

Romans 11¹ “The Natural and Wild Branches”²

Romans 11

I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, 3 “LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life”? 4 But what does the divine response say to him? “I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” 5 Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

1. Paul asks the obvious question. Since the Jews rejected the Messiah, did He cast them off? No. Paul is living proof.
2. God hasn't cast of the nation He foreknew.

Denney says; "Which He foreknew" must contain a reason which makes the rejection incredible or impossible...We must take 'foreknew', as in 8:29: the meaning is, Israel stood before God's eyes from eternity as His people, and in the immutableness of the sovereign love with which He made it His, lies the impossibility of its rejection."-Wuest

3. He quotes Elijah when he thought he was the only one left to serve God. Paul knew he was not the only Jew to believe in the Messiah. There were thousands.
4. God let Elijah know that he was not the only person left who was faithful to God. There were 7,000 who were yet faithful. This; however, is sad, since there were millions of Israelites at the time.
5. “A remnant according to the election of grace” means those who chose to believe in Jesus by grace through faith.

6 And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.

¹ Unless otherwise stated, all scripture is taken from the *New King James Version (NKJV)* Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

² In this lesson, the number of the point corresponds with the number of the verse.

6. **Grace is grace. Salvation comes by grace through faith, not works. If salvation comes by works, then it doesn't come by grace. You can't balance grace with works. If you do, then grace ceases to be grace. You cannot earn grace.**

Alford, commenting on the contents of verse six, says; "And let us remember, when we say an election of grace, how much those words imply: namely, nothing short of the entire exclusion of all human work from the question. Let these two terms be regarded as, and kept distinct from one another, and do not let us attempt to mix them and so destroy the meaning of each."-Wuest's

In the statement, "Grace is no more grace," the word "is" is ginomai, "to become." Vincent says; "No longer comes into manifestation as what it really is. 'It gives up its specific character.'" -Wuest

7 What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. 8 Just as it is written:

*"God has given them a spirit of stupor,
Eyes that they should not see
And ears that they should not hear,
To this very day."*

9 And David says:

*"Let their table become a snare and a trap,
A stumbling block and a recompense to them.
10 Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see,
And bow down their back always."*

7. **"The elect" are those who believed in the Messiah. "The rest" refers to those who chose not to believe.**
8. **To those who rejected Christ, blindness was given. This is the same as we see in Romans 1. Those who rejected Jesus were blinded. They were not blinded SO THAT they could not believe but BECAUSE they would not believe.**
9. **God allows man to not believe, and this results in further darkness.**

How are we to understand this? Moses records the fact that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, but not until Pharaoh had first hardened his own heart. The original hardening came from his totally depraved nature. Then God hardened Pharaoh's heart by forcing him to an issue which he did not want to meet. The more God demanded that he let Israel go, the more Pharaoh rebelled. The more he rebelled, the harder his heart became. So with Israel. Israel rejected God and His Word, and the more it did so the harder its heart became. Light rejected, blinds. In addition to this natural hardening of the heart, there was God's judicial action of hardening as, a just judgment upon its sin of rejection. Denney explains as follows; "Paul does not say how they were hardened or by whom: there is the same indefiniteness here as in 'vessels fitted to destruction' in 9:22. Wuest's

11 I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. 12 Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!

11. God did not cause the Jews to reject Christ so that they would fall. He knew who would accept and reject Him. This “fall” would result in the salvation of the Gentiles which would provoke them to jealousy (in hopes they would believe).

But the salvation of the Gentiles is not the end of the story. It too has a purpose—to make the Jews jealous. The blessings offered to the Gentiles would spur Israel to end their hostility toward the gospel and ultimately bring them to faith. God desires to restore Israel to himself. -Life Application New Testament Commentary

12. Paul is saying if their fall and failure resulted in riches of grace for the Gentiles, how much more would their fullness produce.

Professor J. A. Robinson's paraphrase: "If the Gentiles have been enriched in a sense, through the very miscarriage and disaster of Israel, what wealth is in store for them in the great Return, when all Israel shall be saved – 'when God hath made the pile complete.' " Think of it – the Lord Jesus, personally reigning on the throne of David in Jerusalem, the nation Israel saved, Satan bound, and universal righteousness, peace, and prosperity for one thousand years, "that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles" (Acts 15:17). -Wuest

13 For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, 14 if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them. 15 For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

13. Paul's main ministry was to the Gentiles and he is addressing them.

"Magnify" is doxazō, "to glorify." Paul glorifies his ministry in the sense that he honors it by the faithful discharge of its duties." -Wuest

14. He hopes that his ministry to the Gentiles will provoke the Jews to jealousy resulting in their salvation.
15. If the casting away of the Jews meant the reconciling of the Gentiles, then surely their acceptance would be nothing short of life from the dead.

Casting away of Israel the nation, refers to the act of God setting Israel aside temporarily as a channel through which to bring the good news of salvation to the world. -Wuest

16 For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. 17 And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, 18 do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

16. The word *hagios*, "holy" means basically, "set apart for God." There is no reference here to the quality of the life of the patriarchs, but to the fact that they, and thus Israel, have been set apart for God as a chosen nation through which salvation could be produced and channeled to the rest of the human race.-Wuest
17. The "branches broken off" refers to the non-believing Jews. The wild olive tree refers to the Gentiles. Branches from the wild olive tree were grafted in among the Jews, thus become partakes of the root and the fruitfulness of the olive tree³.
18. The Gentiles are not to boast against the Jews just because they currently have the favor of God.

19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." 20 Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either.

19. Paul begins to warn the Gentile believers against pride.
20. He says that verse 19 is true, BUT it was their unbelief (non-faith) that caused them to be broken off, and the Gentiles stand by faith (belief). He warns them not to be haughty in their attitudes.
21. The Jews are the natural branches. If He cut them off due to unbelief, He could cut the Gentiles off for unbelief. The Gentiles were in the tree by FAITH only.

In interpreting verse 21, we must keep in mind that the corporate nation Israel and the Gentiles as distinctive parts of the race are in view, not an individual Gentile. In other words, Paul is not speaking of the possible loss of salvation on the part of a Gentile who glories against the Jew.-Wuest

22 Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.

22. Remember that Paul is focusing on two primary groups, the Jews, and the Gentiles. Paul is speaking specifically to the Church in Rome. The Jews were "broken off"

³ Grafting is not an uncommon practice. You can splice a branch from an orange tree, for example, and put it into a lemon tree. That branch will become part and partaker of that tree.

because they could no longer be a conduit of the correct message of the Gospel, and if any Gentile church rejects the true Gospel, they will be broken off.

- a. In Galatians 1 Paul declares a double curse on anyone preaching another Gospel.

Galatians 1:6-9

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

- b. In the book of Revelation, Jesus says individual Churches can have their lampstand removed.

Revelations 2:4-5

But I have his against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵ Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent.

- c. *For those who might still believe that this is referring to individuals, consider this.* This is a topic of serious debate among commentators ranging from the idea that once someone is born again, no matter what they believe afterward, they cannot be cut off. Others teach that if you live a life of sin, you can be cut off. Our view is that we stand by faith. As long as we believe in Him we “will NOT perish but have everlasting life.”

23 And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. 24 For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

23. This is strong evidence that a return to faith is possible for both groups, with emphasis here on the Jews.

If the Jews give up their unbelief they will be incorporated again in the true people of God." And this is exactly what will take place at the second Advent. Israel as a nation will in the sovereign grace of God be regenerated and filled with the Spirit to become again the channel through which God will operate for one thousand years to bring salvation to a Christ-rejecting world.-Wuest

24. He repeats His illustration. If a wild branch can be grafted in, how much more would a natural branch be received by the tree.

The second speaks of the completion of the Mystical Body of Christ made up of Jew and Gentile saved from Pentecost to the Rapture. The hardening of Israel extends to the time when the last sinner elected to salvation for this Age of Grace, by his introduction into the Body of Christ, completes that Body. The Rapture occurs, the Seventieth Week of Daniel comes some time after this event, and at the second Advent, the salvation of Israel.-Wuest

25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

*“ The Deliverer will come out of Zion,
 And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;
 27 For this is My covenant with them,
 When I take away their sins.”*

25. Because of their unbelief, blindness has happened to Israel, but this will only be for a period of time until “the fullness of the Gentiles has come in”. Most commentators believe this to be until the church is taken up from the earth and then final seven years begin. During this time, the largest group of those being born again will be the Jews.
26. “All of Israel will be saved” is not as debated as one might think. We might think that some commentators would say that this means everyone who has any Jewish ancestry will be saved and that others would take issue with this thought. Actually, we were unable to find any commentator to substantiate the first idea (though likely they exist...we just couldn’t find any). Most agree that this is referring to a time when the Jewish nation will be turning to Christ for salvation. The main reason for not believing that every individual Jew will be automatically saved is it smacks in the face of what Paul has been saying in the entire letter thus far, that salvation and justification comes by faith. God will not make an exception for anyone. Only by grace through faith in Jesus can anyone be saved. Without faith there is no salvation.

By all Israel being saved, Paul means the individual salvation of each member of the nation Israel living at the time of the second Advent. Zechariah (13:1) predicts this cleansing of Israel from its sins in the words, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness." This individual cleansing from sin will be followed by a national restoration to the Messianic kingdom with Messiah reigning on the throne of David in Jerusalem as King of kings and Lord of lords for one thousand years. -Wuest

27. This is referring to *Jeremiah 31:33-34*.
“But his is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

28 Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. 29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. 30 For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, 31 even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. 32 For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.

28. The Jews persecuted Gentiles who preached the gospel making them their enemies, but Paul is instructing them to understand, that in God's eyes these people were still beloved for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
29. God's promises and calling to the Jews were irrevocable.
30. The Gentiles were once disobedient to God, but they obtained mercy through the Jews disobedience.
31. In the same way, the Jews who were now being disobedient (by not believing in Jesus) would obtain mercy due to the mercy shown the Gentiles.

The thought is that God confined both Jew and Gentile within the scope of one kind of guilt, that of unbelief.-Wuest

The words "not believed" and "unbelief" are apeitheō, "not to allow one's self to be persuaded, not to comply with, to refuse or withhold belief, to be disobedient, to refuse belief and obedience." It speaks of a stubborn, stiff-necked attitude.-Wuest

For, even as you formerly disbelieved God, yet now have been made recipients of mercy through (the occasion of) their unbelief, thus also these now have disbelieved in order that through (the occasion of) the mercy which is yours, they themselves also might become the recipients of mercy, for God has corralled all within (the state) of unbelief in order that He might have mercy upon all.-Wuest

32. God declares all disobedient so that He may have mercy on all. None of us are saved because we are obedient (works), but we are saved through grace through faith.

33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

*34 "For who has known the mind of the LORD?
Or who has become His counselor?"*

*35 "Or who has first given to Him
And it shall be repaid to him?"*

36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

- 33. Paul nearly breaks out singing as he praises God for His wisdom and knowledge. He marvels at the ways of the Lord, the way He planned ahead for all of these things.**

And it answers to this, that in the providence of God, Jew and Gentile alike have been made to feel the need of grace by being shut up under disobedience. -Wuest

- 34. God has planned salvation for the Jew and Gentiles. The New Covenant was not Plan B. It was His plan of redemption from the beginning. He knew beforehand that Israel would reject the Messiah, and He planned ahead how to bring them to Himself. Who could have given Him this plan?**

Paul is referring to two truths, namely God's riches on the one hand, and God's wisdom and knowledge on the other...Paul has already written on God's wealth "the riches of His kindness, tolerance and patience"(2:4, "the riches of His glory"(9:23) and the riches which the Lord Jesus bestows indiscriminately on all those who call on Him (10:12). Elsewhere he describes God as rich in mercy, and refers to Christ's inexhaustible riches. The dominate thought is that salvation is a gift from God's riches and that it immensely enriches those to whom it is given. John Stott

- 35. No one is rewarded salvation. It cannot be earned.**
36. All things are from Him and through Him and to Him. To HIM be glory forever.
37. Our worship of God comes from a correct view of who He is.

It is of great importance to note from Romans 1-11 that theology (our belief about God) and doxology (our worship of God) should never be separated. -John Stott