

The Bible (Unmuted) Transcript
Episode 41
Romans, Part 18 (Rom11)
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Episode Summary:

If you read Romans 9, you need to read Romans 11. The points Paul makes in Romans 11 are so significant such that, if you were to miss them (or ignore them), you'll misunderstand how he reads key parts of the Jewish story. In this episode, we dive into Romans 11 and see how Paul continues, and builds upon, his previous discussions about "foreknowledge," "election," and "hardening." We also look at Genesis 12 -- what does that passage have to do with Paul's argument in Romans 11? The answer is: everything. Listen to find out how Paul understands the promise of Genesis 12:1-3 in light of his christological convictions.

Pre-order Matt's newest book, *The End of the World As You Know It*. You can purchase through (1) Amazon or (2) Lexham Press (as well as other outlets).

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[The End of the World as You Know It: What the Bible Really Says about the End Times \(And Why It's Good News\) - Lexham Press](#)

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Transcript:

0:00 Hey friends. Welcome back to another episode of the Bible Unmuted. My name is Matt Halsted, and it is a pleasure to be with you once again this week. Today, we find ourselves in Romans Chapter 11. Now we've been through Romans quite a bit already. We've done a number of episodes, and it's exciting to be in Romans 11 because Romans 11 has a lot of cool things that we're going to need to explore and journey through so that we can wrap up a lot of things that Paul has been talking about thus far. In many ways, Romans 11 is a crux point, and it's important that we understand it rightly. You know, a lot of times people read Romans, say, chapter 9, chapter 10 by themselves. And really, if you want to read Romans 9 you've got to read Romans 11 because Paul as is well-known has a whole section of thought in Romans 9 through 11, and those three chapters, no doubt go together. I mean, the whole book goes together, right? So I hate, well, I have this allergy against sectioning off parts of Romans. I mean, the more I read Romans,

the more I'm reminded that every part goes with every part. But it is okay to acknowledge and to recognize that it is in sections; that parts of Romans are more, I guess you could say, thematic with each other than other parts. But nonetheless, when you come to Romans chapter 9, chapter 9 goes with 10 and 11. You've got to have those three together. So anyway, all to say, today today we get into Romans 11, and which we'll circle back around to a few things that we talked about in Romans 9. And so you'll see how things wrap up quite beautifully.

Well, before we get to that, though, I want to share just a little bit about my new book that I've that I've been talking about. It's called the *End of the World As You Know It: What the Bible Really Says About the End Times and Why It's Good News*. It's published by Lexham Press or with Lexham Press. And it's been a delight to work on this project. And I'm excited to see it hit the bookshelves and be released out into the wild. The official release date is not until February 7th of 2024 so we still have some time before it comes out officially. However, it is available for pre-order. You can pre-order it on Amazon you can pre-order it at the LexhamPress.com website. In fact, I think, as of this recording at least, there's still a discount. So if you order it from Lexham Press you'll get a pretty sizable discount. I think it's like 32% off or something. So it's pretty cool.

But yeah, I just really have a passion about this topic of eschatology and each chapter goes through different questions that are really, well, that are on people's minds these days. So for example: are we in the end times? That's chapter one. How should we understand revelation? That's chapter 2. And then on and on it goes. What is the mark of the beast? Will Christians be raptured? I'm really excited to hear what you what you think about that chapter. The fifth chapter, is there a coming time of tribulation? Chapter 6, how can we know when Jesus will return? And then number 7, what can we know about the Antichrist? So seven questions, seven chapters. There's an introduction and conclusion that book ends all of that.

But yeah it was a lot of fun and I thought I would read one of the blurbs that another scholar had kindly written. And it was endorsed by several people David deSilva, Greg Boyd, Andrew Malone, Michael Gorman, Mark Beuving, Jay Nelson Kraybill. And you know it's really cool to be able to... well, you know I pinched myself to be honest with you. Because these are people that I read their books and I learned a lot from them. And I never in million years would have thought they would have been endorsing my book. So it's pretty cool. But anyway, I thought I would read Greg Boyd's endorsement he says,

"The rapture, the Antichrist, the Great Tribulation, the mark of the beast, 666. As our world seems to be unraveling, and people are becoming more and more anxious. We are hearing these terms being talked about with increasing frequency. In this well researched, well written and forcibly argued book, Matthew Halsted considers these and other aspects of the standard evangelical eschatology and holds them up to the light of biblical scholarship and reason. In the process, Halsted not only deconstructs the standard evangelical understanding of these concepts, he demonstrates how these and other biblical images of the end times were meant to buttress our hope in Christ's second coming not to instill us with fear. Anyone who has ever embraced or been influenced by the standard evangelical eschatology or knows who knows people who have, needs to read this compelling and much-needed book!"

Many thanks to Greg Boyd for that very kind endorsement. I hope that this book helps people, encourages people, gives them hope, helps them wade through those eschatological passages in Scripture. At the end of the day, my hope in all of my writing is that anybody who reads my books would walk away closer to Jesus and recognizing more how much their loved by God. And so this book is no exception. I really do hope that this book helps folks do that and realize God's love for them and the hope that we can have in Christ and the gospel. So yeah, pick up my book,

pre-order the book, *End of the World As You Know It: What the Bible Really Says About the End Times and Why It's Good News*. So check it out on Amazon.com or LexhamPress .com. I'll put links in the show notes so that you can find those easy.

OK, well, let's see. Yeah, let's get to Romans, chapter 11. We're going to begin by looking at, I don't know, I guess the first 15 verses. You know, I normally type all of my notes out on the computer, but this time I did hand notes. So we'll see how this goes. But anyway, all right. Well, without further ado, let's dive into Romans chapter 11.

6:20 Let's read vv 1-10. I'll be reading from the new revised standard version.

Romans 11:1-10 (NRSV)

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

7:30 So there's a lot to be said about this passage. I feel like I could do a whole episode on just this section, but will resist the temptation. So let's just dive into the big items here that we need to address.

So Paul is having to ask himself a question. Well, he is actually asking the question for the sake of his readers, who, in his mind, are probably asking this very important question, namely, has God rejected his people? Now here he's referencing ethnic Jews who have not believed that Jesus is the Messiah. And so the natural question that would be asked is, well: has God rejected them? You know Paul, if you're going off saying that you can be in covenant with God as a Gentile, then does that mean that God has just totally rejected Israel? And he says, no. He in fact, says, *mē genoito* [μὴ γένοιτο]. By no means, no way! And he gives reasons why he says that. He says, ***I myself am an Israelite. I'm a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.*** Now, why is Paul saying that? He's saying that because he's demonstrating his point, that he, as an ethnic Jew, is clearly in covenant with God because he believes Jesus is the Messiah, and therefore no one can say that God has rejected ethnic Jews. He is one, and he's accepted in Christ, by God. Okay so that's, that's his whole point in saying that.

In verse two, he gives another reason. He says, ***God has not rejected his people, whom he foreknew.*** This is a very interesting sentence in verse two because we see this word

foreknowledge or foreknowing. Now we ran into this before in Romans 8 and I'm not going to rehash all of that discussion, because you can go back and check that out. It's a long episode, some two hours, I believe. But it's important to at least point out a very important feature here. How do we understand foreknowledge in this passage? Well, we have to answer that question by asking ourselves another question. Who is the reference for this foreknowledge? Who is being foreknown? Well, it's his people. God's people. **God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew.** Now, *this people*, this is ethnic Jews who do not believe in Jesus. These are the, you know, the Jews that Paul has been talking about in verse 1.

And so this is a very interesting point I want to make. Because it demonstrates the fact that foreknowledge, divine foreknowledge, does not entail salvation. Because some of these people may not be saved. And Paul doesn't seem to think in his theology that all of them will. Later on he's going to say that, my hope as a missionary is that God would use the gospel to save some of them. Of course he wants all of them to be saved, obviously. But he's being realistic here. He doesn't seem to think that everybody will end up believing that Jesus is the Messiah. And that's really sad for him. But that's what he says.

10:28 My point here is just to show you that foreknowledge, divine foreknowledge, does not mean election in this pre-determination sense. Because here you have the word *foreknew* applied to people who may or may not be saved. It's not a guarantee, in other words.

And Paul goes on to demonstrate a little bit more about what's going on here in verses two and on down he goes on and tells the Elijah story. He says, **do you not know what the scripture says about Elijah when he pleads with God against Israel?** And here he quotes some passages from 1 Kings 19. He says to quote Elijah as to say, **Lord, they have killed your prophets. They have demolished your altars. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life.** Here, what Paul is doing is reminding his readers of this Jewish idea of remnant theology.

Okay, remnant theology. What is that? Well, it's this idea that God has, a people, ethnic Israel, but within that people are the ones who are truly following him. Truly loyal to him. And that's what Elijah here is lamenting. It's that he feels all alone. **I alone am left.** And then of course, God replies to him and says, well, I have kept for myself 7000 people have not bowed the knee to Baal. You are not alone. There are 7000 other people who are left.

And what's interesting is this word *left*. It's the word *leipó* [λείπω]. And it comes from the root word *leipó* [λείπω] in Greek. Variations of that root word occur three times in vv 3, 4 and 5. And unfortunately the English is not as transparent about that. You don't get the translation such that you can see the connection that you would easily see if you were looking at this in the Greek language. So for example when Elijah says, **I alone am left**; that word *left* comes from the root word, *leipó* [λείπω]. **I alone am leipó.** And then God says well no, **I have leipó.** I have kept for myself 7000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal. So you see that connection there in verse three? I alone am *left*. And then God says, no, I have *left* for myself 7000 others. So in English, that connection is not clear, but it is there.

And then verse 5 Paul says, **so too at the present time, there is a remnant.** This is the word *leimma* [λείμμα], which comes from *leipó*. There's a remnant chosen by grace. Okay, so lots to say about this here. Let me talk a little bit about this remnant idea. So the big picture is that Paul is not introducing for the first time, remnant theology as if he's inventing this or anything. No, he's clearly getting this from the Old Testament. And he wants his readers to know something specific about this remnant idea. Again, if you're a good Jew, you are already familiar with remnant theology. What Paul is doing in context of this whole chapter of Romans 11 is christologizing the Jewish idea of remnant theology. The remnant is according to Christ. That's Paul's big point in Romans 11. Remnant theology is centered around faith in Christ; the christology. It's

christocentric. You don't have that in the 1 Kings passage originally in the original context. But now that Christ has come, it has been recontextualized around Jesus. And you see this in vv 5 and 6, and on down here. **So too at the present time**, says Paul, **that there is a remnant chosen by grace**.

And now, when he says *chosen by grace*, there's two things I want to say about this. First, I don't like that translation because it doesn't really capture the Greek here. It's not *chosen* by grace, it's an election. Really how you can translate this is to say, *so too at the present time there is a remnant according to an election of grace*. That's the idea here and that's a pretty wooden translation of the Greek.

So let me repeat that verse 5. *So too at the present time, there is a remnant according to an election of grace*. Do you see the difference there from the New Revised Standard Version? The New Revised Standard Version says *so too at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace*. The way I have constructed it is *so too at the present time there is a remnant according to an election of grace*. And I think there's lots of things we could say about that. But I think the point here is that Paul is just saying that election in the present time is working very similar to how it did in 1 Kings in terms of a people within a people. God has a big number of people but within that big number of people, there are people who are specifically loyal to him. And for Paul what it means to be loyal to Yahweh, now is to be loyal to Jesus the Messiah.

15:40 And so when he says that there's an election of grace, that the remnant is according to an election of grace, he is doing that in what we would call an elliptical fashion. By elliptical we mean that Paul is leaving out something here. He's just saying it shorthand. What he means to say is that *there's a remnant still now according to an election of grace in Jesus the Messiah*. He's left the *in Jesus the Messiah* off because it's assumed. That's what we mean by, it's elliptical. He leaves that part out. Okay, in other words he's just saying that *election* is christological. I mean that's pretty much what he's saying. Remnant theology, more precisely, I suppose is christological. So you can have this big body of elect people (i.e. ethnic Israel) but within that, there is a remnant according to an election of grace. According to a christological election of grace. That's what Paul is really getting at.

He goes on and he says in verse 6, **but if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace would no longer be grace**. Now when he says that this idea of works when he introduces works here we should take him to mean what he's always been meaning thus far in the letter. So we have talked about this that when Paul talks about works, more than likely he's referring to specifically the works of Torah. Those works of Torah that distinguish the Jews from the Gentiles; works such as circumcision, perhaps sabbath keeping, and dietary restrictions. I mean he's been talking about circumcision a lot in Romans 2 and Romans 4, so we can expect that's what he means here by works as well. And he's saying, look this election according to the grace of Christ it is based on grace completely, not works. In other words he's saying it's open to all ethnicities, Jews and Gentiles. And it's not on the basis of works of Torah, or those works that distinguish one group from another group; the Jews from the Gentiles. No, it's a christological election. That's the point.

Just as we go on, vv 7-10... I think when we get into vv 7-10 we'll see the christology coming out. We'll see that that's the emphasis here. I suppose that I could just read this again just for clarity's sake. So vv 7-10, let me read this. He says, (and he's summing up everything he has said so far.)

7 What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened,

Okay, so let me just stop here. This is just a good stopping point. **Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking the elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened.** He's not saying anything new here. He's already said these sorts of things before, and he expects his reader to remember what he said in a previous chapter, specifically in Romans 9:30 and the verses that follow that. So let me go back and read Romans 9:30-10:4.

30 What then are we to say? Gentiles, who did not strive for righteousness, have attained it, that is, righteousness through faith; 31 but Israel, who did strive for the righteousness that is based on the law, did not succeed in fulfilling that law. 32 Why not? Because they did not strive for it on the basis of faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, 33 as it is written, "See, I am laying in Zion a stone that will make people stumble, a rock that will make them fall, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

10 Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. 2 I can testify that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened. 3 For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they have not submitted to God's righteousness. 4 For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

20:11 Okay, did you notice that last part? He says, that they were seeking to establish their own righteousness based on law. And that's what Paul is saying again in Romans 11:7 here; he's saying the same thing, different words, different contexts, but the same idea. He says again, **what then Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained, but the rest were hardened.** Now, so again, they fail to obtain what they're seeing because they were seeking it outside of Christ. They were trying to establish an election on Torah, not christology. And that's a big problem for Paul. He says that the elect obtained it; but the rest, they were hardened.

Now, what does he mean by hardening here? Now we've already talked quite a bit about this heartening idea in past episodes. So I'm not going to rehash all of that, but I just want to make it very important observation. I think it's worth making, even if it's redundant from previous episodes. This. Idea of hardening cannot be a reference to, you know, eternal hardening or eternal reprobation. This is not the doctrine of reprobation of the 17th century. Why not? Well, because, as we'll see later on, (I won't get into it now), but as we'll see later on in the chapter, Paul seems to think that the people who are hardened can actually come to faith. They're hardening can be reversed if they choose to believe in Jesus, the Messiah. Okay, we'll get to that in a little bit. Yeah, This idea that

**8 as it is written,
"God gave them a sluggish spirit,
eyes that would not see
and ears that would not hear,
down to this very day."**

So Paul is saying that, yeah, God is instrumental in this hardening process. But we have to ask how. How is God instrumental? We've already established this is not an eternal hardening. So we have to kind of, well we simply do, we have to toss it out. That's not an option based on the text; based on the data. So how is God doing this hardening? Well he's doing it by means of christology. The Christ who saves is the Christ who hardens. it's an old adage; it's an old cliché, but I think it captures an important biblical truth. Namely this: that the same sun that melts wax

can harden clay. It's based on the constitution of a person's heart. What do you do with Jesus? that's going to determine your relationship to God; your hardening or softening. That's what's going to determine your covenant inclusion or exclusion. And really, you see this in the next verse. Verse 9 where he quotes Psalm 68. Paul says,

**9 And David says,
"Let their table become a snare and a trap,
a stumbling block and a retribution for them;**

Now some scholars, and I don't remember off the top of my head who that might be. I have an idea, but I don't want to say because I'm not 100 percent sure; but some scholars and I'm inclined to agree. But some scholars say that this idea of a table becoming a snare and a trap, that's probably a reference to maybe dietary restrictions, or some of those works of Torah here that actually has served to be a trap to them. Or maybe not. Maybe something else is going on. But it's a whole idea of a stumbling block; that is reoccurring here as well. You know, it could be that they have failed to see how Torah points to Jesus and testifies to Jesus. Maybe that's what's going on here. How those works of Torah actually point to Messiah in some way. Because he does mention - the reason I say that is because he does mention the stumbling block. You know, that they are experiencing a stumbling block. This word is *skándalon* [σκάνδαλον], stumbling block. And we saw that a moment ago in Romans 9:33 where Paul says **see I am laying in Zion a stone that will make people stumble, a rock that will make them fall** [*skándalon*]; **and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame**. So that's a passage that is christologized by Paul; the stumbling stone. This rock is Jesus. And so you see that here in Romans 11:9; this stumbling block idea. So again Christology seems to be in play with respect to the hardening of the people's hearts. He goes on in verse 10. He says,

**10 let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see,
and keep their backs forever bent."**

That's an interesting passage in light on what I'm saying, right? He says, **let them be forever bent. Let the rebellion be forever**. In other words, but is that what Paul is actually saying? Again, based on the context that we'll see momentarily, that cannot be the case. It's not a forever hardening. That's not what's not what seems to be happening because Paul actually envisions this hardening being reversed, based upon the decisions these people make with respect to Jesus. So again, it's christology. That's, that's the point here. So why would he use this word forever? this whole idea of being forever rebellious? Well, I think it's hyperbolic. I think that's the best option for understanding this passage.

So that's vv 1-10 and there's lots more to say. We can go back and forth on a lot of other bits and pieces here, especially on the quotations from the Old Testament, but what I want to do is just kind of leave this as it is and let it set. And let's move on to the next section.

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27:10 Let's read vv 11-15:

11 So I ask, have they stumbled so as to fall? By no means! But through their stumbling salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. 12 Now if their stumbling means riches for the world, and if their defeat means riches for Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!
13 Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I glorify my ministry 14 in order to make my own people jealous, and thus 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!

Okay, a couple of observations here. So here you begin to see that Paul does envision the possibility of the reversal of their hardening. He flat out says, is there stumbling such that they're going to fall? By no means! In fact, it's through their stumbling that salvation is able to go to the Gentiles, which in turn rebounds back to Israel's benefit, causing them to be jealous. And then therefore, presumably wanting to come back into the covenant by faith in Christ.

Now this idea of jealousy here comes again from Deuteronomy 32:21. We looked at that verse last week. And it's reoccurring here. I just want to make an observation so that you can maybe file this away for a little bit later into the episode, because we're going to revisit it. But just notice that the purpose for Gentile inclusion, and then the purpose that God's going to make from this unfortunate situation is going to work out for salvation. So okay, that all sounded really confusing. Let me repeat. God is going to use this unfortunate situation of Israel's hardening to result in the blessing for Israel.

God is super wise, super smart to be able to take any dire situation, any unfortunate situation and cause all things work out for the good of those who love God. I mean, is it one of the church fathers? I think it was, oh, goodness. I can't remember.... But they had this great quote. I need to go dig it up. It says, "God is able to mold any situation for his glory and our good." And I think the way he does it is that he's just so smart. He knows all things; he knows how to do anything. And so God can take even this unfortunate situation that Paul laments, namely Israel's rebellion and Israel hardening, and turn it into something good. God has a way. He's got the smarts to do this. I just want to point this out. File it away we'll come back to it.

It also needs to be observed that in verse 14, the verse we read a moment ago where Paul again says **he glorifies his ministry to the Gentiles in order to make my own people jealous, and thus save some of them**. Again God has this ability, Paul thinks, to bring about something good from this unfortunate situation. And Paul is absolutely correct on that.

And also, again, Paul envisions that these ethnic Jews who are currently hardened; they can come in. This nullifies the whole idea that what Paul has been talking about has been eternal reprobation. That's not the case. That's just not the way the text is going. And it's a good reminder that we perhaps need to be constantly thinking about our systems of thought and checking our systems of thought in the light of what scripture is teaching. I think that's a very important thing to keep in mind. We always need to come back to scripture to revise some of the things that we have that we have accepted that may not necessarily be scriptural. Okay, lots more to say on that, but let's move on.

31:25 Let's read vv 16-24.

16 If the part of the dough offered as first fruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; and if the root is holy, then the branches also are holy. 17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the rich root of the olive tree, 18 do not boast over the branches. If you do boast, remember that it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you. 19 You will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." 20 That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand only through faith. So do not become proud, but stand in awe. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, perhaps he will not spare you. 22 Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness toward you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. 23 And even those of Israel, if they do not persist in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. 24 For if you have been 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 natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree.

32:48 So here Paul is giving a metaphor about this idea of election and reprobation or hardening. He's giving a metaphor about a wild olive shoot and branches, and rich root, and just this olive tree idea. Let me see if I can unpack it a little bit. In verse 17 he talks about three elements of this this image. He talks about branches that were broken off. This obviously is a reference to ethnic Israel. He talks about a wild olive shoot. This is the Gentiles. This wild olive shoot is grafted in their place to share the rich root. That's the third thing. The rich root of the olive tree. So three things. Branches, wild olive shoot, and the rich root.

The rich root is sort of like the foundation. It's a good image. It's the root. It's the thing that makes the thing the thing. And a number of scholars, (and I am inclined to agree), believe that this rich root element is probably a reference to the patriarchs. I would say probably Abraham, specifically. You can see this in my book page 205-206; I quote Gorman there. I think Gorman mentions Abraham and patriarchs here, and that's my opinion. So you have this idea that the branches, ethnic Israel, has been broken off. Why? Because of their unbelief. That's what he says in verse 20, **they were broken off for the unbelief**. The wild olive shoot, the Gentiles; they're grafted in. They didn't originally belong to this tree, but they're grafted in by faith. And the rich root is the patriarchs. The patriarchal promise. The thing that made Israel, Israel, right? And the reason I say Abraham is because of Genesis 12:1-3. God calls Abraham and Abraham's family to be a blessing to the nations. And that promise was a covenant promise, and it is the root that made Israel. And because of Israel being Israel, she was called to be a light to the nations. And here you see that mysteriously being brought to conclusion; to fulfillment, because you have Gentiles coming in. So that's a very important piece here.

And a thing here that we need to also mention is to reinforce what we said a moment ago about what it means to be elect, and what it means to be hardened. I think Paul answers this question straightforward and he says to the Gentiles, “*you will say branches were broken off so that I may be grafted in*”. He says, ***that is true*** verse 20, ***they were broken off because of their unbelief but you stand only through faith***. So this is a very important point I think we need to make: Israel’s reprobation, their hardening was not because of some eternal decree in the past. That doesn’t seem to be what’s being said here, as if it’s an eternal fixed decree. This seems to be contingent upon their belief. I think this is just another important point to make: the idea of being broken off is due to faith not this this decree in in the past. This breaking off, moreover, and this inclusion into the tree is christological. Election and hardening is all christological. That’s what faith and belief point to. Faith in who? Christ. Unbelief in who? Christ. So that’s the point here. And I say it’s not an eternal fixed decree because these are people that can believe again. They can come back to the tree. And moreover those who are currently in the rich root; attached to the rich root; they can be broken off. That’s what Paul says here.

36:48 So, let’s see, he says, ***if God did not spare the natural branches perhaps he will not spare you. He says, Note then the kindness and the severity of God’s severity toward those who have fallen, but God’s kindness toward you provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you’ll be cut off. And even those of Israel if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in for God has the power to graft them in***. Okay again so this can’t be eternal decree kind of stuff. And this is a metaphor, remember, for election. That’s an important point to make. He’s not talking about something different here. He’s continuing the same line of thought about election and hardening and all that. And it’s all christological. And it’s a very, very important point. Now we don’t really see Christology explicit here, but we see the words faith. And for Paul, faith is not abstract; it’s not positive thinking; it’s not hopeful thinking; it’s not just “got to have faith” in an abstract way. No, this is faith in Jesus. In other words it’s all christological.

Yeah, just looking at my handwritten notes here again. I normally use typed notes which are easier to read, but I’m looking at handwritten notes. What else do I need to say?

Oh, yes! Very important point! This whole passage is about don’t boast. If you’re a Gentile, you have no grounds to boast. You have zero grounds to boast; you are a wild olive shoot. You were not part of the covenant promises and so if you find yourself in the Abrahamic family, it’s only by grace through Christ. So there’s no room for boasting. At all. Zero. Zero boasting. If you’re boasting over your Jewish friends, you should question if you really understand the grace of Jesus. If you’re boasting at all. Period. I mean we’re a humble people. Christians are a humble people. And it also is not just for Gentiles to remember this but also for Jewish people to remember this too. You know, God shows no favoritism; that we are all one in Christ Jesus. And so this idea of boasting being nullified is a beautiful piece because we need unity amongst ourselves; and that unity can be found in Jesus who has taken the dividing wall of hostility. Read Ephesians; Ephesians 2; he’s taken the dividing wall of hostility and he’s broken it down and he’s made out of the two people, one people in Christ. It’s the beautiful, beautiful picture; we are all servants of one another. We look at each other humbly and so that’s what Paul is saying here. So zero reason to boast; every reason to boast in the grace of Jesus. There’s nothing in us that made any this possible. We looked at Jesus and we say thank you. We glorify Jesus for his grace; and we look upon our brothers; we look upon every human being on this planet and we look upon them with love, and kindness; and we consider ourselves their servants because Jesus has come to our world and has considered us as a beloved; and so we look upon others in the same way.

40:10 Okay moving right along here I want to pick up. I guess we’re going to pick up in verse 25 let me Read verse 25 – 32:

25 So that you may not claim to be wiser than you are, brothers and sister I want you to understand this mystery: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And so all Israel will be saved; as it is written, "Out of Zion will come the Deliverer; he will banish ungodliness from Jacob." 27 "And this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins." 28 As regards the gospel they are enemies of God for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved, for the sake of their ancestors; 29 for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. 30 Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, 31 so they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy. 32 For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.

41:05 Okay, So in verses 26 and 27, there was a couple of quotations from Isaiah. Isaiah 59. Isaiah 27. And there was a nod here to Jeremiah. Jeremiah 31 about this whole covenant idea taking away sins. And that's Isaiah 27 and Jeremy 31. We won't get into all that. It's fascinating to go back and look at some of that, but I just want to stay 30,000 feet above the trees so that we can focus quite a bit.

I want to bring our attention though to verse 25, this hardening idea. It's only in place, says Paul, until the fullness of the Gentiles come in. So it's temporary, but it's important there to note that even in Paul's own day, that he's not necessarily looking in the future, that this is like some sort of hardening that that goes on for a certain amount of time. And I think that's part of it, of course, but even he thinks in his time frame; that in his point in history, that this hardening can be reversed. I just want to make that clear, for Paul even in his day, he thought the hardening could be reversed. He's not looking necessarily toward the future eschatologically, merely. But it's a multifaceted idea here.

I do want to look at verse 28 where he says **as regards the gospel they are enemies of God for your sake but as regards election they are beloved**. This is fascinating because here you have this election language brought up again and it's used here in reference to those who rejected the gospel. As a reference to ethnic Israel the question here is whether they will fulfill the vocation of the patriarchs, namely to be the rescue plan for the world. I mean that's what they were called to; and that gift and calling is irrevocable. Will they fulfill that? That's Paul's hope because as ethnic Israel they are children, fleshly children of Abraham. And so Paul, I think, is bringing this up because he's really wanting his people to take their heritage very seriously and say, look you are called to be a blessing to the Gentiles; you were called to be a covenant bearer; do that, do that. And I think this is this whole idea of following in the vocation of the patriarchs; for Israel to do that and therefore be the rescue plan for the world, I think this point is sort of the point of verse 17.

So for example let me go back and read verse 17, **but if some of the branches were broken off, in you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the rich root of the olive trees**. So this idea of Gentiles coming in and sharing in this olive tree; and sharing in this root of the patriarchs; I think for Paul, this idea is he wants his people to see their vocation, and how they need to follow in the steps of Abraham, and fulfill the covenant, through Christ of course, and be that light to the Gentiles. He's asking, will the natural branches stay true to the root of their olive tree? I think that's the question.

And so here I just want to recap again that Genesis 11, 12 narrative. You can find this in my book and I talk a lot about it elsewhere, and I draw on NT Wright's insights here too. But Genesis 11,12 narrative I think needs to be considered as we consider Romans 11 and what Paul's really saying here. So Genesis chapters 3-11 is all about human wickedness and sin; how it spiraled out of control, and the nations have gone berserk, essentially. And so in chapter 12 of Genesis, God calls Abraham. And he calls him out and says I'm going to bless you and your family; and in you, all the families of the nations of the earth, they will be blessed as well. And so God promises the Abraham family, or Israel, that they will be blessed and they will be a blessing to the nations. And of course we have to ask ourselves why do the nations need to be blessed? Well go read Genesis 3 through 11. They're messed up. And so God's rescue plan for the world is the Israel family, is the nation of Israel. This is basic NT Wright stuff in his book *Justification* and *Paul in the Faithfulness of God*. So be sure to go check out those books because he talks about this whole idea of Israel as a rescue plan for the world. And as NT Wright further says is he notices something that we should all notice; namely that as Israel goes about her vocation, we all discover, Israel discovers, that she needs rescuing from sin as well. So it turns out that God cannot use Israel to rescue the world because Israel needs to be rescued as well.

46:09 And so the question before God really is, well, is how is God going to stay true to his promises? How is he going to rescue the world through the family of Abraham? God is not going to pick the Americans to do it. He's not going to pick any other nation to do it; the Chinese, or the Australians, or anybody. Why not? Well, because they need rescuing, and he promised Abraham. Covenant. It was a covenant that God made Abraham. He must use the family of Abraham if he's going to be true to his covenant; and God is always true to his covenant. So how does God do that? How does God use the family of Israel to rescue the world? Short answer: Jesus. He has to find a faithful Israelite to do the job, and Jesus is the faithful Israelite.

That is why in the New Testament Gospels you see Jesus reenacting the story of Israel. Go read Matthew 1 - 7. Jesus lives for a time in Egypt and has his exodus from Egypt to go back to the promised land. Matthew 2:15; you have his temptations in the wilderness for 40 days. That's a weird number. His baptism, his crossing through the waters of the Jordan. His being on a mountain talking about Torah and the law. I mean, he's reenacting the story of Israel. He's reliving Israel's story in his own body. Why? Why is he baptized in the Jordan? He tells us because he wants to fulfill all righteousness. That doesn't mean forgiveness of sins, for he has no sins to be forgiven. To fulfill righteousness means to fulfill the covenant, to be covenant faithful; to be God's arm, to be YHWH's arm of faithfulness to his people Israel. And so he crosses the Jordan, and starts a ministry, and he makes people whole. It's a beautiful picture. And so God has found a faithful Israelite to rescue the world.

48:03 Now in Romans, of course, we still have this issue of Israel not believing, Israel not participating in these covenant blessings; and it's going to the Gentiles, and Paul sees this as a problem because he's a good devout Jew who knows the covenants, and promises, and so forth. He knows that Israel is called to be a blessing and to be blessed. And so the question is, how is Israel going to be blessed and be a blessing? Well, this is where he builds his system of election around Christology. That's how he makes sense of the circumstance of Israel's unbelief. So for example, he thinks that just because Israel is unbelieving in Jesus, he doesn't see that as deterring God's plan; he doesn't see that as messing up God's program of redemption for the world. No, no, he says no, it's by their rejection that the Gentiles are able to come in.

And that's the whole point of Romans 11; it is to say that Israel has stumbled and the gospel has in turn gone to the Gentiles. And so has God given up on his people? Paul says no, not at all. Because in their rejection, yes, in Israel's rejection of the gospel, the gospel has gone to the Gentiles; but by going to the Gentiles, that's going to make Israel jealous, which means they're (at least some of them) are going to come to faith; just like some Gentiles are going to come to

faith. And he envisions that Jews and Gentiles will come to faith as a result of this disobedience; that the Gentiles were disobedient, but the gospel has gone to them because of Israel's disobedience; and because the gospel goes to the Gentiles, Israel is going to be jealous and they're going to come into the covenant because of their jealousy. So even in their disobedience, it's going to work out for their good in the end, right? And for many of them, at least those who believe in Jesus. And so why this is important is because what we're seeing here in Romans 9, 10 and 11 (especially in 11) is how God fulfills his promise to Abraham. Remember in Genesis 12, God promised Abraham, "I will bless you and you will be a blessing to the nations." And so what you have here is the Christ people being blessed with covenant inclusion; and being a blessing to others as well. So the Jews, they will be blessed because the gospel even in their disobedience goes to the Gentiles, and the Gentiles will bring them in through jealousy. So they're going to be, even in their disobedience, they are blessing the Gentiles by the gospel going to them; and they will be blessed in return because many of them will come to faith in Jesus, just like Paul. Paul is the son of Abraham, a Benjamite, and he has come to faith. So he's a living example of the Genesis 12 promise coming to truth.

And so, I hope I'm explaining this. It's kind of late at night so my brain is not working well. But do you see how that narrative of Genesis 12 is playing through here in Romans 11? How God is truly blessing Israel and making them a blessing to the nations; and how even those Gentiles who become Christians, they're grafted into this Israel tree, and they in turn get to participate in the blessing of the nations; including the nations of the Gentiles, and the nation of Israel.

So here's the point if you are in Jesus you are blessed and you will be a blessing. And this is why Jesus himself tells us in the great Commission, *go into all the world all the nations baptizing all the nations and teaching them all these all the things I've taught you*. We are called to be a blessing to the nations. Why? Because as Christ's people we are Israel people, in Israel's vocation, Israel's election is all about being a blessing to those who are outside of the covenant so that they might come into the covenant. And how do you come into the covenant? Through Christ. Election is christological. Everything for Paul is christological. And so I hope we've seen here the way all of this is functioning; the way Paul's biblical, theological narrative is working and flushing itself out. Do not, don't you dare read Romans 9 without reading Romans 10 and 11. You've got to have all three of those together. And don't you dare try to read Romans 9-11 without reading Romans 2 and Romans 3, and Romans 4. My goodness, I think we should just read all of Romans to get the point. I think that's a pretty good idea. Let's read all of Romans to get the full story of what Paul is saying.

52:50 So in light of all of that, in light of how God takes the Abrahamic covenant and shows himself faithful through Jesus the Messiah and through the Messiah people, the Christians, Jew and Gentile, it makes sense why Paul will end Romans 11 the way he does. Here's what he says.

33 O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

**34 "For who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been his counselor?"**

**35 "Or who has given a gift to him,
to receive a gift in return?"**

36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.

That's a beautiful picture of how we're supposed to respond to this biblical, theological story that's being painted before our eyes in Romans 9-11. And we are just supposed to stop and praise God. Paul quotes

from Isaiah 40 and Job 41 here, and I'll let you go back and look up those and compare all of that. Lots to be said about those quotations. But I guess I just want to end on this; I think every study of Romans... there are two things that happens when you study Romans. One, you get into some depth of the narrative; you get into some deep theology; you get into all sorts of beautiful, beautiful, deep things. But that's the first thing. The second thing that should happen is it should cause you to get on your knees and praise God; to just stop and be in awe of how God works. It's a beautiful picture. It's a beautiful thing. I'm so glad that Paul ends Romans 11 with the doxology with this note of praise to God.

Well, friends that's everything today. I hope you enjoyed our study through Romans chapter 11. Next week we're going to be diving into, you guessed it, Romans chapter 12. Another fun chapter. There's so much more fun to come. See you next time.

54:55 That's the end of today's episode. And thanks again for listening to The Bible Unmuted. If you like this podcast, consider rating it on your podcast platform, subscribing to it, and sharing with your friends. You can also support the podcast by becoming a patreon member. Go to: <https://www.patreon.com/TheBibleUnmuted> - or simply find the link in the description of this episode. Thanks for listening. Until next time, friends.