



Relentless Grace: How the Gospel Changes Everything

Paul's Letter to the Romans

Session 13 – The Root and Branches | Romans Chapter 11

If you've seen *Fiddler on the Roof*, you remember Tevye saying to God, "I know we're the chosen people—but once in a while can't You choose someone else?" Some people do think that God rejected the Jews, took back all of the promises He made, and gave them to the church instead. But Paul (who never saw *Fiddler on the Roof*) takes care of that question in this chapter.

In this chapter, Paul explains the mystery of God's redemption plan. We admit it can be a brain teaser, but this we know. God does not break His promises and He has not abandoned His people.

Icebreaker

Which of these mysteries have you ever successfully solved?

Escape Room Rubik's Cube Who built Stonehenge Mayan Calendar Where lost socks go

Goals for this Session:

- Discover the scope and magnitude of God's plan of redemption.
- Consider the perils of pride and complacency in a believer's life.
- Pray for the faithful remnant of Jewish believers to be salt and light for their people.

Rejected? No Way!

Romans 11:1–24

Paul didn't shy away from calling out Israel for rejecting the gospel, but he had more to say.

1. **What Paul remembered** (verses 1–10). Paul cites proof that God is not finished with Israel.
 - a. Paul starts with the most personal evidence he could offer. Himself! What made Paul living proof that God wasn't done with Jews? You can use the following references or simply list what comes to mind about Paul. (Acts 9; 1 Corinthians 15:1–10; 1 Timothy 1:16)
 - b. *Elijah and the remnant*. Read the story for yourself (1 Kings 19) but there's a reason Paul applies it to his own generation. Elijah thought all of Israel had rejected God—and from outward appearances, it sure looked that way. Elijah was ready to quit on his people (and life). So God kindly lifted Elijah out of his funk. God let the weary prophet know there was a faithful remnant. He wasn't alone. God had a plan, and it was time for Elijah to go home. There was still more work to be done.

For Paul, this was tremendously encouraging. Share one takeaway lesson for yourself.

2. **What Paul knew** (verses 11–15). For Paul, the rub of his kinsmen rejecting Jesus was hard; would they never respond? In these verses, Paul explains what he knew of God's master plan for His people.

- a. How did Israel's blindness result in blessing for the Gentiles?
- b. How did Paul see salvation among the Gentiles as ultimately working for the Jews' benefit?
- c. If we assume that because Paul knew God's plan, he never grappled with the hard parts, we forget how human he was. He already expressed his own grief and longing for the salvation of his people. According to verse 15, what did Paul take comfort in knowing?

Good to Know

Soon after his conversion, God told Paul that he would take the gospel to Gentiles (Acts 9:15-16). We see how this played out in Acts, in a familiar pattern wherever Paul went. He visited the synagogues first and gave the gospel to fellow Jews; they rejected it so he took it to Gentiles (Acts 13:42-52).

What painful situation has you leaning into God and looking ahead to better days? What brings you comfort?

Romans 8:28

Jeremiah 29:11

Isaiah 43:18–19

3. **What Paul warned** (verses 16–24). Paul taught that Israel’s rejection was temporary; one day the Jewish nation will be brought back to God. Two metaphors apply to Israel’s natural heritage as God’s chosen people. Again, Paul is showing that God is not done with Israel.

a. The olive tree is a symbol of the nation of Israel.* The root is God’s promise to Abraham. God keeps His promises and this is what supports and sustains Israel to this day.

Paul pictures unbelieving Jews as broken off branches and believing Gentiles as wild branches grafted in. Paul reminds his Gentile friends what got Jews in trouble in the first place and warns them not to have the same attitude.** We have

touched on this before (Romans 2:1–4, Romans 3:27). Since most believers in Rome were Gentile, Paul’s concern was warranted. In your experience, what’s the harm of:

Being on the receiving end of a superior attitude:

Being on the giving end of a superior attitude:

First Fruits

It was Jewish custom to offer the first part of any produce to the Lord as a reminder that God is the source of all good things (Numbers 15:17-19). The sample represented the whole batch.

b. What did Gentile believers need to remember about being given access (grafted in) to God’s covenant with Abraham? What had they done to deserve all of the advantages and privileges that God had promised Abraham? Please explain.

#wordstoknow

Greek words/terms at a glance.

kindness (chrestos) goodness; absence of malice in thought, deed, and character

severity (apotomia) to cut off; as in the decisive removal of dead branches

c. Paul seriously warns Gentiles that they have no room to be proud and good reason for reverent fear (verse 20). If God didn’t spare natural branches, He won’t spare you.[?] It was true in Paul’s day and true in ours.

mercy (eleeo) compassion; an active desire to remove man from the misery of sin

The Bible says what lies ahead for the church in the last days (1 Timothy 4; 2 Timothy 3). Jesus cautioned churches that grew complacent and self-satisfied that He would remove His presence and blessing if they didn’t repent (Revelation 2–3). This is the best, albeit unpleasant, warning! On the upside, the Bible gives us hope and practical ways to respond. How can we, as the church, remain spiritually active, healthy, and engaged?

Colossians 4:2–6

2 Timothy 4:1–5

Titus 2:11–13

* The olive tree is not a picture of the church; in the church, there is no difference between Jew and Gentile (Galatians 3:28). Paul is talking about Jews and Gentiles as people groups and their relative positions in God’s plan.

** Jews had always regarded themselves as God’s special favorites and they despised Gentiles; now the tables were turned.

[?] Paul is not raising the possibility of a person losing their salvation; nothing can separate a *true believer* from God (Romans 8).

Memory Verse

As you memorize this verse, let it sink in and make it part of your prayers. Ask the Holy Spirit to examine your heart and increase your understanding.

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past founding out!”
Romans 11:33 NKJV

Think About It . . .

Which part of this verse resonates most with you today? How and in what way?

God’s Mercy

Romans 11:25–36

Paul explains that when salvation among the Gentiles is fulfilled, Israel will turn back to God and embrace the gospel of grace.

1. **The mystery of God’s mercy** (verses 25–32). Imagine how hard it must have been for a devout Jew like Paul, with the history and experience of his people flowing through his veins, to see them reject the gospel without a thought and refuse Jesus. *But it won’t always be so.*
 - a. What did Paul want his Gentile friends to understand about God’s love and purposes for the Jewish people?

 - b. Paul saw it was his responsibility and ours to arouse unbelieving Jews to envy (*I want what you’ve got*). What will compel anyone to want what we’ve got?

John 13:34–35

Ephesians 4:29

Titus 3:1–2

2. *How the gospel changes everything.* We can't prove it, but it's entirely likely that Paul was accustomed to puzzled stares and hands up for questions every time he spoke out the mystery of God's mercy. No one can grasp every nuance of His grace, but this we know. God never condemns men who want to be saved—He saves men who deserve to be lost. When we remember this, the power of the gospel is good news all over again.

a. **The gospel is incentive to live in awe of God** (verses 33–36).

Take time to meditate on these verses. It will take more than a 30-second look to grasp the extent of what Paul is expressing here. What stands out to you about God's character? His wisdom? His ways? His mercy?

**“The reverential fear of God
mixed with love
and
fascination and astonishment
and devotion
is the most purifying emotion
the human soul can know.”**

A.W. Tozer

b. **The gospel is incentive to extend mercy and keep praying.** Paul emphasizes God's grace and patience towards Israel, even in their rebellion. At any time, when someone turns to Him, God will always forgive and welcome them back. Have you ever felt like giving up on someone who is calloused, unwilling to listen, and consistently rejects hearing the gospel? According to the verses below, what can you be sure is God's heart toward them?

Jeremiah 31:3

Isaiah 30:18

2 Peter 3:9

Does this realign your heart attitude to extend mercy and keep praying? In what way?



Gospel at a Glance: The Depth and Riches of God's Wisdom | “Having contemplated God's great plan of salvation for Jews and Gentiles, all Paul could do was sing a hymn of praise. Only a God as wise as our God could take the fall of Israel and turn it into salvation for the world! His plans will not be aborted nor will His purposes lack fulfillment. No human being can fully know the mind of the Lord; and the more we study His ways, the more we offer Him praise.” – Warren Wiersbe¹

¹ Warren Wiersbe, *Bible Exposition Commentary/New Testament, Volume 1*, (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Cook Communications, 2001), p. 553

Adoration **C**onfession **T**hankfulness **S**upplication

“Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.” Ephesians 6:18 NIV

In each session, we will pray—for ourselves, for others, for our church, and for our nation. As a focus for prayer, use the memory verse, another scripture, or what the Lord has impressed on you from the chapter. No need to be profound or elaborate, just authentic.

Write a simple prayer, including each element here.

A _____

C _____

T _____

S _____

Relentless Grace: How the Gospel Changes Everything

©2018–2019 Harvest Christian Fellowship. All rights reserved.