

Romans – An In-Depth Study

[Chapters 9-16]

[Part 4]

Romans 11:1-5 [NIV] *“I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don’t you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he appealed to God against Israel: “Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me”? And what was God’s answer to him? “I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.”*

Paul now addresses a question which any Jew is bound to ask.

Does all you have said confirm that God has rejected and divorced His chosen people?

Paul answers this from an Old Testament example.

Remember that Paul was very much a Jew himself.

2 Corinthians 11:22 [NIV] *“Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham’s descendants? So am I.”*

Paul reminds the church at Corinth that he was a very righteous Jew, a Pharisee.

Philippians 3:3-9 [NIV] *“For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh, though I myself have reasons for such confidence. **If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more:** circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, **I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish,** that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.”*

For all the ritualistic Jewish background Paul had, he considered it of **no worth** compared with being a bond slave of Jesus Christ and receiving righteousness through faith in Him.

1 Kings 19:1-3 [NIV] *“Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, “May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them.” **Elijah was afraid and ran for his life.** When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there,”*

After his triumph over the prophets of Baal, who were introduced to Israel by the queen Jezebel [**1 Kings 18:16-40**], Elijah feared the death threat of the queen and ran into the wilderness.

1 Kings 19:9-10 [NIV] *“There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the LORD came to him: “What are you doing here, Elijah?” He replied, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. **I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”**”*

Elijah believed he alone was left who was faithful to the true God of Israel.

1 Kings 19:18 [NIV] *“Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him.”*

Yet there were 7,000 who had remained faithful to God, inspite of living under the rule of a weak king and a Pagan queen.

In Jewish thought this was an indication that there would always be a remnant remaining faithful to the true God.

1 Samuel 12:22 [NIV] *“For the sake of his great name **the LORD will not reject his people**, because the LORD was pleased to make you his own.”*

A promise made to Samuel that God would **not** reject all Israel.

Jeremiah 31:37 [NIV] *“This is what the LORD says: “Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below be searched out **will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done**,” declares the LORD.”*

The same message given to the prophet Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 33:24-26 [NIV] *“Have you not noticed that these people are saying, ‘The LORD has rejected the two kingdoms he chose’? So they despise my people and no longer regard them as a nation. This is what the LORD says: ‘If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the fixed laws of heaven and earth, then I will reject the descendants of Jacob and David my servant and will not choose one of his sons to rule over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For **I will restore their fortunes and have compassion on them.**’”*

Again this promise is reinforced.

Psalms 94:12-14 [NIV] *“Blessed is the man you discipline, O LORD, the man you teach from your law; you grant him relief from days of trouble, till a pit is dug for the wicked. **For the LORD will not reject his people; he will never forsake his inheritance.**”*

God would discipline Israel, but will never totally reject or forsake them, still looking on them as His children.

There is revealed a tremendous truth in these verses.

No church or nation is ever offered salvation en masse.

The idea of a chosen nation that includes all its people does **not** hold water because the relationship with the Creator God is very much an individual relationship.

Romans 11:6 [NIV] *“And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.”*

This selection is by God’s personal choice **not** by anything we can do to require Him to choose us for our opportunity for salvation at this time.

Romans 11:7-8 [NIV] *“What then? **What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did.** The others were hardened, as it is written: “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day.”*

Paul now addresses all who are **not** part of that remnant or elect of God.

Deuteronomy 29:1-4 [NIV] *“These are the terms of the covenant the LORD commanded Moses to make with the Israelites in Moab, in addition to the covenant he had made with them at Horeb. Moses summoned all the Israelites and said to them: Your eyes have seen all that the LORD did in Egypt to Pharaoh, to all his officials and to all his land. With your own eyes you saw those great trials, those miraculous signs and great wonders. **But to this day the LORD has not given you a mind that understands or eyes that see or ears that hear.**”*

All of Israel saw the wonders that God performed on their behalf, yet were blinded to what God desires to do through them.

For them to become an example nation for all other people to follow.

Isaiah 6:5 [NIV] *“**Woe to me!**” I cried. **“I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.”***

After being shown the glory and perfection of God, he realised what a sinner he was.

Isaiah 6:6-7 [NIV] *“Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, **“See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”***

God showed Isaiah mercy and forgave him his sins.

Isaiah 6:8 [NIV] *“Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, **“Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”** And I said, **“Here am I. Send me!”***

God then offered Isaiah a challenge, and Isaiah gratefully accepted this job.

Isaiah 6:9-10 [NIV] *“He said, **“Go and tell this people: “Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.”** Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”*

But Isaiah was warned by God that the vast majority of those who heard his message from God would **not** understand it because God had **not** opened their minds to receive it.

Matthew 13:10-13 [NIV] *“The disciples came to him and asked, **“Why do you speak to the people in parables?”** He replied, **“The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.** Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. **This is why I speak to them in parables: “Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.”***

This same personal selection by God as to whom will receive the opportunity for salvation now, continues in the world today.

Does this mean that God is unjust?

The reply to this must start with another question.

Why would God be under any obligation to give anything to humanity who has turned their back on Him, their Creator and Sustainer?

Romans 3:23 [NIV] *“for **all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**”*

There is **no** human being who has ever been given life by God who has **not** failed to keep God’s Law of love towards Him and especially towards other human beings [**read Matthew 22:36-40**].

Because of this we have **no** claim upon God’s grace.

Grace, by definition, is something that God is never obliged to give, but something that He gives freely and voluntarily.

If God deals with us strictly according to righteous justice we would all end up eternally dead, in hell.

If God is going to save anyone it is through grace, for no-one deserves to be saved.

But suppose that God in His wisdom and mercy decides to call some to receive His mercy now while others do **not** receive this mercy at this time?

Note I always add the words “*at this time*” or “*now*” and I do this because of what I have stated before, it is God’s desire that all humans will have a chance to repent and receive salvation.

2 Peter 3:9 [NIV] *“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.”*

This is stated in the context of God working outside of time [v8].

1 Timothy 2:1-6 [NIV] *“I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone, for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men, the testimony given in its proper time.”*

God wants our prayer and our desires to be the same as His, for all humans to come to accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

John 3:16-18 [NIV] *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”*

“The world” – that encompasses all humanity.

1 Corinthians 15:22-23 [NIV] *“For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.”*

The revealing words in this scripture are “*each in his own turn,*” that is **not** all humans will be offered salvation at one time.

I truly believe that in His great wisdom God knows just when, in human history, it will be the best time for each human to receive their call to receive salvation.

This may be through a resurrection back to physical life as referred to in Revelation.

Revelation 20:11-13 [NIV] *“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done.”*

For this great resurrection God is calling a limited number of people in each generation and in each ethnic group.

They will then be able to really relate to the different generations and ethnic groups resurrected.

For these people called will be the best teachers that each resurrected group of people can have, as they open up God's Word, the Christian Bible, to them.

Revelation 5:9-10 [NIV] *“And they sang a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. **You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”**”*

Referring to all who have been called by God for salvation prior to Christ's return.

Romans 11:9-11 [NIV] *“And David says: “**May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling-block and a retribution for them. May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent for ever.**” Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, **because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious.**”*

The picture painted here is of a people feeling very secure, but their sense of safety becomes their ruin.

The Jewish nation acts like this, at ease in the confidence that they alone are God's chosen people.

This is a quotation from the Old Testament scriptures that Jews venerate. [**Psalms 69:22-23**]

Eventually this will make the Jews envious when they come to realise that God is offering salvation to all humanity and not just Jews.

It may take the return of Jesus Christ, as the Messiah they missed at His first coming, to open their eyes and minds to the truth.

Romans 11:12-16 [NIV] *“**But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fulness bring! I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.**”*

If Israel's rejection means the door is opened to all non-Jews, how wonderful it will be when the Jews join the Gentile Christians and accept Jesus Christ, Who they rejected at His first coming, as their Saviour [Messiah].

Acts 9:10-15 [NIV] *“In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, “Ananias!” “Yes, Lord,” he answered. The Lord told him, “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and **ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.**” “Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.” But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! **This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel.**”*

God tells us that He was going to use Saul [renamed Paul] to be His instrument to take the gospel message to non-Jews but also to make Jews envious.

1 Corinthians 9:20-22 [NIV] *“To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. **I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.**”*

This was the driving force behind Paul's life, and should also motivate every Christian to reach out to all who do **not** know Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

Romans 11:17-20 [NIV] *"If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: **You do not support the root, but the root supports you.** You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. **Do not be arrogant, but be afraid.**"*

Paul then addresses the new Gentile Christians, telling them **not** to boast about their calling while some Jews have **not** been called to receive salvation.

The main stem of this olive tree is Abraham and the root is his faith in God's promises.

The natural branches were Israel, but most of them had been broken off because of their unbelief, to make room for unnatural, Gentile branches to be grafted on to the same stem and root system, a faith in God's promises that originated with Abraham.

Romans 11:21 [NIV] *"For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either."*

Paul reminded these new Gentile converts to Christianity that if they lost faith in God's promises that came to them through Jesus Christ, they too could be broken off as some of Israel was.

In effect, Paul was saying that there would be no such thing as Christianity unless Abraham had lived by faith in God's promises and the Jews, in part, had the same faith in God's Word as expressed in the Old Testament scriptures and promises.

The Christian church has a debt to Judaism which it can never pay by any other means than by bringing Christianity to the Jews.

Romans 11:22-24 [NIV] *"Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, **for God is able to graft them in again.** After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, **how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!**"*

The Gentiles had experienced the kindness of God, and the Jews have experienced the severity of God.

Paul warns the Gentiles to remain in faith that this kindness may continue.

Paul also tells the Jews if they come out of their unbelief and accept Jesus Christ, they also will experience the kindness of God, being once again grafted back into the stem and root of faith that began with Abraham.

Abraham, who they look upon as their "spiritual" father calling themselves "children of Abraham."

Romans 11:25 [NIV] *"I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: **Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.**"*

What is this "full number of Gentiles" ?

Please read again my comment on **Revelation 20:11-13**, for the vast majority who will be in this resurrection will be non-Jews, Gentiles.

Therefore the largest number of teachers of the “books” [Greek “*biblōs*” referring to the scrolls on which the books of the Christian Bible was originally written] will be Gentiles who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

Romans 11:26-27 [NIV] *“And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”*

At the same time that the number of converted Gentiles is reached, then the rest of Jews, and by extension all Israel, will have the veil over their eyes lifted and their hardened heart will be made pliable, so that at last they can accept Jesus Christ the Son of God and Son of Man as their awaited Messiah [Saviour].

Isaiah 59:20-21 [NIV] *“The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins,” declares the LORD. “As for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the LORD. “My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and for ever,” says the LORD.*”

This wonderful scripture that Israel often read will become a reality, but **not** in the way that they expected.

Then Israel will realise that it is the faith of their “spiritual” father that is important to them, not their genealogical link with the person of Abraham.

Paul is quoting or referring to two scriptures in the Old Testament of the Christian Bible, which is accepted by the Jews and Israel as a whole.

Isaiah 59:20-21 [NIV] *“The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins,” declares the LORD. “As for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the LORD. “My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and for ever,” says the LORD.*”

This conversion will be the active work of the Holy Spirit within the minds and hearts of Israel and God’s words they know so well will “*come alive*” to their minds and human spirit.

Jeremiah 31:33-34 [NIV] *“This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”*

The Old Testament covenant that God made with Israel, which they totally failed to keep under their own strength, will be replaced by the New Testament, New Covenant, made by Jesus Christ and ratified by His death.

A covenant of faith and **not** of religious works.

In reality this is the very covenant of faith that God made with Abraham.

Romans 11:28-32 [NIV] *“As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable. Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God’s mercy to you. For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.”*

In this passage of scripture Paul shows how Israel and the Gentiles benefit each other.

Whenever God shows mercy to one group, the other shares the blessing in God's original plan.

Israel would be the source of God's blessing to the Gentiles [**Genesis 12:3**].

When Israel neglected this mission, to be an example nation to all humanity, God blessed the Gentiles anyway through the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who was born physically of a Jewish virgin, Mary.

God still maintained His love for Israel because of His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

In the end time Israel will share in God's mercy towards the Gentiles.

God's Plan will **not** be thwarted, He will *"have mercy on them all."*

Note one very important scripture for all humanity.

"For God's gifts and His call are irrevocable [gone beyond recall]."

Every human being will have **one** chance of salvation when their minds and hearts will be opened to the love and mercy of their Creator God.

What is being offered is so great and wonderful that if rejected that person will not have a second chance.

Matthew 12:30-32 [NIV] *"He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come."*

Why is this sin against the Holy Spirit unforgiveable?

The context of this statement is where the Pharisees attributed the miracle of Jesus casting out of a person an evil spirit [demon] to *"Beelzebub"* [Satan, the prince of demons], **not** Holy Spirit.

God uses the Holy Spirit in every part of our conversion from a sinner to a justified created child of God.

If we reject this work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, then we have rejected the power of God to bring us to a place of justification [being acceptable to a holy god] and our salvation [our protection from deserved eternal death].

John 16:7-8 [NIV] *"But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:"*

Holy Spirit brings us to the point of repentance.

John 14:15-18 [NIV] *"If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."*

The Holy Spirit will at first work with us, preparing our mind to receive God's Word, the Christian Bible, with all its promises and guidance for our lives.

The Holy Spirit will, if we let Him, then dwell in us and this intimate relationship will develop in us all the very characteristics of a Holy God, and Jesus Christ. [Read **Galatians 5:22-25**]

John 14:26 [NIV] *“But the Counsellor, **the Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and **will remind you of everything I have said to you.**”*

The Holy Spirit will remind us of all the words and promises of Jesus Christ, when we need them to guide our lives.

John 16:13 [NIV] *“**But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.**”*

The Holy Spirit will allow us to understand the truth that is found within the Holy scriptures, the Christian Bible, and reveal to us the future plan that God has for all humanity.

2 Timothy 1:7 [King James] *“For God hath not given us **the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.**”*

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit will empower us to live a Christian life, and free us from the fear of physical death.

Romans 8:11 [NIV] *“**And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.**”*

The Holy Spirit Who raised Jesus Christ from the grave will also raise us from death and give us an eternal body. [Read **1 Corinthians 15:12-23** and **1 Corinthians 15:49-54**]

The above are, I feel, enough for us **not** to reject the saving work of the Holy Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 5:19 [NIV] *“Do not put out **the Spirit’s fire;**”*

Do **not** dampen the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

Ephesians 4:30-32 [NIV] *“**And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**”*

Do **not** grieve the Holy Spirit who desires to work in us day-by-day to prepare to be an acceptable created child of our Creator God.

Romans 11:33-36 [NIV] *“**Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor?” “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory for ever! Amen.**”*

Here is a passage of scripture we all need to meditate on often, that we may truly know our Creator God.