

Romans Summary  
Week 19, Wednesday February 15, 2017  
Romans 11:1-24

In light of the way concluded chapter 10 describing, once again, how the Gentiles found what they weren't looking for, but Israel remained disobedient, Paul asks his key question: Has God rejected his people? As usual his answer is a resounding, no! More, he holds himself up as an example that the conclusion cannot be. He is an Israelite, a child of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin — you don't get much more Jewish than that.

But he also stands in the prophetic tradition, now he identifies with Elijah in the wilderness — he seems to be alone, but the truth is God has chosen a whole remnant. This remnant isn't based on an ethical selection, but God's own gracious selection of a portion of ethnic Israel who have responded in faith to the Gospel of Jesus.

So what's going on, then? A small portion have received the gospel but the rest have not. Those who have not used God's grace to repent and believe are being hardened. This hardening is not malicious on God's part — it, itself is to awaken Israel and have her come in. After all Isaiah has promised this hardening will come and, as in Jesus' use in the gospels, this blindness is itself a warning.

Is this the end of the story? A small group have believed, but the rest are hardened — that's it? No. These are Messiah's people according to the flesh. In the same way Adam's transgression brought sin to it's fullest in the flesh, so God is using Israel's transgression for his purposes; the Gentiles have received salvation because of Israel's transgression. But, that has a responding purpose for Israel — it's meant to make them jealous.

As the Messiah was cast away which was salvation for the world, so Israel's failure has brought riches to the Gentiles, i.e. Gentiles have found salvation as a result. So, when they come to faith in Jesus the Messiah it will be like life from the dead. Paul glories in his ministry as apostle to the Gentiles because he sees this interdependent relationship. Israel doesn't receive the gospel, it goes to the Gentiles, the Gentiles receive, they enjoy the blessings which were promised to Abraham, now Israel sees Gentiles enjoying their blessings, and they should be so jealous that they come in too. When they do it's a resurrection as opposed to life from nothing like Gentiles.

Paul is now shifting to speak directly to Gentiles — this all has important implications for their attitudes towards Israel — especially anyone who may have been tempted to answer yes to Paul's question about Israel being rejected by God. If the remnant is the portion of the offering for the sacrifice to God, then the whole lump of dough has been consecrated. A second image, if Christ is the true root of the Israel tree then all the branches share in the roots essence — holiness.

Paul then expands that metaphor more. Yes, some of the trees branches have been broken off and this has allowed unnatural, wild branches to be grafted in — which, of course is not how it's done — which allows Gentiles to share in the essence of the root, Jesus — holiness. Then Gentiles, do get cocky! Don't think for a second that you have developed some sort of Gentile ethnic right/boast.

The same rules apply for everyone. If being connected to the tree is by faith then should Israel come to faith, they will be re-grafted in, and you better maintain your faith and not develop a ethic righteousness of your own. God is both severe and kind. Severe to those who persist in unbelief, but extremely kind to those who finally believe.

**“Gold Medals for Everyone” reflection and discussion questions:**

1. Why have you been chosen by grace?
2. What does it mean that grace would no longer be grace?
3. Why do we need to be reminded about God's grace?
4. Why don't we want unmerited, undeserved favour?