

When speaking of issues like God’s election/predestination in salvation (as Paul did in Romans 9), there is an almost universal objection: “That’s not fair!” We often forget the big picture that all of humanity, until born again by faith in Jesus Christ, is lost in rebellion against God – fairness, or justice, would result in all of humanity spending an eternity separate from God.

Still, is there a reason for God’s choosing to save some and hardening others? In today’s text, the apostle Paul gives us some insight. God is not random or arbitrary. He does not elect some to salvation because they are worthy, for all are unworthy of salvation (which is why it’s called “grace”). But God saves some and hardens others so that different groups of people can hear the Gospel. He has purposed to save a people “*from every tribe and tongue and people and nation*” (Revelation 5:9).

### **Divine Use of Rejection for Salvation (11:11)**

11:11 *I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.*

#### **Those Who Stumble Over Christ**

- Paul is not speaking of individual Israelites – individual Israelites who are “*elect*” found righteousness before God in Christ.<sup>1</sup> Individual Israelites who did not believe in Christ were “*blinded*” (11:7). Instead of speaking individual Israelites according to the flesh, Paul is speaking about the people as a whole. He is still underlining the fact that “*God [has not] cast away His people*” (11:1).

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<sup>1</sup> Including Paul himself! In many ways, this section is a repeat of the beginning of the chapter: “*God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite*” (11:1). Israel has not fallen forever in its stumbling over Christ, has it? No. Individual Israelites, including Paul, are being saved by faith in Christ!

- The apostle has already spoken of this “*stumbling*,” and told us that “*they stumbled*” over their long-awaited Messiah (Christ): READ 9:31-33.

#### **God’s Plan to Make Them Jealous**

- In the previous chapter, the apostle revealed to us that God had planned to make the Jews jealous through the non-Jews long ago: READ 10:19. Paul is quoting from Deuteronomy 32:21.

#### **The Blessings of the Jewish Messiah**

##### **Going Out to the Nations**

- Jesus Himself spoke of the fall of the majority of Israelites, and how it would make way for the Gospel to be spread among the non-Jews: READ Matthew 8:11,12; 21:43.<sup>2</sup>
- The early Church witnessed to this reality: READ Acts 13:44-48; 18:1,4-6; 28:23-29.<sup>3</sup>
- Even inside the early Church, the Jews who first accepted Jesus as the Messiah (Christ) resisted the proclamation of the Gospel among the Gentiles (non-Jews). When the Gentiles began coming to faith in Christ, the Jews wanted to add the Old Testament requirements to them to hinder their salvation (Acts 15)!

### **Completing the Number of the Saved (11:12)**

11:12 *Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!*

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<sup>2</sup> Jesus is speaking of the “*Kingdom*” being taken away from the Old Testament nation of Israel and given to the New Testament people Israel (Jews and non-Jews who have faith in Jesus).

<sup>3</sup> By the way, this is where the book of Acts ends – with Paul proclaiming the Gospel in Rome and the Lord granting new converts to Christ from among the Jews and Gentiles. This is followed immediately by Paul’s letter to the Romans in the order of the New Testament. This providential ordering was purposeful.

### The World

- “The world” here is parallel to “the Gentiles,” that is, by “the world,” Paul means non-Jews.
- This is the mercy of God to save from out of “the world” through His Son: READ John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:18,19; 1 John 2:1,2.

### True Riches

- God’s salvation through His Son is the truest wealth – while the treasures of this world are temporary (as is our enjoyment of them), what He gives through Jesus is infinitely and eternally better.
- READ 10:12,13. Paul frequently speaks of the “riches” we have in Christ (Romans 2:4; 9:23; 11:33; Ephesians 1:7,8,18,19; 2:4-7; 3:8-12; Philippians 4:19; Colossians 1:25-27; 2:1-3; see also Hebrews 11:26). Is Christ your greater “riches”? How is that seen in your thoughts, your desires, your priorities, your decisions? Pray that God changes your understanding of wealth from a worldly one to a Christ-centered one.

### Fullness

- When Jews join non-Jews in salvation by faith in Jesus, the richness of our salvation only increases – this is true for us whenever anyone different than us (using worldly standards) becomes our brother and sister in Christ.

### Paul’s Use of Rejection for Salvation (11:13,14)

<sup>11:13</sup>But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, <sup>11:14</sup>if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them.

- Paul spoke to the Jews in the Roman Church in 2:15; 7:1. Now he speaks to the non-Jews in the Roman Church.

### Mission to the Inhabitants of the Ends of the World

- Paul desires to see the Gospel spread to the ends of the earth (1:5; 16:26). Is this your desire?

### Those Who Are My Flesh: Ethnic Israel

- “...my fellow countrymen” is literally, “those who are my flesh.” Compare with 9:3, or “Israel according to the flesh” (1 Corinthians 10:18). “It is not the children of the flesh who are children of God” (Romans 9:8) – we are only saved by faith in Jesus!
- Paul’s “kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites,” are “accursed, separated from Christ” because of their unbelief in the Gospel (9:3,4). “They have a zeal for God” (10:2), but are lost because they have not been reconciled to God through faith in Jesus.
- If all the Jews had received Jesus as the promised Messiah (Christ), they might have concluded that the Gospel was only for the Jewish people – it would have just been a revival inside Judaism, and the world would have remained estranged from God.

### Making Gospel-Believers Winsome

- Sometimes people speak of making the Gospel “winsome,” that is, sharing the Gospel in such a way as to make it sound as appealing as possible.
- **Instead of trying to make the Gospel “winsome,” we should be trying to make ourselves as Gospel-believers as winsome as possible. Our lives should exude the benefits of salvation in Jesus Christ “to provoke to jealousy” those who are unbelievers!**

### Alive (11:15)!

<sup>11:15</sup>For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

- Unbelief is a dead life (Ephesians 2:1,5).
- “...life from the dead...” The closest equivalent to this phrase in the N.T. is found in 6:13. READ 6:1-14. Do you see your life as a baptized believer as a resurrected life? Do you want others to share in this life?