ROMANS 11

God Has Not Rejected His People

A Remnant by Grace, an Olive Tree, and a Mystery That Ends in Praise

> *"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.""*
> ROMANS 11:25–26

A SMITH FOR CHRIST STUDY · FOUR VOICES: GUZIK · SPROUL · SPURGEON · HENRY

Where Paul has brought us

1. Romans 9–11 is one argument with three movements, and chapter 11 is its last word.

2. Paul’s answer moves in five steps.

3. The Old Testament fills the chapter.

A Remnant Chosen by Grace

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

ROMANS 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.

DAVID GUZIK

Paul is the proof; God works through a faithful remnant; the rest hardened by their rejection.

R.C. SPROUL

The "Elijah syndrome"; grace and works exclude each other; blindness as judgment.

C.H. SPURGEON

Elijah Fainting: the seven thousand cheered the prophet; God's servants are rarely as alone as they feel.

MATTHEW HENRY

A remnant in every apostasy; free grace makes the difference; they shut their own eyes.

λεῖμμα κατ᾽ ἐκλογὴν χάριτος
LEIMMA KAT' EKLOGĒN CHARITOS · "A REMNANT ACCORDING TO THE CHOICE OF GRACE"

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."

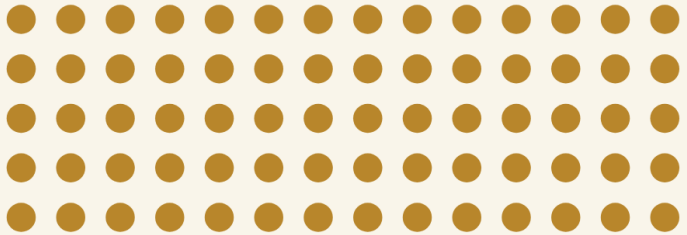
The Remnant Then and Now

THEN · ELIJAH (1 KINGS 19)

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



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

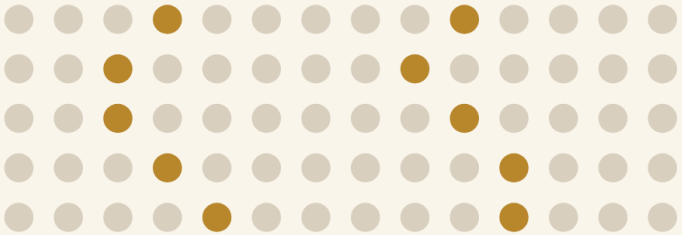


each dot = 100 who had not bowed to Baal

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."

Stumbled, Not Fallen

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

ROMANS 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.

DAVID GUZIK

A stumble, not a fall; God opened a door to the nations to provoke a good jealousy.

R.C. SPROUL

Not fully and finally; "how much more" restoration; dry bones come to life.

MATTHEW HENRY

Divinely ordered; their fulness fills the empty place; their receiving brings joy to the church.

μὴ ἔπταισαν ἵνα πέσωσιν;

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

Ptaiō (G4417) is to trip, to stumble — a misstep (James 2:10; 3:2).

The Root, the Branches, and the Graft

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

ROMANS 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.

DAVID GUZIK

The root is Israel; Gentiles stand by faith only; continue in His goodness.

R.C. SPROUL

They are the root, we the wild branch; no room for anti-Semitism; apostasy can prune us too.

MATTHEW HENRY

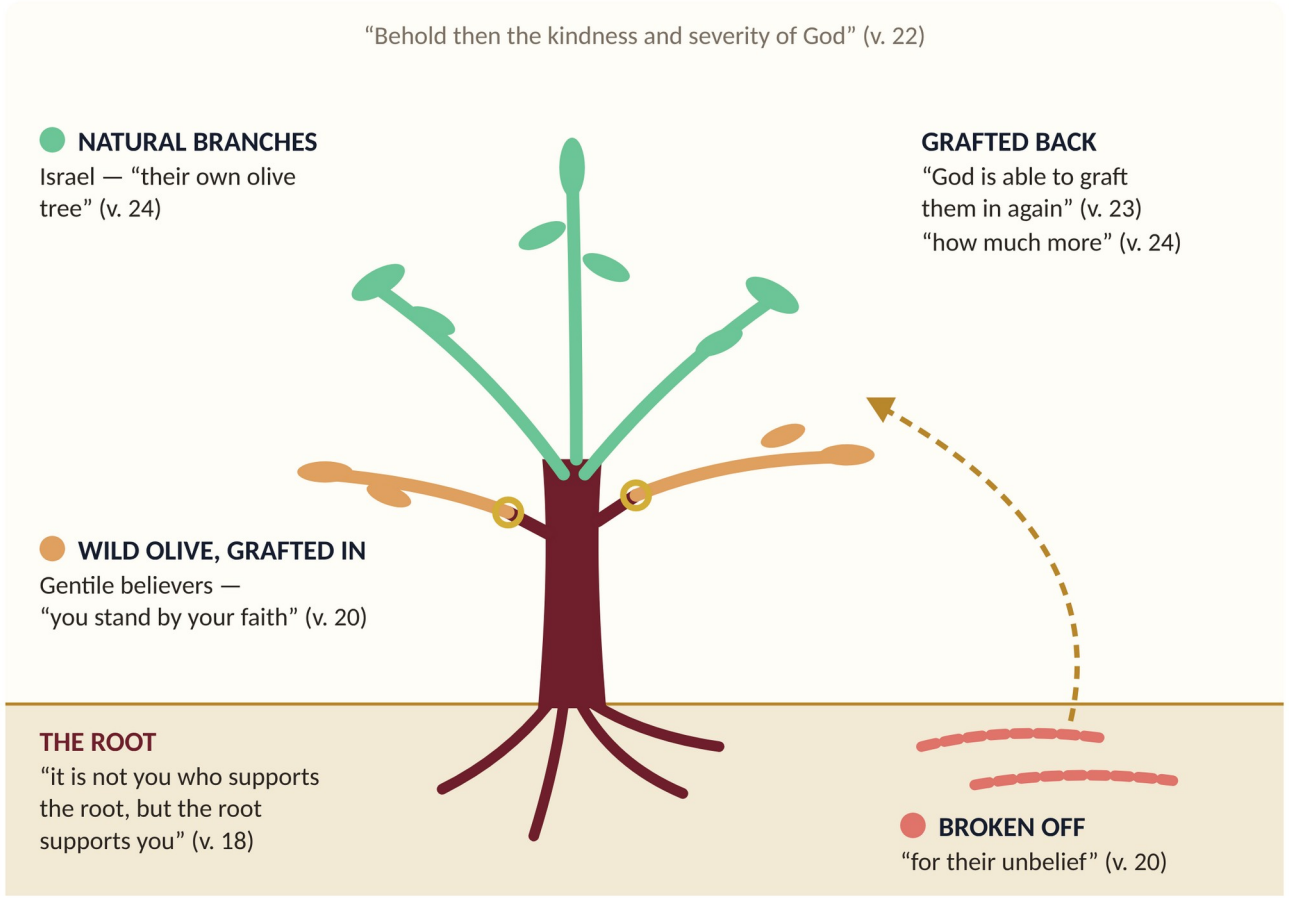
Tree = visible church; Abraham the root; God grafts to mend the branch.

ἀγριέλαιος · ἐνεκεντρίσθης · καλλιέλαιος

AGRIELAIOS · ENEKENTRISTHĒS

Three words found nowhere else in the New Testament.

The Olive Tree (Romans 11:16–24)



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.

The Mystery: All Israel Will Be Saved

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

ROMANS 11:25

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;

DAVID GUZIK

Ethnic Israel as a whole, not "spiritual Israel"; tied to Christ's return.

R.C. SPROUL

"Until" is terminal; the full complement of elect Israel; no date, one agenda.

C.H. SPURGEON

From Ezekiel 37: political restoration and spiritual conversion, both still to come.

MATTHEW HENRY

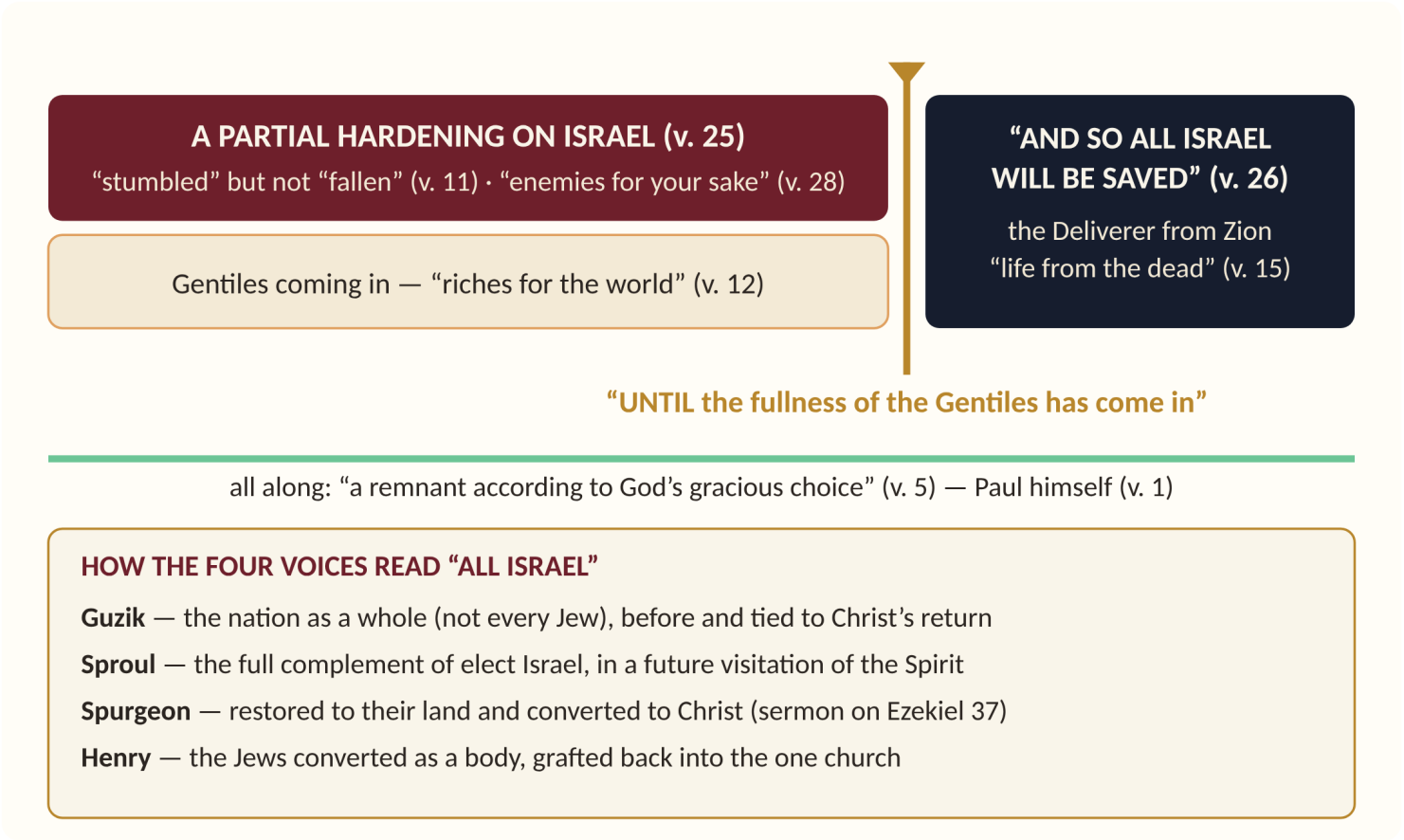
Cast off for the present; taken in again as a body when the fulness of time comes.

μυστήριον · πώρωσις ἀπὸ μέρους · ἄχρι οὗ

MYSTĒRION · PŌRŌSIS APO MEROUS

Mystērion (G3466) is not a riddle but a secret God has now disclosed (16:25; Ephesians 3:3–6).

A Hardening With an End Date



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

Oh, the Depth!

The doxology that closes eleven chapters of doctrine

ROMANS 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!

DAVID GUZIK

Paul can't figure God out, so he glorifies Him more; you can't out-give God.

R.C. SPROUL

Theology ends in doxology; the finite cannot contain the infinite; God owes no one.

C.H. SPURGEON

Laus Deo: Paul drops his pen and falls on his knees; every stitch is of the Lord.

MATTHEW HENRY

Men's riches are shallow, God's deep; the saints in glory never dispute, but praise.

ὦ βάθος πλούτου

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

Bathos (G899), depth — the deep water of Luke 5:4 where Peter let down his nets.

What to carry from this chapter

1

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).

2

The remnant is kept, not self-made.

Leimma answers God's "I have kept for Myself" (v. 4).

3

The "Elijah syndrome."

The faithful believer's conviction that he is the last one standing.

4

A stumble is not a fall.

Ptaiō is a misstep; piptō is going down for good.

More to carry

5

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.”

6

Kindness and severity, together.

Apotomia, used only in verse 22, is a cutting word.

7

“Until” has an end.

The hardening is partial (apo merous) and temporary (achri hou).

8

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…

Talk it through

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?

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?

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?

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

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

CLOSING

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

Full Deep Dive, O·I·A study, reflection journal and film: see the Romans study page.