

ROMANS

Lesson 11 w/Answers

Romans Chapter 11

In our last lesson, we examined further the differences that Paul called out between the believing Gentiles and the Law-focused Jews, his own people. He wanted them to see that the Law doesn't save anyone, and that there is nothing that anyone can do to earn their salvation. Only through God's great grace and the shed blood of Christ can we hope to find salvation—and yet he also wanted the Gentiles to know that indeed the Jews are God's chosen people, and he offered several things as evidence.

In this lesson, Paul continues that dialogue, as he speaks to the restoring of God's Chosen People and the role of the Gentiles. Just as salvation is available for the Gentiles, so it is as well for the people of Israel, even though they rejected him.

Read Romans Chapter 11 from the Contemporary English Version (CEV) below, or from your favorite version.

Romans 11

God Has Not Rejected His People

¹Am I saying that God has turned his back on his people? Certainly not! I am one of the people of Israel, and I myself am a descendant of Abraham from the tribe of Benjamin. ²God did not turn his back on his chosen people. Don't you remember reading in the Scriptures how Elijah complained to God about the people of Israel? ³He said, "Lord, they killed your prophets and destroyed your altars. I am the only one left, and now they want to kill me."

⁴But the Lord told Elijah, "I still have seven thousand followers who have not worshiped Baal." ⁵It is the same way now. God was kind to the people of Israel, and so a few of them are still his followers. ⁶This happened because of God's undeserved kindness and not because of anything they have done. It could not have happened except for God's kindness. ⁷This means that only a chosen few of the people of Israel found what all of them were searching for. And the rest of them were stubborn, ⁸just as the Scriptures say,

"God made them so stupid
that their eyes are blind,
and their ears
are still deaf."

⁹Then David said,

"Turn their meals
into bait for a trap,
so that they will stumble
and be given
what they deserve.

¹⁰Blindfold their eyes!

Don't let them see.
Bend their backs
beneath a burden
that will never be lifted."

Gentiles Will Be Saved

¹¹Do I mean that the people of Israel fell, never to get up again? Certainly not! Their failure made it possible for the Gentiles to be saved, and this will make the people of Israel jealous. ¹²But if the rest of the world's people were helped so much by Israel's sin and loss, they will be helped even more by their full return.

¹³I am now speaking to you Gentiles, and as long as I am an apostle to you, I will take pride in my work. ¹⁴I hope in this way to make some of my own people jealous enough to be saved. ¹⁵When Israel rejected God, the rest of the people in the

world were able to turn to him. So when God makes friends with Israel, it will be like bringing the dead back to life. ¹⁶If part of a batch of dough is made holy by being offered to God, then all of the dough is holy. If the roots of a tree are holy, the rest of the tree is holy too.

¹⁷You Gentiles are like branches of a wild olive tree that were made to be part of a cultivated olive tree. You have taken the place of some branches that were cut away from it. And because of this, you enjoy the blessings that come from being part of that cultivated tree. ¹⁸But don't think you are better than the branches that were cut away. Just remember that you are not supporting the roots of that tree. Its roots are supporting you.

¹⁹Maybe you think those branches were cut away, so that you could be put in their place. ²⁰That's true enough. But they were cut away because they did not have faith, and you are where you are because you do have faith. So don't be proud, but be afraid. ²¹If God cut away those natural branches, couldn't he do the same to you?

²²Now you see both how kind and how hard God can be. He was hard on those who fell, but he was kind to you. And he will keep on being kind to you, if you keep on trusting in his kindness. Otherwise, you will be cut away too.

²³If those other branches will start having faith, they will be made a part of that tree again. God has the power to put them back. ²⁴After all, it wasn't natural for branches to be cut from a wild olive tree and to be made part of a cultivated olive tree. So it is much more likely that God will join the natural branches back to the cultivated olive tree.

The People of Israel Will Be Brought Back

²⁵My friends, I don't want you Gentiles to be too proud of yourselves. So I will explain the mystery of what has happened to the people of Israel. Some of them have become stubborn, and they will stay like that until the complete number of you Gentiles has come in. ²⁶In this way all of Israel will be saved, as the Scriptures say,

"From Zion someone will come
to rescue us.

Then Jacob's descendants
will stop being evil.

²⁷This is what the Lord
has promised to do
when he forgives their sins."

²⁸The people of Israel are treated as God's enemies, so that the good news can come to you Gentiles. But they are still the chosen ones, and God loves them because of their famous ancestors. ²⁹God doesn't take back the gifts he has given or forget about the people he has chosen.

³⁰At one time you Gentiles rejected God. But now Israel has rejected God, and you have been shown mercy. ³¹And because of the mercy shown to you, they will also be shown mercy. ³²All people have disobeyed God, and that's why he treats them as prisoners. But he does this, so that he can have mercy on all of them.

³³Who can measure the wealth and wisdom and knowledge of God? Who can understand his decisions or explain what he does?

³⁴"Has anyone known
the thoughts of the Lord
or given him advice?

³⁵Has anyone loaned
something to the Lord
that must be repaid?"

³⁶Everything comes from the Lord. All things were made because of him and will return to him. Praise the Lord forever!
Amen.

Consider the questions below regarding Paul's comments in Romans Chapter 11:

1. In Romans 11:1-6, Paul poses the question, "Has God turned His back on His people?" What is Paul's answer to this question, and what did he offer as proof?
 - a. ANSWER 1: Paul emphatically stated that God had not turned His back on His people, and offered himself as proof of this. Paul, a Pharisee, knew that he was the perfect example of a lost Jew who had followed the wrong path towards being acceptable to God, and yet God had saved him. He knew from this experience and other Jewish conversions that he had witnessed that God had not turned His on his people.
 - b. ANSWER 2: Paul also offered the example of Elijah, who thought he was the last witness; and God revealed to him that he had put aside a remnant who did not worship idols and only worshipped God—that Elijah was not the only witness, nor would he be the last.
 - c. ANSWER 3: See also 1 Samuel 12:2. God promises that he will always take care of His chosen people.
2. In Romans 11:7-10, what is Paul saying about the people of Israel? How many will be saved, and how many will be lost thinking that they are saved by following the Law?
 - a. ANSWER: Paul shows us that "only a chosen few of the people of Israel" will be saved. The rest are stubborn, stupid, blind, and deaf. Their self-imposed burden of trying to be acceptable by obeying the Law will be so heavy on them that it will bend their backs and never be lifted.
3. Did Paul mean that the people of Israel have no hope, i.e., that their fall from grace was permanent? What does he tell us in Romans 11:11-12?
 - a. ANSWER: Paul indicates that the people of Israel have stumbled, rather than fell. He asserts that their current rejection is causing untold millions of Gentiles to be saved, and that when Israel returns to her former glory when Christ returns, the world will be helped even more. There is a day coming when the relationship between the people of Israel and God will be restored—the day Christ returns to the earth.
4. What does Paul express hope for in Romans 11:13-16?
 - a. ANSWER: He continues to hope that his own people will be saved as a result of their envy of the followers of Christ. And again, he states that when God "makes friends with Israel," it will be a blessing to everyone. In the meantime, Paul is hoping to lead some of them to Christ as a result of them seeing the Gentile world turn to Jesus.
5. In Romans 11:17-21, Paul discusses the olive tree and its branches. In relation to John 4:22, what is Paul trying to tell many of us, as Gentile believers?
 - a. ANSWER: He is telling us that even though we share in the promises of God, our salvation in fact came from Him through the Jews. We are not to boast or ignore the root of the cultivated olive tree that we have been grafted into.
6. Paul then points out that, while as Gentile believers we've been grafted, a commensurate warning exists. What is it? (See Romans 11:22-24)
 - a. ANSWER: Just as he grafted us in, he can cut us out if we reject him. He also has the power to restore the people of Israel and to put them back into the tree. Specifically, it wasn't natural to graft a wild branch into a cultivated tree, but it is very natural to graft a cultivated tree branch back into the tree. God will restore His Chosen People.
7. Paul tells us next that he will explain a "mystery." See Romans 11:25-28. What does the word mystery mean in this context, and what is the mystery that Paul is explaining to us?
 - a. ANSWER 1: A mystery, in this context, is the revealing of a truth that was previously unknown. This is God revealing something important to us that we had not known before.
 - b. ANSWER 2: The mystery, or truth, being revealed is that God is using the stubbornness of the Jews to save the Gentiles. When that has been accomplished, he will restore Israel.
8. In the closing verses of Romans Chapter 11, verses 29-36, Paul speaks about God's sovereign will, in regard to how he treats his chosen people. Read these verses, as well as Isaiah 55:7-9 and Isaiah 59:20-21. What do they tell us about God's great plan?
 - a. ANSWER: These verses tell us that God has plan that is greater than our understanding. That in the end, all who should be saved will be saved, according to plan. These verses tell us that God does not think as we do, nor are His ways our ways. Because of this, we are to trust in Him completely, just as Paul did. He will restore the people of Israel, and He will save us as long as we put our faith in Him and in His only son Jesus. May He be praised continually for His great grace and love for us.

Thus Paul concludes this three-chapter section about the Jews and his desire for them to be saved. We see that it is because of the people of Israel that many of us as Gentiles have received the gospel, and we are not to boast about it. We also learned that, at the appointed time, God will restore His relationship with His Chosen People; and the world once again will be better off for it.

Let's continue to thank Jesus for saving us and continue to pray for the "peace of Israel" and the return of Jesus as the Messiah, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords!

May He richly bless you as you study with us this week.

In Christ,

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