

## Romans Chapter 11- John Karmelich

1. The title for this lesson is, "Count on God to Keep His Promises".
  - a) This lesson ends the third in a series about God's relationship with the Jewish nation.
    - i) Chapter 9 focused upon Israel "past", prior to Jesus First Coming.
    - ii) Chapter 10 focused upon Israel "present", from the birth of the Christian church and goes until the time of Jesus Second Coming.
    - iii) Chapter 11, this lesson, focuses upon Israel "future" which takes place around the time of the Jesus Second Coming.
  - b) The question to ponder is then, "How does God's future plan for Israel affect my behavior today? How does this apply to my life?" We'll get into those issues.
    - i) This section of Romans, Chapters 9-11 deals with the Nation of Israel.
    - ii) It is a 3-chapter "history and future-history" about the Jewish people.
    - iii) It is also an illustration of God's promises and salvation.
2. It is best to see Chapters 9-11 as a parallel to Chapters 1-8.
  - a) In Romans Chapters 1-8, Paul lays out all the reasons why we don't deserve to get into heaven based on our efforts. Paul deals with the immoral person, the moral person, and the religious person, and says in effect, "not good enough". Paul finally gets to chapter 8 where he says, "God saves us only because He loves us. God made unconditional promises to the Christian to resurrect us to a new life. We can't earn that nor improve upon it by our own efforts."
  - b) Romans 9-11 are a parallel to this concept. Paul talks about the Jewish people as an illustration that God keeps His unconditional promises. To summarize these chapters in a few sentences, "God called a group of people to be "His chosen people". It does not mean that is an automatic ticket into heaven. He wanted them to be His witnesses to the world. Collectively and corporately, they have failed to be His witnesses. However, God did make unconditional promises to that nation and God keeps His promises.
3. To best explain Chapter 11, it is best to explain the promises made to the Jewish nation:
  - a) God told Abraham: "I (God) will make you (Abraham) into a great nation (Israel) and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:2-3 NIV)
    - i) Upon that promise the Nation of Israel was born. That group of people has existed and continues to exist and thrive to this day. That promise has come true.
  - b) Here is the second key promise: "He (God) also said to him (Abraham), "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land (Israel) to take possession of it." (Genesis 15:7 NIV)
    - i) The Nation of Israel has survived despite all sorts of odds against it. It didn't exist as a country from 70AD until 1948. In this lesson, I'll discuss modern Israel and how it fits in with the predictions made in Romans Chapter 11.
  - c) Notice what the Genesis verses do not say: "Hey Abraham, if your descendants fail to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, then they are toast. ☹ If they fail to recognize Jesus, I will go back on those promises." That is not in the bible.
  - d) My point is the promises to the nation of Israel are unconditional. That is probably the key point of Romans Chapters 9-11. God is not through with the Nation of Israel because there are unconditional promises that have not been fulfilled as of yet.
4. So, what does this mean to the Christian "practically"? Let's say I understand that God still has plans for the Jewish nation. What does that have to do with my life today? Do I have to eat kosher now? ☺ ("The answer is "no" to the last question.)

- a) The key point is that God's promises are unconditional. His promises to us through Jesus are unconditional just as His promises to the Jewish nation are unconditional.
  - b) Another point is how to treat individual Jewish people. A great mistake Christians have made over the centuries is the mistreatment of the Jewish people. If God is not through with them, why should we treat them with any less respect?
  - c) One of the issues Paul dealt with in Chapter 10 is what I call "smugness". The Jewish people were guilty of having a holier-than-thou attitude over non-Jewish people as they believe they were God's chosen people.
    - i) Christians can be equally guilty of smugness by thinking, "I'm saved and you can go away". Somebody ministered to us and prayed for our salvation. If it were not for people helping us, we wouldn't be Christians. We need to have that same sort of attitude toward others.
  - d) We are also living in a historical unique time where for the first time in almost 2,000 years, the Nation of Israel is a nation again. They have not been a sovereign nation (i.e., not part of anybody's empire) since the Babylonian captivity, which was about 2,500 years ago.
    - i) In the history of civilization, there has never been a nation that was conquered, scattered and became a nation again. Except for Israel, who has done it twice.
      - a) The bible predicts that God "gathers his people a second time" (Isaiah 11:1). That prediction is the modern state of Israel.
    - ii) In the history of civilization, no dead language has ever come back to life. Except for the Jewish language of Hebrew. The bible predicted that too. (Zephaniah 3:9)
    - iii) My point is the fact that the nation of Israel has accomplished what has never happened in human history (twice come back to life after being conquered and scattered) is proof enough that God keeps His promises! It also supports the idea that modern Israel is God-ordained and part of His unconditional promises.
5. Chapter 11, Verse 1: I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin.
- a) Let me paraphrase Paul here, "Do you want proof that God is not done with the Nation of Israel? I can prove it with my life. I'm Jewish, I believe Jesus died for my sins and God picked me for salvation."
  - b) The point is if God were "done" with the Nation of Israel, then no Jewish people would be saved. We forget that most of the original 1<sup>st</sup> Century Christians were Jewish. Most of the Christians in Israel when the church started were Jewish.
  - c) Paul is stating his "Jewish lineage" in Verse 1. He is stating that he is also a descendant of Abraham and Paul knew which of the 12 tribes of Israel he was from (Benjamin).
    - i) One of the tragedies of history is in 70 AD; the Roman Empire destroyed the Jewish temple. That temple was also the library of Jewish genealogies. Many Jewish people of that time could look up the family lineage. My point here is Paul could prove he was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin based on family records.
6. Verse 2: God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah--how he appealed to God against Israel: <sup>3</sup> "Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me"? <sup>4</sup> And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal."
- a) Paul now picks an interesting Old Testament historical example to prove that God has never been done with Israel and is not currently done with Israel: Elijah.
  - b) To a religious Jew, Elijah is one of the most revered prophets. The bible predicts he will return prior to the coming of the Messiah. (See Malachi 4:5). Jesus confirmed this as well in Matthew 17:11. Part of the tradition of the Passover dinner is to leave the door open in case Elijah is to come.

- c) The specific historical reference is a high-low point in Elijah's career. He was used by God in a great miracle. There was a false-god that was popular at that time named Baal. Elijah did a demonstration to prove God was greater than Baal. Hundreds of the prophets of Baal were killed after this demonstration. The problem was the wife of the Israel king, named Jezebel. She was a worshipper of Baal. She publicly vowed to kill Elijah for this demonstration and for killing the prophets of Baal. This is all in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings Chapter 18.
    - i) After that, Elijah was on the run from Queen Jezebel. Elijah was having a pity-party for himself and saying in effect, "I'm the only Jew left who believes in God and everyone else has turned over to Baal."
    - ii) God answers Elijah with the response, "I (God) have reserved for myself seven thousand (Jews) who have not bowed the knee to Baal." (1<sup>st</sup> Kings 19:18 NIV). That is the verse Paul is quoting here in Romans 11, Verse 4.
  - d) The point is God is always has a faithful Jewish remnant. Even when it seems that "everyone" is turning from God, He responds by saying in effect, "Calm down. I made a promise to the Jewish nation that there would always be a faithful remnant and I meant it. I meant it in the days of Elijah and I mean it in the times of Paul and I mean it today."
  - e) The important thing for the non-Jewish Christian to remember is that God keeps His promises! If you expect God to keep His promises to you through Jesus, then you better also expect God to keep all His promises He made, including those to the Jewish nation!
  - f) Are you saying that only a "remnant" of the Jewish nation makes it into heaven?
    - i) Unfortunately, that is what the bible teaches. I don't know how many are in a "remnant", but that word does not imply a great majority."
    - ii) The same applies to non-Jews as well today. Remember what Jesus said about salvation: "Narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." (Matthew 7:14b NIV)". I don't know how many is "few", but I don't think that is a whole lot more than a "remnant". ☺
7. Verse 5: So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. <sup>6</sup> And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.
- a) Paul continues his point that there Jewish people who did accept Christ.
  - b) Paul gets back to the theme of "grace versus works".
    - i) In context, Paul is saying that anyone and everyone who is saved is only saved due to the grace of God, and not anything a person did to earn God's favor.
    - ii) Paul defines grace in the sense that if a person was saved due to how good they were, then they were not saved by God's grace.
    - iii) The point here is that some Jewish people are chosen by God to accept Jesus by the grace of God and not because they were Jewish.
  - c) For the last two thousand years, there has always been a minority of people of Jewish decent who have become Christians. Today there is a worldwide ministry group called "Jews for Jesus" that are made up of Christians of Jewish decent.
    - i) Many Jews can't understand why Christian-Jews make such a big deal about why they are "both". For example, there are no groups called "Brazilians for Christ" or "Dutch for Christ". ☺ The significance of "Jewish-Christians" is the reminder that God keeps his promise about a faithful (Christian) remnant of the Jewish People.
8. Verse 7: What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened, <sup>8</sup> as it is written: "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day."
- a) Paul now gets back to an Old Testament bible study to prove his points. As I stated in the last lesson, Paul quotes the Old Testament roughly 30 times in this three-chapter section.
    - i) Verse 8 is a quote of Deuteronomy 29:4, mixed with Isaiah 29:10.
    - ii) In Deut. 29, and Isaiah 29, the prediction is specifically given to the Israelites. The point is these verses are not given to the heathen nations that surround Israel.

- b) Verses 5-6 focused on a Jewish minority that did understand that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Now Paul is going to focus on the Jewish majority that didn't get it.
    - i) This is a prediction that God gave them a "spirit of stupor".
  - c) Over the next set of verses were going to get into the topic of being "spiritually blinded".
    - i) It is the idea that you can logically tell someone about Jesus, explain it well and give all the arguments, and the person still refuses to believe it as if a "blinding spirit" was upon them.
    - ii) First of all, I do believe a non-Christian can explain how Jesus is the Messiah if they so desired. A non-Christian can read the bible and explain it properly. That is not what is meant by "spiritually blinded". It is simply the idea that they don't accept the truth that Jesus died for their sins and is the Son of God.
    - iii) I'm sure a religious Jew can turn right around and say, "Well, you Christians are spiritually blind to our truth". Fair enough. I'm just telling you what the New Testament says a prediction to the Jewish people about being "spiritually blind".
  - d) This goes back to the idea that God knows all things and we don't.
    - i) We must accept the idea that God knows in advance who will be saved and who will not. We don't have that knowledge. Therefore, we also must accept the fact that "Whoever God blinds, God blinds". Is that fair? From our perspective, I like to think of it as, "This person has already chosen to reject God and God in-turn has turned up the amplifier to make it impossible for them to change".
    - ii) The other key point is we as humans don't have perfect knowledge. There is always a remnant of Jewish people who do get it. We don't know who is part of that remnant so we pray for all people.
    - iii) The same applies to non-Jewish people as well. We don't know who is saved. What we can do is pray for people's heart to be opened to the truth and share that truth with them. It is not up to us to produce results, but it is up to us to share that truth with them. In other words, we give the gospel message to others, and then it's "God's problem" whether or not they accept such truth.
9. Verse 9: And David says: "May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. <sup>10</sup> May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever."
- a) This is a quote of Psalm 69:22-23 written by King David. These verses are prophetic.
    - i) It is best to understand predictive prophecy as having short-term and long-term fulfillments. This is a view taught in both Judaism and Christianity. There is a short-term fulfillment designed to validate that person as a prophet. There is a long-term fulfillment that is often the main point of the prophecy.
    - ii) A prophet may make a prediction that comes true say, twenty years later. That way people will say, "Son of a gun, that guy is a prophet after all." That same predictive text has some long-term prophecies implied as well.
  - b) With that understood, David wrote this Psalm when he was on the run from King Saul, who was trying to kill him. This Psalm is full of messianic overtones.
    - i) In context, David was pleading with God to "blind his enemies" so they could not find him while he is on the run. To expand, David is saying to "blind his fellow Jewish brethren (King Saul, his army) who for the moment want to kill him."
    - ii) The short term "prophetic prayer" came true, as King Saul never got to David.
    - iii) Paul understood this Psalm in a greater context. Paul understood this reference in Psalm 69:22-23 as being a prediction that most Israelites would be spiritually blinded to the truth about Jesus.
    - iv) Paul was not alone in this interpretation. There are some Jewish commentaries that support Psalm 69 as being messianic in its reference. Those commentaries also argue that "some" will be blinded to God's truth.

10. Verse 11: Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious.
- a) Paul is saying God has a purpose in “blinding” most of Israel. It is so that Gentiles (i.e., non-Jews) would corporately have an opportunity for salvation.
  - b) It is as if God is saying, “OK, for roughly two thousand years (Abraham to Jesus), I have wanted the nation of Israel to obey My laws and be My witnesses to the world. Yes, there has been a small percentage that are obedient, but as a whole, it’s not impressive. ☺ Therefore, I’m going to give the Gentiles a shot at it. I’m going to “choose” many Gentiles to accept Jesus. Still, I don’t want to give up on the Jewish nation, and maybe if they see Gentiles get saved, they will get envious and want to join in.”
  - c) God’s purpose of “blinding” Israel is two fold: One is to bring in a big bunch of Gentile people into heaven and two is to make Israel (corporately) envious so that some of them do accept Jesus as the Messiah.
  - d) Let’s talk a little about the Jewish people and “envious”:
    - i) When you study the book of Acts, the apostles were persecuted and it was often at the hands of the religious Jewish leaders. The Jewish leaders felt that what the Christians were doing was blasphemy and violently tried to stop them.
    - ii) The biggest problem the religious Jews had of that day is the concept that there is “some other way” to God other than through Judaism.
    - iii) Did the Nation of Israel get “envious”? I believe they did in the sense, as they couldn’t stand the idea that someone could approach God by going around them. Historically, it was not enough to get a large percentage of Jewish converts, but it was successful in the prediction of getting them envious.
    - iv) Are religious Jews envious of Christian gentiles today? The vast majority is not.
    - v) The prevailing view among religious Jews today is, “A Gentile became “born-again”? Well, good for them, and I hope they have a nice life and have good behavior. A Jewish person becoming a Christian? That’s a problem!”
    - vi) In other words, the hostility today among religious Jews is mostly at other Jews who become Christians. They see them as traitors to their faith.
11. Verse 12: But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!
- a) Verse 12 ties to the cliché of “Your loss, my gain”. It is as if you have second pick in some draft choice, and you are hoping and praying the person who has first pick doesn’t pick the thing you want. When they pass on your choice, you rejoice.
  - b) Paul is saying something similar in that God wants “someone” to be His witnesses to the world. When the Jewish people, as a whole rejected Jesus, God the Father said in effect, “Well, OK, if that’s what you want. I do want somebody to be my representatives of the Gospel message. If you Jews refuse that opportunity, I’ll pick out a whole bunch of Gentile people to do it instead”. Technically, we Gentiles are Gods’ “second pick”.
  - c) This leads us back to verse 12: The Jewish “loss” is the Gentile Christian “gain”.
    - i) This doesn’t mean God wants you to walk up to a Jewish person and say sarcastically, “Gee, thanks for rejecting Jesus. That gave me the opportunity to accept Him.” God does not have a specified quota of “believers per year”.
    - ii) It does mean that since the Jewish nation corporately rejected Jesus, all of the Gentiles now have “second draft pick status” and God choose to pick Gentiles.
  - d) There is another point to Verse 12: God is not done with the Jewish nation.
    - i) Let me paraphrase Paul some more: “God made unconditional promises to the Jewish nation. For centuries now, they have collectively chosen to reject Jesus. When that day comes, whenever it comes, that God once again chooses the nation of Israel collectively, how great it will be God fulfills His promises.”

- e) It might be best at this time to talk about the fact that how God “focuses” on either the Jews or the Gentiles one at a time.
    - i) Prior to Jesus, God primarily worked through the Jewish nation. It is not that God didn’t care about Gentile people during this time era. It is just that God “primarily focused” to manifest Himself through the Jewish nation. God wanted the Jewish nation to be His witnesses to the world, and God primarily worked through them.
    - ii) From Jesus First Coming and leading up to Jesus Second Coming, God is “primarily focused” to manifest Himself through Gentiles. That means individual Gentile people (and some Jewish people) are being saved so that they can intimately know the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
    - iii) There is coming a day where God will once again, primarily work through the Jewish nation again. We’re seeing signs that God is “getting ready” for that event as Israel is a nation again after roughly 1,900 years.
12. Verse 13: I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry <sup>14</sup> in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them.
- a) Notice who Paul is writing to: Gentiles. There is application in this chapter for Gentiles.
  - b) Paul realized that he was called to preach to Gentiles in Verse 13. When you study the Book of Acts, Paul loved to preach to his fellow Jewish brethren. He would go into a new town, and usually start in a synagogue. In short, not much good ever happened. Paul may have gotten a few converts, but most rejected him. However, many Gentiles in the city-of-the-moment did convert and Paul figured out, “Hey maybe God wants me to focus on Gentiles because that is where the result are.”
    - i) I say all of this to remind us that often, the way to see where God is leading us is to “watch the results”. Jesus used the illustration of Christians as a fruit tree and His desire for us is to bear fruit. We do that by “sticking our roots in Jesus”.
    - ii) The other thing is to watch “where the fruit is coming from”. In other words, often, (but not always) the way to tell where God wants you is to look around and see the results. I add disclaimers here because often missionaries are called to do the initial work, while others then come along to “harvest the fruit”.
  - c) Paul’s other point here is that he still had a heart for his fellow Jewish brethren. To paraphrase Paul here, “I hope that the success I have with non-Jewish converts brings some of my Jewish brethren to envy so they can see the light with Christ.”
13. Verse 15: For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?
- a) We’re back to the issue of the Jewish “corporate” rejection of Jesus. That rejection became the Gentiles opportunity to be God’s corporate witness to the world. Paul is trying to put a positive spin (Gentile opportunity) on the tragedy of the Jewish nation rejecting Jesus.
  - b) Paul’s second point is that some Jewish people do accept Jesus and receive eternal salvation. The other point is that one-day God will “refocus” on the Jewish nation. That comes back to the key promise that God does not go back on His promises.
14. Verse 16: If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy;
- a) In the first part of Verse 16, Paul uses a loaf of bread dough as an illustration.
  - b) In the second part of Verse 16, through Verse 21, Paul uses a tree as another illustration.
  - c) There were offerings made to God where part of an offering was burned up as a symbolic gesture of giving it to God. The offering was considered “holy”. The word “holy” means something that is separated for God’s use. Whatever was not burned up was to be eaten by the priests. It is the idea of communion or “one-ness” with God.
    - i) The point of the bread-dough illustration is that if part of an offering is holy, then the entire offering is holy. If the part of the bread being offered up to God is holy (separated for God), then that holiness applies to the whole loaf.

- ii) Again, this is about “saved people”. We are the bread-dough in this illustration. We give our lives to God. We are imperfect beings because we still have our sinful nature. God sees us in our future, perfected, perfectly forgiven state.
  - d) Remember this is a dual illustration. The first illustration was a loaf of bread and how we as believers make up that “holy loaf”. The second illustration goes from Verses 16b-21.
15. Verse 16, Part 2: if the root is holy, so are the branches.
- a) The best way to read Verses 16b-21 is to understand it is describing the entire Christian church as a single tree. This composite of the entire church is composed of people from Jewish and Gentile backgrounds.
  - b) In Verse 16 Part 1, all Christians collectively are being compared to a loaf of bread.
  - c) Here in Verse 16 Part 2, all Christians collectively are being compared to a single tree.
  - d) In this tree illustration, the “root” of the tree is Jesus Christ. Notice the root is singular.
    - i) It is God saying in effect, “All people who believe in Jesus are special (holy). Since Jesus is special (holy), so are those who believe in Him.”
16. Verse 17: If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root,
- a) It is time to explain “grafting”. There is a concept in farming of helping a bad plant by mixing in the roots of another healthy plant. This is common in grape vineyards. When a bad vine exits, it is removed. A healthy vine from another location is mixed in (i.e., “grafted”) to make it better.
  - b) In this illustration, “the (dead) branches being broken off” refers to those who have heard the Gospel message, and rejected it. It is about rejection. It is God rejecting that person just as that person has rejected God.
  - c) Jesus said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.” (John 15:5-6 NIV)
    - i) The idea of Jesus’ comment is very similar to what Paul is saying here in Romans.
    - ii) Paul says in Verse 17, we “now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root”.
    - iii) Jesus says in John 15: “If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit”. In both cases, it is about “abiding” in Jesus.
17. Verse 18: do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you.<sup>19</sup> You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.”<sup>20</sup> Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid.<sup>21</sup> For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.
- a) Let’s start with the phrase, “do not boast over those branches”.
    - i) The problem, traditionally, with religious Jews at the time of Jesus was a holier-than-thou view toward non-Jewish people. Because they were the Chosen People, they believed they were automatically saved because they were Jewish.
    - ii) That same sort of smugness can happen to non-Jews as well. One can see how a large number of Gentiles believe in Jesus and relatively few Jewish people believe in Jesus. We as “Gentiles” can develop the same sort of smugness.
    - iii) How unfortunate this has been through the last 2,000 years. Some of the most horrid and embarrassing moments in Christian history are how people “in the name of Jesus” have treated Jewish people.
    - iv) There is a view within Christianity called “replacement theology”. It is the idea that God is 100% done with the Jewish nation. It doesn’t take Romans Chapter 11 literally. I am convinced some of the horrid things done to Jewish people have its roots in replacement theology. I vehemently disagree with this view.

- b) The second part of Verse 18 says, “but the root supports you”.
  - i) This is similar to Jesus comment, “apart from me you can do nothing”. (John 15:5)
  - ii) It does not mean we can’t walk across the street without Jesus approval. ☺
  - iii) It means that none of our self-disciplined efforts are pleasing to God. Giving our lives to Jesus means He is in charge of every aspect of our lives. In order to be obedient to God, it requires Jesus “living within us” and harnessing God’s power (through prayer) in order to be obedient.
- c) Verse 19-20 says, “Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.”<sup>20</sup> Granted.”
  - i) This sentence is about how many Jewish people rejected Jesus. They are the “branches that were broken off”. The next part is “so that I (atypical Christian gentile) could be grafted in.
    - a) Paul then says, “Granted”. It means Paul agrees with that statement.
  - ii) Paul’s point here is that it is not something for Gentile people to boast about.
  - iii) Remember that God knows all things. He knew before the world began that most Jewish people would reject Jesus. God still holds people accountable despite having His perfect knowledge.
  - iv) God’s “used” the fact of the corporate Jewish rejection of Jesus to create this long time era where many Gentile people would accept Jesus. It is often called “the church age”. It refers to the time period between Jesus First and Second Coming. It is the time era where God “primarily focuses” upon Gentiles. That simply means the vast majority of people who accept Jesus as Savior are non-Jewish.
- d) This leads us to Verse 19-20 with the key line, “Do not be arrogant, but be afraid.”
  - i) It is Paul saying in effect, “If God could break off those branches, He could break you off just as well.”
- e) This leads to the classic debate question of “Can one lose their salvation?”
  - i) The safe answer is “As long as one trusts in Jesus for the payment of their sins, you can’t sin-enough to lose one’s salvation”.
  - ii) Many people wonder, “What about the person who spends part of their life believing in Jesus, then completely changes, reject the concept of Christian salvation and live the last part of their life rejecting Jesus? My point is one can ponder forever different possibilities over “what if” situations.
  - iii) As long as we’re trusting in Jesus, we can’t mess up our salvation. If we could “sin too much”, we would lose our salvation. That is what Romans Chapter 8 was all about. The parallel thought is here in Chapter 11 is that the Jewish nation can’t “mess up” God’s unconditional promises to them as well.
  - iv) So, can one accept Jesus, later reject Jesus and lose their salvation? Personally, I would rather never go in that direction to find out. Based on these verses, it appears the answer is yes. God wants us stick as close as we can to Jesus all of our lives and here is another incentive factor to abide in Jesus. With that said, one has to be careful of not trying to please God based on our efforts. One has to accept the idea that Jesus paid the price for all of our sins and we can’t earn God’s love.
  - v) Jesus says the only unforgivable sin is “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 12:32 et. al.). The Holy Spirit’s job is to lead us to Jesus and believe His words are truth. That term means to continually deny Jesus as God. If one say, spends the early part of one’s life believing in Jesus and then spends the latter part of their life continually and habitually denying Jesus as God, then I would argue that person has committed “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit”.
  - vi) I have found that if a person has a heart for God, will eventually turn to God. A Christian is one who deep down thinks, “What I’m doing is not pleasing to God and I want to change”. A Christian is one who is never content in a sinful life.



18. Verse 22: Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.
  - a) If we had any doubts that a believer can be “cut off” (condemned to hell), read Verse 22.
    - i) This “kindness” refers to our continual trust in Jesus paying the price for our sins. Verse 22 says if we don’t continue in God’s kindness, we will be “cut off”.
  - b) One can argue that Paul is speaking to “Gentiles as a whole”. In other words, if the Jewish nation, corporately rejected Jesus, then the Gentile nation as a whole can also be rejected one day. My view is that Paul is talking to individual Gentile believers (Verse 13) and Paul is warning against the danger of “walking away” from Jesus.
19. Verse 23: And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.
  - a) What does Verse 23 mean? It means it is never too late to turn one’s life over to Jesus.
  - b) Paul’s point is, just because a person was born Jewish does not mean it’s too late for them to repent. It also ties to the idea that if one “was” a Christian, and then spent their lives denying Jesus as payment of their sins, it is never too late until to change until one dies.
  - c) I have met a few people who believed they have committed the “unpardonable sin” because they have spent a good portion of their lives rejecting Jesus. My answer to that person is Verse 23. It says, “God is able to graft them in again.” God allows u-turns! ☺
20. Verse 24: After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!
  - a) Verse 24 finished the tree-branch illustration that started in Verse 16.
  - b) We are getting our focus back upon the Jewish nation. Those Jewish people who decide to accept Jesus as payment of their sins will be saved. This illustration is continuing Paul’s point that as long as one is living on earth, it is never too late to turn to Jesus.
  - c) Let me discuss the phrase “contrary to nature”:
    - i) In grafting, in order to make a healthy tree (or say, grapevines), one prunes off the bad branches (or vines) and grafts in healthy branches (or vines).
    - ii) The point is you can’t “make a bad root (or branch) good again”. That is contrary to nature. You cannot add a bad root to a good tree in order to make the bad root into a good root. In “nature” that will not work.
    - iii) Paul says “contrary to nature”. In other words, God does what nature cannot do.
    - iv) God can “make (us) bad branches good” by forgiving our sins. God can take what is “essentially dead” and make it alive again.
21. Verse 25: I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.
  - a) Let’s start with the word “mystery”. The Greek word translated “mystery” means “something unrevealed up to now.” Therefore, whatever Paul is talking about, it is something that was a mystery to people prior to the time of Paul’s writing.
    - i) Whenever Paul uses the word “mystery”, he is usually describing the Christian church (e.g., see Ephesians 5:32). The “mystery” as far as Old Testament revelation is that there would be a long era of time (roughly 2,000 years and counting), where God does not primarily focus on the Jewish nation, but God calls anyone to be part of a selected group of humans to be called Christians, whether they have a Jewish background or a non-Jewish background.
    - ii) Every aspect of Jesus’ life, death and Second Coming is predicted somewhere in the Old Testament. In that sense, Jesus was not a “mystery” because there were hundreds of predictions about “The Messiah” all over the Old Testament. The new revelation, i.e., “the mystery revealed” is the concept of the Christian church.

- b) Paul is expanding upon this mystery: The “mystery unrevealed to now” is that God has “hardened the hearts” of the Jewish nation to primarily focus on non-Jewish people. This gets back to the idea of God thinking, “My Chosen People has rejected Jesus, so I’ll give the Gentiles a shot at it”. It is part of the “mystery” of the existence of the Christian church from an Old Testament prophetic perspective.
  - i) Notice the words “hardening in part”. That means some Jewish people do accept Jesus as the Messiah during this time era.
- c) The next key word in this verse is “until”.
  - i) That one word means that the corporate rejection of Jesus by the Jewish nation is not permanent.
  - ii) When Jesus was weeping over the fact that the Jewish nation rejected Him as the Promised Messiah, Jesus ended with this comment: “For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’” (Matthew 23:39 NIV)
    - a) Some people interpret that statement in Matthew to mean that individual Jewish people are condemned “until” they acknowledge Jesus as Messiah. While that is technically correct, it misses the point of what Jesus is saying.
    - b) Jesus is speaking to the Jewish nation as a whole. Therefore, when Jesus is saying, “until”, He means there is coming a day where the Jewish nation as a whole will come to know Jesus. That ties to Paul’s use of “until”.
- d) The final phrase is “until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.”
  - i) In heaven, the number of people is finite, not infinite. If there are only a finite number of believers, there has to be an “x” person who is the last believer.
  - ii) If there is an “x” last believer, then there also has to be an “x” last Gentile.
  - iii) A good illustration is a “clicker counter”. There are little devices that if you click on the device it “adds one” to the number count. For example, many big retail stores will have a person outside the door with a clicker counter. Their job is to see how many people that day enter the store. They click every time someone walks in. The device then “adds one” for every click.
  - iv) In a sense, God has a big clicker counter every time someone is saved. There are a finite number of people in heaven. Only God the Father knows that number. We don’t. When that “x” person gets in, God the Father then says to Jesus, “OK, time for the Second Coming Jesus, get moving”. ☺
  - v) That is why Jesus said only the Father knows the day and hour of Jesus’ return. (Reference Mark 13:32) We can’t figure it out by studying the bible, nor are we ever entitled to know that information. The classic joke is if you are the last person holding out, will you hurry up and accept Jesus so we can get on with this? ☺

22. Verse 26: And so all Israel will be saved.

- a) I could spend a whole lesson just on this one phrase. There are many end time bible verses that tie directly into this one phrase. I’ll do my best to refrain myself here. ☺
- b) First of all, understand that Paul is being literal about the Nation of Israel and the Jewish people. If you read this verse in context of Chapter 11, Paul is talking about the literal people of Israel. This phrase is designed to be connected to Verse 25. Verse 25 says literal-Israel is “partially hardened” until the full number of Gentiles has come in.
  - i) Sometimes the New Testament uses the word “Israel” symbolically represents the church in that Christians are adopted as “Sons of Abraham”. (Ref.: Galatians. 4:5) That is not the case here. Verses 25-26 contrast literal Israel from literal non-Israel, which are non-Jewish believers.
  - ii) This is why the literal coming together of the Nation of Israel is part of God’s redemptive plan. God can’t “save” the Nation of Israel unless they are back in the land in the first place. That is why I’m convinced modern Israel is God-ordained.

- c) Now the big question, what does “all” mean?
    - i) Does that mean there will come a day when every Jewish person will accept Jesus?
    - ii) Does that mean a Jew does will not have to come to Jesus “by faith”?
    - iii) Here is God’s “problem”: Back in Genesis 15, God promised to give the land of Israel to the Jewish people. There were no time constraints on that promise.
    - iv) By the way, that promise was confirmed to Abraham’s grandson Jacob. Jacob was the father of the 12 tribes of Israel. This promise only applies to the Jewish people, not to other tribes that were sons of Abraham. (Reference Genesis 26:3 et.al.)
      - a) God gave this unconditional promise that the Promised Land (Israel) belonged to the Jewish people forever.
      - b) At the present time, they are not “saved”, so how can they inherit the land?
      - c) The answer is God must “save” them at the time of Jesus Second Coming for the sake of His promise! When the Second Coming? No one knows.
    - v) I take the view that one day, when Jesus comes back, Jewish people living in the land of Israel will “corporately” realize, “Oh oh, we blew it. The Messiah was Jesus.” God the Father will forgive them for that rejection and they will be saved.
    - vi) A good Old Testament prophecy cross-reference is Zechariah 12:10 (NIV)
      - a) “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.”
  - d) The term “all Israel” means the whole land of Israel will be saved, due to God’s unconditional promise. I don’t believe it means every single Jewish person living in that land, but I could be wrong on that point. Israel “corporately” rejected Jesus at the time of Jesus First Coming and will “corporately” accept Jesus at the time of Jesus Second Coming. While some of the details may be fuzzy to us, this event must happen in order for God to keep His unconditional promises.
23. Verse 26, (Part 2): As it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. <sup>27</sup> And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."
- a) Paul then finishes Verse 26 with a quote of Isaiah 59:20-21 as Paul’s prophetic support of the concept of “All Israel will be saved.”
  - b) The point of this Isaiah quote is that the Old Testament predicts that one day God will “refocus His attention” on the nation of Israel, and they will accept Jesus as Messiah.
  - c) Do the Jews of that day come to Jesus by faith? I argue yes, from our perspective, just as they are “pre-chosen” from God’s perspective. My view is that the Holy Spirit “will do its thing” around the time of Jesus Second Coming and an evangelic wave will work its way through Israel so that corporately, they will accept Jesus as Messiah. This would seem impossible by human standards, but I don’t put anything past God! Besides God’s reputation for keeping His word is at stake here. It must happen!
24. Verse 28: As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, <sup>29</sup> for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable.
- a) Let’s start with the phrase, “they are enemies”. That refers to the fact the majority of Jewish people reject God’s free provision of salvation. It is not a license to do one harm.
    - i) Jesus taught to “love one’s enemies” (Matthew 5:44). It is the idea of treating others as you want to be treated, no matter what they think of you. It is easy to hate someone who hates you. God wants us to Let His love work through us so that we can love someone who considers us an enemy.
  - b) The verse then says, “They are loved on account of the patriarchs”. That refers to God’s unconditional promises to Abraham, which are retold to his grandson Jacob. It ties back to “all Israel will be saved” because of God’s unconditional promises.

- c) The final word of Verse 29 is “irrevocable”. That is another way of saying God cannot go back on an unconditional promise. If we cannot trust God’s promises to Israel, how can we ever trust His promises to us through Jesus Christ?
  - d) On a related note, I have a real problem with Christians who condemn the modern state of Israel and state that it does not have a right to exist. Such a view is stating that God is somehow capable of going back on His unconditional promises.
    - i) Remember that if God is going to save all of Israel, first God must unite all of Israel. I am convinced modern Israel is part of God’s ordained plan.
25. Verse 30: Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience,<sup>31</sup> so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you.
- a) I now want to speak to those who have committed their lives to Christ as adults. Most people reading this have become committed Christians as adults. Some people commit as young children and don’t remember a time prior to ever being a Christian. If you were one of those kids, feel free to skip this section. ☺
  - b) For us adult-converted Christians, there was a time in our life when we were disobedient to God in that we didn’t turn our lives over to Jesus. God didn’t “zap” us at that point in our lives, but waited patiently for the time when we would change.
  - c) This gets back to the idea that “It is never too late”. Just as God patiently waited for us to make that commitment, so it is never too late for any person, Jewish or non-Jewish to commit their lives to serving Christ. It also ties to the fact that one day, whenever “x” number of Gentiles get saved, God will once again focus upon the Nation of Israel.
26. Vs. 32: For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.
- a) Let’s start with the phrase, “God has bound all men over to disobedience”.
    - i) This is the idea we are all sinners and imperfect beings. We are “bound to disobedience” in that God allowed the sin disease to be passed on from Adam and Eve. All adults who are aware of God’s standards for right and wrong have committed disobedience to those standards.
  - b) The next phrase is “that he may have mercy on us all”.
    - i) God doesn’t “zap” people to death every time we sin. He has mercy on all people in that God wants as many as possible to repent and turn to Him.
    - ii) God has mercy and allows sin so as to patiently wait for as many people as possible to turn their lives over to Christ.
  - c) In context, Paul is still talking about the rejection of the Jewish Nation of Jesus. Paul is saying God is full of mercy and willing to forgive any and all that turn to Jesus. His mercy is going to extend to the day when “all Israel” will turn to Jesus in order for God to keep His unconditional promises.
27. Verse 33: Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! <sup>34</sup> "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" <sup>35</sup> "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" <sup>36</sup> For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.
- a) Paul ends this three chapter section about “God and Israel” with a prayer of praise.
  - b) It is as if Paul is saying, “Now that I understand God’s great redemptive game plan for my fellow Jewish people, I (Paul) am in awe. I praise God for this plan. I never would have thought of it myself. I can’t understand it all!
  - c) The point of the prayer is “God is God and we are not.” The wisdom and knowledge of God is beyond our comprehension.
  - d) Why is the emphasis here on the “uncomprehensible” God?
    - i) Part of it is to assure us that God is bigger than our problems. We may give up on a person, but God doesn’t. We may give up on ourselves, but God doesn’t. We may think our problems are beyond help, but God doesn’t.

- ii) Next time you're depressed, try praying a praise-prayer like Paul did in these three verses. It helps to remind us that nothing is beyond God's help.
- e) I want to end this lesson with some questions I brought up in the beginning: "How does God's future plan for Israel affect my behavior today? How does this apply to my life?"
  - i) Hopefully by now, I have made you a little more "Pro-Jewish". ☺ These bible verses should help us understand why Israel exists as a country again.
  - ii) These verses explain why so many people are "hell-bent" on Israel's destruction. The only logical explain of anti-Semitism is demonic. Satan knows his bible. He knows that Jesus Second Coming brings his destruction. The longer Satan can delay that time frame, the better. Part of Satan's delay strategy is to delay or deny the Jewish people from being a nation again in the Promised Land. Stop and think of all the efforts over the centuries to destroy the Jewish people. It is demonic in its origins and it is part of Satan's plan to either delay or deny Jesus Second Coming and for God to fulfill His unconditional promises.
- f) There is also something more practical and personal to contemplate:
  - i) If God isn't giving up on the Jewish nation, He's not giving up on you and me either. God made an unconditional promise to save you and me, assuming we are trusting in Jesus for our salvation. If God is going to save us, that also means He desires to mature us as to trust Him more and more. It means God is working on our lives for the better. That work of God is also "unconditional".
  - ii) We may not understand everything we are going through but God does. Like Paul was saying in the last couple of verses, God's knowledge is "unsearchable". What does that mean practically? It means "Hang in there, God has a plan!" It means that God does His best work when things appear to be hopeless. When things are hopeless from our perspective, God can work and get all the credit when the victory is achieved.

28. Let's pray: Heavenly Father, Thank You for the victory You have given in our lives. Thank You for the unconditional promises You have made to us. Help us to trust in those promises and know that You are working, especially when things appear to be hopeless. We pray for those who don't know You. Open their hearts as You have opened ours. We don't know how long we have on earth, but You do. Guide us and embolden us as we use our precious time for You in all that we do. May we live a life pleasing to You in all that we do. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.