



Group Discussion Guide

Romans 11:1-16

For groups meeting May 31 evening through June 7 morning.

Now we come to the final portion of this unit that is comprised of Romans 9-11. These chapters are meant to be studied together, and while it is impossible to create a comprehensive summary of these three chapters, the following is an attempt at describing the major purpose of Paul's writing: God's sovereignty, wisdom and grace can all be seen through His plan of redemption for all who believe in Jesus Christ. Salvation is for Jews and Gentiles who believe, and God knows who will accept and who will reject.

In the latter part of this unit, Paul focused on God's plan as it relates corporately to Israel and also to Gentiles; those outside of the nation of Israel. In our reading this week, we discover that Paul desired to ensure Gentiles understood that God's decision to reject Israel as a whole is not because He loved Gentiles more, but because Israel had chosen to reject God's Messiah, Jesus Christ (vs. 17-20). Specifically, he wrote that Gentile believers must remember that the root of God's plan – Israel – is the root of the tree of salvation, and that Gentiles would not have access to salvation by faith if not for those Jews who had followed God in faith (v. 18). Instead of being proud, Gentiles are instructed to have the proper fear of God (v. 20). After all, Paul wrote, if Israel as a whole could be cut off for their unbelief, Gentiles as a whole could experience the same fate (vs. 21-22). Also, when the majority of Jews begin to accept Jesus as the Messiah, they will be grafted back into the tree from which they were cut off (vs. 23-24).

To help Gentiles combat pride, Paul outlined the "mystery" of God's dealings with Israel (v. 25). He wrote that the hardening of the nation was only partial, meaning that He had not abandoned His chosen people and there would be a day in the future when the majority of Jews would believe. This would happen after all Gentiles who would trust in Christ had come to faith. Paul supported this with quotes from Isaiah 59:20-21 and Isaiah 27:9 (vs. 26-27).

The statement, "All Israel will be saved" does not mean that every Jew living at Christ's return will be regenerated. Many of them will not be saved, as seen by the fact that the judgment of Israel, to follow soon after the Lord's return, will include the removal of Jewish rebels (Ezek. 20:34-38). Following this judgment God will then remove godlessness and sins from the nation as He establishes His New Covenant with regenerate Israel (cf. Jer. 31:33-34).

John A. Witmer, "Romans," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 486.

At the present time, Paul wrote that the majority of Jews were enemies of the Gospel, and this opened the door for the message of salvation to be brought to the Gentiles. However, God's

promises given to Abraham were still active and would be fulfilled and therefore Israel would eventually turn to Christ (vs. 28-29). Paul wanted Gentiles to realize they were now in the place where Jews once stood, and that one day Jews would stand where the Gentiles now stood. Both Jews and Gentiles have been disobedient to God, and this magnifies the mercy He makes available to all people (vs. 30-32).

Paul concluded this chapter and this portion of his letter with an acknowledgement of God's greatness. He focused on God's wisdom and knowledge, and how His decisions and His ways are far beyond human understanding. He used Isaiah 40:13 and Job 35:7 to demonstrate mankind's understanding in relation to God. We cannot give counsel to our Creator, and there is nothing we can give to Him (vs. 34-35). All things come from God. All things exist through God. All things are glorifying to God. He is to be praised forever (v. 36).

Discussion Questions

1. How is it possible for a recipient of God's grace to become arrogant about receiving that gift? What could lead to this mindset?
2. Have you ever found yourself looking down at unbelievers? If so, describe how God revealed this to you and how He has worked to help you overcome this.
3. Do you find it difficult to view Paul's references to Jews and Gentiles as the majority of a group of people instead of individuals? Why or why not? How does this affect the meaning of the passage we read this week?
4. Paul refers to God's plan as a "mystery" in verse 25. Why do you think he uses that term? Do you see His overall plan for Jews and Gentiles as mysterious?
5. Paul writes in verse 29 that "the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable." How does that truth encourage you at this point in your life?
6. What are some things we learn about God from verses 33-36? How can you put these into practice in your life this week?