

Israel's Restoration and the Salvation of the World
Romans 11:11-36

Introduction

1. Paul just finished describing Israel's abstinence and disobedience and how that is the only thing that stands between them and receiving God's promises
2. He just described how God had hardened them as a form of judgement
3. Today we learn that this hardening is only temporary and serves a divine purpose

A. God has a divine plan and purpose in Israel's hardening (11-15)

1. Israel stumbled but they haven't fallen (11a): **"I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be!"**
 - a. **"Stumble"** here refers to Israel's rejection of Christ and a righteousness based on faith
 - b. **"Fall"** refers to spiritual ruin, or a complete and total separation from God, "cut off" as it says in 11:22
 - c. So, Israel's hardening is akin to stumbling on the sidewalk but not quite hitting the ground (we've all done that)
2. Paul reveals God's two fold purpose in hardening Israel (11-16)
 - a. One purpose is that Israel's hardening has brought salvation to the gentiles (11b): **"But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles,"**
 - b. The second purpose is that the Gentiles' salvation will ultimately lead to the restoration and salvation of Israel (11-12):
 - 1) How will this happen? The Gentiles salvation will cause Israel to become jealous (11b): **"to make them jealous."**
 - 2) This jealousy will lead to Israel's restoration: (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!"**
 - a) **"fulfillment"** here is best understood as Israel's restoration (NET: **"their full restoration"**)
 - b) We know from the context of 9-11 that Paul is referring to the *true* Israel, not the entire nation or every Israelite, but the faithful remnant of Israel
 - c) Paul pauses to reflect on his own ministry and role in provoking Israel to jealousy (13-14): **"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."**
 - 3) Paul returns to the point he was making in v. 12:
 - a) In v. 12 he stated that since Israel's transgression brought **"riches"** for the world and the Gentiles, Israel's restoration would bring **"much more"**
 - b) He didn't tell us what that **"much more"** was in v.12, but he does here (15): **"for if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?"**—let's break this down:
 - **"their rejection"** refers to God's *temporary* casting aside of Israel

- This temporary casting aside lead to the “**reconciliation of the world**” which is another way of referring to the salvation that has come to the rest of the world
 - “**Their acceptance**” refers to Israel’s restoration, acceptance by God and refers to the faithful remnant or *true* Israel
 - “**life from the dead**” refers to spiritual salvation
3. So the implication is this: that God’s promise to bless all the nations of the earth through Israel is ultimately fulfilled as God incorporates them into His plan for Israel:
- a. In v. 11 Paul said that Israel’s rebellion brought salvation to the gentiles
 - b. In v. 12 he wrote that if Israel’s rejection by God brought “**riches**” to the world (Gentiles), Israel’s acceptance by God would bring “**much more**” and the context indicates this is much more to the world
 - c. That “**much more**” for the world is revealed to be “**life from the dead**”
 - d. So, the world’s/Gentile’s salvation is linked to God’s restoration of faithful Israel because, as Paul will lay out in the verses below, Gentiles are grafted into Israel

B. So, God’s plan includes grafting both Jew and Gentile into the same tree (16-22):

1. Paul introduces two metaphors (16): “**If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too.**”
 - a. The first is dough
 - 1) Paul likely has in mind Numbers 15:21-22: “**Of the first of your dough you shall lift up a cake as an offering ;as the offering of the threshing floor, so you shall lift it up. From the first of your dough you shall give to the LORD an offering throughout your generations.**”
 - 2) The “**first of your dough**” is holy because serves as an offering to God; it’s sanctified, set apart, holy
 - 3) Offering the first piece of dough sanctifies (makes holy) the remaining lump of dough
 - 4) In this metaphor, the first piece of dough is Jesus Christ, the “first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20-23) and the holy offering
 - 5) The lump is God’s people made up of Jews and Gentiles
 - b. The second is an olive tree
 - 1) Paul mentions the root and the branches
 - 2) The roots of a tree are the most important part of the tree because they provide not only nutrients to the tree, but they provide support
 - 3) If the root of the tree is healthy, then the branches will be healthy as well
 - 4) In this metaphor, the root is Jesus Christ, the olive tree is entity Israel, the natural branches represent the people of Israel, and the wild olive tree represents the gentiles
 - 5) So, in this metaphor, any branches (Jews and Gentiles) that are connected to the root (Jesus) are holy
2. Paul explains the incorporation of the gentiles into God’s plan and offers a warning to gentiles (17-22):
 - a. Some of the natural braches (unfaithful Jews) were broken off from the root and the gentiles (gentile Christians) were grafted into the root (Christ; 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,”

- b. Paul warns against boasting and arrogance on the part of the gentiles (18-22):
 - 1) We must refrain from becoming arrogant against the branches that were broken off (unbelieving Jews; 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.”**
 - 2) We are warned against conceit (excessive pride; thinking we deserve a place in the tree while the unbelieving branches don’t; 19-20) : **“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;”** –this is often at the heart of replacement theology
 - 3) Instead, we should develop a healthy fear (20b-22): **“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.”**

C. God’s plan culminates in restoring and saving Israel (23-32):

- 1. The remnant of Israel will be grafted back into the healthy tree (23-24): **“And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.”**
 - a. **“They”** refers to those who **“do not continue in their unbelief”**
 - b. These are the braches who were broken off and the ones who **“will be grafted [back] in”** to the health tree (e.g. the people of God made up of both Gentiles and Jews)
 - c. Paul is referring to the remnant (Romans 9:27; 11:5)
 - d. Notice that it is God who is **“able to graft them in again”** and it is based on faith--not continuing in their unbelief (23b-24): **“... 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?”**
- 2. Israel’s hardening is only temporary (25-27):
 - a. It will end when God fulfills his plan for the Gentiles (25): **“For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery-- so that you will not be wise in your own estimation-- that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;”**
 - 1) See John 10:16—the Gentiles are Jesus’ **“other sheep”**
 - 2) Jesus used a similar phrase in Luke 21:24 in referring to the end times when Jerusalem would continue to **“be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”**
 - b. Israel will be saved (26-32): **“and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB." 27 "THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.”**
 - 1) **“and so”** is better translated as **“and thus”** or **“and in this manner”** (as the ESV and CSB) and indicates the manner in which Israel will be saved (e.g. they will be grafted back into the tree when they abandon their unbelief)

- 2) **“all Israel”**: the phrase is “all Israel” not “every Israelite” and is a reference to the nation of Israel as a whole, not a reference that every Jew will be saved
 - a) Not every Jew is a part of the true Israel (Romans 9:6)
 - b) It’s only the remnant that will be saved (Romans 9:27)
 - c) Example: “America is a Christian nation”: this is a reference to the nature, founding or heritage of America, not a claim that every American is a Christian

- 3) This salvation of Israel is a reference to the eschatological restoration of Israel that occurs at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ shown by Paul’s quoting of Isaiah 59:20-21):
 - a) Paul only quotes part of it, but in its entirety it reads: **“A Redeemer will come to Zion, And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,” declares the LORD. 21 “As for Me, this is My covenant with them,” says the LORD: “My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring,” says the LORD, “from now and forever.”**
 - b) Chapters 60-66 (end of the book) describe God’s restoration of faithful Israel (the remnant), His judging of the nations **and** unfaithful Israelites, and the creation of the new heavens and new earth (e.g. second coming through the millennial kingdom, through the final battle and ultimately eternity).

- 4) This is because God’s calling of Israel is irrevocable (28-31):
 - a) In spite of their current rebellion, they are still loved by God because of His irrevocable promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (28-29): **“From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.”**
 - b) Just as God showed mercy to the Gentiles, He will show mercy to Israel (30-31): **“For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, 31 so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. 32 For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.”**

D. Conclusion (33-36)

1. As Paul wraps up his discussion of the future of Israel and their place in God’s redemptive plan all he can do is marvel (33a): **“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!”**
2. He describes the riches of God’s wisdom and knowledge as impossible to comprehend (he uses the same Greek word twice; 33b): **“How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!”**
3. Paul concludes with a short doxology which stresses the centrality of God in His plan for Israel (36): **“For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”**
 - a. As Moo writes in his commentary on Romans (p. 743), God is the source (“**from Him**”), the sustainer (“**through Him**”) and goal (“**to Him**”)
 - b. As such, He deserves glory