



Kindness

GOD'S PLAN FOR REDEMPTION INCLUDES ALL PEOPLE.

Scripture Passage: Romans 11:11-24 Memory Verse: Romans 11:33

As a pastor, I've seen God answer prayer in dramatic ways. For example, I remember a couple who had been praying for children; but because of some health issues, they had been unable to get pregnant. They believed their prayers were leading them toward adoption, but they couldn't afford that option. We spent some time in prayer that day, asking God to make a way.

As I walked them to the door, I noticed our financial secretary sitting at her desk with tears in her eyes. When I asked what was wrong, she said something I'll never forget: *Do you know anyone who would adopt three children?* As you might have guessed, the couple who had just prayed with me adopted them. For the next decade I watched how family love changed the future for each of those children.

God has a plan for all people of all nations and all social standings. As you study this session from Romans 11, spend some time thanking God for fulfilling His purposes in your life, especially in regard to redeeming you from sin. Ask Him to give you wisdom as you share this truth with the adults in your Bible study this week.



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Who should be included on the invitation list? That question often puts event planners in a tough spot. They must determine how many invitations can be sent based on the event's purpose and the budget available. Ultimately, they're forced to wrestle with the difficult decision of who will receive an invitation and who will not. They would never simply declare that everyone is invited. Yet that's exactly what God does. His invitation is open to all. (PSG, p. 82)

**When was the last time you received an unexpected invitation to something?
What has God shown you about His open invitation to everyone?**



Understand the Context (Romans 11:1-36)

Romans 9–11 describes the paradox of Israel's rejection of Christ, even though they were the chosen people of God. After taking the first eight chapters of Romans to explain the gospel, Paul took the following chapters to deal with the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, and how both had to come through faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul covered the election of Israel in Romans 9, before affirming that everyone who believed in Jesus's resurrection and confessed Him as Lord would be saved (Rom. 10:9-10). He ended chapter 10 by describing how Israel had rejected the gospel message. This rebellion against the Lord and His ways made Israel a disobedient and defiant people (10:21).

But not all the news about God's chosen people was bad. At the beginning of the next chapter, Paul declared that Israel's rejection was not total and not permanent. In fact, a remnant of Jews would believe in Jesus (11:1-10). As a Jewish man, Paul himself was an example of this remnant (11:1).

Across history, God had always protected the people of Israel, even through the most difficult times. They had turned their backs on Him more than once and had suffered the consequences for their disobedience. Yet, God had never stopped loving them or fulfilling His plan through them.

Paul referred to the prophet Elijah's ancient cry that he was the only servant of God who had followed the Lord faithfully in the days of Ahab

and Jezebel (see 1 Kings 19:10,14). God answered that complaint by telling Elijah that seven thousand had not bowed down to Baal (19:18). Among the unbelieving Jews was a remnant of those who would respond to God's saving grace (Rom. 11:5). Believing and unbelieving Jews made up the nation of Israel.

This emphasis on the Jews' rejection of God highlighted the fact that God also desired to share the gospel with the Gentiles. While God has a special plan for the Israelites, He also had charged them with being a "light for the nations" (Isa. 49:6). The privilege of being God's people came with a responsibility of sharing the gospel with the world.

In Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas quoted this passage during their ministry in Antioch. When the Jews questioned the presence of Gentiles at the meeting, the missionaries reminded them of Isaiah's words (Acts 13:47). Meanwhile, the Gentiles rejoiced at the opportunity to enter God's kingdom (Acts 13:48). They knew at that point that the gospel plan for redemption was for all people.

Read Romans 11 in your Bible and underline each reference to God's grace and mercy. What insights into God and His character do you garner from these references? (PSG, p. 83)

ENGAGE



PREPARE: Display **Pack item 2** (Poster: Outline of Romans). Make copies of **Pack Item 14** (Handout: Jewish and Gentile Believers in Rome). Write the word *Invitation* on the whiteboard.

DIRECT:

Read the opening paragraph on page 82 of the PSG. Highlight the word “Invitation” on the whiteboard. Note that people send invitations in many ways today. Point out that sometimes we are the ones inviting others, while at other times, we are the ones receiving the invitation.

ASK:

When was the last time you received an unexpected invitation to something? (PSG, p. 82)

SHARE:

Paul understood the tension between the Jews and the gospel. But he also knew that God wasn't done with the Jewish nation. He was living proof that God's invitation for salvation was still open to Israelites—as well as to Gentiles.

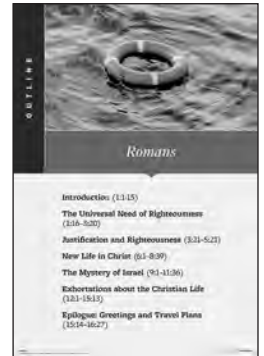
EXPLAIN:

Summarize this content from page 83 of the PSG to highlight God's universal offer of salvation:

“Paul stressed that God had not turned His back on Israel. His mercy toward the Jews would never be smothered. Quite the opposite, His abiding love for them would always fuel the fire of His mercy toward them. His love for them reached all the way back to the original Old Testament patriarchs who followed His leadership during the formative years of Israel's history. Consequently, God showed his mercy to Jews and Gentiles alike.”

TRANSITION:

Direct attention to **Pack item 2** (Poster: Outline of Romans) and highlight Romans 9–11, “The Mystery of Israel.” Remind adults that the last session examined verses from Romans 9–10. Share that this session concludes this section on the nation of Israel by looking at verses from Romans 11. Challenge adults to consider their own attitudes about God's universal offer of salvation as they study this passage.



Group Activity Option

Music

Distribute hymnals and direct attention to “The Savior Is Waiting” (*Baptist Hymnal*, 2008, No. 412). Lead the group to sing the song or read the lyrics in unison. Lead a brief discussion on how the door to Christ is always open. Ask: **Why do some people find it hard to understand that the gospel is available to all people?**

Rejection (Rom. 11:11-16)

11 I ask, then, have they stumbled so as to fall? Absolutely not! On the contrary, by their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel jealous. **12** Now if their transgression brings riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fullness bring! **13** Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Insofar as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, **14** if I might somehow make my own people jealous and save some of them. **15** For if their rejection brings reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? **16** Now if the firstfruits are holy, so is the whole batch. And if the root is holy, so are the branches.

(vv. 11-12) Many of the Jews had rejected the gospel. That was a historical reality. But Paul questioned whether that rejection meant the Jews had *stumbled so as to fall*. In other words, were they beyond recovery? Would God reject them and deal only with the Gentiles?

In the strongest terms, Paul said, ***Absolutely not!*** This was a common expression of Paul in Romans (see Rom. 3:4,6,31; 6:2,15; 7:7,13; 9:14; 11:1,11). He often set up a proposition before strongly refuting it. Here, He argued that the Jewish rejection of Jesus opened the door for ***Gentiles*** to receive ***salvation***. This, in turn, was God's plan to ***make Israel jealous***. In modern society, jealousy is a negative term, but the Greek word can mean "zeal." So, Paul was saying that the salvation of the Gentiles should create a desire for the Jews to trust in Christ.

Paul referred to the Jewish rejection as a ***transgression*** and a ***failure***. The general rejection of the Jews was a problem, but God used it to share ***riches for the Gentiles***. Their loss was the Gentiles' gain. However, Paul expressed hope for a future ***fullness*** of Israel that would bless both the Jews and the Gentiles.

(vv. 13-14) Lest Romans might think that Paul favored the Jews, he reminded them that he was ***speaking to you Gentiles***. Also, God had called him to be the ***apostle to the Gentiles***. God had brought the Gentiles into His kingdom, but their inclusion did not mean that the apostle had no desire for the Jews to find redemption. Instead, he chose to ***magnify*** his ***ministry*** with the Gentiles so the Jews would embrace Christ. Paul hoped unbelieving Israelites would become jealous for their own relationship with God.

He referred to Israel as ***my own people***. When Paul turned to a ministry for the Gentiles, he did not abandon his own people. He believed

God's plan included all people. He wanted God to ***save some of them***, and he wanted God to use him in that process.

(v. 15) Through the ***rejection*** of the Jews, God brought ***reconciliation to the world***. The Gentiles had the opportunity to receive Christ even as the Jews rejected Him. Paul also believed that the ***acceptance*** of the Gentiles meant ***life from the dead*** for the Jews. It is a cycle of grace. Because the Jews rejected Christ, the Gentiles received Him. Because the Gentiles received Him, the Jews would move toward a spiritual awakening of faith. Israel's faith would move them from being dead in their sin to being made alive in Christ.

(v. 16) Paul expressed his hope in terms of bread and botany. First, he spoke of the ***firstfruits*** as ***holy***. This is a reference to Numbers 15:17-21, where God instructed Moses to offer the first meal that was ground. Afterward, that offering celebrated God's provision for the people. The thought was that if the ***firstfruits*** were ***holy***, then all the dough would be holy. The remnant of Israel who believed in Jesus were the firstfruits. They were the hope that one day more from Israel would turn to Christ.

Second, Paul noted that if the ***root*** of a plant is holy, then the ***branches*** are as well. This is a reference to Leviticus 23:10-11, where the Lord told Moses to bring the first sheaf of their harvest to the priest as an offering. If the first sheaf is holy, so is the root of the plant.

These metaphors illustrated that the root and dough of Judaism were holy. As a result, God would continue working within the nation. And, as Paul would show in the next section, the Gentiles were grafted into this plant.

EXPLORE Romans 11:11-16



APPLICATION POINT: We can be assured that the gospel is for all people.

READ:

Invite a volunteer to read **Romans 11:11-16**, listening for how Israel's rejection of the gospel was a benefit for the Gentiles.

REVIEW:

Distribute copies of **Pack Item 14** (*Handout: Jewish and Gentile Believers in Rome*). Direct adults to work in pairs to scan the article and to highlight things that resonate with them. Lead a brief discussion on how the themes in the article connect to Romans 11:11-16.

EXPLAIN:

On a whiteboard write *Jews reject, Gentiles believe, Jews jealous*. Highlight Paul's desire to share the gospel with Gentiles and the impact it could have on Jews who needed to come to Jesus. Note that seeing God at work in the lives of Gentiles through Christ would prompt the Jews to turn back to Him.

REVIEW:

Summarize this information from page 84 of the PSG to explain the relationship between the Gentile's acceptance of the gospel and Paul's hope for the Jews:

"God transformed Israel's transgression into a blessing for the Gentiles. . . . Israel's failure to turn to Christ opened the door for people across the world to come to Him by faith. . . . Although Israel's spiritual emptiness had not prevented others from being saved, [Paul] wondered what would happen when the Jewish people themselves embraced Christ and experienced the fullness of life found in Him."

ASK:

If God's plan of salvation embraces all peoples, what is one next step—prayer, conversation, hospitality, giving, or going—you will take to participate in that plan this week? (PSG, p. 86)

How did they respond to the gospel?	How did they respond to the gospel?	How did they respond to the gospel?
- They were jealous of the Gentiles who were receiving the gospel. - They were angry that God was blessing the Gentiles. - They were sad that they themselves were not receiving the gospel. - They were confused by the idea that God was blessing the Gentiles. - They were disappointed that they themselves were not receiving the gospel. - They were angry that God was blessing the Gentiles. - They were sad that they themselves were not receiving the gospel. - They were confused by the idea that God was blessing the Gentiles. - They were disappointed that they themselves were not receiving the gospel.	- They were glad that they themselves were receiving the gospel. - They were happy that they themselves were receiving the gospel. - They were proud that they themselves were receiving the gospel. - They were confident that they themselves were receiving the gospel. - They were sure that they themselves were receiving the gospel. - They were certain that they themselves were receiving the gospel. - They were convinced that they themselves were receiving the gospel. - They were persuaded that they themselves were receiving the gospel. - They were determined that they themselves were receiving the gospel. - They were resolved that they themselves were receiving the gospel.	- They were glad that they themselves were receiving the gospel. - They were happy that they themselves were receiving the gospel. - They were proud that they themselves were receiving the gospel. - They were confident that they themselves were receiving the gospel. - They were sure that they themselves were receiving the gospel. - They were certain that they themselves were receiving the gospel. - They were convinced that they themselves were receiving the gospel. - They were persuaded that they themselves were receiving the gospel. - They were determined that they themselves were receiving the gospel. - They were resolved that they themselves were receiving the gospel.

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Open Door

During the session, open the door completely, then close it firmly. Open the door and leave it ajar. Explain that in Romans 11, Paul stated that the door of the gospel is still open for all people to approach Christ in faith. Say: *It might seem like the Jews have closed the door, but God is still at work, meaning the door is ajar until a spiritual awakening comes to fruition.*

Grafted (Rom. 11:17-22)

17 Now if some of the branches were broken off, and you, though a wild olive branch, were grafted in among them and have come to share in the rich root of the cultivated olive tree, **18** do not boast that you are better than those branches. But if you do boast—you do not sustain the root, but the root sustains you. **19** Then you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” **20** True enough; they were broken off because of unbelief, but you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but beware, **21** because if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. **22** Therefore, consider God’s kindness and severity: severity toward those who have fallen but God’s kindness toward you—if you remain in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.



God's People

Paul compared Israel to a cultivated olive tree, with Gentiles as wild branches grafted onto the original.

(vv. 17-18) In the Old Testament, God referred to the Jews as a fruitful olive tree. While the tree flourished, though, God would prune its branches (Jer. 11:16-19). Then, new branches would blossom as a part of the original plant (Hos. 14:6-7). Paul picked up this metaphor here.

Paul noted that some **branches** were **broken off**, a reference to unbelieving Jews. The fall of both Israel and Judah as nations illustrated the truth that many Jews were not faithful to God. But the apostle also noted a **wild olive branch**, which represented the Gentiles. These originally were disconnected from the tree (Israel), but God had **grafted** them to the main branch.

Grafting allowed cultivated shoots to join existing branches. The exposed ends of the branches were covered with clay, bound to the tree, and tied in place. The cultivated branches grew to become a vital part of the original tree.

Paul reminded the Gentiles that they owed their spiritual existence to the Jews. They didn't replace Israel, but they were grafted into the population of God's people. They came to **share in the rich root of the cultivated olive tree**.

Paul's desire was to remind the Gentiles that they had no reason to **boast**. They did not **sustain** the Jews, but the **root** (Jesus) sustained them.

(vv. 19-21) The Gentiles' boast would be that the branches were broken so wild branches could be brought in. The rejection of the Jews led to the grafting of the Gentiles. However, Paul emphasized that the broken branches resulted from **unbelief** (v. 20), while the grafting was the result of **faith**. God didn't favor one group over the other. He saved members of both groups as they came to Him in faith.

Just like Jews, the Gentiles should **beware**. The word **arrogant** indicates someone who is high-minded, while **beware** can be translated "fear." This fear was not terror, but reverence. God wanted the Jews stay humble as His people (Deut. 7:7-8). But he also reminded the Gentiles that God **did not spare the natural branches**. Even Jews needed faith (Rom. 4:1-5). Faith or unbelief determines a branch's connection.

(v. 22) Paul's warning contrasted God's **kindness** and His **severity**. **Kindness** in Greek referred to upright actions toward others. God treated people according to His goodness, not theirs.

Severity literally means "cut off" and relates to judgment. The same God who shows kindness to believers punishes unbelief. In fact, God's kindness cannot be appreciated fully unless it is viewed against the backdrop of His severity. Those who **remain in his kindness** are saved, but those who persist in unbelief **will be cut off**.

Key Doctrine

God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility. (See Ephesians 1:4-6; 1 Peter 2:9-10.)

**READ:**

APPLICATION POINT: As members of God's family, believers should embrace humility and resist spiritual pridefulness.

Read aloud Romans 11:17-22 as the group listens for the imagery and process of grafting. Share that the olive tree is a common Old Testament symbol for Israel, God's people.

GUIDE:

Explain that grafting connects an outside branch to an existing tree. Note that over time, the grafted branch becomes a vital part of the tree to which it was grafted. Share how Paul used this image to explain the Gentiles' place in God's kingdom:

Paul compared [Gentiles] to a wild olive branch. God grafted them in so they could thrive as His people. Also, the root brought to mind the nourishing presence of God among His people. The grafted branch flourished because it enjoyed the privilege of receiving the same kind of nourishment that had enriched the cultivated olive tree. Of course, Paul intended for the cultivated tree to serve as a reference to Jewish people. (PSG, p. 86)

DISCUSS:

Write the word *boasting* on the board or a large sheet of paper. Lead a brief discussion on why Gentiles might be inclined to boast after being grafted into God's people. Use information from Romans 11:19-21 on page 104 of the Leader Guide to supplement the discussion.

SAY:

Paul reminded the Gentiles that God had not spared the original branches from being broken off when they were disobedient. That meant He would use the same standard and judgment for them if they became arrogant.

ASK:

**When might we feel boastful of our spiritual blessings?
How can we turn from spiritual pride to genuine care?**
(PSG, p. 88)

Group Activity Option

Nature

Get an olive branch or print off a picture of an olive tree from the internet. Invite someone with experience in grafting to explain the process and how it affects the overall health of the tree. Lead the group to discuss why Paul used the image of grafting to help the Gentiles in Rome understand their relationship with their Jewish brothers and sisters.

Restoration (Rom. 11:23-24)

23 And even they, if they do not remain in unbelief, will be grafted in, because God has the power to graft them in again. **24** For if you were cut off from your native wild olive tree and against nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these—the natural branches—be grafted into their own olive tree?

(v. 23) Who did Paul intend with the word, *they*? These were the unbelieving ethnic Jews who had refused to believe in Jesus. He also had spoken to the Gentiles, but the contrast that he was setting up was between the unbelieving Jews and the believing Gentiles.

The apostle wanted the Gentiles to know that even now God stood ready to save any Jews who were willing to put their trust in Him. The Jews who did not *remain in unbelief* would be *grafted in* just as the Gentiles who believed had been grafted into God's family. Only *unbelief* stood in their way, specifically their unbelief in Jesus Christ as the Messiah and Savior.

Paul had previously told the Romans that God was willing to save Israel (Rom. 10:21), but here he emphasized God's ability to save them. He has the *power to graft them in again*. The Greek word for *power* had to do with ability, competence, or skill. God alone had the ability to reattach lost people (both Jews and Gentiles) to His people. Unbelief of the broken branches, not God's authority, stood in their way of being reattached to the root. Also, God would not force them back into the family. They had to believe in Jesus.

The salvation of the Jews did not run on an alternate pathway to the Gentiles. They both needed to demonstrate faith (belief) in Jesus. John the Baptist had preached this message in preparation for Jesus. He had warned the Israelites that being children of Abraham was not enough to be restored to God (Matt. 3:9-10). In fact, God could create sons of Abraham from the rocks. The difference was faith, and those who lacked faith would be judged and condemned. Unbelieving Jews (and Gentiles) would be cut off, and their hope of reattachment rested only in faith in Christ.

(v. 24) Paul used the salvation of the Gentiles to bring hope to his fellow Jews. He said that if God saved Gentiles, who were *cut off from* their *native wild olive tree* and were *grafted into a cultivated olive tree* (Israel), why could He not regraft the old branches back onto the *cultivated olive tree*? If a foreign branch could be grafted onto a different root, then surely a native branch could be grafted back on its original tree.

This is what Paul meant by the expression *against nature*. God had saved the Gentiles, so it would be no problem for Him to save Jews as well. Paul concluded this section with a reminder that God has the power to save anyone who repents from their sin and believes in Jesus. Ethnicity and personal history are no obstacle, as long as they are willing to believe in Christ.

The hope of unbelieving Jews and unbelieving Gentiles is the same. They can repent and be saved by faith in Christ. When they turn from their sin to Jesus, God is able to restore them and bring them into His family.

Bible Skill

Use multiple Scripture passages to understand a major doctrine.

This session emphasizes a Christian's eternal security once he or she has accepted Christ as Savior. Paul's teaching refutes the idea that true believers are in jeopardy of losing their salvation. Read the following Bible passages and note what each one teaches about the security of the believer: Matthew 10:22; 24:13; John 5:24; 6:37; 10:27-28; Romans 8:38-39; Philippians 1:6; 1 John 2:19; 3:9; Jude 1:24-25.

**READ:**

APPLICATION POINT: Believers can take comfort in knowing God has the power to save those who repent.

Invite a volunteer to read Romans 11:23-24 as the group listens for words that indicate hope for the future that comes through repentance and faith.

DISCUSS:

Write the word *grace* on the board. Lead a brief discussion on how these verses demonstrate God's grace.

REVIEW:

Summarize this information from pages 88-89 of the PSG to emphasize God's ability to save anyone who comes to Him in faith:

"For the Jews, being removed did not mean their relationship with God would never be restored. However, their restoration depended on their willingness to return to Him. . . . Their hope for restoration in their relationship with God did not rest with their ability to persuade Him to change His mind about them. They could not have won God's favor by promising to be better or do more as Jewish people. Rather, the only fitting response that they could make to Him was to abandon their unbelief and put their faith in Christ alone. . . . God alone had the power to restore their relationship with Him. . . . God saved Gentiles who entrusted their lives to Christ, and He did something that went against what farmers had learned in nature about olive trees. In those days, farmers would take a branch of a cultivated olive tree and graft it into a native olive tree. Grafting a branch in that way would make the native olive tree more productive. God grafted believing Gentiles into the cultivated tree with believing Jews. As a result, the tree that included Gentiles as well as Jews who trusted in Christ became stronger and more productive."

ASK:

What do you learn about God's heart from His willingness to restore those who previously rejected Him? How might that influence the way you view people who have walked away from faith? (PSG, p. 89)

HIGHLIGHT:

Focus on Romans 11:33 as this session's memory verse. Note that this verse calls believers to praise God for His grace. Direct the group to read the verse aloud chorally. Allow time for them to paraphrase the verse in their own words.

TRANSITION:

Paul acknowledged that God's grace provides hope for restoration for both Jews and Gentiles who put aside their unbelief and put their faith in Christ.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE:

Review these points from Apply the Text on page 90 of the *Personal Study Guide*:

- *We can be assured that the gospel is for all people.*
- *As members of God's family, believers should embrace humility and resist spiritual pridefulness.*
- *Believers can take comfort in knowing God has the power to save those who repent.*

REFLECT:

Divide the group into small teams of three or four people each. Direct the groups to read and talk about this question from page 90 of the PSG: *In what ways would a lack of humility prevent you from sharing the good news of Christ?* After a few minutes, review responses and highlight the importance of humility in sharing the gospel with others.

ACTIVITY:

Challenge adults to reach out and grab something close to them. Talk about the difference between things that are within reach and things that are out of reach. Affirm that sometimes even God's people are tempted to think that some groups are beyond His reach, even though they are not. Challenge adults to review the second set of questions on page 90 of the PSG during the week and to ask God to remove any barriers that might be holding them back from sharing the gospel with others.

PRAY:

Encourage adults to think of groups they might consider "out of reach" and to ask God to change their heart this week. Close the session in prayer.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by sending a text or email to the group. Encourage them to ask God to open their eyes so they can see people who might need to hear about Christ's power to restore them to God. Remind them of the second set of questions on page 90 of the PSG and their prayers to avoid seeing any group as beyond God's reach. Let them know that you are praying for them and are available to discuss any questions.

LEADER BLOG



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