

The previous context of 11:1-6 speaks of Israel having a historical and current problem — the majority is unbelieving, obstinate, and rebellious. But as we saw in Romans 10:1-4, it is not as though they think they are wrong. They have a zeal for God but not according to understanding. They are obstinate to the truth, veiled in passion for God. As a result, they have not obtained what they seek.

Romans 11:7-10 What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; just as it is written,

“God gave them a spirit of stupor, Eyes to see not and ears to hear not, Down to this very day.” And David says, “Let their table become a snare and a trap, And a stumbling block and a retribution to them. “Let their eyes be darkened to see not, And bend their backs forever.”

In verse 7, Paul states plainly that “What Israel seeks, it has not obtained.” The words used in this verse are of interest. The verbs (seeks, obtains 2x) are all emphatic. Paul uses the typical words for "seek" and "obtain," but there is an additional preposition (*epi*) attached to these verbs in this verse.

The verb for “is seeking” is “ἐπιζητέω *epizēteō* (*eh-peed-zay-teh'-oh*);” the main verb is used very simply for seek, want, look for. The “*epi*” intensifies the seeking. The definition of this compound word demonstrates the implications of intensifying seeking: "strive for, inquire, dispute, debate, demand." The BDG concludes that this word in this context means to "strive for" (Matthew 6:30-33). All of the synoptics use this word in "this evil and adulterous generation **seeks after** a sign." The context is that they continue to seek after they have been given a sign or they had heard of the signs. The word is neither negative or positive but it is based upon what is eagerly sought (Philippians 4:17). The word indicates a continual perpetual seeking, not being satisfied with what one has. If it is for the Word of God, we should never be satisfied but have a continual seeking for truth; it is a very good thing. If it after personal desires, experiences, etc. then the implication is negative.

The question then comes in “for what does Israel eagerly seek?” Some have mistakenly concluded that Israel is seeking spiritual salvation. The context is Israel as a nation, not individuals; the context is purpose, not position. Therefore, what Israel was/is seeking is to function as God's instrument displaying the His glory. Because of their disbelief, that privilege has been set aside. They seek it with fervor, but God denies them.

It is important to understand that they want it, they seek it, they have been rejected, and then they try to reopen the verdict, deliberate the decision. Remember the intensity with which they seek. The fact that they seek after the approval and use of YHWH only leads to greater destruction because they do not heed the good news of Jesus Christ (the Messiah). This is also why only the believing remnant is and can be used in the “*ekklesia*” in this dispensation.

Only the ones who believe, the current remnant, have obtained all of what Israel seeks. The word for “chosen” is the same as in 11:5 and means “to be selected.” As we have noted, it is always “selected for a purpose.”

Israel had been God’s chosen vessel from Abraham to the Church Age. Even during their unbelief (it was the believers that fulfilled that duty), it was still through Israel and Hebrew Scriptures that one needed to go in order to understand the truth.

Today, they do not hold the truth. There is no truth in Israel. But in contrast, a completed Jew is one of the best sources to understand the truth of God and the Messiah.

In order to make this plain, Paul once again turns to the Old Testament to demonstrate that this is not his (Paul’s) statement but God Himself speaks of this time in the Hebrew Scriptures.

As a group that has no trouble with this understanding, this may seem like Paul is overstating the point. But we must understand the situation. The revealing of the church is still in its infancy. Jews are the prominent group, if not the majority, of believers in the church.

There is probably a number of well-meaning believers that are questioning this doctrine, either implying or accusing Paul of teaching this on his own. Paul is careful, systematic, and Biblical in explaining God’s setting aside of Israel and His using a new entity.

There is some debate about from where the first OT quote comes, either Deuteronomy 29:2-9 or Isaiah 29:9-12, and second is definitely from Psalm 69. Based upon observation from the LXX, the context and the passage seem to more accurately relate to and allude to Isaiah. The point of Isaiah is that God made it difficult to understand the words that were written to them because of their unbelief.

Some have properly referred to Matthew 13:10-15 as another example of this hardening of Israel due to their obstinate unbelief. Here, after signs and teachings, Jesus begins to teach in parables as a judgment against unbelieving Israel, but believers were given understanding of the parables. It is important to understand that God desires to use Israel, but because of their unbelief, they have been rejected (but not forever).

Now we turn to Psalm 69. Verses 20-21 are Messianic in that Jesus was alone and not cared for while hanging on the cross. David also symbolizes this in his own life. He sought care and comfort but there was no one. To whom was he referring? Who was supposed to care and comfort him? Israel. Psalm 69:22-28 tells of a great judgment. In context and due to Paul's use, to whom is this referring? Israel.

In the quoted text, “their table” refers to that which Israel had and expected. They had the privilege of being the administrators of God’s glory. The provisions and promises that are Israel’s have now become that which traps them.

I heard a semi-secular Jew say that as long as they live a conscientious life and maintain general belief in YHWH, they will make it to eternity. The promises of an eternal kingdom made to Israel they took as individual eternality.

Similarly, Jews then and now cannot understand the passages which so clearly illustrate that, at a point in time, Israel will come under discipline and be set aside. God is actually involved in their hardening so that the judgment of God will become obvious and necessary. God has bound unbelieving Israel to its fate, but there has always been a believing remnant and in the last day, there will be a final, The Remnant, who will enter into the Millennial Reign.

Recap:

1. Israel Seeks With Fervor to Be Used By God.
2. They Have Not Obtained It Due to Their Unbelief.
3. Due to This Rejection, God Perpetuates Their Stupor.
4. This is Not About Justification But About the Change of Vessels.
5. The Hebrew Scripture is Clear that Israel Would Be Set Aside; That Time is Now
6. The Setting Aside of Israel is Temporary, Not Permanent

Romans 11:11-15 I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation *has come* to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen 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?

The context of this paragraph is the rejection of Israel as far as their privilege of having the role of administrator. Because we already understand that this is temporary, we have adapted our language to say the “setting aside of Israel.” This makes it sound less final. But the fact still remains that Israel is under severe discipline and will face near destruction before restoration.

The verse begins in the same manner as 11:1. Without repeating why, I will simply render this “Therefore, I am not saying they stumbled with the result that they would fall, inconceivable!” Once again, the tone is that of doctrine with an emphasis on Scripture so that it is not misconstrued as Paul giving this condemnation.

“Stumble” is the word “πταίω *ptaiō* (*ptay’-oh*)” and is translated literally but always has a figurative usage in the New Testament. This word means to commit an error in light of truth (James 2:10; 3:2; 2nd Peter 1:9-10). So, in the context of Romans, Israel has made a significant error.

“πίπτω *piptō* (*pihp’-toe*)” means to fall. Now, how this is normally understood is that Israel messed up so much that their discipline/judgment is final. In fact, there is nothing that they can do that would cause God to forsake His promises to Israel. The question is, “Is that what this verse is saying?”

The problem comes in when we look closer into the word “πίπτω *piptō*.” In verse 12, the next phrase contains a cognate, “παράπτωμα *paraptōma* (*pah-rah’-ptoh-mah*),” translated transgression or offense. The cognate of a word does not automatically mean we should question an interpretation but now look at verse 22. “The ones who fell” is “πίπτω *piptō*” as an articular participle and is referring to Israel. In one breath, Paul says they stumbled but did not fall and in another says they fell.

The solution lies in the conjunction in verse 11. “Therefore, I am not saying they stumbled with the result that they would fall, Inconceivable!” In the NASB, the conjunction is translated “so as to.” This is a “*hina* clause” and introduces a purpose or result. This indicates that the purpose of Israel’s misstep was to have them fall.

In the verse, the purpose of their rejection was not to just reject them but to select another. Read the rest of verse 11 with this in mind. The purpose of the rejection was so that the nations might obtain salvation.

Salvation, in this context, is not about the justification of individuals but that the administration of God might go to foreigners. This is well established in the previous lessons of Romans 10. The verse concludes with the goal of Israel's rejection and the administration given to another so that it would cause them to be jealous.

Verse 12 reiterates this point by restating that their offense and failures have meant an opportunity that no one expected, the Gentiles have been included in the proclamation and caretaking of the gospel of God. Paul provides an amazing contrast of how much more the blessing will be when Israel is restored. He does not answer this yet but returns to this question in verse 15.

Verse 13-14 is an interjection of Paul's motivation, speaking as the Apostle to the Gentiles. Paul's ministry is to the entity that would take over the responsibility of being the pillar of truth to the world. This is the biggest stressor in the early church. In every letter, Paul points out in some manner that the Gospel is for everyone, implying not for the Jew only. It has been obvious that Paul is not excluding the Jews, but rather he is constantly reminding the Jewish believers not to exclude the Gentiles.

The problem in Acts 15 (Galatians 2) is not the works component, although that is the result. The root of the problem is that the Jewish believers were trying to make the Gentiles into Jews, not simply accepting them into the body of Christ. The result is legalism and Judaizers.

Ephesians 2:11-16; Colossians 3:11; 1st Timothy 2:3-7 – the unfortunate truth now is that many have the opposite thought — the gospel is for Gentiles only and Jews should be left alone. They shouldn't waste their breath on those who would not believe. But that is negating the very purpose of the existence of the "ekklesia."

Romans 11:13-14 – The interjection is more than just an explanation that he is an apostle to the Gentiles. Paul is instrumental in the plan of God to provoke Israel to jealousy. Paul is zealous for the Gospel, he is passionate for all men (heart for all people), but also his ministry is fulfilling the need to Israel as well. Paul is participating in saving more Jews by establishing the church.

Paul states, "I magnify my ministry to the Gentiles, hopefully making some of them jealous and save some from among Israel." "Save," in context, is referring to the function of believers, the ministry.

Verse 15 continues by enhancing the thought from verse 12. The amazing benefit of Israel's rejection has been to the nations (the world). When Israel is restored, what will that mean?

"...life from the dead" — This last phrase has a normal interpretation of hyperbole, but this is not the case. When Israel is restored, all the earth will come to a partial reconciliation that will be followed by a full and eternal perfection. Romans 8:20-21; Revelation 20:1-6

The implication is that all of humanity and creation will be harmonized for a time after Jesus returns and restores Israel. Vicious creatures will be tame, the lion will eat grass, natural violence will be stifled, mankind will be at peace with God (for a time).

Recap:

1. The Purpose of Israel's Failure Was Not to Have Them Rejected.
2. Their Rejection Was to Institute a New Entity (*ekklesia*).
3. This New Entity's Purpose Is to Provoke Jealousy in Israel.
4. Israel's Rejection Meant Benefit to the Gentiles.
5. Israel's Restoration Will Cause Global Restoration
6. We Need to Understand Our Purpose and Be Prepared to Give the Gospel to All Men
 - a. To The Jew
 - b. To The Gentile