

CONCERNING THE WAY

February 22, 2011

LESSON 118: PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS



Chapter 11 – The Purpose of God and Israel's Future

We're in that section of the book of Romans, chapters 9-11, where Paul talks about the past and future of the Jews. In the time that Paul wrote this book, Gentiles were coming to faith in Christ in droves. The Jewish believers may have begun to worry that God had rejected Israel and would not fulfill His promises to them. Paul wanted to rid them of that idea completely. He makes it crystal clear that God is not through with Israel in these chapters.

Romans 11:1 So I ask, "God has not rejected his people, has he?" Of course not! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham from the tribe of Benjamin.

It's important to understand that when Paul speaks of the Jews in Romans – "his people", Paul is primarily speaking of the nation of Israel, not individual Jews. So here, Paul is telling us that God has not rejected the nation of Israel. Many church denominations do not believe what Paul says here through the Holy Spirit. They will say that it is possible for a Jew to become a Christian, but that God has rejected the nation of Israel – the Jews as a people group, and now the church has replaced Israel as God's chosen people.

But Paul clearly says God has not rejected his people, and he is actually quoting from the Old Testament again. Read 1 Samuel 12:22 and Psalms 94:14. God had chosen Israel as His covenant people from eternity past and entered into a relationship with them that will never be ended (Jeremiah 31:37).

But Paul does offer himself as an example that God has not rejected the Jews. Paul was as Jewish as anyone and had been chosen by God to bring the gospel to the Gentiles.

Romans 11:2-3 God has not rejected his people whom he chose long ago. Do you not know what the Scripture says in the story about Elijah, when he pleads with God against Israel? (3) "Lord, they have killed your prophets and demolished your altars. I am the only one left, and they are trying to take my life."

Some versions say "whom He foreknew" instead of "whom He chose" in verse 2. Either way is correct, but we must not think that "foreknew" means that God looks into the future to see who would accept Him, and that's who He chooses. That's not what the word means. It means to know someone in an intimate way ahead of time. God chose the Jews because He knew them long before they existed in an intimate way.

Paul is quoting Elijah from 1 Kings 19, when he appealed to God to wipe Israel out because they had become so evil and had rejected God. Elijah thought he was the last godly person in Israel and assumed that God would want to be finished with them for good.

Romans 11:4-5 But what was the divine reply to him? "I have reserved for myself 7,000 people who have not knelt to worship Baal." (5) So it is at the present time: there is a

remnant, chosen by grace.

This reminds us of the sealing of the 144,000 Jews in Revelation 7. In Elijah's day God had sealed 7,000 for Himself. We have discussed this before – there has always been a remnant of Jews faithful to God, and there is a remnant today who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Messiah. Though it may look like God has rejected Israel permanently, he has not, as Paul says here. More and more Jews are turning to Christ, even in Israel. That is an absolute miracle.

Verse 5 is translated in some versions as “election of grace”, or “God’s gracious choice.”

Romans 11:6 But if this is by grace, then it is no longer on the basis of actions. Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace.

Jews are coming to Christ not because they are seeking Him in themselves, or because they are obeying the Mosaic Law, but by God’s sovereign grace He is choosing some, and the Holy Spirit is drawing them to Him. Paul is pounding on the fact of salvation by grace to make sure that any Jews reading this would understand that you cannot get saved by works. You cannot be good enough to please God.

This reminds us of what happened at the end of the book of Acts:

Acts 28:23-29 So they set a day to meet with Paul and came out in large numbers to see him where he was staying. From morning until evening he continued to explain the kingdom of God to them, trying to convince them about Jesus from the law of Moses and the Prophets. (24) Some of them were convinced by what he said, but others wouldn't believe. (25) They disagreed with one another as they were leaving, so Paul added this statement: "The Holy Spirit was so right when he spoke to your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah! (26) He said, 'Go to this people and say, "You will listen and listen but never understand, and you will look and look but never see! (27) For this people's minds have become stupid, and their ears can barely hear, and they have shut their eyes so that they may never see with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn and let me heal them."' (28) You must understand that this message about God's salvation has been sent to the gentiles, and they will listen." (29) When he had said these words, the Jews left, arguing intensely among themselves.

This is the doctrine of postponement. The Kingdom of God has been delayed because of Israel’s rejection of Christ. Israel has temporarily been set aside, and the gospel has gone to the Gentiles. This event in Acts is when that started, and we don’t know how long it will last, but God will turn His attention back to Israel at some point. And it seems that it may be near, because Israel’s blindness to the gospel seems that it might be starting to lift.

Romans 11:7-10 What, then, does this mean? It means that Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking, but the selected group obtained it while the rest were hardened. (8) As it is written, "To this day God has put them into deep sleep. Their eyes do not see, and their ears do not hear." (9) And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a punishment for them. (10) Let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and keep their backs forever bent."

Those Jews who were chosen by God found salvation through accepting Jesus as their Messiah – this is the remnant Paul spoke of. The hearts of the rest were hardened against God, which they brought on themselves because they stubbornly refused to believe in their Messiah. They were seeking God

by their works and not by faith. They could never find God that way. The Greek word for “hardened” means “render insensitive”. They were made insensitive to God.

In verses 8-10 Paul quotes Deuteronomy 29:4, Isaiah 29:10, and Psalms 69:22-23. He kind of runs them together to explain what he meant by God hardening the rest. This is the curse that has come upon all of those Jews who have rejected God by trying to be saved by works, and by rejecting their Messiah. The idea is that of a numbness that is caused by an insect’s bite or sting. It is a sort of spiritual stupor.

Romans 11:11-12 And so I ask, "They have not stumbled so as to fall, have they?" Of course not! On the contrary, because of their stumbling, salvation has come to the gentiles to make the Jews jealous. (12) Now if their stumbling means riches for the world, and if their fall means riches for the gentiles, how much more will their full participation mean!

This is a great statement by Paul. First of all, even though Israel as a whole rejected God, God considers that they have only stumbled. They have not fallen! The sense of the Greek here is to fall and not get back up. This is also a great message for all of us! When you fail, you are stumbling. You are not falling down, never to get up again. And Israel will rise again.

Also, Israel’s failure meant the rest of us, the Gentiles, received the blessing of the Word of God, and salvation through Christ. Before Israel fell, if a Gentile wanted to know the true God, he had to become a “proselyte”. He had to go to Jerusalem three times a year, and even then he couldn’t worship directly, but only in the outer courts of the temple. He had to offer sacrifices, going through Levitical priests and observing the Law. But then came Pentecost! Now we can draw near to God, through the blood of Christ, any time, any place, and in any circumstances, and worship Him directly, without any priests. We can make our requests known to Him directly, and He is always near to us! I don’t think any of us fully recognize the blessings that we have received, the spiritual riches God has given us, especially here in America.

And Paul says, “If you think that is great, wait until you see Israel get back up again!” That will be stupendous. The entire universe will see it and rejoice! This verse is promising the restoration of Israel, a fulfillment of all the promises God made to Israel. It is going to take place.

Romans 11:13-14 I am speaking to you gentiles. Because I am an apostle to the gentiles, I magnify my ministry (14) in the hope that I can make my people jealous and save some of them.

Part of Paul’s motivation to be diligent in his ministry to preach to the Gentiles was the hope that when the Jews saw how many Gentiles were believing God and were receiving His blessings, they would become angry and jealous and some would want what the Gentiles had received from God. And this has happened to some Jews. Many believing Jews say that they were brought to Christ by jealousy of a Gentile. Arnold Fructenbaum says he started studying the New Testament because he saw many Jews coming to Christ and it made him angry, made him want to expose errors in the New Testament. He wanted to counter the message of Christianity. Well, that didn’t work, he ended up believing in Christ because of the New Testament.

Romans 11:15 For if their rejection results in reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance bring but life from the dead?

The reconciling of Israel back to God is associated with the resurrection of Israel as a nation (Ezekiel 37:11-14), and also with the bodily resurrection of all who have died in faith (Isaiah 26:19; Hosea 6:1-3; Revelation 20:4-6).

Israel's rejection of God resulted in the Gentiles being reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). Their future acceptance of Christ as their Messiah will bring life to Israel again, what was a spiritually dead nation. There is a day coming that a surviving remnant of Jews will recognize Jesus as Messiah and that will bring Jesus back to earth and will usher in the Kingdom of God. Paul may be speaking of a mighty revival that will occur in the last days that will result in large numbers of Jews coming to faith in Jesus as their Messiah and Savior.

In any case, when Israel is restored, it will truly be life from death. In the Kingdom, the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord (Isaiah 11:9). Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all flesh will see it together (Isaiah 4:1-5). This is something the world has not seen yet. That's why Paul says, in my paraphrase, "You ain't seen nothin' yet!"

Romans 11:16 *If the first part of the dough is holy, so is the whole batch. If the root is holy, so are the branches.*

What does Paul mean here? I'll let Dr. John Walvoord explain it:

"His first illustration was taken from God's instructions to Israel to take "a cake from the first of [their] ground meal and present it as an offering" (Num. 15:20) after they entered the land of Canaan and reaped their first wheat harvest. This offering was to be repeated each year at their harvests. The cake made from the first ground meal of the wheat harvest was sanctified or made holy by being offered to God. As Paul explained, If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits (lit., "If the firstfruits") is holy, then the whole batch is holy (lit., "the lump is also")."

Paul's second illustration was that of a tree: If the root is holy, so are the branches. In both illustrations the principle is the same: what is considered first contributes its character to what is related to it. With a tree, the root obviously comes first and contributes the nature of that type of tree to the branches that come later. With the cake presented to the Lord, the flour for the cake is taken from the ground meal, but that cake is formed and baked first and presented as a firstfruit. Since it is set apart to the Lord first, it sanctifies the whole harvest. The firstfruits and the root represent the patriarchs of Israel or Abraham personally, and the lump and the branches represent the people of Israel. As a result Israel is set apart (holy) to God, and her "stumbling" (rejection of Christ) must therefore be temporary."

Romans 11:17-18 *Now if some of the branches have been broken off, and you, a wild olive branch, have been grafted in their place to share the rich root of the olive tree, (18) do not boast about being better than the other branches. If you boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.*

Some try to interpret this as saying that the Gentiles were grafted into Israel and have now become a part of, or even replaced Israel. If you read carefully you'll see that's not what Paul is saying. This tree is definitely not the Church. Some teach that the olive tree and the root is Israel. Others teach that the olive tree is the place of privilege, of blessings with God. I think that is right, and more specifically, the root of the tree is Abraham, or the Abrahamic Covenant. Israel originally occupied that place of blessing – they are the natural branches of the tree.

Paul is describing the temporary setting aside of Israel that occurred in his day, that's the branches being broken off because they were unrepentant and rejected Christ. We believing Gentiles, the wild olive branches, have been grafted into the tree and now receive the benefit of God's blessings through the Abrahamic Covenant, because of our position in Christ (Galatians 3:7-9,14). But the root of the tree is still Jewish. God guaranteed the Abrahamic Covenant is for eternity – it will never be changed or broken. There has always been a remnant of faithful Jews

But Paul is saying don't be arrogant about this. Just because we have now received God's blessing, don't feel that we are any better than the Jews. Paul reminds us that we are only grafted into that tree because of God's grace, not because of anything we have done, or because we're special. The root supports us – we are indebted to the Jews, not the other way around. We Gentile believers are linked to Abraham, because of the Covenant God made with him. In one sense we owe our salvation to him.

Romans 11:19-20 Then you will say, "Branches were cut off so that I could be grafted in." (20) That's right! They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you remain only because of faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid!

We can see in history the arrogance the Christian church has had, and the constant persecution of the Jews is only one result of that. We like to think that while Israel failed God, Christianity has proven true. Is that correct? Have we proven ourselves different than Israel in our obedience to God? I don't think so. Christianity has failed God every bit as much as Israel did. Our record is not very good. And we have been given much more light than Israel ever had.

Do you disagree? Let's just look at a few things. After more than 2,000 years, much of the human race still doesn't know Jesus Christ. In the majority of so-called Christendom, salvation by grace through faith is still not understood – but works and good character are still thought by most to be what will give us acceptance by God.

Instead of simple gatherings of believers in the name of Christ and relying completely on the Holy Spirit in worship, as they did at the beginning, now most of Christianity "worships" in big pagan temples, with elaborate services that attempt to make the worshippers feel good about themselves. Instead of the free, general common priesthood of believers in the fellowship of prayer and faith, we have thousands upon thousands of professing Christians who have never openly prayed in an assembly, and millions who don't have assurance of salvation. We have returned to idolatry, and not just in Catholic churches. We are becoming more interested in liturgy, holy days, and medieval forms and practices than in studying God's revelation to us in the Bible.

Gentile Christendom has set up the Christian religion, and has settled down on earth as if the Church belonged here, and as if Christ is never coming back. No, I don't think Christianity has any reason to feel high and mighty over Israel!

The only reason we Gentiles have salvation available to us is because of Israel's unbelief. Now Gentiles can receive blessing from God. People in Arminian churches use these verses to try to disprove the doctrine of the eternal security of the believer. But they ignore the fact that Paul is not speaking of individual salvation here, but of people groups. He is speaking of the nation of Israel and the Gentile nations, and the place of blessing with God. His point is that if we Gentiles, as a people group, get haughty and fall into unbelief (as a people group), then we could also be removed from the place of blessing. Many people believe this is starting to happen with the United States. This nation has rejected God in that we have tried to remove Him from every part of life. We have become almost completely a pagan culture and nation.

Many say that God is or will remove His hand of blessing from us if we continue on this way. Does this mean there are no true believers left in America? Of course not, I believe there are many believers still. But it is the nation as a whole that has rejected God. That's what Paul is speaking of here. Israel as a nation rejected God, and that's why they were cut off. Were there no true believers in Israel? Of course there were – Paul just said in verse 5 that there was a remnant of true believers.

Romans 11:21-22 For if God did not spare the natural branches, he certainly will not spare you, either. (22) Consider, then, the kindness and severity of God: his severity toward those who fell, but God's kindness toward you — if you continue receiving his kindness. Otherwise, you too will be cut off.

This is a sobering statement. Watch your tendency towards pride. Check yourself to see if you have any anti-Semitism in your heart. That is sin.

Notice that you can receive kindness and severity from God. If you have true faith in Him, you will receive kindness. If you reject God, and part of that rejection would be mistreating the Jews or harboring hatred in your heart against them, then you will receive severity from God. We must not judge Israel because they have not accepted Christ. We must love them and realize they are still God's chosen people, and God's plan is to restore them.

“You too will be cut off” - again, this does not suggest that a Christian can lose his salvation; it is not speaking of individuals. It refers to Gentiles as a people group turning from the gospel like Israel as a nation had done. And this is definitely happening in the world more and more.

Romans 11:23-24 If the Jews do not persist in their unbelief, they will be grafted in again, because God is able to graft them in. (24) After all, if you were cut off from what is naturally a wild olive tree, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much easier it will be for these natural branches to be grafted back into their own olive tree!

Verse 24 is powerful. We are wild olive branches that are grafted into a cultivated tree. The Jews will much more easily be grafted back into the tree because they were the natural branches to begin with. They can easily be restored. Someday the age of grace will end, and God will turn His attention to Israel once again, and the faithful remnant of Israel will be grafted back into their own olive tree. God will restore them.

Romans 11:25 (ISV) For I want to let you know about this secret, brothers, so that you will not claim to be wiser than you are: Stubbornness has come to part of Israel until the full number of the gentiles comes to faith.

Romans 11:25 (NASB) 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;

I've included this verse in the ISV and the NASB so you can get the full flavor of it. What a fascinating verse! God is revealing, through Paul, something that had never been known before – that's what “mystery” in the Bible means. Israel's stumbling, which is temporary, not permanent, is called

a mystery. We see that Israel, from the time of Paul right up until today, has been hardened towards God, they have been afflicted with stubbornness, as the ISV puts it. But Paul says that this won't go on forever. The key word is UNTIL. It will continue until the full number of Gentiles comes to faith. Isn't that something?

We are currently in an age where God is primarily saving Gentiles. Some Jews are being saved (it is a partial hardening), but God is mostly working in the hearts of Gentiles (Acts 15:14). So God must have a number in mind of Gentiles He is choosing for His Church. And when that number is reached, He will take His Church (composed of all New Testament saints, Jew and Gentile) to heaven at the Rapture. Then, during the Tribulation period God will again focus His attention on Israel in order to restore the Jewish people to a place of blessing.

When might this number be reached? We don't know. I can't tell you when it will be. We can speculate that it may be soon. After all, we are long past the greatest period of evangelism and missions in the world – that occurred in the first half of the 20th century (Even though there are still places in the world where people are coming to Christ in numbers, it's nothing like it was then.) And Christianity is practically dead in Europe. Christianity is being blunted and superseded by religions such as Islam in most of the other parts of the world. America's culture and society is racing away from true Christianity as fast as they can. Most of the Christian denominations in America have gone liberal, so they they do not teach the literal Word of God any more. And, the Jews are back in their land. So what do you think? Could we be coming to the time when the full number of Gentiles comes to faith? What will happen when the full number is reached? Paul is going to explain:

Romans 11:26-27 In this way, all Israel will be saved. 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."

ALL Israel? Wait, I thought that only a remnant would be saved. Well, let's go to Jeremiah 30, which talks about the Tribulation, to verse 3.

Jeremiah 30:3 Indeed, the time will come,' declares the LORD, 'when I'll restore the security of my people Israel and Judah,' says the LORD. 'I'll bring them back to the land that I gave to their ancestors, and they'll possess it.'"

Notice that Jeremiah says "Israel and Judah". That's the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. In those days Israel was split between two kingdoms – the tribes of Judah and Benjamin in the south and the other ten tribes in the north. This continued right up until the Assyrians captured and scattered the Northern Kingdom and then later on the Babylonians captured and exiled the Southern Kingdom.

So when Paul says "all Israel", he is probably saying that descendants of both kingdoms, all twelve tribes, will be saved. Let's read on in Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 30:6-7 'Ask now, and see if a male can give birth. Why do I see every man With his hands on his loins, as a woman in childbirth? And why have all faces turned pale? (7) 'Alas! for that day is great, There is none like it; And it is the time of Jacob's distress, But he will be saved from it.

Jeremiah 30:10-11 'Fear not, O Jacob My servant,' declares the LORD, 'And do not be dismayed, O Israel; For behold, I will save you from afar And your offspring from the

land of their captivity. And Jacob will return and will be quiet and at ease, And no one will make him afraid. (11) 'For I am with you,' declares the LORD, 'to save you; For I will destroy completely all the nations where I have scattered you, Only I will not destroy you completely. But I will chasten you justly And will by no means leave you unpunished.'

Again, Jeremiah is obviously speaking of the coming Tribulation, which Revelation says so much more about. But notice that, even though there will be “great distress” for Israel, and “I will destroy completely all the nations where I have scattered you”, and “I will chasten you”, God promises that He will not destroy Israel completely, and Israel will be saved from it. Does this mean every Jewish person is saved? No, obviously not - only those who trust Christ as their Savior. But a remnant of the nation will survive the Tribulation and they will be saved. This would seem to say that, though many Jews will die during the Tribulation (Zechariah says two thirds will die during this time in 13:8, also see Ezekiel 20:34-38), most or all of the survivors will recognize Christ as their Messiah (Zechariah 12:10). In that sense, perhaps “all Israel”, all that are left, will be saved.

At the coming of Christ in power and glory, when He will deliver the earth from the antichrist's rule, He will restore Israel to be the apple of God's eye. Read Habakkuk 3, which is about Christ's return in glory. What is the purpose of His coming? For the salvation of His people – verse 13. Read Joel 3:14-16. The Lord is a refuge for His people and a stronghold for the sons of Israel! Large numbers of surviving, elect Jews will fall at the feet of Jesus, not only as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, but as their Messiah as well. Read Psalm 46 - they may be singing that or something like it!

So let's go back and read those verses from Romans again, and then we'll go on:

Romans 11:26-27 In this way, all Israel will be saved. 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."

Paul quotes from Isaiah 59:20-21, Isaiah 27:9, and Jeremiah 31:33-34 to confirm what he just said. Who is the Deliverer (note it is capitalized)? That's the Messiah, who is Jesus. This will happen at the 2nd coming of Christ. Verse 27 is the New Covenant from Jeremiah 31. The New Covenant is what we are under today as Gentiles, but it was given first to the Jews. The New Covenant permanently removes our sin. And this prophecy states it will happen to that surviving remnant of Israel – Jesus will come from Zion and remove all sin from Israel. Today they have no deliverer, no one that can take away their sins. They don't trust in their Messiah. But, as you can see, some day they will.

Romans 11:28-29 (NASB) 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; (29) for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Romans 11:28-29 (ISV) As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for your sake, but as far as election is concerned, they are loved for the sake of their ancestors. (29) For God's gifts and calling never change.

These are two hugely important verses. This totally blows away replacement theology – the idea that God has rejected Israel and the Church has taken her place. As Paul stated before, the fact that Israel rejected Christ (they are enemies of the gospel) meant that we Gentiles could now receive God's blessings, but God's choices have never changed. He still loves Israel because He loves the Fathers – men like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, etc., and made promises to them. Those gifts God will

never take away, and the calling of Israel as God's chosen people can never change.

Sooo many Gentile Christians do not like this idea. Many people do not like Jews, and they can't stand the idea that they may still be God's chosen people. But here it is, folks, in plain words. God says, "I love them, because of promises I made, and I will not change." So if you don't like this, you better check which side you're on. You may not be on God's side.

Does this mean we accept today's nation of Israel unreservedly? No, of course not. While most of them are good people, most Jews today are secular and atheistic. And we know God is going to chasten them. But we support the nation of Israel because we know that God is working out His plan to finally deliver Israel. Check your heart for any sign of anti-Semitism! Some of those people now in Israel may be one of the remnant that will turn to Christ after they have been chastened. We should be praying for Israel, that they will recognize their Messiah.

Verse 29 is so clear. God does not change His plans. Once He has called you, that calling will never be revoked. God will never take back His gifts and His calling. That means Israel has to be restored.

Romans 11:30-31 For just as you disobeyed God in the past but now have received his mercy because of their disobedience, (31) so they, too, have now disobeyed. As a result, they may receive mercy because of the mercy shown to you.

Many Christians despise the Jews because they rejected Christ – they even call them Christ-killers and worse. Paul is reminding us that we Gentiles are no different. Until God called us and we believed in Jesus, we were also disobedient and rebellious against God.

What an amazing plan God has! What man could come up with this? Because the Jews rejected God, we Gentiles received His mercy, even though we were disobedient – we didn't deserve it. And now they can receive mercy because we were shown mercy. Paul was caught up in the wonder of God's plan, too, as he finishes this chapter with an anthem to the awesomeness of God's wisdom and His ways.

Romans 11:32-33 For God has locked all people in the prison of their own disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all. (33) O how deep are God's riches, and wisdom, and knowledge! How unfathomable are his decisions and unexplainable are his ways!

Here is the key to why God temporarily allows sin and disobedience in the world. It is so He can show mercy on us! If some of us were able to come to God and obey Him on our own, then we would get the credit for our righteousness, and it would not be because of God's grace and mercy.

But we're all in the same boat. God has to do the choosing, and God has to do the drawing of us to Him, and He is the one that must save us completely, because we are all disobedient. It is God's will for it to be that way, so that He can show His mercy on all of us. To God be the glory!

Romans 11:34-36 Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become his adviser? (35) Or who has given him something only to have him pay it back?" (36) For all things are from him, by him, and for him. Glory belongs to him forever! Amen.

This is something we have to understand. This is who God is. We don't figure out what we are going to do, we don't make our plans. God doesn't owe us anything. He's not saving us and showing us

mercy and grace because there's anything special about us. We are all disobedient, and deserve destruction. But God is merciful and has a plan for humanity. We need to get in line with God's plan. God is going to do everything His way, and we better get on board with that, and not be arrogant about how we want to live our lives. All things are from Him, by Him, and for Him.

So, in summary, God isn't finished with the nation of Israel. His plan continues to unfold today, and will progress toward that day when Israel's hardness will be softened through tribulation and the Jewish people will call on Jesus Christ and return to Him in great numbers. We Gentile believers can only pray that God will bring that about very soon.

In Romans Eleven we learn:

1. That God has not cast off Israel, there is a Remnant that is always preserved.
2. That all but the elect of Israel were hardened,—to let the fullness of the Gentiles come in: for the purpose of provoking Israel to “jealousy,”—that they might discover Jehovah's mercy.
3. That although broken off from the tree of blessing, they will be grafted back into “their own olive tree.”
4. That this will be at the coming to Zion in Jerusalem of the Lord Jesus Christ; and that then a New Covenant will be made with Israel.
5. That the place of direct Divine blessing will again be taken by Israel, who will return from their unbelief.
6. That this most solemn fact should warn Gentiles against individual self-confidence, and especially against the delusion that Israel has been “cast away” forever, and that the Gentiles have taken their place! God has made no covenants with any nation but Israel; and that nation He will restore, the Gentiles will then be dependent on blessing, through Israel, throughout the future.

It cannot be too much emphasized that Chapters Nine, Ten, and Eleven do not teach that the Church as such has succeeded the Jews in the place of blessing; but do show that Gentiledom has received the place of privilege and opportunity, and consequently of responsibility, that Israel once had. Through not continuing in the Divine “goodness,” Gentiledom will be cut off as directly blessed of God, and will be blessed through restored Israel only, in the future, after Christ's return, the Rapture of the Church, and the setting up of the Millennial Kingdom.

This blessing of Gentiles will be much wider and greater when Israel is restored. But the blessing will be of another order. Now, “there is no difference between Jew and Greek.” But, when the Lord returns to Zion: “In those days ten men shall take hold, out of all the languages of the nations, they shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you!” (Zech. 8:23). William Newell