

The Gospel Story: Mercy to All

Romans 11:1-36

Pastor Bryan Clark

Romans chapter 8 was the climax of the first eight chapters where God reminds us that all creation awaits this grand redemption yet to come. He reminded us that if God is for us, who can be against us? And he told us, promised us, that nothing can separate us from the love of God. Chapter 8 is filled with promises that Christians claim. But at the end of the chapter, one might say, “Seems to me God made some pretty audacious promises to the children of Israel, and it seems to me maybe He didn’t keep those promises. Therefore, what would be the basis by which we think He would keep these promises He’s made to us?” which is then the basis for launching Romans 9, 10 and 11. I told you a couple of weeks ago these are three very difficult chapters—this week Chapter 11, perhaps the most difficult of the three. So I would say to you: Hang in there one more week, and then Chapter 12 starts the most practical section of the Book of Romans—how do we live out this magnificent truth?

God indeed kept His promises to the nation of Israel. Chapter 9 was the reminder that God never said every ethnic Jew would be saved, but rather promised that there would always be a remnant that would enter into His salvation, into the promises that He made to Abraham. But in order for God to make sure that those promises were perfectly fulfilled, God had to exercise His sovereignty. He had to enter into the story; He had to interject Himself into the story to sovereignly determine that those promises would be fulfilled. We reminded ourselves: no sovereignty means no security, which then raises the question: If that’s true, then does that mean that those who didn’t believe, didn’t believe because they were non-elect? Chapter 10: No, that’s not the case. They weren’t saved, not because they were non-elect, but because they were disobedient. They were obstinate. They chose to reject the Messiah. Did they know the message? Yes, they did. Did they understand the message? Yes, they did. Did they reject the message? Yes, they did. They bear the responsibility which leaves us with the question: How can both Chapters 9 and 10 be true? How can there be sovereign election *and* human responsibility? And our answer was: I have no idea. But somehow God reconciles it in His economy. Just because I can’t, with all my limitations, figure it out doesn’t mean God doesn’t resolve it. So we leave it at that.

Chapter 11 is perhaps the most difficult because, basically you take Chapter 9—God’s sovereign election, and Chapter 10—human responsibility, and you put them both into Chapter 11 to finish the story. Basically the story in Chapter 11 is: Okay, then what about the Jews today?—which would have been two thousand years ago in Paul’s day. But we can ask the same question for us today: And what about the future? All of the questions that we had in Chapter 9, all the questions we had in Chapter 10, they remain. We are not going to resolve them in Chapter 11. I’m not going to try to go back over all that again. We are just going to understand what we said in Chapter 9, what we said in Chapter 10, and we are going to accept that there are things we can’t resolve—lots of questions, lot of mysteries to this story.

So with that in mind, I would invite you to turn with us to Romans Chapter 11. It would be very easy in Chapter 11 to get lost in the details, because there are lots of details and it gets overwhelming. But in the process, we tend to lose the point. So I’m going to make every effort to take big chunks and just stay true to what’s the point; what’s the big idea that Paul is trying to communicate? Chapter 11, verse 1:

I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the *passage* about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? **“Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE.”** But what is the divine response to him? **“I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL.”** In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God’s gracious choice. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. 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.”** (*NASB, Romans 11:1-10)

Chapter 11 verse 1 is the question Paul is asking in his day, “Is God done with ethnic Israel?” And the answer is, “No”. There is yet unfinished business. There are yet promises to be fulfilled. His first defense for that answer is that he himself is a Jew. He himself was Jewish up to his eyebrows. He himself was zealous for God, but he was sincerely wrong. He was steeped in self-righteousness. But God pursued him. No one would say that Paul just figured out grace. As a matter of fact, if you know the story, there’s no question God tracked him down; God pursued him. God literally brought him to his knees on the Damascus road and revealed Himself to Paul. And Paul responded. So you have both God’s choice and human responsibility in the conversion of the Apostle Paul. So he’s saying, clearly, even now, God still pursues a remnant and He gives Himself as an example.

Then he goes back to the story of Elijah. The story of Elijah is when Elijah had a contest between himself and the prophets of Baal—and God handily won the contest. It was a great victory for Elijah—and he was very excited, and he expected the nation to turn to God. But word got back to Queen Jezebel and she was very upset. She was so upset that she put a *hit* out on Elijah. So Elijah went into this depression and he ran and he hid. And he uttered the words that were recorded in the text, basically, “Woe is me! I’m the only one left. And now they’re going to kill me.” And so Paul says, “Really? What did God say?” God came back and said to Elijah, “No, Elijah, there are **seven thousand godly men who have not bowed a knee to Baal.**” In other words, God is saying, “I saved a remnant. I’ve always saved a remnant.” But the text is clear: it was God’s choice. If God did not sovereignly intervene into the story, the remnant would not have remained. And that’s where Paul says, verse 5...**In the same way then**, so he’s saying, “Just as this was true in the day of Elijah, it is just as true in the first century. God continues to raise up a remnant.

Verse 6 is just a good reminder that it's **by grace**—that this remnant doesn't exist because they were high performers, because they were self-righteous, because they were utterly religious. It's because of God's grace and *they* chose to believe. Verse 6 is very clear that grace and works are not compatible systems. You cannot say: I'm going to have a little grace; I'm going to have a little bit of works. A lot of people want to do that because they feel like that's safe—might as well cover all the bases. But what Paul is saying is, "It doesn't work. You can't do that. If it's works, it's one hundred percent by works. If it's grace, it's one hundred percent by grace. It's one or the other."

Starting then in verse 7, he reminds us of what he's already told us: that there is a remnant that has been saved by faith and there is the obstinate, the disobedient, those steeped in self-righteousness, that turned away and were hardened in their sin. Now we could say that was the conversation two thousand years ago, but it equally would be true of the conversation today, because we would continue to ask the question: "What about ethnic Israel?" A lot of people seem to be under the impression that that was the story *then*...but that's old news. And now it's about us—the Gentiles, and the church—which to some degree is true. It is about the church now, but God is not finished with ethnic Israel. There are still unfulfilled promises yet to be fulfilled to them as a nation. Just the fact that there is a nation of Israel today is nothing short of a miracle. If you study the history of the Hebrew people, of the Israelites, you would say over and over and over again, "It is just miraculous that they continue to survive." They might say it's because of their traditions. They might say it's because of their ways. But we would say there's only one explanation—it's because of the sovereignty of God, because God is not done with them as an ethnic people.

A little over a hundred years ago, Frederick was the leader, the king of Prussia, and Frederick was struggling to continue to believe the Bible is true. He was highly influenced by the French atheist Voltaire. So he kept asking his chaplain for reasons to believe that the Bible is true. He kind of had it up to here and he said to his chaplain, "I'm tired of reading long books and long-winded explanations. Can't you just give it to me in a word or two?" And the chaplain thought about it for a while and said, "Actually, I can. I can give it to you in one word. The one word: Israel." It was an answer that Frederick found acceptable. It is simply miraculous that God has continued to preserve His ethnic people. There are those who would believe that the church has replaced Israel. But in Chapter 11 that's clearly not the case. Those Jews who believe today are brought into the church. We are all one people—Jews, Arabs, Black, White, Asian—we all come together as the church. But there's still unfinished business with the nation of Israel and that continues to be obvious in this text.

So verses 1 through 10 are about: what about now? But starting in verse 11 it's: what about the future?

I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? (*meaning the Israelites*) (Vs. 11a)

He's asking the question: "Did they blow it to a degree that God has given up on them? You know, three strikes and you are out." And the answer is, "No," that's not the case.

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? If the first piece of *dough* is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too. (Vs. 11b-16)

You say, “What in the world does that mean?” Basically it’s something he’s going to repeat a couple of times in this chapter. And that is that God started with the Hebrew people—He started with the Israelites—He started with a promise made to Abraham, a covenant made to Abraham that was really quite a spectacular covenant. But as the Hebrew people, the Israelites, rejected God and His promise, then God moved His attention to the Gentiles. Because of Israel’s disobedience, the offer went to the Gentiles. But the desire was that the Gentiles, by coming to faith in Christ in waves, would create jealousy among the Israelites, so that they would turn back to their Messiah. Now there are all kinds of unanswerable questions that go with that, but the basic idea is God started with the Hebrew people; they turned away; He opened it up to the Gentiles, desiring that as the Gentiles would come to Christ, the Jews would rethink their position and come back to the Messiah. So part of the argument to us, as the Gentiles, is that if, as a result of Israel’s rebellion, what we’ve received is spectacular, what we’ve received is riches, what we’ve received is our salvation, imagine how much greater it will be when God’s Israelites, when God’s people, come into the fold as well. In other words, the ultimate combination will be far beyond what we can even imagine. And that’s basically the case he’s trying to make.

At the end of verse 15, he talks about **life from the dead**. Now there’s a fair amount of discussion as to what exactly that phrase is referring to. The phrase **from the dead** appears forty-seven times. Forty-six of those times are in reference to the resurrection, at the end of the story. So we’d be on pretty safe ground to say that’s what it’s referring to here. And you are going to see that in a little bit, that there is this looking forward to the fulfillment of God’s plan that comes with the salvation of the Gentiles, the fulfillment of the promises to Israel, the ultimate resurrection, the return of Jesus and the ushering in of the new heaven and the new earth. And there’s a reminder that there’s this big sovereign story going on—that your salvation is *not* just you picking up a couple of tickets to heaven and that’s all it is. It’s the unfolding of God’s plan and purpose in the world. It’s a big story. It’s not primarily about you or me. It’s about God and it’s about His sovereignty and it’s about his story and it’s about His ultimate victory that you have been invited into.

Verse 16 just uses two very simple images—metaphors—that talk about **a piece of dough**, and out of that piece of dough, you pull out a lump. And the basic idea is: if the piece of dough was holy, then the lump you pull out is holy. Same thing with the root in the tree: the tree grows out of the root, so if the root is holy, then the tree that grows out of it is holy. God made a promise to the remnant, and those who come out of that, connected to that promise, then are holy, are set apart, are children of that promise, which sets up the discussion that follows.

But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partakers with them of the rich root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, *remember that* it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either. Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God’s kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again. (Vs. 17-23)

Now what's he's saying there—again it gets kind of confusing. Basically what he's saying is that there was this root and the root is basically the Abrahamic covenant, the promises God made to Abraham concerning his descendants, the promises that would be true of the remnant. But because many of the Hebrew people did not believe, they are the branches that were broken off because of their disbelief. So then God took wild volunteer olive branches—in other words the Gentiles—and He grafted them into the tree, so that we as Gentiles would experience the nourishment, the life of the promises made to Abraham. So we as Gentiles are grafted into the root, to the promises. But then he reminds us: as Gentiles, don't be arrogant. Don't start thinking somehow you are self-righteous. Don't think somehow you're greater than, because, at the end of the day, our faith is not ultimately Gentile; it's Jewish. We are rooted into the promises made to Abraham. We as Gentiles are grafted into the promise—and it's good never to forget that. As a matter of fact, he says, "Rather than becoming arrogant, we should be fearful. If God broke off branches that were the natural branches, then He's not going to hesitate to break off the wild olive branches that are grafted in, if they choose not to believe." Now I don't think he's saying that an individual can lose his or her salvation. That would be contrary to everything he's talked about in the last chapters. He's not talking here about individuals; he's talking about nations. And he's talking about, as a nation, Israel did not believe and, as a people group, as a nation if you will, the Gentiles came in waves. But if the Gentiles become arrogant, become spiritually arrogant, become self-righteous, God will take His hand of blessing off them as well.

Now this is interesting to think about. Whenever God steps in and pours out His blessing, history would say there's always this tendency for the blessed to start to become arrogant, to start to think: this was about *me*; this was about *my* performance; this was about *my* great intellect; this is because *we* figured it out. And suddenly we start thinking: somehow it's because I'm better or we figured this out or we are better—and it creates a certain degree of spiritual arrogance, that then moves to self-righteousness, which then causes God's hand of blessing to move away. It's a very dangerous pattern.

One of the interesting ways to see this is just to think about what we might call the center of Christianity over the last two thousand years. One of the unique things about the Christian faith is that the center of Christianity has geographically moved around the world—that in contrast with the world religions. If you think about Islam, if you think about Buddhism, if you think about Hinduism, all of them are geographically centered—and they all remain geographically centered in the place where that religion was born. There's no example of a world religion moving geographically around the world as Christianity has. But basically, you have people for whom God has poured out his blessing, often great revival, often turns to spiritual arrogance, often turns to self-righteousness, and then God moves His hand of blessing somewhere else. I think you can make a case that at one time that center of Christianity was here in the West and, specifically, in the United States. We had a strong desire to live according to God's principles. I mean we actually put on our coinage: In God we trust. We actually put in the Pledge of Allegiance: One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all, which by the way—there's very little in the Pledge of Allegiance that's true of us anymore. We have fundamentally changed as a nation. We have gone the route of spiritual arrogance, to self-righteousness, that moves to secularism, and that's certainly the path we are on now. I don't know any missiologist that would make the case that the United States is the center of Christianity anymore. Not by any means—we haven't been for a long time. It's moved to places like Latin America, to places in Asia, to places in Africa, where we as a country aren't even close to being in the top missionary-sending country anymore. We

fundamentally changed because of our self-righteousness, because of our arrogance, and now because of our secularism, the hand of God continues to move around.

But it's not just as a nation; we could bring it down to a local church. If you were here last week, it was so emotionally stirring to see sixty-one people baptized, to celebrate the power of Jesus to change lives. It was wonderful! It's just a glimpse of the fruit of what God is doing here. But it would be very easy to experience that and start to think: *we* did that; *we* must have it figured out. *We* must be the best church in town. *We* must have a clever strategy. *We* obviously have superior leadership. (laughter) And suddenly we take the hand of God's blessing and turned it into a degree of arrogance and self-righteousness and, "Look at what we are doing," and we began to lose our way. It's very important to come out of a weekend like last weekend, to be disciplined to say, "This is just God. It's God and His goodness and His grace." It's not about our leaders. It's not about our strategy. It's not about something we figured out. It's just God and God's blessing—and the right response is, in brokenness and humility and thanksgiving, that God would continue to do a work among us.

So you have this obvious pattern in history and that's what Paul is describing. Again, he talks about the remnant that has been chosen. He talks about Israel who's been hardened because of their unbelief. But then he says in verse 23, that if they chose to believe, if they—Israel—chose not to continue in unbelief, God will certainly graft them back in. Basically he says, "If God grafted in a wild olive branch, of course, He'd graft back in the natural branch." So God continues to save the Jewish remnant even today in our lifetime. Verse 24:

For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree? For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, so that you will not be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written,

**"THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION,
HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB."
"THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM,
WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS."**

From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all. (Vs. 24-32)

Now he talks about a **mystery**. In the Bible, a mystery is always something that has been previously hidden, that's now being revealed. So we would say: in the first century, what Paul reveals in Chapter 11 was something never known before and this is the first time that it's revealed. What is the mystery? There's a little debate about that but I think the mystery is him saying that the hardening of the Hebrew people, of the Israelites, is only a partial hardening. And there is coming a day in the future that he calls **the fullness of the Gentiles**. Now there's a lot of debate about what

that means. But when it's all said and done, I think there's agreement that it means: when God has completed His sovereign plan for the Gentiles. Whatever exactly that means, when the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, that's the trigger that there will be a mass conversion of the Israelites back to Christ their Messiah, to the degree that all living Israelites at that time will come to know Jesus as Savior. The statement there, **all Israel will be saved**, doesn't mean every Jew that has ever lived. If you track that wording back to the Old Testament, it's common wording and it always means those who were alive at that time: "All Israel heard"; "all Israel was afraid"; "all Israel believed". And that's what this quotation is referring to: that there is coming a climax to the story, to the gospel story, and somehow we will reach the fullness of the Gentiles, which will trigger a mass revival among the Israelites and all that are alive at that time will believe the Messiah. And that's the culmination of history: and Jesus will come and the resurrection of the dead and the ushering in of the new heaven and the new earth and paradise forever. That's kind of how the story finally ends. Now, depending on your eschatology—your end times theology—you are going to fit this in different ways. But the point is that God has a story. God has a sovereign plan and purpose, and He's going to sovereignly work it to the end and reach ultimate victory and fulfill every promise made. At the end of the day, God wins—perfectly holy, perfectly righteous, perfectly fulfilling every promise to us as Gentiles, to the Jews—and then God ushers in the new heaven and the new earth.

There is a reminder in all this that it's always been about the **mercy** of God—that the Gentiles experience God's mercy because of the disobedience of Israel. But one day Israel is going to come in and experience God's mercy and that culminates with verse 32, that for God it's always been about mercy.

Now there are those who would try and turn verse 32 into a statement of universalism, meaning everybody ultimately is saved. If you are going to do that to verse 32, you basically have to remove the rest of the Book of Romans, because it's been very clear: it's about those who believe; it's about a remnant; it's about those who have faith. What he's saying in verse 32 is *all nations*—the Gentiles, the Hebrews, the Israelites, people of every tribe and tongue and nation—God's desire is to show them mercy. Now there's no question that we would say in Chapters 9, 10, 11, there's a lot of mystery; there's a lot of unanswered questions; there's a lot of things we can't explain. And at times, it may seem to you that God is unfair. But, at the end of the day, the text tells us that God's motive every step of the way has been mercy. God desires that all people be saved. He desires to pour out His mercy. That's the heartbeat of who God is. Whether we can figure out all the details or not, it's good to remember that because that's how these three chapters culminate. It's always been about the mercy of God, which then leads to this final doxology, which I think is the doxology of Chapters 8, 9, 10, and 11.

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen. (Vs. 33-36)

Now I find it interesting that Paul ends this very difficult section by ultimately saying: there are things about this we can't know; we can't understand; we can't figure out; we can't explain. We don't have God's mind; we don't have God's perspective. So if Paul, as the writer of these chapters, ends these chapters by saying, "We can't figure it all out," we need to understand that, to

surrender to that. There are people so determined to figure it out, they end up compromising one chapter or the other. But if Paul as the author says, “I can’t figure out,” I’m going to go with that. Neither can we. There’s a mystery to this. But if, at the end of the day, we can know there is sovereignty; at the end of the day, there’s human responsibility; at the end of the day, it’s about God’s mercy; at the end of the day, there’s a reminder that this is about God’s sovereign story. Your salvation and mine is not ultimately about *me*. I’m not the star of the show. It’s about God. It’s about His glory. It’s about His sovereignty. If your understanding of salvation is basically the story of Christmas, the story of Easter and, as a result of that, God lays the tickets to heaven on a table, and then He backs out of human history, and He just waits to see who take their tickets, you’ve completely misunderstood the story. It’s a story that goes from Genesis to Revelation. If the story is just a ticket to heaven, why do we have sixty-six books and such a long complicated story? Because the gospel story *is* Genesis to Revelation. It’s about God. It’s about His plan and purpose. It’s about His sovereignty. It’s about exercising His will. It’s about God ultimately redeeming all back, and declaring ultimate victory. It’s about God making promises to Abraham. It’s about God making promises to us. It’s about understanding, at the end of the story God keeps His promises to Israel *and* keeps His promises to us perfectly. But to do that, He sovereignly interjects Himself into the story. No sovereignty—no security. Human responsibility—we are accountable for our choices. That’s the essence of this big story.

I think the biggest question coming out of these chapters is: why did God in His sovereignty, why did God in His foreknowledge, why did God in His holiness, invite you as His enemy, you as one in rebellion, you deserving of His wrath? Why did He invite you into His story? And the answer is: I don’t know. Based on the grace and the mercy of God, God has invited you into His story. You were an enemy; He made you His friend. You were rebellious; He made you His child. God delights in pouring out riches upon you now and ultimately forever. God will keep His promise to you perfectly. What lies ahead for you is paradise. The only big question is: why would He do that for you? And the answer is: I don’t know. It’s His grace. It’s His mercy. It’s His love. All I know is that God has invited you into the story and He’s promised that He will sovereignly do whatever’s necessary to perfectly keep the promises He’s made to you. So we say with Paul, at the end of Chapter 11: **To God be the glory, for great things He has done!**

Father, we are thankful that You have saved us. Lord, sometimes we just make this story all about us. We made a decision, so we are going to heaven. We fail to realize this story isn’t really about us; it’s about You. It’s about Your sovereignty. It’s about Your promises. It’s about Your plan and purpose. It’s about Your ultimate redemption of what has been corrupted by sin. Lord, for reasons we’ll never understand, You’ve invited us into the story. Lord, we, by our own choice, were Your enemies. You, by Your choice, have made us Your friends. We were in rebellion; You made us Your children. And, Lord, You promise us a future more grand than we could possibly imagine today. Lord, help us to live and celebrate the truth of Your promises to us. Lord, to You be the glory. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

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The Gospel Story: Mercy to All

A Study of Romans

Romans 11:1-36

Pastor Bryan Clark

Opening Discussion

1. What do you understand to be true of the “Gospel Story”? Is your salvation merely a ticket to heaven that you picked up along the way or is there something more to the story? Is it possible that you somehow figure into the fulfillment of God’s plan for all Creation?
2. What would you consider some of the “mysteries” of God?
3. In our “google” world we’ve removed much of the mystery of life. We have answers and information at our finger tips. We have GPS to lead us and in many ways take the discovery out of a new adventure. We follow but we don’t really discover. So where do you find mystery and discovery in your life today? When was the last time you were like a child on Christmas morning because of a new discovery or an experience that filled your mind with wonder?

Bible Study

1. Review briefly what you learned in Romans 9 and 10. What were the main points?
2. In a sense, chapter 11 takes the concepts of God’s election and human responsibility and puts them together to tell the bigger story of God’s redemption. The focus in this chapter should not be to figure out all the details but rather to understand there is a bigger story playing out and to wonder that God would invite you into the story. Perhaps it would be good for a couple people to own the responsibility of reminding the group to not get lost in the details and keep the bigger story in view.
3. Read Romans 11:1-10. What is the evidence that God has not abandoned the Jewish people according to this text? How do you see the concepts from chapters 9 and 10 playing out in this text?
4. Compare what Paul says in 11:6 with what he says in Galatians 2:15-21. Is there any way that salvation by works and salvation by faith can be compatible belief systems? Therefore, what must one conclude concerning any belief system regarding salvation that introduces any work into the conversation as a requirement for salvation?
5. Read Romans 11:11-36. What is the big story as it relates to Israel and the Gentiles? What is the warning to us as Gentiles?

6. Does this text indicate God is done with ethnic Israel or is there still more God plans to do in order to fulfill his covenant promises to them?
7. God told Abraham that He would bless those who bless them and curse those who curse them (Genesis 12:1-3). If God still has plans for Ethnic Israel as a nation then is this promise still in effect? What does this mean for us today as a nation in relation to Israel?
8. Although it is impossible to understand how all this has played out in history and will play out in the future, what does this text teach us about our salvation? How does this affect my view concerning the security of our salvation?
9. While we can't really explain all the details about how all this works, what is God's heart towards sinful people according to 11:30-32?
10. While many students of the Bible seem determined to figure all this out what does 11:33-36 tell us? Is the point of Romans 8-11 for us to figure out how all this works out in the plan of God or to see the bigger story that we've been invited into? Why does this matter?

Application

1. Can you summarize Romans 8-11? What is the point? Why does it matter?
2. What are the three most significant truths you learned from these difficult chapters? How does each of these three affect your daily life?
3. What should be the proper attitude toward difficult things in the Bible based on 11:33-36?