



R & R BIBLE STUDY 2019-20

breathtaking grace

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

LESSON 12

So, the looming questions at hand ... is God's patience with Israel going to wear out? How long will it last? What is the future for the nation of Israel? These questions will be answered in our chapter this week. In my Bible, Romans chapter 11 is titled: Israel's Rejection is Not Total. (I guess that's our answer! 😊) I'd advise reading this chapter again in the New Living Translation; I think it will really help you understand what Paul is trying to say. But remember, it's not the end of the story. God is far more patient than we are. And Paul has already reminded us in Romans 5:20 that "sin increases, but grace increases all the more."

First Day

1. Read Romans 11:1-36. Let's break it down into smaller sections to make it easier and observe the text. Ask yourself: Who? What? When? Where? How? For each section, observe and list the repeated words, phrases, and thoughts, as well as the main point of the section.

A. Verses 1-10

B. Verses 11-15

C. Verses 16-24

D. Verses 25-32

E. Verses 33-36

2. List any words or phrases you aren't familiar with or that you don't understand.

3. Paul asks two questions that in verses 1 and 11 that we can use as an outline of this chapter. What are they? Do you think they're reasonable questions?

4. What are your first thoughts about this chapter? Questions? Application ideas?

As a brief summary (and to make sure we're all on track), Irving Jensen wrote, "God has not finished His dealings with Israel. Their present rejection is neither total nor final. Their rejection is not total because, even in this present time of national rejection, any individual Israelite who will believe on Christ is accepted of God. And Israel's rejection is not final because there is a time coming when Israel as a nation will accept Christ and therefore be accepted by God." See you tomorrow, ladies!

Memory Verse of the Week: "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!" Romans 11:33

1. Read Romans 11:1-10 again. Paul's "imaginary" friend who is dialoguing with him, asks if God's rejection of Israel is total. How does Paul answer this question? (Remember that God deals with Israel both individually and nationally. In this context, he's speaking to individuals.)
2. How and why does Paul use himself as proof of that?
3. In verses 2-4, Paul uses the story of Elijah to answer that question as well. Read the story Paul's referring to in I Kings 18-19:10-14. Summarize the story in your own words.
4. How might this story be a comfort to the Jewish people who had become believers? How is it a comfort to you?

5. In verse 5, what other comfort does Paul give them?

It may have seemed that God was rejecting all Israelites and only accepting Gentiles because so many were coming to Christ. Paul therefore reminds his readers of a similar situation in Elijah's day. There's always been a "remnant" of believers throughout Israel's history. Dave Shepherd defines "the remnant" as follows: "The remnant consists of the righteous people of God who remained after divine judgment. Old Testament accounts abound. For example, Noah and his family may be understood as survivors, or a remnant, of a divine judgment in the flood (Genesis 6:5-8; 7:1-23). In the New Testament, Paul quoted from the prophets Hosea and Isaiah to demonstrate that the saving of a remnant from among the Jewish people was still part of the Lord's method of redeeming His people (Romans 9:25-33). There would always be a future for anyone among the covenant people who would turn to the Lord for salvation." Other examples besides those in Elijah's and Isaiah's time, are during captivity (Ezekiel, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego), during restoration (Ezra, Nehemiah, and followers), at the time of Jesus' birth (John the Baptist, Simeon, Anna), and during the church age (Romans 11:4-5).

5. In verse 6, Paul again reminds his readers that they are saved by something other than works. What does he say?

6. According to verses 7-10, what happened to the rest of the people of Israel? How does this tie in with what we've already learned about Israel's rebellion?

7. Paul quotes Psalm 69:22-23 in verses 9-10. Summarize what Paul is saying in these verses.

Israel's spiritual blessings should have brought them to Christ, but instead, they became a snare that caused them to trip over Him. Their religiosity became a substitute for real faith, keeping them from true salvation. Earlier in our lesson we discussed how people can make the same mistake today by trusting in religious rituals and practices rather than in Christ.

Psalms 69 is David's plea for God to judge the wicked who are persecuting him. It's also a messianic psalm foreshadowing the suffering of Jesus. Commentator John A. Witmer explains why Paul uses these verses to prove his point. He wrote, "The very things that should have been the source of nourishment and blessing to Israel (*table* means their blessings from the hand of God, which should have led them to Christ; Galatians 3:24) became the occasion for their rejection of God (*a snare and a trap, a stumbling block*; Romans 9:32-33) and God's judgement (*retribution*) on them. Because they refused to receive God's truth (Isaiah 6:9-10; John 5:40), *their backs* will be bent under the weight of guilt and punishment *forever*."

God left the Jews who rejected the Messiah to their own devices, turning them over to their own unbelief.

8. Remind yourself about Paul's violent past by reading Acts..... Paul most likely wanted to remind them that if God could save one hostile, violent, hardened Jewish man, as well as arrogant and ignorant Gentiles, they shouldn't give up on the remaining Jews in the synagogues as well. It wasn't the end of their story either. How does that encourage you as you continue to pray for someone whose heart seems hardened? (Have you been ready to give up?)

9. What application do you see for yourself in this section? How does it speak to your heart?

Don't give up on hard people! In these verses we sense God's kindness and longsuffering, which is something we should desire to emulate. The most unlikely and hardened person can be transformed by God's grace. God will pour out His grace on people we'd never expect. It's God's plan, not ours. May we love and pray for others as we see in the example of Christ, who loves us incredibly, and lives to intercede for you and for me!

5. What do you think Paul was trying to say about the Jews from his first word picture? What did he feel was so important for the Gentiles to remember?

6. How does his second analogy drive the point home?

7. What does Paul seem to think the Gentiles may be guilty of if they forget that they weren't saved on their own merit?

John A. Witmer wrote, "To illustrate Israel's special place in God's program, Paul refers to the ancient Jewish practice of consecrating the first piece of dough made from the grains of the new harvest (Numbers 15:20-21). Since it is set apart to the Lord first, it sanctifies the whole harvest. The parallel, then, is that the patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—consecrated the Jews to follow."

Swindoll continues the thought using Paul's second illustration; "Just as life-giving sap flows from the root of a tree through the trunk into the branches, the covenant blessing in Abraham (the root of Israel) courses through each limb of the Jewish nation. Nothing, not even the terrible sin of rejecting the Messiah, can stop up the flow and cause God to revoke His covenant. And yet, because of their transgression, the Jews must endure God's hand of judgement. As a result, writes Bible scholar John Stott, 'The Jews are objects of God's love and wrath simultaneously. This begs the question: How should Paul's Roman readers relate to the Jews—as objects of God's love or as objects of His wrath? As brothers or enemies?'"

8. Read verses 18-22. Why do you think the Gentiles might feel they are "better" than the Jews?

9. In what ways does this still happen today? Are you guilty of thinking you are “better” than someone else? What does Paul say about this kind of arrogance in 1 Cor. 10:12?

10. What promise do we find for Israel in verses 23-24?

11. What does the tree with “grafted branches” reveal or express about the relationship between God, the Jews, and the Gentiles?

12. How were the Gentiles actually obligated to Israel?

13. What warning does Paul give the Gentiles in verses 19-24?

14. What are your thoughts on this section so far? How does it speak to your heart?

I am so excited about this section! I love the nation of Israel and when we're there, I often feel sad because of the hardness of their hearts, which is clearly seen in some of the religious people. I was so blessed to be reminded that the nation of Israel will be restored again! Halleluiah! I love the "grafted in" picture Paul gives us, don't you? And I'm reminded of God's grace that we've received and humbly need to rely on. Over and over Paul reminds us it's not because of anything in us, or anything we've done, that we are "grafted in." It's totally by God's grace.

Fourth Day

Meditate on your verse today.

Before we begin, let's remember that the olive tree is a symbol of the nation of Israel. (Jeremiah 11:16-17; Hosea 14:4-6) Some scholars believe the olive tree symbolizes the church, but then being "cut off" might mean we lose our salvation. Weirsbe wrote, "Keep in mind that Paul was not discussing the relationship of individual believers to God, but the place of Israel in the plan of God. The roots of the tree support the tree; again, this was a symbol of the patriarchs who founded the nation. God made His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and He cannot deny them or change them. Thus, it is God's promise to Abraham that sustains Israel even today."

Alva McClain wrote, “The olive tree represents the pale of favor or privilege. Abraham is the root, for ‘salvation’ is of the Jews (John 4:22). God first brought into favor the Jew, then He cast them out of favor and put in the Gentile. It does not save anyone to be in this olive tree.” In other words, again, it’s referring to them as “nations” not as individuals. Salvation was, and still is, a matter of personal faith.

1. Please read Romans 11 again. Focus on verses 25-27. How do these verses relate to our topic at hand?
2. Why do you think Paul calls this a “mystery”? (A “mystery” is a previously hidden truth that is now revealed.)

Paul reminds us that God's "timing" is perfect by the phrase "The fullness of the Gentiles has come in." God is visiting the "Gentiles" and building His church. Individual Jews are still getting saved, but primarily it is the Age of the Church. However, God will, once more, deal with Israel as a nation when the "Fullness of the Gentiles has come."

3. Do you trust God's timing in your life? Are you struggling with believing His timing is perfect, for some reason?
4. Remember the question I quoted earlier: "Should his Roman readers view the Jews as enemies or as bothers?" How does Paul answer that in verses 28-29?
5. The mercy of God comes up a few times in this chapter. In what ways are both the Jews and the Gentiles recipients of God's mercy?
6. How have you experienced God's mercy in your life?
7. As a result of His mercy, how have you recently shown mercy to someone else? Do you struggle with extending mercy to others?

Tomorrow we're going to read Paul's amazing doxology in verses 33-36. I pray that although this chapter is a bit heavy on doctrine, the "mystery" of it all has overwhelmed you as it has me.

Write out your verse from memory.

1. Read Romans 11 and focus on verses 33-36. What emotions do you detect in this section that Paul may have been experiencing?
2. How would you summarize these verses in your own words? How do Paul's words reflect God's character?
3. List the attributes of God that Paul is praising in this section.

4. What other attributes of God are you thankful for?
5. Paul reminds us that no man can fully know the mind of God. How does that make you feel?

It's been said that Paul seemed to be standing on a "Spiritual Mount Everest" as he looked at the unexplainable, unknowable, unfathomable, majesty of God. The BREATHTAKING grace of God! Eugene Peterson rewords these verses in today's speech: "Is there anyone around who can explain God? Anyone smart enough to tell Him what to do? Anyone who has done Him such a huge favor that God has to ask His advice?"

6. Paul saw what Job had seen centuries before. Read Job 42:2, 3b, 5-6. What does he say about God?
7. How do these verses encourage you in something you are facing today? Challenge you?
8. Have you recently forgotten some of these truths?
9. Spend some alone time praising Him for His BREATHTAKING grace!

