



Romans (Strengthened by the Gospel) **(Week 15/18) Israel's Unbelief and God's Faithfulness**

Small Group Discussion Questions

Connect *Think of three people in your life who don't yet know Jesus. Pray each day this week for soft hearts, for opportunities for them to hear the gospel, and courage for yourself to share the gospel.*

Warm-Up

1. Who is the audience that Paul is writing to? How does that shape our understanding?

Read Romans 11:1-10

2. What evidence does Paul give that God has not rejected his people Israel?
3. Paul says that the remnant is chosen "by grace." Why is Paul so careful to contrast grace with works?
4. What is the significance of referencing Elijah and the seven thousand faithful followers in Kings 19? How does this point to God's faithfulness, outweighing human rebellion?
5. Who is included in the remnant? How does this give hope for the people of Israel?
6. What were many of the people of Israel trying to obtain (that doesn't lead to salvation)?
7. How is the hardening of Israel related to their rejection of the Lord? Why or why not is this permanent?
8. How does the Lord react to all people when they turn back to him? Have you met anyone who you think is too hardened for the Lord to work? Why can you still hold out hope for a change?

Read Romans 11:11-32

9. What does Paul hope the salvation of the Gentiles will bring about?
10. Who is the "wild olive shoot" and who is the "natural branches"?
11. What is the root which supports all branches? Why then is there no cause for superiority over Jews?
12. What have been some of the devastating outcomes in history when Gentile Christians have viewed themselves as superior? How have you seen this form of anti-semitism play out today in Australia?
13. Why were branches broken off? How will they be grafted back in?
14. What is God's kindness and what is his sternness? Are we ever at risk of presuming God's kindness?
15. How does the olive tree example demonstrate God's readiness to graft back in the people of Israel?
16. In verse 26, who could "all Israel" be? When does Israel get saved?
17. How does Israel get saved? (read Romans 1:16-17)
18. What is God's desire for all people - Jews and Gentiles? How is God's desire reflected in our lives - through what we pray for and who we spend time with? How can we reflect God's desire more?

Apply *Tell someone else this week of how you came to believe and specifically about God's kindness to you in getting an opportunity to hear and believe in Jesus Christ.*

Pray *Loving God, thank you for your mercy and that you have welcomed us into your family. Please help us to trust in your unsearchable judgements. Amen.*

GOING DEEPER

Romans (Strengthened by the Gospel) (Week 15/18) Israel's Unbelief and God's Faithfulness

Small Group Discussion Questions

On Your Frontline this Week

Who are three people you know, you are not yet following Jesus? Pray for them all week - for soft hearts, opportunities to hear the gospel, and courage for you to share the gospel.

For Families

- *Download:* some of the family resources to use at home: stbartskids.org

Listen, Watch, and Read

- *Listen (sermon):* "All Israel will be saved" by Paul Blackham:
https://www.allsouls.org/Media/AllMedia.aspx?show_media=50734&show_file=57635
- *Listen (sermon):* "Romans 11 - Deep Wisdom" by Christopher Ash:
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/sermon/romans-11-deep-wisdom/>
- *Watch (discussion):* "All Israel Will Be Saved" by Michael Bird:
<https://michaelfbird.substack.com/p/all-israel-will-be-saved-968>
- *Watch (discussion):* "Restoration for Israel" by D. A. Carson:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2h2oEMwG_tM
- *Watch (discussion):* "Romans 9-11 with Mike Bird and Nijay Gupta" by Michael Bird and Nijay Gupta:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nNjLsOkHJGU>

Series Resources

- *Read:* "Strengthened by the Gospel" by Brian Rosner. 
- *Read:* "The Story of God Bible Commentary: Romans" by Michael Bird.
- *Read:* "Into the Heart of Romans" by N. T. Wright. 
- *Read:* "Epistle of Paul to the Romans" by F. F. Bruce. 
- *Read:* "The Message of Romans" by John Stott. 
- *Read:* "The Epistle to the Romans" by Leon Morris. 
- *Watch:* "Romans" by the Bible Project:
<https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-romans/>

 Available to borrow from the St Bart's Library (Toowoomba): stbarts.com.au/library

Romans 11 – The Gospel and the Olive Tree

Intro

- Story of Jewish man whose son became German
- Romans 9-11 is about Israel in the past, present, and future
- Interlocking destiny of Jews and Gentiles (Rom 1:16 + 15:7-13 // Rom 11:11, 12)
- Relevance
 - Poor history of Jewish/Christian relations (e.g., John Chrysostom, Luther, Holocaust)
 - Anti-Semitism is a very successful ideology.
 - Theology both supersessionism (11:19) and *sonderweg* (11:23)
 - In Romans 9-11, Paul refers to the Jewish “ignorance” (10:3, 19); “disobedience” (10:16, 19; 11:31), spiritual “stupor” (11:8), Jews who have become “enemies of the gospel” (11:28) – but that is not where Paul himself leaves it.
- So what does Paul teach about the Jews and Israel in Romans 11?
 - *God’s election* of Israel which is “irrevocable” (11:28-29), and *God’s plan* was to use Israel’s disobedience to usher in Gentile inclusion and to use Gentile inclusion to bring Israel to jealousy and thus to salvation (11:14, 30-32). For, if God is God, and if Israel are God’s people, then rejection and condemnation cannot be God’s last word for them. Paul rehearses what we read in the Law, Prophets, and Writings, there must be a better ending for Israel if God is to be faithful to his covenant.
 - But how he do that?

11:1-6 – The Remnant of Jewish Christians Proves God Has Not Forsaken Israel

- Gk. *mē genoito*.
- Just like the days of Elijah, there is a remnant now.
- The existence of Jewish Christians like Paul is telling evidence that God has not rejected his people.
- See v. 6, this proves the gracious nature of grace!

11:7-10 – A Recap of Israel’s Failure

- The citations from Deut 29:4, Isa 29:10, and Ps 69:22-23 in vv. 8-10 underscore that Paul sees Israel as suffering a type spiritual blindness and an incapacity to perceive God’s work in their midst.
- As Moses warned, Israel is inherently stupefied and unable to appreciate God’s act of deliverance for them.
- As Isaiah lamented, Israel has reached a point of spiritual stupor where revelation proves ineffectual.
- As David sang, Israel has become like enemies standing in futile opposition against God’s anointed king.
- Tragically, ethnic Israel will be blinded and remain hardened so long as they refuse to see the crucified one as their Messiah and Lord.

11:11-16 – God’s Call, Israel’s Fall, and the Mission of the Apostle Paul

- Paul espouses the interlocking destiny of Jews and Gentiles
- Israel’s rejection = Gentile acceptance
- Gentile acceptance = Israel’s jealousy
- This salvation boomerangs in that it comes from Israel, goes to the Gentiles, and then returns to Israel. The premise behind all this is that Israel is not only savable, but that God really wants to save Israel.

11:16-24 – Redemptive-History and Divine Horticulture

- The basic analogy
 - Olive tree = salvation, election, covenant.
 - Natural branches = ethnic Israel
 - Wild branches = Gentiles.
- Yes, natural branches were broken off and wild branches grafted in.
- But:
 - (1) If God can graft the wild branches in then he can certainly graft in the natural branches.
 - (2) If God did not spare the natural branches, he might cut off too the wild branches.
- The natural branches were broken off for redemption not a replacement (v. 19)
- The natural branches are still intended for the tree if they came to faith (v. 23)

11:25-32 – Plot Twist Revealed: All Israel will be Saved

- Paul refers to a mystery, that is the triumph of God's mercy over Gentile arrogance and Jewish unbelief.
- I'm not going to unpack the "fullness of Gentiles" or when and how the deliverer returns to Zion.
- But rest assured Paul believes "all Israel" (a big part of ethnic Jews) will be saved.

John Barclay puts it well:

The purposes of God are reducible to his will, a will that initially appears equally set to harden or to save, but turns out on closer inspection, and in the end, to harden only in order to save, to hate only in order to love, and to consign all to disobedience only in order to have mercy on all. What has twisted Paul's theology into this strange shape is his understanding of a "gift" that has redefined the meanings of *charis* [grace] and *eleos* [mercy] and defies explanation or rationale. That gift is the Christ-event which reconciled the world "while we were enemies" (Rom 5:6-10) and "justified the ungodly" (4:4-6).

Application

- The gospel is still first for the Jews. I believe in your Messiah!
- Don't be antisemitic or supersessionist. Visit the holocaust Museum.