

Study 11

A PARTIAL HARDENING

Romans 11

In The Group

- ◆ If you could share one thing from your refrigerator with someone in this group, what would it be? (On the other hand, what wouldn't you share?)
- ◆ It seems that many people are apprehensive for others to discover who they really are. Why do you think this is?
- ◆ If someone opened up their heart in this group and shared their doubts and fears, how would this group respond?

This is the closing chapter on Paul's discussion about the place of Israel in God's plan. He has already explained that the New Covenant is entered into by faith in Christ - not ethnicity. That is, just because someone was born a Jew does not mean that they were born with right standing before God.

1. According to Romans 11:1-2 has God banned Jewish people from entering the New Covenant?
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Paul makes the point that Jews were not rejected from accepting the New Covenant - rather, any Jew could receive the Gospel and enter into the New Covenant. While not all Jews had done so, he reminds his readers that even under the Old Covenant only some Israelites had remained faithful to God and kept the terms of the Old Covenant (Rom. 11:2-4).

2. Does God determine someone's future based on what He 'foreknows' about them? (Refer to Rom. 11:2)
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3. What does the fact that Elijah had to intercede on behalf of Israel and appeal to God on their behalf, tell us about “Universalism” (all people are saved - they just don’t know it)? (Rom. 11:2)
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When Elijah complained to God that he was the only person remaining in Israel still faithful to Him, God responded to him by stating that “*I have kept...*” This is one of the clearest statements in the Bible of God’s sovereignty (His decreed power). It wasn’t because these *seven thousand men* had initially *chosen* to be faithful to God. Rather, *God* had done something in them in order that they might choose to be faithful to Him. Whenever God *initiates* something in people who don’t deserve it, it is referred to as “grace” in the New Testament.

4. Based on Romans 11:5, is it possible to be part of the ‘remnant’ without God’s grace?
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5. Considering Romans 11:6, did God *introduce* His grace in the New Covenant?
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6. What does a person have to *do* in order to qualify for God’s grace? (Rom. 11:6)
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THE ELECT

There is much debate over the Apostle Paul’s use of the term “the elect” in Romans (8:33; 9:11; and especially 11:7). Some people regard *the elect* as being all those who willingly receive Christ and His offer of salvation. Others regard *the elect* as those whom God has graciously chosen to be saved. Still some regard *the elect* as referring to Christ and all who surrender to Him are made a part of the elect.

7. On what basis does God elect someone to salvation? (Romans 11:7) Select the correct answer from the options below -
- (a) Because they are basically a good person who would fit right in among those in heaven.
 - (b) God had a few spare spaces in heaven and He needed some people to fill those spaces and these people got lucky.
 - (c) God graciously opened the spiritual eyes of an undeserving sinner and turned their heart toward Him so that they willingly submitted to Him. (Phil. 2:13)

Election sounds like God is deliberately keeping some people out of heaven and only allowing a few elite people in. But this is neither the motive nor the basis of God electing people to salvation.

8. What reasons does Ephesians 1:11 give for God electing people to salvation?
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We do not know who God has elected to salvation. But if we have been saved we should be overwhelmed with gratitude to God for what He has done in us. And the best way that we can thank Him is to share His love through the Gospel with others. As we share the Gospel, we pray for those who hear it that they might have their eyes opened and their ears unstopped.

9. Romans 11:8 says that God kept people from seeing and hearing His Word, but how active does God have to be in order to harden a person's heart? (Note Romans 3:10, 23)
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10. What does Peter say that the elect should do to sure up their election? (2Peter 1:10 - note the context)
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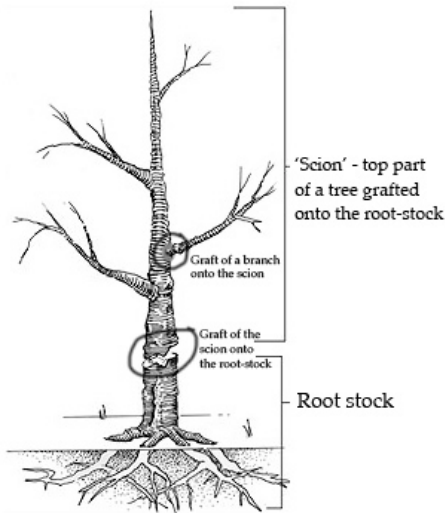
Israel's breaking of the Old Covenant meant that God could establish a New Covenant (Romans 11:11) where He has done all the work (Theologians call this *monergism*). As someone has once said, "*All Christians are saved by good works. It's just that the good works have all been done by Jesus Christ!*"

11. Based on Romans 11:12 where we see that God sovereignly used Israel's *failure* to bring about the glorious offer of salvation to Gentiles, how does this inform us about how God even uses *our* failures for His glory? Can you give an example?
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12. Consider what the Apostle Paul says in Romans 11:13 about being an Apostle 'to the Gentiles' yet desiring to see his countrymen saved. Now consider that the New Testament calls each follower of Christ to *serve* Christ. Connecting these two considerations, how might Romans 11:13 inform your response to someone who refuses to serve Christ where they are not comfortable?
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13. How does Romans 11:14 refute 'Universalism'?
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TRUE ISRAEL



Physical Israel is described by Paul as 'the root' of God's people (Rom. 11:16). Therefore, Paul reasons, all branches attached to this root-stock are 'holy' - that is, they are made part of Israel. The Prophet Isaiah foresaw this. Note Isaiah 11:1 where he describes Israel breaking their covenant with God and being reduced to a stump.

14. Who became the root stock of God's people and the rightful heir to the promises of King David according to Revelation 5:5?
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15. A Gentile believer might be tempted to become arrogant toward Jewish people because they have accepted God's offer of forgiveness of sins and salvation, whereas some Jewish people have rejected it. What exhortation does the Apostle make in Romans 11:20-24 and how might this also apply to how we treat non-believers?
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Paul continues to discuss God's unsearchable sovereignty in the closing verses of Romans 11. He concludes this chapter with one of the most profound verses in the Bible.

16. How does Romans 11:36 sum up God's sovereignty (His ability to work out His plan despite rebellion, mistakes, and failures)?
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Amen.