

PURITAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE APOSTASY OF ISRAEL AND THE MISSION TO THE GENTILES:

EXEGESIS OF ROMANS 11:1-24

MISSIONAL EXEGESIS PAPER SUBMITTED TO DR. DeVries FOR MISSIONS
IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT CLASS

BY
MICHAEL M. DEWALT

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Translation: Romans 11

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1 Λέγω οὖν, μὴ ἀπώσατο ὁ θεὸς τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ; μὴ γένοιτο· καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ Ἰσραηλίτης εἰμί, ἐκ σπέρματος Ἀβραάμ, φυλῆς Βενιαμίν.

Now I say, “Did God reject His people? May it never be! For also I am an Israelite, from the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.”

2 οὐκ ἀπώσατο ὁ θεὸς τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ὃν προέγνω. ἢ οὐκ οἴδατε ἐν Ἠλίας τί λέγει ἡ γραφή, ὡς ἐντυγχάνει τῷ θεῷ κατὰ τοῦ Ἰσραήλ;

God did not reject his people who he knew beforehand. Or do you not know in the story about Elijah? What does the Scripture say, as he intercedes to God against Israel?

ἐν Ἠλίᾳ – instrumental ἐν – see BDF pp.117-118.

3 κύριε, τοὺς προφῆτας σου ἀπέκτειναν, τὰ θυσιαστήριά σου κατέσκαψαν, καὶ γὰρ ὑπελείφθην μόνος καὶ ζητοῦσιν τὴν ψυχὴν μου.

“Lord, they killed your prophets, destroyed your altar and I was left alone and they are seeking my soul.”

4 ἀλλὰ τί λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ χρηματισμός; κατέλιπον ἐμαυτῷ ἑπτακισχιλίους ἄνδρας, οἵτινες οὐκ ἔκαμψαν γόνυ τῇ Βάαλ.

But what does the reply say to him? I have left to myself seven thousand men, who did not bend the knee to Baal.”

5 οὕτως οὖν καὶ ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ λείμμα κατ’ ἐκλογὴν χάριτος γέγονεν·

Now, in this manner also in the present time, there has been a remnant because of gracious election.

κατ’ – it can function as causal in this case (see BDAG 5δ).

χάριτος – probably as genitive of description called attributive genitive.

6 εἰ δὲ χάριτι, οὐκέτι ἐξ ἔργων, ἐπεὶ ἡ χάρις οὐκέτι γίνεται χάρις.

And if it is by grace, then no longer is from works, otherwise, grace is no longer grace

7 Τί οὖν; ὃ ἐπιζητεῖ Ἰσραήλ, τοῦτο οὐκ ἐπέτυχεν, ἡ δὲ ἐκλογὴ ἐπέτυχεν· οἱ δὲ λοιποὶ ἐπωρώθησαν,

What now? What Israel is seeking, it did not obtain, but the chosen obtained. And the rest ones were made stubborn.

8 καθὼς γέγραπται· ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ὁ θεὸς πνεῦμα κατανύξεως, ὀφθαλμοὺς τοῦ μὴ βλέπειν καὶ ὦτα τοῦ μὴ ἀκούειν, ἕως τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας.

Just as it is written, “God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they may not see and ears so that they may not hear, until the present day.”

τοῦ μη + infinitive = result.

Cf. Romans 3:4 and 10:15 for the use I believe to be right in dealing with καθὼς

9 καὶ Δαυὶδ λέγει· γενηθήτω ἡ τράπεζα αὐτῶν εἰς παγίδα καὶ εἰς θήραν καὶ εἰς σκάνδαλον καὶ εἰς ἀνταπόδομα αὐτοῖς,

And David says, “let their table become snare and trap and stumbling block and retribution to them.”

Γίνομαι + εἰς functions as a predicate nominative – BDAG εἰς 8αα.

10 σκοτισθήτωσαν οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτῶν τοῦ μὴ βλέπειν καὶ τὸν νῶτον αὐτῶν διὰ παντὸς σύγκαμψον.

Let their eyes be darkened so that they may not see and bend their back forever.

11 Λέγω οὖν, μὴ ἔπταισαν ἵνα πέσωσιν; μὴ γένοιτο· ἀλλὰ τῷ αὐτῶν παραπτώματι ἡ σωτηρία τοῖς ἔθνεσιν εἰς τὸ παραζηλῶσαι αὐτούς.

Now I say, “Did they not stumble in order that they might fall? May never be! But through their sin, salvation was to the gentiles in order to make them jealous.”

εἰς τὸ + Infinitive = purpose.

12 εἰ δὲ τὸ παράπτωμα αὐτῶν πλοῦτος κόσμος καὶ τὸ ἥττημα αὐτῶν πλοῦτος ἔθνων, πόσῳ μᾶλλον τὸ πλήρωμα αὐτῶν.

But if their sin was the riches of the world and their failure the riches of the gentiles, by how much more is their fulness?

13 ὑμῖν δὲ λέγω τοῖς ἔθνεσιν· ἐφ’ ὅσον μὲν οὖν εἰμι ἐγὼ ἐθνῶν ἀπόστολος, τὴν διακονίαν μου δοξάζω,

But I am speaking to you, Gentiles. To the degree that indeed now I am an apostle of the Gentiles, I glorify my ministry.

ἐφ’ ὅσον – marker of number or measure – BDAG ἐπὶ 13.

14 εἴ πως παραζηλώσω μου τὴν σάρκα καὶ σώσω τινὰς ἐξ αὐτῶν.

If somehow I might make jealous my flesh and then I will save some out of them.

παραζηλώσω ... σώσω – subjunctive followed by future to indicate some further consequence. (see BDF paragraph 369 (3)).

15 εἰ γὰρ ἡ ἀποβολὴ αὐτῶν καταλλαγὴ κόσμου, τίς ἡ πρόσλημψις εἰ μὴ ζωὴ ἐκ νεκρῶν;

For if their rejection is reconciliation of the world, what is the acceptance if not life from the dead?

16 εἰ δὲ ἡ ἀπαρχὴ ἁγία, καὶ τὸ φύραμα· καὶ εἰ ἡ ῥίζα ἁγία, καὶ οἱ κλάδοι.

But if the fruit is holy, so is the lump. And if the root is holy, so are the branches.

17 Εἰ δέ τινες τῶν κλάδων ἐξεκλάσθησαν, σὺ δὲ ἀγριέλαιος ὢν ἐνεκεντρίσθης ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ συγκοινωνὸς τῆς ῥίζης τῆς πιότητος τῆς ἐλαίας ἐγένου,

But if some of the branches were broken off, but you, although being a wild olive tree, were grafted among them and sharer of the root with its oily riches of the olive tree

ἀγριέλαιος ὢν – concessive participle.

πιότητος – πιότης – “the root with its rich sap of the cultivated olive tree” (BDAG, p. 814). And it is a attributive genitive.

18 μὴ κατακαυχῶ τῶν κλάδων· εἰ δὲ κατακαυχᾶσαι οὐ σὺ τὴν ῥίζαν βαστάζεις ἀλλὰ ἡ ῥίζα σέ.
Do not boast over the branches. But if you are to boast, you do not support the root, but the root you.

19 ἔρεῖς οὖν· ἐξεκλάσθησαν κλάδοι ἵνα ἐγὼ ἐγκεντρισθῶ.

Now you will say, “the branches were broken off in order that I might be grafted.”

20 καλῶς· τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ ἐξεκλάσθησαν, σὺ δὲ τῇ πίστει ἔστηκας. μὴ ὑψηλὰ φρόνει ἀλλὰ φοβοῦ·

Well said! They were broken off on account of unbelief, but you have stood by faith. Do not be proud but fear!

τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ ... τῇ πίστει – causal dative (see BDF 196 (1)). But maybe the faith of the gentiles may be rendered as instrumental dative since it is a relationship with God.

21 εἰ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τῶν κατὰ φύσιν κλάδων οὐκ ἐφείσατο, [μή πως] οὐδὲ σοῦ φείσεται.

For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither He will spare you.

22 ἴδε οὖν χρηστότητα καὶ ἀποτομίαν θεοῦ· ἐπὶ μὲν τοὺς πεσόντας ἀποτομία, ἐπὶ δὲ σὲ χρηστότης θεοῦ, ἐὰν ἐπιμένῃς τῇ χρηστότητι, ἐπεὶ καὶ σὺ ἐκκοπήσῃ.

Therefore, see the kindness and severity of God. Indeed, severity upon those who have fallen, and kindness of God upon you, if you continue in kindness, otherwise you also will be cut off.

23 ἀκκεῖνοι δέ, ἐὰν μὴ ἐπιμένωσιν τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ, ἐγκεντρισθήσονται· δυνατὸς γάρ ἐστιν ὁ θεὸς πάλιν ἐγκεντρίσαι αὐτούς.

And those also, if they do not remain in unbelief, then they will be grafted. For God is powerful to graft them again.

24 εἰ γὰρ σὺ ἐκ τῆς κατὰ φύσιν ἐξεκόπης ἀγριελαίου καὶ παρὰ φύσιν ἐνεκεντρίσθης εἰς καλλιέλαιον, πόσω μᾶλλον οὗτοι οἱ κατὰ φύσιν ἐγκεντρισθήσονται τῇ ἰδίᾳ ἐλαίᾳ.

For if you, from what is by nature a wild olive tree, were cut off and contrary to nature you were grafted into cultivated olive tree, how much more they who are natural branches will be grafted in their own olive tree.

25 Οὐ γὰρ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο, ἵνα μὴ ᾦτε [παρ'] ἑαυτοῖς φρόνιμοι, ὅτι πώρωςις ἀπὸ μέρους τῷ Ἰσραὴλ γέγονεν ἄχρι οὗ τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰσέλθῃ

For I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, about this mystery, in order that you might not be wise to yourselves, because hardening has come partially to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles might enter.

ἄχρι οὗ + subjunctive = “until.”

26 καὶ οὕτως πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ σωθήσεται, καθὼς γέγραπται· ἥξει ἐκ Σιών ὁ ῥυόμενος, ἀποστρέψει ἀσεβείας ἀπὸ Ἰακώβ.

And in this way all Israel will be saved, just as it is written, “The rescuer has come from Zion, He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

27 καὶ αὕτη αὐτοῖς ἡ παρ' ἐμοῦ διαθήκη, ὅταν ἀφέλωμαι τὰς ἀμαρτίας αὐτῶν.

And this is the covenant made/given by me to them., when I take away their sins.

παρ' ἐμου – see BDAG παρὰ A3b.

28 κατὰ μὲν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἐχθροὶ δι' ὑμᾶς, κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἐκλογὴν ἀγαπητοὶ διὰ τοὺς πατέρας·

Indeed according to the gospel, enemies because of you, but according to the election, beloved ones because of the fathers.

29 ἀμεταμέλητα γὰρ τὰ χαρίσματα καὶ ἡ κλήσις τοῦ θεοῦ.

For the gift and the call of God are irrevocable

30 ὥσπερ γὰρ ὑμεῖς ποτε ἠπειθήσατε τῷ θεῷ, νῦν δὲ ἠλεήθητε τῇ τούτων ἀπειθείᾳ,

For just as you once disobeyed God and now received mercy on account of their disobedience.

τῇ ἀπειθείᾳ - causal dative (see BDF 196).

31 οὕτως καὶ οὗτοι νῦν ἠπειθήσαν τῷ ὑμετέρῳ ἐλέει, ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ [νῦν] ἐλεηθῶσιν.

So also they have now disobeyed on account of mercy, in order that you might also receive mercy.

τῷ ὑμετέρῳ - causal dative (see BDF 196).

32 συνέκλεισεν γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τοὺς πάντας εἰς ἀπειθειαν, ἵνα τοὺς πάντας ἐλεήσῃ.

For God shut up all to disobedience, in order that He might have mercy on all.

33 Ὡς βάθος πλούτου καὶ σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως θεοῦ· ὡς ἀνεξεραύνητα τὰ κρίματα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀνεξιχνίαστοι αἱ ὁδοὶ αὐτοῦ.

O the depth of the riches and of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and inscrutable his ways!

34 τίς γὰρ ἔγνω νοῦν κυρίου; ἢ τίς σύμβουλος αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο;

For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?

35 ἢ τίς προέδωκεν αὐτῷ, καὶ ἀνταποδοθήσεται αὐτῷ;

Or who has given to Him beforehand, and will be repayed by Him?

36 ὅτι ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα· αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν.

Because from Him and through Him and for Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever, amen.¹

¹ A special thanks to my seminary brother, Tiago Baia for his time spent in helping me in Translate Romans 11.

Outline: Romans 11, the Apostasy of Israel for the Mission of the Gentiles

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Introduction

When considering the Book of Romans, it is evident that it is filled with theology as it focuses on topics including Election, Perseverance, Justification, Predestination, and Calling. But when coming to Romans 11 in particular, theology becomes even more specific. This chapter looks at the following: Why Israel is broken off; Is there a difference between the Gentiles and Israel or are they the same?; What is the “root” in verse 16?; Why exactly did God harden the nation of Israel?; Why does Paul quote Elijah and David?; Is the church today making the Jews jealous or acting much like the same?; Is there another chance for the nation of Israel?; How does Israel’s disobedience lead to the Gentiles’ mercy? These are just some of the major questions brought out in the text. Even the “Doctor” – Martyn Lloyd-Jones – saw this hardship while dealing with this text, and as he starts his commentary on Romans 11 he says, “*In many ways I would say that it is much more difficult than either chapter 9 and 10.*”² However, what happens in these central chapters (Romans 9-11) sheds much light on the purpose behind Israel’s apostasy as a nation, and the mission of God going forth to the Gentiles. In all of the theology that that is packed into these very important chapters of Romans one question should come to thought, “Did God make it that His own nation (Israel) would apostatize from Him?” And if that answer is yes, then “Why would God harden His own nation, so that they would do this?”

² D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: Chapter 11*. (Banner of Truth Trust: Carlisle, 1998), p. 1. Cf. Pages 1-6 for D. M. Lloyd-Jones’s general introduction on the nation of Israel before dealing critically with Romans 11.

When dealing with Romans 11 it is good to keep these questions in the back of your mind, especially while looking at the subject of Israel's hardening bringing forth the gospel to the Gentiles. Dr. George Eldon Ladd brings the point of this chapter together when he states in his New Testament Theology:

"The rejection of Christ by Israel and its subsequent fall was not a mere accident of history but a factor in God's redemptive purpose - an event in *Heilsgeschichte*. Even in the rejection of Israel, God had a purpose: that by Israel's fall, salvation might come to the Gentiles (Rom.11:11). Then Paul makes a key statement: "Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness?" (11:12).³

How does a Calvinist explain something like this? How can one minute person say that God does not wish for apostasy (His people to leave Him), and yet the next minute say that God Himself made His people apostatized from Him?

Romans 11 helps to shed light on this theological issue.

³ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*. (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1993), p. 607.

Exposition

THE APOSTASY AND REMNANT OF A HARDENED ISRAEL (1-10)

The Election of a Remnant from Israel (1-6)

Psalm 94:14-15 states:

“For the LORD will not forsake his people; he will not abandon his heritage; for justice will return to the righteous, and all the upright in heart will follow it.”

Romans 11: 7-10 states:

“What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, as it is written, God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day. And David says, Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever.”

When dealing with Romans 11, a question arises and stands out: How could God possibly allow the apostasy of His own physical nation, Israel, let alone do it Himself, when He had promised beforehand to never forsake His people? There seems to be quite a contradiction between Scriptures, because how can Paul say in Romans 11:7-10 that Israel was hardened into apostasy when David writes in Psalm 94:14-15 about how the LORD's relationship with His people will never be forsaken? The answer to this is actually rather easy, in that God's plan for the redemption of His people throughout history included more than physical Israel. Paul has given us the answer already in Romans 9:6-7:

“But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but through Isaac shall your offspring be named.”

Not all of “Israel” is from the actual physical nation of Israel. But how does that help answer our question? The answer lies in the fact that God's people are not held to a

specific ethnic group, but are all of mankind. This means that a Gentile can reap the benefits of the gospel by becoming a believer and obtain the same benefits that were promised to Abraham and given to Isaac. In God's redemptive historical plan, He worked in such a way that the apostasy of the nation of Israel would bring forth the mission of the gospel to the Gentiles. To put it in the simplest way possible – to fulfill God's plan for the gospel to go forth to all the nations in order to bring in all of His elect (both physical and spiritual Israel) He had to harden His chosen nation of people, so that they would be made jealous and watch the mission of God proclaim the gospel to all of His Israel – that is, His people.

Remember that here we are looking at Israel's apostasy (Romans 9:20-10:21) and how that sent forth a mission to the Gentiles, and not the main thrust of Romans 11, which I believe to be about Israel's future. When coming to the beginning of Romans 11 Paul, as he does many times throughout the book of Romans, begins chapter 11 with a question: "*I ask, then, has God rejected his people?*" He then answers by saying, "*By no means!*" The importance of this is that one can understand that although Israel as a nation has apostatized, they still have a future. Their rejection of God, the Son of God, and the gospel has not brought them to an end for all time, but has blinded them for the time being in order that the gospel can be sent forth to all of the nations.

Paul starts the chapter with God's rejection/Israel's apostasy for several reasons:

- There is a future for Israel
- Paul identifying himself as a Jew
- God does not chase away His people

These are each important, as Paul will continue throughout the rest of the chapter to talk about these subjects. He looks at the first issue, assuring that there is still a future for Israel after the Gentiles have come in. Secondly, Paul identifies himself as a Jew coming from the seed of Abraham, to explain to his audience that one who may still be a Jew today can come to the gospel and partake of the salvation in Christ Jesus. Thirdly, Paul wants it to be made known that even though Israel is hardened and jealous of what the Gentiles have in the gospel, God does not forget “*His people whom He foreknew*.” It is of utmost importance to understand here that Paul does not say this of Israel as a nation or a race, but it is Israel’s *elect* that are foreknown. This is important because Paul is not referring to the whole nation that had apostatized, saying that they will all be saved; rather, he speaks of a remnant of those who are God’s “*people whom He foreknew*” that will come back to Him for the Jewish race.⁴ This is the same word ‘foreknew’ which Paul used earlier on, in Romans 8:26: “*For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers*.” We know that Paul is only referring to those that are the “foreknown” as the remnant because instead of talking about the nation as a whole he goes directly into giving the example of Elijah and the remnant of God’s people there.⁵

Paul chooses this unique example of Elijah to show both the apostasy of Israel as a whole, and also those whom were a part of a believing remnant at Elijah’s time.

⁴ Douglas Moo, *NICNT: The Epistles to the Romans*. (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1996), p. 674-5 for there he deals with the importance of why Paul refers to “the foreknew” instead of continuing to use “Israel.” Also see Charles Hodge, *Romans*. (The Banner of Truth Trust: Carlisle, 1972), p. 354 for his dealing with the different senses of the term “foreknew.”

⁵ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1987), p. 398-405 addresses the importance behind Paul’s use of Elijah and Israel for his example of a remnant of Israel that is left.

Paul quotes Elijah's prayer as an example to the Romans – *"Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life"* – so that the Romans and today's Gentile believers would understand that the apostasy of Israel was planned, just as all things had been before, by the hand of God. As God had saved a remnant of Israel during the time of Elijah, He has saved a select number of the nation of Israel today; however, they had to be hardened because of the plan God had for all of His people – not just the actual physical nation of Israel, but all of Israel, His children. Similar to Elijah's time, Paul was writing during the worst of times, when Israel was covered in apostasy; the whole nation had basically fallen away, left God, disobeyed the Law, made their own legalistic laws, lost the blessing of God, and worshipped themselves more than God. They had forgotten what God had done for them, they had forgotten their heritage from Abraham, they had forgotten their merciful God that brought them out of Egypt, and the blessings God that gave them (their land, their King, etc.) as they so wanted. The people of Elijah's time had apostatized, and it was no different now; therefore, Paul is showing that Israel's apostasy as a nation happened for a reason – it was the plan of God, and it had to happen for the gospel to leave them as a nation and go forth in its' mission to all the nations – that is, including the Gentiles.⁶

The subject of Israel's apostasy here enables Paul to bring forth his thoughts and explain that the nation of Israel had been hardened by God for a purpose. Their apostasy shows that they had totally left what they had once professed; that those who had served the one and true God now – at this point in redemptive history – left the true

⁶ Cf. For a proper view on God's decree of the Gospel to the Gentiles, Robert Haldane, *Geneva Series of Commentaries: Romans*. (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1958), p. 523-5.

God who had done so much for them and kept them time and time again. They had become this way due to repudiating the faith they had once professed as a nation.

We see in verses 4-5 that God had saved some from apostasy: *“I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal. So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.”* The point here is that in the same way that He had saved some from apostasy before, He is doing so again in order to remain gracious to His nation. Those who are a part of the remnant are of the elected grace in which God gives His people, as it says in verse 6, *“But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.”* But for those that are not a part of the remnant of Israel, what happens? It is their apostasy which has blinded the nation as a whole and therefore they no longer see the gospel. It is this purpose that brings about the difference between the Old and New Covenant, as finally here the last apostasy of Israel happens, which brings total hardness upon the nation until *“the fullness of the Gentiles has come in”* (Romans 11:25).

The Hardening of Israel (7-10)

Paul explains as bluntly as one could exactly what the apostasy of Israel is for. Since Israel as a whole nation failed to seek God and apostatized from Him, only His remnant will obtain it; but far worse is that the rest *“were hardened,”* Paul says in Romans 11:7.

Israel of the flesh sought salvation in their own way – a way of Law-keeping only, salvation by their own works of righteousness – and they constantly made rules and regulations trying to seek salvation in that way, no matter how many times God continued to save them time after time. They tried to seek their Messiah and obtain

salvation by their works of the Law, and never once came to the understanding that they could not become right with God by the Law only. Their own works of the Law could not bring them near – not even close! – to God, and seeking salvation this way was due to the lack of knowledge Israel had because of their unbelief. But then even worse, when they left God altogether they no longer had a chance of coming to the gospel at all anymore, for finally in God's plan the time was too late – they were now hardened and cold to Christ. Here it is crucial to mention Paul's thought from Romans 10:3, as when looking at Israel's seeking of righteousness he states: *"For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness."* Israel's hope in obtaining salvation in the Law ended in the Lord Himself blinding them – because of their sin – from His blessing, because of His overall plan for the gospel. What that exactly is, is something we will deal with later in this chapter; but for now it is important to look at what Paul quotes in verses 8-10: *"As it is written, God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see, and ears that would not hear, down to this very day."* Here Paul is bringing together the text of Isaiah 29:10 and Deuteronomy 29:4, saying that God is the one that has hardened Israel so they would apostatize and not see nor hear of the truth in Christ – that is, the gospel. This is why Israel failed in what it was to seek; in their apostasy they were blinded because of God's plan for not only His nation, but for *all* of His people.

Paul uses a prayer from King David (from Psalm 69:22-23) to show their apostasy, saying, *"Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever."* For what purpose does Paul have in quoting this from David to the

Romans? It is to show the judgment which is to come upon God's chosen people for their sin and unbelief of Christ. Thomas Schreiner makes this important point when he states: "*Paul strengthens the emphasis on the activity of God by inserting the phrase 'spirit of stupor.'*"⁷ The significant meaning Paul is getting across to the Romans is that this is God's doing, this is God's plan, and this was always foreknown. Israel did not want to hear, see, nor do the Word of God, and because of their apostasy, judgment has now come upon them as a nation – now their eyes are literally blind to the gospel and they are bent from the truth of Christ. God turned the blessings He had given to Israel into the table of blindness and bitterness towards Christ because of their apostasy from His Word. What Israel had left was the very thing that God had given His people to follow – the Word of God; the actual words in which He spoke for His fame and His glory – and they turned their backs toward that, which is something God then used for their own damnation as He kept their ears and eyes closed to the coming Christ. Schreiner makes another key point here about Paul's dealing of Psalm 69, saying the following:

"The very fact that Ps. 69 is quoted is significant since this Psalm is often used or alluded to in the NT in relationship to the life, ministry, and death of Jesus Christ (Matt. 27:34, 48; Mark 3:21; 15:23, 36; Luke 13:35; 23:36; John 2:17; 15:25; 19:29; Acts 1:20; Rom. 15:23; Heb. 11:26; cf. Also Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5, 16:1)." ⁸

It is extremely thought provoking that David, when saying this in Psalm 69, would use it as a curse against his enemies, but then here in Romans 11 we see Paul using it against David's own lineage – the nation of Israel. Even more interesting is that Paul is using these Old Testament Scriptures to tell the Romans of the fulfillment in them. But what fulfillment, and where? Paul seems to be using David's quote to tell the Romans

⁷ Thomas Schreiner, *ECNT: Romans*. Baker: Grand Rapids, 1998), p. 587.

⁸ Schreiner, *ECNT: Romans*. p.588.

that the Jews had already not acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ and that their apostasy had already begun in the fullness as they as a whole nation have apostatized.⁹ Paul's prayer here is a prayer that was once used by David as a prayer for shelter from Israel's enemies, and is now used as a fulfillment of Paul's prayer of God's judgment upon Israel's apostasy as a nation. How fitting it would be for Paul to expound upon the prophecy of Isaiah 6:9-10:

"And he said, 'Go, and say to this people: "Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive." Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.'"

The words of old now have come true, and Israel's misunderstanding is being revealed by Paul to the Romans. Jesus Christ Himself spoke to His very own people saying in Matthew 13:13-16:

"This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: 'You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.' But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear."

Only Christ's disciples seem to be part of the remnant that could see and could hear Christ, but the time had come for Israel's apostasy to usher in something else far greater than what had taken place over the last 4,000 years among the nation of Israel.

But what great news could come from the apostasy – this falling away, blindness, and hardening – of the LORD's chosen nation of people? What is the Lord doing with

⁹ For an in-depth treatment in dealing with Paul's use of Ps. 69 Cf. Douglas Moo, *NICNT: The Epistle to the Romans*. p. 679-83 and an understanding of Salvation in the Historical sense Cf. *Der Brief an die Römer, teilband 3: Rom 12-16. Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 6/3*. Zurich: Benziger/Neuirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.

Israel? Paul makes it known that the Lord must do this because His mission includes more than physical Israel. His mission of the gospel is to go out to *all* the nations, bringing in all of His peoples among the earth. God assures us that the prophecies which were written in the Old Testament concerning Israel's judgment are for real. No matter what, things are being fulfilled just as the prophet(s) said they would, and thus we see Israel's apostasy as part of this. Paul makes it unquestionable that the Old Testament spoke of the nation of Israel as it was at the present time. With that regard, he also brings out the truth that there is harmony and agreement throughout all of Scripture; as King David's words were true of the judgment that was to come upon Israel. We have here in the first ten verses of Romans 11 two main points which Paul makes about Israel, as he reveals the plan of redemption for God's chosen elect:

1. Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking
2. Israel apostatized for the final time

The overall point brought to light in verse 10 is that the prophecy of David has been fulfilled, and that Israel has had their eyes darkened so that they cannot see, and burdens remain upon them as they bow down their back always because their apostasy has hardened them too far.

THE MISSION TO THE GENTILES (11-24)

Salvation to the Gentiles – Israel's stumbling (11-12)

Paul continues to unfold the mysteries of the issue of Israel's apostasy, explaining why this falling away has occurred. He first poses a question: "*So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall?*" As Paul so often does, he then answers with

certainty, saying, “*By no means!*” then showing us his reasoning for saying so: “*Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.*”

It is clear through Paul’s words that it was the hand of God that planned the apostasy of His chosen nation – His chosen people – so that the Gentiles could come to know the gospel and find salvation in Christ. The apostasy of Israel is what caused the mission of God to go from a small group of people to spread among all of mankind, going forth among all the nations, making Himself known in a greater way than ever before. This enabled all to know the wonderful news which Israel rejected – that Jesus Christ saves! It should never be that anyone would think that God would blind His own nation for no purpose, because the truth is that God’s plan is far greater than anyone could imagine; nothing is done without a purpose. This is what Paul is saying: God gave the Romans the gospel, but in order to do so, He had to harden His people and make them jealous by offering the salvation that they wanted to partake in – namely, Jesus Christ their King – to the Gentiles. Paul is displaying trust in his words; trust that Israel’s apostasy is for a reason, and that the reason is the mission of God being brought forth to the Gentiles.

The ESV Study Bible explains this in a simple manner, stating:

“Israel’s hardening is not the final word. God planned salvation history so that Israel’s trespass would open salvation for the Gentiles, and the Jews in turn would be provoked to jealousy when they see Gentiles being saved and enjoying a relationship with God.”¹⁰

Charles Hodge says,

“As the result and design of the rejection of the Jews was the salvation of the Gentiles, so the conversion of the latter was designed to bring about the restoration of the former. The Gentiles are saved in order to provoke the Jews to jealousy.”

Furthermore, Thomas Schreiner explains,

¹⁰ *The ESV Study Bible*. Crossway: Wheaton, 2008), p. 2176.

“The lapse of Israel is part of God’s all-encompassing purpose, for by means of their trespass salvation has been given to the Gentiles... God planned that the Jews would reject the gospel in large numbers and in response to their rejection the message was proclaimed to the Gentiles.”¹¹

It is important to note here that Paul begins this section in parallel style with verses 1-10 of Romans 11; that is, he first asks a question, answers it, and then gives his reasoning. Paul makes it clear that the apostasy of Israel was not total, and therefore, it was not final. The mission which was sent to the Gentiles gave the promises and blessing of Christ, as was God’s purpose; however, there is even more to this. Paul makes it clear in his reasoning at the end of verse 11: “*Salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.*” God’s mission is being laid out in Paul’s theology as follows:

- God’s mission to his covenant Nation (Genesis 12, 15, 17, 20 & 22)
- God’s mission revealed in Jesus Christ (The Gospels)
- God’s mission in hardening Israel because of their Apostasy (Romans 9-11 & 11:1-10)
- God’s mission sent forth to the Gentiles (Romans 11:12-24)
- God’s mission uses the Gentiles to make Israel Jealous (Romans 11:12-14)
- God’s mission sent to Israel (Romans 11:25-32)

Charles Hodge says it best like this:

“The stumbling of the Jews was not attended with the result of their utter and final ruin, but was the occasion of facilitating the progress of the Gospel among the Gentiles. It was, therefore, not designed to lead to the former but to the later result. From this very design it is probable that they shall be finally restored, because the natural effect of the conversion of the Gentiles is to provoke the emulation of the Jews. That the rejection of the gospel on the part of the Jews was the means of its wider and more rapid spread among the Gentiles seems to be clearly intimated in several passages of the New Testament.”¹²

¹¹ Schreiner, *ECNT: Romans*, p. 594.

¹² Hodge, *Romans*. p.361.

This is the reason that Luke can say – as he does in Acts – that the message of salvation was first preached to Israel in order that they might reject it, fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy:¹³

“But I said, ‘I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my right is with the LORD, and my recompense with my God.’ And now the LORD says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him— for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD, and my God has become my strength—he says: ‘It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.’” (Isaiah 49:4-6)

Luke speaks of this in the following verses:

Acts 13:46 - “And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, ‘It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.’”

Acts 28:28 – “Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.”

Some may have a hard time grasping that an all-loving God would claim Israel as His chosen nation and then harden them; it may seem hard to understand how this could be for good. But Paul, understanding that this would be so, says in verse 12, *“Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!”* The bad news of Israel’s apostasy was used by God to send forth His mission – the good news of His Son – to the Gentiles of the world. That is an all-loving God – a God who would use bad and good to carry out His mission to His people that are of Abraham (Israel) and, as Paul

¹³ It is also important to mention here the latter portion of Isaiah’s prophecy 49:8-26 is that of the later future of Israel that Paul speaks of in Romans 11:25-32.

says, “Isaac” (Gentiles). Out of the apparent evil, the goodness of God’s mission is always done. The “Doctor” Martyn Lloyd-Jones preached it this way:

“As a result of Jewish unbelief two apparently impossible things follow, namely that the Gentiles should hear and believe the Gospel and, through that, the Jews might be made desirous of receiving it.... There is a very great purpose here. God knows what He is doing. He has a plan.” ¹⁴

The plan is God’s mission being transferred from inside of one nation to being sent out to all the nations among the earth. Salvation to the Gentiles has now been placed in the mission of God, and is still today where the history of redemption is at. The stumbling of Israel was the salvation to the Gentiles, for it was the apostasy of Israel that brought the mission of God – the sending the gospel to the Gentiles.

Mission to the Gentiles - Israel’s jealousy (13-16)

It is important to understand that it was nothing that the Gentiles had done, nor could ever do, but only God’s mission that went forth that brought them to believe in the gospel and receive the blessings of His covenant made with His people. With this understanding, it is then important to see exactly why God brought His mission forth to the Gentiles, and how He uses that today with Israel. So far we have seen the following: Israel’s apostasy as a nation, Israel’s apostasy done by God, Israel’s apostasy used by God for the mission to the Gentiles, and now here in verses 13-16 of Romans 11 we see why God has sent forth the gospel to the Gentiles. The reason is seen in verse 14 as Paul says specifically to the Gentiles, *“In order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them.”* Paul sees that it is God’s mission to send forth the Gospel to all the nations in order that His chosen nation Israel would become

¹⁴ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: Chapter 11*. p.72.

jealous that the Gentiles now reap the blessings of God's mission, and are enjoying the message of Christ. This mission is to reach the Gentiles, but in doing so it is also to Israel as it will "*thus save some of them.*" It is Paul's desire that some of his former Jews would follow him in understanding that God's mission has laid aside Israel for now, and went forth to the Gentiles for a purpose.

Paul continues and presents a very unique statement in verse 16, which says,¹⁵ "*If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches.*" Paul is referring here back to the Jubilee Law which was the foreshadowing of Christ's rest, thus referring to Christ who gives His people – the elect – His rest.¹⁶

The Jubilee Law:

Leviticus 23:16-17 - "You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath. Then you shall present a grain offering of new grain to the LORD. You shall bring from your dwelling places two loaves of bread to be waved, made of two tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour, and they shall be baked with leaven, as firstfruits to the LORD.

In these words, Paul seems to be showing that Israel still belongs to Him, and now that the mission has gone forth to the Gentiles, they are also part of spiritual Israel; therefore illustrating that Israel, as was in the Old Testament, and spiritual Israel, are both of the same entities.

Warning to the Gentiles - Israel's broken off (17-24)

¹⁵ Cf. For how this illustration fits into the Future of Israel Barry Horner, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged*. Ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: Tennessee, 2004), p. 258.

¹⁶ Cf. For further explanation of this in Moo, *NIC: Romans*, p. 697-701 and Schriner, *ECNT: Romans*. p. 599-601.

When coming to Romans 11:17, Martyn Lloyd-Jones states, *“This is a tremendous statement on the most important subject. From the standpoint of the future of the Christian church, and the future of the Jews as a nation, nothing is more important than this.”* Romans 11:17-24¹⁷ can get very complicated¹⁸ in a number of ways, however, at the moment we are only dealing with it in how it relates to the mission of God being sent to the Gentiles, and therefore is somewhat simpler to understand.

Romans 11:17-24 reads:

“17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, 18 do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. 19 Then you will say, Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in. 20 That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but stand in awe. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. 22 Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. 23 And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. 24 For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.”

Paul is explaining to the Romans here that the gospel coming to the Gentiles is not because of anything that they have done or deserved. He takes this time to warn the Gentiles that are being brought into God's covenant people that although God's mission has come to them, they are not to be boastful of themselves in any way. This warning to the Gentiles is to remind them that, like Israel's apostasy which made them broken off from God, He can do the same to them. Moo mentions in his commentary that *“Gentile*

¹⁷ Jeremiah 11:16-19 and Hosea 14:6-7 uses illustration as Israel being an olive tree. This seems to be why Paul used the example he did, and even more so that when referring to the branches being cut off, may have some focus towards the Jews of his own day.

¹⁸ As getting “complicated” I am referring to the Dispensational take on the passage which uses verses 17-24 in order to define that there are two separate people groups in which are totally different in identity. In comparison with the Covenant view which sees the elect Gentiles partaking of the same benefits and covenantal promises that the nation of Israel had.

believers were apparently convinced that they belonged to a new people of God that had simply replaced Israel.” Jason Meyer also makes mention of this issue, saying, *“Paul highlights God ability to graft Israel in order to expose and eliminated Gentile boasting.”*¹⁹ Paul does not want the Gentiles to receive God’s mission of the gospel only to see them become prideful or think that Israel is now done with forever. This is very apparent in Paul’s words as he says in verse 17 that the Gentiles *“now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree.”* This is Paul’s way of getting across that the Gentiles are in no state to boast because they are in dependence upon three things: (1) the root, (2) Christ, and (3) God.²⁰

However, there is another major importance to this verses which is crucial to the understanding of what exactly God’s mission was in bringing forth the gospel to the Gentiles. This is found in Paul’s words: *“Although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree.”* The gospel which God allowed the Gentiles to partake of comes from the same root which Israel does; in other words, God’s mission to both Israel and the Gentiles benefited from the same “root” – their historical promises, blessings, commands, and identity were from the same place. This now makes all the more sense as we go back to read Paul’s words given before in Romans 9:6 when he stated: *“For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel.”* Lloyd-Jones says in relation to this that *“the sixth verse of the ninth chapter is the key to the understanding of the whole of these three chapters.”*²¹ The

¹⁹ Jason Meyer, *The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant in Pauline Theology*. Ed. E. Ray Clendenen, (B&H Publishing: Nashville Tennessee, 2009), p. 181.

²⁰ Meyer, *The End of the Law*. p.182.

²¹ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: Chapter 11*. p.103.

importance which is based upon this is the understanding that the New Testament Church, who now reaps the benefits of God's mission to all the Gentiles, reaps the same covenant keeping God who promised a nation to Abraham and gave seed to Isaac. The "Doctor" refers to this in his message on Romans 11:17 saying,

"Here is the answer: For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel. In other words, as we were taught there and as, indeed, the whole of the Bible in a sense reminds us, two nations came out of Abraham as the father and the root. Abraham leads two to two nations; one of them is a natural nation of people and people, the other is a spiritual nation and people. You remember that he goes on there in the ninth chapter and says, "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called".²²

Just as Lloyd-Jones saw this importance,²³ it is crucial for us today to understand that the mission of God sending forth the gospel was not to separate His elect! Let me say this again for those who may not understand this due to mere wishy-washy theology, or even the lack thereof: God did not plan two separate plans; He did not have plan A and plan B. He did not plan that His mission be sent out to the Gentiles, but that they reap from a different root. The Gentiles nourish off the same root that Israel did – one root, one covenant promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And today the New Testament Church – the Gentile believers – to whom the mission of God has moved forward, nourishes off the same root that the physical nation of Israel once did. Though not are "Israel" physically, Gentiles are considered "Israel" spiritually because we all have that same root!

Gentiles were strangers to the gospel, and were not of the chosen nation of Israel, knowing nothing about God. However, now that God's mission has been sent

²² Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: Chapter 11*. p.103.

²³ Cf. Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: Chapter 11*. p. 101-116 for a further treatment of Romans 11:17 and his dealing with what exactly the "root" is, and how that affects the thinking of the Gentile today.

forth to the Gentiles, we are now no longer strangers to His covenant, but are fellow saints with those who are the remnant of Israel; brothers with Paul, Peter, John, Luke, Mark, Matthew, Elijah, Solomon, David, Moses, Jacob, Isaac, Abraham, and most of all, with Jesus. It was the very blood of our elder brother, Jesus Christ, which makes us near and gives us this shared root. Christ made us brothers of the Covenant Promise²⁴ with all the Old Testament saints, and the mission to the Gentiles still goes out and makes more saints of the gospel. We must thank God for this mission that He has allowed us to partake in – His perfect mission, spreading the gospel to all, going out to all of mankind to preach, teach, and speak of the good-news which God has brought forth to us, the Gentiles.²⁵

This is why the illustration of the olive tree is extremely important to understand. In it, we see that God brought to the Gentiles the same mission which He gave to Israel, and therefore, the Gentiles are now inheritors along with the Jews and are of the same body as the Jews. There is no difference between them. It is as Ephesians 3:6-8 says,

“This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace, which was given me by the working of his power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

There is no favor in Paul’s eyes; simply, those rooted in the covenant by Christ’s purchasing are those that have the favor of God upon them.

²⁴ I am referring here to Galatians 3:26-29 when Paul speaks of being “*heirs according to the promise*.”

²⁵ This idea here comes from Ephesians 2:11-20, “*being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel*” and verses 20, “*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens,* but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.*”

Paul explains his illustration of the olive tree and its branches further as he makes his point about the Gentiles not boasting in anything. This is extremely important because it shows us that the church is not to become Anti-Semitic toward Israel. Although it seems hard to believe that a Gentile believer would be so, it can easily seep into the house of God where sin abounds. Paul shows in the text that those who broke off from the tree and root are those who have disobeyed God's commands, and it was for their apostasy that the "wild-shoot" was grafted in. Here we see once more that God used Israel's apostasy in order that He may send His mission to the Gentiles so that they can receive the same covenant-keeping promises which Israel had once enjoyed. We can only imagine what it would have felt like to be a Jew at that time, reading Paul's illustration of the olive tree – a metaphor which is so close and so full of meaning to God's chosen nation – and yet hear that they have been cut off from it! The olive tree, whose roots dig deep into the ground and is known for being steadfast throughout all weather clearly shows a picture of a covenant that is unshakable, unbendable, and unbreakable; which feeds the Israelites time and time again through battle, through hardship, through famines, and through exiles. And now they are cut from such blessings and instead see these pagan Gentiles becoming part of the dear promise which God gave to the Jews.²⁶

Paul says in verses 19-20:

"Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear."

²⁶ Cf. For deeper study on Romans 11:18; Isa. 29:10; Deut. 29:4; [Isa. 43:8; Jer. 5:21; Ezek. 12:2; Eph. 4:18]; See Matt. 13:14.

It is extremely easy to read the text and, as a Gentiles, think higher of one's self than the nation of Israel, but Paul, in the end of verse 20, is once again bringing warning to the Gentiles that they should not become boastful nor proud thinking that they are better or extra-special since God's mission has moved forward to them, cutting off Israel. In his latest work on Romans, R.C. Sproul speaks of Israel's apostasy and gives his warning in how it can easily affect Gentiles as well, saying,

“Just as apostasy polluted Israel, it can pollute us. We have seen the unbelievable corruption of mainline churches that have become monuments of unbelief and apostasy. Just as God cuts off the branches of Israel, he will cut off the unproductive Gentile branches.”²⁷

This is exactly Paul's warning: do not boast and do not be prideful; rather, remain humble, because if you puff yourself up and go astray, leaving the gospel truths, you will be in danger and apostatized yourself. Romans 11:22 states: *“Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.”* This is crystal clear – the Gentiles are not to be arrogant to the broken off branches, for it had nothing to do with neither the broken branches nor the ones grafted in, but it is God's mission that His gospel goes forth to all the nations in this manner. Paul's point is that the Gentiles must understand that the mission of God has come to them, but just as the apostasy of Israel cut them off, the Gentiles could also be cut off at anytime.

Paul continues laying out the future of God's mission in Romans 11 saying, *“Lest you be wise in your own sight, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial*

²⁷ R.C. Sproul, *St. Andrew's Expository Commentary: Romans*. (Crossway: Wheaton, 2009), p. 379.

hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved."²⁸ God's mission for the plan of redemption:

- God's chooses a nation - Romans 11:1-4
- Israel's apostasy - Romans 11:5-10
- God's mission sent to the Gentiles - 11:11-24
- The fullness of the Gentiles bring in the future of Israel - Romans 11:25-32

GOD'S PLAN FOR ISRAEL'S SALVATION (25-32) and DOXOLOGY OF GOD'S PLAN FOR HIS PEOPLE (33-36)

Here Paul sets forth that the mission of God will come back to His chosen nation, offering salvation once again to His people.²⁹ For the last three chapters (9, 10 & 11) Paul has focused upon the salvation of His people and what that meant for Israel. Now in verses 25-32 we come to what Horner calls the "*climatic thrust*"³⁰ of what Paul has been trying to get across. I agree with R.C. Sproul when he says,

"Her temple (Israel's temple) was removed block by block, and her holy city was devastated and given over to the control of the Gentiles, but not forever, according to Luke 21 and Romans 11. There is a future for ethnic Israel and the city of Jerusalem."³¹

²⁸ Cf. For a further study of Romans 11:25-32 see the following references in properly understanding the Future of God's Mission being sent back to Israel: Isaiah 59:20-21; Ezekiel 37:26-27; Matthew 2:2; Luke 19:9-10; John 12:13, 19:21-22; Romans 1:16-18, 9:20; 11:26; Ephesians 1:9-10, 3:3-6; Hebrews 6:9, 8:12-13, 10:33; 1 Peter 2:9-10.

²⁹ Romans 11:25-32 has become one of the most debated text among theologians today. My suggestion for further study is what I believe to be a proper understanding of the future of Israel, and study on this text. Barry Horner, *Future of Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged*. (B&H Publishing: Nashville, 2004), especially pages 253-290. These pages here give what I believe the proper view in the Future of Israel.

³⁰ Horner, *Future of Israel*, p. 259.

³¹ Sproul, *Romans*, p. 384.

But what becomes the issue in Christianity is the question of how exactly God's mission will go back to His ethical nation of Israel. Is it being done now? Has that remnant come back now? Is it all of the nation, or only some, that will come back?³² This chapter in the book of Romans is to show exactly what we have been looking at: how God's mission was to harden His nation Israel into apostasy to that the gospel would then be sent to the Gentiles.³³ However, it would be recognizing only half of things if we don't remember that God's mission will in fact one day go back to Israel, and will bring in those who then will see Jesus as Christ. Paul quotes Isaiah, saying, "*Israel will be saved, as it is written, 'The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob; and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.'*" God's mission now is in sending out the gospel among His elect (spiritual Israel) but, as Isaiah and Paul say, the physical Israel still has a future.³⁴ There is importance in Paul's quoting of Isaiah when he says that a "*Deliverer*" will come. Who might this Deliverer be? Paul answers this in 1 Thessalonians 1:10, naming Christ as mankind's Deliverer who came to save His people. It is crucial for the Gentiles to understand that God's mission of redemption is not finished. As Sproul states, we are seeing "*the next step of redemptive history-God's work with ethnic Israel.*"³⁵ It is important that God's mission is seen in the "*fullness of the*

³² To what extent of Israel will come back? Cf. For all of Israel: Moo, *Romans*. p. 710-39. For those elected of Israel that come to Christ at the end of time: Schreiner, *Romans*. p. 611-30. For those today who are Israel being brought into Christianity: Hodge, *Romans*. p. 371-82.

³³ Here lies much debate in Reformed and Covenant Theology in Israel's Future. There are mainly three views; 1. Salvation of Jews and Gentiles today. 2. The saving of a remnant of Jews throughout history, and 3. The salvation of the end-time generation of the Jewish people in the future. Cf. The ESV Study Bible, p. 2177 for a quick understanding on these three views.

³⁴ I must make mention of the importance of seeing Jesus Christ as Prophet, especially in Luke 21, Matthew 16, 24 & 25 will help shed much light of His prophecy of God's mission for the nation of Israel.

³⁵ Sproul, *Romans*. p.387.

Gentiles” (Romans 11:25), and also that God’s mission will still move further yet, as “*God is not finished with the Jews.*”³⁶

This is why Paul ends with his glorious doxology; a text which many are so familiar with that they can easily recite it, yet may not even know where it is cited:

“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”

Schreiner calls this “*the thematic connection to Romans 9-11*”³⁷ because Paul’s theology looks at how God’s mission is played out among both the nation of Israel and the Gentiles; the importance lies in the truth that God has an exact plan and all that has happened, and will happen, is His thought, mind, and wisdom – and oh, how great it is! It is a glorious thing that the Gentiles can enjoy the mission of God’s great gospel which came forth to them; that He would allow such a gift that they may partake of is an indescribable goodness.

Paul’s point in ending Romans 11 is not to keep the mind of the Romans – nor the reader today – in awe of how Israel fell away, allowing Gentiles to be grafted in, and then looking forward to Israel’s return. This is not Paul’s overall focus. Instead, his focus is on the greatness of God! Schreiner states this perfectly as he says,

“The theme of Romans emerges clearly at the end of the discussion on the relationship between the Jews and Gentiles in salvation history (God’s Mission). The salvation of the Jews and Gentiles is penultimate. What is ultimate is the glory of God... The “amen” in the text indicates Paul’s intense wish that God’s purpose to receive glory and praise will be realized.”

³⁶ Sproul, *Romans*. p.387.

³⁷ Schreiner, *Romans*. p. 635. Cf. Pp. 635-38 on Schreiner’s concluding thoughts on Romans 11:33-36. Here lies the important of Paul using the Old Testament to conclude His thought in how the greatness of God’s mission and plan for all of Israel, both the Jews and Gentiles.

Just as Paul did, today's believers of the gospel ought to stand in awe that God uses all things for His mission of His gospel, in order that His people may come to His Son, Jesus Christ, and enjoy His mission for life here on earth, and eternity. For it is Israel's God whom the Gentiles and Jews alike serve – a God who, in all things, directs a mission that is perfect in giving His people exactly what they need. I can't help but wonder: How, when knowing this God and tasting His goodness, can one ever apostatize?

Homiletical Proposals

One Sermon

The Grafting of the Gospel to the Gentiles

- I. The Hardening of Israel by God (1-10)
- II. The Gospel going to the Gentiles (11-16)
- III. The Warning of Boasting for the Gentiles (17-24)

Multiple Sermon Series

The Hardening of Israel and Its Purpose for the Gospel

- I. Israel's Apostasy from the Gospel (1-4)
- II. Israel's Remnant in the Gospel (5-6)
- III. Israel's failure in the Gospel (7-10)
- IV. Israel's Apostasy for the sake of the Gospel (11-12)

The Mission of the Gospel to the Gentiles

- I. Israel's Stumbling causes Salvation of the Gentiles (11-12)
- II. Israel's Jealousy causes a Mission to the Gentiles (13-16)
- III. A Warning to Gentiles to Not Boast in Themselves but the Gospel (17-24)

Israel's Future with the Gospel

- I. God's Mystery of the Gospel to Israel (25-27)
- II. God's Mercy upon Israel with the Gospel (28-32)

Praise to God for His Plan in the Gospel

I. Oh how Great is God (33)

II. "The Lord's Mind" (34-35)

III. "All Things" (36)

Important Sermon

God's Salvation for His People

I. The hardening of Israel (1-10)

II. The mission to the Gentiles (11-24)

III. The plan for Israel (25-32)

IV. The Glory of God (33-36)

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