

Romans 11:11-24

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[0 : 00] Romans 11, verses 11 through 24. Some men like to preach because they enjoy hours of laborious study.! Some enjoy the craft of writing and delivering a sermon.

! Some men like pontificating over complex doctrines. Some just like to hear themselves speak. I am not one of these men.

In fact, and it may surprise you, I don't really like preaching. I do not like to hear myself speak, and I really don't like being the center of attention. So you may ask, then, why do you do it at all?

I preach because I love things that are good and true and beautiful. I preach because I love you. I preach because I love the God who saved my soul from deserved damnation, and who has revealed himself to us in his word.

I preach because I believe that the best thing for you, week in and week out, is to teach you what God would have you know of himself. This is why I love verse-by-verse exposition.

[1 : 15] It forces tough texts upon us. And why all I know to do is present text to you honestly.

I just want to open it, and I want to read it, and I want to explain it. We have been wading in the deep waters of difficult texts these past weeks, and today is no exception.

Allow me to issue to you a warning. We do not do well when we take up these passages in order that we might judge them, but rather we do well when we approach them humbly, recognizing that they are difficult, and seek to understand them in the light of the grand context in which they sit.

We do well when we approach these passages with great care. In 2 Peter chapter 3 and verse 16, the apostle there writes in reference to Paul's letters, there are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction as they do the other scriptures.

So, let's be careful, not only with the content of these passages, but also with our approach to them. We also do well when we consider these passages with awe that moves to praise.

[2 : 48] Remember that Paul is writing in these chapters of the saving work of God. Beloved, we should be amazed that God saves.

That he saves at all is an astounding truth. It has been a minute since we considered chapter 3. So be reminded that Paul has written, citing from 10 texts in the Old Testament in Romans chapter 3, verses 10 through 18, None is righteous, no, not one.

No one understands, no one seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have become worthless. No one does good, not even one.

Their throat is an open grave, they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood.

In their paths are ruin and misery. And the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

[4 : 00] Sometimes I think we just need to sit in texts like that. And remember, it's either who we currently are or who we once were before God saved us.

Perhaps in the Southeast, we all need greater measures of law. We might rejoice more in our great salvation. You see, we are all part of a mob that led a failed insurrection against a good, kind, loving, and just king.

And when forced at the end of the spear before this king, knowing that we deserve the pronouncement of traitor and our swift execution, we receive rather his mercy and forgiveness.

And some Christians yell the accusation of unfair when other receive the good, kind, loving, just king's judgment.

Let us not be those people. We would gladly leave that courtroom rejoicing for having been shown mercy for our transgression.

[5 : 09] Remember, beloved, in chapter 8, Paul desires to root us in the immovable purpose of God on our behalf. We should love this. He does this so that when the storms of trial come, and they will come, your faith will remain immovable because it is nourished by the immovable purpose of God for you.

Paul glories in these truths. But he also knows the implications that flow from God's elective purpose. Which is why Paul tells us of his grief at the beginning of chapter 9.

There he says, And I think he's so emphatic about this because he's just declared this grand truth of God's divine election.

He wants all of his readers to be sure that he genuinely feels what he says in verse 2. That I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen, according to the flesh. His fellow Israelites.

[6 : 23] Paul knows that not all Israelites will be saved. He has seen the broad rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ by Jewish people in his day. And he is working this out theologically across chapter 9 and 10 and into 11.

But note that he is not judging the scripture of his day. He's certainly not judging the God of the scripture. Paul writes with all that moves to praise.

We will look at the conclusion of chapter 11 in detail next week. But I want to read you Paul's conclusion before we read today's text. This is where his heart is going as he's thinking through all of this.

Beginning in verse 33, he says, Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways.

For who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things.

[7 : 45] To him be glory forever. Amen. And that's the way our study of these texts should move in us.

So join me with humility and awe and the desire that our hearts will be collectively drawn to praise as we consider today's text. Now for some context, I'm going to begin reading in verse 1 of chapter 11.

Before I do, let me remind you, beloved, that this is God's word to us. It was written for his glory and for our good. So we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

I ask them, 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.

God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left and they seek my life.

[8 : 57] But what is God's reply to him? I have kept for myself 7,000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal. So too, at the present time, there is a remnant chosen by grace.

But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works. Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace. What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened.

As it is written, God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day. And David says, let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them.

Let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see and bend their backs forever. Let me pause there for a quick second. We saw in our study of this text two weeks ago that God has not rejected his people in totality.

God is faithful to his word. God is gracious and merciful. And God's judgment justly awaits those who don't flee to him by grace alone, through faith alone, in the personal work of Jesus Christ alone.

[10 : 07] We see in those first ten verses both the remnant and the reprobate. So verse 11 and on today's text. So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall?

By no means. Rather, through their trespass, salvation has come to the Gentiles so as to make Israel jealous. Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for

the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean?

Now I am speaking to you Gentiles, and as much then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous and thus save some of them.

For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump.

And if the root is holy, so are the branches. But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others, and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches.

[11:17] If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. Then you will say, branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.

That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. Note then the kindness and the severity of God. Severity towards those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you too will be cut off.

And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in. For God has the power to graft them in again. For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree?

Okay. Okay. If your head is spinning at this point, you are in good company. Faithful Bible commentators have written broadly on this chapter and often find disagreement.

[12:30] I have taught this chapter before, and any digital record of my notes are mysteriously gone. There's records of sermons from before chapter 11 and records of sermons after chapter 11.

No chapter 11, and perhaps this is God's mercy to you because I likely did a poor job the first time through. I have now spent many more hours turning it over and over and seeking to write and deliver a clear explanation of its contents.

And I am not promising that will be the case this morning. It is a difficult text. These types of texts require us to apply two important hermeneutic principles.

And hermeneutics are principles of interpretation. Number one, we are to set the text in its context. It's really important for us to remember the argument that's being made.

Where have we come from? Where are we going? Not only immediately, but even more broadly. Like, what do we know to be true as is taught in the Bible?

[13:38] So setting the text in its context is helpful, especially with difficult texts. Secondly, we are to allow more clear texts to help us interpret less clear texts.

So those things that are not hard to understand, it's that text that are more difficult. If you get it the other way around, you're going to find yourself with all kinds of disparate views.

We're also needing to imply an important doctrine of the Bible. The perspicuity, which is the most complicated way to say clarity of the Bible.

The clarity of the Bible. Which means God's word is clear about things that are necessary to be understood and obeyed in order for a person to be saved.

Any person, any ordinary person, by the power of the Spirit, can take up the word and believe those things that matter most, that they might be saved.

[14:36] And so it's helpful for us to remember that as we come to these difficult texts. So context, more clear texts to help us interpret less clear texts, and a recognition that difficult texts like today's and our difficulty in understanding them do not obscure the way of salvation.

Okay. So there are four contextualities that we have left. You know a text is difficult when I spend a lot of time on the introduction to it. Okay. Number one.

We are saved by grace alone. It is God's kindness extended to us that saves us. Romans chapter 11, verse 5 and 6.

So too, at the present time, there is a remnant chosen by grace. God extending something that we do not deserve. And then verse 6, Paul says, But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works.

Not saved by works. Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace. It would destroy the definition of grace. So we are saved by grace and the reformers, and we do well to say by grace alone.

[15:56] But we do not stop there. Contextual, clear point number two. We are saved through faith alone.

So it is a means, right, extended by grace to us. We are saved by grace through faith. And we see the Bible again and again and again command us to believe something to be true.

Romans chapter 1, verse 16 and 17. This is the thesis statement of the entirety of the letter. Paul there says, For I am not ashamed of the gospel. For the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

To the Jew first and also to the Greek or Gentile. For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith. As it is written, the righteous shall live by faith.

So when we say we are saved by grace alone, we are not negating that we must believe the gospel in order to be saved. By grace through faith. Ephesians 2, 8 and 9.

[16:59] We are saved by grace. Faith is given to us as a gift. Our salvation is not based on works because we cannot boast. By grace through faith.

Thirdly, we are saved by grace alone through faith alone. And this isn't in anything. We can't just believe in whatever we want to believe in. That faith must be placed in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone.

Believing that Jesus is who he said that he is and he accomplished what needed to be accomplished on our behalf. Again, from the book of Romans.

Romans chapter 5. This is verses 6 through 9. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die.

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since therefore we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

[18:11] So God, as perfect, expects of us perfection. We have failed at that. We have an eternal deficit because of our sin.

It deserves God's eternal wrath. And so we need forgiveness from that sin. We need somebody to die in our place. And this is what Jesus does. His redemptive work on the cross.

He takes away our punishment. And he bears that reproach in himself for us. Which brings us up to neutral. But we also need righteousness.

We also need to be law keepers. We need to be perfect. And so Christ grants us that as well. He keeps the law and he gives to us his righteousness.

So we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone. And this comes to us. This message, this good news of Jesus Christ comes to us.

[19:12] So this is number four. Context and clear. We are saved when the gospel is preached and believed. Let's back up a chapter to Romans chapter 10 and verse 14.

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

And verse 15 says, how do they preach unless they are sent? And so God's eternal, sovereign, elective purposes are not separated from the means by which that gospel is carried and believed. And so now, the stage is set. Context, more clear. We have to bring those things with us to look at this text and get any bearing at all on what it means.

So let's look at verses 11 through 24. I'm just going to divide it into two simple points. Number one, an anticipated objection. That's verses 11 through 15.

[20:17] And then number two, analogies to explain. Verses 12 through 24. So firstly, an anticipated objection.

All throughout the letter, Paul has been doing this. Anticipating objections all along. And then he gives these strong responses to those objections. This is the last one in the book of Romans.

I believe it's the 11th, if I'm remembering correctly, from two weeks ago. He anticipates this objection. So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall?

From what he has said of the reprobate that we observed in the previous text, from the end of verse 11 through verse 10. We saw a number of Israelites who were judicially hardened because of their rejection of Christ.

And in Paul's use of Psalm 69, verse 22 and 23, cited in verses 9 and 10. Right there it says, And David says, Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block, and a retribution for them.

[21:25] So Paul asks, Was the purpose of their stumbling their fall? And he gives the emphatic answer. By no means.

Again, this is the strongest response that he could give to any question at all. May it never be. It's strong, strong Greek language.

The divine purpose of the reprobate was not and is not their destruction. That is not the point of their fall. Their divine purpose is the salvation of the elect.

Note the rest of verse 11. So I ask, Did they stumble in order that, so that they might fall? Was that the reason for the stumbling? No. No. By no means. Rather, Through their trespass, Salvation has come to the Gentiles.

No, they stumbled in order that Salvation would come to the Gentiles. So as to make Israel jealous. [22 : 33] God is employing a gospel-rejecting strategy For the sake of Gentiles, And a jealousy-provoking strategy For the sake of Jews.

I think that you could fairly reword verse 11. So this is my translative work. This is not. This is idea for idea, to be very clear.

Did the Jews stumble so that they would fall? No. They stumbled so that salvation would come to the Gentiles, So that they would become jealous, So that some of them would be saved.

Has God rejected his people? The question Paul asks in verse 1. No. God has broadened and multiplied His grace and mercy.

Verse 12, Paul says, Now if their broad Jewish trespass means riches for the world, And if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, How much more would their full inclusion mean?

[23 : 43] The Jewish trespass is used of God to send the riches of his justifying, Redeeming, adopting, sanctifying, and glorifying work across the world.

It's still happening in our day. The gospel still goes to the ends of the earth. And he has not stopped saving Jewish people.

Note that there are riches abundant for their full inclusion, Which is a phrase I will revisit next week for further explanation. We're going to pull some of this earlier stuff in chapter 11 Into a key phrase in our next text.

And we'll talk about it at greater length. But for now, notice how Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, Has made God's jealousy-provoking strategy part of his ministry.

Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, magnifies that ministry. Now he says, I'm speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then, I'm apostle to the Gentiles.

[24 : 52] I magnify my ministry in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, And thus, save some of them. In his anguish to see Jews come to faith in Christ, He's going to go far and wide to the Gentiles In order that they would see the salvation of God come to people, And that they would be jealous.

And also, how that means, bring them to Christ. For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, What will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?

He's just saying, I want the Jews to be saved. I want as many of them as possible, As God purposes to be saved, To come from death to life. Paul's primary ministry was to non-Jewish peoples.

However, Paul had not given up on the Jewish people. In fact, the driving exhortation of chapter 11, The summary of Paul's explanation of God's elective work, Is that Gentile believers ought not become arrogant.

Beloved, we can interchange the characters at this point. As people justified by grace alone, Through faith alone, And the personal work of Jesus Christ alone, We have no grounds for arrogance.

[26 : 15] There's no reason to think that anyone else is outside of God's saving grace. It is possible to believe the right things wrongly.

Sovereign election, rightly understood, Is held humbly. People who believe in divine election should be the most humble of all people, Because it gives God all the glory for his mercy and his grace.

So, there's the anticipated objection, And his answer to it, Was the purpose of the retrograde their fall? No, no.

The purpose was the salvation of the elect. God is being merciful, Even in that work. And then he gives us analogies to explain, Beginning in verse 12.

And there are two, Very briefly, One. And then another that he expands quite a bit to the end of our text. It says in verse 16, If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, So is the whole lump.

[27 : 22] And if the root is holy, So are the branches. And we see in verse 16, Right here are those two analogies. And we must be especially careful, Not to extrapolate too much from analogies, But to place them carefully in their context.

You hear me say all the time, All analogies fall short at some point. So Paul's trying to communicate something very specific and clear here. And we need to set it in its context to understand. Paul is explaining his affirmation point.

Has God rejected his people? No. God has not done saving Israelites. Therefore, Gentiles, don't be proud. In fact, he has a strategy for doing so.

He is employing means to bring about their salvation. This phrase, If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, Is a reference to the first piece of dough From the annual harvest of grain, Which was commanded to be offered to God in Numbers chapter 15.

Paul most likely is referring to himself, Back in verse 1, chapter 11, And the remnant at the present time, We see in verse 5.

[28 : 36] These Jewish people who are in fact turning to faith in Christ. As a pledge of all the bullying Jews that would come after them. Saying, look, look, look, we can already see God's saving work amongst Jewish people.

It is most probable that the phrase, And if the root is holy, Is speaking of the patriarchs who were saved by faith. We don't see in the scripture two ways of salvation.

People were always in the Bible saved by faith. More on that next week. But this idea of the root being holy is likely about the patriarchs.

My mind goes to Hebrews 11, And the grand list of those who persevered and preserved their souls through faith. Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and so forth.

If the doe offered as first roots is holy, so is the whole lump. And if the root is holy, so are the branches. The apostles' point is that we can expect to see a remnant chosen by grace.

[29 : 51] Verse 6. At the present time and into the future by virtue of the origins of the plant. God has been merciful and will not cease being merciful to the Jewish people.

He will keep his promises the way his promises were always meant to be kept. It is this olive tree analogy that Paul continues to the end of today's text.

Recall from the beginning of verse 13 that he is speaking directly to his Gentile hearers. And here we see clearly the exhortation that Gentile believers ought not become arrogant.

Verse 17. But if some of the branches were broken off and you, that's Gentile believers, although a wild olive shoot were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches.

If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. And grafting is a horticultural technique where the tissue of one plant is joined to another so that the two continue their growth together.

[31 : 10] If you have no concept of grafting, YouTube will teach you more than you want to know about grafting trees together. Right? Common horticultural practice. And certainly these hearers would have fully understood what it meant to take attributes of different plants and put them together in this grafting process.

The point here is that the branches grafted in are not the beginning of the plant. They are part of it, but they do not have their being without the beginning of the plant.

God has always had a people, and he's been saving a people all throughout redemptive history. Paul then continues his exhortation by anticipating what the Gentiles might say.

There's this warning, do not be arrogant toward the branches. Then you will say, branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.

He says, that is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief. But you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear.

[32 : 24] Now, you have to see in the text, every time we're talking about divine election, these writers are not dismissing human responsibility. And here you see it. Why were they broken off? Their unbelief.

It's right there in the text. But you are grafted in, and you stand through faith. And what is the response? Do not become proud. Do not become arrogant.

But fear, because that's a faith that's been gifted to you. Persevere to the end in your faith.

Persevere to the end in your faith. Pursue love of God through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Obedience to His word through faith. And see it out to the very end. Paul goes on. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you.

If you show yourself to be unbelieving, be careful. If you show yourself to be unbelieving, God didn't spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you.

[33 : 29] Note then the kindness and the severity of God. Severity toward those who have fallen. God's justice will be, must be upheld.

And we want this to be true of our God. We want justice done. We want things in this world to be set right. But God's kindness to you, if you have placed faith in Jesus Christ, provided you continue in His kindness.

Otherwise you too will be cut off. And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in. For God has the power to graft them in again.

I'm not ashamed of the gospel. For it's the power of God for salvation to all who will believe. And He continues the horticultural example, right?

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

[34 : 35] He's just saying, God has a purpose of grace and mercy for a people and it includes Jewish people.

So application. For those of us who are in Christ this morning, who have turned from our sin and placed believing faith in Him, we should be amazed at God's sovereign plan of salvation.

It is a grand and broad plan of salvation. My heart is so stirred when I go to the book of Revelation and see the great multitudes praising our God.

It sometimes feels as if, right, the reprobate vastly outnumber the saints. I just like to think the opposite is true. I don't have any biblical evidence of that. But there's a multitude, a countless multitude, praising God at the end of all things.

And we should just be astounded that there are people saved. Secondly, we should be humble because our salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone.

[35 : 49] Oh, beloved, we sing so many good songs that speak to these great truths. We deserve severity but have been given God's kindness.

Thirdly, we should plead God's saving grace for all peoples. We, along with Paul, should be out there sharing the good news of Jesus Christ that people will come to faith in Him and perhaps become jealous.

We should not give up on Jewish people. Direct application of the text. We should not think that God's saving purpose is beyond Israelites.

And there's nothing in here about the nation-state of Israel and what we should think about war right now. So I just want to be clear about that. But the saving work of God still extends.

Let's go and preach the gospel to anyone who will hear, even people of Jewish descent. Charles Spurgeon once said, you may be familiar with the quotes on your bulletin this morning, if sinners be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our dead bodies.

[36 : 59] Charles Spurgeon believed in divine election. Charles Spurgeon once wrote, Calvinism is the gospel. And he also said this, if sinners be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our dead bodies.

And if they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped about their knees, imploring them to stay. If hell must be filled, let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions.

That means like in our faces, like as we exert ourselves for their sake, and let no one go unwarned and unprayed for. So we should be amazed at God's sovereign plan of salvation.

We should be humbled by it. And we should plead God's saving grace for all peoples. For those of you this morning who are not in Christ, your rejection of the saving work of Jesus Christ is keeping you from the kindness, from the goodness of God.

Repent of your sin and put your faith in him for the salvation of your soul. He lived the life God requires of you and died the death that you deserve. Jesus will grant you his perfection and he took your punishment if you would just believe that his work was effectual for you.

[38 : 22] So let's pray to that end.