



A Study of Romans

Romans Chapter 11

God's Mercy for All

Overview

By this point in his letter, Paul has made his point that God is faithful to his word (Chapter 9) even when Israel is not faithful to God (Chapter 10). Now in Chapter 11 Paul pursues the question of Israel's' fate. Paul himself a Jew, makes an argument that God will preserve a remnant among the Jews for the future as he had already done in the past by dividing the faithful from the unfaithful, the elect from the non-elect. In the end, only Jesus is 100% faithful; therefore only those who have faith in Christ will persevere. Israel and Gentiles will stand together in a single family of faith, not boasting of themselves but owing everything to God's mercy for all who believe.

1. Paul and the Remnant (11:1-10)

- 1 *I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin.*
- 2 *God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what Scripture says in the passage about Elijah—how he appealed to God against Israel:*
- 3 *"Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me"?*
- 4 *And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal."*
- 5 *So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.*
- 6 *And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.*
- 7 *What then? What the people of Israel sought so earnestly they did not obtain. The elect among them did, but the others were hardened,*
- 8 *as it is written: "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that could not see and ears that could not hear, to this very day."*
- 9 *And David says: "May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them.*
- 10 *May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever."*

Key Points:

- God has not rejected the inheritance which he promised the descendants of Abraham.
- Paul uses the words of Elijah and applies them as an analogy to Christ.
- The chosen remnant of Jews who had faith in Jesus Christ were kept according to their election of grace, not by their performed works.

Questions:

1. How does Paul use himself as evidence that God did not reject the Israeli people?
2. How is Elijah used as an analogy to Jesus, and as an analogy to Jews who accept Christ?

2. Apostleship to the Gentiles (11:11-16)

- 11 Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious.***
- 12 But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!***
- 13 I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry***
- 14 in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them.***
- 15 For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?***
- 16 If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.***

Key Points:

- Paul states the fall of the Jew was not pointless, since it led to the salvation of the Gentiles.
- Paul states he is proud of his ministry to the Gentiles and hopes Jews become envious.
- Paul uses the concept of purity of parts and entirety and to explain the remnants of Jewish holiness.

Questions:

1. How would stumbling of the Jews bring salvation to the Gentiles?
2. Why does Paul hope his ministry may arouse Jews through envy of Gentiles?

3. What is Paul's point about if part of "firstfruits" is holy, then the "whole batch" is holy?
4. How does Paul use the "root and branches" analogy to explain holiness?

3. The Olive Tree of Israel (11:17-24)

- 17 ***If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root,***
- 18 ***do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you.***
- 19 ***You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in."***
- 20 ***Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble.***
- 21 ***For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.***

Key Points:

- Paul's famous olive tree analogy is used to show how believers from Israel and Gentiles are fused into a single family of faith.
- Paul warns the Gentiles about the dangers of boasting.
- Paul addresses the issue of God's kindness and his severity.

Questions:

1. Using the analogy of the Olive Tree, what do the following terms represent?
 - the olive tree itself
 - the tree root
 - the natural branches
 - the broken branches
 - the "wild olive shoot" grafted branches
 - the "nourishing sap" of the root
2. What does Paul mean when he warns the grafted branches about boasting by saying "you do not support the root, but the root supports you."?
3. What is Paul's point about the grafted branches should not be arrogant but they should tremble?

4. The Mystery of Israel's Salvation (11:25-32)

- 22 ***Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.***
- 23 ***And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.***
- 24 ***After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!***
- 25 ***I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in,***
- 26 ***and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written:***
- “The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.***
- 27 ***And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”***
- 28 ***As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for your sake; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs,***
- 29 ***for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable.***
- 30 ***Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience,***
- 31 ***so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God’s mercy to you.***
- 32 ***For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.***

Key Points:

- Paul reveals how God is working to restore Israel through the redemption of the nations.
- The salvation of Israel will occur in and through the salvation of the Gentiles.
- All Jews and Gentiles are bound with sin, so all people are justified freely by God’s grace through the redemption of Christ Jesus.

Questions:

1. What does Paul mean by saying natural branches that have been cut off are much more readily grafted onto their own olive tree?
2. What are the two parts of the “mystery” that Paul reveals to his audience?
3. What two points is Paul making when he writes “*God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all*”?

5. Final Hymn and Doxology (11:33-36)

33 *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!*

How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

34 *“Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?”*

35 *“Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?”*

36 *For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.*

Key Points:

- God’s wisdom and knowledge is inexhaustible.
- No being could teach God, or counsel him.
- God created all things and has no need to receive anything from anyone else.

Questions:

1. What do you think Paul is referring to by writing “*his paths beyond tracing out*”?
2. What is meant by Paul’s question “*Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them*”?

----- END OF LESSON -----

NEXT WEEK – read Romans (12:1- 21)

Covering: An Offering of Body and Mind; The Body of Christ; The Primacy of Love and Peace