

Study of Romans – Romans 11:1-36 Bellevue Church of Christ – Spring 2017

Paul returns to the fundamental question regarding the "problem" introduced in chapter 9.

Who are the ones that God "foreknew?"
-Act 2:23
-Rom 3:21; 8:28-30
-Eph 1:3-14
-1Pe 1:18-21

Who are "His People?"
-Gen 12:1-3
-Rom 4:13-17; 9:6-8
-Gal 3:7,27-29; 4:28

¹I ask, then, has God rejected his people? **By no means!** For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. < Phil 3:4-6

I Kings 19:10,14 >

I Kings 19:18 >

Why does Paul use himself and Elijah as proof that God has not rejected His people?

²God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel?

³"Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life."

⁴But what is God's reply to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

⁵So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.

"His People" "Remnant" "Elect"

Spiritual Israel

Hardened...

-No suggestion of direct intervention
-God simply takes his hands off and lets willful rejection of Him produce its ugly results in human life
-Rom 1:21-32
-1Co 5:1-5
-1Ti 1:18-20

⁶But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

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

⁸as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day." < Isa 29:10

Stumbling Block
= The Christ
Rom 9:32-33
1Pe 2:3-8

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

¹⁰let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever." < Ps 69:22-23

¹¹So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? **By no means!** Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.

¹²Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

i.e. to fall away with no hope of returning

¹³Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry

¹⁴in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them.

What is Paul's hope in bringing the gospel to the Gentiles?

¹⁵For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?

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

¹⁷But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree,

¹⁸do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you.

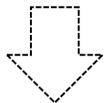
- *Who is the root?
- *Who are the natural branches?
- *Who are the grafted branches?

If the rejection by Physical Israel means riches to the world and Gentiles, how much more will the full inclusion of Spiritual Israel mean to the world and the Gentiles!

Apostle to the Gentiles
-Acts 9:15
-Gal 2:7

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Rom 9:18 - So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.



Unbelief = Hardening, Severity, Broken Off

Faith = Mercy, Kindness, Grafted

Mystery (mysterion) as used in the NT does not mean "enigma," but the activity of God in salvation history made known to his people by revelation.

-Ro 16:25
 -1Co 4:1
 -Eph 1:9; 6:19
 -Col 1:26; 2:2

"Beloved" - Because of the "Children of the Promise" (e.g. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc.) - They were the race of the Messiah! (Rom 9:8)

The Jews and Gentiles have switched places

Doxology = An expression of praise to God

¹⁹Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in."

²⁰That is true. They were **broken off because of their unbelief**, but you *stand fast through faith*. So do not become proud, but fear. < 1Co 10:12

²¹For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you.

²²Note then the **kindness** and the **severity** of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. *Otherwise you too will be cut off.*

²³And even they, **if they do not continue in their unbelief**, will be grafted in, for *God has the power to graft them in again.*

²⁴For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, *how much more* will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.

²⁵Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this **mystery**, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the *fullness of the Gentiles* has come in.

²⁶And in this way **all Israel will be saved**, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; **Jacob = Spiritual Israel**

²⁷"and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins." < Isa 59:20,21

²⁸As regards the gospel, they are **enemies** for your sake. But as regards election, they are **beloved** for the sake of their forefathers. **They = Physical Israel**

²⁹For the gifts and the calling of God are **irrevocable**.

³⁰For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience,

³¹so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy.

³²For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.

³³*Oh, 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 that he might be repaid?"

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

Why were some of the natural branches broken off?

What is the condition for being re-grafted?

"All Israel" =

Spiritual Israel

 Rom 2:25-29
 Rom 9:6-7
 Gal 3:7,27-29

The Jews were chosen as the race through which the Messiah would come. This was not revoked even though they repeatedly rejected God!

Rom 3:23 "...all have sinned..."

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Romans Chapter 11 - Questions for Discussion

Memory Verse:

Romans 11:33 (ESV)

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

Who are God's people? Who is the true Israel? Who are the people that God foreknew?
(vv. 1-6, 9:6)

What does Paul offer as proof that God did not reject His people? (vv. 1-6, I Kings 19:10)

Explain the difference between physical Israel and God's spiritual Israel. Who are the "elect?"
Who are the "others" that were hardened? What does it mean that they were hardened?
(vv. 7-10; Isa 29:10; Deut 29:4; Psa 69:22, 23)

How did physical Israel's transgressions facilitate the spread of the Gospel to the Gentiles?
(vv. 11-12)

What is Paul's hope in bringing the Gospel to the Gentiles? (vv. 13-15)

Natural and Grafted Branches (vv. 16-24):

Who is the root? Who are the natural branches? Who are the grafted branches?

Why were some of the natural branches cut off? Why does Paul tell the grafted branches not to be arrogant? What are the conditions for being re-grafted?

What is the "mystery?" Is Paul saying that everyone in the nation of Israel will eventually be justified? Why or why not? (vv. 25-32)

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His People, Remnant, Elect

Genesis 12:1–3 (ESV)

¹ Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Romans 4:13–17 (ESV)

¹³ For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression. ¹⁶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷ as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

Romans 9:6–8 (ESV)

⁶ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷ and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” ⁸ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

Galatians 3:7 (ESV)

⁷ Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.

Galatians 3:27–29 (ESV)

²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.

Galatians 4:28 (ESV)

²⁸ Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.

1 Kings 19:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ He said, “I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.”

1 Kings 19:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ He said, “I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.”

1 Kings 19:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”

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Credentials of Paul

Philippians 3:4–6 (ESV)

⁴ though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Foreknowledge / Predestined

Acts 2:23 (ESV)

²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

Romans 3:21 (ESV)

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—

Romans 8:28–30 (ESV)

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Ephesians 1:3–14 (ESV)

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

1 Peter 1:18–21 (ESV)

¹⁸ knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. ²⁰ He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ²¹ who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

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Hardened

Romans 1:21–32 (ESV)

²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. ²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. ²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

1 Corinthians 5:1–5 (ESV)

¹ It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. ² And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. ³ For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. ⁴ When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, ⁵ you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

1 Timothy 1:18–20 (ESV)

¹⁸ This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, ¹⁹ holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, ²⁰ among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Isaiah 29:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ For the Lord has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes (the prophets), and covered your heads (the seers).

Stumbling Block

Romans 9:32–33 (ESV)

³² Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, ³³ as it is written, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

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1 Peter 2:3–8 (ESV)

³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. ⁴ As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵ you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” ⁷ So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” ⁸ and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

Psalm 69:22–23 (ESV)

²² Let their own table before them become a snare; and when they are at peace, let it become a trap. ²³ Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see, and make their loins tremble continually.

Apostle to the Gentiles

Acts 9:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.

Galatians 2:7 (ESV)

⁷ On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised

Conditions for Grafting

Romans 9:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

Don't Be Arrogant

1 Corinthians 10:12 (ESV)

¹² Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

Mystery

3696 μυστήριον (*mystērion*), ου (*ou*), τό (*to*): n.neu.; ≡ DBLAram 10661; Str 3466; TDNT 4.802—LN 28.77 **a secret**, a mystery (Mk 4:11; Ro 11:25; 16:25; 1Co 2:1; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51; Eph 1:9; 6:19; Col 1:26; 2:2; 2Th 2:7; 1Ti 3:9; Rev 17:5)¹

3466. μυστήριον *mustērion*; from μύστης *mustēs* (*one initiated*); from 3453; *a mystery or secret doctrine*:—mysteries(5), mystery(22).²

¹ Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

² Thomas, R. L. (1998). *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries : Updated edition*. Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.

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Romans 16:25 (ESV)

²⁵ Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages

1 Corinthians 4:1 (ESV)

¹ This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

Ephesians 1:9 (ESV)

⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ

Ephesians 6:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,

Colossians 1:26 (ESV)

²⁶ the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.

Colossians 2:2 (ESV)

² that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ,

All Israel

Isaiah 59:20–21 (ESV)

²⁰ "And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression," declares the Lord. ²¹ "And as for me, this is my covenant with them," says the Lord: "My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children's offspring," says the Lord, "from this time forth and forevermore."

Romans 2:25–29 (ESV)

²⁵ For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. ²⁶ So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? ²⁷ Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. ²⁸ For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹ But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

Romans 9:6–8 (ESV)

⁶ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷ and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." ⁸ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

Galatians 3:7 (ESV)

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⁷ Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.

Galatians 3:27–29 (ESV)

²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

All Have Sinned

Romans 3:23 (ESV)

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

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Appendix – Commentators on “All Israel” (vv. 25-29)

***A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles: Romans 11 – by David Lipscomb
-Edited, with additional notes, by J. W. Shepherd***

25 For I would not brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery,—A mystery was not something that could not be explained or understood, but something unrevealed and unknown. It is no longer a mystery after it had been explained by an inspired man. It was a mystery, or secret, that the hardness had come upon a part of the Jews until the gospel had been fully preached to the Gentiles.

lest ye be wise in your own conceits, - If they did not understand this, they might be wise in their own conceit to think that they had so commended themselves to God as to supplant the Jews in their favor.

that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in;—As to when "the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" is a difficult question to answer. So it receives different answers from different people. I think all agree that "the Gentiles" means that the gospel should be preached to all Gentiles, and that they would have opportunities equal to those the Jews had enjoyed. Whether they will have rejected these opportunities and privileges as the Jews had done is a question concerning which students differ. For a time I thought they would accept the truth, and that "the fulness" meant when they all came to accept Christ. I now think it probable that they will reject Christ as the Jews did. I have very little confidence in human interpretations of unfulfilled prophecy, because when I look at the fulfillment as given by God, it differs so from what I would have said it meant that I have no confidence in my own interpretations or those of others of what is unfulfilled.

26 and so all Israel shall be saved:—It cannot be true that "all Israel" here means the whole Jewish people. "Israel" seems here in the conclusion of the argument to be used in the restricted sense—to apply to those who believe in Jesus and walk in the footsteps of Abraham—for he had already said: "For they are not all Israel, that are of Israel: neither, because they are Abraham's seed, are they all children" ([9:6](#), [7](#).) "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." ([2:28](#), [29](#).) "Know therefore that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham." ([Gal. 3:7](#).) So "all Israel" here means all who believe in Jesus Christ, both Jews and Gentiles. The Jews, as a nation, were taken out of the way to open the way for the Gentiles to come in among the faithful branches of the Israelites; and so all believers, both Jews and Gentiles, which constitute the true Israel of God, will be saved. The unbelievers ceased to be counted as Israel. **even as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer; he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:**—"Jacob" cannot here mean the fleshly house of Israel, but the true Israel of God that believe in Christ. From these Jesus Christ, the deliverer, will turn away ungodliness.

27 and their is my covenant unto them, When I shall take away their sins.—This result, that all who would accept Christ should be delivered from sin, is the covenant that God made with them, and this covenant is completed with them when he takes away their sins.

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28 As touching the gospel, they are enemies for your sake:—"They" here and in the following verses seems to refer to the Jewish nation. They are enemies to the gospel that the Gentiles might be brought in.

but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sake.—It was in the persons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that the divine election of Israel was originally realized and through them that they are beloved. They stand in favor as the chosen people of God through whom Christ came. [This sentiment might well have been expressed in the words of Moses: "Only Jehovah had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all peoples, as at this day." ([Deut. 10:15.](#))]

29 For the gifts and the calling of God are not repented of. —God having called the family of Abraham and bestowed upon them the honor of producing the Messiah, never repented of such a calling so as to take it from them, notwithstanding their frequent sins and rebellions against him. This is said in explanation of his statement that they were beloved for the fathers' sake. [This verse does not contradict such passages as [Gen. 6:6](#); [Jer. 18:10](#); for, though God cannot change, many of his gifts are conditional on man's conduct; therefore, change in man is followed by a corresponding change in God's treatment of him. This change in God's action is practically the same to us as though God changed his purpose, and, therefore, is sometimes so described. The apparent contradiction arises from the imperfection of human thought and language. God's character is pledged to fulfill his promises; but each man's share in the fulfillment depends on his faith.]³

³ Lipscomb, David. Shepherd, J.W. "Gospel Advocate Commentaries - New Testament Commentary – A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles: Romans." Gospel Advocate Company, Nashville, TN, 1989

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Coffman's Commentaries on the Bible - Romans 11

Verses 25, 26, 27

For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, lest ye be wise in your own conceits, that hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved: even as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer; He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

This mystery ...

A mystery in the New Testament means something revealed, rather than something hidden, but implies that it had been hidden until revealed. The term is appropriate, however; because, even when God reveals a mystery, the knowledge of it still appears arcane or enigmatic, due to man's imperfect understanding. This is especially true with the mystery revealed here.

What is the mystery that Paul revealed? That Israel was hardened? No, for this had been open knowledge since the ministry of Christ. Was it that only part of Israel had been hardened? No, because the separation of the two Israels, the true Israel and the hardened Israel, had been in view for a whole generation. Was it that the hardening of Israel was scheduled to terminate? No, for that is not stated, either here or elsewhere in the word of God. So that is not the mystery.

What, then, is the mystery? It is that HARDENING HAS BEFALLEN ISRAEL UNTIL THE FULLNESS OF THE GENTILES BE COME IN. But 'hardening' (until that of Israel) had invariably meant the destruction and disappearance of the people hardened, as occurred with the ten northern tribes, and all the instances cited under Rom. 11:7 (which see). Paul here knocked down the conceit of the Gentiles by the declaration that God had spared hardened Israel! They would not be destroyed in the final sense at all, nor would they disappear. Their continuation upon the earth was here revealed to extend until the entire harvest of Gentile Christians was reaped; and, in the light of what is now historical truth, God here spared, or announced through Paul that he had spared, hardened Israel for a period of two millenniums (at least) upon the earth. In view of the shocking disappearance, due to judicial hardening and destruction, of the great Gentile nations of Sodom, Gomorrah, Tyre, Sidon, Assyria, Nineveh, and Babylon, the Gentile Christians (some of them) were anticipating the same fate of the hardened Israel, and were GLORYING IN IT. It is impossible to understand this chapter without focusing upon that problem of Gentile pride and conceit which dominates the thought in Romans and which was concisely stated in Rom. 11:25 as the reason for the revelation of the mystery: 'lest ye be wise in your own conceits.' Now, what was there in this revealed mystery to allay the conceit of Gentiles glowing against the Jews? It was the thundering fact that God had spared hardened Israel from the fate hitherto inseparable from the hardened; and Paul's phrasing of this announcement was equivalent to saying, 'The Jews will be here as long as any Gentiles are being saved.'

Furthermore, Paul brought dramatically to the spotlight in this that there was a fullness, or completion, in view for the Gentiles; even the saving of Gentiles was not to be thought of as something inevitable and eternally continuing. The Gentiles under God's favor would run their course, just like the Jews; and in their 'fullness' one must read the time when the Gentile position up stage center in God's favor will be no more, and for the very same reasons that removed Israel from that favor.

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Fullness ...

speaks of something else also. The fullness of Gentiles is not the whole of God's concern (Where art thou, conceited Gentile?). In the same breath, Paul said,

So all Israel shall be saved ...

Could this possibly have any reference to hardened Israel? The very fact of their being 'saved' identifies Israel here as the spiritual Israel. And what Paul was saying was that when the Gentile harvest had been reaped, that reaping, or fullness, is the means by which the determination of the whole body of the redeemed from earth shall at last be concluded. Thus, in that manner, God's precious harvest of the earth shall be concluded. Or, as Paul stated that very truth, 'So (in that manner) all Israel (the entire spiritual Israel of Jews and Gentiles and whomsoever) shall be saved. A final blow, a coup de maitre, to Gentile pride is in 'all Israel,' here said to be the Gentiles themselves who have been saved and brought into the spiritual Israel (!). They themselves are Jews (!), spiritual seed of Abraham. God could find no way of saving a Gentile, except by making him a Jew (!) (in Abraham through Christ). If such a thought as this could not kill Gentile pride, what could?

Until the fullness, etc. ...

This is sincerely thought by many to mean that the hardness will cease at whatever time is indicated by 'until'; and, in all fairness, the word could mean that, and often does, as, for example, when it was written that Joseph knew not his wife Mary 'until' she brought forth her firstborn son and laid him in the manger ([Matthew 1:25](#)). The problem lies in the utter lack of authority in any man to affirm that a particular meaning must be understood here. The other frequent meaning of 'until' leaves all thought of termination out of sight. R. L. Whiteside called attention to this, thus:

'And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month' ([Genesis 8:5](#)). That does not indicate any change after the tenth month: the record shows that the waters continued to decrease. 'Thy servants have been keepers of cattle from our youth even until now' ([Genesis 46:32](#)). This does not mean that they were then going out of the cattle business. 'My Father worketh even until now' ([John 5:17](#)). And, of course, God kept on working as he always has. 'For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth until now' ([Romans 8:22](#)). Nor did Paul mean that the creation quit groaning upon the publication of Romans. ²

Thus, in this very place where the future conversion theory regarding Israel is supposed to be promised, it does not appear. The choice of a meaning for 'until' which could imply that is unjustified, for no such meaning may certainly be inferred from it. This verse simply does not tell what will happen after the fullness of the Gentiles is come in; the most probable event to follow that is the loosing of Satan for a little season, and then the end. When the Gentiles have run their course in God's favor, as fleshly Israel have already run theirs, what, except the end, may be logically expected?

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THE MYSTERY OF HARDENED ISRAEL'S PERPETUATION

The mystery, as more fully identified above, is that Israel, judicially condemned and hardened by God himself, in consequence of their own self-hardening, and formally and officially sentenced by Christ himself to condemnation and destruction ([Matthew 23:37f](#)), shall nevertheless continue to exist in that condition until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in, which may very well mean the end of time, and certainly does mean that, if the fullness of the Gentiles and the end of the world occur simultaneously, as many believe.

God reduced the penalty of total destruction and oblivion for Israel, contrary to all that might have been expected. (See under [11:7](#).) This commutation of the death sentence to life imprisonment, as it were, was formally announced by Paul in Rom. 11:25, for the purpose of countermanding the conceit of the Gentiles; but there were doubtless other valid reasons for God's action of sparing hardened Israel which will be noted below.

Israel's hardening in part (the part hardened being the fleshly Israel) was made, through God's commutation of their sentence, to be a perpetual thing. Far from perishing, the nation would stand in ceaseless petrification throughout the long ages of Gentile acceptance of the gospel, frozen and hardened against the God of their noble ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, a gaunt and terrible witness unto all ages of the absolute truth of every word of their sacred Old Testament, and also of the indisputable verity of the New Testament and all that is revealed there of the Lord Jesus Christ. The nation stands, a stark and awesome monument of God's displeasure vented upon them throughout history in the dispersions and persecutions that have dogged their steps all over the world. Mystery indeed! There was never anything like it, nor shall there ever be. This judicially doomed nation, bound in a cohesive and indissoluble union, flowing through the oceans of earth's populations like a human Gulf Stream, retaining an identity and destiny of their own across centuries and millenniums, is a manifestation of God so tragic and heartbreaking that the very thought of it mists the eyes with emotion. Behold the mystery of hardened Israel, worse than Sodom and Gomorra ([Jeremiah 23:14](#)), but not annihilated like Sodom and Gomorra, but moving blindly through history, still hardened, still disobedient, still blaspheming the name of Christ, still enemies of the gospel of grace, still hating Christ and his religion; but, despite all this, being in themselves, by their very existence, the most eloquent and convincing proof on earth of the total truth of their sacred scriptures, and of the absolute truth and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ and the faith he revealed in the New Testament.

And furthermore, even if God's wisdom should have concealed from us such a thing as the future return of this hardened nation, and if human speculation should prove to be true, it would still stand that what is said here is the way it has been for nearly two thousand years!

So all Israel shall be saved ...

has been treated here as reference to the spiritual Israel, it being the conviction that both the Israels which dominated Paul's mind throughout the epistle are in view in these two verses, being designated here as the hardened Israel ([Romans 11:25](#)) and the saved Israel ([Romans 11:26](#)). Another widely held view construes both Israels as a reference to the hardened Israel. Although disagreeing with that, this writer offers the following as a viable meaning of this clause, in the event of referring it to hardened Israel, best understood by stating it negatively:

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No Israelite Will Ever Be Saved Any Other Way.

Paul expounded throughout this letter the teaching that salvation is only in Jesus Christ, through union and identification with Christ, and by no other means whatsoever.

The people who would be saved must believe and obey Christ, God making no distinction between Jews or Gentiles, That there is a definite emphasis upon 'the manner' of salvation, inherent in the word 'so,' appears in these words of Lard:

*'And so ...' is of particular interest, because it means, 'thus, or in this manner.'*¹

So much for the view of construing this as a reference to hardened Israel. It is precisely in the meaning of 'so' that the difficulty of thus understanding it lies. By this word, Paul was saying, 'In this manner of being saved'; and the only example in the context of any salvation having occurred is that implied in the fullness of the Gentiles, a reference to gathering God's people out of the nations into the spiritual Israel and summing up into a single 'all Israel' in the sense of spiritual Israel. That it is the spiritual Israel intended here is seen in Paul's immediate introduction of two quotations from Isaiah ([Isaiah 59:20](#); [27:9](#)), where, especially in the former, the new covenant is prophesied. This diverse use of 'Israel' in two senses is not unusual with Paul, for in Rom. 11:11 he used the pronoun 'they' in exactly the same way (see under [Romans 11:11](#)).

Of particular interest is a significant change Paul made in Isa. 59:20, which reads thus in the Old Testament:

And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and to them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord.

Paul quoted it, 'shall come out of Zion.' This change by Paul was due to his avoidance of a misunderstanding. Isaiah's prophecy referred to the first advent of our Lord, in which the Lord both came out of Zion, and also to Zion; and without the change he made, the passage would have seemed to refer to the second advent. By the change, Paul said that the Lord has already come to Zion, and also has already come out of it. This forbids any supposition that Christ will return 'to Zion,' as some vainly suppose will be the case when all the Jews are converted! Paul's use of Isaiah's prophecy makes it mandatory to construe it as already fulfilled. As McGarvey has it,

*Christ the Deliverer Had Already Come, so that Part of the Prophecy Had Been Fulfilled.*²

These quotations make it certain that, in whatever sense 'all Israel shall be saved,' everything is contingent upon their acceptance of the Great Deliverer who has already come.

Verses 28, 29

As touching the gospel, they are enemies for your sake: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sake: For the gifts and calling of God are not repented of.

Who are these designated here as 'enemies for your sake'? Their identity is clear from the last clause of the preceding verse, where the portion of Jacob whose sins were forgiven, and who

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had turned away from transgression, are the ones spoken of, making them the subject of this verse. At first, we are shocked that the true Israel (the redeemed portion of Jacob) should here be called 'enemies.' How is this true? Just as Christians on both sides of nations at war are technically enemies, so it is here. Part of the true Israel, through birth and environment, was then and continues to be, commingled with the old Israel. There are some of every generation of fleshly Israel that fall into this category. But within that environment, they are environmentally enemies of the truth, having been identified with the enemies of the gospel from birth, and afterward, by upbringing and education; but, despite this, there are some of that old Israel in every generation who are of the true Israel, who are of 'the election' and the 'righteous remnant' and therefore beloved 'for the fathers' sake' and being the true seed of Abraham, no less than Christians from among the Gentiles; but they become so only by obeying the gospel. They, upon their acceptance of the gospel, claim the inheritance that is theirs as 'children of the promise.' God has not abrogated his promise to THAT Israel. The true Israel has been separated from the fleshly Israel, but the inalienable right of every soul born into this world to decide which way his soul shall go, whether or not he will be of the true Israel, is not contravened. The physical descendants of Abraham in the national entity known as Israel, or scattered throughout earth's populations, AS INDIVIDUALS are not lost and doomed through the accident of their birth, any more than others, the final right of choice still belonging to every man alive.

Some of the old Israel are still being saved, the same as in Paul's day, and the same as in Elijah's day. Therefore no fatalism is taught in the revelation here regarding the hardening of fleshly Israel.

To clear up any confusion, the separation of the two Israels which came about in the events connected with the rise of Christianity, simply reversed the situation that had existed prior to the first advent of Christ. In those days the Gentiles were hardened, and the Jews were the covenant people; but, even under that condition, INDIVIDUAL Gentiles now and again forsook the wickedness of their world and were received into the true spiritual seed of Abraham, Ruth the Moabitess being a conspicuous example. Now, the opposite situation prevails, and again and again, INDIVIDUAL Jews accept the Lord and claim their rightful inheritance as true Sons of Abraham in Christ. The hardening of the Jewish institution has not affected the sovereign right of any man, Jew or Gentile, to obey the gospel and be saved. That the earthly organization called Jewry, and including the state of Israel, shall ever be saved AS SUCH, in the light of the scriptures, appears to be an absolute impossibility, in the same way that it was impossible under reverse conditions before Christ for any state like Babylon or Rome to be accepted AS SUCH into the benefits of Gods' redeeming covenant.

'For the gifts and calling of God are not repented of ...' The gifts and calling of God are the great promise of God to Abraham that in him 'all the families' of the earth shall be blessed with eternal life, such promise never having been confined to Abraham's fleshly posterity alone, and never having included all of them, but only that portion of them who were Abraham's kind of faithful obedient people, the 'spiritual seed' as they are called (fully expounded in Rom. 9).

But the institution, or establishment, of Israel flatly rejected any thought that God's blessing should be extended to Gentiles; and the very mention of God's will in that regard precipitated the great riot in the temple which led to Paul's imprisonment, the enraged Israelites crying that 'It is not fit that he (Paul) should live' ([Acts 22:22](#)). The establishment had not merely murdered

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the Christ and suborned lying witnesses to deny the resurrection, they launched a campaign of eradication directed at the entire following of Jesus Christ, stoned Stephen to death, plotted to kill Paul, and sought by every possible means to thwart the preaching of the gospel on the mission field, Paul himself being on precisely that kind of mission of destruction when he was converted. If the hardened Israel, therefore, had had their way, God's great promise would have failed. This great clause is an affirmation that it did not fail. God did not repent of his purpose, merely because people did not agree with it.

What a glorious onward thrust of God's will is envisioned by Paul in these words! The whole nation of Israel might oppose it; but the will of God moved inexorably to the achievement of the divine purpose.⁴

⁴ Coffman, James Burton. "Commentary on Romans 11:1". "Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament". "<http://www.studylight.org/com/bcc/view.cgi?bk=44&ch=11>". Abilene Christian University Press, Abilene, Texas, USA. 1983-1999.