

# Romans 11:1-15 Election in the Present Time

## Introduction

Dear brothers and sisters, if you would turn in your Bibles to Romans, we will be looking at and reading Romans 11:1-15.

### The Question of God's Faithfulness

"I say then, Has God cast away his people? Far be the thought. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away his people whom he foreknew. Know ye not what the scripture says in the history of Elias, how he pleads with God against Israel? Lord, they have killed thy prophets, they have dug down thine altars; and I have been left alone, and they seek my life. But what says the divine answer to him? I have left to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed knee to Baal. Thus, then, in the present time also there has been a remnant according to the election of grace. But if by grace, no longer of works: since otherwise grace is no more grace.

Verse 7: What is it then? What Israel seeks for, that he has not obtained; but the election has obtained, and the rest have been blinded, according as it is written, God has given to them a spirit of slumber, eyes not to see, and ears not to hear, unto this day. And David says, Let their table be for a snare, and for a gin, and for a fall-trap, and for a recompense to them: let their eyes be darkened not to see, and bow down their back alway.

Verse 11: I say then, Have they stumbled in order that they might fall? Far be the thought: but by their fall there is salvation to the nations to provoke them to jealousy. But if their fall be the world's wealth, and their loss the wealth of the nations, how much rather their fulness? For I speak to you, the nations, inasmuch as I am apostle of nations, I glorify my ministry; if by any means I shall provoke to jealousy them which are my flesh, and shall save some from among them. For if their casting away be the world's reconciliation, what their reception but life from among the dead?"

*Lord, we come to You again in absolute and utter dependence, knowing that You are the only One who has the words of eternal life. And we confess our dependence this morning upon the Holy Spirit to make those words known to us, to quicken the divine words to us that we would not have to tolerate man speaking. But we could hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Open Your word to us. We yield ourselves to You, and we say, Holy Spirit, move among us this morning in your precious name. Amen.*

### Structure of Romans

Well, I think all of you know that my responsibility for some time now has been to share on the study of Romans, both with the brothers and sisters in Pakistan, by Zoom, usually every other week, and here once a month. So, in case you are wondering why you

have to endure my speaking once a month, I have been ordered to share here the things I have been sharing with the brothers and sisters in Pakistan.

Today I would like to look at the first part of Romans 11. Now Romans 11 is in that second section. Let me say this by review because I want you to get it in your head as a framework. The book of Romans is a masterpiece. There is no book like it in the New Testament that goes into the depth of the glory of the gospel of God in our Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing like it. There is nothing that can compare to it. Even the other books that talk much about the gospel do not go to the degree of understanding that the Apostle Paul included in these sixteen chapters.

I encourage you with this story. Years ago, when we were young men and young sisters, Brother Kaung told each one of us young brothers, "pick a book in the Bible you would like to study." And unfortunately, or fortunately, I picked Romans. If I had better sense, I would have picked Jude or some short book and been able to handle it. But instead, I picked a 16-chapter book, one of the longest in the New Testament. So, I would encourage you to choose a book, to meditate on that book, to read the book for yourself and do not just escape to commentators. I have a rule that I never escape to commentators until the thought the Lord has given me is secured in my thinking. Until I have an outline, do I have a way? And then I will look at commentators and hopefully they show me I was not completely wrong. But this is the way I do it and often they enhance and adjust and help me.

So, the book of Romans, to not leave you there, can be divided into three parts. Chapters one through eight are the mighty Works of God, the glorious gospel presented in a way that no other author has ever presented it before. The second part we are in is chapters nine through eleven. This is the Ways of God. Romans 11:33 is where I get the Ways of God, "O depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable his judgments, and untraceable his ways!"

These three chapters are an unveiling or an opening of the Ways of God. We understand the gospel of God in the first eight chapters, the mighty Works of God; but we understand the untraceable ways through these chapters. Heaven's curtain is pulled back and we understand what God has been doing down through the ages with His people, both Old Testament and now New Testament; and what His conclusion is for those people. These are the Ways of God. And then when you go from chapters 12 to 16, you get into the practical part. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the compassions of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your intelligent service. And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." In chapters 12 through 16, you discover the practical working out of the Will of God, how that is done in your life. What does it look like? What should the testimony of Jesus be seen like in a people? That is the Will of God: a testimony expressed in a living way; His own life in a people. And so that is a broad outline. I know you have heard it before, but one day, if I say it enough, you might remember it.

## The Mystery of Election

We are going to look at this first part of Romans 11. The primary subject of these three chapters is the Mystery of Election. That is what it has to do with, the Mystery of Election. Verse 25, the first part says, "For I do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, of this mystery." Now, what mystery is he talking about? The Bible talks about a number of mysteries. But if you look carefully at these three chapters, you begin to discover a dominant word, "election." Now, the word election is six times in the New Testament, only in the New Testament. And four times the word election occurs in the 10th, 11th, and 12th chapters of Romans. So, I do not think there is any doubt what this mystery is, about which we are talking.

And you think about this, brothers and sisters, "election." What does it mean? We need to understand if we are going to know God's ways, what does election mean? And if you look at the Greek word, it means divine selection. Isn't that a beautiful thing? I do not know if it hits you as strongly as it hits me, but God has chosen you. God has chosen me. It is not some leader, some preacher, some religious one that has led me. God himself has selected you. That is what election is. Do you remember? It is in John 15:16 when the Lord was speaking to His own, and He said, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.... that your fruit should abide."

This is what these chapters deal with. And when we come to an end in this 11th chapter, it really becomes apparent what the apostle is dealing with. So, the subject today is Election in the Present Time. I want you to remember that there is a word in there in verse five that talks about the present time. If you look at the second part, from verse sixteen on to the end of chapter 11, you discover election in what you can describe as the fullness of times. The phrase is actually, "the fullness of the nations," but in fact it is the fullness of time. We have the present time through verse fifteen, and through the rest of the chapter we have the fullness of time. So, we give an entire picture, a grand divine picture of this mystery of election.

## Outlines

Now, we are going to look at it in three points. It is easy that way. You can remember three points, and you might remember something in the middle of those three points. But the first is, A Remnant According to the Election of Grace. Understand that single thing, that what God was doing was calling a remnant to Himself, that was according to the election of grace. This is verses 1 through 6. The second point we will look at is, Present Election and Prevailing Blindness. Now, I know that might be a little hard for you to say. Present election, which is what we are dealing with. But there is another issue that God is explaining in His ways and why He chose to work this way, that is Prevailing Blindness, and we will get into that. And finally, the third thing in the great conclusion of these first fifteen verses is, The Fall that Brings Salvation to the World. That is verses 11 through 15.

## **A Remnant According to the Election of Grace**

A Remnant According to the Election of Grace, verse one. If you look at verse one in chapter 11, it is a very provocative question. You need to notice that Paul often says things that sound very provocative. And then he gives a divine reaction to it. In other words, I put it this way, he shows spiritual wrong thinking, and he immediately corrects it with a visceral reaction. Now, do you know what visceral means? It means it comes from the depth of your being.

So, if we read again, verse one of chapter 11, “I say then, Has God cast away his people?” Do you not think that is a provocative question? Can you imagine if God, who is calling a people, would just cast away His people forever? Brothers and sisters, this does not have to do with just the Jewish fall and Jewish turn away from God. This main question has to do with us as the current people of God. Just think for a moment, if God were to cast away His people, where would we be? What hope would we have? How could we stand in this evil day awaiting the coming of the Lord, if we thought all the time, at any moment, for any wrong, God would cast away His people? That is the importance of this provocative question.

If you look at the end of chapter 10, you begin to understand. It talks about the divine, the possible divine rejection. Let me use that word. I want to be very clear about the possible divine rejection of Israel. So that is what Paul is reacting to. Remember, chapters were added by men and verses were numbered by men. Thank God for them. I thank the Lord that there were several men in history that divided the Bible in chapters. How would we ever know it and memorize it and teach it without their aid? What a glorious thing. And then later into verses. So, in verse one, he shares his visceral reaction. Immediately he says, “far be the thought.” In other words, it is an adamant, “No, God cannot cast away His people forever.” What comfort that needs to bring to our hearts when we think of it. “Far be the thought.”

I have also mentioned to you to pay attention to that phrase. You cannot understand the book of Romans if you do not understand that phrase, “far be the thought.” Now that is a Pauline phrase. Nobody else in the Bible uses that phrase, “far be the thought.” Only the Apostle Paul. And he uses it ten times alone in the book of Romans. He is constantly bringing out wrong thinking and immediately exposing wrong thinking so that we can understand the heart and the mind and the ways of God. That is what he is doing when you think about it.

## **Paul is the Proofs of God's Faithfulness**

There are two proofs that show us that God could never cast away His people. Paul, first of all, uses himself as proof. He says, “for I am an Israelite of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.” No one was steeped deeper in Judaism than the apostle Paul. Do you remember his later defense? It is in chapter 22 of the book of Acts, his defense before the council. He says, “I was a student of Gamaliel.” You know that famous teacher who earlier in the Book of Acts told them, “Do not fight these ones in The Way. If this work is

from men, it will be destroyed; but if it be from God, you will not be able to put them down." It was wonderful counsel. Unfortunately, they did not heed it altogether, but it is wonderful counsel. Paul was a student of Gamaliel. And not only was he a student of Gamaliel, but he also said in his defense and in his writings, "I am a Pharisee of the tribe of Benjamin. I am of this elect group."

Here was this son of Judaism, and yet he was the great enemy of the church. Do you remember when you read? It is in Acts 8:3, "But Saul ravaged the assembly." That is the church. He ravaged; he did not just get in their way and try to slow down this message of the way, he literally ravaged, assaulted, the assembly. "Entering into the houses one after another, and dragging off both men and women delivered them up to prison." Here is this avowed enemy of God. Now think about it. I will give you my wrong thinking opinion and you can say God forbid, if you would like. I think if anyone should have been destroyed, it should have been the apostle, Paul. I think if anyone should have been abandoned for God to prove this way was His Way, He should have struck the apostle Paul right then, dead. I think it would be appropriate. Now you can say it. God forbid! Good thinking. I am glad you can remember that phrase. Do you understand? But God's ways are so different than our ways.

Think about it. This avowed enemy was at the martyrdom of Stephen, whose face was like an angel. When they were stoning him to death, they threw his clothing at the feet of the apostle Paul. And the ways, the marvelous ways, the wonderful ways of God are such that He said, "I will not destroy this one. I will not cast this one off. I will make him my chief spokesman." And I go, what was God thinking? Here is this avowed enemy. If anyone should have been cast off, this one should have been cast off. But he became the chief spokesman of the gospel. Think of it. He wrote thirteen epistles. He wrote nearly half of the New Testament, all to the church, to build up the church and to strengthen the church; which had been his sole ambition to destroy. What ways God has. Isn't that wonderful? To me, that is one of the most beautiful things in this chapter. Paul himself is the living proof that God will not cast off His people forever. Praise the Lord for that.

But he brings out another point. "God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew." Now let me read to you from Amos. Many of you may have never read the book of Amos. This one of the minor prophets. I remember years ago brother Kaung used to say not to put too much in that name, "minor prophets;" as if what they say is unimportant. It just means they did not write as much as others like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel. The minor prophets wrote far less. Amos 3:1-2, "Hear this word that Jehovah hath spoken against you, children of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore, will I visit upon you all your iniquities." "You only have I known," and think of the added emphasis that the minor prophet Amos wrote when he said, "Of all the families of the earth, they were foreknown." The children of Israel were foreknown. And Paul is telling us, "will God cast away His people who He has foreknown?"

But, brothers and sisters, think about the magnitude of that. We too, we in the New Testament age, we are foreknown of God. Everybody knows the verse Romans 8:29,

“Because whom he has foreknown,” he has purposed that these ones that he has foreknown would “be conformed to the image of his Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” Now, brothers and sisters, what I want to tell you, you may not know. This is the only place “foreknown,” that word, occurred in the English Bible. Now, the point is this. He foreknew the children of Israel, and He would not cast them off. He foreknew us; before the foundation of the world, it says we were saved. He will not cast us off. But what Amos says is, He will deal with them according to their iniquities. So, this begins to shape the understanding of Romans 11:1-15. God is a God who will never cast off His people permanently, but He will discipline His people. He is a God who disciplines to recover, but never to destroy. What a difference!

Aren't you thankful those are His ways? All His discipline is to bring us back, to recover us from our blindness, from our wandering, from our leaving, from our embracing things that are against Him. But His ways are never meant to destroy. God will never cast away His people whom He has foreknown. He will discipline to recover, but never to permanently cast away. The illustration that Paul uses to make this point clear is from I Kings 19:14-18. This is about the prophet Elijah. You know, we get confused sometimes with the prophet's name. We have Elijah and the one that followed him, Elisha. And then we come to the New Testament, and if it is translated properly in the New Testament, we have Elias. Now who is that? It used to trouble me when I was a young believer 53 years ago, just starting to read the word of God, and I would see this “Elias.” I thought, who is Elias? Well, it is the Greek rendition of Elijah. That is who it is, in case it troubles you. And the reason is because Greek does not have a “J.” All right, so now the mystery has been solved for you in the mystery of His ways.

### **Elijah is the Proofs of God's Faithfulness**

But here it is about Elijah. We all know this story about which he is talking. Here is this prophet of God, of fire and the power of God. And when you read I Kings 18, you see how he called down fire and the prophets of Baal were utterly destroyed. Has there been a prophet with such power, such authority? It is humorous to me, that is why I am laughing. When we come to I Kings 19, we see a prophet not full of fire and power, but full of fear and self-righteousness. He is fleeing, he is fleeing from Jezebel the prophetess. That is what he is doing. He is running for his life. This great man of God, in the previous chapter, I Kings 18, defeated all the prophets of Baal. Now he is running and hiding in a cave. Do you not think that is strange? He says, “I am left alone. It is just me, Lord, I am the only one. And those people have murdered your prophets and torn down your altars, and done despicable things.” But I, this is emphasis by the way, it is not just drama, “I am left alone.” And then to him comes the divine answer. Isn't that beautiful?

We have thoughts, often not God's thoughts. We have ways, certainly not God's ways. But God had to speak to this prophet, one of the greatest prophets of His. And He said to that man, “I have left myself 7,000 that have not bowed the knee to Baal.” Let me offer to you my little bit of insight. Do not ever think, do not ever say, “I am left alone.” You ought to know right away from this clear, loving discipline that God detests anyone who thinks in that way. You know, we have a problem in the church. Sometimes people are used of

God just like the prophet was, and suddenly they get swell-headed, and they think, "I am something." How terrible, how terrible. The correction came instantly. I love the fact that Paul recorded it as the divine answer. It was not Paul's answer, it was not man's answer, it was God's answer, "I have kept for myself 7,000 that have not bowed the knee to Baal." How wonderful.

### **The Assurance of a Remnant of the National Israel**

These two proofs are what Paul uses to show that God will never permanently, and I say that with emphasis, permanently, abandon His people. And He cannot because it is against the very nature of His ways, His untraceable ways. He could not do that. He could not. He went to the point of giving His only begotten Son to bear the sin of the world so that He would not cast-off mankind forever. These are the ways, the marvelous ways of God. How we need to see Him.

I will read you a quote. Sometimes people like quotes, sometimes they would rather do without them. But I will read you this one from J. R. Newell because I was extremely impressed with it. He said, "The Eleventh of Romans should at once and forever turn us away from the presumptuous assertions of those that teach God is 'through' with the national Israel - that it has 'no future as an elect nation' in Palestine." I know there is very wrong teaching that has gone out, "God is done with Israel," and His only concern is the church. And that is not true. You cannot read the prophets and think that. I tell people that if you read the 9th, 10th, and 11th chapters of Romans, you cannot come away with that impression, it is impossible. It is clearly about His long-term ways to not only save the nations, but His long-term ways of how He will turn Israel back to Himself.

### **The Inclusion of Gentiles in the Present Time**

So, we come to Romans 11:5. It says this in verse five and let me read it, "Thus, then," pay attention to that. Whenever a writer says, even in natural thinking, but certainly inspired thinking, "Thus, then," he has come to his point. This is the point. So yes, I should pay attention. It is like in the New Testament, particularly in the book of Romans, the word "therefore." Whenever you see "therefore," pay attention to it. "Therefore" is a very important word, particularly in Romans. But here, let me read verse five, "Thus, then, in the present time also there has been a remnant according to the election of grace." This is what he is talking about, "election." And he is saying right now, in the present time, he is not dealing with the end yet. He is not dealing with the end of the age. He is not dealing with the future. But what he is dealing with is the present time.

And in the present time, God's ways are He has a remnant according to the election of grace. Now, that is wonderful. Who does that remnant include? Well, it certainly includes the Jews. He has not cast off his people. Paul has already proven that. In fact, when you look at the early church, when you read the Book of Acts, the Jews are the foundation of the church of God. They are the beginning of the church of God. And then in later years, in Acts chapter 10, we get to Cornelius' house and the door is open to the Gentiles, or the Nations.

This remnant according to the election of grace is the Jews. In fact, Paul said in his wonderful summary verse of this whole book in Romans 1:16, this gospel “to every one that believes, both to Jew first and to Greek.” Now, let me clear up another bit of confusion. When you read the Bible, you need to understand God puts people in two people groups. You can look at it however you want. You can say Chinese, Indians, Americans that speak slowly from the south; all these things, you can have all kinds of ideas. But God only sees two buckets. And in those buckets are the Jews, the children of Israel; or the Nations, which also is translated the Gentiles. There are only two buckets. So, what God is dealing with here through the Apostle Paul is letting us know His ways for His people down through the ages, in the present time, and into the future; what He will do.

I think most of us here fall in that second bucket. But nevertheless, I hope that is a little bit of clarity. Thank God that He does not abandon His people. Thank God He has chosen a remnant that includes Jews, that included the Apostle Paul, that included this remnant. And thank God, it includes us, the Gentiles. How marvelous this is. We come to see that this election is all according to grace. It is based on nothing else. It cannot be based on anything else. There is nothing that you could have done, that I could have done, that Paul could have done, that the remnant could have done, to be granted this based on our own merit. He is very clear. Election is at the center of God's ways! And election that is at the center of God's ways is all based on grace, nothing else. How marvelous that is.

This is indeed wonderful when we look at it. Paul understood this better than most anybody who wrote in the Bible. I think certainly more than anybody. Have you ever read those thirteen epistles of his? And notice he begins every one of those epistles with “grace.” Usually, it is in the form of, “grace and peace be with you,” or “grace and peace to you.” Very often, right? When you come to the end of every one of his thirteen epistles, he always ends with grace. “The grace of the Lord be with you all.” How marvelous. Here is one who understood that election was at the center of God's ways and that election is all about grace. It is nothing about what we deserve. Thank the Lord for that.

### **Present Election and Prevailing Blindness**

The second point we want to look at is present election. Again, we are dealing with that matter at that time, not the future. Present Election and Prevailing Blindness. This is very important. This is the second point that the apostle Paul makes. And he explains in verse seven, both present election, totally explains it; and he explains also prevailing blindness that has happened to Israel. This is a magnificent verse when you read it. When you look at it, it says, “What is it then? What Israel seeks for, that he has not obtained; but the election has obtained, and the rest have been blinded.” What an explanation. No human being could have composed such a sentence and captured all that is in God's heart concerning election. Remember, I have told you over and over, you need to understand that word, the difference between obtain and attain.



## **The Difference Between Obtain and Attain**

If my language is not clear, it is all obtain with an “ob” and attain with an “at.” And “attain” means you have done something that causes you to deserve what you get. Some righteousness, some work, something you have achieved by your own wit and power and grit and initiative; you have attained to it. We often talk about “self-made people.” You have borne with me before on that, so I will not go into such detail. But there is a different word in Romans. It is the word “obtain.” In other words, everything we get from God, we “obtain” it, we do not “attain” it. Do you get that? You cannot understand the ways of God unless you understand that one concept. The Jews, it says, did not obtain it, but the remnant according to the election of grace, they obtained it; still did not attain it, you will never attain, you will only obtain. And then, as it says in the wonderful book of Zechariah, at the end, when we go through that door to eternity, we will look back and I believe we will hear those words, “grace, grace unto it.” All is of grace from the beginning to the end.

## **The Hardening of Hearts**

Well, that is marvelous. All in one verse, he explained what Israel seeks for, they have not obtained, but the election have obtained. Now we know God's ways depend on this one mystery, election. And depend further on this one principle, grace. And those two explain the wonder of His ways. Those elected in the present time obtain election by grace. We obtain election by grace. How wonderful that is. This phrase, “in the present time,” I have told you, is of utmost importance. You need to understand that. And you need to understand the second part of it, that those ones were blinded. Now that may cause you to stumble. Sometimes it causes me to stumble, I think, God, why would you blind anybody? Why would you do that?

Well, blinded, I like the way Darby renders it. He renders it quite clear that this blindness that fell on national Israel was “hardness of heart.” They hardened their heart and God hardened their heart. Now this is where we get hung up, you know, you have to think back to Romans, chapter nine. We think of Pharaoh and we suddenly begin to get misty-eyed and think good things about Pharaoh. And we think, how can God show mercy to whom He will show mercy? And how can He harden whom He will harden? But if you read the Exodus record, and you read the Exodus record carefully, you will discover that ten times it says, “Pharaoh hardened his heart.” God does not harden anyone's heart unless they harden their own heart. And even then, in the mercy of His ways, it says He only gives this temporary blindness or this temporary hardening to bring you back, to discipline you, to draw you back to His grace. That is the only purpose. How wonderful when you think about it.

Israel had a national disease, a heart disease. I will read this to you. Matthew 15. Probably everybody knows this, but it is quite remarkable what the Lord said to the scribes and Pharisees. Matthew 15:7-9. This is when they accused Him of violating the commandments. And He said in verse seven, “Hypocrites! well has Esaias prophesied about you, saying, This people honour me with the lips, but their heart is far away from me; but in vain do they worship me, teaching as teachings commandments of men.”

Hard-heartedness. Darby calls it, “obdurate.” That is one of those archaic words that we do not use. But it literally means there is a stubbornness in it, there is a willfulness in it. You have determined in your heart to be hard towards God, and therefore He gave them up to this heart disease. Their heart was far from Him. Their heart was far from Him. But it was only with the idea that in the end He would rescue them.

### **The Nature of Hardening**

I think of the importance of the heart. You think of Proverbs 4:23. Solomon said, in his wisdom, “Keep thy heart more than anything that is guarded; for out of it are the issues of life.” Think of that, brothers, and sisters. Do you sometimes find out when you do not understand the dealings of God and the ways of God, that your heart begins to harden, you begin not to listen, and you become obdurate in your own heart? God may have to discipline. I hope He disciplines us. I would rather Him discipline us than let us go forever. That is the alternative. Let them go their way. But because of His ways, He refuses to let them go their way. So, He begins to discipline them. You know, you think about an illustration here in America, the number one killer is heart disease. You may not know that. Everybody knows the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. We heard everything about those people. I hardly knew anything about them till Covid came and I heard about the CDC every day. They said the number one killer in the United States is heart disease. One in five, 20% die of heart disease. This is a natural heart disease that we are talking about here. But in this section of Romans 11:1-15, we are talking about spiritual heart disease. Brothers and sisters, we need to ask the Lord to discipline us, but according to His ways, never let us go. Lord, we will wander, we will stray, we will disbelieve, we will seek our own thoughts, we will cast off. But according to Your miraculous ways, do not cast us off. This is the Spirit of Romans 11:1-15.

Election is all about grace. How wonderful that is. We need to see how wonderful that is. Well, this hardening includes an, “insensibility of heart, sightless spiritual eyes, and deaf ears,” one said. How debilitating it is. Can you imagine if you had all those things and all those things occurred in you at once, how far from God you would be? And yet in His mercy, He will not let us go. Remember, if you do not remember anything else, remember, this is hardening in the present time with an end in view, a glorious end. And the glorious end is recovery. This is a temporary condition. You see it in verse eight. Again, it is emphasizing the present time. There is a phrase that says, “unto this day,” it is only for a while. And then God will do something marvelous.

### **The Fall that Brings Salvation to the World**

Well, the last point I will cover quickly. The Fall that Brings Salvation to the World. I want you to think about God's ways. When you look at verse eleven, let us read this. It is a very wonderful thing. Verse 11, “I say then, Have they stumbled in order that they might fall?” This was the question. Have they stumbled just so they can fall? Was this what their end was? Their permanent end? And Paul again with that phrase that he often used, “Far be the thought.” But listen to this. This was God's miraculous ways. He said, “But by their fall there is salvation to the nations to provoke them to jealousy.”

## **The Assurance of God's Plan**

Do not you see that in God's ways He had a great plan in view through the whole thing? Do you not begin to grasp that He is in control of history? And He is in control of all the things that come upon the earth? And that the divine plan from the beginning was to extend salvation to the nations or the Gentiles. That was the divine plan. And in that divine plan, which I think is marvelous, He would use that extension of the gospel to us to bring us into the kingdom, to provoke to jealousy that natural national people of His. Think about Israel. Do not cast Israel off. It is the only nation God has ever called. You know, we love to say America's beginnings had the Bible all in it. And of course they did to us. But there was only one nation God called. There was only one people that were ever a national people of His, and that is the Jewish people. Now, He cannot cast them off permanently.

Well, you are getting and understanding the burden. Paul says, "Did they do this that they might fall?" No, it was God's mercy. God's mercy flung the door of grace open to you and me. And we today are included as the people of God, the chosen people of God among those He has known beforehand that He might show us the miracle of His ways. This is an amazing point. That door of grace was flung open to the Gentiles. This was the very opportunity for God to save the world. Do you remember what He promised to Abraham in that covenant? You can read it in Genesis 12:3, "and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Read that very carefully. In the end, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. God had no intention in history to leave the nations and the Gentiles out. This was always the divine purpose and way of God. It is made very clear in that covenant to Abraham. It was not just to the Jews. Now it is to the nations. Through the fall of this national people, we see this blessing extended to the nations, to us.

## **The Fulfillment of God's Promise**

Oh, this is marvelous. And then in Genesis 17:4, to Abraham, it said, "and thou shalt be a father of a multitude of nations." Same point. God's ways never fail. He planned this, He knew this. He knew what would happen to Israel as a whole. Thank God, the remnant responded. But He had a plan in mind for this present time and for the end of times, which we will get to next time. God's way was to provoke them to jealousy. In other words, the Jewish people will begin at some time in history to realize the blessings that have been poured out upon us, the remnant of the Jews, and the Gentiles. And they will begin to recognize how wonderful these blessings are. And they will be provoked to jealousy. And somehow, in the miracle of the greatest gospel move almost ever, they will be returned to God. I am getting ahead of myself, but this is what chapter 11 is about.

Now, do you think God is able to provoke them to jealousy? He is able. He would not have said it if He were not able. He is able, He is able to turn them. If you read in Exodus 20:5, this is at the end of the giving of the Ten Commandments. And it says, "for I, Jehovah thy God, am a jealous God." We think jealousy is wrong. Right? You mention jealousy as evil. That is not a good thing. I will never forget something Brother Kaung said to us years ago. Brother Steve Sheridan, he said this in our Bible fellowship Friday night, "Jealousy is actually neutral." If you are jealous of the right things, it is good. If you are jealous that

your kids will grow up in the fear and admonition of the Lord, that is a good thing. It is God's jealousy that is perfect. And this is the assurance that He will provoke this nation to jealousy, because He took the very name, "I am the jealous God." Jealous over His purpose to perform it; jealous over His word, that sending His word forth will accomplish what He intended it to do; jealous over His people. That wonderful phrase, in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, "we are people of possession," His possession. This is what the jealous God talks about.

### **The Assurance of Reception**

In Deuteronomy 4:24. It says, "For Jehovah thy God is a consuming fire, a jealous God." I am praying for myself, and for you, and for all that He will save, that this jealous God will never let us go; reminding Him of His ways. He cannot and He will not. This is the encouragement of these fifteen verses. You know, the last four verses are filled with divine assurance. It talks about the world's wealth. Let me read Romans 11:12 to you. "But if their fall be the world's wealth, and their loss the wealth of the nations, how much rather their fulness?" Now, did you notice that last phrase? "How much rather their fullness?" Do you think the Apostle Paul just inserted his thoughts in there? No, this is the Divine thought. This is the Divine answer He has for those people whom He has called a "fulness." And He will never let it go. That is why it talks about the fullness of the nation, which can be related to the fullness of the times. He has a fullness in view for these people. This is the assurance we have when we come to these last verses.

And then, well, let me read verses 13 and 14. "For I speak to you, the nations, inasmuch as I am apostle of nations, I glorify my ministry; if by any means I shall provoke to jealousy them which are my flesh, and shall save some from among them." Here is the Apostle Paul, his ministry was to the Gentiles. This one that was such an exceptional representative of the Jewish people and the learned Jews. His ministry actually came to us, the Gentiles, the nations, and the remnant of the Jews for the present time. But this apostle reverted back. He could not help but think about his people. He said, "If by any means." If by any means, brothers, and sisters, that phrase explains chapter 11 so well. This is the way God thinks. Here is a man that understood the ways of God. If by any means, if God can do anything, He will provoke His people to jealousy. And if in the end some are saved, He is pleased. That is wonderful. When we come to the end, in verse fifteen, it says this, "For if their casting away be the world's reconciliation." You already understand that, right? "What their reception but life from among the dead?" Now think about it. This is not Paul's thought. He is not thinking spiritually, trying to produce an understanding. This is God's ways. What shall their end be but reception from the dead.

### **Conclusion**

#### **The Prodigal Son**

Isn't that beautiful? What does that remind you of? Well, I will give you a hint. The hint is the prodigal son. Do you remember that? What an illustration of the ways of God. I can imagine that father looking for that son to return. I can imagine he went out every

morning at the break of dawn, the light was up, and he looked out upon the horizon, and he scanned the whole horizon looking for that one lost son. I can imagine that. I can imagine that one who had a true father's heart would every night before dusk descended and darkness enveloped the earth, he would come out and look out upon the horizon and look, is my son coming home? Is he coming home? And you can then imagine the delight that day, that one day he looked out and there he saw his son. And he could not withhold his emotions, and he ran, and he embraced that son. Isn't this wonderful? Do you not think this is an explanation of Romans 11:1-15. At the end, what will their reception be? Life from among the dead.

You remember that older brother got upset, right? "And Father, I have never left you. I have always been faithful about what I have done. And you have never killed the fatted calf for me. You have never done these things." And his only answer, "My son who once was dead is alive. Let us rejoice and be merry." Isn't that wonderful? That is Luke 15:24, the end of that glorious story.

I imagine when I read Romans 11, this is what I see, the Father looking out. When will they return? Have they begun a yearning? Will this temporary blindness be removed? Will they be brought back to the fold? I can imagine He is waiting, looking to say, "Life from among the dead." Well, to me this is at least part of the explanation of Romans 11:1-15.

Thank God that we are in the election at the present time. Thank God we have received that election according to grace. We have been selected by God. Thank God that this blindness that fell upon national Israel is temporary. And God is doing everything He can, "if by any means," to restore those that are lost. This is the ways of God. He cannot abandon them; He will not abandon them. All His discipline is with recovery in view. And the divine assurance at the end is their reception will be life from among the dead.

*Father, we bow in the name of the Lord Jesus, and we wonder at Your ways, Your wonderful ways. Who is like Thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who thinks like You, Lord? We do not, we confess it, we are wandering people. But You have set the course, and You will never change Your ways. And we commit ourselves and all that You will call into Your kingdom, that You will finish Your glorious ways and bring about the fullness at the end. Bring about the reception at the end. And may You get all the glory. All of grace, everything we have received, we thank You for. In Jesus precious name, Amen.*

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