SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES

†
11:26

DEEP DIVE

Romans

Chapter Eleven, Verses 1–36

God Has Not Rejected His People — A Remnant by Grace, an Olive Tree, and a Mystery That Ends in Praise

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

Has God cast off Israel? Paul answers with himself, with Elijah's seven thousand, with an olive tree whose broken branches can be grafted back, and with a mystery: a partial hardening "until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in," and then "all Israel will be saved." Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind Paul's key words.

THE PASSAGE

Romans 11:1–36

Remnant · olive tree · mystery · doxology

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

Contents

A remnant, a root, a hardening with an end date, and a song

—	**How to Read This Study** · *the four voices & their colors*	3
—	**Before the Passage** · *from Israel's stumbling to Israel's future*	3
I	**A Remnant Chosen by Grace** · *Romans 11:1–10 · the remnant by grace*	4
II	**Stumbled, Not Fallen** · *Romans 11:11–15 · stumbled, not fallen*	7
III	**The Root, the Branches, and the Graft** · *Romans 11:16–24 · the olive tree*	8
IV	**The Mystery: All Israel Will Be Saved** · *Romans 11:25–32 · all Israel will be saved*	10
V	**Oh, the Depth!** · *Romans 11:33–36 · the doxology*	13
VI	**The Passage in the Whole Bible** · *cross-references*	15
†	**At a Glance** · *the four voices side by side*	16
†	**Key Insights & Questions for the Table** · *discussion*	16
†	**Sources** · *where each voice comes from*	18



"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!" — Romans 11:33

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

Romans 11:1–36

God Has Not Rejected His People — A remnant by grace, branches broken and grafted, a hardening "until," and a doxology

† How to Read This Study

This study walks Romans 11 in 5 movements, in Paul's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the argument so you can see where Paul is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word
R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle
MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED
God — His character & actions
Command / instruction
Key repeated word
Sin / warning
Promise / blessing
Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · ROMANS 11:25–26

"For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.""

† Before the Passage

Romans 9–11 is one argument with three movements, and chapter 11 is its last word. Paul opened it with grief — "I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart" for his kinsmen (9:2) — and with a claim: "it is not as though the word of God has failed" (9:6). Chapter 9 grounded Israel's story in God's sovereign choice; chapter 10 laid Israel's unbelief at Israel's own door — a zeal "not in accordance with knowledge" (10:2), a people to whom God says, "ALL THE DAY LONG I HAVE STRETCHED OUT MY HANDS" (10:21). That verse leaves a question hanging, and 11:1 asks it out loud: has God, then, rejected His people?

Paul's answer moves in five steps. The rejection is **not total** — there is a remnant, Paul among them (vv. 1–10). It is **not purposeless** — Israel's stumbling has opened the door to the nations, to make Israel jealous (vv. 11–15). It is **not a license for Gentile pride** — the olive tree's root carries the grafted branches, not the other way round (vv. 16–24). It is **not final** — a partial hardening lasts "until," and then "all Israel will be saved" (vv. 25–32). And it is **not explainable** — only adorable (vv. 33–36). The doxology closes not just this chapter but the first eleven chapters of the letter; 12:1 begins "Therefore."

The Old Testament fills the chapter. Paul quotes Elijah's complaint and God's answer (1 Kings 19:10, 18), Moses and Isaiah on a spirit of stupor (Deuteronomy 29:4; Isaiah 29:10), David's prayer about a table turned to a snare (Psalm 69:22–23), Isaiah's Deliverer and Jeremiah's new covenant (Isaiah 59:20–21; 27:9; Jeremiah 31:33–34), and Isaiah and Job in the doxology (Isaiah 40:13; Job 41:11). The olive tree itself is a prophet's picture: "The LORD called your name, 'A green olive tree, beautiful in fruit and form'" (Jeremiah 11:16).

This is the chapter where Bible teachers part ways most visibly, and the four voices in this study do not say the same thing about "all Israel." Read them carefully: all four look for a future work of God among the Jewish people, but they describe it differently — the nation as a whole before Christ returns (Guzik), the full complement of elect Israel in a new visitation of the Spirit (Sproul), a restoration to the land and a conversion (Spurgeon, preaching on Ezekiel 37), and the Jews brought back as a body into the one church (Henry). Where they differ, this study says so.

I
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 11:1–10

A Remnant Chosen by Grace

Paul, Elijah's seven thousand, and the rest hardened

> [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.* [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?* [3] *"Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE."* [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."* [5] *In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time ☆ a remnant according to God's gracious choice.* [6] *But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.* [7] *What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and ⚠ the rest were hardened;* [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."*
> [9] *And David says, "LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP, AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM.* [10] *"LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT, AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER."*
>
> ROMANS 11:1–10

> *"Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him."*
>
> 1 KINGS 19:18

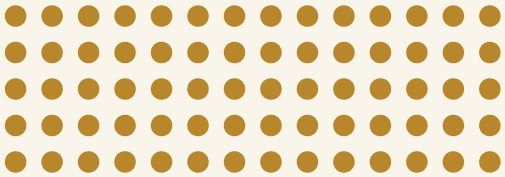
FIGURE · THE REMNANT THEN AND NOW

THEN · ELIJAH (1 KINGS 19)

What Elijah saw
"I alone am left" (v. 3)



What God had kept
"SEVEN THOUSAND MEN" (v. 4)

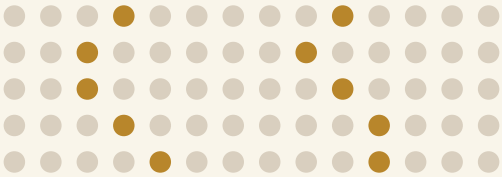


each dot = 100 who had not bowed to Baal

NOW · PAUL (ROMANS 11)

The proof in the pulpit
"I too am an Israelite … of Benjamin" (v. 1)

Israel at the present time
a remnant (gold) · the rest hardened (v. 7)



a picture of the principle, not a census

"a remnant according to God's gracious choice … otherwise grace is no longer grace" (vv. 5–6)

Elijah counted one faithful man; God counted seven thousand — and Paul says the same grace keeps a remnant "at the present time."

λεῖμμα κατ᾽ ἐκλογὴν χάριτος

LEIMMA KAT' EKLOGĒN CHARITOS · "A REMNANT ACCORDING TO THE CHOICE OF GRACE" · G3005, G1589

Leimma (G3005), "what is left over," occurs only here in the New Testament; it is the noun behind the verb of verse 4, "I have kept (*katelipon*) for Myself." The remnant is not what survived by its own grit but what God *kept*. *Eklogē* (G1589), "choice, election," is the word of 9:11 ("God's purpose according to His choice") and returns in 11:28. NASB95 renders *kat' eklogēn charitos* "according to God's gracious choice"; the KJV keeps it closer, "the election of grace." Verse 6 then states the logic in a sentence: if by grace, then not by works — "otherwise grace is no longer grace." And verse 2 roots the whole thing deeper still: "His people whom He foreknew" (*proegnō*, G4267).

ἐπωρώθησαν · πνεῦμα κατανύξεως

EPŌRŌTHĒSAN · PNEUMA KATANYXEŌS · "WERE HARDENED · A SPIRIT OF STUPOR" · G4456, G2659

Pōroō (G4456) means to petrify, to cover with a callus — the word for the disciples' hearts in Mark 6:52 and 8:17. Its noun, *pōrōsis*, returns in verse 25, where the hardening is "partial" and has an end. *Katanyxis* (G2659), "stupor," is found only here in the New Testament, from the Septuagint of Isaiah 29:10: a numbness, the dullness of a limb gone to sleep. Paul joins it to Deuteronomy 29:4 ("eyes to see not") and then to Psalm 69:22–23, where the *table* (*trapeza*) — the place of fellowship and plenty — becomes a snare (*pagis*, G3803).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik hears verse 1 as an emphatic denial, and he lets Paul be his own evidence: an Israelite, a son of Abraham, a Benjamite, saved by grace. "Despite their present state, Israel is not permanently cast away." Elijah's complaint is the pattern — "God has often worked in Israel through a faithful remnant" — and Guzik, citing Harrison, suspects that Paul, hounded by his own countrymen, felt a special kinship with the prophet. Grace and works cannot be blended, and verse 7 is the result: "The elect among Israel received and responded to the mercy of God but the rest were hardened by their rejection." The stupor of verse 8 he explains with Leon Morris as a deadness toward spiritual things.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul calls verse 1 the hinge question for everything Paul will say about Israel's future, and he notes that Paul makes himself the test case: if God had cast off every Israelite, He would have cast off Paul. Elijah's despair under Ahab and Jezebel gets a name — "I call that the Elijah syndrome" — the faithful believer's conviction that he is the only one left. God had preserved seven thousand Elijah could not see, and that preservation is why "the church of Jesus Christ will never be erased from the face of the earth." On verse 6 he is blunt: "If it is grace, it is not earned; if it is earned, it is not grace." And the hardening is judicial: "Their blindness was a punishment for their sin." With Luther he reads the table of verse 9 as God's Word — honey to those who receive it, poison to those who refuse it.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's sermon "Elijah Fainting" (No. 2725, on 1 Kings 19:4) sits with the prophet in the scene Paul summons in verses 2–4. Part of God's answer to His exhausted servant was information: "He told Elijah that he still had seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal," and "that revelation still further cheered the prophet's heart." Part of it was work — the Lord sent Elijah back to his task, and Spurgeon counts that perhaps the best restorative of all. He even turns Elijah's prayer for death on its head: if you really are the only one left, "you ought to pray that you may live on until there are some more to carry on the work." God's servants are rarely as alone as they feel.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry begins with Paul's own case: "Should I say that all the Jews are rejected, I should cut off my own claims." Elijah, he says, spoke as though faithfulness had died with him, but God had seven thousand — "a competent number to bear their testimony against the idolatry of Israel." The lesson is general: "In times of general apostasy, there is usually a remnant that keep their integrity." And the remnant is no credit to itself: "It is his free and almighty grace that makes the difference between them and others." As for the rest, Henry holds both sides together — "They shut their eyes, and would not see; this was their sin" — and God's blinding of them was the just judgment that followed.

II
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 11:11–15

Stumbled, Not Fallen

Salvation to the Gentiles, jealousy for Israel, and "how much more"

> 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.* 12 *Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!* 13 *But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry,* 14 *if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them.* 15 *For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?*
>
> ROMANS 11:11–15

μὴ ἔπταισαν ἵνα πέσωσιν;

MĒ EPTAISAN HINA PESŌSIN · "THEY DID NOT STUMBLE SO AS TO FALL, DID THEY?" · G4417, G4098

Ptaiō (G4417) is to trip, to stumble — a misstep (James 2:10; 3:2). *Piptō* (G4098) is to fall down flat, to go down for good. The question is framed with *mē*, expecting "no," and Paul answers with the strongest refusal he owns, *mē genoito* — "May it never be!" (the same cry as v. 1). What happened instead is a *paraptōma* (G3900), a "false step," a trespass beside the path — the word of 5:15–20 for Adam's transgression. Israel tripped; it did not die.

παραζηλῶσαι

PARAZĒLŌSAI · "TO MAKE THEM JEALOUS" · G3863

Parazēloō (G3863) is to provoke to jealousy, to stir someone to want what another has. Paul has already quoted its source in 10:19 — Moses in Deuteronomy 32:21: "I WILL MAKE YOU JEALOUS BY THAT WHICH IS NOT A NATION." Here (v. 11) it is God's purpose, and in verses 13–14 it is Paul's strategy: he "magnifies" (*doxazō*, glorifies) his Gentile ministry in the hope of moving his own flesh and blood. A church full of joy in Israel's Messiah is meant to look, to Israel, like a home they want back.

ἀποβολή · πρόσλημψις

APOBOLĒ · PROSLĒMPSIS · "REJECTION · ACCEPTANCE" · G580, G4356

Verse 15 sets two nouns side by side. *Apobolē* (G580) is a casting away — in Acts 27:22 the "loss" of the ship. *Proslēmpsis* (G4356), found only here in the New Testament, is a taking-to-oneself, a welcome. Verse 12 makes the same contrast with *hēttēma* (G2275), "failure, defeat," against *plērōma* (G4138), "fulfillment, fullness" — the word that will return in verse 25 for the Gentiles. If Israel's loss meant reconciliation for the world, Israel's welcome home will be "life from the dead."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik makes the distinction plain enough for a child: "You can recover from a stumble, but if you fall you're down." Israel stumbled. God had a specific purpose in it, and the purpose was the nations — yet he is careful about cause and effect: "It wasn't that the Jewish rejection of Jesus as Messiah *caused* Gentiles to be saved." God turned a tragedy into an open door. And the goal of that open door circles back to Israel: Paul wants his people provoked "to a good kind of jealousy," seeing in Gentile believers the blessings promised to them. With Leon Morris he warns that Christians should not read this passage calmly.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul ("Israel's Rejection Not Final, Part 1," 10 December 2006) states the question sharply: "Did God want His people to fall not just temporarily, but fully and finally?" No. He reminds his mostly Gentile congregation that they are the beneficiaries of a plan once hidden and now revealed, faintly foreshadowed in the promise to Abraham and in Jonah's mission to Nineveh. The "how much more" of verse 12 works like Jesus' argument from the unjust judge: if failure brought such riches, imagine restoration. The jealousy is meant to run one direction: "Instead of being angry with us, the Jews will be jealous of us and try to pursue the same things that we enjoy." And "life from the dead" sends him to Ezekiel's valley of dry bones.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry sees the hand of God in the sequence: "by the divine appointment it was so ordered that the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles." The "fulness" of verse 12 is "the addition of them to the church, the filling up again of that place which became vacant by their rejection," and the church will be the richer for it. Their "receiving" in verse 15 will be "so strange and surprising, and yet withal so welcome and acceptable," that only the prodigal's father has words for it — the son who "was dead and has begun to live" (Luke 15:32). Hence his warning: Gentile believers must not mock the Jews but pity them and long for their return, for "The conversion of the Jews will bring great joy to the church."

III
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 11:16–24

The Root, the Branches, and the Graft

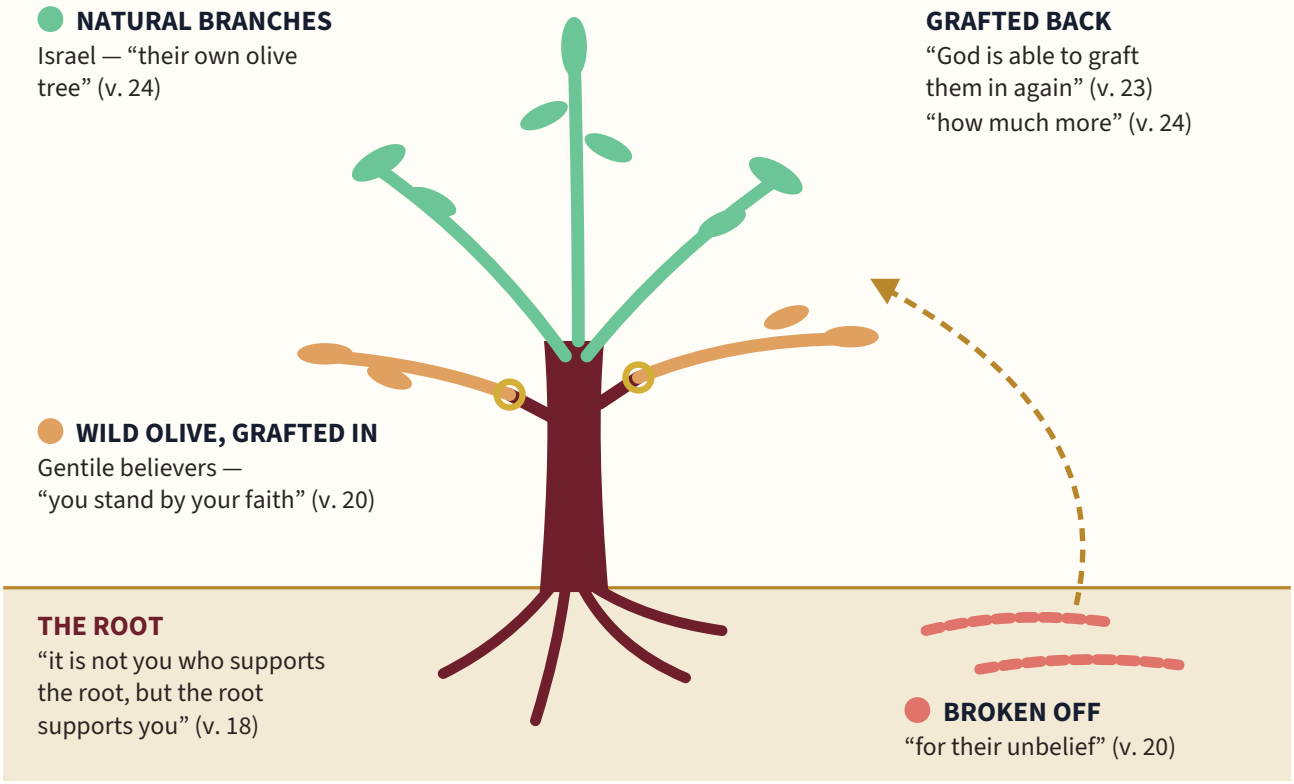
Natural branches broken off, a wild olive grafted in, and God able to graft again

16 *If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too.* 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,* 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.* 19 *You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in."* 20 *Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear;* 21 *for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either.* 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.* 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.* 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 will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?*

ROMANS 11:16–24

FIGURE · THE OLIVE TREE (ROMANS 11:16–24)

"Behold then the kindness and severity of God" (v. 22)



One tree, one root: natural branches broken off for unbelief, wild branches grafted in by faith, and the broken branches able to be grafted back.

ἀγριέλαιος · ἐνεκεντρίσθης · καλλιέλαιος

AGRIELAIOS · ENEKENTRISTHĒS · KALLIELAIOS · "WILD OLIVE · YOU WERE GRAFTED · CULTIVATED OLIVE" · G65, G1461, G2565

Three words found nowhere else in the New Testament. *Agrielaios* (G65), the wild olive — scrubby, small-fruited, good for little. *Kallielaios* (G2565), literally the "beautiful olive," the garden tree. *Enkentrizō* (G1461), to graft — from *kentron*, a point or goad: the incision that opens the stock to receive the scion; it appears six times in vv. 17–24 and only here. Paul admits the horticulture runs backward — a wild shoot is grafted onto a good stock "contrary to nature" (*para physin*, v. 24) — and that is the point: grace does what growers do not. The branch shares "the rich root" (*tēs rhizēs tēs piotētos*, the root of fatness, G4096), the sap of the promises.

χρηστότης καὶ ἀποτομία θεοῦ

CHRĒSTOTĒS KAI APOTOMIA THEOU · "THE KINDNESS AND SEVERITY OF GOD" · G5544, G663

Chrēstotēs (G5544) is kindness that is useful and generous — the "kindness" that leads to repentance in 2:4. *Apotomia* (G663), used only here (twice in v. 22), comes from *apotemnō*, to cut off sharply: a pruning-hook word, severity with an edge. Paul will not let either half go. The warning verbs of verses 18–20 sharpen it: *katakauchaomai* (G2620), "boast against, gloat over," and *hypsēla phronei*, "think lofty thoughts" (NASB "be conceited"). The cure is "but fear" (*phobou*, G5399) — and "if you continue in His kindness" (*epimenēs*).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik reads the firstfruit of verse 16 as the first Christians, who were Jewish, and the tree itself as Israel's — "the 'root' of which is Israel." The Gentile branch is there only by grace: "any Gentile standing in the 'tree' of God is there by faith only, not by works or merits." So the only fitting posture is humility: "remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you." The "if" of verse 22 he takes seriously — "not in the sense of a salvation by works, but continuing in God's grace and goodness to us" — and quotes John Murray: "there is no security in the bond of the gospel apart from perseverance." Then he turns to hope: the natural branches can be grafted back, and with less strain than the wild ones.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul explains that the olive was the most valuable and long-lived tree in Israel, while the wild olive was worthless — and that is what Gentiles were. "They are the root; we are the wild olive branch that is grafted into the root." Holiness here is borrowed: "It is only by the connection of the branch to the root that the branch is considered sacred and holy." From this he draws a word against anti-Semitism — salvation is from the Jews — and a warning to the church: "Just as apostasy polluted Israel, it can pollute you." He points to mainline churches that have done exactly that. "Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God": kindness continues for those who continue in it, and even church discipline is meant as a call back.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry identifies the good olive tree as the visible church, citing Jeremiah 11:16. Its root, in the sense of administration, is Abraham — "the root of this tree was Abraham, not the root of communication," for that root is Christ. The holiness of the branches is covenant holiness, belonging to the family, rather than holiness inherent in each branch. And the grafting is the reverse of ours: "Men graft to mend the tree; but God grafts to mend the branch." So the Gentile must not boast: he stands "By faith, which is a depending grace, and fetches in strength from heaven." Henry hears verse 23 as a reason to expect Israel's return: "God is able to graft them in again."

IV
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 11:25–32

The Mystery: All Israel Will Be Saved

A hardening "until," a Deliverer from Zion, and gifts God never takes back

25 *For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that* ◷ *a partial hardening has happened to Israel* ◷ *until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;* 26 ☆ *and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "* △ *THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL*

> *REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.”* [27] *“THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, △ WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.”* [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;* [29] *for ☆ the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.* [30] *For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown ⇄ mercy because of their disobedience,* [31] *so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the ⇄ mercy shown to you they also may now be shown ⇄ mercy.* [32] *For △ God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.*
>
> ROMANS 11:25–32

> *“A Redeemer will come to Zion, And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,” declares the LORD.*
>
> ISAIAH 59:20

FIGURE · A HARDENING WITH AN END DATE

A PARTIAL HARDENING ON ISRAEL (v. 25)
“stumbled” but not “fallen” (v. 11) · “enemies for your sake” (v. 28)

Gentiles coming in — “riches for the world” (v. 12)

“AND SO ALL ISRAEL WILL BE SAVED” (v. 26)
the Deliverer from Zion
“life from the dead” (v. 15)

“UNTIL the fullness of the Gentiles has come in”

all along: “a remnant according to God’s gracious choice” (v. 5) — Paul himself (v. 1)

HOW THE FOUR VOICES READ “ALL ISRAEL”

Guzik — the nation as a whole (not every Jew), before and tied to Christ’s return
Sproul — the full complement of elect Israel, in a future visitation of the Spirit
Spurgeon — restored to their land and converted to Christ (sermon on Ezekiel 37)
Henry — the Jews converted as a body, grafted back into the one church

The hardening is partial (a remnant all along) and temporary (“until”); read the bottom panel to see where the four teachers agree and differ.

μυστήριον · πώρωσις ἀπὸ μέρους · ἄχρι οὗ

MYSTĒRION · PŌRŌSIS APO MEROUS · ACHRI HOU · "MYSTERY · A PARTIAL HARDENING · UNTIL" · G3466, G4457, G891

Mystērion (G3466) is not a riddle but a secret God has now disclosed (16:25; Ephesians 3:3–6). *Pōrōsis* (G4457), the callus of verse 7 in noun form (also Mark 3:5; Ephesians 4:18), is qualified twice: *apo merous*, "in part" — not every Jew, as Paul himself proves — and *achri hou* (G891), "until," a limit in time. The terminus is "the fullness of the Gentiles" (*to plērōma tōn ethnōn*, G4138), the full number God is gathering. Then "and so" (*kai houtōs*) — not first of all "and then," but "and in this manner" — "all Israel will be saved." Paul's quotation follows the Septuagint of Isaiah 59:20 but writes "*from* Zion" (*ek Siōn*); Isaiah's Hebrew reads "to Zion." The Deliverer (*ho rhyomenos*, G4506) uses the verb of "who will set me free" (7:24) and of Jesus "who rescues us" (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

ἀμεταμέλητα · συνέκλεισεν

AMETAMELĒTA · SYNEKLEISEN · "IRREVOCABLE · HE HAS SHUT UP" · G278, G4788

Ametamelētos (G278) is "without regret" — God does not change His mind about what He gave (KJV, "without repentance"; elsewhere only 2 Corinthians 7:10). It stands first in verse 29 for emphasis: irrevocable are the gifts and the calling of God. The two "standpoints" of verse 28 sit side by side — *echthroi* (G2190), enemies, as far as the gospel goes; *agapētoi* (G27), beloved, as far as God's choice goes. Then *synkleiō* (G4788), to shut in on every side, to lock up — the net that closes on the fish in Luke 5:6 and the jail of Galatians 3:22–23. God locked Jew and Gentile alike in the same cell of disobedience so that the only door out would be mercy.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik is direct: "This states clearly for us that God is not finished with Israel as a nation or a distinct ethnic group." He rejects the reading that makes "all Israel" the church — "This *all Israel* is not 'spiritual Israel'" — noting that Harrison traces that view to Calvin, but that Paul never calls Gentiles "Israel" in this chapter. Nor does it mean every Jew who ever lived (F.F. Bruce); rather, "Israel as a whole will be a saved people," the nation and its leadership embracing Jesus as Messiah. He ties it to the end of the age: "The Bible indicates this is a necessary condition for the return of Jesus Christ (Matthew 23:39, Zechariah 12:10-11)." And verses 30–32 level everyone: God "has shut up both Jew and Gentile into custody as lawbreakers."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul ("Israel's Rejection Not Final, Part 2," 14 January 2007) weighs every word. The blindness is partial — Paul is a Jew — and it is not final: the word "until" "has a terminal dimension to it," and "This blindness that has come upon Israel has a historical limit." He links the fullness of the Gentiles to "the times of the Gentiles" in Luke 21:24 but refuses to set a date. He rejects "spiritual Israel" — "that would be departing from the way Paul uses the term Israel throughout the whole chapter" — and also "every ethnic Jew": "But I do believe that the full complement of God's elect from Israel will be saved." He adds, "I do not believe that God has two agendas," yet wonders aloud whether, since 1967, "We may be close to the next step of redemptive history where God is working with ethnic Israel." In Part 3 he grounds it in verse 29: "When the Lord God gives a gift, that gift is irrevocable."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon did not leave a sermon on these verses, but his sermon "The Restoration and Conversion of the Jews" (No. 582, 16 June 1864, on Ezekiel 37:1–10) shows where he stood on Israel's future, and he refused to spiritualize it away. He expected two things: "there shall be a political restoration of the Jews to their own land and to their own nationality," and "a spiritual restoration, a conversion in fact, of the tribes of Israel." Which comes first he would not guess — "I am not going to theorize upon which of them will come first." But the way is not in doubt: "The way in which Israel shall be saved is the same by which any one individual sinner shall be saved" — by trusting Christ. So he wanted the gospel preached to Jew and Gentile alike.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry, too, reads the chapter as teaching that the Jews, "though for the present they are cast off," will be brought back. He describes their conversion four ways — their "fulness," their "receiving," their "grafting of them in again," and "the saving of all Israel" — and expects that "when the fulness of time is come, they will be taken in again." Note his frame: they return into "their own olive tree" (v. 24), the one visible church. His grounds are the holy root, God's power, the grace Gentiles have tasted, and Isaiah 59:20. "True conversion may well be called salvation; it is salvation begun." On verse 28 he says that when God's time comes, "God's love to their fathers will be remembered"; on verse 29, "we never find God repenting that he had given a man grace, or effectually called him."

V
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 11:33–36

Oh, the Depth!

The doxology that closes eleven chapters of doctrine

33 △*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!* 34 *For* WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? 35 *Or* WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? 36 *For* △*from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.*

ROMANS 11:33–36

"Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or as His counselor has informed Him?"

ISAIAH 40:13

ὦ βάθος πλούτου

Ō BATHOS PLOUTOU · "OH, THE DEPTH OF THE RICHES" · G899

Bathos (G899), depth — the deep water of Luke 5:4 where Peter let down his nets. Paul has just said that Israel's failure is "riches for the world" (v. 12); now he finds the riches are God's, and bottomless. Two adjectives follow, both with a negative prefix. *Anexeraunētos* (G419), "unsearchable" — not able to be searched out, like a mine with no end. *Anexichniastos* (G421), "unfathomable" — literally "untraceable," from *ichnos*, a footprint: you cannot track His steps. Paul uses the same word for "the unfathomable riches of Christ" in Ephesians 3:8.

ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι᾽ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν

EX AUTOU KAI DI’ AUTOU KAI EIS AUTON · “FROM HIM AND THROUGH HIM AND TO HIM”

Three prepositions say everything. *Ex*, “out of” — God is the source. *Dia*, “through” — God is the agent and means. *Eis*, “into, toward” — God is the goal. Verses 34–35 have already taken away every rival claim with Isaiah 40:13 (who was His *symboulos*, counselor? G4825) and Job 41:11 (who gave first, that God must repay?). Then *autō hē doxa* — “to Him be the glory forever. Amen.” The argument of Romans 9–11 does not end in a chart; it ends on its knees.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik sees Paul doing what theologians are tempted not to: “The fact that Paul can’t figure out God makes him glorify God all the more.” He quotes Adam Clarke’s rebuke of men who write coolly and confidently about God’s decrees with such a verse in front of them. Verse 34 says the plan was not man’s idea; verse 35 says no one has a claim on God — “You can’t out-give God.” And he enjoys F.B. Meyer’s observation that “of Him and through Him and to Him” is built of words so short a child could read them. The deepest truth in the letter is spelled in monosyllables.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew’s

Sproul hears Paul’s “Oh” as a groan of worship, and draws the lesson that sound theology begins and ends in doxology. With Calvin’s axiom that the finite cannot contain the infinite, he insists God remains incomprehensible even in eternity. “Who can reach the depths of the riches of His wisdom and knowledge?” Prayer does not add knowledge to God or change His mind; it changes the one who prays. No one has known the Lord’s mind on his own: “The only way we can know the mind of the Lord is when the Lord is pleased to reveal it.” And no one has put God in his debt: “What can you give to God that He does not already own?”

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In “Laus Deo” (No. 572, 29 May 1864, on Romans 11:36) Spurgeon pictures the moment the doxology breaks out: “The apostle puts his pen back into the ink bottle, falls on his knees—he cannot help it—he must have a doxology.” His doctrine is that all things are of God, through God and to God — in creation and providence, in grace, in the believer, in Christian work. “Every stitch in the noble tapestry of salvation most surely comes from the Lord’s wisdom.” So the preacher takes no credit: “We cannot take the honour of a single convert.” Then devotion: God’s glory should be the Christian’s single, constant, practical desire — “Praise him by your patience in pain, by your perseverance in duty, by your generosity in his cause.”

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry measures the depth with a sentence: “Men’s riches of all kinds are shallow, you may soon see the bottom; but God’s riches are deep.” The doxology silences both parties in the chapter — the Jew who would complain and the Gentile who would boast — for no creature has counseled God and none can put Him in debt: “It is certain God will let nobody lose by him.” He reads “of him, and through him, and to him” as God the source, the sustainer and the end of all things, and so whatever the premises, the conclusion must be God’s glory. His last word is about heaven: “The glorified saints, that see furthest into these mysteries, never dispute, but praise to eternity.”

VI
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

The olive tree, the unbreakable promise, and the day Israel looks on Him

> *"The LORD called your name, "A green olive tree, beautiful in fruit and form"; With the noise of a great tumult He has kindled fire on it, And its branches are worthless."*
>
> JEREMIAH 11:16

> *"Thus says the LORD, "If the heavens above can be measured And the foundations of the earth searched out below, Then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel For all that they have done," declares the LORD."*
>
> JEREMIAH 31:37

> *"I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn."*
>
> ZECHARIAH 12:10

> *"For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'"*
>
> MATTHEW 23:39

> *"and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."*
>
> LUKE 21:24

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik puts Matthew 23:39 and Zechariah 12:10 beside verse 26: Jesus told Jerusalem it would not see Him again until it welcomed Him, and Zechariah saw the house of David looking on the One they pierced. On his reading, Israel's national turning to Jesus is not an afterthought to the Second Coming but one of its conditions.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry takes Jeremiah 11:16 as the key to Paul's picture: the olive tree is the visible church, so named by the prophet. Gentiles grafted into it share the same root and fatness — the covenant privileges once Israel's — and so they are told, "Boast not against the branches." The same tree that received them stands ready, he says, to receive the natural branches again.

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, one chapter. Guzik reads verse by verse with an eye to Israel's national future; Sproul preaches the Reformed doctrine of grace and weighs every word of "until"; Spurgeon brings the pastor's heart and the preacher's praise; Henry gathers the old Puritan wisdom into sentences you can carry. On "all Israel" they are closer than many expect — and still not the same.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · The remnant	Paul is the proof; God works through a faithful remnant; the rest hardened by their rejection.	The "Elijah syndrome"; grace and works exclude each other; blindness as judgment.	Elijah Fainting: the seven thousand cheered the prophet; God's servants are rarely as alone as they feel.	A remnant in every apostasy; free grace makes the difference; they shut their own eyes.
II · Stumbled	A stumble, not a fall; God opened a door to the nations to provoke a good jealousy.	Not fully and finally; "how much more" restoration; dry bones come to life.	No sermon found on these verses.	Divinely ordered; their fulness fills the empty place; their receiving brings joy to the church.
III · Olive tree	The root is Israel; Gentiles stand by faith only; continue in His goodness.	They are the root, we the wild branch; no room for anti-Semitism; apostasy can prune us too.	No sermon found on these verses.	Tree = visible church; Abraham the root; God grafts to mend the branch.
IV · All Israel	Ethnic Israel as a whole, not "spiritual Israel"; tied to Christ's return.	"Until" is terminal; the full complement of elect Israel; no date, one agenda.	From Ezekiel 37: political restoration and spiritual conversion, both still to come.	Cast off for the present; taken in again as a body when the fulness of time comes.
V · Doxology	Paul can't figure God out, so he glorifies Him more; you can't out-give God.	Theology ends in doxology; the finite cannot contain the infinite; God owes no one.	Laus Deo: Paul drops his pen and falls on his knees; every stitch is of the Lord.	Men's riches are shallow, God's deep; the saints in glory never dispute, but praise.

ROMANS 11:1–36 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **The first answer is a man.** Before Paul quotes a prophet he points to himself — an Israelite, a son of Abraham, a Benjamite (v. 1). As long as one Jewish believer stands, God has not rejected His people. THE TEXT
- **The remnant is kept, not self-made.** *Leimma* answers God's "I have kept for Myself" (v. 4). Elijah counted one; God counted seven thousand — and Paul calls the present remnant a "gracious choice." THE GREEK
- **The "Elijah syndrome."** The faithful believer's conviction that he is the last one standing. God's answer is that He has preserved more than we can see. SPROUL
- **A stumble is not a fall.** *Ptaiō* is a misstep; *piptō* is going down for good. "You can recover from a stumble, but if you fall you're down." GUZIK
- **God grafts to mend the branch.** Growers graft a good scion onto a wild stock; God grafts a wild shoot onto the good tree, "contrary to nature." Grace runs backward on purpose. HENRY
- **Kindness and severity, together.** *Apotomia*, used only in verse 22, is a cutting word. The same God who grafts in also prunes — and the warning is addressed to Gentile believers. THE GREEK

- **"Until" has an end.** The hardening is partial (*apo merous*) and temporary (*achri hou*). "This blindness that has come upon Israel has a historical limit." SPROUL
- **Not "spiritual Israel."** Guzik and Sproul both refuse to read "all Israel" as the church, because Paul uses "Israel" for ethnic Israel throughout the chapter — though they describe the future salvation differently. GUZIK
- **God does not take back His gifts.** *Ametamelētos*: without regret. If He could revoke Israel's calling, no believer's calling would be safe either. THE TEXT
- **Theology that ends on its knees.** Spurgeon pictures Paul putting his pen back into the ink bottle and falling to his knees. Eleven chapters of doctrine end in "To Him be the glory forever. Amen." SPURGEON

† Questions for the Table

1 **Elijah thought he was the only faithful one left. When have you felt that way — at work, in your family, inside a facility — and what did it do to your prayers?**

God had seven thousand Elijah could not see; you are rarely as alone as you feel.

11:2–5; 1 KINGS 19:10, 18

2 **"If it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works." Where are you still quietly trying to earn a place in the tree?**

Grace mixed with works stops being grace; the branch only receives the sap.

11:5–6; EPHESIANS 2:8–9

3 **Paul wanted his life among the Gentiles to make his own people jealous. Would anyone who watches your life want what you have in Christ?**

Jealousy is God's strategy here — a joy so visible that others want it back.

11:11, 14; DEUTERONOMY 32:21

4 **"Do not be arrogant toward the branches." Where have you looked down on someone whose fall made room for your blessing?**

The root supports you; you do not support the root.

11:17–21

5 **"Behold then the kindness and severity of God." Which of the two do you find easier to believe about God, and why?**

Both are true at once; the kindness is meant to keep us, the severity to warn us.

11:22; 2:4

6 **"The gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." What does that say to a man who believes he has burned his last bridge with God?**

If God has not given up on a rebellious nation, He has not given up on you.

11:29; PHILIPPIANS 1:6

Paul began the chapter with a question about rejection and ended it on his knees. God has not rejected His people; He kept a remnant, grafted in the nations, set an "until" on Israel's hardening, and promised that His gifts and calling will never be withdrawn. From Him and through Him and to Him are all things — to Him be the glory forever.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry died in 1714 having reached Acts; the Romans volume of his *Commentary* was completed by his successors (John Evans) from his notes and method, and is cited under his name as it is published. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

- David Guzik, Enduring Word Commentary, Romans 11 — https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/romans-11/
- R.C. Sproul, "Israel's Rejection Not Total" (Romans 11:1–10), 12 Nov 2006 — https://learn.ligonier.org/sermons/israels-rejection-not-total
- R.C. Sproul, "Israel's Rejection Not Final (Part 1)" (Romans 11:11–23), 10 Dec 2006 — https://learn.ligonier.org/sermons/israels-rejection-not-final-part-1
- R.C. Sproul, "Israel's Rejection Not Final (Part 2)" (Romans 11:25–26), 14 Jan 2007 — https://learn.ligonier.org/sermons/israels-rejection-not-final-part-2
- R.C. Sproul, "Israel's Rejection Not Final (Part 3)" (Romans 11:26–35), 21 Jan 2007 — https://learn.ligonier.org/sermons/israels-rejection-not-final-part-3
- Ligonier Scripture index, Romans 11 — https://learn.ligonier.org/scripture/romans-11
- C.H. Spurgeon, "Elijah Fainting," No. 2725 (1 Kings 19:4) — https://www.spurgeongems.org/sermon/chs2725.pdf
- C.H. Spurgeon, "The Restoration and Conversion of the Jews," No. 582 (Ezekiel 37:1–10) — https://www.spurgeongems.org/sermon/chs582.pdf
- C.H. Spurgeon, "Laus Deo," No. 572 (Romans 11:36) — https://answersingenesis.org/education/spurgeon-sermons/572-laus-deo/
- Spurgeon Gems NT Scripture index (Romans 11 entries) — https://www.spurgeongems.org/sindex_nt.pdf
- Matthew Henry, Commentary on the Whole Bible, Romans 11 (CCEL) — https://www.ccel.org/ccel/henry/mhc6.Rom.xii.html
- Matthew Henry, Romans 11 (Bible Study Tools) — https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/romans/11.html
- Greek words and Strong's numbers, Romans 11 interlinear — https://biblehub.com/interlinear/romans/11.htm
- NASB95 text: Jeremiah 31 — https://biblehub.com/nasb95/jeremiah/31.htm
- NASB95 text: Zechariah 12 — https://biblehub.com/nasb95/zechariah/12.htm
- NASB95 text: Luke 21 — https://biblehub.com/nasb95/luke/21.htm
- NASB95 text: 1 Kings 19 — https://biblehub.com/nasb95/1_kings/19.htm
- NASB95 text: Isaiah 40 — https://biblehub.com/nasb95/isaiah/40.htm
- NASB95 text: Isaiah 59:20 — https://biblehub.com/isaiah/59-20.htm
- NASB95 text: Jeremiah 11:16 — https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah%2011:16&version=NASB1995

Scripture: New American Standard Bible® (NASB), © 1960–1995 The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. Greek: SBL Greek New Testament; Strong's numbers per biblehub.com. · Smith For Christ Publishing · Ed Smith