

**Romans 9:1–29 (ESV)**

**August 31, 2025**

<sup>9</sup> I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—<sup>2</sup> that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. <sup>3</sup> For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. <sup>4</sup> They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. <sup>5</sup> To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

<sup>6</sup> But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, <sup>7</sup> and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” <sup>8</sup> This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. <sup>9</sup> For this is what the promise said: “About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.” <sup>10</sup> And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, <sup>11</sup> though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—<sup>12</sup> she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” <sup>13</sup> As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

<sup>14</sup> What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God’s part? By no means! <sup>15</sup> For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” <sup>16</sup> So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. <sup>17</sup> For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” <sup>18</sup> So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

<sup>19</sup> You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?” <sup>20</sup> But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” <sup>21</sup> Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? <sup>22</sup> What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, <sup>23</sup> in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—<sup>24</sup> even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? <sup>25</sup> As indeed he says in Hosea,

“Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’  
and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’ ”

<sup>26</sup> “And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’ ”

<sup>27</sup> And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, <sup>28</sup> for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.” <sup>29</sup> And as Isaiah predicted,

“If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring,  
we would have been like Sodom  
and become like Gomorrah.”

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## I. Introduction

Paul begins Romans 9 with deep anguish for his fellow Israelites. Although they had great privileges from God, most rejected Christ. Does this mean God’s promises have failed? Absolutely not. God’s saving purposes are not based on human effort or heritage, but on His sovereign mercy.

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## II. Exposition and Reflection

### 1. Paul’s Anguish for Israel (vv. 1–5)

- Paul would even wish himself accursed if it meant salvation for Israel.
- Israel had unique covenant blessings: adoption, glory, covenants, law, worship, promises, patriarchs, and the Messiah.
- Yet despite all this, they largely rejected Christ.
  - *How does Paul’s grief challenge you to pray for unbelieving family and neighbors?*
  - *Do you share Paul’s urgency for the lost?*

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### 2. God’s Word Has Not Failed (vv. 6–13)

- Not all physical descendants of Abraham belong to the true Israel.
- God chose Isaac over Ishmael and Jacob over Esau, before they had done anything good or bad.
- Election rests in God’s sovereign purpose, not human effort.

- *Why is it encouraging that God's promises depend on His mercy, not on our performance or heritage?*
  - *How should this humble your view of salvation?*
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### **3. God's Righteousness in Election (vv. 14–18)**

- God is not unjust to show mercy or to harden hearts.
  - Mercy is His free choice, not owed to anyone.
  - Pharaoh was raised up so God's power and glory would be displayed.
    - *Why is mercy only mercy if it is undeserved?*
    - *How does this passage deepen your awe of God's sovereignty?*
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### **4. God's Right as Potter (vv. 19–29)**

- The creature cannot argue with the Creator.
  - God endures vessels of wrath and displays the riches of His mercy on vessels of mercy.
  - God's plan always included calling Gentiles as His people.
    - *Do you struggle with God's absolute authority over salvation?*
    - *Does His sovereignty lead you to worship instead of complaining?*
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## **Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Sermon Overview - Romans 9**

### **1. The Value of the Old Testament**

1. It shows that "God's purpose is one" from Old to New Testament
  2. It demonstrates that "God's method [of grace] is always the same"
  3. It provides historical illustrations that apply to personal situations today
  4. It helps solve doctrinal problems by providing scriptural context
  5. The principle of grace is "as obvious in the Old Testament as it is in the New"
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### **2. What Not to Rely on for Salvation**

- Natural birth: *"The fact that our parents, grandparents or forebears were great Christians doesn't mean that we are Christians."*

- Family or national identity: *"None of these things matter at all."*
- Religion: *"The fact that you're a religious man doesn't of necessity mean that you're a Christian man."*
- Mere belief in God: *"You can believe in God and still not be a Christian."*
- Good works: *"Though they're good works, they are valueless in the sight of God."*
- Even our faith, if treated as works: *"It isn't my belief that saves me... if I say that I'm turning my belief and my faith into works."*

Rely on Grace Alone:

*"We are what we are by the grace of God and by that alone."*

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### **3. True vs. False Continuity in the Church**

- False continuity: external, institutional, mechanical (ancestry, national identity, apostolic succession).
  - True continuity: spiritual and doctrinal.
    - *"The real continuity in the Church is the invisible... those who are born again, led of the Spirit."*
    - *"The man who's in the direct line from the apostles is the man who preaches the doctrine of the apostles, the man who has the Spirit of the apostles in him, not a man who has derived something mechanically from the laying on of physical hands."*
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### **4. Why Christians Need Not Fear for the Church's Future**

- *"We need never have any fear about the future of the Christian church. We need never be alarmed about the future of the people of God."*
- God always preserves a remnant:
  - *"Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved."*
  - *"God preserved a seed... He will preserve a seed always."*
- *"Don't be frightened. Don't be worried about the future of the church... It's God who preserves, and he will preserve a seed always."*

<sup>30</sup> What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; <sup>31</sup> but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. <sup>32</sup> Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, <sup>33</sup> as it is written,

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

10 Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. <sup>2</sup> For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. <sup>3</sup> For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. <sup>4</sup> For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

<sup>5</sup> For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. <sup>6</sup> But the righteousness based on faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ down) <sup>7</sup> “or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). <sup>8</sup> But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); <sup>9</sup> because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. <sup>11</sup> For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” <sup>12</sup> For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. <sup>13</sup> For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

<sup>14</sup> How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? <sup>15</sup> And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”

<sup>16</sup> But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” <sup>17</sup> So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

<sup>18</sup> 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.”

<sup>19</sup> 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.”

<sup>20</sup> 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.”

<sup>21</sup> But of Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.”

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## **I. Introduction**

Paul shows that Christ is the fulfillment and goal of the law, so that righteousness comes to everyone who believes in Him. The good news is not distant or hidden, it is near and revealed, and all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved.

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## **II. Exposition and Reflection**

### **1. Israel Stumbled Over Christ (9:30–33)**

- Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness obtained it by faith.
- Israel, pursuing the law, stumbled over Christ the cornerstone.
  - *How can religious zeal blind a person to Christ?*
  - *Where do you see the danger of trusting in works today?*

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### **2. Paul’s Desire for Their Salvation (10:1–4)**

- Paul longs for Israel’s salvation as a blood relative.
- Israel’s zeal lacked true knowledge of grace, they sought to establish their own righteousness by works.
- Christ is the fulfillment of the law.
  - *Do you pray with passion for unbelievers like Paul does?*
  - *How does Christ fulfill the law on your behalf?*

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### **3. The Word of Faith (10:5–13)**

- The Law leaves salvation out of reach; Christ brings it to your heart.

- If you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart, you will be saved!
  - Everyone who calls on the Lord will be saved.
    - *Why is it important that salvation is as simple as faith in Christ?*
    - *What does it mean to confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that Jesus lived, died, and rose again for your sins?*
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#### 4. The Preacher's Task (10:14–21)

- Faith comes through hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.
  - Israel heard but refused to believe.
  - God still sends out His messengers to proclaim the gospel.
    - *Why is preaching and teaching so central to God's plan?*
    - *Who in your life still needs to hear the gospel clearly from you?*
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#### Charles Spurgeon, *Mouth and Heart*, Sermon on Romans 10:9

Hear, I pray you, the text: “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

Notice what it is that is to be confessed: “The Lord Jesus.” By which I gather, that it is essential to salvation that a man confess the Deity of Christ. I would not be uncharitable to anybody; but I never can, as a believer in the Word of God, expect to see a man saved who denies the Godhead of his Saviour. He puts himself out of court, he rejects that part of the Redeemer's character which is essential to his being a Saviour. If any man would be saved he must believe that Jesus Christ is both Lord and God.

Again, you must confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; that is, Ruler and Master. You must cheerfully become his disciple, follower, and servant. You must confess,—“He is my Master, he is my Lord, I intend to be a soldier under him; he shall be to me Leader and Commander; God has made him such, and I accept him as such.”

We are to confess the Lord Jesus, too. That means the Saviour, who has come to save his people from their sins. If you would be saved by him, you must own him as the Messiah, sent of God, to lead his people out of their ruin into eternal salvation. The Lord commands you to confess him in that character, and promises to such a believing confessor that he shall be saved. Without such open confession there is no promise.

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### **R. C. Sproul, *Faith Alone***

During the Reformation a threefold definition of saving faith emerged. The constituent elements of saving faith are (1) *notitia*, (2) *assensus*, and (3) *fiducia*.

Each element was regarded as necessary for saving faith. None of these elements, even *fiducia*, taken alone or separately, is a *sufficient* condition for saving faith. All three are essential to it...

*Notitia* has to do with the *content* of faith, the data or information to be received, understood, and embraced. Faith has a clear and rational *object*. What we believe has eternal consequences...

As the Latin word *assensus* suggests, the second essential element of saving faith is intellectual assent. Intellectual assent involves the assurance or conviction that a certain proposition is true...

*Fiducia* means a positive disposition of the soul or mind to an object.

To see how this works with respect to the necessary condition for saving faith, let us consider the case of Satan and his response to Christ. Satan does not lack intelligence. He is aware—clearly aware—of the identity of Christ. Satan has the *notitia*. He is also fully cognizant of the *truth* of the identity of Christ. Satan has the *assensus*. But Satan personally places no *fiducia* or trust in Christ. He resists Christ. He does *will* to oppose Christ. He has no affection for Christ. In fact he despises Christ. His unmitigated hatred for Christ displays itself in an enmity that knows no bounds. The disposition or inclination of Satan's "heart" is utterly negative. Therefore, it can be said Satan does not possess "faith" in Christ."

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### **J. Gresham Machen, *What is Faith?***

The efficacy of faith, then, depends not upon the faith itself, considered as a psychological phenomenon, but upon the object of the faith, namely Christ. Faith is not regarded in the New Testament as itself a meritorious work or a meritorious condition of the soul; but it is regarded as a means which is used by the grace of God: the New Testament never says that man is saved *on account of* his faith, but always that he is saved *through* his faith or *by means of* his faith; faith is merely the means which the Holy Spirit uses to apply to the individual soul the benefits of Christ's death.

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11 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. <sup>2</sup> 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? <sup>3</sup> “Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.” <sup>4</sup> But what is God’s reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” <sup>5</sup> So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. <sup>6</sup> But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

<sup>7</sup> What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, <sup>8</sup> 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.”

<sup>9</sup> And David says,

“Let their table become a snare and a trap,  
a stumbling block and a retribution for them;  
<sup>10</sup> let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see,  
and bend their backs forever.”

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## **I. Introduction**

Has God rejected Israel completely? No! Paul himself is proof, as an Israelite who believes in Christ. Just as in Elijah’s day, when God preserved seven thousand who had not bowed to Baal, so now there is a remnant chosen by grace. This remnant shows that God’s promises have not failed and will never fail. Yet many remain hardened, their eyes darkened and ears closed, fulfilling what was written by the prophets.

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## **II. Exposition and Reflection**

### **1. God Has Not Rejected His People (vv. 1–6)**

- Paul himself is proof of God’s promises, as an Israelite saved by grace.

- God also preserved a faithful remnant in Elijah's day.
  - Salvation is by grace, not works, or it would no longer be grace.
    - *How does God's preservation of a remnant strengthen your confidence in His promises?*
    - *Why does Paul emphasize that God often works through remnants?*
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## 2. The Rest Were Hardened (vv. 7–10)

- Israel sought righteousness on their own but did not obtain it.
  - God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, showing that even their rejection fits within His sovereign plan to save a people for His Glory.
  - Judgment and hardening reveal the seriousness of unbelief.
    - *Why is spiritual blindness such a sobering reality?*
    - *How does this passage humble you to pray for God's mercy on unbelievers?*
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## Sinclair Ferguson, Has God Rejected Israel?

Well, do you really believe in grace? You really believe that your only hope is that God in His mercy should look down upon your undeserving heart and pursue you? Bring you to himself and embrace you? Or are there still those remnants... And dear Christian friends, they linger long and the Christian heart too, that resists the very grace that has the power to dilute the last remnants of our self dependence and bring us to a glorious freedom and joyful salvation. Grace is other than we think, don't you think? So let's, let's sink our souls into it. Let's, let's allow the sheerness of God's grace, to dilute all, all those last cries that we make. And we make them in a multitude of different ways. There is something still in me that I've contributed to my salvation, isn't there? My dear friends, there's absolutely nothing. And so long as I think that is something, the only thing I can do with the message of the absoluteness, fullness and sheerness of God's grace is to press it back, harden my heart, and resist it.

Amazing Grace. Still amazed by grace? Or should we sing accustomed grace? Or rather well deserved grace? Or shall we sing "Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. Who once was lost, and now is found. Was blind but now can see."

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### **John Newton, *Amazing Grace***

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch like me.  
I once was lost but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.

Through many dangers, toils and snares  
I have already come;  
'Tis Grace that brought me safe thus far  
and Grace will lead me home.

T'was Grace that taught my heart to fear.  
And Grace, my fears relieved.  
How precious did that Grace appear  
The hour I first believed.

When we've been here ten thousand years  
Bright shining as the sun.  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we've first begun.

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### **Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *An Introduction to Romans 11: A Breakdown***

1. It is important to approach this chapter with the right spirit - with reverence, not excitement or a desire to prove one's own view. There is an element of mystery in this chapter.
2. Romans 9-11 forms a unit, dealing with the question of the Jews' rejection of the gospel and relationship to God's plan. Romans 9-10 explain the Jews' current position; Romans 11 looks to the future.
3. Romans 11 asks whether God has rejected His people Israel. The answer is no - God has always preserved a remnant.
4. The rejection of Israel as a nation is not final. There is a possibility, probability and certainty of their restoration.
5. We must remember that Paul is speaking of Israel as an entity, not necessarily every individual. We must distinguish the nation as a whole from individuals within it.
6. Notice the logical progression and sequence of Paul's argument, his use of Scripture to prove his points, and his apt illustrations. Though handling lofty theology, Paul remains practical.
7. Paul's overarching concern is for God's glory. Everything must serve and minister to God's glory.
8. This passage has relevance for us today. The persistence of the Jewish people despite persecution shows the truth of Scripture. This passage gives a view of God's plan for history and its certainty. It should give us comfort in difficult times.
9. We should pray for open eyes to see and understand God's glorious plan and purpose.

<sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> 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!

<sup>13</sup> Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry <sup>14</sup> in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. <sup>15</sup> For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?

<sup>16</sup> If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

<sup>17</sup> 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, <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> Then you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” <sup>20</sup> That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. <sup>21</sup> For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. <sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> 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.

<sup>25</sup> 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. <sup>26</sup> 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”;

<sup>27</sup> “and this will be my covenant with them  
when I take away their sins.”

<sup>28</sup> As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. <sup>29</sup> For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. <sup>30</sup> For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, <sup>31</sup> so they too have now been

disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. <sup>32</sup> For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.

<sup>33</sup> Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

<sup>34</sup> “For who has known the mind of the Lord,  
or who has been his counselor?”

<sup>35</sup> “Or who has given a gift to him  
that he might be repaid?”

<sup>36</sup> For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

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## I. Introduction

Israel’s rejection is not final. Through their stumbling, salvation has come to the Gentiles, and God will one day show mercy to Israel again. This passage reveals the balance of God’s severity and kindness, displaying His wisdom and sovereignty. It calls us to humility, inspires hope, and magnifies the glory of God in all things.

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## II. Exposition and Reflection

### 1. Israel’s Trespass Brings Salvation to Gentiles (vv. 11–16)

- Israel’s rejection meant riches for the Gentiles.
- Paul magnifies his ministry, hoping to provoke Israel to jealousy.
- If their present rejection means future reconciliation, their future acceptance will be glorious.
  - *How does Israel’s story show that God brings good out of evil?*
  - *Why should this give you hope for unbelieving loved ones?*

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### 2. Warning Against Gentile Pride (vv. 17–24)

- Gentile believers are grafted into Israel’s olive tree.
- They stand by faith, not by merit.
- Arrogance leads to being cut off; humility leads to fruitfulness.

- *Why does Paul warn against pride in salvation?*
  - *What attitudes today reveal arrogance instead of humility about God's grace?*
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### **3. The Mystery of God's Plan (vv. 25–32)**

- A partial hardening has come on Israel until the Gentiles come in.
  - Then all Israel will be saved. God's covenant promises remain.
  - God's final word is mercy, binding all over to disobedience so that He may have mercy on all.
    - *How does God's mercy toward both Jews and Gentiles humble you?*
    - *How does this passage fuel your hope for global missions?*
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### **4. The Majesty of God's Wisdom (vv. 33–36)**

- God's wisdom and knowledge are beyond searching out; His ways are untraceable, revealing a depth and richness that calls us to awe, trust, and humble reverence.
  - God is utterly self-sufficient; no one has given Him counsel or made Him a debtor, for He owes nothing to anyone and all creation exists entirely for His purposes and glory.
  - All things are from Him, through Him, and to Him; to Him belongs eternal glory, as everything originates in God, unfolds according to His sovereign plan, and ultimately returns to honor and glorify Him.
    - *How does this passage deepen your awe and worship of God?*
    - *How does remembering God's sovereignty free you from anxiety about His plan?*
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### **Robert Yarbrough, *Has God Rejected His People?***

To give understanding that can help his readers avoid arrogance, Paul explains a “mystery.” In his usage, this term often refers to a previously unknown truth on which God has now shed light by revelation. The term “Brothers” points to Paul's friendly and collegial regard. “Partial hardening” means that not all Jews reject Jesus as their Messiah. It is also “partial” with respect to duration: it will persist

“until the fullness of the Gentiles” has arrived. This could mean the full number of non-Jews that God has appointed to be saved (cf. Acts 13:48).

Once the process described in verse 25 has run its course, “all Israel will be saved.” Interpreters debate what this means. Clearly, Paul does not think Israelites, whether in OT times or his own era, will all be saved.

He has been lamenting lost Israel since the beginning of Romans 9, and Romans 2 details ways in which Jews have gone astray. He could be thinking of a time to come when large numbers of Jews will awaken to faith in Jesus as the promised Messiah. This cannot be ruled out, since the gospel message certainly holds this potential.

It is also possible that he is using “Israel” to include both:

1. True Jews since Abraham, who like Abraham through faith know circumcision of the heart by the Spirit, not the letter (Rom. 2:29). Examples include Paul, the other apostles, Timothy, and other Jews who have confessed faith in Christ.
2. Gentiles who have become children of Abraham through faith in Jesus Christ. Examples include the Roman believers, mostly Gentile, whom chapter 11 has been describing as grafted into the cultivated olive tree.

Whatever the proper interpretation, all the redeemed will owe their status to the “Deliverer . . . from Zion.” He will bring about a new level of godliness—he will “banish ungodliness”—among God’s people, in keeping with the prophecy in Isaiah 59:20. This applies to both earthly and heavenly life.

To Isaiah’s prophecy in verse 26, Paul adds a portion of Jeremiah 31:33–34, the new covenant prophecy:

- “And this will be my covenant with them” (Jer. 31:33)
- “When I take away their sins” (Jer. 31:34)

Applying these to “all Israel” (Rom. 11:26) supports the idea that “Israel” here includes new covenant believers—Gentiles, as well as Jews who believe in the one who established that covenant, Jesus:

- “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt. 26:28).
- “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many” (Mark 14:24).
- “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood” (Luke 22:20).

### *God's Commitment*

“They” are Jews who could and should be saved by the gospel but as yet are not. “For your sake” may mean that their opposition vindicates God’s wisdom and compassion, in contrast to His own people’s hostility toward Gentiles. It could also be translated “because of you,” pointing to Jewish hostility toward accepting Gentiles as worship partners.

God’s election of a nation in Abraham has continuing implications even as Paul seeks to spread the gospel despite Jewish opposition. God’s faithfulness to the patriarchs guarantees his unwavering commitment to the patriarchs’ descendants.

One reason for God’s unwavering commitment (Rom. 11:28) is that “the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.”

- Gifts include countless promises made to His people and blessings extended to them from Abraham, Noah, and even Adam and Eve, as well as God’s written Word (Rom. 3:2) and the specific blessings listed in Romans 9:4–5.
- The calling of God is His summons that brought Israel into being. It is not only a common call but also translates into an awareness, arising in people called to faith, of the presence of God and their responsibility to respond.

Both God’s gifts and His calling of Jews to faith in Christ remain in force and will not be revoked.

Paul draws an analogy between God’s mercy on the Jews and His mercy on Paul’s (Gentile) Roman audience. Prior to their reception of the gospel message, the Romans were “disobedient to God” and without “hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). But as Paul writes to them, God has shown them mercy.

“Because of their disobedience” refers to the Jews’ rejection of the gospel, which opened the door for Gentiles (like the Romans) to be at the forefront of early church expansion. Paul foresees a similar process lying ahead for Jews. “They too have now been disobedient” (Rom. 11:31) they have rejected the gospel. But as Gentiles continue to receive that message and prosper in faith, the result may be that “they also may now receive mercy.”

Jew and Gentile alike are “consigned to disobedience.” Paul has already described the law’s role in this: God gave the law “so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God” (Rom. 3:19). Using the same word translated as “consigned,” Paul also writes:

- “The Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe” (Gal. 3:22).



- “Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed” (Gal. 3:23).

No one likes to be accused of wrongdoing, but God kindly pulls back the curtain on human sin so that “he may have mercy on all” who own up to their sin and accept God’s sole sufficient remedy.

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### **David G. Peterson, *Romans***

As we engage in evangelism ourselves, we play our part in God's mission to the nations. Our involvement should be with a sense of awe about the depths of his riches, wisdom, and knowledge, and with a humble acknowledgment that his judgments are unsearchable and his ways untraceable (11:33-36). We may not have all our questions answered, but Scripture reveals enough of God's plan for us to trust him completely. Rather than being discouraged by unbelief, we should be motivated by an overwhelming sense of God's mercy.

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### **Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans***

God is the source of all things, the means by which all things are accomplished, and the goal of all things. Since he is the source and means of all things, no one could possibly function as his counselor or expect payment for some service rendered. God is the giver of wisdom to human beings, not the recipient of wisdom from them; God is the one who gives all things to us, not the one who receives benefits from human hands. Not only is God the source of all things and the means by which all things are accomplished, but he is also the goal of all things. The purpose for which the world was created is God's purpose.

It is fitting, therefore, that the text ends with an acclamation of God's glory. The one from whom and through whom and to whom are all things deserves all the glory. The goal of Romans emerges clearly at the end of the discussion on the relationship between Jews and gentiles in salvation history. The salvation of Jews and gentiles is penultimate. What is ultimate is the glory of God.

As Schlatter says, "Worship is the concluding word." God has arranged redemptive history to bring the maximum glory to himself. He has arranged it so that it is clear that all things are from him, through him, and to him. The "Amen" in the text indicates Paul's intense wish that God's purpose to receive glory and praise will be realized.

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## **Patrick Schreiner, *The Visual Word***

### *Righteousness Defended (9-11)*

This is all good news, but doesn't the lackluster response of Israel raise questions about God's faithfulness and righteousness? Paul climactically defends God's righteousness, arguing God has been faithful to His promises to Israel even though some of Israel does not believe. There has always been an Israel of the flesh and an Israel of the promise. Ethnicity never automatically made one a member of God's family. Jacob and Esau are prime examples of this reality. Jacob was chosen, Esau was not. God is still faithful to spiritual Israel. Paul stands as an example of spiritual Israel. The Israel of flesh has stumbled over Jesus and not submitted to righteousness from God that comes by faith. Yet Israel still has the opportunity to believe as the gospel message is brought to them, and Paul promises there is a remnant of Israel who will be saved on the last day. These realities should humble both Gentiles and Israel and not make them proud over their brothers and sisters.

### *Remnant (11)*

The rejection of Israel is not complete nor final. Paul affirms the call of Israel that cannot be recalled or revoked. There will be a surprising twist at the end. God has not rejected His people. He will save those whom He foreknew. God has chosen a remnant to be saved, and there will be a future day for Israel even though right now a majority of them are hardened. Israel stumbled so that Gentiles could come in, but this will only make Israel jealous. Gentiles should not be proud because they have been grafted onto the olive tree as wild shoots. If they can be grafted on, they can be cut off. Paul affirms that at the end, a large number of Jews will come to Jesus. God's righteousness has been defended. His wisdom is beyond what humans can perceive and too wonderful for them to comprehend.

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