

# ROMANS

## Chapter 11

*The Remnant of Israel*

**I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? 3 “Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.” 4 But what is God's reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” 5 So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. 6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. 7 What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, 8 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.” 9 And David says, “Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; 10 let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever.”**

**11:1** *rejected*. Totally reject. There has always been a faithful remnant among the Jewish people. (CSB)

Greek grammar requires a negative answer. The idea that God should push aside or repudiate His people is unthinkable (Ps. 94:14; 1 Sam 12:22). (TLSB)

*tribe of Benjamin* – He was the beloved son of Jacob and Rachel; Jacob's only son born in the Promised Land (Gn 35:16-18). The tribe of Benjamin gave Israel her first king (Paul's namesake, Saul; 1 Sam 9:1-16) and was regarded highly by the Jews. Within the borders stood Jerusalem and the temple (jgs 1:21). To belong to this tribe was a privilege that Paul stresses (Php 3:5). (TLSB)

**11:2** *whom he foreknew*. God chose Israel to be His people through whom He would carry out His saving purpose. (TLSB)

**11:3–4** Two quotations dealing with Elijah. In Elijah's day, God had preserved for Himself a remnant in a nation that had, as a whole, rejected Him. So also in Paul's day, God—faithful to His promises—has kept for Himself a faithful remnant. (CC)

**11:5** *remnant*. As it was in Elijah's day, so it was in Paul's day. Despite widespread apostasy, a faithful remnant of Jews remained. (CSB)

Gk *leimma*, “small remainder.” Used only here in NT; describes those who believed in the Gospel. (TLSB)

*chosen by grace*. The grounds for the existence of the remnant was not their good works but God's grace. (CSB)

Remnant exists as a result of God's gracious election and is a sign of hope in the world. (TLSB)

**11:6** Grace and works are mutually exclusive. God's election of the remnant is on the basis of grace alone; works are excluded. (TLSB))

**11:7** *Israel failed to obtain.* A righteous standing before God, which eluded the greater part of Israel. (CSB)

*the elect.* The faithful remnant among the Jews. (CSB)

Those in Israel who have believed the Gospel. (TLSB)

*were hardened.* Because they refused the way of faith (see 9:31–32), God made them impervious to spiritual truth (see note on Isa 6:10)—a judicial hardening of Israel. (CSB)

God's judgment against unbelief. (TLSB)

**11:8** Support for Paul's previous reference to God's judgment against those who refused to listen to God's word of judgment and promise (cf Is 6:9–10). (TLSB)

*to this very day.* The spiritual dullness of the Jews had continued from Isaiah's day to Paul's day. (CSB)

**11:9–10** The passage from Ps 69:22–23 was probably originally spoken by David concerning his enemies; Paul uses it to describe the results of the divine hardening. (CSB)

Psalmist's suffering at the hands of his persecutors prefigures Christ and His Passion (see the use of Ps 69 in Mt 27:34; Jn 2:17; 15:25; Ac 1:20). Paul, in turn, applies the psalm to unbelieving Israel, quoting verses that call on God to vindicate His Suffering Servant and to bring judgment on His enemies. (TLSB)

**11:1–10** Paul, chosen by God's grace revealed in Jesus Christ, is a living example that God has preserved for Himself a remnant in Israel. Those who become hardened and spiritually callous are in danger of God's frightening judgment. However, through the suffering for sin that Christ endured, even the sin of unbelief is forgiven in those who trust in His grace. • O Lord, may the physical descendants of Abraham receive the promised salvation delivered in the Gospel of Jesus. Amen. (TLSB)

*Gentiles Grafted In*

**11** So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. **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! **13** Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry **14** in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. **15** For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? **16** If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches. **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[c] 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 fear. 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.

**11:11** *So I ask.* The question is inevitable from what precedes. Had Israel stumbled to the point of being forever lost? (TLSB)

*their trespass.* The Jews' rejection of the gospel. *make Israel envious.* See v. 14; 10:19. (CSB)

As the outcome of their sin (rejection of the Gospel). (TLSB)

*to make Israel jealous.* The Gentiles' salvation, in God's divine plan, was intended to lead the Jews to covet (in the good sense) the blessings of salvation for themselves. (Paul is referring to Dt 32:21.). (TLSB)

**11:12** *riches for the world.* Equivalent to “riches for the Gentiles,” a reference to the abundant benefits of salvation already enjoyed by believing Gentiles, which had come about because of the rejection of the gospel by the Jews. That rejection caused the apostles to turn to the Gentiles (see Ac 13:46–48; 18:6). (CSB)

Blessings for the world. (TLSB)

*their failure.* Equivalent to “their transgression” (see note on v. 11), but focusing on the loss that this transgression entailed. (CSB)

*their full inclusion.* The salvation of Israel (see vv. 26–27; see also the “fullness [NIV ‘full number’] of the Gentiles,” v. 25). (CSB)

Expression clearly does not mean that all Jews will be saved. It could be translated with the active wording “their fulfilling” (i.e., their fulfilling of God's will). In any case, God intends in history to bring to completion the full number of those who belong to spiritual Israel (“the Israel of God,” Gal 6:16). These are the true heirs of the promise through faith in Christ. (TLSB)

**11:13** *the Gentiles* – They were probably the majority in the congregation. (TLSB)

*apostle to the Gentiles.* This was Paul's call. (TLSB)

*my mystery* – This is Paul's apostolic office as Christ's servant for the Gospel sake (cf 1 Co 3:5; Eph 3:7) (TLSB)

**11:14** *save some of them* – Paul does not envision a mass conversion of the nation of Israel. This is important for the interpretation of “all Israel” in verse 26. (TLSB)

**11:15** *their rejection.* God’s temporary and partial exclusion of the Jews. (CSB)

Paradoxically, through the Israelites’ rejection of the Messiah, God brought reconciliation (cf 5:10-11; 2 Cor 5:18-20). However, God’s rejection of unbelieving Israelites was temporary, for some would be accepted through faith and receive a new life to be consumed in the resurrection from the dead (cf Ezk 37:1-14). (TLSB)

*reconciliation of the world.* Somewhat equivalent to “riches for the world.” (CSB)

*life from the dead.*† Equivalent to “greater riches” in v. 12. The sequence of redemptive events is: The “transgression” and “loss” (v. 12) of Israel leads to the salvation of the Gentiles, which leads to the jealousy or envy of Israel, which leads to the “fullness” or “full number” (v. 12) of Israel, which leads to even more riches for the Gentiles. But what are the “greater riches” (v. 12) for the Gentiles, which Paul describes here as “life from the dead”? Three views have been suggested: (1) an unprecedented spiritual awakening in the world; (2) the consummation of redemption at the resurrection of the dead; (3) a figurative expression describing the conversion of the Jews as a joyful and glorious event (like resurrection)—which will result in even greater blessing for the world. Of these three views the first seems less likely, since, before Israel’s assumed general spiritual rebirth, the fullness of the Gentiles will already have come in (see v. 25). Since the Gentile mission will then be complete, there seems to be no place for a period of unprecedented spiritual awakening. The third view is also unlikely, since v. 14 speaks specifically of merely “some of them” (Jews) being saved. (CSB)

**11:16** The first half of this verse is a reference to Nu 15:17–21. Part of the dough made from the first of the harvested grain (firstfruits) was offered to the Lord. This consecrated the whole batch. (CSB)

Paul uses metaphors to illustrate God’s gracious election of Israel. What happened to the patriarchs (e.g., Abraham, who believed the promise) affected their descendants (v 28). As the firstfruits consecrated the whole (Lv 23:10–11; Nu 15:17–21) and branches grow from the root, so God’s gracious choosing of His people leads to inclusion of others who follow later. (TLSB)

*firstfruits.* The patriarchs. (CSB)

*whole lump.* The Jewish people. *holy.* Not that all Jews are righteous (i.e., saved) but that God will be true to his promises concerning them (see 3:3–4). Paul foresaw a future for Israel, even though she was for a time set aside. (CSB)

*root.* The patriarchs. (CSB)

*branches.* The Jewish people. (CSB)

**11:17–24** Metaphor reflects ancient practice of invigorating an olive tree by grafting in branches from a wild tree. An olive tree grows slowly, maturing over 30 years. Pruning and grafting enables a tree to produce fruit for centuries or even millennia. The cultured olive tree represents Israel, God’s people and heirs of the promise. The wild olive tree represents the Gentiles. By faith, individual branches, Jews and Gentiles, are incorporated into God’s true people, the new Israel, the Church. (TLSB)

**11:17** *branches.* Individual Jews. (CSB)

*broken off.* Equivalent expressions (e.g., “hardened,” v 7; “fall,” “trespass,” v 11; “rejection,” v 15) describe the current failure of some Israelites to believe, with the hope that they will come to faith. (TLSB)

*wild olive shoot.* Gentile Christians. (CSB)

*grafted in.* The usual procedure was to insert a shoot or slip of a cultivated tree into a common or wild one. In vv. 17–24, however, the metaphor is used, “contrary to nature” (v. 24), of grafting a wild olive branch (the Gentiles) into the cultivated olive tree. Such a procedure is unnatural, which is precisely the point. Normally, such a graft would be unfruitful. (CSB)

God, by His grace, miraculously brings Gentiles into His Church, the new Israel. (TLSB)

*olive root.* The patriarchs. The whole olive tree represents the people of God. (CSB)

**11:18** *the root supports you.* The salvation of Gentile Christians is dependent on the Jews, especially the patriarchs (e.g., the Abrahamic covenant). See Jn 4:22. (CSB)

**11:19** A possible protest of overly proud and self-confident Gentiles who feel superior to the Jews. (TLSB)

*Branches.* Unbelieving Jews. (CSB)

**11:20** *you stand fast through faith.* A reminder that only through the gift of faith does anyone become a member of God’s people. (TLSB)

*become proud.* Lit, “think lofty thoughts. (TLSB)

*fear.* In the sense of reverence. (TLSB)

**11:21** *you.* Singular in Gk; directs stern warning to the individual “branches” of the tree, Jew and Gentile, who will be held accountable for their unbelief. (TLSB)

**11:22** *kindness and severity of God.* † God’s mercy and justice. (CSB)

Christians must live their whole life in holy fear, with full awareness that they depend entirely on God’s grace. (TLSB)

**11:23** *if they do not continue.* Paul reaffirms the hope that his unbelieving kinsmen will believe. (TLSB)

*power.* God, by His grace, has the power to do what from a human perspective is impossible: graft branches cut off (unbelieving Jews) back into the olive tree. (TLSB)

*God has the power.* † Paul holds out this possibility for the Jews—God is able (see Mt 19:26; Mk 10:27; Lk 18:27). (CSB)

**11:24** Summary of the preceding argument (vv 17–23), expanding on God’s power in the service of His grace. (TLSB)

*contrary to nature.* Paul recognized that such grafting was not commonly practiced. The inclusion of Gentiles in the family of God is “contrary to nature” (cf. Eph 2:12). Obviously, the reasoning in this verse is more theological than horticultural. It would be difficult horticulturally to graft broken branches back into the parent tree, but the Jews really “belong” (historically and theologically) to the parent tree. Thus they will “much more readily ... be grafted into their own olive tree.” (CSB)

**11:11–24** Paul warns the Gentile believers against pride and reminds them of their role in God’s mission to Jewish unbelievers. To look down on any nonbeliever is sinful rejection of God’s gracious purposes. In goodness and kindness, God can restore to faith those who have fallen. • Heavenly Father, be merciful to all those who have drifted away from You, especially family members and friends. Graft them in again by Your Word and grace. Amen. (TLSB)

### *Mystery of Israel’s Salvation*

**25 Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness 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 banish ungodliness from Jacob”; 27 “and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.” 28 As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. 29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. 30 For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, 31 so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. 32 For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all. 33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! 34 “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” 35 “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” 36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.**

**11:25** *wise in your own sight.* Lit, “wise in yourselves,” i.e., filled with arrogance (over the Jews). Cf Pr 3:7. (TLSB)

*mystery.* The so-called mystery religions of Paul’s day used the Greek word (*mysterion*) in the sense of something that was to be revealed only to the initiated. Paul himself, however, used it to refer to something formerly hidden or obscure but now revealed by God for all to know and understand (see 16:25; 1Co 2:7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51; Eph 1:9; 3:3–4, 9; 5:32; 6:19; Col 1:26–27; 2:2; 4:3; 2Th 2:7; 1Ti 3:9, 16). The word is used of (1) the incarnation, (2) the death of Christ (1Co 2:17, “secret wisdom”), (3) God’s purpose to sum up all things in Christ (Eph 1:9) and especially to include both Jews and Gentiles in the NT church (Eph 3:3–6), (4) the change that will take place at the resurrection (1Co 15:51), and (5) the plan of God by which both Jew and Gentile, after a period of disobedience by both, will by his mercy be included in his kingdom (v. 25). (CSB)

*a partial hardening has come upon Israel.* God’s merciful plan to include the Gentiles in his great salvation plan should humble them, not fill them with arrogance. *in part.* Israel’s hardening is partial, not total. (CSB)

Not all Israelites have stubbornly resisted the Gospel (v 7), for some have believed (the remnant, v 5). (TLSB)

*until*. Israel's hardening is temporary, not permanent. (CSB)

*full number of the Gentiles*. The total number of the elect Gentiles. (CSB)

**11:26–27** Prove Paul's lead assertion that "all Israel will be saved." Christ came from Zion (the Jews) to the Gentiles. He will forgive the sins of Jews "if they do not continue in their unbelief" (v 23). (TLSB)

**11:26** *And in this way*. An emphatic statement that this is the way all Israel will be saved. (CSB)

Gk *houtos*, the manner in which it is accomplished. Not "then," as understood by some holding millennialist views. (TLSB)

*all Israel*.† Three main interpretations of this phrase are: (1) the total number of elect Jews of every generation (equivalent to the "fullness" of Israel [v. 12], which is analogous to the "fullness ['full number'] of the Gentiles" [v. 25]); (2) the total number of the elect, both Jews and Gentiles, of every generation; (3) the great majority of Jews of the final generation. The last interpretation defies Paul's statement in v. 14 that only "some of them" will be saved. The first two would agree with Paul's use of the term "Israel" in Gal 6:16 as the believers in the NT era, which harmonizes best with the second interpretation. (CSB)

*will be saved*. The salvation of the Jews will, of course, be on the same basis as anyone's salvation: personal faith in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen from the dead. (CSB)

Refers to "children of the promise" in 9:8 (the spiritual Israel), not "children of the flesh" (the nation of Israel). All the elect, both Jews and Gentiles, will be saved throughout history. Cf 9:6. (TLSB)

*The deliverer will come from Zion*. The quotation is from Isa 59:20, where the deliverer ("Redeemer") seems to refer to God. The Talmud understood the text to be a reference to the Messiah, and Paul appears to use it in this way. *Zion*. (CSB)

**11:27** *covenant*. The new covenant of Jer 31:31–34. (CSB)

*will banish ungodliness from Jacob*.† See Jer 31:34; Zec 13:1. Just as salvation for Gentiles involves forgiveness of sins, so the Jews, when they are saved, are forgiven by the mercy of God—his forgiveness based only on his grace and the ministry of Jesus. (CSB)

**11:28** *they are enemies*.† As long as they reject the gospel. (CSB)

*on your account*. Explained in v. 11. (CSB)

The Jews are objects of God's hostility as far as the Gospel is concerned because they oppose it. But in God's plan this was for the Gentiles' benefit. (TLSB)

*beloved for the sake of their forefathers*.† Not because any merit was passed on from the patriarchs to the Jewish people as a whole, but because God in love chose Israel. (CSB)

With respect to His choice of Israel and for the sake of the patriarchs, God loves the Jewish people. They are objects of God's love and of His wrath at the same time. (TLSB)

**11:29** *God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.*† God does not change his mind with reference to his call. Even though Israel is presently in a state of unbelief, God's purpose will be fulfilled in all who believe. (CSB)

God still has His gifts (9:4–5) and His gracious invitation for His people to receive the salvation offered through His Son. God remains faithful to His promises. (TLSB)

**11:30–31** The experience of the Jews and of the Gentiles are parallel. Both have received mercy in the face of disobedience. Because of Israel's disobedience (1:18–32), undeserving Gentiles received mercy. Because of the mercy to the Gentiles, disobedient Jews will receive mercy (cf v. 11) (TLSB)

**11:32** *all.*† Both groups under discussion (Jews and Gentiles). There has been a period of disobedience for each in order that God may have mercy on both groups. Paul is in no way teaching universal salvation. (CSB)

Paul summarizes not only vv 30–31 but also the overriding purpose of God's mercy in chs 9–11. All people—Jews and Gentiles—are imprisoned in their disobedience, with no possibility of escape unless God in His mercy releases them. “We should not reach conclusions about our election to eternal life based on reason or God's Law.... <The true judgment about predestination> must be learned alone from the Holy Gospel about Christ” (FC Ep XI 9–10). (TLSB)

**11:33–36**† The doxology that ends this section of Romans is the natural outpouring of Paul's praise to God, whose wisdom and knowledge brought about his great plan for the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles who believe. (CSB)

Ascription of praise in doxological form as Paul ponders in awe God's inscrutable ways (cf Eph 3:21). (TLSB)

**11:33** *oh* – This interjection goes as an exclamation with the entire verse.

*The dept of the riches* – The wealth of God's grace and glory (2:4; 9:23; 10:12; cf 2Co 8:9), the wisdom of His purposeful actions in history to save (cf 1Co 1:18–31; Eph 1:8; 3:10; Col 2:2–3), and His intimate knowledge of us (cf 8:29; 11:2; 1Co 8:3) are too deep for human beings to fathom. (TLSB)

All men end up in beggary (11:32); only God is rich, inexhaustibly rich, rich in kindness and forbearance (2:4), rich in glory (9:23), and the Lord whom He gave to Jew and Greek is rich in His beneficence toward all who call on Him (10:12). God cannot fail for lack of means in compassing His ends. God is wise. He uses all His riches in a sure, astounding governance of history that overawes and humbles men. (Franzmann)

*unsearchable are his judgments* – God's decisions (the ways He thinks). (TLSB)

The apostle Paul sings a great doxology of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How beyond our ability to grasp are His ways. God has bestowed on His created humans the precious gift of a rational mind. We pride ourselves in our ability to analyze and explain many of the phenomena God has put into our world. We measure accurately time and space and dimensions. We devise mathematical formulas to explain the relationship of these to each other. We apply logic to arrive



at profound truths concerning our universe. We have even succeeded in manipulating the genetic code! (Portals of Prayer – 2/16)

But we are less than infants when it comes to plumbing the “depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” What earthly standard can measure His great love in giving His only Son to die in the place of His rebellious creatures? What mathematical formula can explain the new birth in which He re-created us in Holy Baptism? By what logic does our Lord physically come to us with forgiveness in His Holy Supper? Can the genetic code reveal “what God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9)? With the apostle we can only sing, “To Him be the glory forever!” (Portals of Prayer – 2/16)

The doxological hymn in vv 33–36 concludes Romans 9–11 and introduces the remaining section of Romans, which especially addresses the Christian life. These four verses are the traditional Epistle for Holy Trinity Sunday, rejoicing in the deep and unfathomable mystery of the Godhead. The hymn is introduced by the concluding words of 11:32, “that he may have mercy on all.” The “depths” (*bathos*) praised here are searched and revealed by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:10; Eph 3:18). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

God’s plan is a mystery in the sense that we would never have been able to plan or devise anything like it. And even after God in his infinite wisdom devised it, we would never have been able to figure it out if he had not graciously revealed it to us. And even after he revealed it to us, we would never have been able to believe and accept it had he not sent his Holy Spirit into our hearts to work that faith. God’s ways far transcend our puny human capabilities. (PBC)

**11:34-35** These three rhetorical questions praise the greatness of God’s mercy toward man. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

Reflecting the thinking of Isaiah (Isaiah 40:13) and Job (41:11), Paul poses three rhetorical questions, each of which leads us to acknowledge that absolutely nobody gave God any help with devising the marvelous plan of salvation where mercy predominates. Hence there is but one possible reaction and that is to give all glory to the triune God. (PBC)

**11:34** Rhetorical questions highlighting the absurdity of anyone teaching God anything. We have no access to God’s thinking except what He chooses to reveal to us. (TLSB)

*who has known the mind of the Lord* – “Who has given Him advice?” Isaiah asked (Is 40:13). (Franzmann)

**11:35** *that he might be repaid* – Rules out any thought that the Creator God owes us anything. (TLSB)

No man has ever made God his debtor with a gift. “Who has given me, that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine,” the Lord told trembling Job (Job 41:13). (Franzmann)

**11:36** *from Him and through Him and to Him*. With three prepositions, Paul declares God, Creator and Savior, to be the source, means, and goal of everything. He is Alpha and Omega. (TLSB)

The triune God is the source, mediator, and purpose of all things, for which he receives eternal praise. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

**11:25–36** In ways beyond our understanding, God has acted in mercy to bring salvation to Jews and Gentiles. Human beings cannot exchange roles with God, presuming to sit in judgment of Him. But we in whom His Spirit dwells praise Him for His inexhaustible kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. • To You alone, O triune Lord, belongs all glory forever. Amen. (TLSB)