



Lesson 17

And So All Israel Will Be Saved Romans 11

*“a partial hardening has happened to **Israel** until the fullness of the **Gentiles** has come in; and so all Israel will be **saved**;*

Romans 11.25-26

Paul may have had great sorry for his Jewish kinsmen (9.1-3), he may have prayed to God for their salvation (10.1), but things were not looking good for most of them. They were lost, but their condition was their own doing and blame could not be laid at the feet of God. They may have been God’s elect people, but they had pursued a righteousness of works rather than the righteousness of faith (9.30-32). They had heard the message of Christ, but they had remained disobedient and obstinate (10.17-21).

Was that it? Had God rejected His people? That’s the issue Paul deals with in this chapter. The surprising answer is found in vs. 26, “and so all Israel will be saved.” What does Paul mean by this? Some, including most premillennialists, assert that before the end of time (or in conjunction with the end of time), all of fleshly Israel will be saved. This verse is used as a primary proof text of their position. But, is that what Paul was saying? Paul has already stated that a remnant was what would be saved (9.27) and he’ll make the same case for a remnant of Israel in the opening verses of chapter 11. Furthermore, Paul has stated in 9.6-7 that, “they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham’s descendants.” Finally, the true Israel is comprised of those who are circumcised in the heart (2.28-29).

What this passage does is expound on how God’s great promise to Abraham was fulfilled. You’ll recall that God promised, “in you all the families of the earth will be blessed,” (Gen. 12.3). Paul states in Eph. 3.4-6 that the “mystery” was how the Gentiles could become “fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” In Romans 11 Paul elaborates on how this occurred, showing how remarkable and improbable God’s plan was! This was how all Israel would be saved!

The Remnant Of Grace (Vss. 1-6)

Romans 11:1–6 (NASB95)

1I 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.

2God 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?

3“Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE.”

4But what is the divine response to him? “I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL.”

5In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to

God's gracious choice.

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

1. Paul's response to the question, "God has not rejected His people, has He?" is easy to follow in this opening paragraph: of course He hasn't! Paul is living proof that some Jews (a remnant) had accepted the gospel message and put their faith in Christ.
2. Paul's quotation from 1Kings 19 amplifies the notion of there being a remnant among the Jews. In the days of Elijah, the vast majority of Israel had turned to Baal, but a remnant of 7000 remained true to Jehovah God. So, while the vast majority of Jews had rejected Christ, there was still a remnant of grace who believed in Him.

Israel's Hardening (Vss. 7-10)

Romans 11:7-10 (NASB95)

7What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;

8just 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."

9And David says, "LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP, AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM.

10"LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT, AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER."

1. The elect remnant (i.e. those who put their faith in Christ) had found God's grace. But what of the rest? They were hardened. This is not a new thought as Paul had already reflected on how the majority of Jews had stumbled by pursuing a righteousness based on works (9.30-33).
2. Cottrell has some good thoughts on the idea of Israel being hardened: The following facts concerning this hardening will emerge in the course of Paul's argument, but may profitably be summed up before we go any further. (1) Whatever the nature of this hardening, it is not the cause of anyone's unbelief. The only ones hardened are those who have already rejected God's righteousness in Christ. (2) Whatever the nature of the hardening, it is not irrevocable and final. Those hardened are still able to come to faith, as the next point indicates. (3) God's purpose for this hardening is to use it as a means of converting many Gentiles, which in turn will be a means of converting many of the hardened Jews themselves. Thus paradoxically the ultimate goal and result of the hardening is the salvation of those who are hardened! The sequence of events is as follows: the bulk of the Jews reject the gospel; they are hardened; as a consequence Gentiles are saved; as a consequence of this, many of the hardened Jews are made jealous and are saved; and as a consequence of this, even more Gentiles are saved!

The Results Of Israel's Hardening (Vss. 11-24)

Romans 11:11-24 (NASB95)

11I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their trans-

gression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

12Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!

13But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry,

14if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them.

15For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

16If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too.

17But 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,

18do 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.

19You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.”

20Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear;

21for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either.

22Behold 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.

23And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

24For 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?

1. This section begins with another question: “they did not stumble so as to fall, did they?” Israel had stumbled in rejecting Christ, but was this permanent? Was their salvation impossible? Absolutely not! They could be saved and Paul reveals how all is working according to God’s wondrous plans.
2. Paul’s basic argument in this text is simple: the Jews’ rejection of Christ had opened the way of righteousness to the Gentiles (It’s probable that Christ’s crucifixion is in view here). Now that the Gentiles are being saved, the Jews may be moved to jealousy (i.e. longing for the relationship with God that the Gentiles now enjoy) and will thus be saved.
3. A few notes on the text:
 - Paul speaks of the Jews “fulfillment” in vs. 12. This word is also translated as “fullness” and is used as proof by some that all Jews will ultimately be saved. But one will note that the same term is used of the Gentiles in vs. 25. Paul’s point is that the salvation of the Jewish remnant is a part of God’s plan.

- Paul speaks of the first piece of dough and the root being holy in vs. 16, but he does not define it. It seems most likely that Paul has Abraham in mind, specifically the promise that was made to him (note vs. 28 where Paul says the Jewish people are still beloved “for the sake of the fathers”). Thus, in the tree illustration that follows the tree stands for God’s people, while the root of represents Abraham, the father of the faithful (4.16). Some of the branches had been trimmed (Jews), some had been grafted in (Gentiles).
- The tree illustration in vss. 17-24 is an important one because it shows the standard used for branches being grafted in or cut off: faith! Calvinistic notions of irresistible grace and perseverance of the saints cannot stand up to the scrutiny of this text where Paul says the determining factor for receiving mercy is a person’s faith and that if a person ceases in his faith he is lost.

So All Israel Will Be Saved (Vss. 25-32)

Romans 11:25–32 (NASB95)

25For 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;

26and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.”

27“THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.”

28From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God’s choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers;

29for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

30For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience,

31so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy.

32For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.

1. As we noted at the start of this lesson, the mystery was how the Gentiles would become part of God’s people (see Eph. 3.4-6). Here Paul makes clear that the mystery involved the partial hardening of the Jews so that the “fullness” of the Gentiles could come in.
2. Now we can define what is meant by “all Israel” in vs. 26 because Paul has already defined it for us. The “all Israel” that will be saved is the fullness of the Jews (vs. 12) + the fullness of the Gentiles (vs. 26). In other words, the full number of Jews and Gentiles that would place their faith in Christ, who would circumcise their hearts (2.28-29).
3. So, even though it seemed to Gentile Christians that the Jews were their enemies, they should reflect on the fact that it was the Jews’ rejection of Jesus that paved the way for their salvation. Furthermore, the Jews were still loved by God since it was to their fathers (i.e. Abraham) that God made His promises. Those promises would not be revoked, so if any Jew would turn to Christ in faith, he would be saved.

Glory To God! (Vss. 33-36)

Romans 11:33–36 (NASB95)

33Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

34For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR?

35Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN?

36For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

1. Paul ends these thoughts, and the major theological section of the letter, with an exclamation of praise and wonder. Who could possibly foresee how God would save not only the Jews, but the Gentiles too? Who could know that the Jews' rejection of Jesus would bring about salvation for the Gentiles? Who could know that the Gentiles coming to God would provoke some of the Jews to reconsider and come back to God? Who would know that this was how "all Israel" would be saved?
2. The concluding verse is very relevant: "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever." Given the wondrous way that God has revealed His grace to both Jew and Gentile, He is certainly worthy of glory. As we will see in the concluding chapters, that glory is expressed in our actions.