

Romans 11 v. 1-16

Basic problem – fact of unbelieving Israel. Shows that God is not under obligation to save Israel if she has rejected His terms of salvation by faith. Their refusal of God's terms was predicted by the prophets. But God's long-suffering towards Israel was not exhausted. Holds out hope of glorious future for Israel. Present situation is not final. Blessedness of Gentiles will provoke unbelieving Israel to emulation, and therefore to regain lost fellowship with God by faith. Israel's restoration to be associated with marvellous blessings to the world.

So far blessing on Jews is confined to godly remnant amid national degeneracy. But to be more widespread blessing in future days. **God hath not cast away His people whom He foreknew** (Romans 11:2), i.e. not just foresight, but note with pleasure "loved". Historical analogy –at the time of Elijah there was also a godly remnant unknown to entire nation, 7000 who had not bowed knee to Baal (11:4). And now, says Paul, there is a remnant related to God on basis of grace and not works. Through this remnant God makes provision for the future. Meanwhile, the rest are hardened – a statement which is corroborated by quotations from Isaiah 29:10, Deuteronomy 29:4 and Psalm 69:22-23. The majority are therefore still seeking righteousness by works. But there are the few who are enjoying salvation through grace by faith. Hardening of heart of the majority was because of their sin and rebellion.

Much about God is seen in vv1-10. The Apostle Paul builds a monument of Divine mercy. We need not despair of the hardest case. The Jewish nation is a monument of Divine faithfulness to His promises regarding the Jews, despite their sin. The godly remnant is a monument of Divine mercy. (In most corrupt countries, God has some true followers. God is never without His witnesses.) Rebellious majority are monument to Divine justice (Warnings about becoming over familiar with divine truth, i.e. "Gospel-hardened").

But though this is the present situation of the great majority of the nation, a great change is coming. This temporary hardening is, in fact, in preparation for future restoration. Israel's ruin is not final or permanent. God's over-ruling of the situation is in evidence. Fact of Gentile salvation is, in turn, intended to stir the Jews, and to cause the Jews to wish for and accept the same Saviour. Israel's restoration must lead to super-abundant blessing. If, by the fall of the Jews, the world received the Gospel, how much more will the world be blessed through the return and restoration of Jews to Christ. Reception back again is to be of infinitely greater value to the world than their fall – indeed the restoration of the Jews will be **life from the dead** (v15). Therefore wholesale salvation of Jews to bring spiritual revival to the church.

Two metaphors in v.16 about the restoration of the Jews – (1) the first fruits and the lump, and (2) root and branches. The patriarchs were the first fruits from whom the lump (i.e. the people) descended. They made pledge of consecration of the whole nation. So again Abraham was the Root, and the Branches were his descendents. He made earnest promise of great future for his race.

In summary, therefore, the problem of human sin in relationship to God is still with us.

1. God's promise and human sin. In the Old Testament, there were promises of the Messiah with spiritual blessings. But alas Jews not accept the promise. So today.
2. God's providence and human sin. God used Israel's rejection to cause Gentiles to be saved. Then He used that to stir up Jews to awareness of need.
3. God's purpose. God over-ruled deepest iniquity to bless the whole world.
4. God's power. Sin is not to be victorious. But if we wait long enough we may see divine power is not really thwarted. Grace is, in the long run, omnipotent. Though evil is great, sin's power is limited. In spite of appearances to the contrary "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth".