

ROMANS From Wretchedness to Righteousness

Study 17

How it Works with Israel

Romans 11:1-36

Final Inclusion of the Jews

Recap

Romans 9:30-10:21 talked about human’s responsibility despite God’s sovereignty and Romans 11 talk about the final inclusion of the Jews.

Part 1 of 4: God Allows a Partial Hardening of Israel (Romans 11:1-10)

Verse 1-6

Romans 11:1-6

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. 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: “Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me”? And what was God’s answer to him? “I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

1) Comprehension Question. Paul is answering the questions in the mind of the audience on whether God is rejecting the Jews/Israelites by accepting Gentiles. Paul then proceeded to give evidence that God isn’t rejecting the Jews. After listening to the explanation in the video lecture, rephrase what Paul was trying to say in your own words or in modern terms.

Evidence	Verse content	What was Paul trying to say?
Exhibit 1: Rom 11:1	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.	God didn’t reject the Jews ah. Look at me! I am of the Jewish race but I am a Christian also because God saved me.
Exhibit 2: Rom 11:2-4	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: “Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am	In the Old Testament passage, at one time when Elijah was in trouble thinking he was the only one left that listens to God, God replied

	the only one left, and they are trying to kill me”? And what was God’s answer to him? “I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.”	that there are some that He preserved and saved from worshipping another god (Baal).
Exhibit 3: Rom 11:5-6	So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.	So today, God will also save a remnant of Jews by his grace, not by their works.

Verse 7-10

Romans 11:7-10
 What then? What the people of Israel sought so earnestly they did not obtain. The elect among them did, but the others were hardened, 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.”

And David says:
 “May their table become a snare and a trap,
 a stumbling block and a retribution for them.
 May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see,
 and their backs be bent forever.”

2) Objective question. In verses 7-10, Paul says that some Jews will be blind to salvation. Who is the “David” Paul is quoting in verse 9?

- A. David son of Benjamin, A fellow brother in Christ of Apostle Paul
- B. David Wood
- C. David Beckham
- D. David Ng
- E. King David’s psalm in Psalms 69:22-23

Part 2 of 4: This Allows the Incorporation of Gentiles (Romans 11:11-16)

Verse 11-13

Romans 11:11-13
 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. 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!

3) Objective question. Choose the appropriate answer, can be more than one. Based on verses 11-13 and the video lecture, which of the following is true?

- A. Jews have stumbled and fallen beyond any recovery of salvation through Jesus.
- B. The Jew's disbelief in Jesus has allowed the Gospel to spread to the Gentiles area and for the Gentiles to be saved.
- C. Gentiles believing in God and Christ can make the Jews jealous and hopefully believe in Jesus.
- D. If more Jews believe in Jesus Christ, it is a good thing.

Verse 11-15

Romans 11:14-15

I am talking to you Gentiles. In as much as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

4) Objective question. Choose the appropriate answer, can be more than one. Based on verses 14-15 and the video lecture, which of the following is true?

- A. Paul is an apostle to the Gentiles
- B. Paul wishes that through his ministry to the Gentiles, the Jews will get jealous and angry
- C. Paul wishes that through his ministry to the Gentiles, the Jews will get jealous and also want to be saved
- D. Paul wishes that the Jews continue rejecting the gospel because their rejection brought reconciliation to the world
- E. Paul wishes the Jews will accept the gospel and their acceptance is a good thing because it will be "life from the dead"

Verse 16

Romans 11:16

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.

5) Objective question. Choose the most appropriate answer. Based on verse 16 and the video lecture, what is Paul trying to say with this metaphor?

- A. If the Patriarchs like Abraham is kept holy for the LORD so will the rest of the Jews.
- B. Paul is giving tips on baking and gardening.

Part 3 of 4: Warning Against Spiritual Pride (Romans 11:17-22)

Verse 17-22

Romans 11:17-22

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, 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. You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. 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.

6) a) Objective question. Choose the most appropriate answer. In the metaphor in verses 17-22, who is the "wild olive shoot" according to the video lecture?

A. Gentiles

B. Jews

b) Objective question. Choose the most appropriate answer. In the metaphor in verses 17-22, who are the "branches/other branches/natural branches that are broken off" according to the video lecture?

A. Gentiles

B. Jews

c) Objective question. Choose the most appropriate answer. In the metaphor in verses 17-22, who are the "olive root/root" according to the video lecture?

A. Jewish roots- the Patriarchs (Abraham etc)

B. God

d) Reflection question. Paul gave some warnings to the Gentile Christians to not be arrogant. Have you found yourself looking down on those who do not accept the gospel of Jesus? Please share.

Verses

- "do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches" (v.18)

- "Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either." (v.20-21)

- "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." (v.22)

Background information

Fear: “Reverential respect for God of majesty and glory with a healthy concern to continue to live out of the grace of God in our lives.”

Part 4 of 4: God will Redeem the Rest of Israel in the Future (Romans 11:23-36)

Verse 23-24

Romans 11:23-24

And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. 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!

7) a) Objective question. Choose the most appropriate answer. In verse 23, who is the “they” according to the video lecture?

A. Gentiles

B. Jews

b) Objective question. Choose the most appropriate answer. In verse 24, who is the “you” according to the video lecture?

A. Gentiles

B. Jews

Verse 25-27

Romans 11:25-27

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, 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.

And this is my covenant with them
when I take away their sins.”

8) Objective question. Choose the most appropriate answer. According to the video lecture, who does “All Israel” in “all Israel will be saved” in verse 26, refer to?

A. All Christians (Jews and Gentiles)

B. Messianic Jews (Christian Jews)

C. Nation of Israel

Verse 28-29

Romans 11:28-29

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, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.

9) a) Fill in the blanks. What does "As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for your sake" in verse 28 mean according to the video lecture?

Jews are allowed to	Disobey (gospel)	For the sake of the ingrafting of the	Gentiles
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b) Fill in the blanks. What does "but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable" in verses 28-29 mean according to the video lecture?

Jews will be brought	Back to faith	Because of	God's covenant	With their forefathers (Patriarchs)
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Verse 30-32

Romans 11:30-32

Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, 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. For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

10) Fill in the blanks. According to the video lecture, what is the common thing both the Jews and Gentiles will receive based on verses 30-32?

Last time (at one time)	Now	Both the disobedient will receive...
Gentiles disobedient	Gentiles received mercy	God's mercy
Jews obeyed	Jews disobedient	

Verse 33-36

Romans 11:33-36

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

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

"Who has known the mind of the Lord?

Or who has been his counselor?"

"Who has ever given to God,
that God should repay them?"

For from him and through him and for him are all things.

To him be the glory forever! Amen.

10) Reflection question. Paul breaks into spontaneous worship in verses 33-36! Share your reaction and thoughts from Paul's example of worship. You may see the examples in the model answer below and give your reflection on them.

Model Answer

There are many, many more things we can learn that can be put down here. But here are some ideas:

A. On the one hand — **there should be no worship without truth.** Paul is quoting Scripture as he praises God spontaneously. In v.34 he quotes Is.40:13 and in v.35 he quotes Job 41:11. Knowing Scripture intimately makes an enormous difference in both the ignition of praise in the heart and in the expression of praise. Many books teach meditation/spirituality techniques that center on “visualizations” of incidents on one’s past or on phrases or images or even on nothing at all. Worship should not come from meditation in general, but through the meditation of Scripture in particular. The Bible must always be the center of any public or private praise and worship.

B. On the other hand — **there should be no teaching or study of truth without worship.** Paul does not just teach or study doctrinal truth without using it immediately as a basis for the praise of God. He never treats truth as just something to be known or even applied, but as a gateway into praise of God. He uses truth to see God. We are never to study God or the Bible in a detached, cool manner. We must let ourselves be disturbed and comforted and challenged by the truth. We must always allow ourselves to feel its power.

C. **Doctrines that exalt God lead to the greatest joy.** Paul does not find the deepest impulses for praise in looking at human accomplishments. Praise comes to the degree we see our weakness and impotence and complete dependence on him. In other words, the doctrines of God's complete sovereignty in salvation is what leads Paul to the greatest joy and praise. We have never given God anything — he owes us nothing. These are the ideas that bring Paul the most joy in worship.

D. Paul does not even get troubled by the parts of God’s ways that he cannot discern or figure out. “how unsearchable his judgments and how inscrutable his ways” (v.33 – King James Version). Many people feel they cannot bow or worship God unless they can understand everything about him.

Takeaway for Romans 11

Part 1 of 4: God Allows a Partial Hardening of Israel (Romans 11:1-10)

Part 2 of 4: This Allows the Incorporation of Gentiles (Romans 11:11-16)

Part 3 of 4: Warning Against Spiritual Pride (Romans 11:17-22)

Part 4 of 4: God will Redeem the Rest of Israel in the Future (Romans 11:23-36)

TENSION

Danger passages

Rom 11:22 *provided* you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off

Romans 8:17b ..heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, *provided* we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him

Assurance passages

Romans 8:38-39 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord

MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY

Warning passages

Road signs to follow in order to complete the journey

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

Assurance passages

Guarantees you will get there

“Jesus full intends for us to understand that God who elected his own for salvation, secures them from apostasy and preserves them through afflictions by use of warnings that caution watchfulness, wariness and vigilant steadfastness.” -T. Schreiner and A Canedy p159

Case Studies

Case 1

We live in a country where the Jews are mainly vilified publicly as a matter of policy. War atrocities of the Jews are constantly brought up and those of the others are minimized.

11) Discussion question. Should we as Christians support the nation of Israel and defend them even in the public space in our discussions with our neighbors? Does Israel have a right to exist? You may refer to the model answer below.

Model Answer

Romans 11 tells us clearly that the Jews as a nation will be saved when the full number of Gentiles have been saved. The actions of the political nation of Israel will have to be judged individually on their own merits whether it is war crimes or self-defense. We need to engage our neighbors to treat each one fairly.

I believe the state of Israel has a right to exist and Christians should support this stand rather than take the position of some radicals that they must be wiped out. -Dr. Peter Ng

Here is an interesting article by the Sultanah of Johor:

“For so long now most Malaysian Muslims see all Jews as wicked and evil. That is like believing that all Muslims are good when we know some have acted against the very teachings of Islam. Listen to what Rabbi Michael Learner has to say about Muslims, about Israel, about Palestine, about peace, and you will understand that it is wrong to pass judgement on anyone.

And, yes, I do have a few Jewish friends: they have shown me kindness and compassion, especially during my darker days. I am also honored to have Palestinian friends who have remained brave and are still filled with hope that one day there will be peace in their homeland.

I have lived through the unimaginable as a mother and it has changed me. I now do not care if what I believe in makes me unpopular. What I would like to achieve is to be a good Muslim and a decent human being.”

Case 2

Gary Low was a young Christian and happen to read Romans 11:7-10 and was very disturbed and questioned how God could be so dictatorial and arbitrary to cause Israelites to not to be able to believe in Him. He gave them a spirit of stupor!!! How can God then

turn around and condemn these very same Jews when He is the cause of their non-responsiveness.

12) Discussion question. How do you answer Gary? You may refer to the model answer below.

Model Answer

Verse 7 says, "What Israel (meaning Israel as a whole or majority) sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect (meaning Israel's believing minority). The others were hardened." It is in 10:3 that Paul tells us what it was that Israel "sought" — righteousness. However, they sought it by establishing their own, rather than receiving it as a gift from God through Christ. (10:3-4)

Here then seems to be the order: First, Israel sought the righteousness of God, but when confronted with the choice of getting it by "works" or "gift," the majority sought it through the former and the "elect" through the gift. Then the majority was hardened. I think it is fair to paraphrase Paul in v.7 like this:

"Israel sought the righteousness of God earnestly, but wrongly, except for the elect. As a result, the majority were hardened."

Therefore the hardening we have here is a "judicial" hardening — a punishment for having a proud heart that rejects the message of grace. Thus in vv.9-10 (quoting from Psalm 69) we see that the "darkening" of their eyes is retribution! Retribution is a punishment that exactly fits the crime. Hardening is thus a most fitting punishment for a proud spirit. Pride and self-centeredness lead to hardness and lovelessness. Though God executes it, it is a natural consequence!

Case 3

Jillian Mah was a remarkable young woman brought up to be very spiritually attuned to the people around her. At a very young age, she became a Christian through infant baptism as her parents were Christian. She had a great deal of love and zeal for God and went on many trips as a young teenager for projects in disaster relief all over the world. She now works for Doctors without borders after finishing off Medical School in Sydney. Friends from her old church visited her one day and when the conversation turned to Christ she quietly admitted that she cannot possibly agree with the narrow-minded doctrines of her parents who think Jesus is the only way to God. There are so many ways to please God and one only has to do what comes naturally to please Him.

13) a) Discussion question. How is it possible for her to so want to please God that she now rejects Christ's love for her? You may summarize the model answer below.

Model Answer

We must remember as well that “hardening” does not necessarily mean bitterness, wrath, and hostility toward Christianity per se. It does not necessarily mean harshness. A hardened person is someone who is completely obtuse to the gospel of free justification and adoption.

Verse 7 thus gives us a picture of a dynamic that can happen today. The amazing concept is this — a person can be trying so desperately (earnestly) hard to please and serve God that he or she comes to vigorously resist the idea of grace. How? Well, you could very easily conclude that God is holy and majestic and that he cannot abide evil in any way. Therefore, you conclude you must cleanse and purify your heart to approach him. You find any concept of “free total acceptance” as dishonoring to a holy God! “Imagine!” says a person with this view.

“The idea that a convicted murderer can just say words of repentance and come right into God like a person who has worked for years to be good! How illogical! How insulting to the righteousness of God!” You can see the gospel as an insult to the greatness of the Lord.

This is a form of spiritual “judo” done on the heart by sin and the devil. (“Judo” uses the enemy's forward motion against him.) It is good to seek God’s righteousness, but that eagerness can easily be used to make the gospel seem unworthy of that righteousness. So through a real desire to please God — mixed with an unwitting pride in one’s abilities — the heart becomes deeply allergic and hard toward the mercy and love of God through Christ. This is the case with many people around the world today. Very sincere Jews and Muslims and Hindus, for example, misguidedly reject the gospel because it seems to weaken the need for moral effort. But inside the church, this dynamic is working heavily as well. It can be seen in whole congregations motivated almost completely by fear and guilt and a need for approval.

Case 3.2

Jillian shared that it was growing up in her parent’s church that she had seen so many hypocrites even leaders who say they love God but when the crunch came never volunteered for any work to help the poor. After that experience, Jesus was never real to her anymore. She now concentrated on helping the poor because she trust that God will continue to use her as He has so powerfully done so in the past. Her life is pleasing to God whilst the ones in her church are not.

b) Discussion question. What do you think is the spiritual problem with her?

She may have zeal and love for God but her social endeavors have made her proud. Her pride is based on her performance which is a proxy for her spirituality. She has compared herself to church members and feels she is better than them and the pride has blinded her to the truth.

13) Do this as a self-exercise (no need for discussion). Fill in the blanks. There seems to be a repetitive pattern of “Israel initial sin->Gentiles saved instead->Israel later saved” in Romans 11. Write down the part of the verse that shows evidence for this “pattern”.

Verses	Pattern	Verse content that proves this point
vv11-12	Sin of Israel	they stumble...their transgression...their transgression means riches for the world,
	Salvation Gentiles	salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious...and their loss means riches for the Gentiles
	Israel full inclusion	how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!
v15	Rejection of Israel	their rejection
	Reconcile world	brought reconciliation to the world
	Israel acceptance	what will their acceptance be but life from the dead
vv17-23	Natural branches broken	If some of the branches have been broken off,
	Wild branches grafted in	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...But they were broken off because of unbelief,...You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.”
	Natural branches grafted back	And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again
vv25-26	Hardening Israel	Israel has experienced a hardening in part
	Fullness of Gentiles	until the full number of the Gentiles has come in
	All Israel saved	and in this way all Israel will be saved.

vv30-31	Disobedience Israel	as a result of their disobedience
	Mercy Gentiles	Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy
	Mercy Israel	they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you.

Meditation

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 (Romans 11:21-22 ESV)

What wrong attitudes do I need to repent of?

What is it in these verses that bring comfort?

What is it in these verses that build me up?

Meditate on these for the next week and come back to share with each other how God has spoken to you through the Holy Spirit.