

Romans 11



*Part II: An Analysis and
Scriptural Support (7-10)
and*

*Part III: What Happens
Next? (11-12)*

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11:7-12



Introduction

St. Paul will now begin a detailed analysis, with Scriptural support, of what has happen to Israel. Remembering last week, you should always keep in mind Paul's use of the Torah in Romans 5, which counters any notion regarding the use of **“works of the Law”** as necessary either for entering or for remaining in God's grace! Paul will maintain that both entrance into and remaining as God's people has always been and will remain by grace alone!

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The Three
Parts of v.7

⁷What then? That which Israel seeks earnestly, this it has not obtained; but the chosen obtained [it]. The rest now were hardened,

Paul now begins a very concise three-part overview of what has happen to Israel:

(1) *That which Israel seeks earnestly, this it has not obtained (7a).* Paul has said the same in 9:30–10:5. Of special note: Paul is not speaking of Israel as a whole. Instead, he is speaking of those Israelites who “*seeks earnestly.*” These are those Israelites that Paul describes in 9:31-32 as “*pursing a Law of righteousness*” “*as if [it could be attained] from works.*” Although they were properly zealous for God (10:2), they did not attain righteousness!

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7What then? That which Israel seeks earnestly, this it has not obtained; but the chosen obtained [it]. The rest now were hardened,

Why and how did this occur? Those who base righteousness on their works (attempting to keep the Law) did hear the Word of Christ (10:16-17), which drew near to them (10:8). But, ***“they were not submissive to the righteousness of God”*** (10:3) because they were working in the opposite direction. Again, those ***“seeking to establish their own righteousness”*** by the doing of the Law are not ***“listening responsively”*** to the Good News; rather than listening to the Rock, they stumble over Him and this is why they will not obtain the righteousness they so earnestly seek!

**The Three
Parts of v.7**

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The Three
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⁷What then? That which Israel seeks earnestly, this it has not obtained; but the chosen obtained [it]. The rest now were hardened,

(2) “...*but the chosen obtained [it]* (7b). The “chosen” are the remnant, by faith, which we discussed last week. They have obtained, not by works, but by God’s “*choice of grace*” (11:5). These are the true “*chosen people!*” These are the children of Abraham; since, like Abraham, they believe and passively receive what was promised (Gen. 15:6).

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Therefore, it's clear that God's gracious and active choosing is nothing new; the promises to Abraham and God's saving power at work in the Exodus (cf. 9:22) and in Israel's preservation and eventual return from exile all demonstrate this fact! Yet, even more powerful is the proclamation of the "***Word of Christ***" (10:17). All who listen and receive the Good News "***from faith***" obtain righteousness and salvation (10:10).

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⁷What then? That which Israel seeks earnestly, this it has not obtained; but the chosen obtained [it]. The rest now were hardened,

(3) *The rest now were hardened, (7c).* Paul reveals in the third overview God's reluctant reaction to the stubborn response of the "*rest*" in Israel! Their hardening by God is not because they were rejected by God before the foundation of the world due to something that God freely determined before the Fall. Neither is human sinfulness the essential cause of God's hardening. Certainly, God's hardening acts is on those who are sinners; however, if it were enacted purely on that basis, all sinners would be hardened!

**The Three
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The “*rest*” are the “*not all*” of 9:6 and 10:16 who refused to listen responsively to and then believe the Good News, the Word of Christ, when it came near. God, therefore, hardened them due to their unbelief. He did not harden them from everlasting in order to prevent them from believing!

**The Three
Parts of v.7**

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**Scriptural
Support &
Verification!**

⁸as it has been written: “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes not to see, and ears, not to hear, unto the day today.” ⁹And David says: “Let the table of them be for a snare and for a trap, and for a stumbling block and for a retribution to them; ¹⁰let their eyes be darkened, not to see, and their backs be bent over forever.”

Once again, the three part overview given by St. Paul isn't new. Therefore, it cannot be used as an excuse by Israel; since, Paul will now give scriptural support in order to validate his overview! Paul signals this by his use of the phrase: “...as it has been written.” And Paul will now take the Israelites, of his day, back to the wilderness in Dt. 29:4. First, Paul turns what YHWH “*did not give*” or actively withheld into what He actively “*gave.*”

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Secondly, notice that the Greek infinitives are negated: “a spirit of stupor, eyes not to see, and ears, not to hear.” Paul even strengthens his argument from Dt by his use of Ps. 69:24 in v.10.

In the third place, before we discuss it, let’s compare Dt. 29:4 to what Paul writes in v.8. Paul substitutes, “a heart to perceive” with “a spirit of stupor.” The Greek word for “stupor” (κατανύξεως) is graphic: a violent strike of *bewilderment*, resulting in falling into a mental *stupor* (used only here). In other words, a state of spiritual insensibility!

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**Scriptural
Support &
Verification!**

*⁹And David says: “Let **the table** of them be for a snare and for a trap, and for a stumbling block and for a retribution to them; ¹⁰let their eyes be darkened, not to see, and their backs be bent over forever.”*

Paul now draws on what “David says” from Ps. 69:22-23. The first question to arise is what does Paul mean by “**the table**” (ἡ τράπεζα)? This noun refers to any structure or surface on which food or other things can be placed. Could David be referring to the Table of Showbread in the Tabernacle (Ex 39:36)? Could it possibly refer to the Table of the Law? Could Paul be using this word to refer to table fellowship (Acts 11:2-3; Gal 2:11-14)? In reality, Paul does not give an explanation, he just cites it and leaves it in a state of uncertainty.

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**Scriptural
Support &
Verification!**

¹⁰let their eyes be darkened, not to see, and their backs be bent over forever.”

This quote is from Ps. 69:23 and it, too, may seem surprising and a little ambiguous. However, Paul uses this quote to reveal his awareness and general reliance upon the Greek translation from the Septuagint. This requires knowledge of Greek to clearly “see” what Paul is relating to his audience in Rome and beyond. So let’s give it a try:

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**Scriptural
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¹⁰let their eyes be darkened, not to see, and their backs be bent over forever.”

1. Paul begins by the use of an aorist (past tense) imperative (a command/order): σκοτισθήτωσαν οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτῶν (***“let be darkened the eyes of them”***). Literally, this is a Divine passive since the first Greek word is an aorist imperative passive verb! This plea is that God, divinely, darken or *“cover their eyes with darkness.”* This is in the spiritual sense: that God would spiritually blind them, not permanently, but in order to lead them to repentance!

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¹⁰let their eyes be darkened, not to see, and their backs be bent over forever.

2. We also see the same in the second part of v.10, except the verb is an aorist active verb: **σύνκαμψον** (**bent over**); or to bow down one's back, metaphorically, to subject one to error and hardness of heart, a figure taken from the bowing of the back by captives compelled to pass under the yoke. Though David's words sound gloomy and very harsh, they are no more so than the searing indictment Paul files against all people, including every Jew and Gentile, earlier in this letter (cf. 1:18–3:20). Once again, the purpose of such spiritual darkness and infliction...repentance!

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Part III: What Happens Next?

¹¹I ask then, did they not stumble so that they might fall? Never may it be! However, in the trespass of them [is] salvation to the Gentiles, so as to provoke their jealousy. ¹²On the other hand, if their trespass [is] riches of [the] world, and their failure [is the] riches of [the] Gentiles, how much more their fullness!

Paul moves to now wrap up the consequences of vv.1-10. He does so by returning to how he began in v.1 by saying, ***“I ask then...”*** followed by a negated question and a rebuke of it! We are required to ask, however, who are the ***“they, them, their?”*** And Paul’s context, from v. 7, answers for us: Israel! *“That which Israel seeks earnestly, this it has not obtained”* (7a).

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Therefore, “**stumbled**” are those Jews who have stubbornly rejected and refused to listen to the Gospel of Jesus, their (and our) Messiah! By the way, the verb “**stumbled**” is not a passive (or Divine passive), it’s an active verb; therefore, it’s the unbelieving Jews who have actively **stumbled** themselves, since they earnestly are seeking righteousness not from faith, but as if it can be obtained from works (cf. 9:32)!

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Part III: What Happens Next?

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¹²On the other hand, if their trespass [is] riches of [the] world, and their failure [is the] riches of [the] Gentiles, how much more their fullness!*

Once again, the importance of the Greek! This short clause is known as a “*ἵνα*” (hina) clause. In other words, it expresses a purpose or result. Therefore, in context, Paul is stating the resulting state of those who have stumbled; and the result is a spiritual stumbling! Once more, God is not the cause of or the result of the cause.

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Part III: What Happens Next?

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The “*ἵνα*” (hina) clause is written as a question. And the question concerns whether those who now lie fallen (spiritually) will remain in such a state. Is their recovery possible? From a human perspective, their fall may be seen as irretrievable and irrevocable. However, the verb that Paul uses depicts a fall from which one cannot recover on one’s own! This does not mean that the result of their stumbling is unalterable from a Divine perspective!

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Part III: What Happens Next?

***11I ask then, did they not stumble so that they might fall? Never may it be!** However, in the trespass of them [is] salvation to the Gentiles, so as to provoke their jealousy.*
12On the other hand, if their trespass [is] riches of [the] world, and their failure [is the] riches of [the] Gentiles, how much more their fullness!

Note that Paul vehemently rejects the idea that they must remain fallen.

“Never may it be!” Remember that Paul used this expression when rejecting the notion of God pushing away or rejecting His people and Paul even used his personal experience as an example. So Paul follows with:

“However, in the trespass of them [is] salvation to the Gentiles, so as to provoke their jealousy” (11c).

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Part III: What Happens Next?

*¹¹I ask then, did they not stumble so that they might fall? Never may it be! However, in the **trespass** of them [is] salvation to the Gentiles, so as to provoke their jealousy. ¹²On the other hand, if their trespass [is] riches of [the] world, and their failure [is the] riches of [the] Gentiles, how much more their fullness!*

God has worked a very benevolent result out of their stumbling. And Paul highlights this with the noun “**trespass**” (παράπτωματι): to fall away after being close-beside, i.e., a lapse or deviation from the truth! You must understand that Paul meaning isn’t a moral lapse consisting of acting contrary to God’s commandments. Rather, the context tells us that the language of stumbling and trespass stand equivalent to unbelief!

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11:11-12



Rev. Dr. Franz A.O. Pieper (1852-1931)

Part III: What Happens Next?

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“Of course, all sins, original sins and actual sins, are indeed damnable in themselves..., and this truth must be urged against all who minimize sin; but in fact (*actu*) only unbelief results in damnation. This truth must be brought home to all who minimize the work of Christ, the complete reconciliation He brought about through His vicarious satisfaction... But where unbelief reigns, all other sins again assume their condemnatory character” [citing St. Mark 16:16; St. John 3:18, 36].

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Part III: What Happens Next?

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Israel's unbelieving rejection of grace stems from striving for righteousness based upon works instead of receiving it from FAITH (9:30-32, 10:3; 11:6-7). Yet, by means of Israel's stumbling, Paul contends that there ***"[is] salvation to the Gentiles."***

By salvation to the Gentiles, God accomplishes what Moses first prophesied in Dt. 32:21, as cited by Paul in 10:19. God will use this to make Israel envious or "jealous." What is God's obvious end and Paul's hope?

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11:11-12



**Part III:
What
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Salvation for “all” of Israel. Clearly then, this very hope means God has not pushed away or reject His people (11:2) and that the current fallen state of Israel as a whole, as shown here in v.11, need not be permanent; and v.12 makes this even more apparent as Paul will now use a very provocative statement.

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**Part III:
What
Happens
Next?**

¹²*On the other hand, if their trespass [is] riches of [the] world, and their failure [is the] riches of [the] Gentiles, how much more their fullness!*

The stumbling of Israel resulted in the Gospel of salvation going out to the Gentiles. The Gospel of Christ “*[is the] riches*” (πλοῦτος) referred to here. Along with this salvation, comes innumerable other riches, such as God’s grace and mercy! Lastly, and more pertinent, Paul uses “*richness*” and “*riches*” exclusively in regard to Jesus Christ.

The “*stumble*” of the unbelieving Jews is then equated with their “*failure.*” Paul uses this noun in order to describe how the reaction of those in Israel who did not believe in the Gospel and, therefore, are now lost has led some Gentiles to hear, believe, and receive the riches of salvation (Christ).

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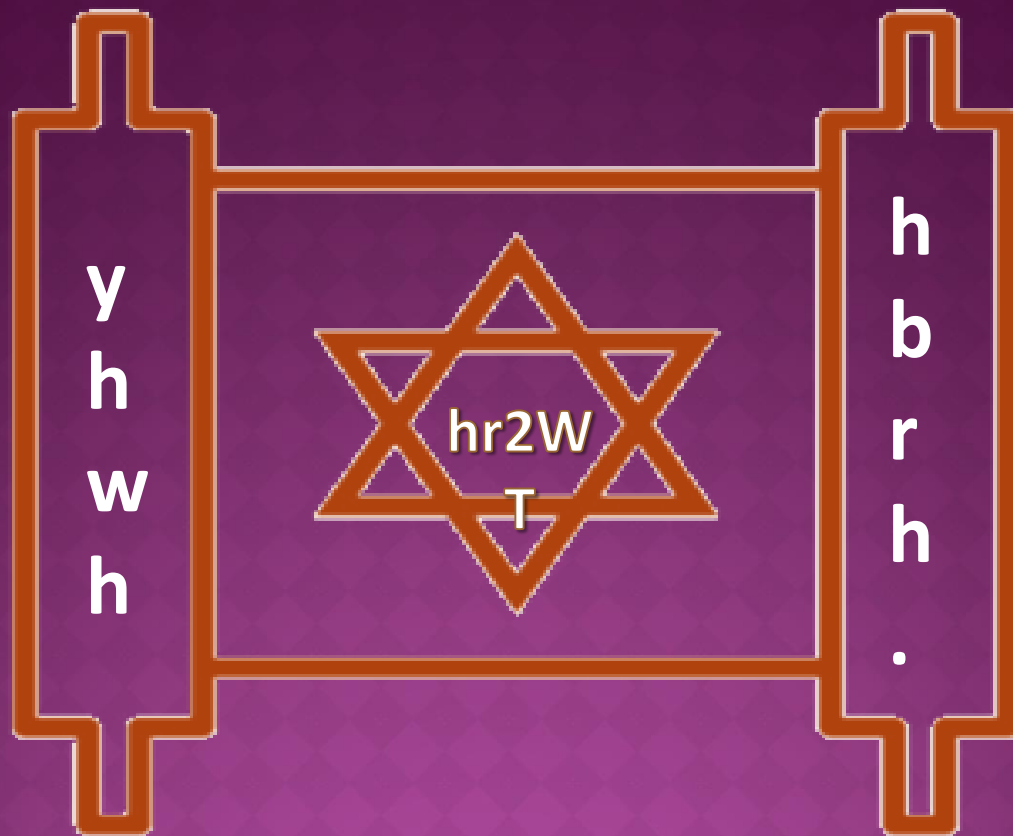
Part III: What Happens Next?

¹²On the other hand, if their trespass [is] riches of [the] world, and their failure [is the] riches of [the] Gentiles, how much more **their fullness!**

How much better then would be their **“their fullness!”** The referent **“their”** refers to Israel as a whole and so encompasses unbelieving Jews, but it need not imply that all of them will be part of the **“fullness.”** And what exactly does Paul mean by **“fullness?”** It refers to the full number of those comprising the remnant of Israel.

Again, as Paul will soon make clear, **“their fullness”** consists of all those who do **“not remain in unbelief” (11:23)**. Thus, Paul’s hope is that when the unbelieving Jews saw that the Gentiles were being allowed into the Kingdom of God, they might repent and imitate the faith of the Gentiles!

June 9th



Excursus
*The Modern State of
Israel and Romans 11*

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