

God's Mysterious Olive Tree

Romans 11

Read verses 1-15

1. What was Paul's first proof that God has not fully rejected His people? (verse 1)
2. Paul alludes to Elijah, at the time he was hiding in a cave, fleeing from the wicked Jezebel who threatened to take his life. Read 1 Kings 19:9-14. The Word of the Lord came to him and asked him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" What kind of response did Elijah have? Was he right? Do you think that God was pleased with his response?
3. Elijah could have been seen as being a bit self-righteous. As there was a remnant in Elijah's day, so was there in the day of Paul. How is it that the remnant would be saved according to verse 5? If one is a part of the remnant, would there be anything to boast about?
4. Last week's study guide contained a study on the theme of "faith." This week, consider the term "grace." One theologian accurately defines grace as "God's utterly undeserved favor upon man." It is also properly defined as "God's unmerited favor on man."

Why is man utterly undeserving of God's favor?

What synonyms can you think of for "favor"?

According to Psalm 145:8-9, to whom does God give grace?

But according to Romans 11:5 & 6, does He display his saving grace to all?

So, now that you understand grace a little better, what did Paul mean when he said that grace would not be grace if salvation was by works?

5. Suppose you were saving your money for an expensive family trip to Europe. Children had been helping by saving for months by mowing lawns, working for your parents and other odds and ends jobs. When the deadline came for the money to be turned in, you fell well short of the amount needed and could not go. As you were waving goodbye to your other friends going on the trip, you asked one how he raised the money and he told you, "There was a scholarship! The money was given to me!" How would you feel? According to verses 11-15, how was Paul thinking that some Jews might come to be saved?
6. What did the rejection of Israel bring to the rest of the world?

Read verses 16 through 24

7. Paul uses the illustration of an olive tree and new branches being grafted in. Try to explain this illustration Paul is using.

Who is represented by the natural branches broken off?

Who is represented by the shoots grafted in?

What do you think is the root system that supports the branches?

What is Paul basically saying in this passage?

8. Verses 18-20 contain a warning to the Gentiles. What is the warning given in this section? Why did Paul see the need to give it? How are you tempted to fall into the very same sin?

9. Do verses 21 and 22 suggest that one could lose his salvation? From the book of Romans, how do you know? What is this verse teaching?

10. In verses 23 and 24, Paul gives another proof that Israel has not been completely cast out of God's plan. What would it take for Israel to be saved?

Read verses 25 through 36

11. There are three basic questions that every student of the Bible must ask about the passage he is studying. Thoughtfully answer these three questions about verse 25 in its context:

What does it say? (make observations)

What does it mean? (make an interpretation using study tools such as commentaries and dictionaries)

What does it mean for me? (make applications)

12. This chapter reveals more information as to why God hardens peoples hearts. He hardened Pharaoh's heart in chapter nine, and now He is seen as having hardened the hearts of Israel. Paul reveals God's purpose for doing that. According to verses 30-32, what is God's purpose for allowing both Gentiles and Jews to go through a period of disobedience? According to verses 33-36 what is the ultimate purpose for all that God has done?

13. Take a look back at what Paul has taught us so far: Man stands guilty before God as a sinner and is unable to save himself (1:18-3:20). But God provided a way for both Jews and Gentiles to become righteous through faith in Jesus Christ (3:21-5:21), and our union with Him allows us to now become obedient and pleasing to God because of the indwelling Holy Spirit (6:1-8:16). Those who were disobedient and headed toward destruction may now have confidence that only glory awaits them in heaven (8:17-39)! God has not neglected the Jews, however, for there is still a remnant today and there will be a day when all Israel will be saved. God allowed Israel to undergo this disobedience and hardened their hearts so that His mercy might be shown to all (9:1-11:32)! What a wonderful display of the pleasure and sovereignty of God! What other response could we have other than to praise God with Paul in verses 33-36? Meditate on and memorize these verses and glory in the greatness of God's sovereign plan of redemption. Write down your prayer to Him.

Suggested Memory verses:
Romans 11:33-36