

## **Romans 11**

Leo n L. Combs, Ph.D.

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**Rom 11:1 “I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.**

**Rom 11:2 God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?**

**Rom 11:3 "Lord, they have killed Thy prophets, they have torn down Thine altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life."**

**Rom 11:4 But what is the divine response to him? "I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."**

**Rom 11:5 In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice.”**

Paul could testify that God has not rejected the Jewish race for Paul himself is a member of the Jewish race as a descendent of Abraham and even being of the tribe of Benjamin. Sometimes I also have felt like Elijah in this episode. Sometimes it may seem to any of us that the world is so much against us that God surely has indeed deserted us also. But this Scripture is excellent understanding of how God works in that He never deserts His chosen people be they Jew or Gentile.

Paul chose the name “Israelite” rather than “Jew” or “Hebrew”. The origin of the name “Hebrew” is uncertain, but may be derived from the name “Eber” in Gen 10:21 in which case it denotes a larger section of people than just those ethnic Israelites. It would be similar to the word “Semite”. The word “Jew” comes from Judah, the fourth son of Jacob by Leah and later the most prominent of the twelve tribes and stresses the people’s ethnic origins. The name “Israel” distinguishes God’s covenant people – the Jews under covenant with God. So for God to reject Israel would mean that He broke His covenant vow with His chosen people and, of course, God never breaks His covenant vow.

Being of the tribe of Benjamin was also very special for Benjamin was the only son of Jacob to be born in Israel. The tribe remained closer to God than the other tribes and was thus the last tribe to survive until the conquest of Babylon in 586 BC.

We can be sure that just as Paul wrote in his time also in our time and in times to come, God will always save His chosen people. Being a remnant means that neither all of the Jews nor all of the Gentiles will be kept, but only a portion of those people according to God’s gracious choice. It is not by our rejection of God that we could be forsaken, but it is only by God’s grace any of us are kept. Surely seven thousand men is a small fraction of the living Jews at Paul’s time of this writing, but God’s success is not measured in percentages or numbers. I am glad that our local congregation does not publish numbers in attendance at worship services for nobody can count the number of true worshipers in a worship service. The invisible church is just that: invisible, and not be seen or guessed

by any other members of the visible church. Jesus warned us about trying to pick the tares from the wheat:

*Matt 13:24 "He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.*

*Matt 13:25 "But while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away.*

*Matt 13:26 "But when the wheat sprang up and bore grain, then the tares became evident also.*

*Matt 13:27 "And the slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'*

*Matt 13:28 "And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' And the slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?'*

*Matt 13:29 "But he said, 'No; lest while you are gathering up the tares, you may root up the wheat with them.*

*Matt 13:30 'Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn."' "*

And just as Jesus taught us that sins start in the mind, we must not even think that “John” is a tare. Certainly if “John” was involved in a sin that indicated he was not a true believer, we should approach him about his activities just as Jesus also instructed us. If he is a true believer who has yielded to temptation then our talking to him will result in his repentance and his coming back into active obedience to our Lord. If he is not a true believer then perhaps God will use our talk to him to bring him to initial repentance. But if “John” chooses to leave us and not repent then we will know that he was never a believer and his departure will indeed strengthen our body.

*1John 2:19 "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us."*

It seems from Scripture that there will also be a remnant of the Church who will be saved in the End Times. Certainly we see now a huge corruption of the visible church and it seems as if Carol and I are moving into a portion of the remnant as we have moved from two different denominations into the PCA. I am certainly not saying that those other denominations are totally apostate, but it seems like the PCA is of a purer Biblical structure than the others. However there is no perfect church and, if there were one, I would ruin it by joining it.

**Rom 11:6 "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.**

We will talk more about grace in chapter 16, but Paul’s point here is that our salvation cannot be of any type of work on our part or otherwise the salvation would not be by God’s grace. Certainly we have clearly seen in chapter 3 that we, on our own, are

certainly totally without merit and not capable of any works that could earn us salvation. Even just raising our hands to accept the offer is works and we are not capable of doing any good works in our totally human state. Some religions teach that all humans have been given enough grace when they are physically born to allow them to “earn” their salvation by the work of accepting God’s offer of salvation. Certainly each of us wants to think that we are in control and our pride tells us that we do not need God to bring us to Him. However any approach to salvation that involves the necessity of human works is just not Biblical.

**Rom 11:7 What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;**

**Rom 11:8 just as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, Eyes to see not and ears to hear not, Down to this very day."**

**Rom 11:9 And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, And a stumbling block and a retribution to them."**

**Rom 11:10 "Let their eyes be darkened to see not, And bend their backs forever.""**

Of course the act of grace means that there is no basis for works. Our salvation from the wrath of God is not grace plus works but totally of grace for we have clearly seen in Romans chapter 3 that there is no means within any of us to do God’s required works. Only God Himself in the form of Jesus could do the works required by God and so God then permuted those works unto our chart and put our sins on the head of sinless Jesus. Praise God for His grace and mercy! The word “grace” is used only eight times in the entire Old Testament, but it is used 128 times in the New Testament and mostly in the writings of Paul.

Certainly verse 7 warns us of false seeking. Israel was seeking for a religion of earning their way into the blessings of God. Note that Paul also used the name “Israel” as we discussed above so he indeed is talking of the people who were under covenant with God. But even though this group of people was under the covenant of God, not all of them were indeed those chosen by God for the covenant and these people were trying to earn the blessing. The moment any of us begin to rely on anything totally and only within ourselves for being a child of God, we have started on a wrong path.

But we also see another warning here that has already been studied in our study of Romans.

*Rom 9:15 “For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."”*

The same doctrine was taught by Jesus Christ:

*Matt 13:13 “Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.”*

*Matt 13:14 "And in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; And you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive;*

*Matt 13:15 For the heart of this people has become dull, And with their ears they scarcely hear, And they have closed their eyes Lest they should see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart and return, And I should heal them.'*

*Matt 13:16 "But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.*

*Matt 13:17 "For truly I say to you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it; and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."*

Beginning with Gen 6:3, we see that God tells us that He will **not** always put up with the rebellious nature of men:

*Gen 6:3 "Then the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.""*

God has always elected some to salvation and to others He has not elected to salvation. Everyone will be treated justly, but to some He will show mercy and allow the justice to be that earned by Jesus. To the others, they will be justly treated according to their acts. He has not made any individual a sinner because we are all sinners. He cannot be unjust in His actions. God demonstrates common grace to everyone but only to His chosen people does He exercise particular, special, saving grace. We then have the clear teaching of election and reprobation. Both of these actions have as their motive the glory of God. This teaching is clearly taught throughout the Bible as clearly seen by the following: Proverbs 16:4, John 12:39-40, John 13:18, John 17:12, 1 Peter 2:7-8, Jude 1: 4, and of course in Romans 9 is the most forceful statement of double predestination in the Bible.

*Prov 16:4 "The Lord has made everything for its own purpose, Even the wicked for the day of evil."*

*John 12:39 "For this cause they could not believe, for Isaiah said again,*

*John 12:40 He has blinded their eyes, and He hardened their heart; lest they see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, and be converted, and I heal them."*

*John 13:18 "I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me.'"*

*John 17:12 "While I was with them, I was keeping them in Thy name which Thou hast given Me; and I guarded them, and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled."*

*John 17:20 "I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;*

*John 17:21 that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me."*

*1Peter 2:7 "This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, "The stone which the builders rejected, This became the very corner stone," 1Peter 2:8 and, "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. 1Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 1Peter 2:10 for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."*

*Jude 1:4 "For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Jude 1:5 Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. Jude 1:6 And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day."*

Jude 1:5 reminds us again that not all of the people that God led out of Egypt were true believers and He did destroy these unbelievers. Jude 1:6 tells us that the angels also had a choice and those who chose against their Creator were kept in judgment so that there is no hope for them after they made their choice against God.

**Rom 11:11 "I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. Rom 11:12 Now if their transgression be riches for the world and their failure be riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!"**

Now Paul tells us that not all of the Jews who stumbled over the truth of Jesus were indeed making a permanent choice against God. The stumbling of Israel had a purpose! Of course that statement reminds me of Rom 8:28-29. God used their transgression to bring salvation to the Gentiles so that the Jews would become jealous and then reconsider what God has done. The book of Acts tells us a lot about how the story of the work of Jesus spread throughout the world. Then after the bringing in of the Gentiles into the Kingdom of God, He will bring in the remnant of the Jews into the promised Kingdom also. Since the failure of the Jews resulted in the salvation of the Gentiles, this sinful work will result in a great fulfillment of the covenant that God made with Israel. God is just and His word is sure. One day all of God's children will understand the plans of God. I don't need to understand because I know and trust God, but the understanding that will come will bring even more glory to God. Meanwhile, we Gentiles should be involved in evangelism and with making disciples of those whom God saves.

*Matt 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,*

*Matt 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

**Rom 11:13 “But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry,**

**Rom 11:14 if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them.**

Paul reminds the audience that he is speaking to Gentiles and that he is an apostle to the Gentiles, but he continues to have a heart for his fellow Jews and hopes that by bringing jealousy to them he might be used by God to bring some of them to salvation also. Looking up jealousy is enlightening. One definition is “an intense interest for another's honor or prosperity”. Of course jealousy involves envy and coveting, which we would think is not something that we should want to happen to someone. But Paul wanted them to see the change in the lives of the converted Gentiles to the extent that they wanted the same sort of changes in their lives. Such may be the only acceptable coveting that someone can do! Of course God is the One who saves people, but God could use the coveting of the people for the peace with and of God to bring them to a point where He would then cause them to be reborn. Paul was hoping for this sort of double effect of his ministry in that Gentiles would be saved and Jews would be jealous enough of the change in the lives of the Gentiles to investigate further with the result that God would cause those Jews to be born again.

**Rom 11:15 For if their rejection be the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?”**

We know that Paul was a messenger for the Gentiles and here he amplifies his ministry for he still has a love for his fleshly relatives and hopes that somehow they would still be allowed to choose Jesus as the Christ. Their rejection of Jesus brings about salvation for “the world” – meaning people of races other than the Jew – so then when the chosen Jews do accept Jesus then they also will be brought to spiritual life from spiritual death. The truth of the effective work of Jesus to the Gentiles is witnessed strongly by the words of Acts. Since indeed the work of Jesus proved effective for the world then It certainly will be effective for the Jews who choose Jesus as the Christ.

**Rom 11:16 “And if the first piece of dough be holy, the lump is also; and if the root be holy, the branches are too.**

**Rom 11:17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree,**

**Rom 11:18 do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you.”**

We Gentiles have to remember our place in the world. The original chosen people were the Jews and not the Gentiles. We have to respect the ones whom God chose first to carry His Word to the world and to give birth to Jesus, Who was also of the Jewish race

through His mother Mary. We must not become haughty about our being chosen as God's people. Only a healthy root can bring forth healthy branches and fruit. The root (the chosen Israelites) is certainly very healthy because such was chosen and developed by God. However some of the branches became unhealthy as witnessed by the Old Testament writings and by the behavior of the Pharisees in the time of Jesus on earth. These branches had to be then broken off and new branches (the Gentiles) grafted unto the healthy trunk. In the two thousand years since Pentecost we have the witness of many Gentile pretenders to be broken off and, if we are not really God's chosen people, we can also be broken off and thrown into the fire.

**Rom 11:19 "You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in."**

**Rom 11:20 Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear;**

**Rom 11:21 for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you."**

This is not saying that any of us real chosen people of God can lose our salvation, but God can stop His salvation of the Gentiles and the Bible indeed does tell us that one day there will be an end to the time of the Gentiles. We are not any better than anyone else regarding our natural being. In fact we are not physical descendants of the original chosen race so we were not chosen by any birthright. However nobody has ever been chosen a child of God because of his/her physical birthright. I am not a Christian because my dad was a Christian and my son is not a Christian because I am a Christian. Praise the Lord he and I are Christians because of our faith that He gave to both of us. We cannot be conceited for something that we did not earn! Fear is an important component of being a Child of God for we want to obey Him. We do not fear that He will take away our salvation, but if we are self-deluded into thinking that we are Christians when we indeed are not then certainly God can reveal that to us and we will not be spared. The Bible often speaks of fear that we children of God should have:

*Psa 85:9 "Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him, That glory may dwell in our land."*

*Phil 2:12 "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;"*

The fear that we are to have is mentioned often in the New Testament such as:

*Matt 10:28 "And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."*

*Luke 1:50 "And His mercy is upon generation after generation Toward those who fear Him."*

*Luke 12:5 "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!"*

*2Cor 5:11 "Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences."*

*2Cor 5:11 "Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences."*

*Eph 5:21 "and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."*

I think that the above is enough to point out that we should have a very healthy fear of the almighty holy God. The correct fear that we are to have is not taught enough today. Rather than spend any more time here on this topic, I refer you to a great book by John Bunyan called "The Fear of God" that is referenced below.

**Rom 11:22 "Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.**

**Rom 11:23 And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again.**

**Rom 11:24 For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more shall these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?"**

Certainly all of Scripture teaches both the kindness and the severity of God. Of course the ones who fell were those who were physically Jews, but not those in true covenant with God. There is only one Family of God and those members are those of every tribe and race throughout the world who were chosen by God and given saving faith on which they can act to choose Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. Anyone who falls from the Family were really not of the family. Those members of the visible church who do not continue in the kindness of God were never members of the invisible church and they will eventually be cut off from even the visible church. Similarly the Jews who were not of true faith but who are given true faith by God will indeed be grafted back into the root.

**Rom 11:25 "For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in;**

**Rom 11:26 and thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob."**

**Rom 11:27 "And this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.""**

Remember the definition of Jew and Israel from the beginning of this chapter. The Israelites are those who were in covenant with God and certainly all of them will be saved. There will be a time when the fullness of the Gentiles occurs, which is the time when all the chosen Gentiles have been saved. Until that time, a partial hardening has happened to the Jews who are in covenant with God (the Israelites). But the time will come when God will remove the ungodliness from Jacob and the complete covenant of God with his chosen race of Jews will be revealed.



**Rom 11:28** “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;  
**Rom 11:29** for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.  
**Rom 11:30** For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience,  
**Rom 11:31** so these also now have been disobedient, in order that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy.  
**Rom 11:32** For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all.”

**Rom 11:33** “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!  
How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!  
**Rom 11:34** For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor?  
**Rom 11:35** Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again?  
**Rom 11:36** For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”

There is no way any human can even begin to understand the creations of God and we cannot begin to properly understand exactly how He works out all of His justice to His creation. We cannot offer any help to the Creator in His justice! How arrogant of us to presume to judge His judgment! Certainly none of us has first given to God so that He can then give some back to us! We have absolutely nothing to give to God, we can only humbly accept His glorious gift of life through Jesus Christ.

What a glorious cycle! God created everything that is visible to us and what is invisible to us and He then gave all to His chosen people through Jesus and then all of His chosen people then give it all back to Him! What majestic glory is to be given to Him!

### References

1. All Bible quotations are from the New American Standard Bible, Moody Press, 1975.
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4. John Bunyan, “The Fear of God”, first published in London in 1679 and then published by Soli Deo Gloria in 1999.