

Romans

I. The Jews loss has brought about the Gentiles gain

A. Romans 11:7-24 . . . What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; [8] just as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes to see not and ears to hear not, down to this very day." [9] And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, and a stumbling block and a retribution to them. [10] "Let their eyes be darkened to see not, and bend their backs forever." [11] I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. [12] Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! [13] But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, [14] if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them. [15] For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? [16] If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too. [17] But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, [18] do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. [19] You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." [20] Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; [21] for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either. [22] Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. [23] And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. [24] For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?

B. Prayer

II. The Jews loss has brought about the Gentiles gain

A. Romans 11:7a . . . What then?

1. The “What then?” or “Now what?” of vs 7 refers to the fact that since the time of Moses, Israel has heard from God about the righteousness that comes about by faith rather than by the works of the law, and Israel has heard about the universal inclusion of the Gentiles in the family of God.
2. Yet in spite of having heard, most Jews have continued denying having heard, and have continued to disobey and stubbornly resist the revealed word of God.
3. However, despite their continued disobedience and stubborn resistance, God has not rejected them as a group.
 - a. Only those who refuse to repent, come to God in faith, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and live a life of faithful obedience, are unjustified.
 - b. And yet, any Jew who repents and comes in faith to Jesus Christ, will obtain favor with God, be justified, and given the gift of eternal salvation.
4. With this background in mind, Paul moves on to answer his question.

B. Romans 11:7b-8 . . . What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; [8] just as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes to see not and ears to hear not, down to this very day."

1. What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained –
 - a. And what is Israel seeking? Acceptance by God, blessing from God, and justification with the promise of eternal life.
 - b. However, as Paul began pointing out in Romans 2, the Jews are not automatically justified. Only those who live by faith in the redemptive work of God through Jesus Christ, and who live according to the righteousness of God – as described in the law – are justified. Therefore, though Israel was seeking justification, it was taking the wrong path and therefore not obtaining it.
2. But those who were chosen obtained it –
 - a. As we learned back in Romans 9, Paul did not create a new theology of salvation when he spoke of God choosing or electing those who are saved. Rather, Paul spoke of God’s choosing in order to counter two false beliefs held by the Jews.

- (1) First, Paul was countering the Jew's belief that they are automatically justified because of their birth heritage and religious practices – in spite of how they live day-to-day.
 - (2) Second, Paul was countering the Jew's belief that if their righteous deeds accomplished exceeded by even one the number of sins committed, they will then be in a standing with God whereby He owes them justification.
- b. Therefore, Paul's point here is that God – not the Jews, not the Protestants who hold to eternal security, and not the Catholics who believe they are the true church – but God, independently, decides and therefore chooses who He will justify for the purpose of giving them eternal life. And this is important because Paul is teaching that God is choosing and justifying Gentiles.
3. And the rest (*those God is not choosing*) were hardened –
 - a. As you may recall, Paul first speaks of God hardening hearts in Romans 9:18 where he uses the hardening of Pharaoh as another example of God independently choosing how He will deal with each individual rather than you and I deciding how God will deal with us.
 - b. And as I said then, God's hardening of a person's heart – such as Pharaoh's – is punitive for this life, not eternally damning.
 - (1) This means God is making it harder for long-term practicing sinner's to come to repentance and a life of faith.
 - (2) Now we do not know if God does this through a specific act of hardening, or if He takes advantage of the hardening we bring on ourselves by resisting the truth and refusing to live up to what we know is right (*dulling our conscience, hardening our heart*). It may even be that God makes full use of both methods, simultaneously. Either way, we know from vs 8, that God is fully involved in the hardening.
4. [8] just as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes to see not and ears to hear not, down to this very day."
 - a. To the best of our knowledge, this quotation is a combination of two OT scriptures, Isaiah 29:10 and Isaiah 6:9-10.
 - b. Isaiah 29:10 . . . For the LORD has poured over you a spirit of deep sleep, He has shut your eyes (*functional blindness*), the prophets; and He has covered (*put a hood over*) your heads, the seers.
 - c. Isaiah 6:9-10 . . . [God] said [to Isaiah], "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on listening, but do not perceive; keep on looking, but do

not understand.' [10] Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim, otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed." (*read vs 8 again*)

- C. Next Paul turns to the Psalms for additional scripture support. Romans 11:9-10 . . . And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, and a stumbling block and a retribution to them. [10] Let their eyes be darkened to see not, and bend their backs forever."
1. *This may or may not be of interest to you.* In your Hebrew OT, this quote is found in Psalm 69:22-23, but in the Septuagint, it is found in Psalm 68:23-24 . . . Let their table become a snare before them, and a recompense and a stumbling block. Let their eyes be darkened so they may not see, and bend down their backs continually.
 2. Psalm 68 (Septuagint) is written like a prayer, and the church has understood it to be a Messianic Psalm expressing Christ's distress in the face of an aggressive, unrelenting enemy – those Jews who were intent on putting Jesus to death.
 3. The first part of the quote stated here in Romans 11:9, is a prayer asking God to turn the enemies blessings, their pleasures, and their personal riches into a curse that will further harden their heart against God.
 4. The second part of the quote as found in Romans 11:10, continues the prayer, asking God to give the enemy eyes that do not see and a back weighed down by a heavy burden – which most probably is the burden created by the destructive consequences of their sin.
 5. However, the second half of this quote expresses the idea of finality – that is, eyes blinded and backs bent forever. And it is this sense of finality that sets up Paul's question in Romans 11:11 – which in essence is, "Does this mean they are lost forever?"
- D. Before looking at Paul's answer to the "Are they lost forever?" question, I want to summarize what we have covered in Romans 11 so far.
1. First, we see that God has not rejected Israel as a nation, as proven by the fact that there is at least a remnant of Jews who have come to faith in Jesus Christ, Paul being one of them.
 2. Then we see that, due to the Jews rebellion and stubborn resistance to God's revealed truth, God has added a hardening of heart to their already hardened heart, thus making it that much harder for them to come to faith in Jesus Christ.

3. And this brings us to vs 11 where Paul, in essence, raises the same question he asked in vs 1. I also want to point out that this is the last of the many questions Paul asks and answers in Romans 9-11. And all of these questions and answers deal with Paul's teaching about why the Jews are not automatically secure in God's love.
- E. Romans 11:11a . . . I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be!
1. The larger inference of the question goes like this:
 - a. If God deals with Israel as a nation,
 - b. and if God made it clear in the OT scriptures that they were not going to be automatically justified,
 - c. and if God made it clear that they had to rise to His standard of righteousness in keeping the law – which requires living by faith,
 - d. and if God told them through the prophets about Jesus Christ,
 - e. and if they did not heed God's message, but continued to rebel and stubbornly resist God and His word,
 - f. then isn't that offense of such magnitude as to mean they are now cut off from God and without hope of eternal salvation?
 2. The simple answer to this question is "No!" And the reason it is "No!" is because no matter how rebellious and sinful we become, as long as we are still alive in this world, and able, we can repent, confess our sin, turn to God in faith, trust in Jesus' redeeming work for salvation, and proceed to live a life of trust in and faithful obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ.
 3. Therefore, though it is true that God deals with nations as a whole group, it is also true that God deals with each individual, so that any individual in a condemned nation, who repents and lives by faith, will be saved (Romans 10:13). And this includes any Jew.
- F. Now, having stated the simple answer, what we have before us, from vs 11b through vs 32, is a more complex answer. However, to help us make our way through this more complex answer, I want to give you a simple summation of the more complex answer.
1. The Jews rebellion and stubborn resistance has resulted in the gospel being preached to the whole world so that any non-Jew can come to God in faith, live a godly life by faith, be justified and given the gift of eternal life.
 2. Therefore, Gentiles can now come to God without having to come through the ceremonial signs of keeping the law (*i.e.*, *Temple worship*,

the sacrifices, circumcision, and the observance of feast and fast days – such as Passover). All Gentiles must do is come in faith, believe in Jesus, and live a life of faithful obedience (Note: Acts 15:22-29).

3. Now, with this simple summation in mind, let us examine Paul's more complex answer, because it teaches truth we are wise to learn.
- G. Romans 11:11b . . . But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them (*the unbelieving Jews*) jealous.
1. The idea of making the sinful Jews jealous by including Gentiles in God's family is first spoken of in Deuteronomy 32:21 . . . They have made Me jealous with what is not God; they have provoked Me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation (*the Gentiles – who God refers to as a single group*)."
 2. In the NT, Jesus affirmed that the church was to include Jews and Gentiles alike when He told the disciples – and subsequently us – to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20).
 3. God affirmed this when sending Ananias to Paul to restore his sight, for God assured Ananias that it was safe to meet with Paul because, in God's words, "[Paul] is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel" (Acts 9:15).
 4. My point is that OT and NT scriptures affirm that Gentiles were to be included in God's great work of justification and eternal salvation. And some of those scriptures include the idea that the universal inclusion of Gentiles was to have the positive effect of making the unbelieving Jews jealous enough to repent and turn in faith to God.
 5. Now, in an effort to keep this jealousy factor in perspective, we must remember that using jealousy to urge unbelieving Jews back to a right relationship with God was neither God's only nor even His primary reason for saving Gentiles. It was just one of His reasons – even though no other reasons are mentioned here. (*Value context*)
- H. Romans 11:12 . . . Now if their (*unbelieving Jews*) transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!
1. In other words, if the Jews' rebellion and stubborn refusal to heed God's word brought the exceeding rich blessing of justification and eternal salvation for any Gentile who calls on the name of the Lord, then surely a large scale number of Jews repenting and turning to a life of faith will bring even greater riches and blessings from God.

2. The next thing Paul does is step aside for a moment and defend his ministry to the Gentiles as an effort to further move his fellow Jews toward jealousy in hopes they will come to faith in Jesus Christ.

I. Romans 11:13-14 . . . But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles (*most likely the majority of the Christians in Rome, and Paul is telling them that though he just spent a lot of time on explaining why the Jews are not automatically justified, he is now turning his attention toward them*). Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify (*that is, I make known as far and wide as I can*) my ministry, [14] if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them. (*Having just defended his ministry to the Gentiles on the basis of it hopefully resulting in salvation for his fellow Jews, Paul returns to what he was saying in vs 12.*)

J. Romans 11:15 . . . For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

1. Again, Paul affirms that God has extended eternal riches to the Gentiles because of the Jews rebellion and stubborn resistance to God's word. Or as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:19, God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself .

2. Then, as he did in vs 12, Paul affirms that if the Jews will only repent and live by faith, it will result in life from the dead, or eternal life.

a. We don't know this to be the case, but it is possible Paul was drawing on Jesus' parable about the prodigal son when saying the Jew's acceptance will result in life from the dead.

b. Listen as I read from Luke 15:21-24 . . . "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." [22] But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; [23] and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; [24] for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found."

III. Conclusion: Romans 11:33-36 . . . Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to God that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.