

## The Gospel in Romans: Romans 11:11-24

### INTRODUCTION

“You will be greatly hindered in understanding this argument, except you take notice, that the Apostle speaks sometimes of the whole nation of the Jews, and sometimes of single individuals; for hence arises the diversity, that one while he speaks of the Jews as being banished from the kingdom of God, cut off from the tree and precipitated by God’s judgment into destruction, and that at another he denies that they had fallen from grace, but that on the contrary they continued in the possession of the covenant, and had a place in the Church of God.

“It is then in conformity with this difference that he now speaks; for since the Jews for the most part rejected Christ, so that perverseness had taken hold almost on the whole nation, and few among them seemed to be of a sane mind, he asks the question, whether the Jewish nation had so stumbled at Christ, that it was all over with them universally, and that no hope of repentance remained. Here he justly denies that the salvation of the Jews was to be despaired of, or that they were so rejected by God, that there was to be no future restoration, or that the covenant of grace, which he had once made with them, was entirely abolished, since there had ever remained in that nation the seed of blessing. That we are so to understand his meaning is evident from this, — that having before connected a sure ruin with blindness, he now gives a hope of rising again; which two things are wholly different. They then, who perversely stumbled at Christ, fell and fell into destruction; yet the nation itself had not fallen, so that he who is a Jew must necessarily perish or be alienated from God.”

—John Calvin, *Commentary on Romans*, s.v. 11:11

1. The chapter deals mainly w/ two questions: Has God rejected His people (1-10)? Are they beyond recovery (11-32)?
    - The answer to the first question is a resounding, No! But to whom and what was promised is very important.
      - As we saw in the first ten verses and in chapter 9, God never promised salvation to every ethnic Israelite.
      - Promises were made to the nation and kept, and promises were made to spiritual Israel, and are being kept.
      - Failing to distinguish the two leads to serious misunderstandings and raises doubts about God’s faithfulness.
    - The answer to the second question is also, No, and raises additional issues for careful consideration.
      - For instance, these paragraphs make broad statements about groups generally, not individuals, *per se*.
      - The Jews have fallen, but not every Jew is lost or will be lost; many, in fact, are and yet will be saved.
      - The Gentiles have been engrafted, but not every Gentile is saved or will be; many, in fact, are and will be lost.
      - So we have to be very careful to determine of whom, to whom, and in what sense Paul is speaking.
  2. This section is very important in demonstrating and understanding the sovereignty, justice, and mercy of God.
- I. **THE RELATIONSHIP OF GENTILE AND JEWISH SALVATION (11-16)**
- A. *The Societal Consequences of the Relationship (11-15)*
1. Jewish rejection of the gospel paved the way, historically and socially, for its success among Gentiles.
    - God worked providentially in history to bring the gospel rapidly and powerfully to Gentiles.
    - Even unbelief is sovereignly overseen and providentially used by the mighty God. (cf. Rom. 8:28-30)
  2. Paul’s figure of speech must be recognized lest we misunderstand what is actually being said.
    - It is not as though God offered the gospel to the Jews and then decided to give it to the Gentiles.
    - None of this was a surprise to God, nor was sending the gospel to Gentiles Plan B.
  3. The Gentiles would have been offered the gospel regardless, but Jewish rejection opened doors.
    - When Paul was put out of synagogues, Gentiles opportunities appeared. (e.g. Acts 13:44-52; 18:5-7)
    - Thus historically and socially the pattern of “first to the Jews, then to Greeks” was consistently seen.
  4. How much better though, Paul speculates, if the Jews *also* embraced the gospel in great numbers.
    - It is not as though Gentile faith and salvation depended on Jewish unbelief and rejection.
    - If such a great conversion accompanied Jewish rejection, how much more if they accepted it!
- B. *The Historical Connection of the Relationship (16)*
1. The Israelites were a special people, a chosen nation, a family used mightily by God to bring redemption.
    - This does not mean every person in the nation was (or is) elect unto salvation or will be saved.
    - Nor does it justify any kind of reverse discrimination such as the Jewish pride of Jesus’ day. (Jn. 8:33)
  2. But the root of Christianity is Hebraic (Jewish), not nationally or politically but covenantally speaking.
    - The root Paul speaks of is not national or political Israel but men like Abraham and Moses.
    - The patriarchal covenant and the promises God made to the fathers are the root of our fruit (faith)!
  3. The New Covenant is global and universal, but its roots are Abrahamic. **Gen. 17:7; Gal. 3:7, 10, 13-14, 29**
    - Paul is speaking broadly in federal/covenantal terms; individualistic Americans will struggle with it.
    - Salvation is bestowed individually through faith, but covenant holiness extends farther. **1Cor. 7:14**

## II. THE ANALOGY OF GENTILE AND JEWISH GRAFTING (17-24)

Rather than looking consecutively at the verses in this paragraph, we will examine the three interwoven ideas.

### A. Pruning Out for Unbelief

1. Listen carefully: There is no promise of salvation for anyone who continues in unbelief. **1Jn. 2:3-6; 3:4-10**
  - Say all you want about believers' shortcomings; Scripture says we sin too. (cf. 1Jn. 1:8, 10; 1Kg. 8:46)
  - But there is a fundamental and eternal difference between sinning but repenting and continuing unrepentantly in the practice of known sin. **Heb. 6:4-8; 10:26-31; 2Pet. 2:20-22**
2. Does your theology permit you to let these passages speak forcefully, without embarrassed disclaimers?
  - Unfortunately, many believers explicitly *deny* perseverance in faith is necessary for salvation.  
"You and I are not saved because we have enduring faith. We are saved because at a moment in time we expressed faith in our Lord." –Charles Stanley, *Eternal Security*, p.190  
"Even if a believer for all practical purposes becomes an unbeliever, his salvation is not in jeopardy." p.93
  - Such statements cannot be reconciled with the Bible. **Matt. 24:13; 2Tim. 2:12; Heb. 10:36-39**
3. The olive tree represents the people of God, not national Israel, *per se*, but inclusive of them.
  - As a covenant community, the Israelites were part of the visible people of God.
  - But whenever any of them rejected the gospel and fell into unbelief, they were cut off.
4. Thus the composition of God's people is ultimately determined not by ethnicity but by faith in Christ.

### B. Plugging In through Faith

1. Just as unbelief results in covenant members being taken out, belief causes others to be engrafted.
  - The Jews who rejected Christ were cast out, but the Gentiles who embraced Him were brought in.
  - Similarly, the Jews who once rejected Christ can be grafted in again if they repent and believe. **v.23**
2. The analogy emphasizes the organic unity of God's people; it is not an institution but a living thing.
  - The children of covenant members are also in covenant with God but can only remain through faith.
  - The living, growing, unity of God's people is portrayed in a way that allows addition and subtraction.
3. It is faith that brings converts into covenant; it is faith that keeps covenant members connected to Him.
  - Faith matters. Covenant faithfulness matters. Faith is the instrument of justification and salvation.
  - We must beware of thinking faith is only necessary and important at the point of conversion.
4. Jesus is the Founder and Perfecter of our faith; salvation is by faith from beginning to end. **Heb. 12:1-2**

### C. The Ever-present Danger of Pride

1. Jewish pride in their relation to Abraham and Moses is well-documented in the NT. **Jn. 5:45; 8:33; 9:28**
  - Many trusted in their religious and covenantal heritage rather than trusting in God. (Php. 3:3-11)
  - Such pride trusts in one's own merit, whether by birth, by works, or both. **2:17-29** (cf. Luke 18:9-14)
2. But pride is not merely a temptation for the Jews; it is a danger for the Gentiles as well.
  - Fundamentally pride is a human problem, and every one of us must guard against it. **1Co. 10:12**
  - We must continually meditate on the gospel lest we look too admiringly at ourselves. **1Ti. 1:15**
3. It is not enough to dwell on the kindness of God; we must remain aware of His holy severity too. **v.21-22**  
"The Gentiles were prone to pride because they focused on themselves rather than on God, considering that their ethnic superiority rendered them candidates for election. The antidote to pride is fear, and the object of fear is God himself, particularly his kindness and severity." –T. Schreiner, *Romans*, 608
  - We need more fear of God, the right fear, a holy trembling before the One we love. **Psa. 2:11-12**
  - Perfect love casts out fear of judgment, but we should never fail to fear His holy majesty. **1Jn. 4:18**
4. It is an indication of our unbalanced theology and ignorance that the fear of God is so often despised.
  - Evangelicals often want nothing to do with fear, as if godly fear is incompatible with grace and faith.
  - But Paul says explicitly, "Do not become proud, but fear." Are we obeying this instruction? **Ac. 9:31**

## III. APPLICATION

### A. Once Saved, Always Saved and the Divine Requirement of Perseverance

1. The Bible is full of warnings not to turn back but to continue in the faith. These are not idle threats. "When we look at it retrospectively (cf. 2 Tim. 2:11-21; 1 John 2:19) we discover that those who fail to persevere thereby reveal that they were never actually part of the elect community. But we must beware of imposing this retrospective comment upon the warnings so that they lose their function for believers. We must take seriously the words of this text: if we fall away, we shall face final judgment. Those who brush aside the warnings as unnecessary, concluding that they are protected from God's wrath no matter how they behave, are presuming upon God's grace." –T. Schreiner, *Romans*, 609

2. We believe, rightly so, that all those the Father gives to Christ *will* come (in faith) and be saved. **Jn. 6:37**
    - Not one of them will be lost. Jesus is strong enough to keep every one of them, and He will.
    - But He keeps us through faith; He keeps us by sustaining our faith by His power. **1Pet. 1:3-5**
  3. You cannot say, “You must believe in Jesus to be saved, but then you can stop and it will turn out okay.”
    - We must not only believe (trust) in Christ; we must continue to believe, even unto the end.
    - We cannot do so in our own strength but only by resting in His grace and work.
  4. Don’t deceive yourself or others by suggesting unbelievers are saved because they once said a prayer.
- B. A Covenant Community Visibly Larger Than Those Ultimately Saved*
1. We mentioned earlier that the number of God’s people is ultimately determined by faith, not biology.
    - But clearly there were some included in the covenant community who were later cast out.
    - Jesus indicates the same truth in His teaching. **Mt. 13:18-23, 36-43, 47-50; Jn. 15:1-8**
  2. The Scriptures are clear that all of the elect will persevere by God’s grace and be saved. **Jn. 10:26-29**
    - But not all that are visibly, externally connected to Christ are elect or will persevere and be saved.
    - There have always been people in the visible covenant who are not savingly united to Christ.
  3. How can we explain the fact some are part of the olive tree or in the vine but later cut off and cast out?
    - There are some who will profess faith and believe for a time but will not endure. (cf. Matt. 13:18-23)
      - These were never truly, eternally, and savingly united with Christ. They were never saved. **1Jn. 2:19**
      - We are not saved by a simple profession but by a sincere, Spirit-prompted conviction of truth!
    - We also should note the children of believers are visibly included in God’s covenant. **1Co. 7:14**
      - The Lord promises to be God to us and to our children. **Gen. 17:7** (cf. Acts 16:15, 31, 34; 18:8)
      - But that does not mean all of our children are elect or will be saved. They too must believe.
  4. We should neither exclude our children from God’s covenant promises nor assume their final salvation.
- C. The Need for Vigilance and Diligence in Our Walk with Christ*
1. If we learn nothing else from this chapter, we must learn this: humble, faithful, enduring trust in Christ.
    - *Vigilant* and *diligent*, these words describe what daily discipleship ought to look like in our lives.
    - We must not presume upon God’s grace by assuming that since I once believed I no longer need to.
  2. Am I adding to my faith the attributes cultivated by God’s grace? **2Pe. 1:5-11**
    - Can I say in sincerity that I am living with the deliberate aim to be pleasing to God? **2Tim. 2:15**
    - Notice I am not working to be approved; I am working as one who is approved and desires to please.
  3. It isn’t easy to be a Christian, but it is much easier than remaining an impenitent sinner. **Matt. 11:28-30**
    - Our entire lives must be oriented toward serving the One who died to save us. **2Co. 5:9-10, 14-15**
    - We must never take for granted what Jesus has done or our participation in it by faith. **1Co. 15:58**

#### PRAYER OF REFLECTION

Holy God and Father in Heaven, we do tremble with reverent awe as we contemplate the significance of coming into Your presence. Help us to practice this awareness every day, that we may see ourselves standing in Your light, accepted solely by the merit and virtue of Christ, worshipping a Holy God whose judgment rightly falls on all who reject His grace. Father, we are not sustained in covenant relationship with You by our own strength or worth or works. We are sustained by the same means through which we are saved. We are sustained day after day and moment to moment by Your sovereign grace. Keep us, O Lord, by Your mighty power, and strengthen our faith so we may always trust in Christ and never in ourselves. Thank You for receiving us into Your family, uniting us to Your Son, grafting us into Your people. Never cast us away, O God. Give faith and repentance to our children and our grandchildren, that we all may share in the glories of Your everlasting kingdom. We give You all the glory, honor, and praise.

In Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Genesis 17:7** And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

**Galatians 3:7** Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. ... **10** For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." ... **13-14** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us--for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"--so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith. ... **29** And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

**1 Corinthians 7:14** For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

**1 John 2:3-6** And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

**1 John 3:4-10** Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

**Hebrews 6:4-8** For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.

**Hebrews 10:26-31** For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

**2 Peter 2:20-22** For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire."

**Matthew 24:13** But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

**2 Timothy 2:12** if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us;

**Hebrews 10:36-39** For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

**Hebrews 12:1-2** Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

**Romans 2:17-29** But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth--you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

**Psalms 2:11-12** Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

**Acts 9:31** So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

**1 Peter 1:3-5** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

**2 Peter 1:5-11** For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**2 Timothy 2:15** Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

**2 Corinthians 5:9-10** So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

**2 Corinthians 5:14-15** For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

**1 Corinthians 15:58** Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.