Romans chap. 11

Israel without repentance

1 I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, 3 Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. 4 But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. 5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 6 And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. 7 What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded 8 (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. 9 And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them: 10 Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway. 11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. 12 Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? 13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: 14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. 15 For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? 16 For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. 17 And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert graffed in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; 18 Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. 19 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be graffed in. 20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: 21 For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. 22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. 23 And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be graffed in: for God is able to graff them in again. 24 For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert graffed contrary to nature into a good olive

tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be graffed into their own olive tree? 25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. 26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: 27 For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. 28 As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. 29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. 30 For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: 31 Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. 32 For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. 33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! 34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? 35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? 36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Paul here foreseeing some may draw the conclusion that God has cast away all Israel dispels this by showing that he was a true descendent of the flesh and was not cast away even in his blindness when he persecuted the church. The tribe of Benjamin being the one tribe that remained with Judah and comprised the faithful house of Judah. There was a remnant of believing Jews and Paul was part of this even in his blindness when he was dysfunctional sheep. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. An election according to grace is one of the most powerful truths in the bible. Of all truths this one in particular does completely away with the works of man. If God does all the choosing then my choice, my will, my works and my efforts play no role whatsoever. Some may argue that this does away with man's responsibility but it most certainly does not. We are responsible for our lives in this world but God like any loving Father chooses what is best for his children.

Paul next begins his famous analogy of the olive tree where the unbelieving branches were broken off and the wild branches were grafted in by faith. I have heard many different understandings for the olive tree from Israel to the Abrahamic covenant to Jesus himself. The branches that were broken off are said to be Israel and the tree supports the branches so the

idea that Israel is broken off or grafted back into Israel is nonsensical. Jesus didn't make his earthly appearance until the 1st century so the best understanding of the olive tree is the Abrahamic covenant. Where the Jews could have been broken off of by unbelief and the Gentiles could have been grafted into by faith. Many forget that Abraham himself was a Gentile from Ur of the Chaldees and the distinction between Jew and Gentile didn't occur until Jacob the father of Israel. So Gentiles who are grafted into the Abrahamic covenant are really being grafted into a natural or everlasting covenant that God made with Abraham the father of many nations. Paul next warns the Gentiles not to become proud - For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Our standing in the covenant of grace is solely by faith so unbelief in all its varied forms is a death sentence.

Verses 25 - 29 are some of the most controversial in all of Romans so we will be looking at these in depth. The most controversial phrase is 'all Israel shall be saved' with many commentators concluding that all of Israel of the flesh will be saved at the end of time. The restoration of the state of Israel in 1948 adding credence to these beliefs. This 'all Israel' if we continue reading is part of a covenant that will take away their sins. The old covenant based on law could not remove sin only strengthen and magnify it. So this 'all Israel' will be under the new covenant of grace and if we continue reading they will be part of an irrevocable election. We must conclude that 'all Israel' refers to a group of elect Jews who will come to faith at the end of time. These elect Jews will cast off the cup of Babylon with its poison of works and performance religion and embrace Christ and the gospel of grace. When we look at the elect Jews of the 1st century they all preached grace, Paul was not the only one albeit John focused more on love and James focused more on works. Many Christians try to pit Paul against James even going so far as to say that Paul's gospel was only for the Gentiles and James's gospel was only for the Jews when nothing could be further from the truth.

James actually had a very strong emphasis on grace, faith and love with him even saying that love is the royal law of scripture (James 2:8). James also had a strong emphasis on works as the fruit of justification which is completely biblical. The doctrine of Justification by faith alone is one of the most attacked and misunderstood of all Protestant beliefs. Justification by faith alone excludes all human works as a means of attaining to or apprehending justification, it does not mean that believers produce no works at all. The believer's works are produced by Christ via the Holy Spirit in and thru us. So those who uphold the gospel of 'faith alone' will always produce works of the Spirit or works of love. While those who uphold the gospel of 'faith plus works' will always produce works of the flesh or works of the law which are never acceptable to God. The Catholic church being the most famous example of the corrupted 'faith plus works' gospel where Christ is robbed of his power to save sinners to the uttermost. Souls

that are won to Christ under the corrupted 'faith plus works' gospel often enter a lukewarm state and are only partially if ever fully converted. Faith alone being the hot state and works alone being the cold state in the famous Laodicean analogy.

The two branches of Protestant Christianity that still uphold 'faith alone' theology are Lutheran and Calvinist/Reformed churches. Lutherans have the most formal style of worship which is not for everyone but they have excellent Sunday school lessons. Calvinist/Reformed churches are a less formal option if one can get past all the hypocrisy and arrogance which I personally have no problem with. I have had good experiences with the Church of Christ who focus on the bible alone and reject many of the dispensational ideas which are so popular today. Probably the best experience I have had to date are with the non-denominational bible and celebration churches. Congregations who are into loud drums and electric guitars definitely don't trust in their works which is always a good sign but once again not for everyone. No church is perfect and while most churches have devolved into a business in our day where if you hear any gospel at all it is usually the corrupted 'faith plus works' gospel it does not mean that God is not present there. We are all on a journey of faith and God's Spirit can be heard even from the dysfunctional sheep like the apostle Paul used to be until he met Jesus on the Damascus road.

We will be beginning a 4 part mini-series on the twelve spiritual tribes of Israel. There are four dominant character types per the four living creatures around the throne of God so going by the orders in Revelation: Judah, Reuben and Gad would be the tribes of the lion. Ashur, Naphtali and Manasses would be the tribes of the bull. Simeon, Levi and Issachar would be the tribes of the man. And Zebulun, Joseph and Benjamin would be the tribes of the eagle. I realize that this can be very subjective but my purpose is to show that those who are re-born in Christ have a much different character than those who are born of the flesh. Jesus said the twelve disciples would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel - Matt. 19:28. The disciples were most likely from Judah or Benjamin, the house of Judah being the only ethnic house remaining in the 1st century also two sets of disciples were brothers and brothers would come from the same tribe. So the disciples far from being ethnic members of the twelve tribes were spiritual heads or fathers of the twelve spiritual tribes of Israel. Judas of course being replaced by Paul not Matthias. The disciples chose Matthias while Jesus chose Paul and his choice is the only one that counts.