

## The Book of Romans Study Guide

### Chapter 11 part 1

In chapter 10, Paul re-emphasized his desire for Israel's salvation, and that it can only come by believing and confessing that Yeshua is Lord and that God raised Him from the dead. But Israel's history has demonstrated that in spite of hearing the Gospel, on a national level, they have been disobedient and obstinate toward the message. Those elements serve as the basis of the primary theme of chapter 11. Previously, He also introduced a concept that he will complete in chapter 11, in regard to the way that God would manifest Himself to non-Jews in order to make Israel jealous.

#### 11:1-5

- v 1 Paul begins this chapter with another rhetorical question that arises from the description at the end of chapter 10. In light of national Israel's general state of unbelief, he asks if it is possible that God has rejected them? He answers once again with his favored answer: "*Mē genoito*"—"may it never be," or "God forbid." And the reason that he could be so adamant about his answer is that he has evidence to back it up—himself! As a descendant of Abraham from the tribe of Benjamin, he is an heir of the Abrahamic Covenant, and as a believer in Yeshua, he is an heir of the New Covenant. That makes him part of the faithful remnant that he described in chapter 9. And, as we saw in that chapter, the presence of the remnant, coupled with the principle of inclusive reckoning, means that the promise of a physical nation in the Abrahamic Covenant still holds true.
- v 2 In chapter 9, Paul used Isaac and Jacob as examples of the remnant. Now, he cites the example of Elijah and the story in 1 Kings 18-19 that describes a dramatic showdown on Mount Carmel to determine the true God of Israel. That event occurred at a time of great apostasy in Israel, as exemplified by 450 Jewish prophets of Baal, and only Elijah representing Adonai in this confrontation.
- v 3 Paul quotes 1 Kings 19:14 to show the depth of that apostasy, as well as the perception of Elijah that he was the last remaining faithful person in Israel.
- v 4 He quotes 1 Kings 19:18, where God clarifies that there are 7,000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal. While that is a fair number of people, a century earlier, according to a census ordered by King David in 2 Samuel 24, there were 800,000 men in Israel. That means over 99 percent of them were Baal worshipers. And the 1 percent was the faithful remnant. Notice also that God is the one who kept or reserved the remnant for Himself.
- v 5 Paul declares that a remnant also existed at the present time. He doesn't say how many people made up the remnant of his day. But, as we have seen, it doesn't matter as long as there is at least one person. And, again, it is a matter of God's choice. Two Greek words are used in that regard.
- The first is *eklogē*, which comes into English as "election" (KJV), also meaning "choice." And that emphasizes God's dominant role when it comes to salvation.
  - The second term is *charis*, the common word for "grace," which has the sense of

“unmerited favor” or a kind and generous gift freely given to someone who hasn’t earned it. And that very much describes the salvation of the remnant of Israel, which is no different than the salvation of Gentiles.

The concept of the remnant is the key to understanding major themes of Scripture and clarifying what appear to be contradictions or false conclusions:

- It is the remnant that provides the basis for God’s preservation of national Israel according to the Abrahamic Covenant, while also chastening the nation according to the Mosaic Covenant.
- Moreover, the remnant provides a basis for showing how Jewish believers in Yeshua are still Jews.
- And it shows the way to the restoration of Israel’s relationship to God.

### 11:6-12

v 6 Paul returns to the theme he developed in chapter 3, in which he shows that all people are justified by faith, not works. Here, he emphasizes that works and grace are entirely distinct concepts. Works are human-oriented, while grace is a gift from God. And that connects to verse 5 where he shows that grace is a matter of God’s choosing.

v 7 He states that Israel, as a whole, was strenuously seeking or “craving” righteousness (*epizēteō*), but they failed to “obtain” (*epetychen*) it because they sought it through works rather than faith. In contrast, the elect remnant of Israel accepted the principle of *charis* (grace) rather than relying on their own works.

At the end of this verse, Paul states that those outside the remnant were hardened. This word – *epōrōthēsan* – comes from a term used (*pōroō*) in ancient medicine to describe the formation of a hard, stony callus that forms over broken bones. While many translations miss this underlying word picture by using “blinded,” the Greek conveys a breaking of something solid, in this case, God’s way of righteousness by faith, followed by a “petrification” or “callousness” of the heart and mind. The verb is in the passive voice, indicating that this hardening happened to them. While the verse doesn’t explicitly name the cause, the surrounding context (verse 8) suggests a divine judicial hardening in response to persistent unbelief. Altogether, this text depicts Israel breaking God’s way of righteousness through faith by choosing works instead, and that led to God causing a callousness or hardening that confirmed their decision.

v 8-10 Paul, then, backs up that statement with two related passages in the *Tanakh* (Old Testament). In verse 8, by quoting from both Isaiah 29:10 and Deuteronomy 29:4, he is showing that the current spiritual condition of Israel is not a new or accidental development. Instead, it is a consistent pattern of God’s judicial hardening found throughout the Law and the Prophets, which Paul uses to explain why only a “remnant” has accepted the Messiah while others remain hardened.

In verses 9-10, he adds similar words from King David in Psalm 69:22-23, thus including the Writings portion (Ketuvim) of the Tanakh. The “table” (symbolizing Israel’s spiritual privileges, laws, and sacrificial system) became a snare and a trap.

So, instead of leading them to Messiah, their reliance on these blessings for self-

righteousness caused them to stumble. “Bending their backs always (*diapantos*, adv.) literally means “by always,” often used in the sense of “over and over again,” depicts the heavy, ongoing burden of trying to reach God through law-keeping rather than grace.

- v 11 In this key verse, the stumbling he referenced in verse 9, does not mean falling. To stumble (*ptaiō*) refers to losing one’s footing or tripping, but still staying upright. But to fall (*piptō*) implies in this context a complete, final, and irrevocable ruin—falling so as to never rise again. Since he words it as a rhetorical question, once more he responds by saying “*Mē genoito*”—“may it never be.” Thus, he is declaring that Israel’s national disobedience is not permanent.

That connects to his initial statement in verse 1 and now continues until verse 26 when He will show that the disobedience will come to an end completely. Let us also recognize that Paul’s words are a dagger to those who adhere to replacement theology and look at Israel’s present national unbelief and conclude that they actually have fallen and will rise on their feet spiritually.

In the second half of verse 11, Paul shows that this stumbling has utility in God’s plan, because it opened the door for salvation to reach the Gentiles. But, the ultimate goal of this shift was not to abandon Israel but to “provoke them to jealousy.” In this way of thinking, by seeing Gentiles enjoy the blessings of the covenant, the “stumbled” Israelites would be motivated to return to their own Messiah.

- v 12 Paul uses a rabbinical tool called *Qal v’Homer* (Hebrew for “light and heavy”), indicated by the words, “how much more.” In this way of reasoning, if the light event of Israel’s apparent failure brought a great blessing to Gentiles, then the coming heavy event of Israel’s salvation and full restoration will bring even greater, “superabundant” blessings to the entire world.