

An Outline of Romans 11

Chapter 11

1 God has not cast off or rejected His people. Paul is a Jew and he has not been rejected or cast off.

2–6 Elijah once thought that he was the only faithful person left alive, but God said Elijah was wrong. God told Elijah that there was a remnant of 7000 that was still faithful to Him. Paul says that a small remnant of faithful Jews in his day is no more strange than the small number of faithful Jews in Elijah's day. That God has not cast off His people is clear because this remnant has been saved. The faithless Jews are not His people just as they were not His people in the days of Elijah.

7 Israel was seeking the promised Messianic blessings but had failed to obtain them as a whole. However, some of the Israelites **had** (past tense!) obtained those blessings. The elect were presently enjoying the promised blessings. The others rejected Christ due to the hardness of their hearts.

8–10 After the faithless Jews initially hardened their hearts and rejected Christ, God decided as part of His judicial work to harden them further. He decided to use the wickedness of the Jews to fulfill His own good purposes just as He had used the wickedness of Pharaoh to fulfill His own good purposes.

11 Are the faithless Jews without hope? Not at all. God did not reject them because they were Jews. God rejected them because they were faithless. If they turned back to Him then God would accept them. Through their wickedness, God brought blessings to the entire world. God has done everything He could do to save the faithless Jews. He sent prophets to prepare them. He sent His son to convince them and die for them. He sent preachers to spread the good news. Even now, Paul says, the salvation of the Gentiles is intended to bring the faithless Jews back to God. God owes the faithless Jews nothing more. No faithless Jew can at the last day point a finger at God and complain that He did not do enough or that He wasn't faithful to His promises.

12 The Jewish rejection of Christ brought blessings to the entire world. The "fullness" used here is not a numerical term. Paul is simply saying that if the Jews' faithless-

ness brought blessings to the world, just think what their faithfulness would allow God to do.

13–14 Paul now begins to direct his comments toward the arrogant Gentiles who thought that God had rejected the Jews in favor of themselves. Paul magnifies his ministry to the Gentiles by again expressing his hope that the faithless Jews would turn back to God out of jealousy when they saw their promised blessings being inherited by the Gentiles. Paul says that it is hope that this will allow some of the Jews to be saved.

15 Here Paul is contrasting what the Jews' rejection means with what their acceptance would mean **if** it occurred. The faithlessness of the Jews brought blessings to the world through Christ. What would it be like if the faithless Jews then turned to Christ as well? It would be like life coming from death!

16 The Gentiles thought that the Jews had been rejected because they were Jews. Paul says that such is not the case. If the patriarchs (the first fruits of the dough or the root of the tree) were accepted by God then their descendants (the whole lump or the branches) could be as well.

17–18 The branches that were broken off the tree represent the faithless Jews who were cut off from among the people. The branches that were grafted in represent the faithful Gentiles who were now enjoying the blessings originally promised to the Jews.

19–22 Paul is still trying to convince the arrogant Gentiles that the Jews had not been rejected simply because they were Jews. They were rejected because of their faithlessness. If they returned to God then they too could be grafted back in. Likewise, the faithful Gentiles will continue to enjoy the blessings of God provided that they remain faithful. If they become faithless then they too will experience the severity of God.

23–24 The Jews have not been cut off permanently in the sense that they have no hope. If the faithless Jews return to God then God will graft them back onto the tree. The issue is one of faith and not of race. What must precede their return to God? Does God need to do something more? No. Paul says that the

Jews must do something—they must not persist in their unbelief.

25 The stated purpose of this verse is to convince the Gentiles that they should not be conceited over the fact that they are enjoying promises that the Jews are not. The word "until" can be used in the sense that something occurs up until a certain point and then ceases to occur. However, the word "until" can also mean that something occurs up until a certain point and then does **not** cease to occur. (For example, in Romans 5:13, Paul said that sin was in the world until the law came.) Thus, there is no reason to conclude from this verse that the hardening of the faithless Jews ever did or ever will cease. Paul is reminding the faithless Gentiles that they are receiving the fullness of Christ's blessings because of the hardness of the Jews.

26–27 The faithless Jews were complaining and the arrogant Gentiles were boasting. Why shouldn't the Jews complain? Why shouldn't the Gentiles boast? The answer to each question is the same. The Jews have no right to complain because all Israel has been saved. The Gentiles have no right to boast because all Israel has been saved. Which Israel has been saved? It is the faithful remnant that makes up the true Israel and that has been saved.

28–29 Although the Jews had rejected Christ and were enemies of the gospel, no one could deny that they had a special place in God's plan. The many advantages of the Jews that Paul had listed in Chapter 9 applied to both faithless and faithful Jews alike. God's promises to the patriarchs had not been revoked. God had completely fulfilled them through Jesus Christ.

30–32 Every difference between Jew and Gentile with regard to salvation has been removed through Jesus Christ. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and hence all are in need of God's mercy.

33–35 God had granted Paul a glimpse into His plan and Paul was left in wonder and awe. Who are we to complain to God? Who are we to boast before God? We are all in need of His mercy. We are all in the same boat—and that is the theme of Romans 9-11.