

# Romans 11 - Oh the Depth of the Riches

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Open up your Bible then to Romans chapter 11. This is not an easy book. And I want you to know that with the conclusion of Romans chapter 11, we are finishing Paul's treatise on salvation. When we get into chapter 12, there weren't chapters in here when Paul wrote a letter. He didn't say chapter 12 that was done— added way, way, way later.

But as we finish what we know as Romans chapter 11, we finish Paul's treatise when he gets into 12, he moves on to very practical life in Christ issues, concerns, questions, that sort of thing. This has been a challenging journey, has it not? I mean, there's a lot of powerful and deep stuff in these chapters. I mean, Paul starts off, Romans chapter 1, just comes out swinging, saying, *“the wrath of God is being poured out on mankind.”* (ESV)

And we're just oh, it just sets you back in your chair. And all this time he's been talking about our salvation so that we can have a better understanding of it. He's going to complete it in the study that we do here in 11 today. So, let's begin with prayer. Father, thank you for giving us this time. Use the Word to really challenge our hearts today and minister truth, insight and understanding. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.

Before we get into the text, let me put a definition up on the screen here for you for something that's going to figure into our study.

## **Replacement Theology –**

The belief that the Jews are no longer God's chosen people, and God does not have specific future plans for the nation of Israel. Furthermore, the Christian church is now the “Israel of God,” and all the promises to Israel now apply to the church.

Also referred to as Fulfillment Theology or Supersessionism

And it's the subject of replacement theology. I don't know if you've ever heard of it or heard teachings from it, but it's the belief that the Jews are no longer God's chosen people and that in fact, God does not have any specific future plans for the nation of Israel any longer. And who has stepped into their place?

It's also the belief that the Christian Church is now the Israel of God. And as such, all the promises of Israel now apply to us.

All of the promises that were made to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob are now part of the promises that are given to us as the Christian Church. Again, it's called Replacement Theology. It's also known by those names, Fulfillment Theology and Supersessionism.

Anyway, so is it true? Has the Church replaced Israel? Does God no longer have any use for Israel? Well, if you've been hanging around Calvary Chapel for any amount of time at all, you know that that's not something that I believe, and I firmly believe that the Bible supports that fact.

You're going to find that in Romans chapter 11 you're going to find, I believe, the clearest refutation of that teaching. And by the way, it's not a small teaching. I mean, there's a sizable portion of the body of Christ that believes in replacement theology, believe it or not. And I never have, and again, I don't see it in the Word of God, but it's there in various places. In fact, Paul comes right out with a question in verse 1 that really speaks to the issue. And he says in verse 1,

*“I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.” (ESV)*

So, he begins this chapter with a question saying, has God rejected all of his people Israel? Now let me just admit something to you. Later on in this chapter, Paul is going to admit that God has rejected some of Israel. But the point he's making at this juncture is, it's not everybody because, hello, I'm a Jew, he's saying. If God had rejected all of Israel, then that would certainly include me and Paul says, hey, I'm a Jew. I'm of the tribe of Benjamin, so obviously he hasn't rejected all of Israel but by and large the Israelites have rejected their Messiah.

We'll talk about that here in just a little bit, but he's saying not all of the Jews have been rejected. And that brings up into our conversation, a new term that we need to look at and we'll put it on the screen. And it's this term remnant, and it means a small remaining quantity of something.

#### **REMNANT—**

1. a small remaining quantity of something.

Those of you who have ever worked with cloth, maybe you're, what do you call somebody who sews? A seamstress. Something like that. You deal with that term probably quite a lot, a remnant. Well, Paul is going to use that term, and he's going to apply it to Israel, and we'll see how.

Look at verse 2. *“God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel?”*<sup>3</sup> *“Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.”*<sup>4</sup> *But what is God's reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.”*<sup>5</sup> *So too at the present time there is a remnant, (there's that word) chosen by grace.*<sup>6</sup> *But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.”*

Stop there for a moment. Paul is referring to the Old Testament story of Elijah to show that God has always had a remnant. And we just went through this, actually, on Wednesday night in our study of first and second Kings. Because we're really in that time of the kings, during the ministry of Elijah and Elisha. And it wasn't that long ago we read the story of how Elijah had the great victory over the 450 prophets of Baal. And then the very day Jezebel sent him a threat saying that she was going to kill him.

By that next day, she promised to kill him. So, he ran for his life and ran a long ways, ran to Mount Horeb, Mount Sinai, where he hid in a cave. And the Lord confronted him and said, Elijah, what are you doing here? And Elijah kind of gives this complaint, and he says, I'm the last one. Everybody has completely abandoned you. And I'm the last faithful person in Israel. And God says, absolutely, that's not true. And he said, I've reserved 7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal.

And what God was saying, and what Paul is bringing out that God was saying in that Old Testament story, is that he had a remnant then. And what about now? Look at verse 5 with me again.

Verse 5 says, *“So too at the present time. There is a remnant chosen by grace.”* So, there is a remnant.” Would you say that God still has a remnant today? I believe that He does. Now what's interesting though is that when you use that word remnant, some Christian groups like to rise up and say, yes, He does have a remnant and we're it.

In fact, it's interesting, I don't know how much research or whatever you've done into cults and cult type groups, but they love to use the word remnant to

apply to themselves. They'll say, we are the remnant of God. And when you think about it, that's a very prideful sort of a thing, isn't it? You know, if I were to tell you, God has a remnant and we're it. We're the last ones. We're the last of the faithful of God. And people will go, yes! It's an easy sell, because it just really appeals to our sense of pride, and cults have really latched onto it. Make no mistake about it. When Paul uses the word remnant here, he's talking about Israel and only Israel. Okay?

He goes on, in verse 7. He says, *"What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect (or if you will, the remnant) obtained it, but the rest were hardened,"* He's talking about the Jews here. Many of them were hardened, their hearts were made hard.

And he goes on in verse 8 to say) *"as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor,..."* And the word stupor, you may not use it on a daily basis, but it literally means an apathy or almost a near unconsciousness) You could almost say that somebody who was in a mild coma was in a stupor. They might be able to hear what's going on around them and even see to some degree, but they can't respond sort of a thing. And that's largely what he's talking about, that God has given them a spirit of stupor. *"...eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day."*

He says this is happening right now. Israel has been hardened. Now stop there for just a moment. This is a little troubling to us when we hear this. God has hardened people? He's given them a spirit of stupor, an almost a spirit of just bleh, so they can't respond? Why would God do that? Are we saying, in essence, that God basically took all of Israel at some particular point and just said, okay, all right, here we go. We're going to take a few of you here.

We're going to move you over here. You're going to be the remnant. You'll be the chosen and I'm going to show myself to you and bless you. But all these rest of you guys over here, you guys move over here and I'm going to, and I'm going to harden your hearts and I'm going to give you a spirit of stupor so you can't even see what's going on here or whatever like that, and you guys just sit there, and I'll deal with you later. Is that what's going on here?

No, I don't think so. We're not talking about God just randomly or arbitrarily saying to some people, Okay. I like you, but I don't like you. I like you, and not you, not, and you, well, okay. That's not what's going on here. The Bible says that according to God's foreknowledge, and foreknowledge of what? Of your response to the Gospel. According to His foreknowledge, some were selected.

He has this remnant according to foreknowledge, and according to grace. But it is not an arbitrary, random situation where God goes around hardening people who are trying to seek Him and know Him, but He's saying, no, I'm not going to let that happen. The Bible tells us in no uncertain terms that God wants all people to come to repentance. And the only individuals He hardens are those whose hearts were already hard. Those who had stiffened their neck, to use another biblical term. To those who had refused and rejected the way of the Lord. To those God, He gave them over to that hard condition of their hearts.

So that's what's going on here. And we're not talking about God interfering with the freedom of man to choose his path. People struggle with this whole idea of freedom, this freedom of choice. And they say, well, man has a freedom of choice that can supersede God. Listen, man only has a freedom to choose because God gave him a freedom to choose. Our free will is a gift from God, and we possess it and He's not going to take it away.

But according to His foreknowledge, He knows who is going to receive Him. He knows who's going to come to Him by faith. Paul goes on to quote, Psalm 69 here, where David spoke of God's judgment on unbelieving Israel.

Look what it says in verse 9. It says, *“And David says, “Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; <sup>10</sup> let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see and bend their backs forever.”*

This is a powerful prophecy that Paul now says is David looking ahead, years ahead to the nation of Israel when they would reject their Messiah. And he says, *“Let their table become a snare.”* What does he mean when he says their table? The table is that which God has prepared for the nation of Israel. And it's full of all kinds of blessings and privileges. God gave so many blessings and privileges to Israel. But you know what? They hardened their heart.

They didn't want anything to do with it, and so God said, or David says, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, so fine, let their table now become a snare to them. Let it literally become a stumbling block to them. The very thing that was meant to bless them has now become a stumbling block, if you will.

And then Paul, he asks this question in verse 11. Look here in your Bible. He says, *“So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall?”* Now you need to understand what he means by fall. He means fall beyond recovery, and that's actually how the NIV translates it. In that instance, that's a very good interpretation of what is being said here, because you and I think of stumbling and falling as synonymous terms, but they're not. You can stumble without

falling. Have you ever stumbled and then caught yourself? It's whew, that was close. And then there's those times you stumble, and you know you're going down and there's nothing you can do to stop it.

It's a horrible feeling to know you're going down. And nothing, it's all over except for the pain. And that's what Paul's talking about. He says so I ask you, have they stumbled so as to fall beyond recovery? And then he answers his own question, “*by no means!*”

Listen people if you needed a real good refutation for replacement theology there it is right there in that verse. Has Israel stumbled beyond recovery? By no means! Paul answers it very clearly and that's one of the reasons why I don't think replacement theology has any place in Christian thinking, because it goes against the Word of God.

Reading on, in verse 11, Paul says, “*Rather, through their trespass (in other words, their rejection of Messiah) salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.*”

Alright, stop there. This is an interesting and very important statement that you and I, need to understand. Paul says that through the trespass of Israel. In other words, through Israel's rejection of their Messiah, blessing has come to the rest of the world. Or blessing has come, if you will, to the Gentiles. So what that means is you and I are the recipients of God's blessing predicated upon the fact that Israel rejected their Messiah. Because instead of the Gospel going to them, then it was then taken to the Gentiles.

You remember how Paul did his ministry? It's told us in the book of Acts. When Paul would go into a new city, he'd look for enough Jews in the city to qualify to have a synagogue. And if there was a synagogue in that city, he would go to those people first. He would give the Jews. the first opportunity to respond to the Gospel. And if the Jews didn't respond, and they really never did, at least not very many of them, Paul would eventually shake the dust off his feet and he would say, fine, I'm going to the Gentiles. I'm taking this to the Gentiles. And so, what Paul is now saying here in Romans chapter 11 is, because they rejected the Gospel message it has come to us.

In other words, it has become a blessing to you and I because they rejected it. Now here's the point of what Paul is saying, and this is going to blow your mind a little bit so stick with me. He's telling us that was God's plan. It was God's plan. And I know that when you hear that your immediate thought is. Okay, so it was God's plan for the Jews to reject their Messiah? Yes. So that means they

had no choice in the fact or the matter of rejecting their Messiah because it was God's plan. No, that's not what I'm saying. I believe they still had a choice in the matter, but it was God's plan. And somebody will say, well, pastor Paul, that is the stupidest thing you've ever said in your life.

How can those two things exist at the same time? Either it was God's plan or it was their choice. One of the two. And I'm telling you, God's Word says, both took place. Well, how can that be? I don't know, ask God! I'm not smart enough to explain these things. All I can tell you is, it's in the Bible! The great blessing that you and I have in Christ that has come to us through the plan of God and Israel's rejection of their Messiah was also the choice of Israel to reject their Messiah. And if anybody ever asks you, and says, well, so what do you think? Was it God's plan or was it their choice? You say yes. That's the answer to that.

Now verse 12 is really fascinating. Look at this. And he says, *“Now if their trespass means riches for the world, (and we have received riches, right?) and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how (do you suppose) much more will their full inclusion mean!”* Is going to affect us?

That's what he's asking here. I paraphrased it a little bit. He says, how much more will their full inclusion mean? And that really is a wonderful question. Listen, if you and I have been blessed by Israel's disobedience, how do you think we're going to be blessed by their obedience? You see, we already made the point, God's not done with Israel, right? Well, what does God have in store for Israel?

Well, he's going to tell us here as we get further into the chapter, God's plan for Israel is that they be saved. And one day all Israel will be saved. We'll see that in just a bit. And he says, so he says, listen, if their failure brought grace and beauty and blessing into your life, imagine what their success is going to bring. And he's going to talk about that right here.

Verse 13. We'll put it another way. *“Now (he says) I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry (I make a big deal of it so that, or) <sup>14</sup> in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them.”*

Paul says, I want them to see the blessing that is coming upon you that should have been theirs. I want them to be made jealous so that they might get saved. He says for, verse 15, *“For if their rejection (meaning of their Messiah) means the reconciliation of the world, (good grief) what will their acceptance (of the Messiah) mean but life from the dead?” <sup>16</sup> If the* (and then he's going to

bring a couple of kind of metaphorical pictures. He says if the) *dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump*, (or anything that comes from that original batch of dough) *and if the root is holy, so are the branches.*”

He's using these metaphors to describe the fact that Israel is the beginning of the Church, right? We're an offshoot. We're an offshoot, but he says, listen, if we're called holy, and by the way, we are, did you know that? Did you know that the Church is called holy? In fact, do you know that you're called a holy one? Isn't that crazy? That's what the word saint means. And the Bible says that you're a saint. It doesn't mean that you're perfect. We use the word saint in very weird kind of ways. Oh, she's a saint.

And we say that to say that she's a neat person or whatever like that. But the Bible calls you a saint for a completely different reason. But the word saint means holy one. And you're holy in God's sight. Set apart. That's also what it means. You've been set apart by God as holy. Now, if you're holy, and you are an offshoot from Israel. In other words, you came about from what they rejected, what does that make them? Right? What does that make them? They were the original ones to whom this Gospel message came.

It is the very Messiah who came from their very culture, their very people, their very DNA, the blessing, the covenants, everything else that God gave, the privileges that He gave to Israel. It all came to Israel! And yet you and I are now being blessed by that. So, if we're called holy, what do you suppose they are? That's what Paul is saying. Boy, doesn't this change the way you look at Israel? And he asked that question. He says, if we've been blessed through them, through their disobedience, imagine what, how it's going to affect the world when they finally come around.

And by the way, they're going to finally come around. Do you know I didn't have time to share with you the Old Testament passages that talk about this, but I could have kept you here well past dinner just giving you passage after passage of prophecy, which by the way, has yet to be fulfilled, which tells of the blessings that's going to come to this world one day through Israel when Messiah returns to this earth and sets up his throne in Jerusalem on Mount Zion and rules from that place during the millennial kingdom.

Oh, there's prophecy after prophecy after prophecy. In this last year, as I was reading through the Old Testament, God just kept bringing those across my attention. and it's like every prophet has something to say about this time in the future when God is going to bless the whole earth through Israel. It's going to be absolutely amazing.



Verse 17, he says, *“But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, (How do you like that? That's you're a wild olive shoot. You can look at your spouse today and go, you wild olive shoot, you. See what it gets you. He says, you, although a wild olive shoot) were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, <sup>18</sup> do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you.”*

Okay? So he clearly admits that some of the branches were broken off, but they were natural branches. You got grafted in, but you weren't natural branches. You got put into the root, not through natural means. You didn't grow there naturally. You got put there supernaturally, right? That's how you got grafted into the root. That's how I got grafted in. Supernaturally. We didn't belong there. Do you get that? We didn't belong there. But God made us belong. He adopted us as sons and daughters, right? And we were grafted into the root so that we might receive the nourishment that comes from the root.

And then Paul says verse 19. He says, *“Then you will say, (Okay) “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in. (Paul says yeah) <sup>20</sup> That is true. (but remember this) They were broken off because of their unbelief, (right?) but you stand fast through faith. So (he says) do not become proud, but fear. <sup>21</sup> For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you.”*

See, the point is, we've got to remember this. Israel was broken off in part, in large part. There's only a remnant that was actually stayed in, but Israel was lopped off from the original root. Why? It wasn't because God just arbitrarily said, I don't like you guys right there. You just, you're gone. They were lopped off because of unbelief. Okay? Unbelief was the reason. So he said, Hey, think about that when you are being arrogant about the fact that, well, the Jews, they were cut off, say, hey, just remember why they were cut off because of unbelief.

And you be careful. Remember that you're in here because of your faith. You stand by faith, right? You're a Christian. And what makes you a Christian? Your faith in Jesus. What keeps you a Christian? Your faith in Jesus. We stand by faith, not by works. But by faith, I believe, I believe. So, Paul says don't forget that.

Verse 22, *“Note then (he says) the kindness and the severity of God: (that is seen in this picture) severity toward those who have fallen, (or those who did not have faith) but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you too will be cut off. <sup>23</sup> And even they, (here's where he talks about Israel) if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, (again) for*

*God has the power to graft them in again. <sup>24</sup> For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree."*

He's saying, hey, it's a small thing for God to put the real branches, I mean the original branches, the natural branches back on. He's talking about Israel. and now he's going to say, and guess what guys, it's coming. Are you ready for it? It's coming.

Look what he says in verse 25, *"Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: "*

Stop there because I need to define for you the word, *mystery*, from a New Testament angle or perspective. It doesn't mean the same thing as a mystery like a Sherlock Holmes mystery, and I love mysteries by the way, I do. But that's not what this means. A mystery defined by the New Testament is a truth that has been previously unrevealed, usually meaning in the Old Testament, but now through Christ, it has been revealed. We still call it a mystery, although it's something that everybody can know because it's been revealed by Jesus.

So what is it? He says, I don't want you to be aware of this mystery. And here it is. We're in the middle of verse 25, *"...a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until (that's a keyword) the fullness of the Gentiles has come in."*

And this is where Paul reveals that Israel's hardening, Israel's disobedience, will come to an end. When is that? He says it. When the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And when will that be? God's not telling. There you go. For those of you who like to set dates or whatever like that, it's not going to happen. God will know when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And that means you and I should probably get busy telling people about Jesus. You know, we've talked about this before.

If I ever find out it's somebody from Calvary Chapel who wasn't witnessing, and you kept us going, longer. I'm going to be mad. It's like, get busy, okay? Alright? Fullness of the Gentiles, bring them in! We're bringing in the sheaves, right? There you go. Alright, let's get busy. He says, when the fullness of the Gentiles takes place, what's going to happen then? All Israel is going to be saved. Look at verse 26. *"And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob" <sup>27</sup> "and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins."*

He uses a couple of quotations from the Old Testament to speak of a time that is yet future, when Israel will be turned from her unbelief and will place her faith in the crucified and risen Messiah. And by the way, it is clearly prophesied that one day Israel will recognize her Messiah. And by the way, her Messiah is our Messiah. And it's given to us actually in the old Testament book of Zechariah. Let me put this on the screen for you. Goes like this chapter 12.

**Zechariah 12:9-10 (ESV)**

*And on that day, I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.”*

*And on that day, I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.”*

Isn't that a fascinating prophecy? Leave that up for just a second. That is such a beautiful, God says, okay, on that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. What's He talking about? He's talking about that period of time at the end of the tribulation, the end of the great tribulation when the nations of the world will amass to wipe Israel off the map once and for all. And it's going to look really bad for them for quite a period of time during that—when they come to besiege Israel. And it's going to look like that they've gotten they're going about to get the job done.

And then the Lord is going to return to this earth, and He is going to fight for Israel and He is going to destroy the enemies of Israel and they are going to recognize the One who came to fight on their behalf and they're going to see that it was the very One that they rejected.

Look what it says here in this passage, it says, “*so that when they look on me* (this is God talking) *when they look on me. On him whom they have pierced.* (Speaking of piercing his hands and his feet on the cross) *they shall mourn for him.* (And that is the bitter mourning of repentance, which Israel will display at that time for the fact that they will now know that they rejected Messiah. And this is the very one who has come now to save them.) *And they will mourn for him as one mourns for a firstborn or an only child.*”

Isn't that amazing? And at that time, all Israel will be saved. There will be a national turning to the Lord of that remnant of Israel that remains on the earth there at the end of the Great Tribulation. But the tribulation will have taken its huge toll on the people of Israel during that time, as well as many people on the earth. But God spoke through Jeremiah about a time when He would forgive all of their sin. Let me put this one up here. It says,

**Jeremiah 31:31, 34b (ESV)**

*“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”*

*“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”*

Now, notice he says, I'm going to “*make a new covenant.*” People, this is the covenant that Jesus inaugurated at the Last Supper. This is the covenant you and I have been enjoying for 2,000 years. But Israel rejected it. But there's coming a day when He will take this very same covenant that was established on the cross and through His resurrection, and He will apply it to Israel and to Judah, and He will forgive their sins.

He will remember them no more. Now, listen, this has already partially been fulfilled in you and I, but for Israel, it awaits its ultimate fulfillment at the end of the tribulation period when Jesus returns to fight for the nation of Israel. By the way, I do not believe that's the first time that Jesus comes for His people. I personally believe that Jesus returns for the Church, and we are caught up to be with the Lord in the air. And I believe that's what catapults us into the tribulation period when the church is removed from the face of the earth. Some of you disagree. I give you 100 percent right to be wrong. I'm just kidding.

Listen, we're not going to squabble over it. I personally don't believe the Church is going to be here for the tribulation. You want to stick around, it's your business. But I believe that in fact, that's what's going to herald that dark time when salt and light is removed from this earth and the Spirit with us. And so, Jesus will come first for the Church and then He will return for Israel at the end of the tribulation period.

So how should we view Israel today? Look with me here in verse 28, “*As regards the gospel then, they are enemies for your sake.*” And you know they still are today. Do you know it's illegal to preach the Gospel in Israel today? I

mean, there's people doing it, but it's against the law. You're not supposed to proselytize. And you can get in trouble, for doing it. As relates to the Gospel, they're enemies, *"But as regards election, (or this being a remnant) they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers."* Meaning Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and so forth.

<sup>29</sup> *For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. (cannot be taken away)*

<sup>30</sup> *For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, <sup>31</sup> so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy.*

<sup>32</sup> *For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all."*

Meaning God has given over all of mankind to their sinful rebellion so that He might have mercy and grace upon us.

Now, you know what? There's a few verses left in the chapter, but with that Paul's done. He's done talking about our salvation. He's not going to bring it up again, frankly, I mean, except in just very, very light tones throughout the rest of this letter. But as of this, as of the end of verse 32, he's done. He's finished. And like I said, this is, this has been a tough study. It's been challenging sometimes to get through some of this stuff, but it's been, but it's been good, we've enjoyed it. But lest we think, okay, well, I've been through Romans chapter 1 through 11. Okay, I got this thing dialed in now.

Lest you think that, know and understand this. Paul didn't think that. Paul had the realization, the understanding, the cognizant understanding that even though he had written this masterpiece of information that is made up of Romans chapters 1 through 11, he didn't even scratch the surface of uncovering the mind of God for His people. Look what he goes on and says in verse 33 and following. He says, *"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable (are) his ways!"*

If inscrutable isn't part of your vocabulary, it means impossible to understand. How impossible it is to understand these things. This is the man who just wrote the most incredible treatise on salvation that anyone has ever written on the face of the earth, and he comes back at the end of it and says, Pfft, there's so much of this I just don't get. And then he asks the question, which is a quotation, verse 34, *"For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?"* (We've all tried doing that from time to time in prayer) <sup>35</sup> *"Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?"* <sup>36</sup> *For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen."*

And this is Paul's way of saying, I've done my best here with the grace God's given me to teach you what I know about this salvation of ours. But you know what? I understand that it even doesn't begin to reflect the full mind of the Lord on this topic. And I think it's good to read these verses every so often to remind ourselves just how over our heads this whole conversation is, because sometimes we can get, what does knowledge do to us again?

It doesn't it puff us up. Isn't that what Paul said knowledge puffs up? And so, we get you're going through, Romans chapters 1 through 11 and we get all puffed up. Is it okay? I got this thing dialed in. I know what's going on. You have a question about salvation, talk to me, thank you. And Paul would say, you know, I've shared with you what God has revealed, but I still know nothing. I still know nothing. I haven't begun to scratch the surface of this thing. It's funny, when I was a younger man, when I was in Bible college, I remember in our Christian doctrine class, I was in my 20s at the time.

Still pretty much an idiot. And the professor used to ask us to debate with one another. He'd give us a topic. See everybody who believes this about this topic, get on this side of the room and everybody who believes this, that about this topic, you get over there and I want you guys to debate. And I mean, we'd be so passionate. No, you're wrong! And we'd say it's this and that, and we were so dumb. And I remember those days and I cringe a little bit because I think how arrogant I was. I thought I knew this stuff. And by the grace of God, I mean, this is my third time teaching through the Bible.

By God's grace, I've learned a few things. But you know what I've really learned? How much I don't know. How much I can't understand. How much is still out there that I'm just like, I don't know. I don't get it. You know? The thing that my professor actually, in college, used to say to us, and I didn't understand it as a twenty something. But he used to say to me. In this room, I realize that I know less than all of you. And I was like, what? But what he meant was he'd lived long enough and become humble enough in his years to realize that he knew so little.

And we still thought we knew a lot. God and time has a wonderful way of breaking us of that sort of pride that says, I know it all. Even Paul the apostle says, oh, the depths. The depths of the wisdom of God, how far past finding out they are. The next time we start getting arrogant about what we know, I think we need to think again. God has been so good to share what we can know, the things that we can be sure of, and I'm not suggesting that we cannot be sure because we can be sure about the things He has revealed to us. We can have a confidence that this is true.