

1. **Introduction:** Our last lesson ended considering Paul's impassioned plea for vigorous evangelism. Evangelism is initiated by sending out selected people to proclaim the gospel. People hear, believe, call on Jesus name, and are saved.

- Paul uses this perspective to structure his next paragraph concerning Israel's unbelief.

2. **Romans 10:16-21:** *But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?"¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.¹⁸ But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."¹⁹ But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, "I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry."²⁰ Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me."²¹ But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."*

- The gospel was being preached to the Jews. Why did they not accept it with joy? Paul himself heard the gospel, rejected it, and persecuted those who did believe.
- Then the risen Christ confronted Paul, and Paul for evermore believed and followed Him.
- The Jews didn't reject Christ because they failed to hear the good news of the gospel nor didn't understand the meaning and significance of the gospel message. They had been prepared by the prophets for Messiah's coming.
- Their unwillingness to believe was due to personal stubbornness and hardness of heart which was prophesied in Isaiah 65:2 which Paul quotes. (10:21), "***But of Israel he says, 'All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.'***"
- The question is, "Has Israel forever missed the opportunity to believe?" No! Paul examines two questions on the implications of Israel's failure to believe.

- First (11:1), he asks has Israel’s rejection of God by failing to believe His Messiah caused God to reject Israel?

3. ***Romans 11:1-10: I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. ² God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? ³ “Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.” ⁴ But what is God's reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” ⁵ So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. ⁶ But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. ⁷ What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, ⁸ as it is written, “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.” ⁹ And David says, “Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; ¹⁰ let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever.***

- Paul likely remembers Psalm 94:14 where the Psalmist says, *“For the Lord will not forsake his people; he will not abandon his heritage.”*
- Paul cites personal, theological, Biblical, and contemporary statistical evidence supporting the Psalm’s statement.
- His **first piece of evidence** is himself. Paul says if you think all Israel has failed to believe, then look at me. I am a Jew and I was a blasphemer and persecutor of Christ’s church who used all my strength against the church.
- Yet, God had mercy and in His grace saved me. I now believe, follow, and preach Christ and His righteousness no matter what it costs me.
- The **second piece of evidence** is theological. The people of Israel are the people of the covenant with God which God declared unbreakable (Jeremiah 33:19 – 26). God will not break His covenant even though Israel itself forsakes the covenant.
- The **third piece of evidence** comes from 1Kings 19:10 and 19:18.

- Elijah became frightened and appealed to God against Israel saying, *“I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.”*
- But the Lord said, *“Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”*
- Even in times of apostasy, God retains for Himself a faithful remnant.
- The **fourth piece of evidence** God had not totally rejected His people was, as Paul traveled and preached, he encountered a believing Jewish remnant.
- The chief characteristic of this gospel-believing remnant was they were chosen by God’s grace – His gracious kindness to the undeserving.
- Israel, as a whole, failed to obtain the righteousness they sought through obedience to the Law, but individuals of a remnant were chosen by grace and justified by faith.
- Those remaining were given up by God to their own stubbornness, described as a spirit of stupor, in which they were spiritually blind and deaf.
- Being spiritually deaf they could not hear and understand the gospel and being spiritually blind they could not see the consequences.

4. ***Romans 11:11-15***: *So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. ¹² Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean! ¹³ Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry ¹⁴ in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. ¹⁵ For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?*

- Can Israel recover from its rejection of Christ? Paul’s answer is yes. He believes Israel’s present state of unbelief is not final but partial and temporary.
- Paul says God is always purposeful in what He does and what He permits.

- Did Israel stumble over Christ to ensure Israel would completely fall out of God’s favor, or did God have another purpose in permitting Israel to stumble?
- Paul says Israel’s stumble enabled the rise of the church.
- In the church’s early days, it was Jews, like the pre-conversion Paul, who persecuted believers causing them to move out of Jerusalem. The exiled believers drew people to Christ wherever they went.
- Judaism required that Jews not assimilate but remain separate from non-Jews.
- With Christ’s death and resurrection, a new principle came into effect.
- “In Christ” Jews and Gentiles were to become one people.
- Jews believed Judaism was the only route for access to God. A frequently asked question was, must Gentiles become Jews before becoming “in Christ?”
- Paul and others showed God was providing direct access through grace for believers. Access to God shifted from being “in Israel” to being “in Christ.”
- Gentiles and Jews alike come to Christ through faith in Him.
- Israel’s failure, as a nation, to believe enabled Gentiles to hear the gospel.
- In the very early days of the church most preachers of the gospel were Jews by birth. Paul is the great example. With one likely exception (Luke), all authors of the books of the New Testament were Jews.
- Paul’s primary mission was to Gentiles.
- Paul says in God’s timing, the remnant of Jewish believers will become a majority. That will bring even greater blessings to the church.
- There are several possible interpretations of what Paul meant by “life from the dead.” The most likely is a figurative interpretation that says unimaginable blessing will come to the Gentiles when Israel experiences widespread belief, blessings so great as to seem like new life out of death.
- The future of the Jews is that they ultimately will be drawn into Christ.

5. ***Romans 11:16-24: If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches. ¹⁷ But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, ¹⁸ do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you***

who support the root, but the root that supports you. ¹⁹ Then you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” ²⁰ That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. ²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. ²² Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. ²³ And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. ²⁴ For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.

- The Jews were chosen and set apart by God to be His special people. How do believers fit into Israel’s spiritual heritage.
- Paul’s two illustrations support his argument that the Jews have not been discarded by God, but rather God has opened a new door for both Jews and Gentiles such that both share the same spiritual heritage.
- The **first illustration** (11:16a) draws on Numbers 15:17-21.
- When a new batch of dough was made, the first part was to be offered to God as a symbol that the whole lump belonged to Him.
- Likewise, in the Feast of Firstfruits, a sheaf was to be offered to God as a token that the entire harvest was His.
- The idea is that when God accepts “a part,” He sanctifies “the whole.” Paul uses this idea to show God’s acceptance of Abraham, set apart all Israel.
- This means God accepted Isaac and Jacob and the “rest of the lump that made up the nation of Israel” despite their sins or failings.
- The olive, which is cultivated in groves or orchards, (Psalm 80:8ff) was an accepted symbol for Israel (Jeremiah 11:16-17, Hosea 14:16).
- Paul’s **second illustration** begins in verse 16b and continues through 24.
- A cultivated olive tree represents the nation Israel. God is the cultivator.

- The roots of the tree are the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and the covenants God made with them.
- The roots support and nourish the tree. God made the covenants and will not deny or change them. They continue in effect.
- The tree representing the Israel is changed by grafting believing Gentiles (wild olive branches) among the believing Jews and removing unbelieving Jews. In this way Gentiles “in Christ” share Israel’s spiritual heritage.
- The changed tree continues to represent the chosen people of God but now includes all who are “in Christ” and those only.
- Paul describes this process as cutting off unproductive branches from the trunk of the cultivated Israel olive tree while branches from a wild olive tree are grafted in.
- The illustration is particularly striking because the more common thing is to graft cultivated olive branches into the trunk of a wild olive tree.
- But when a cultivated olive tree becomes “decadent” and ceases to bear good fruit, grafting branches from a wild olive tree into its trunk is a way to restore the tree to productivity. Hence, Paul’s analogy.
- Israel, having ceased to be productive for God, was to be revitalized by grafting Gentile believers into spiritual Israel.
- The branches removed represent unbelieving Jews. A believing remnant remains. Gentile believers are the grafted-in wild branches.
- The continuity of God’s dealings with His people through the ages comes through the trunk of the olive tree.
- The good patriarchal roots of the cultivated tree supply nourishment to the wild branches which then produce good fruit.
- The changed olive tree represents all believers, both Gentile and Jewish.
- All believers are supported by the same trunk, nourished by the same roots.
- The foundation God provided the Jews through the ages continues to nourish all believers and is greatly enhanced by what God has done through Christ.
- Paul’s allegory teaches two complementary lessons.
- First a warning to Gentile believers against being presumptuous (17-22).

- Secondly a promise to Jewish unbelievers that they can be restored (23-24).
- Branches have no life in themselves. All branches depend on nourishment from the roots. Branches do not nourish the root. Unbelieving branches do not harm the root.
- The allegory is a neat picture of Jewish and Gentile believers who together are God's people in Christ. The warning against unbelief is strong.
- Unbelief led to many original branches being pruned. If original branches could be pruned, so can grafted-in branches.
- Unbelieving branches cannot survive on God's olive tree, but a branch removed because of unbelief can be grafted back if it acquires belief.
- Paul's allegory of the olive tree shows how, through pruning and grafting, Jews and Gentiles come together to form a one-people spiritual tree.
- It is clear the roots of OT faith nourish Christianity.

6. ***Romans 11:25-32: Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶ And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; ²⁷ "and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins." ²⁸ As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. ²⁹ For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰ For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, ³¹ so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. ³² For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.***

- God's covenant promises always were limited to spiritual Israel and never intended for all physical Israel. Spiritual Israel is everyone "in Christ."
- Believing and unbelieving Jews will continue to exist together until the last day as will believing and unbelieving Gentiles.
- Everyone who is saved is saved by faith, individually, one by one.

- Paul already described how Gentiles “in Christ” are equal beneficiaries with the Jews of the promises of God and equal members of the family of God.
- In some manner the hardening of the Jews, though temporary and partial, enhanced the “grafting in” of the Gentiles.
- There is a believing remnant of Jews. The partial hardening of Israel will last until “*the fullness of the Gentiles has come in*” at which time it will end.
- The “fullness of the Gentiles” refers to that time when all Gentile elect have been saved. “All Israel” means the time when all elect Jews have been saved.
- God’s intent is that all ungodliness be banished from Jacob. Salvation for “all Israel” will come through faith in Christ to individuals.
- There is no hint of national salvation, saving the nation as a unit. Nothing is said about either political entity or a return to the land.
- Further, there is no suggestion that Israel will be saved in some special way that eliminates the necessity for faith in Christ.
- There is a righteousness apart from the Law, earned by Christ, and imputed to those who believe in Him.
- In verses 28-32 Paul states grounds for confidence that God has neither rejected His people nor allowed them to fall beyond recovery.
- He gives two grounds for this confidence – God’s election and God’s mercy.
- “*Enemies for your sake*” refers to unbelieving Jews producing effects that spread the gospel. Yet, they remain under God’s judgment for their unbelief.
- God’s love and wrath simultaneously apply to unbelieving Jews.
- Unbelieving Jews were not only rejected the Gospel but actively opposed it and worked to prevent Gentiles from hearing it.
- Since God wants Gentiles to hear the Gospel, active opposition to the gospel alienated those who practiced it from God’s blessing and favor.
- But the Jews (believing and unbelieving) remain the chosen people of God, chosen to receive God’s promises and for Christ to be born among them.
- They are the descendants of the patriarchs with whom the covenant was made and to whom the promises were given.

- The **first ground** for confidence for the future salvation of Israel is from election and for the sake of the patriarchs.
- God, who is faithful to His covenant and promises, loves them and is determined to bring them to salvation. God's gifts and call are irrevocable. In this instance God's gifts are the privileges bestowed on Israel. God's call to Israel has not changed.
- God's mercy is the **second ground** Paul cites for having confidence that God has a plan for the future of His chosen people.
- Jews and Gentiles alike are disobedient. Through the good news of the gospel, God has shown mercy to both the Gentiles and Jews.
- Israel's disobedience provided an opening for the Gentiles to hear the gospel. That led to God's gift of mercy to disobedient Gentiles.
- Remember the parable in Luke. 14:16-24 where invited guests (the Jews) refuse to come to a banquet. A servant is sent into the highways and hedges (that is among the Gentiles) to bring in people to fill the banquet hall.
- The refusal of many Jews to believe led to the transfer of the opportunity for salvation to the Gentiles.
- After that, because of the mercy God showed to disobedient Gentiles, Paul says, He will show mercy to disobedient Jews.
- Verse 32 harks back to Paul's proof in the first part of the letter that all human beings are sinful, guilty, and without excuse.
- Paul's careful argument has been that there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile either in sin or in salvation.
- His point here is that as Jews and Gentiles have been together in the prison of disobedience, so they will be together in the freedom of God's mercy.
- He predicts a "fulness" of those being saved for both Gentiles and Jews.
- When all Jews and Gentiles that are to be saved have been saved, God's mercy will have been dispensed without distinction to all who believe.

7. **What is Next:** Romans 11:33-36.