

Grafted into the Promise

Rom 11:11-24

SS Lesson for 08/21/2016

Devotional Scripture: John 15:1-8

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Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

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From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson teaches how Gentiles have been **Grafted into the Promise**. The **study's aim** is to understand that God sovereignly blesses people of faith and disciplines those who should believe but do not. The **study's application** is to understand that we must become people of consistent and living faith to be in the place of blessing.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Rom 11:22

Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

11:11-12. Paul asked still another question he anticipated from his readers. **Did they stumble** (cf. 9:32) **so as to fall beyond recovery?** Literally, the Greek says simply, "Did they stumble so that they fell?" But the tense of the verb "fell" and its contrast with the verb translated "stumble" imply the idea of falling beyond recovery. Once again the question in Greek was worded to elicit a negative answer, and for the 10th and last time in Romans, Paul responded, **Not at all!** (*mē genoito*; cf. 3:4, 6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1) "They" refers to "the others" (v. 7), the majority of the people of Israel, excluding the "remnant chosen by grace" (v. 5). Israel experienced not a permanent fall, but a stumbling. It served at least two divine purposes: (a) to offer **salvation... to the Gentiles**, and (b) **to make Israel envious** (lit., "to the provoking of them to jealousy"; cf. Deut. 32:21). Twice already in his ministry Paul had turned away from unbelieving Jews to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46; 18:6), and he would do so at least once more in Rome (Acts 28:25-28). In so doing he was fulfilling these purposes of God. But Paul was convinced that Israel's **transgression** (*paraptōma*, "false step," which seems to fit with "stumble"; cf. *paraptōma*, trans. "trespass" in Rom. 5:17-18, 20) was temporary. So he looked beyond its immediate results (**riches for the world and... riches for the Gentiles**) to the possibility of its removal (**how much greater riches will their fullness bring!**). "World" here means mankind, not the physical world (cf. "world" in 11:15). Certainly the world has been enriched spiritually because of so many Gentiles coming to Christ (cf. comments on "reconciliation" in v. 15). But even greater riches will be enjoyed by Gentiles after the conversion of Israel at the Lord's return (cf. v. 26). Israel's "fullness" suggests a large-scale conversion (cf. "full number [lit., 'fullness'] of the Gentiles," v. 25).

11:13-15. Paul then singled out a part of the Christian community at Rome, saying, **I am talking to you Gentiles**. Though writing, Paul used terms referring to oral communication, a fact with implications for the inspiration of the Scriptures. Paul then affirmed his special position as **the apostle to the Gentiles** (cf. Acts 9:15; Gal. 1:16; 2:7-8; Eph. 3:8), and declared, **I make much of** (lit., "I glorify" or "I magnify") **my ministry**. Part of Paul's purpose for magnifying his service to the Gentiles was to provoke to jealousy his fellow Jews (Rom. 11:11), resulting in the salvation **of some of them** (cf. 9:1-4; 10:1). Any such Jews won to Christ would be part of the "remnant chosen by grace." Then Paul reminded his Gentiles readers that Israel's **rejection** meant **the reconciliation of the world** in the purpose of God. Because Israel rejected Christ, the gospel was taken to these Gentiles. In Scripture reconciliation is a work of God in the death of Christ which does not *actually* restore an individual to fellowship with God but provides the basis for him to be restored to fellowship (cf. 2 Cor. 5:18-20). This statement serves to explain the meaning of the

phrases “riches for the world” and “riches for the Gentiles” in Romans 11:12. (When a person comes to Christ by faith God’s work of reconciliation is appropriated to him and he then has fellowship with God and the spiritual enmity is removed.) Because Paul was convinced that Israel’s stumbling is temporary, he asked, **What will their acceptance be but life from the dead?** (lit., “out from dead ones”) This question explains the clause, “How much greater riches will their fullness bring” (v. 12). Israel’s “acceptance” of Christ is related to “the first resurrection” (Rev. 20:4-6), the resurrection of life (John 5:29, KJV). The first resurrection includes dead saints at the Rapture (1 Thes. 4:13-18), martyred Great Tribulation saints raised at Christ’s return (Rev. 20:4, 5b), and believing Old Testament saints (Dan. 12:1-2). The second resurrection will include all the wicked dead to be judged at the great white throne judgment (Rev. 20:5a, 12-13). The teaching that there will be one general resurrection of all humanity at one time fails to take these distinctions into account.

11:16. Paul was convinced that Israel’s stumbling is temporary rather than permanent and that the nation will be restored as God’s people. With two illustrations Paul showed why he believed this. His first illustration was taken from God’s instructions to Israel to take “a cake from the first of [their] ground meal and present it as an offering” (Num. 15:20) after they entered the land of Canaan and reaped their first wheat harvest. This offering was to be repeated each year at their harvests. The cake made from the first ground meal of the wheat harvest was sanctified or made holy by being offered to God. As Paul explained, **If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits** (lit., “If the firstfruits”) **is holy, then the whole batch is holy** (lit., “the lump is also”). Paul’s second illustration was that of a tree: **If the root is holy, so are the branches.** In both illustrations the principle is the same: what is considered first contributes its character to what is related to it. With a tree, the root obviously comes first and contributes the nature of that type of tree to the branches that come later. With the cake presented to the Lord, the flour for the cake is taken from the ground meal, but that cake is formed and baked first and presented as a firstfruit. Since it is set apart to the Lord first, it sanctifies the whole harvest. The firstfruits and the root represent the patriarchs of Israel or Abraham personally, and the lump and the branches represent the people of Israel. As a result Israel is set apart (holy) to God, and her “stumbling” (rejection of Christ) must therefore be temporary.

11:17-21. In the apostolic generation God put aside as a whole the people of Israel, an action Paul described as one in which **some of the branches have been broken off.** The apostle then spoke directly to Gentile Christians: **And you** (sing.), **though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root** (lit., “have become a co-partner of the root of the fatness of the olive”). To be so blessed by God and His grace, however, is no reason to **boast**, which Paul warned against. Since they were like “a wild olive shoot” grafted to a regular cultivated olive tree, they were indebted to Israel, not Israel to them. “Salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22). Normally a branch of a cultivated olive tree is grafted into a wild olive tree, the opposite of what Paul spoke of here. But he knew that grafting the wild into the cultivated was not the norm (though it was done), for later he said it was “contrary to nature” (Rom. 11:24). To reinforce his warning Paul declared, **You do not support the root, but the root supports you.** The root of the tree is the source of life and nourishment to all the branches, and Abraham is “the father of all who believe” (4:11-12, 16-17). So Gentile believers are linked to Abraham; in one sense they owe their salvation to him, not vice versa. The apostle anticipated the rebuttal a Gentile believer might make: **Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.** Though that was not the real reason the branches were broken off, Paul accepted the statement for the sake of argument. Then he pointed out that the real reason the branches were broken off was Israel’s **unbelief** and that any Gentile as a grafted-in branch stands (cf. 5:2) **by faith.** Therefore Paul warned Gentile Christians individually again, **Do not be arrogant** (lit., “Do not think high” of yourself; cf. 12:16) **but be afraid,** have a proper fear of God. Paul reminded them, **For if God did not spare the natural branches, Israel, He will not spare you either.** In Greek this is a first-class condition in which the conditional statement beginning with “if” is assumed to be true. As clearly stated in the previous verses, this speaks of Israel’s “fall” (11:11), “loss” (v. 12), and “rejection” (v. 15), for “the branches have been broken off” (v. 17) “because of unbelief” (v. 20). This section (vv. 11-21) explains the righteousness of God’s sovereign choice. If God is righteous in temporarily putting aside Israel as a whole for unbelief, He certainly could put aside the Gentiles for boasting and haughtiness.

11:22-24. In these verses Paul summarized his whole discussion of God’s sovereign choice in temporarily putting Israel aside corporately and proclaiming righteousness by faith to all mankind. **Consider** (*ide*, “see, behold”) **therefore the kindness** (*chrēstotēta*, “benevolence in action”; also used of God in 2:4; Eph. 2:7; Titus 3:4) **and sternness of God.** “Sternness” translates *apotomian*, used only here in the New Testament (cf. the adverb *apotomōs* in 2 Cor. 13:10 [“be harsh”] and Titus 1:13 [“sharply”]). God’s sovereign choice involved severity toward the Jews **who stumbled (fell)**; cf. Rom. 11:11) in unbelief and were hardened (v. 25), but that same decision displayed the goodness of God toward individual Gentiles. God’s continuing

His goodness to the Gentiles depends on their continuing **in His kindness**. If Gentiles do not continue in God's kindness, they **also will be cut off**. This does not suggest that a Christian can lose his salvation; it refers to Gentiles as a whole (suggested by the sing. **you**) turning from the gospel much as Israel as a nation had done. Conversely for the people of Israel, **if they do not persist** (lit., "continue") **in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again**. At issue is not God's ability but God's decision. God sovereignly chose to put Israel aside corporately because of unbelief and to extend righteousness by faith to everyone. This demonstrates His decision to graft Gentiles into the spiritual stock of Abraham (cf. 4:12, 16-17; Gal. 3:14). Obviously, therefore, **if** the unbelief which caused Israel's rejection by God is removed, God is able and will graft the people of Israel (**the natural branches**) back into the spiritual stock to which they belong (**their own olive tree**). After all, as Paul wrote earlier, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom. 10:13). The "olive tree" is not the church; it is the spiritual stock of Abraham. Believing Gentiles are included in that sphere of blessing so that in the Church Age both Jews and Gentiles are in Christ's body (Eph. 2:11-22; 3:6). Yet someday Israel as a whole will turn to Christ (as Paul discussed in Rom. 11:25-27). This passage does not teach that the national promises to Israel have been abrogated and are now being fulfilled by the church. This idea, taught by amillenarians, is foreign to Paul's point, for he said Israel's fall is temporary. While believing Gentiles share in the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:3b) as Abraham's spiritual children (Gal. 3:8-9), they do not permanently replace Israel as the heirs of God's promises (Gen. 12:2-3; 15:18-21; 17:19-21; 22:15-18).

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

The larger context of this text concerns God's sovereign plan for His Old Testament people Israel as the New Testament era unfolds. Paul made several points of explanation concerning Israel but not without admonishing Gentiles as well. In this explanation we see both the "goodness and severity of God." The text provides an explanation, an illustration, and a warning. The explanation relates to the announcement of both God's severity and His goodness. The severity of God, His judgment, fell on much of Israel because of their unbelief. The Lord Jesus presented Himself to His people, yet many did not receive Him. Israel stumbled and fell (cf. Rom. 11:11). Unbelief is a very dangerous thing. It is, of course, the absence of faith, the one thing necessary to be saved and to establish an eternal relationship with God. Given the example of many in Israel, we should all fear unbelief. The goodness of God, on the other hand, is seen in this. Through Israel's unbelief, the door was opened wider to the Gentiles so that all the nations might have free access to the gospel (cf. Rom. 11:15). The way of life is wide open to all humanity. But we are not to lose sight of the fact that saving faith is required. We must trust in the Lord Jesus Christ in order to be saved. A striking illustration of God's gracious plan is the picture of the branch being grafted into the olive tree (Rom. 11:17). Gentiles, who were not at first a part of this olive tree, can now easily be grafted into the promise of salvation. And even those of Israel who end their unbelief are grafted in again for salvation (vs. 23). Israel is not hopelessly blocked in any way. The way of salvation is open to all, Jews and Gentiles, through saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Finally, there is a warning in the text. Paul stated that the goodness of God's salvation can be received but that it involves true faith. We must believe and "continue in his goodness," that is, be fully convinced of God's goodness in salvation. We must look to Him with true saving faith. Without this there is no hope, and we are cut off from the promise of salvation. We dare not regard this matter casually. God is pleased to save anyone who leaves unbelief behind. God will graft them into the promise of salvation. All should realize, however, that the wonderfully wide offer of salvation should not be presumed on. Just because it is a wide and free offer of salvation does not mean we possess it automatically. Each person must diligently seek the gift of salvation and place total faith and trust in the Lord Jesus. We cannot presume on God's goodness, and we must also fear His severity. So this text is a wonderful yet sobering word. The way of salvation is wide open to all who will seek it. Yet the severity and judgment of God will fall on those who do not properly esteem it and thus fail to seek it. They will be cut off and will fail to receive the promise of salvation.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Humans have been experimenting with ways to improve cultivated food production for thousands of years. Ancient farmers discovered that trees had the potential of providing many nutritious fruits and nuts, but multiplying trees through seeds was a slow and unpredictable process. Those farmers discovered that better results could be obtained by taking cuttings from a healthy tree and allowing these cuttings to produce roots. These miniature trees could then be planted in soil and would grow quickly. Around 1000 BC, farmers learned another way to use these cuttings. They discovered that a branch from one tree could be inserted into a cut on

another tree, and this foreign branch would become part of the new tree. This allowed for the use of a mature root and trunk system in production of fruit different from the “host” tree. We can only imagine the wonder this must have produced among ancient farmers, to have a tree with red apples on some branches and golden apples on others! This method, known as grafting, is an important part of orchard science today. Grafting is now done with fruit trees, with ornamental flowers such as roses, and with plants such as tomatoes. The process is similar in all cases: a healthy branch is joined to another plant, and the result is production that the host plant was incapable of previously. Our lesson today relies on the awareness of grafting as a common practice among those who cultivated orchards. One of the most important and valued trees of Paul’s world was the olive tree. The readers of the book of Romans were familiar with orchards of olive trees in the countryside as well as the remarkable and valuable practice of grafting. Paul used these common sights and experiences to illustrate an important truth.

In Romans 9, the apostle Paul began to discuss a situation that distressed him greatly: the unbelief of his fellow Jews. In last week’s lesson we saw him recap the scriptural history of Israel to demonstrate that God controlled the nation’s future. While we may not understand why God chooses certain nations and people as his instruments (Isaiah 7:18-20; etc.), Paul warned against considering God to be unjust in those decisions (Romans 9:14). In the text just preceding that of today’s lesson, Paul asked and answered two questions concerning Israel. First, “Did God reject his people?” No, Paul said, that cannot possibly be true (Romans 11:1). He supported his conclusion with a theme common in the Old Testament prophets: that God had preserved a “remnant” of faithful Israelites (Romans 11:5; compare Isaiah 10:21). Paul considered himself to be part of that remnant. Second, why didn’t more Jews believe in Jesus, as Paul did? His answer was that God had “hardened” many of the people of Israel in a way that precluded belief (Romans 11:7, 8). The apostle pointed out that this was nothing new for the people of Israel, and he quoted Scriptures to show this historical pattern of unbelief (a mixing of Deuteronomy 29:4; Psalm 69:22, 23; and Isaiah 29:10).

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Grafting Allowed by Israel's Jealous Rejection (Rom 11:11-14)

11 I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles.

12 Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!

13 For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry,

14 if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them.

To provide salvation of the world (11-12)

Salvation of the world that comes from the sanctification (Acts 26:16-18)

16 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. 17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them 18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

Salvation of the world for those who believe (Rom 1:16)

16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

Salvation of the world for those baptized in Jesus (Gal 3:26-29)

26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Salvation of the world through the gospel (Eph 3:6)

6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

Salvation of the world because God wants everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9)

9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Salvation of the world because God wants all men to be saved (1 Tim 2:1-4)

2 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 3 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Salvation of the world because God's grace brings salvation before all men (Titus 2:11)

11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

To provide the return of the Jews (13-14)

Returning to God brings restoral (Deut 30:2-3)

2 and when you and your children return to the Lord your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, 3 then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you.

Returning to God brings answered prayers, mercy and forgiveness from God (1 Kings 8:47-50)

47 and if they have a change of heart in the land where they are held captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their conquerors and say, 'We have sinned, we have done wrong, we have acted wickedly'; 48 and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul in the land of their enemies who took them captive, and pray to you toward the land you gave their fathers, toward the city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name; 49 then from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause. 50 And forgive your people, who have sinned against you; forgive all the offenses they have committed against you, and cause their conquerors to show them mercy;

Returning to God brings healing (2 Chron 7:14)

14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Returning to God will result in growth in knowing God (Jer 24:7)

7 I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart.

Returning to God could bring blessings from Him (Joel 2:13-14)

13 Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. 14 Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing — grain offerings and drink offerings for the Lord your God.

Returning to God brings mercy and prosperity (Prov 28:13)

13 He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

Grafting to Partake of the Divine Source (Rom 11:15-21)

15 For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?
16 For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.
17 And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree,
18 do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.
19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in."
20 Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear.
21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either.

Partakers of reconciliation (15-16)

Reconciliation through justification (Rom 5:1-2)

5 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Reconciliation through Jesus' death (Rom 5:10)

10 For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Reconciliation that brings peace (Eph 2:14-16)

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

Reconciliation through Jesus' blood (Col 1:19-22)

19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. 21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. 22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation

Reconciliation through forgiveness of sins (Heb 2:17)

17 For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

Partakers of God's sustainment (17-18)

God sustains by upholding those who fall (Ps 37:23-24)

23 If the Lord delights in a man's way, he makes his steps firm; 24 though he stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand.

God sustains from birth (Ps 71:6)

6 From birth I have relied on you; you brought me forth from my mother's womb. I will ever praise you.

God sustains through a willing spirit (Ps 51:12)

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

God sustains because He will never forsake His own (Ps 55:22)

22 Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.

God sustains because He promised to do so (Ps 119:116)

116 Sustain me according to your promise, and I will live; do not let my hopes be dashed.

God sustains because He always finishes what He starts (Phil 1:6)

6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Partakers through faith (19-21)

Faith in the power of God (John 11:14-15)

14 So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, 15 and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

Faith in the word of God (John 20:30-31)

30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Faith in God's indwelling presence (Exod 4:4-5)

4 Then the Lord said to him, "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail." So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand. 5 "This," said the Lord, "is so that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers — the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob — has appeared to you."

Faith in Jesus as the Son of God (John 19:34-35)

34 Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. 35 The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe.

Grafting Through the Power of God (Rom 11:22-24)

22 Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.

23 And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

24 For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

Power motivated by goodness (22)

Goodness that endures forever (Ps 107:1)

107 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.

Goodness because He is faithful to His promises (Ps 25:8-10)

8 Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways. 9 He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. 10 All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful for those who keep the demands of his covenant.

Goodness because He is longsuffering (Exodus 34:6)

6 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness,

Goodness because He is forgiving (Ps 86:5)

5 You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you.

Goodness because He does good (Ps 119:68)

68 You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees.

Power to fulfill promises (23-24)

Promises that are always "YES" in Jesus (2 Cor 1:20)

20 For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.

Promises made with the Divine power (2 Peter 1:3-4)

3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Promises that are only being completely satisfied in the present age (Heb 11:13-16)

13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. 14 People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. 15 If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 Instead, they were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

Promises of an eternal life (1 John 2:24-25)

24 See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. 25 And this is what he promised us — even eternal life.

God is faithful to His promises (Heb 10:23)

23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

Israel's Rejection, Even Now, Is Not Total (11:1-10)

Romans 9 and 10 have explained to us why many Jews have failed to accept Jesus Christ as their Messiah. God has not chosen them, and they have not chosen Him. This we can live with. God had never purposed or promised to save every individual offspring of Abraham. But God had made promises concerning the nation Israel as a whole. What of these promises? Were they not to be honored? Were God's dealings with the nation Israel throughout their history an exercise in futility? Are we to conclude, as some theologians teach, that God has no program for Israel as a nation, distinct from the church? This is the question of verse 1: "I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He?"

The positive side of the answer to this question is recorded in verses 1-6. In verses 1-4 we are given three reasons why God has not forsaken Israel as a nation.

The Apostle Paul is a believing Jew (v. 1). Paul replies in astonishment, "May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin" (Romans 11:1b). As a devout Jew, Paul could never delight in such a conclusion. Indeed, Paul himself was a forceful argument against any claim that God had rejected the nation Israel. Paul was a believing Jew.⁶⁷ More than this, Paul in his pre-conversion days could make Bonnie and Clyde look like Jack and Jill. Paul had adamantly rejected the gospel and was guilty not only of persecution, but of shedding the blood of innocent saints. Paul could refer to himself in 1 Timothy 1:15 as 'chief of sinners.' If a rebel like Paul could be made to do a spiritual about-face, surely there is hope for Israel.

Israel has hope for a bright future because God foreordained this nation to privileges and blessings which cannot be revoked (v. 2). “God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew” (Romans 11:2a). This foreknowledge is that of God’s free choice in eternity past to create a nation on which He would bestow special privileges. It should be evident in this context that God’s foreknowledge is here far more than ‘knowledge of,’ but rather ‘prior choice of.’ Israel can be assured of future blessing because of God’s calling, and His calling and election are ‘irrevocable’ (verse 29).

Israel’s present situation can be likened to that in Elijah’s day (vv. 2b-6). Does it seem as though all Israel has forsaken God? So it seemed in the days of Elijah. Elijah was plagued by the ‘Lone Ranger Syndrome’: I alone am left. Paul might be tempted in this same direction, but for a reminder of what God told Elijah, “You may think you’re the Lone Ranger, but I have kept for Myself a faithful remnant of 7,000 who have not followed after Baal” (Romans 11:4, my paraphrase). God has always kindled the fires of Israel’s hope by maintaining a faithful remnant, through whom He can fulfill His promises. This is a remnant according to divine election (verse 5) and not according to works, for works and grace are incompatible with each other (verse 6).

And what of the rest? (vv. 7-10). Summing up the matter in verses 7-10, Paul says that Israel failed to arrive at that for which they sought. Those who were chosen obtained salvation, and the rest were hardened. This hardening was nothing new and unusual, but fully in keeping with the teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures.

How can Israel fail to see what is so obvious? Simple; God has judicially blinded them, just as Isaiah described of his own day (verse 8). The same was true in Paul’s time, and, for that matter, in ours as well. Of this stumbling, David also wrote in the Psalms (verses 9 and 10). The Israelites had always been a stiff-necked and rebellious people (cf. Acts 7:51). After years of rebellion, God judicially blinded them so that it was impossible to turn and believe in Christ as their Messiah. No man, unaided by the Holy Spirit, can see God, but God has determined for the present to convert only a handful of the Jews.

Israel’s Rejection Is Not Permanent (11:11-32)

We can find consolation in the fact of a small remnant of believing Jews who have come to faith in Christ, but is there no hope for the nation as a whole? Is Israel’s ailment terminal? “I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall did they?” (Romans 11:11a) At long last with this question the whole counsel of God is placed before our eyes so far as the hardening of the Jews and the salvation of the Gentiles is concerned. In verses 11-15 we see the two-fold purpose of God as it relates to Jewish unbelief and Gentile conversion. In verses 16-24, we Gentiles are given a word of warning against pride and arrogance. Verses 25-32 contain the clearest possible promise of Israel’s national restoration.

Israel’s loss is the Gentile’s gain (vv. 11-15). The hardening of Israel was not a capricious act on God’s part. From eternity past, it was the will of God that through the disobedience and unbelief of Israel the Gentiles would come to faith in God. “But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles ...” (Romans 11:11b).

But God’s purpose extends beyond Gentile conversion. The conversion of Gentiles is a back-handed blessing for the Jews in that it is intended to provoke them to jealousy. This was something the Jews of Paul’s day did not yet appreciate. They violently resisted Paul’s offering of the gospel to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 22:21, 22). But to Paul preaching to the Gentiles had a double intent. First of all it resulted in the salvation of Gentiles. Second, it furthered God’s purpose of provoking the Jews to jealousy. In this way, the offering of the gospel to Gentiles was good for both Gentiles and Jews alike.

Presently, the Gentiles have much to gain by Israel’s unbelief. Ultimately, Israel has much to gain by Gentile belief. There is no need, however, for the Gentiles to dread the time when God once again restores the nation Israel to a place of faith, blessing and prominence. Paul’s argument in verses 12 and 15 is from the lesser to the greater. God had promised Abram that He would bless the entire world through his offspring (Genesis 12:3). True, God would bless Israel, but He would also bless the world through Israel. God blessed the Gentiles with salvation through the unbelief of the Jews. If the Gentiles could be blessed by the Jews due to their unbelief, imagine the blessing that will come through their faith and obedience! Surely, the Gentiles should not dread the day of God’s blessing on Israel, but should await it with eager anticipation.

A lesson to be learned by the Gentiles: A word of warning (vv. 16-24). Throughout verses 16-24, there is clearly implied a hope for the national restoration of Israel. The hardening of Israel and the salvation of the Gentiles is compared to the process of grafting a branch into the trunk of a tree. Normally, grafting is done to make a useless tree productive. An old tree that fails to produce is pruned back so that the vitality of the stock is

not wasted on unproductive limbs. Then a hearty, productive limb is grafted into the stock to produce good fruit. I have watched my father do this with useless apple trees, and I have eaten the excellent apples that have been produced by the grafted limbs.

But it is easy to see that this is not at all what Paul is describing. The stock of the tree is Israel; not faithless unbelieving Jews, but the patriarchs to whom God had made His promises, men who had trusted in God. These holy men assured the future of Israel as a holy nation (verse 16). So the tree is not itself unfruitful. The unfruitful branches, which represent unbelieving Jews, have been pruned away. Those branches which are grafted into the stock represent the Gentiles. But rather than being highly desirable and highly productive branches they are the branches of a wild olive tree (verse 24).

Do you see the difference between the normal grafting process and that which God has performed with His rich olive tree (the nation Israel) and the undesirable Gentile branches? God has done that which is highly unnatural. Rather than grafting good branches into a worthless stock, He has grafted worthless branches into a good stock.

It is precisely here that we can see Paul's point. For in this analogy we find a word of encouragement and hope for the Jews, and a word of warning for the Gentiles. If God can graft wild olive branches into a cultivated olive tree, a process which is unnatural, surely He can much more easily graft in cultivated branches into a cultivated tree. If God can include Gentiles in the blessings originally promised to the Jews, how much more so can He restore Jews to these blessings? Here, then, is the word of hope for the Jews.

But on the other hand, there is a word of warning for the Gentiles. Just as the Jews became proud and arrogant about the blessings God had given them as a nation, so the Gentiles might foster such a spirit of arrogance. Such arrogance is based upon ignorance of the facts. The root sustains the branch, and not the branch the root (verse 18). The Gentiles are, so to speak, living off of the blessings of Israel as a kind of parasite, and there is no room for pride here. The limbs become a part of the tree by faith and dependence upon the stock. There is no basis for boasting, for our life and blessings come from God and not by works.

We must remember also that it was this very Jewish attitude of pride and arrogance toward their privileges which caused their severance from God's blessing. If God removed the natural branches for such pride, surely He will not tolerate it in His grafted branches. They, too, can be removed. The blessing of God on the Gentiles should lead us to grateful praise and humility. The fall of Israel should prompt us to sorrow and godly fear.

So there is in this grafting analogy a word of hope for the Jews and a word of warning for the Gentiles. God deals with both on the same basis. Men are grafted in on the basis of faith and are removed on the basis of rebellion, sin and unbelief.

Full assurance of Israel's recovery (vv. 25-32). Israel's full and final recovery has surely been implied in the preceding verses, but lest there be any doubt that God is going to restore Israel to a place of prominence and blessing in fulfillment of His covenants with the patriarchs, the final recovery of Israel is clearly established in verses 25-32. "For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in" (Romans 11:25).

The failure of the nation Israel at present is only partial, for there is a faithful remnant of Jewish saints. But more than this, the failure of Israel is only temporary, for when the fulness of the Gentiles has come in God will once again cause His wayward nation to return to Him. He will remove their sins and will restore them to privileges and blessing (verses 26, 27).

The expression, 'until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in' is a difficult one which has created much discussion by the commentators. Although the precise meaning of the expression may be in doubt, the argument of Paul is crystal clear. God has decreed a dispensation in which the Jews are hardened and the blessings of the Jews are being poured out on the Gentiles. The Gentiles are having their day of salvation and blessing due to Israel's unbelief. But the day of the Gentile will come to an end and Israel's day is soon coming. The fulness of the Gentiles refers to that time when the day of the Gentiles ends and the restoration of Israel begins.

When Paul writes in verse 26 that "all Israel will be saved," he does not mean that every individual Israelite will be saved, but that the nation in general will turn to God in faith and obedience. Although the Jews are at present the 'enemies of the gospel,' their hope lies in the fact that by virtue of their national election to prominence and blessing, they are 'the beloved of God for the sake of the fathers.' Israel's national future is not conditioned by their faithfulness to God but is based upon God's faithfulness to His covenants made with their forefathers. "From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Romans 11:28, 29).

Here is the key to Israel's future as a nation; it is God's faithfulness to His Word, "for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Romans 11:29).

God elected a nation to be the recipients of certain privileges and blessings through the offspring of Abraham. This elect nation was to bring blessing to all nations. The specific promises and blessings were stated and reiterated to the patriarchs. The promise of Israel's hardening, chastening, and future restoration was made through the prophets. Israel's future is as certain as the reliability of God, and His promises are irrevocable. There is no greater security than this!

Look back with me for a moment to review what God is doing by means of Israel's hardening. He is giving the Gentiles the opportunity to cash in on the blessing of salvation and on the riches of God's blessings to Israel. By the turning of the Gentiles to Christ, God is wooing unfaithful Israel to Himself. And in the case of both the Jews and the Gentiles, He has brought both to disobedience in order to bestow mercy upon them (verses 31 and 32)

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/there-future-israel-romans-11>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

A controversial topic in some churches concerns the position of Jewish people today in relation to the will of God. For some Christians, this question centers on the modern state of Israel, established in 1948 in historic territory in Palestine. Some Christians teach that this nation's existence is an expression of God's will, a sign that he has not forgotten Israel. Others wonder about the Jews in their own cities, questioning whether faithful keeping of Torah and the old covenant is still a valid way to serve God and find his favor. Various interpretations of Romans 11:26 ("all Israel will be saved") stoke the flames of controversy. We must not allow the importance of that topic—and it is indeed important—to overshadow what Paul is saying to his readers about the basis of their faith and their attitude toward it. That basis is faith in Jesus, and the proper attitude is fear in the sense of reverential awe.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

1. Man's disobedience cannot interfere with God's plans or His promises (Rom. 11:11-12)
2. Men sometimes will only realize the value of what God has for them when they see others enjoying those blessings (vss. 13-15)
3. The greatest gift we have for future generations is a legacy of holiness and faith in God (vs. 16)
4. Believers have no right to feel superior to those who have not yet come to faith (vss. 17-18)
5. Believers cannot afford to allow spiritual pride to gain a foothold within (vss. 19-21)
6. God is our merciful Father, but He strictly judges sin (vss. 22-24)