Israel's past, Israel's present, and now tonight Israel's future
 - That's where Paul has been leading us over the course of the past two chapters of Romans
 - Paul wants to reconcile the truth of a faithful, promise-keeping God with the reality of an unbelieving Israel
 - There's an answer here, something that's been hidden from the beginning of time, something we need to understand
 - But understanding it requires careful scholarship, an open mind and an appreciation of Israel's history
 - Paul addressed Israel's history in chapter 9
 - And an examination of that history revealed that God has always dispensed His mercy selectively within the nation of Israel
 - Some were even mercy while others weren't
 - So chapter 9 explained why only some in Israel embraced their Messiah when He appeared for them
 - The Lord shifted His mercy away from the Jewish nation to the Gentiles nations
 - Then in chapter 10, Paul addressed Israel's present circumstances
 - Even today, Israel remains intently focused on following God and awaiting their Messiah's arrival
 - Yet they aren't finding the very thing they are seeking because they continue to seek it with hard hearts
 - They're intent on obtaining self-righteousness rather than the righteousness that comes by faith
 - So chapter 10 explained why a zealous nation continues in their unbelief despite the simplicity of God's plan of salvation
 - The Lord in His providence has elected to leave Israel in their disobedience for a time to extend mercy to Gentiles

- As we reach chapter 11, Paul still has more questions to answer regarding God's faithfulness and His plan for His people, Israel
 - Including the most important question of all: why?

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."

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.

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

- Paul opens the chapter with the next logical question he knew his readers would pose: does this mean God has rejected His people, Israel?
 - Does Israel's continuing unbelief mean Israel will never come to faith in Jesus? Has God decided to cast them aside?
 - That's the question Paul's Jewish readers would naturally ask in light of Paul explained in chapters 9 & 10
 - Indeed, many believers have asked this same question in the centuries since Paul wrote this letter
 - In fact, some believers – and even entire Christian denominations – have answered this question wrongly, concluding that God did reject Israel forever
 - They teach a wrong view of Israel called "replacement theology"
 - They believe that Gentile believers in the Church have "replaced" the Jewish people in God's plan
 - Consequently, the promises God gave to the Jewish people will be fulfilled through the Church
 - These false conclusions are especially ironic given Paul's direct answer to the question in v.1

- Paul says unambiguously the Lord will never reject His covenant people
- Notice the people in view in v.1 (i.e., His people) are the same people Paul defined at the start of chapter 9
- In chapter 9, Paul defined God's people are those who physically descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who Paul called Israelites
- Paul's definition prevents us from shifting our focus to some other group, a so-called "spiritual Israel"
- In v.1 Paul says clearly that God has not – will not – forsake His covenant people, Israel
 - And Paul offers himself as his best proof
 - Paul says he is proof that God has not rejected His people
 - And notice again Paul's description
 - Paul called himself an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham of the tribe of Benjamin
 - These are terms that can only refer to a literal Jew
 - The term Israelite is especially important, because it was part of Paul's definition of God's people back in chapter 9
 - In the Bible, the term Israelite is only ever used to describe a physical descendant of Jacob
 - Gentile believers in the Church are never called "Israelites" in the Bible
 - Only Jews, whether believer or unbeliever, can be considered an Israelite
 - So Paul says the proof that God hasn't rejected literal, physical Israel is that there are believing Jews today, including Paul
 - If God had rejected His people, there would be no believing at all
 - This argument can only make sense if we understand that God determines who receives His mercy, as Paul has shown in chapter 9

- Therefore, if even one Jew is believing, it's proof that God has not forsaken His people
- Because it means God chose a Jew to receive His mercy
- Therefore, Paul says explicitly that his faith is proof that God has not forsaken the Jewish people, those God foreknew
 - The people God foreknew are those Jews God had on His mind from before the foundations of the earth
 - These people God foreknew, He predestined to salvation
 - And those He predestined He called into faith preserving a remnant within the larger community of apostate Israel
 - Paul is identifying himself as a member of the Jewish remnant in his day
 - Moreover, Paul's saying that the continuing existence of a believing Jewish remnant is proof of God's continuing faithfulness to His people
 - Just as God has only selected some to believe in Israel's past, He continues to select only a remnant to believe today
 - And the continuing existence of a remnant proves that God is not done with the Jewish people
 - If God had no intentions of preserving His nation, then He wouldn't have perpetuated faith among Jewish people
 - He would have withheld His mercy, faith would have died out, and eventually the people themselves would cease to exist
 - The same way God extinguished the Canaanites, the Phoenicians, the Philistines and other peoples
 - But instead, the people of Israel live on, and among them, God continues to preserve a remnant of believing Jews like Paul
 - Therefore, we can be sure God still has a plan for His covenant people
- Because God has always called just a minority of His people into faith, it's always been easy for someone to assume God had turned His back on Israel
 - Even some of God's greatest servants have made this same mistake, and in v.2 Paul cites one such an example from the Old Testament

- He reminds us of a moment in Elijah's ministry
- In 1 Kings 19 we find Elijah discouraged and frustrated in his efforts to bring an end to Israel's apostasy
- He's battling an evil king, Ahab, and his murderous wife, Jezebel
- And he's dismayed by the rampant idolatry gripping Israel under their influence
- His frustrations reach a crisis in chapter 19, so Elijah runs to Mt. Horeb, the mountain where God appeared to Moses during the Exodus
 - And Elijah demands that God take his life because Elijah believed that he was the last remaining faithful Jew in all Israel
 - He cries out to God that I alone am left and they will kill me soon
 - From Elijah's perspective, the nation was already lost so there was no point in continuing in his ministry
 - Essentially, Elijah was declaring what some were declaring in Paul's day: the nation was lost because the Lord has forsaken His people Israel
- But in v.4 Paul reminds us of God's response to Elijah's pity party
 - The Lord told Elijah that He had kept 7,000 within Israel from bowing to the false god of Ahab, Baal
 - There are three important things to notice in Paul's example
- First, the Lord kept a remnant that Elijah knew nothing about
 - The verb "kept" emphasizes an action by God to actively ensure the continuation of faith among Israel
 - He didn't say I "found" or I "have received", but the Lord said I "kept"
 - Clearly, God was working to assign His mercy to some in Israel keeping them in faith
 - Secondly, this group was unknown to Elijah
 - The prophet believed he was truly alone in Israel
 - Everywhere he looked, he saw only apostasy and unbelief

- Yet there were those who knew and trusted the Lord, but they weren't the powerful or prominent
- They were quietly serving God, in the shadows
- Finally, notice the number the Lord preserved from apostasy: 7,000
 - The precise of this number immediately grabs our attention
 - This was not an estimate, for there is no indication in the text that God was rounding up or down
 - He didn't say "about" seven thousand or something similar that would clearly indicate the number was an approximation
- Instead, the Lord gives a precise count of Jews who were believing in Elijah's day, and the count was exactly 7,000
 - Not 6,999 or 7,001 but 7,000
 - And the number "7" is also notable, since seven is the Bible's number to signify completeness or the whole of something
- So the precision and specificity of 7,000 reaffirms the Lord sovereignly working to choose who may receive His mercy in Israel
 - There is simply no other way to explain such a precise number of believing Jews
 - Either God chose precisely who would believe, or else tis the greatest coincidence in the history of coincidences
- And in case you're tempted to vote for coincidence, Paul makes sure you understand this number was no coincidence
 - In v.5 Paul says Elijah's example is proof of how the Lord works to preserve a remnant in Israel
 - Paul says in the same way today we will find a precise number of Israel preserved from apostasy by God's gracious choice
 - By His grace, He choose to save some in Israel
 - And if it's always by God's gracious choice, then it can never be according to our works
 - Paul says in v.6 one excludes the other, because they are mutually exclusive

- When Paul says works, he's referring back to what we learned in chapter 10
- The Jewish people are pursuing God's mercy by trying to do the works of the Law
- They are zealous but without a true knowledge of salvation is found
- But Paul says if the remnant of believing Israel only comes from God's choice, then it can never be earned by works, even works of law
 - The Jews are barking up the wrong tree, seeking to be justified by their works
 - Meanwhile, the remnant of Israel, those who will receive God's mercy, are those God chooses by His grace
- If God allowed Israel to receive mercy because of their zealously, then salvation would cease to be by grace
 - If you want God to reward the zealously of Israel, then you're voting for God to do away with grace for everyone
 - And then suddenly, we all would find ourselves in an impossible race to earn salvation
 - Either we accept that God finds those He chooses to receive His mercy (which is the Bible's definition of grace)
 - Or we seek to find God's mercy by our own efforts, which is the Bible's definition of works
- But of course we want the Lord to work on the basis of grace, for if it were any other way we could never receive mercy
 - Therefore, we accept God's sovereignty and understand that God is choosing to work with only a minority in Israel for now
 - And this is Paul's conclusion too, and it leads to the next question

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.”

- Paul asks “What then” or we could say, what does all this mean?
 - Paul explains that the righteousness Israel is seeking (through works of Law) it has not obtained
 - The nation of Israel as a whole has not found righteous
 - Righteousness came for them in the person of Jesus and they rejected Him
 - They failed to confess Christ in faith, and the Lord continues to withhold His mercy for the majority of Jews
 - So Israel continues pursuing righteousness the wrong way, while saving faith continues to be found by Gentiles
 - In the meantime, Paul says a minority of Jews, people like Paul himself, were chosen by God to receive righteousness
 - These are the elect of Israel, the remnant that demonstrate God’s continuing faithfulness to the Jewish people
 - They had what they had by God’s choice, and nothing demonstrates that better than Paul’s own conversion story
 - Paul was literally arrested by Jesus while walking on a road, and Jesus never offered Paul a choice of whether to follow Him
 - Paul was chosen to be part of the remnant
 - But the rest of Israel has been hardened by God, Paul says
 - The last time we saw Paul use the term hardened was in chapter 9, when Paul raised the example of Pharaoh
 - Pharaoh’s sinful heart was set against the Lord from the start
 - But as Paul showed us, the Lord acted to ensure Pharaoh’s heart remained disobedient so Pharaoh wouldn’t give in prematurely

- Therefore, we should apply the meaning of the word in a similar way here to describe God's dealing with Israel
 - Israel initially opposed Christ by their own sinful hearts
 - God didn't have to do anything to create Israel's unbelief
 - Unbelief was Israel's natural condition just as it is for all fallen humanity
 - But Paul says God hardened Israel's hearts to ensure their continued resistance to the Gospel
 - And once again, Paul backs his teaching with Old Testament scripture that declares the same truth
 - The first quote in v.8 comes from the Law in Deuteronomy where Moses foretold that God would ensure His people Israel remained outside His mercy
 - Paul paraphrases the verse, so here's the exact wording of Deut 29

Deut. 29:2 And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, "You have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh and all his servants and all his land;

Deut. 29:3 the great trials which your eyes have seen, those great signs and wonders.

Deut. 29:4 "Yet to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear.

Deut. 29:5 "I have led you forty years in the wilderness; your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandal has not worn out on your foot.

- This scene is near the end of the forty years of wandering
 - Moses is addressing the generation of Israel that grew up in the desert
 - This is the generation that will be allowed to enter the Promised Land in contrast to their parents who were barred for unbelief
- But right before they enter, Moses addresses them
 - He says though they had seen great miracles in the desert, nevertheless this generation still wasn't a believing people
 - Why not? How could they *not* believe given all the miracles they have seen God doing?

- Moses says the answer is the Lord had not given them eyes to see or ears to hear
- Most importantly, God had not given them hearts to know Him
- Moses' words make it abundantly clear that no one believes unless and until the Lord chooses to bring them mercy
 - That's Paul's point here in chapter 11
 - Like the generation of Israel that came out of the desert, the Lord has not given the Israel of our generation hearts to know Him either
 - Apart from a small remnant, Israel has been hardened
- David confirms this conclusion in Psalm 69 saying let their table become a snare and stumbling block
 - This quote is Jesus speaking prophetically through David, asking the Father to bring retribution upon those who crucified Jesus
 - Israel's "table" refers to the banquet table that opens the Kingdom
- When Jesus came to Israel, this table was "set" for Israel in the sense that Israel could have received the Kingdom had they accepted Jesus as their King
 - Instead, they rejected Jesus, so Jesus says let their rejection be cause for God to withhold the Kingdom from Israel
 - In that sense, Jesus' offer of the Kingdom became a snare, a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution to Israel
 - What could have been Israel's ticket to the Kingdom became just cause for God to withhold the Kingdom and keep Israel under judgment
- So God has purposed to withhold salvation from Israel as a whole (apart from a small remnant) because of their rejection of Jesus
 - But this was not a plan to crush or destroy Israel, as Paul explains next
 - This following section of Romans 11 is especially important to Paul's overall argument in chapters 9-11
 - So we need to understand it carefully

- First, we need to understand that at this point Paul is talking expressly about nations, not individual people
 - He's comparing God's plan for the Jewish nation with His plan for Gentiles
 - That's the question we've been following from the start of chapter 9
 - Therefore, we can't apply what Paul is saying to the circumstances of a single individual, whether Jew or Gentile
- Let's look at the next section and we'll see this pattern at work

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.

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?

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.

- In vs.11-16 Paul reaffirms that Israel still has a special place in God's plan
 - He asks did the Lord allow the nation to stumble so they might fall?
 - By fall Paul means to cease to be God's people, to disappear, to be forsaken
 - And of course, the answer again is no, God doesn't have Israel's destruction in mind
 - Instead, the Lord withheld His mercy from Israel, allowing them to reject Jesus and to be justly set under judgment for doing so for a good purpose
 - And that good purpose was you and me
 - We Gentiles are now enjoying the Lord's grace, begin given opportunity to receive His mercy

- And in the process, we serve God's purpose in making Israel jealous
- As I said last week, we make Israel jealous in the sense that we stir within the Jewish people are renewed desire for their Messiah
 - We aren't leading Jews to become jealous of Jesus nor to agreeing He is their Messiah
 - Nevertheless, our declaration that Jesus is Messiah serves to strengthen Israel's anticipation and desire for a Messiah
 - In the same way that when your best friend gets a girlfriend or boyfriend, it make you wish you could find one too
- Paul then asks us to consider how God is working in this way for the benefit for the entire world, both Jew and Gentile
 - Paul compares the mistake Israel made with the way God used it for good
 - Israel's rejection of Jesus was their transgression (singular)
 - That transgression gave God just cause to send Jesus too Gentiles instead, as we learned in chapter 10
 - Now you and I enjoy great riches in Christ because God allowed His own people to sin against His Son
 - That's a whole lotta good to come from a very bad thing
 - So if God could use Israel's rejection of Christ to accomplish very good things for us, what more good things might come when Israel receives Christ?
 - Paul describes that moment as Israel's fulfillment at the end of v. 12
 - He means when God finally fulfills His promises to give Israel the Kingdom
 - That can only happen if and when Israel receives Christ, of course
 - So Israel receiving Christ will bring about even better things for the world than their rejection of Christ brought to us
 - Isn't that an amazing thing to consider?

- Israel is blessing us regardless of what they do
- When they sin against Jesus, it opened the door for God to give us mercy
- And when they finally receive Christ, it will bring us even more riches, because it will bring about the Kingdom God promised
- Knowing this, how should we Gentiles view the Jewish people during this time, especially those who are not believing in Jesus?
 - Paul explains it to us saying specifically in v.13 listen up Gentiles
 - Paul was the apostle appointed by Jesus to reach Gentiles
 - But Paul says even though he was sent to Gentiles, he magnifies his ministry when he manages to reach a Jew here or there
 - Paul always went to the Jew first before reaching out the Gentile in each city he visited, which was in keeping with Paul's desire to save the Jew
 - That's how Gentiles should look at Jews as well
 - We know the nation has been set aside for a time for our sake
 - But we also know God is still working a plan for their sake, and they were God's means of reaching us in the first place
 - So we should seek for the lost Jew, for the remnant God is seeking to save
 - Because if their rejection of Christ brought the reconciliation to the Gentile world, then Israel's acceptance of Christ will bring about the resurrection
 - In other words, the first coming of Christ brought about Israel's rejection
 - And therefore, Israel's acceptance of Christ will bring about Christ's Second Coming
 - That's the moment for the resurrection of all dead and the start of the Kingdom
 - Daniel teaches both these truths in many places, especially Daniel, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah

- So seeking Jews for Christ in compassion and understanding should be the natural response for any Christian who understands God's plan for the world
 - We stand in Christ because of Israel and we will receive the Kingdom only when Israel does too
 - So we have every reason to treat that nation of people with respect and seek their conversion earnestly
- As Paul says, if the first piece is holy, so the lump, or if the root is holy, so are the branches
 - The lump or the root both refer to the beginnings of Israel
 - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David... these men of Israel represent the lump or the root of Israel
- Do you consider these men to be holy? To be respected? To be honored?
 - Then likewise, you must consider the nation God has produced from these men to be equally worthy of honor
 - Not because they are individually worthy of our respect or even if they are believing or not
 - But merely because they are God's people, who God has used to make available everything we hold dear
- At hearing this, some Christians can't help but call foul
 - We question whether it's right to treat such an unholy, disobedient people with respect
 - After all, they crucified Jesus and they spit at the mention of His name today
 - Jews typically treat Christians with great disdain
 - And it was even worse in Paul's day, of course
 - Jews were persecuting Christians to the point of imprisonment and death
 - Under those circumstances, it was especially hard to accept the notion that Gentile Christian should continue to hold Jews, even unbelieving Jews, in high esteem

- Nevertheless, Paul calls the church to set aside any prejudice or hatred for God's people, warning us of what may come

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, **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.

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?

- In this passage, Paul continues to speak in terms of nations, not individuals
 - It's critically important to understand that context here
 - Otherwise, we're likely to make serious mistakes in interpreting Paul's argument
- He compares the present generations of Israel to the branches of an olive tree
 - Remember, Paul just spoke of Israel's origins as a holy lump or root
 - Now he's just extending the metaphor further to speak of the future for Israel
- The branches of this root represent the present generation of Israel
 - These are the people that have grown up from the root
 - They are the descendants of the patriarchs and they are the heirs to the promises God gave to those men
 - But they didn't receive the Messiah, so Paul says the branches were broken off

- So in Paul's analogy breaking off natural olive branches pictures God setting aside present generations of Israel for their rejecting of Jesus
 - And we learned, God did so make salvation available to Gentiles
 - Paul pictures that as wild olive branches grafted into the branchless root
 - In Palestine cultivated olive trees differ from wild olive trees
 - Naturally, a cultivated olive tree produces a certain type of branch, while a wild tree produces a different type of branch
 - Paul compares Gentiles to unnatural branches in the root of Israel
 - We are like something wild which God has grafted into the holy lump of Israel
 - We have what we have spiritually because God first made it available to Israel
 - And we have it unnaturally, which is to say it wasn't given to us directly
 - We only have it because God's people don't have it for this time
- Knowing this Paul says we have no right to be arrogant toward those branches who are broken off, speaking of the unbelieving Jews of our day
 - Whether God chooses to bring them to faith or not, we have no place in treating them arrogantly
 - As if to suggest we are better than them because we have received what they rejected
 - Paul says remember who his the root in this arrangement
 - Who is holding you up, so to speak?
 - So if we treat an unbelieving Jew disrespectfully, especially if we harbor antisemitic views, we're forgetting that his or her unbelief was ordained for our sake
 - In v.19 Paul suggests that some Christians might conclude well God cut Israel off to give us our place in the Church
 - Paul's making the argument of the replacement theologian

- That the Church has replaced Israel in God's plan, therefore we have no reason to give special consideration to Jewish people
- They are yesterday's news, as far as God is concerned
- To this Paul responds in v.20 that yes, they were cut off for our sake, but remember you stand by your faith
 - That is to say, the Gentile church has what it has merely because God decided we should have it
 - He decided to shift His mercy toward us, so that by faith we might receive His righteousness
 - Remember, we already learned that we have His righteousness not because we were looking for it but because God elected that we should receive it
- So Paul warns the replacement theologian not to be so conceited in their view of Israel, but instead to fear God
 - Because we God's pattern should be clear by now
 - In v.21 that if God was willing to set His own people aside for a time, then certainly we should anticipate He is willing to do the same for Gentiles
- Paul's alluding to what's coming for Israel and the world
 - There was a day in the past when the natural branches were the center of God's attention
 - In that day, the Gentile nations were subject to Israel's power and prestige
 - When God wanted His people to have the Promised Land, the Canaanites were taken out of the way
 - When God wanted to free His people, Egypt and the Pharaoh were collateral damage
 - But then God elected to cut off those natural branches to make room for unnatural branches to share in the good things God gave to Israel
 - While we sit in this privileged position, it's Israel that pays the price

- As God desires to bless other nations, He sacrifices His own people
- But this isn't the end of the story
 - We know God has a Kingdom on earth planned, where He Son will rule from the seat of David in the temple in Jerusalem
 - Scriptures say that in this kingdom to come, Israel will once again be God's chief nation on the earth
 - And all Gentile nations in the Kingdom will serve and honor the Jewish nation
- So Paul directs our attention to that day, when Israel will once again be in the driver's seat
 - And as we consider that day to come, we should ask how will God will deal with us if we spent our time on earth arrogantly against His people?
 - When they have become our masters and we are Israel's servants, will we wish we had thought twice about our prejudice?
 - That's what Paul means when he says believers who are arrogant against unbelieving Israel should fear God
- Then in v.21 Paul reveals that if God was willing to set His own people aside for a time, then we should expect He will one day He will do the same for Gentiles
 - In a day to come, God's mercy toward Gentile will come to an end
 - And in that moment, He will turn His attention back again to His own people
 - In that day, the Gentiles will be cut off just as Jews were cut off
 - Once again, we're not talking about individual people being cut off
 - Paul's talking about nations moving in and out of God's favor in His plan for the world
 - In summary, Paul asks us to contemplate the kindness and severity of God

- The same God that cut off Israel has welcomed the likes of us into His mercy
- He is showing severity to Israel for now while showing us kindness
- But Paul adds at the end of v.22 that this state is not permanent
 - Gentiles should not depend on God's mercy remaining available to us forever
 - In a day to come, the Lord will shift His mercy back to the Jewish people, so that He might fulfill the promises He made to them
 - In that day, Gentiles will be cut off, and the Jewish nation will be grafted back into their own root again
- After all, Paul argues, if God can graft in unnatural branches, then He can certainly go back to grafting natural branches back in
 - Or simply put, if God was willing to offer salvation to a people who were not His people
 - Then how much should we expect Him to offer salvation to the people who ARE His people
 - Remember the quote from Hosea in Romans 9:

Rom. 9:25 As He says also in Hosea,

**“I will call those who were not My people, ‘My people,’
And her who was not beloved, ‘Beloved.’”**

Rom. 9:26 “And It shall be that in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people,’

There they shall be called sons of the living God.”

- The prophet said that God would call Gentiles His people
- But then he added that in a time to come the Lord would call Israel sons of the living God again
- So as we prepare to finish this chapter, here's what we know
 - God dispenses His mercy as He chooses
 - Historically, God has selected only a minority of Israel to receive mercy

- When the time came for Israel to receive their Messiah, they rejected Him because of their hard hearts
- God gave Israel the message that salvation was by faith early and often
- Yet they stubbornly refused to accept God's word preferring to seek their own righteousness
- Moreover, God did not give the nation hearts to know and receive Christ as judgment for their sin
 - He left them in their sins, allowing their sinful hearts to go their own way, leading to the rejection and crucifixion of Christ
 - This was God's plan, to set His people aside, so that He could fulfill His promise to Abraham to bring His mercy to all nations
- Today, His mercy is going out to all nations because of Israel's rejection of Christ
 - Meanwhile, God has hardened Israel's hearts to leave them outside His mercy for a time
 - In the meantime, we Gentiles are receiving God's mercy must not look arrogantly upon His people though they remain unbelieving
 - How can we look upon Israel with contempt knowing they were left unbelieving so we might receive God's mercy?
 - It's a humbling truth and it should leave us with great sympathy for the Jewish people
- So all that remains for us to understand is how God plans to fulfill His promises to Israel

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.”

- This is a powerful section of Paul's letter, yet it's brief on details
 - Most of the details are available in other scripture, but time won't permit me to walk through all of it
 - You can see the details in other studies like Revelation so I will just summarize here as Paul does
 - Beginning with the Paul's preface in v.25
 - Paul prepares us to receive a mystery
 - A mystery in the Bible is a truth that has existed from the beginning but was hidden from our understanding until revealed in the New Testament
 - There are eight such mysteries in the New Testament, and Paul revealed four of the them
 - Here we find one of them
 - Paul says unless we understand this mystery, we're likely to be wise in our own estimation
 - We might be tempted to think we know what God is doing with Israel and the Gentile church
 - But in reality our wisdom is in our own eyes only, because we lack a critical piece of information
 - Once again, Paul's describing those who hold to replacement theology, who believe the Church has replaced Israel
 - This view is necessarily a partial truth, because it understands God's pattern up to the point of the First Coming of Christ
 - But that's where the understanding stops, and so it misses the rest of the story
- Paul says here's the rest of the story: the hardening that Israel has experienced since Christ is partial and temporary
 - It's partial because it still allows for a remnant, a small number of believing Jews who never cease to exist on earth
 - Remember, this is important because all by itself the remnant is proof that God is not done with His covenant people

- So God continue to maintain faith among at least some in Israel to make sure His nation carries forward
- Secondly, this hardening is temporary
 - It won't last forever
 - It ends when the fullness of Gentiles comes in
 - The term "fullness" is a Greek word that can be translated "a full count"
- So when God has reached the full count of Gentiles He intends to save, then He will be ready to return His attention to Israel
 - At that point, the hardening of Israel will come to an end
 - And the nation will receive God's mercy so as to believe in Jesus, just as Gentiles have now received the same
- This is yet another clear statement of God's sovereignty in salvation and His appointment of a certain number of believing people
 - In a way, we could say that just as God had a certain number of Jews in mind for His remnant (i.e., 7,000 in Elijah's day)
 - Similarly, God has a certain number of Gentiles in mind for salvation across this age
 - And like as the Jewish remnant was a small number relative to the overall number of Jewish people
 - Similarly, the Gentiles who receive mercy will be a small number compared to the overall number of Gentiles who walk the earth
- Furthermore, Paul quotes Old Testament scriptures to prove that God has foretold these details as well, though they were hidden until Paul's day
 - In v.26 Paul quotes from the very end of Isaiah 59
 - That chapter and the one that follows describes the circumstances surrounding Christ's Second Coming and the start of His Kingdom
 - In the midst of those event, Isaiah says the Lord promises to send Jesus from Zion, referring to the Zion in Heaven

- He will come for the purpose of removing ungodliness from Jacob
- Jacob is another nation for Israel, so it stands for the nation of Israel
 - At His Second Coming to earth, Jesus will remove all ungodliness from Israel
 - The nation of Jews alive on earth in that future day will all be saved by faith in Jesus
- This is a dramatic turn around from the situation we find today, which is exactly what Paul has been telling us will happen
 - One day, the Lord's mercy will return to His people in a big way
 - He won't just save a remnant in that future day
 - He intends to save all His people
- Notice how Paul opens v.26: he says and so all Israel will be saved
 - Every single Jew will receive mercy in that day to come
 - We see this moment described in Zechariah 12

Zech. 12:9 “And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

Zech. 12:10 “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.

Zech. 12:11 “In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo.

Zech. 12:12 “The land will mourn, every family by itself; the family of the house of David by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself and their wives by themselves;

Zech. 12:13 the family of the house of Levi by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself and their wives by themselves;

Zech. 12:14 all the families that remain, every family by itself and their wives by themselves.

- The setting of Zechariah 12-14 is the end of Tribulation and the war of Armageddon and the return of Christ

- So we're talking about the same moment as Isaiah was speaking about in chapter 59-60
 - In that moment, Zechariah describes how all Israel will be saved just as Paul says
 - The Spirit of God will be poured out on the people of Israel so that all of them recognize Jesus as Messiah
 - Notice Zechariah says "all the families that remain" on earth are saved in this way
- Here again, we cannot explain how such a thing could happen except that God sovereignly brings all these people to faith by His grace
 - Since there are no exceptions, we must acknowledge that this moment is determined by will or choice
 - It was determined by God's will in keeping with His promises to Israel
- Just as Isaiah says in v.27: this act of mercy is God keeping His covenant with them, to save them and bring them into the Kingdom
 - God promised Israel this future through the Abrahamic Covenant
 - And He reiterated it in the Mosaic Covenant (Lev 26:42)
 - And God will keep His promises
- But He has delayed the fulfillment of these things long enough to extend mercy to a certain number of Gentiles, including you and me
 - That number hasn't been reached yet, obviously
 - But one day it will be reached, and then God will move to rescue Israel from unbelief