

The Doctrine Of Israel (Part Nine): Romans 11

Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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When I began in my first sermon in this series, I started at the right place, I hope, with the origin of Israel in God's calling and teaching, of Abraham in particular, but also Isaac and Jacob, who became known as Israel after he was converted. Those men, those three patriarchs, and we can probably throw in Joseph as well, put a lasting mark on their descendants in both positive and negative ways. We are still feeling the effects of those men's lives.

The second sermon moved on to the binding covenants that God made both with Abraham and later with the whole nation of Israel at Mount Sinai. The latter covenant that He made with them at Sinai, the Old Covenant, was designed to form them into a nation of priests. That is said very clearly in Exodus 19. Now, the covenant itself contained the obligations to both parties, that is, to God and to the people of Israel. It also contained incentives and rewards for doing what the covenant said they should do. And it also contained the necessary penalties and punishments for noncompliance. It is just like any kind of contract. Normally, any kind of business contract will have similar things, the responsibilities of each party. What happens when they do well, what happens when they do not do well.

The third sermon, we moved into basically the book of Judges and showed the continuing cycle of Israel's rebellion, and the cycle then went from the rebellion to divine punishment, and then God would raise up a deliverer, and after a while, many of the people would repent of their sins, of their turning from God. This part of the cycle was often short-lived, but then they went into rebellion, divine punishment, deliverance, and repentance. And then they were rebelled again, and then they had to be punished again. It just went on and on and on like this. History proves that most Israelites strayed quickly from God's covenant. They soon flirted with idolatry and then over a period of time they fell into outright apostasy.

My fourth sermon went into God's indictment of Israel and He indicts them, both Israel and Judah, on several charges. We will not go into them. They all boil down to that Israel/Judah forsook the covenant. They were the ones that were in the wrong. They were the ones that left all the agreements that they had made with God. The Israelites had particular problems with idolatry, with Sabbath breaking, and trusting in other nations, the nations that surrounded them, whether they were Egypt or Syria or Assyria or Babylon or what have you. They would rather trust them than their powerful God. It got to the point where He says in His Word, that Israelites do not even know how to do right. That is how far they had sunk by the time He had to get them out of the land, why He had to punish them for good.

It shows in the wording that He uses, that like the pre-Flood men, that every thought was only evil continually, it got to the point where that is the way Israel was too. They lacked a firm concept of right and wrong. So God used to Assyria to destroy the kingdom of Israel and sent the survivors into exile and they are still there.

The fifth sermon that I gave showed that not even 150 years later, God had to do the same thing to Judah. This time He used Nebuchadnezzar of the Babylonians and they demolished Judah and took a very small remnant, actually, back to Babylon. They stayed there 70 years and by this time Babylon had been succeeded by Persia, the Medo-Persian empire, and the king there sent the Jews back to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple. And later on he sent others back to rebuild the wall.

So a Jewish community was replanted, if you will, in Judah, in that area, and so there was a community that Jesus Christ could be born into, a community of Israelites, a community of Jews. His Son then was born in the fullness of time, as the Bible says, among His own people, but they rejected Him. And if you look closely at the state of the Jews at the time of Jesus, we know that they proved themselves to be as guilty as their fathers. As a matter of fact, Jesus said they would fill up their father's sins.

We have been talking a little bit about Jesus. Part Six was about Jesus' teaching on Israel and we saw that His teaching looks forward, not to a new physical Israel, but a new Israel, a spiritual Israel, as well as a New Covenant that would relate the terms of their relationship. The reason for this, His

looking forward to a New Israel and a New Covenant, was very obvious because physical Israel and the Old Covenant proved quite inadequate to God achieving His purpose of creating spiritual children for Himself—reproducing Himself. So under this foundation that was given by Jesus Christ, New Testament teaching tends to emphasize the Israel of God rather than physical Israel. That is what they are called in Galatians 6:16, the Israel of God, and in that same verse, Paul defines that Israel of God as those who are called, are elected to receive God's Spirit and who live according to that way of life, that law.

The last two sermons, 7 and 8, have concentrated on Paul's doctrinal argument about Israel in Romans 9, 10, and 11. Those two sermons (one was on chapter 9 and the other was on chapter 10 of Romans), and I will go quickly through Paul's arguments in those two chapters. In the first chapter, Romans 9, God chose Israel as His own people. That is something baseline that we need to understand—God chose Israel as His own people. Divine spiritual election, however, trump's physical descent. It is not His calling of those who are in the flesh that is important. It is His spiritual calling of His people that He wants as His children that is so important.

What this did was that it created an Israel within Israel, "Therefore," he says, "not all Israel is of Israel." So, by election, by His choice, a chosen spiritual remnant has been separated from physical Israel, and what He has done with those people is to form the church, or, as we said earlier, a spiritual Israel, an Israel of God.

Paul recognizes that there might be an objection to this and he says that God's choice, God's election, is not unfair. And the reason he gives that it is not unfair is that the Creator God can do whatever He pleases. God is God. He can choose whomever He wants and it cannot be called unfair because He is God. He is the Creator, He owns us, and He is supreme. He is sovereign over all things. Now, that is kind of a blunt argument, but it is a true one. Who are we, as the clay, to complain against the Potter?

So what He did at that point, is that choosing Israel, going through all that stuff in the Old Testament, Israel proving that they were not going to follow Him, He decided to put them away, divorce Israel. And so He did and He hardened Israel's heart, like He had hardened Pharaoh's heart in Egypt. He

did this so that He could focus on a spiritual remnant. He put them aside and said, "Wait, we will put you over here and I'm going to focus on this particular spiritual remnant that I am most interested in building up into a Family right now."

That is what He decided to do. And the amazing thing to the Jews was that He decided to use both Jews *and* Gentiles in this Family. So we have a Family that is called by grace and not because of any superiority or works that were done by people. So God was resuming on working a spiritual creation through election and grace.

Chapter 10 is one basic argument and that is that Israel was the one in the wrong. Israel erred in trying to achieve justification through law keeping or strict obedience and good works. Whereas God has always accounted righteousness as being through faith. So Israel, having consistently gone about seeking God in the wrong way, and to just put it plainly, they were the ones that rejected Christ and the gospel. They were always the one in the wrong. God never was.

This is where we are in the whole long series of sermons as we go into Paul's argument in Romans 11. Now, this sermon will cover all of Romans 11. I know it is a long chapter and we are not going to go there first. We will end up going somewhere else first because I still like to get a running start for myself. But Romans 11 revolves around, essentially, two rhetorical questions that Paul brings up as possible objections to his argument that God has discarded physical Israel.

Now, it seems like, up to this point, that he means that God discarded Israel and they are done. That is an idea that a person can have from what he has already said. As a matter of fact, he wrote very decisively in Romans 9, verse 8 that those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God. That is pretty plain. So chapter 11 is his attempt to explain Israel's present cut-off status with God, in contrast to her future glorious status.

In other words, their being cut off is temporary. It works within time. We know that being cut off now does not mean that it is all over. "With God," Jesus said, "all things are possible." So just because He has cut them off, and in the meantime, billions of Israelites have lived and died, He is still going to

work things out to save Israel. But this is something we will find out later that bamboozles most people. How could He do that? But as Paul says, it is a mystery and it has to be revealed through His Word and the Holy Spirit.

I told you that we were going to start someplace else. So please turn to Ezekiel, the 33rd chapter. We are going to read verses 10 through 20. This is a prophecy that God gave to Ezekiel about the watchman and it goes on to talk about God's judgment in all of this because this prophecy is basically saying that God has judged His people and they failed.

Ezekiel 33:10-20 [God says] "Therefore you, O son of man, say to the house of Israel: 'Thus you say, "If our transgressions and our sins lie upon us, and we pine away in them, how can we then live?"' Say to them, 'As I live,' says the Lord, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?' "Therefore, you, O son of man, say to the children of your people: 'The righteousness of the righteous man shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression; as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall because of it in the day that he turns from his wickedness; nor shall the righteous be able to live because of his righteousness in the day that he sins.' When I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, but he trusts his own righteousness and commits iniquity, none of his righteous work shall be remembered; but because of the iniquity that he has committed, he shall die. Again, when I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' if he turns from his sin and does what is lawful and right, if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has stolen, walks in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of his sins which he has committed shall be remembered against him; he has done what is lawful and right; he shall surely live. Yet the children of your people say, 'The way of the Lord is not fair! But it is their way which is not fair! When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die because of it. But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is lawful and

right, he shall live because of it. Yet you say, 'The way of The Lord is not fair.' O house of Israel, I will judge every one of you according to your ways."

God lays down the law here. This passage, for us, provides a summary of Israel's position before God, as it is this day. His judgments throughout all of Old Testament history, and really we can bring that up to right now, have been perfectly fair, have gone straight along the lines of His covenant and of His character. But Israel complained, pretty vociferously at times, that God had not been fair with them, He had not been just, He had not been equitable. They accused *Him* of being in the wrong. Basically, they accuse God of sin, that He did not follow through on the terms of the covenant. But of course He had.

Underneath their complaint that they are making here is an attitude, and it is a very vile attitude, and that is that God should have treated them better. Why? Because they were His chosen people, God should have given them a break, is what is underneath their complaint. He should have given them a pass and given them blessings, no matter how filthy their record showed them to be. They wanted Him to disregard His own character and His own law, to give them a break, time and time again—every time.

See, what they were doing was that they were relying on their covenantal position of specialness before God. God says in Amos 3:2, that only you of all the people on the earth have I known. That is how special they were. They were unique in all the world and all the earth because they were the only ones with a relationship with the Creator God, and boy, did they bank on that. In a previous sermon, we went through Jeremiah 7 and talked about how they said, "Ah look, the Temple's still there, we must be in great standing with God. So we are able to do all these vile things."

That is exactly what they said. "Because God is still there and He has not turned His back on us, we can continue to sin, do all these abominations," I think is the phraseology there. But that is not the way it works. They were *completely* wrong in this understanding. So they were, as I said, relying on their covenant position of specialness before God rather than what He wanted, which was trust—faithfulness—faith in Him. He would have been satisfied if they were trusting in their personal righteousness more than what

they were; that is, trusting in their special position. He would have rather have seen them try to keep all the laws as well as they could and be as personally righteous as they could. This would not have justified them in any way, but it would have shown that they were trying at least.

But no, they were complaining that He was not treating them fairly; because they should have been treated fairly just because of who they were. "We're special. We're God's people." Do you know this attitude goes all the way back to the wilderness? Do you remember the rebellion of Korah in Numbers 16? Do you do you remember what their big beef with Moses was? "You take too much on yourself, Moses. But don't you know that," as it says there, "all the congregation is holy? We're all special. Why are you making yourself out to be so special, Moses?" So if they treated Moses that way, it stands to reason that not long after (it took them a few 100 years), they were treating God that way. "We're all holy, God. There is no way we can sin and be this bad. Why are you throwing the Assyrians against us? Why are you throwing the Babylonians against us? We haven't done anything wrong." That is what they are saying. "You're the one, God, who has been unjust because we are all holy, we are the holy people."

Like I said, this is a vile attitude to think that you should have something just because of who you are. And I do not think God likes it very much. God, in this passage that we just read, emphasizes doing right and He gets down to the nitty-gritty of it. It is not just the nation doing right. It is everyone in the nation personally, individually, being judged for their works. Each person. So they could not just say, "Hey, I'm a part of Israel, I'm going to be fine." They had to show their righteousness, as it were, through their own works. Do you know that this idea of judgment according to an individual's works—each person being judged according to works—goes all the way through to Revelation 22:12 as He is concluding the Book? He makes sure that this understanding is right there for us to remember: each one will be judged according to his works.

Now, I am skipping in time to the time of the Pharisees here. It could be that misreading passages like Ezekiel 33 could have been what convinced the Jews and the Pharisees to believe that they were justified by works because God put such an emphasis on doing good works and doing good. But as they normally did, they went to an extreme on this matter. So they stressed

scrupulous keeping of the works of the law to prove to God, and other people. As we know, there were those Pharisees that stood out in the middle of the street and did their their acts of the works of the law and whatnot, to be seen of men. But they were proving to God that they were righteous.

It took them a couple of centuries, but to them, righteousness and sin became completely outward matters. It was how you cleaned your cup or your dish. It was what you wore. Did you wear a phylactery or not? It was whether you would walk less than 5/8 of a mile to synagogue. It was whether you would carry a needle on the Sabbath or not. It was all these exterior things that, to them, proved that they were righteous or that another person was sinful because he *did* carry a needle on the Sabbath. Horrors!

So to them righteousness was all about success in observing the minutia of the law, and all the meticulous works that they thought they found in Scripture. And if they did not do these things, then they were failures. They were sinners and iniquitous. The idea of trusting God—having faith, and keeping His law to please Him and to grow in His favor and in character—ran a distant second, if not further back, because it was all about what you could show in your outward actions, outward behavior. But you know what? Even in this section, in verse 13, God warns them about this misconception. Let me read verse 13 again.

Ezekiel 33:13 "When I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, but he trusts in his own righteousness and commits iniquity, none of his righteous work shall be remembered; but because of the iniquity that he has committed, he shall die."

He knew the Jews had a tendency, a propensity, to do this, as most people do. They become self-righteous. It is what they make up to be righteousness that they follow. And He says, if you do all these things under your own authority, as what is righteous, then when you sin, which you will inevitably do, He says those good works will not be remembered because that is not how it works. It has all got to be based on the righteousness of God, and the righteousness of God is through faith. So the person who will live is the person who does what is lawful and right, what is just and righteous according to God.

But instead the Jews formed their own law of righteousness, their own rules or orders of what is right doing, all based on their distorted and exaggerated ideas of what work should be. But none of these things that they found or very few of the things that they found and taught to be righteousness were things that God ever considered criteria for justification. Do you know what God considers to be criteria for justification? They are in Acts 2: repent and believe. That is about it, and be baptized every one of you. It is all about *faith*. We are not talking righteousness, we are talking justification. The criteria for justification is faith in Jesus Christ.

This is what Paul concludes in Romans 9, verses 31-32.

Romans 9:31-32 Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. . . . Because they did not seek it by faith, but . . . by the works of the law.

Their failure, when it comes down to it, was essentially that they did not trust God, but instead they took it into their own hands and decided that justification would be by their own works. So Paul spends the rest of Romans 10 showing that Israel, exercising its free will, chose to reject God. It was all their fault. Despite all God that did for them: sending the prophets, sending them leaders, giving them all this instruction in the Old Testament, and giving them prophets that would speak that instruction, well, they failed to obey God because they did not have faith in Him.

So they left Him. They were the ones in the wrong. And because of the terms of the covenant, He was forced to cut them off. It was all there in the law. That was one of the penalties for noncompliance. Well, the penalties for noncompliance in the Old Covenant said that they would face the wrath of God and He would cut them off. So that is where they stood.

Keep in mind that underlying Paul's argument in Romans 11 is his view that Israel's displacement in God's favor at this point is a matter of time. This is *very* important. He did not put them aside in terms of *place*, although they did go into exile and all that. They went out of the land. That is not what he means. Paul is saying that he put them aside in *time*, if you understand what I

mean. Their time is not now. He let them live, many of them. Those that did not fall under His wrath, He put them in exile. But what He did was He said, "You're cut off for the time being."

God pushed them away to work with others in this time. So their displacement is not forever but temporary. Their situation is not permanent but fixable. That is the overall argument that he is trying to get across here in Romans 11. He is saying, be patient, wait. God will rectify the condition of Israel in His own time. When the time is come, when the time is full.

Let us go to Romans 11. I hope this is not boring you. I know how doctrine can be. It can be a little bit dry but I think this is a very important subject because we need to know where Israel stands and what is going to happen because it affects us. We are the Israel of God and they will be younger sisters and brothers of us, and we need to understand what God is going to do and why, because it is all part and parcel of being part of God's Family.

Romans 11:1-10 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. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know that the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, "Lord, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life." What does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 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. What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. 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." And David says: "Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a recompense to them. Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back always."

The section of Romans 11 tends to be a bit of a review of what we have learned so far. But there are a few interesting points that I need to bring up here. In the very first verse, and the second verse as well, Paul emphatically denies that God has cast Israel away. Now, that seems in contradiction to what he had already said. But remember the idea of time that I mentioned just a few minutes ago. If we add an adverb of time or condition to this question, we get a clear answer to what he actually was meaning.

We could say here, "Has God cast away His people? Absolutely." "Has God cast away His people totally?" Or "Has God cast away His people completely?" You understand what I am going for here. "Has God utterly cast away His people?" or "Has He cast away His people forever?" This is what he means when he replies, "Certainly not!" This is not permanent. That is what he means. It is not well translated, at least in this particular translation, I am reading out of the New King James. But this is his meaning.

The point is made then that he does not believe that Israel's separation from God at this point is forever, or complete. Maybe that is a better way to look at it. That God's separation of Israel from Himself is complete. And he makes the point by pointing to himself. He said, "God called me, didn't he?" He goes on to say, "Look, I'm a Hebrew, I'm an Israelite, I'm a Benjaminite. If it was complete, if he was completely cutting Israel off, He wouldn't have called *me*." So he uses himself as an example of God's grace toward those of Israel that He is continuing to call and so, Israel is not completely or forever or utterly cut off.

This leads Paul to think of something else. The situation in the Old Testament back in Kings where Elijah considers himself alone and God says, "No, there is a remnant of 7,000 that you were not even aware of." So he is implying here that this situation in which God works with a small remnant of Israel is not new. That it is, in fact, God has been working with a remnant all along. He started working with Abraham who was a remnant of all humanity, and ever since He has chosen ones and twos and little groups and various people within Israel, elected them, given *them* His Spirit, not the whole group.

And so really Paul is telling us, we should not think this is strange. God has been working this way, it is His pattern that He has been working with all through history. He always works with the elect remnant, keeps it small. Now, ultimately, that will change because He wants to bring everybody in. But in the meantime, in this world, He is working with small groups and bringing them into or towards the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

He gets then to this idea in verse 5, "Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace." He brings grace in big time here. And then he explains that it has got to be grace alone because if there is any amount of works mixed in with the grace, then the grace is not grace. That is just how it works. If there are works, then the definition of grace is wrong because grace is a free gift. So it cannot be by works, it has to be one or the other. It has to either be by works or by grace. That is, justification. I am not talking about salvation here, I am talking about justification. If you want God's favor, you cannot earn it, it has got to be given freely by Him. And so it is grace and no works, in terms of justification.

Justification is *not* salvation. Justification is that initial act at the beginning of one's conversion, where God puts you in alignment with Him and what He does is it is a legal act. He says Jesus Christ died, He died a sinless death. He alone is holy of humanity, and He, being the Creator God, has paid for the sins of all mankind who believe in Him. And so if we believe in Him, if we trust Him, if we give ourselves to Him, then His blood covers us and we can come before the Father as holy because Jesus Christ is holy. And because of that belief in Jesus Christ, our *faith* in Him, then God looks upon us as righteous. But it is only through Him. We have done nothing to earn this. All we have done is believe and give ourselves wholly to him. And there is even good indication, quite good indication, that He gave us the faith in the first place.

It is purely a gift, no works are involved because He has elected us to be one of His children and that sets us on the road to a life of conversion, of change, of transformation. So, he says, our justification before God has to be fully by grace and Israel chose the wrong way. They chose to do it by works, and that is just not right. It does not work that way, and God would not accept their

works as justification. It is just impossible. So, Israel's attempts to have a relationship with God failed because they sought justification by works.

On the other hand, members of God's church, the elect, receive justification by the gift of God through faith. It is as simple as that. One works, the other does not. Israel chose the wrong way. They failed. He rejected them and cast them aside. Those in the church, doing it the right way through grace by faith, did it the right way, and He works with them. It is very simple. And because Israel decided to do it this wrong way, God just simply decided to blind them, blind pretty much the entire nation. He hardened their hearts, as it is said about Pharaoh. He made them unable to see, unable to hear what is godly, what is right and good. They are able to physically see it. They are able to physically hear it, but they cannot put it together. It just does not strike them in the right way.

Now, speaking of American Christianity here, and many evangelical types of Christianity all over the world, they have gone to the very opposite extreme and say they will not do anything. They will accept Jesus, but they will not *do* anything. And so they have got this hyper-grace where no works, no righteousness, no any kind of law keeping is required, because they do not understand. They do not understand how to put together the revelation of God to know where and when these parts fit into their conversion.

So God put Israel aside for this reason and He hardened their hearts, He spiritually blinded them so that they cannot understand God's ways, His purposes. What it comes down to is that God decided to treat them just like any other people in the world, just like the Gentiles. And now Israel thinks they are Gentiles. They lost the Sabbath, they lost their identity, and so they think they are Gentiles out there in the world. They are not Semites, they are just Caucasians that came from somewhere. Maybe they are Germanic, maybe they are whatever, but they are certainly not Israel.

And so they live like Gentiles, which is where God has put them. He did that purposely, He cut them off from Him and set them aside to experience life as the Gentiles do. He wants them to see, to experience throughout their lives and throughout the lives of many generations of Israelites, what life is like without God and how disastrous it is not to have God by their side and guiding and helping them.

They do have advantages, though. I said that God wanted them to live like Gentiles and they do, but they do have a couple of advantages that has made their lives a little bit better. He has shown them actually a great deal of favor and mercy in their wandering the world as Gentiles, and that is:

1) He allowed them to retain His Word. That is, they are fairly familiar with God's Word because what did He do after Jesus started the church? Jesus sent the apostles to Israel first and He gave them His Word. The church has been very active among the descendants of Israel. And so they have that, and if they at least give token respect to the Word of God, they have had a much better life than many of the Gentiles have in this world.

2) God did not forget His promises to Abraham. The blessings that came to Israel as a result of Abraham's faith, they have received and used to make their nations great. Of course, he had the prophecies about Joseph's sons, that Ephraim and Manasseh would be a great nation and a multitude of nations.

So they have been able then to have these two advantages throughout history since Jesus Christ, and it stood them in good stead. And God is still going to Israel predominantly, even though in this age with the Internet and all that were able to go all over the world, even this little work here, and its minor resources and few employees and all that. (Next sermon, I am going to expand on this particular idea about Israel since Jesus and the role this time plays.)

Let us continue in Romans 11. We are going to read the next six verses. Remember we left Israel as hardened or blinded. He says,

Romans 11:11-15 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. Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them. For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will be their acceptance be but life from the dead?

That is pretty amazing paragraph. I think Paul reclarifies here that Israel's present state is not permanent. He wants to pound that into us as we read this. This is not permanent. He says they have stumbled. Yes, they made a very bad mistake and they are paying for it, but they have not fallen and lost all hope of getting back on their feet. That is essentially what he is saying there. They may have made a huge blunder. And what I mean by blunder is sin. They sinned terribly, but their sin can be forgiven. They can get up and walk again. But it is not *now*. There is something else that has to happen first. Israel still has hope and purpose within God's plan. It will turn out alright. In fact, it is going to be a glorious, awe-inspiring end. Everybody is just going to say, how in the world did God do that? Scrape these people off the pavement and made them kings and priests. Can you believe it? Only God could do that.

Now, recall in chapter 10, verse 2, that Paul wrote that Israel has a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. So they are religious people. There are many among them that want to have a relationship with God. They want to be close to Him. It seems to be in our DNA. But they went about it all wrong, as we have seen, despite all of God's abundant instruction and help that He gave to them.

What Paul does here is that he makes a play on words on this idea that Israel is zealous, and what he does is he uses a very similar word in Greek, which is translated as jealous. So he changed zeal to jealousy. As a matter of fact in Greek, it is the difference between *zelon* and *parazelosai*. They are not at all synonyms, but they both have the fragment of zeal in them. And so he says, we are going to change that zeal for God into jealousy of the Gentiles. It is going to be an attitudinal change from this mistaken, misplaced zeal that they have, into an envy of the Gentiles.

It is really kind of interesting. This envy is a strong desire to return to a former relationship. I mean, we are talking, God is the husband, Israel is the wife. God divorces the wife and He finds another wife called the Israel of God, made up of many Gentiles and some Israelites. And Israel looks at that and says, "Why can't I have that? I used to have that, but I am outside, I've been put away. I've been shunted aside." And because they have a zeal for God, they will turn this jealousy into a strong desire to be part of the life

again. See, it is God using human nature to turn them around to make them, once again, a loving spouse under the covenant.

He wants to funnel that zeal into the proper channel and He will do it by saying, putting it in modern terms, "I'm going out with this Gentile woman." "Oh, You can't do that, You're mine!" "Prove it." And so they will return to Him in time.

Another thing to note is that in verses 11 and 12 is the word fall. Notice, "I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall?" Well, the Greek word that is used there for fall is the word for fall: to be cast into ruin or to fall down, to suffer ruin. That is a good way to put it. That they suffer ruin because they fell. You know, like how a city would fall to an enemy, or a nation would fall. Well, this is what it is talking about.

But then it says, "But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy." Now that fall, I do not know why translators do this, but they translated this word as fall and it is *paraptoma*, which means "sin," inequity. It means "trespass" or "transgression." Paul is saying that their fall was the result of their transgression. But this is totally obscured here in the New King James unless you read your margin, which the word is there. But why did not they just translate it as iniquity, because of their iniquitous ways, or through their iniquitous ways, He would provoke them to jealousy? Much more understandable. I just thought I should point that out.

What we have here is God making use of their sin. God is just amazing. He could take sin and turn it into a wonderful thing, transforming the circumstances around it to cause great growth and blessing and goodness. That is what he is saying here. Even though Israel sinned, He is going to turn that around and make it a blessing for the Gentiles. The whole world is going to ultimately benefit from this terrible decision on the part of the Israelites. Mr. Armstrong often talked about turning lemons into lemonade. God does that daily. He is always taking a situation and turning it around for the better.

So He uses their sin and their misfortune in having to be put away from Him for the time being, to bless the rest of the world. That is, opening up salvation to the Gentiles. And when Israel finally repents, we cannot imagine, at this point, how much good that is going to do for the whole of

humanity. We have some guesses about how He is going to use Israel in the Millennium and how He may use Israel in the second resurrection, but "eye has not seen, nor ear heard," all the wonderful things that He is going to make happen out of this fall of Israel. Whatever it is, it is going to be glorious and it is going to bring all kinds of praise and honor to God.

One more thing here in verse 15. He talks about, "For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?" You all know what life from the dead is. We just use the long Latinate term, resurrection. He is talking about a resurrection here. Now, this may point to a prophetic reality which is reinforced in verse 26, which says, "And so all Israel will be saved." That Israel's reconciliation will only take place in days of resurrection.

Let me explain that. What he may mean here is that Israel will not be reconciled to God until resurrections happen. That is, the first resurrection. There will be a reconciliation of Israel to God. That is, those who are alive at the time and He has the Second Exodus and He brings them back to the land of Israel and He converts them. But there is also the second resurrection. In the second resurrection, all those billions of Israel who have lived in the past will rise and He will then reconcile them. But it is going to take resurrection from the dead in order to save all Israel, whether it is at the time of the first resurrection or the time of the second resurrection.

Now, if we wanted to pick a time that He is specifically thinking about here, I would say the second resurrection when the majority of Israel will be turned back to God. Therefore, if that is the case, what we have here in verse 15 is an obscure allusion to Ezekiel 37 and the valley of dry bones. Because that talks about a resurrection of physical Israel to where that they are able to have the Spirit given to them and they can learn and grow and become the elect.

Let us go to verses 16 through 24 of Romans 11 and work on this paragraph here for a bit.

Romans 11:16-24 For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. 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, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. 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. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree, which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree, how much more will these, who are the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

Since at least verse 13, and probably we could say a lot before that, Paul has been speaking specifically to the Gentiles, and now he turns and gives them a very stern warning. Do not get the big head! Do not be like Israel and think that because you have been called and been given favor by God, that you cannot fall, that you are better than Israel, that you are superior. Do not be proud of your present position of being in God's favor. Because remember what he says to the Gentiles in Corinth in chapter 1, verse 26, and on through 29, that they are the foolish, they are the weak, they are the base of this world, and all glory and honor go to God for the fact that they are in the church and that they are elect of God.

Instead he tells them they need to be thankful and reverence God for allowing them to partake of the blessings that should have gone to Israel. Which he calls here, the fatness of the tree, all the blessings. He is talking about olives and obviously the fatness of an olive is its oil and all the wonderful things that can come from the use of the olive oil. He says in his extended metaphor that they now enjoy all those blessings, but they should not get a big head about it. Because they are there by God's sufferance, His grace. He allowed them, He gave them favor. He condescended to them and brought them in, and so they should instead be grateful, be thankful, and joyous that they have this position and not feel any way superior. So he employs this metaphor of root and branch to explain how it is, how it works.

Interestingly, he starts it out with another metaphor, this allusion to the offering of the firstfruits of grain, which is mentioned in Numbers 15:17-21. When the Israelites harvested their grain from the field, they were supposed to, of course, take it and grind it down in the meal. But they were supposed to give a firstfruits offering to God from this. And so what they would do is that they would take some of this meal and they would make it into a loaf, a lump that was going to be made into bread. They would fire it up into bread. But before they did that, they were supposed to take some of that out and give it to the priest as an offering to God as the firstfruit.

So Paul says, "Okay, if that lump that they gave to the priest as a firstfruit is holy, doesn't that mean that the original large lump that they took it out of is also holy?" Because it is part of the firstfruits offering, they just gave part of it to the priest as an act of offering, of sacrifice. And so he said the same thing is working here in this metaphor of a plant. If the root is holy, then the branches are holy, or if the branches are holy, the root is holy. So we have got to understand that he is making this big metaphor about the whole being holy as well as the smaller part.

This sets up the teaching that he is going to give us there at the end of chapter 11. The root he refers to, of course, is Israel, but it may be much more specific. Some people say that the root is all the Old Testament saints combined, they are the root of this tree. But it is probably even more specific than that because he goes on in verse 28 (which we have not gotten to), to mention the fathers. Probably he means Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and if we are going to bring it down to one person in particular, that is, the root other than Jesus Christ, it would be Abraham.

This is backed up by chapter 4, verse 16. We will not go there. I will just mention that Paul writes in that place that Abraham, who is the father of us all, meaning he is the father of the faithful. As a matter of fact, in the Old Testament, we are told to go back to the stone that we were hewn from and he mentioned specifically there, Abraham and Sarah. So the root idea may be Abraham himself. That is from whom all Israel sprang, if we want to use that part of the metaphor.

So he is saying the Gentiles enjoy their place now, only because of the foundation set by the root of Israel. And secondly, because of the iniquity and unbelief of most Israelites. The Gentiles have only been given this great opportunity because Abraham was faithful and because most of Israel was unfaithful. It is kind of an interesting way of talking about it and making them understand that it is because of both good and bad things that they were given this opportunity.

But he goes on to warn them that now, even though they are in this good position under God, they are actually in a very precarious position under God, because they must maintain their belief or God will break them off the root too, just like He did Israel. So if they want to continue in God's goodness, they must endure in faith to the end, otherwise they are going to suffer His severity just as ancient Israel did. They will be cut off just like they were. God is not going to change the rules in midstream here. They are going to have to play by the same rules that Israel did. And that is, they must believe and they must keep the law.

By the way, this happens to be another argument against the very pernicious doctrine of eternal security. Where Paul says very plainly and positively, *you will be cut off* if they do not live in faith. So a person can fall away.

Now on Israel's part, God says that He will re-graft them into the root at the proper time. And if God could graft wild Gentiles, as it were, into Israel's root, something that the Jews thought was extremely difficult, if not unnatural, then how easy will it be for God to reinsert Israel into their original natural place? It would be easy for Him. He will just put them right back into their natural environment, if you will. So he is telling the Gentiles there that there is no reason for boasting, no reason for feeling superior over Israel. Instead, they should feel joy and gratitude that God has even included them in His Family because His original plan, if you will, was Israel. Those are the ones that He chose out of all the nations of the earth. Not that He changed His plan. He was always going to do this. But he wants them to see that Israel was His firstborn, if you will.

Let us go and finish this chapter starting in verse 25.

Romans 11:25-36 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. 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; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins." Concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election, they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. 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! "For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?" "Or who has first given to Him, and it shall be repaid to him?" For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

Paul considered what he was teaching the church here about Israel's restoration to be a mystery. That is, it requires divinely-given insight. It requires revelation. It requires the application of the Holy Spirit to understand what he is talking about. It is not something that you could get just by reading and not having any background or whatever, as well as the Holy Spirit, to understand it. He is telling us that God opens the eyes of His elect as opposed to what He did to Israel. He blinded them. So He is giving us favor even in this, that we can understand what He is doing here.

No matter how it looks to someone on the outside, God will work to save all Israel, even though it may look that Israel is condemned and that they do not have a chance, God will make it happen because God is God. God is all-powerful and sovereign, He can make anything happen that He wishes to happen. And He can even change the mind of Israelites. That is the toughest thing in the entire world to do. They have such stiff necks and think they are so good and proud and wonderful people, and they will have to be once again humbled very terribly in order to get the point.

So, God did not fail in His purposes at all. Israel failed in its faithfulness. So, once God has brought a sufficient number of Gentiles into His Family (that is what is said there at the end of verse 25), then He will pivot to restore and save Israel until He has fulfilled that number too, whatever that number happens to be. No one knows how many that will be.

What does "all Israel" mean? We have gotten down to this point, "And all Israel will be saved." Yay, wonderful. But what does that mean? What does "all Israel" mean? Scholars have several ideas, but one thing we know that is it does not mean every last Israelite. It cannot mean every last Israelite. For instance, Jesus says there in John 17:12, that He lost the "son of perdition" and Judas Iscariot was an Israelite. So right there it cannot be all Israel. And there are others who will sear their conscience with sin or reject God's offer in other ways.

The answer that seems to work best is that Paul means not all national Israel, but instead, all the elect of Israel. All those whom God has chosen to be part of Israel. That accords with his affirmation in verse 29 that God's calling is irrevocable. That is, He does not regret those ones that He has decided to call. God will not withdraw His calling from those who He has purposed to call. But remember, calling is not salvation. All along, Paul has focused on the true Israel, the children of the promise, those called in Isaac, those who are the seed of Abraham. He has been focused, Jesus has been focused. As we saw in Part 5, His focus was on the New Israel, on the Israel of God.

So God will save all those whom He has chosen as His sons and daughters. Jesus even said that in the gospels, that He will not lose anybody that God has put into His hands, except the son of perdition, which was prophesied. There may be many more among Israel that He will call to salvation. But the thing that we need to understand is that will happen only at the right time. When that happens, He will call them spiritually as He has called us, and He will run them through the same paces that we go through in our converted lives.

Like us, they will have to *choose* to believe, they will have to *choose* to grow in grace and knowledge and character. They will have to *choose* to overcome and produce fruit that is pleasing to God and they will have to *choose* and

also do it. That is, endure to the end, just as we do. They are not going to be saved any other different way just because they are Israelites. They will go through the same process we do.

Paul finishes in Romans 11 by praising God for His salvation, for His wisdom, and how He works all this out or we will work it all out. And perhaps he was thinking of Jeremiah 31, verses 13 and 14, which is about the Second Exodus.

Jeremiah 31:13-14 [He says here, after this happens] "Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old, together; for I will turn their mourning to joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice rather than sorrow. I will satiate the soul of the priests with abundance, and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness," says the Lord.

So God, as I mentioned before, makes lemonade out of lemons. God turns disaster, the disaster of Israel, into joy. Out of darkness, He makes light to shine. That is just His way. I have said this before, something I stole from J. R. R. Tolkien. "He is a God of eucatastrophe." Literally, a good catastrophe. That is, transforming tragedy into wonderful goodness. And for that, He gets all the glory.