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**Not Final but Temporary
(Part 3)
Israel's Future Restoration
Romans 11:23-27**

Introduction:

In his book entitled *Explore the Book*, **J. Sidlow Baxter** wrote a poem that focuses on the **attribute** of **God's faithfulness**. It reads:

He never fails the soul that **trusts** in Him;
Tho' **disappointments** come and **hope** burns dim,
He never fails.

Tho' **trials** surge like stormy seas around,
Tho' **testings** fierce like ambushed foes abound,
Yet this **my soul**, with **millions more** has found,
He never fails; He never fails.

He never fails the soul that **trusts** in Him;
Tho' **angry skies** with thunder-clouds grow grim,
He never fails.

Tho' **icy blasts** life's fairest flow'rs **lay low**,
Tho' earthly springs of **joy** all **cease** to flow,
Yet still 'tis **true**, with **millions more** I know,
He never fails; He never fails.

He never fails the soul that **trusts** in Him;
Tho' **sorrow's cup** should **overflow** the brim,
He never fails.

Tho' oft the **pilgrim way** seems **rough** and **long**,
I yet shall **stand** amid yon white-robed throng,

And **there** I'll sing, with **millions more**, this song—
He never fails; He never fails.

Nothing in life is more **taken for granted** than a **faith** that is **unchallenged**. And nothing **challenges** our **faith** more than the **trials** of life. Life in this fallen, sinful world often **screams out** to us that God is not **sovereign** or **good** or **faithful** toward us by what He is allowing to happen in our lives. **But that is not true!** For as **2 Timothy 2:13** declares that even “If **we** are **faithless**, **He** remains **faithful**, for He cannot **deny** Himself.” **God is faithful! He never fails!** Once again we see the **faithfulness of God** behind the scenes in the passage we will be looking at this morning. Turn in your Bible to **Romans 11**.

In Romans 11:23-27 we see three aspects of Israel's future salvation by the grace of God that should keep all of us Gentile believers humble in how we look at the Jews.

The **first aspect** of Israel's future salvation is this:

I. The Assurance that God can accomplish Miracles

- A. Look at v. **23**: And **they also**, if they do not **continue** in their **unbelief**, will be grafted in, for **God is able** to graft them in again.
 1. Having just **warned** professing **Gentile believers** in vv. **16-22** to not be **arrogant** and **boast** over the Jews because God has **broken off** the branches of the **Jewish majority** in their **unbelief**, so that the **same thing** doesn't happen to them, Paul now **shifts** his focus onto the **hope** of Israel's future restoration, the **theme** of **chapter 11**.
 2. Now when Paul says “**they also**” he is no longer referring to the **Gentile believers** but the unbelieving **Jewish majority**. Here

we see the **hopeful possibility** that “**if they do not continue** in their **unbelief**” (9:30-10:21) but instead exercise **faith** in Jesus Christ, they will be “**grafted in,**” or better “**re-grafted**” back into the cultivated olive tree (i.e. the people of God) from which they were broken off.

3. Here we see that **faith** makes **all** the **difference!** **Salvation** for both Jews and Gentiles has ever and always been through **faith** (3:22, 26; 10:4-13).
 4. There is only the **one tree** of the true people of God, and everyone is attached to this tree by **grace alone** through **faith alone** in **Christ alone**. There is no other way!
 5. And yet, it is **God alone** who can **make** this happen. Paul says at the end of **v. 23**, “...for **God is able** to **graft** them in **again.**” **A.T. Robertson** is correct when he says, “This is the **crux** of the whole matter. **God is able.**” (pg. 397)
 6. The word “**able**” (dunatos) not only speaks of God being **all-powerful** or omnipotent, but also His **willingness** to restore His people when they **repent** of their sin and **believe**. God is **able** and **willing** to **miraculously** graft them in again because **He is faithful** to His **saving promises** to Israel.
- B. Paul then gives **further reason why** the Jewish majority will **one day** be grafted in again in **v. 24**: **For** if **you** were cut off from what is **by nature** a **wild olive tree**, and were **grafted contrary to nature** into a cultivated olive tree, **how much more** will **these** (i.e. unbelieving Jews) who are the **natural branches** be **grafted** into their **own** olive tree?

1. In other words, if God can graft **wild olive branches** (i.e. Gentile believers) into a **cultivated olive tree** (the true people of God) to which they did not “**naturally belong**,” He can **certainly re-graft** unbelieving Jews who **by nature** originally **belonged** to the tree when they **repent** and **believe!**
2. **God is able** to do it because with the all-powerful “God **all things** are possible” (Matt. 19:26). Therefore, because of God’s faithfulness Israel’s **future return** to the Lord is not only **possible** but **certain!**
3. We see this in the **second aspect** of Israel’s future salvation, which is this:

II. The Fact that Israel will be Saved

- A. Look at **vv. 25-26** where Paul says: **For** I do not want you, **brethren**, to be **uninformed** of **this mystery**—**so that** you will not be **wise** in your own estimation—that a **partial hardening** has happened to Israel **until** the **fullness of the Gentiles** has come in; and so **all Israel** will be **saved**; (Stop there)
 1. **Highlighting** the **extreme importance** of what he is about to say, Paul uses his familiar introductory formula, “I do not want you, **brethren**, to be **uninformed**” (1:13; 1 Cor. 10:1; 12:1; 2 Cor. 1:8; 1 Thess. 4:13). And the **reason** he wanted the predominately Gentile church at **Rome** to not be “**uninformed** (or **ignorant**) of **this mystery**” was “...**so that** you will **not be wise** in your **own estimation**.”
 2. Paul wants to help them understand God’s **plan of salvation** and how they and the Jews fit into it, so they will be **less likely** to **arrogantly think** that Israel is out forever and they as the

- church** have **replaced** Israel. And yet, that is **exactly** what some believers teach today as they let their theological system take **precedence** over what the **text of Scripture** actually says.
3. Now what is “**this mystery**” that Paul is talking about here? The word “**mystery**” (musterion) means something **hidden** from eternity past but is now **revealed** by God in the **New Testament** (Dan. 2:17-18, 27-30, 47; Mk. 4:11; Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 3:3-6; Col. 1:26-27; 2 Thess. 2:7).
 4. Paul then goes on to describe the **content** of this **mystery** in **vv. 25-26**. In these **two verses** God reveals to us His plan of salvation as outlined in **three stages**.
- B. The **first stage** is: The **hardening** of the Jewish **majority**. Paul says in **v. 25**, “...that a **partial hardening** has happened to Israel...” (Stop there)
1. We have already seen that Israel’s hardening was not simply a matter of their human disobedience but of God’s sovereign and judicial hardening (9:17-18, 30-10:21; 7-10). But this hardening is **not total but partial** because God by His grace has **preserved a remnant** for Himself (11:1-5, 7).
 2. While it is true that **individual Jews** are being **saved today**, during this present **church age** God is **predominantly** saving a great number of **Gentiles** (11:11-15) as the **gospel** is being preached throughout the world. As we saw before, this was **intended** by God to make Israel **jealous** (11:11, 14) and drive them to saving faith in Jesus Christ.
 3. The fact that **more Gentiles** are coming to Christ at this time than **Jews** is the **ultimate application** of Jesus principle “the

first will be **last**; and the **last, first**” (Matt. 19:30). Although **salvation** was intended **first** for the **Jews** (Jn. 4:22; Rom. 1:16), in **actuality** they are **last**.

4. Now whereas Israel’s hardening is **not total but partial**, it is also **not final but temporary**.

C. We see this in the **second stage**, which is: Israel’s **hardening** will have an **end**. Look at the end of v. **25**, “...**until** the **fullness of the Gentiles** has come in.”

1. The word “**until**” (achri) refers to **time**; and the word “**fullness**” (pleroma) has to do with **numerical completion**. Together, these terms show that Israel’s hardening will **last** for a **predetermined** length of time.

2. Also, the phrase “**has come in**” refers to **entering** the **kingdom of God** (Matt. 5:20; Mk. 9:47; Jn. 3:5; Acts 14:22) or **eternal life** (Mk. 9:43, 45). Both of which refer to **receiving salvation**.

3. Therefore, when Paul says, “**until** the **fullness** of the **Gentiles has come in**” he is saying that Israel’s **hardened unbelief** and **rejection** of Christ will last only **until** the **full number** of Gentiles believers has been **reached**.

4. **Douglas Moo** says it this way, “...the Gentiles’ ‘**fullness**’ involves a **numerical completion**: God has **determined** to save a **certain number** of Gentiles, and only when that number has been reached will Israel’s hardening be **removed**.” (pg. 719)

5. Notice that since it was **God** who sovereignly **hardened** Israel in the first place, it is God who sovereignly **removes** it. And it is “the **fullness** of the **Gentiles**,” when the **last** Gentile believer is

saved that **marks the end of stages one and two** and the **beginning of the third stage.**

D. The **third stage** is: Ethnic **Israel** is saved in **Mass.** Look at **v. 26:** and so **all Israel** will be **saved...** (Stop there)

1. Concerning the opening words “**and so**” (kai outos), **F.F. Bruce** rightly states, “The connecting words ‘**and so**’ say more than ‘**and then:**’ they **imply** that ‘**in this way**’—by the **operation** of the **divine purpose** that the **gospel** should be **received** by the **Gentile first**, and then also by the **Jew**—(that) the **salvation** of ‘**all Israel**’ will come about.” (pg. 218)
2. This is the **divinely appointed process** whereby God sovereignly planned salvation history to unfold. Although we often have no clue what is happening in the world and in our lives, He knows exactly what He is doing!
3. We now come to the time when “**all Israel will be saved.**” **Israel’s future restoration** is the **overall theme** of the chapter, the **heart** of this mystery, and the **outcome** that everything in **chapter 9-11** has been pointing to.
4. This **third stage** was described in **v. 12** as “**their fulfillment,**” in **v. 15** as “**their acceptance,**” and in **vv. 23-24** as the **re-grafting** in again of the **natural branches** into their **own** olive tree.
5. Now what exactly does “**all Israel will be saved**” mean? Let’s look at each of the **three main words** in this statement: “**all,**” “**Israel,**” and “**saved.**” **First**, what is the **identity** of “**Israel?**” There are **three basic views:**

1) Some say “**Israel**” refers to the entire community of the elect, both Jews and Gentiles that make up the church.

- This is the **Amillennial view** that sees the church as the **new Israel** that **replaces** the **old Israel** and is the true people of God.
- However, this view disregards the clear ethnic contrast between Israel and the Gentiles throughout chapter 11, and especially v. 25.

2) Some say “**Israel**” refers to the **remnant** within Israel that has believed throughout their history.

- Although Paul uses the term “**Israel**” for the “**spiritual Israel**” or elect within “**ethnic Israel**” (9:6b), this would not advance Paul’s argument. It would be **anticlimactic** since Paul has said all along that the **remnant** of believing Jews, those not broken off from the tree, would be saved and will continually exist while the fullness of the Gentiles is being completed.
- Paul has also made it very clear in **verses 12** and **15** that **something more** than the salvation of the remnant awaits Israel in the future. The expectation that the **broken off branches** will be **grafted in again** to the olive tree suggests that a **great number** of Jews will turn back to Christ in faith.

3) Others say that “**Israel**” refers to the **ethnic Israel** as a whole. This is the **best view**.

- Paul has used the term “**Israel**” **ten times** so far in **Romans 9-11** and **each** refers to **ethnic Israel** [9:6b (twice), 27 (twice), 31; 10:19, 21; 11:2, 7, 25].
 - **John Murray** accurately states, “It is **exegetically impossible** to give to ‘**Israel**’ in this verse any other de-no-ta-tion than that which belongs to the term throughout this chapter.” (Vol. 2 pg. 96)
 - And **F.F. Bruce** agrees saying, “It is **impossible** to entertain an **exegesis** which understands ‘**Israel**’ here in a different sense from ‘**Israel**’ in **verse 25**.” (pg. 218)
6. **Second**, what is the **extent** or **scope** of the word “**all**?” Whom does Paul intend to **include** in “**all Israel**?” Again **three views**:
- 1) Some say “**all**” refers to every single Israelite without exception who ever lived throughout Israel’s history.
 - But this would be a sort of **ethnic universalism**. And this directly **contradicts** what Paul said in **9:6b** that “...they are **not** all Israel who are descended from Israel.”
 - Also, since the salvation of “**all Israel**” is a **future event** that occurs only **after** the completed number of Gentiles believers, then all the Jews who **failed to believe** in Jesus Christ have **died in unbelief**. And Scripture is clear that faith in Christ is the only way of salvation.
 - 2) Some say “**all**” doesn’t mean “**all**” as in every single Israelite at the end of history, but refers to **ethnic Israel** as a whole **representatively**. This view carries a lot of weight.
 - Since the word “**all**” is often used as a representative amount in the Old Testament (1 Sam. 7:5; 12:1; 25:1; 2

Chron. 12:1; 1 Kgs. 12:1; Dan. 9:11), they say this is the way it is used here.

- Therefore, they say at the end of history the **small remnant** of Jewish Christians will **explode** in number so as to be the **majority** of Israel (though not every Israelite), and that **majority** is **representative** of the nation, and is thus called “**all Israel.**”

3) Others say “**all**” refers to the entire ethnic nation of Israel—every single Israelite who is alive at the end of history. I personally think this is the **best view.**

- Here the word “**all**” literally means **all!** Now **before “all Israel”** is saved, God is going to **judge Israel** during the **Great Tribulation** (Ezek. 20:33-38; Dan. 12:10).
- In **Revelation 12** we are told that **Satan** will persecute and attempt to **destroy** Israel. The **prophet Zechariah** prophesied in **Zechariah 13:8** that during this Tribulation period **two-thirds** of the Jewish population will be “**cut off and die.**”
- Now while the Jewish population is dramatically **reduced**, **Zachariah** goes on to declare in **v. 9** that the **remaining one-third** of the Israelites that are alive at the end of the Tribulation when Christ returns will go through a period of **intense suffering** that will **result in all of them** receiving Him and being saved (Zech. 12:8-13:1-2; 14:4; Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:7). These are the now believing Jewish majority that is **re-grafted** into the true people of God.

- It is **this group** that makes the previously **small remnant** to **explode** in number and now **constitute** “**all Israel**,” the entire ethnic nation of Israel. Now “**all Israel**” is **spiritual Israel**!
7. **Third**, notice again the **timing when** in history “all Israel will be **saved**.”
- Since “all Israel” is **saved** only **after** the salvation of all the **elect Gentiles**, there is **no more salvation** for Gentiles. This shows that the **end of time** has arrived.
 - **Douglas Moo** correctly observes, “The **salvation** of Israel comes only **after** God has brought into the kingdom all the Gentiles **destined** to be saved. **No room** is therefore left for a spiritual quickening of the world; all that **remains** is the **consummation**.” (pg. 695)
 - Therefore, this end of time is closely associated with the **Second Coming** of Jesus Christ in in all of His glory as “**King of Kings** and **Lord of Lords**” (Rev. 17:14; 19:16) at the **end** of the **Tribulation** to **take back** this earth that rightly belongs to Him, to **put down** His enemies, and to **establish** His millennial kingdom.
8. Therefore, “**this mystery**” that Paul wants Gentiles believers to **know** refers to God’s plan of salvation at the end of history whereby all ethnic Israel will be saved when Christ returns. And this is the **very fulfillment** of Paul’s **prayer** in **10:1** where he says, “Brethren, my **heart’s desire** and my **prayer** to God for them is for their **salvation**.” (9:2-3)
9. The **third aspect** of Israel’s future salvation is this:

III. The Proof from Scripture of Israel Salvation

- A. Look at the end of v. 26: just as it is written, “**THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.**” (Verse 27) “**THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.**”
1. As we have seen before, Paul introductory formula “**just as it is written**” means that just as God’s Word was **authoritative** when **originally** written, so it has **binding authority** now. So **listen to** and **believe** what it says!
 2. He then gives a quotation, which is a **combination** of certain elements from various Old Testament Scriptures: **Isaiah 27:9; 59:20-21a; and Jeremiah 31:33-34.**
 3. Now in **proving** Israel’s future salvation from Scripture, **first** Paul says in v. 26, “**THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION...**” Whereas in the Old Testament “the **Redeemer**” or “**Deliverer**” is certainly **Yahweh**, for Paul He is **Jesus the Messiah.**
 4. Notice that He “**will come** (future tense) from **Zion.**” Although the word “**Zion**” has been said to refer to Jesus’ place of origin, descent from David, and His death and resurrection in Jerusalem, it is **best** to see it as referring to the **heavenly Jerusalem** from which the Lord comes to **save Israel** at His **Second Coming** (Gal. 4:26; 1 Thess. 1:10; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 3:12, 21).
 5. **Second**, notice what Christ **does** when he comes. Paul says at the end of v. 26, “**...HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS**

FROM **JACOB**,” which is the **patriarch** from whom the name **Israel** and the **twelve tribes** of **Israel** came.

6. This is also in the future tense, showing that when the glorified Christ comes to save His people it is a salvation from their sins. He is the One who will **remove** their “**ungodliness**” or **unbelief** and **grant** them saving faith in Himself.

B. And **third**, Christ does this in **fulfillment** of His earlier **covenant** with them. Look at **v. 27**: “**THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.**”

1. This undoubtedly refers to a **portion** of the **New Covenant** that God **originally gave** to Israel in such passages as **Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 36**, and others. Paul uses a clause from **Isaiah 27:9** to interpret this covenant in terms of the **forgiveness of sins**.

2. Here we see that the **substance** of the **New Covenant** which Christ brings about in Israel’s future salvation is His gracious **forgiveness** of their sins. Therefore, Paul ties Israel’s salvation to the **cross of Christ**, where the **price** for sin has been **paid** in full (3:21-26).

3. As we saw back in **Romans 5**, this forgiveness of sin is what I called a “**new purity**.” The **four resources** of the **New Covenant** given by God to every believer are: a **new purity**, a **new identity**, a **new disposition**, and a **new power**.

4. Although these **promised resources** were **originally given** to Israel, since the **New Covenant** was **inaugurated** by Christ at His **first coming**, Gentile believers can **share** in these blessings **right now** as Abraham’s spiritual children (Gal. 3:8-9).

5. Whereas the **New Covenant** was **inaugurated** by Christ at His **first coming**, it will be **consummated** at His **Second Coming** when “**all Israel** will be **saved**” and they will experience the **fulfillment** of all God’s promises to them by His sheer **mercy** and **grace**.
6. Therefore, as Paul said back in **9:6a**, “...it is **not** as though the **word of God** has **failed**...” God’s **saving promises** to Israel have not **failed** or been **nullified**, regardless of her **unbelief** and **rejection** of the Christ and His gospel.
7. God is not **finished** with Israel! Although on the **surface** God may “**appear**” to **not be faithful** to the promises He made to Israel, God **always keeps** His promises.
8. God’s promises cannot be **thwarted**, and He Himself will not **break** them. Therefore, what He has **promised** will always be **fulfilled** at **exactly** the **time** and in **exactly** the **way** that He has sovereignly determined.
9. And this is all because **God is faithful! He never fails!**

Conclusion:

In closing, may we as Gentile believers **learn** from God’s **faithful dealings** with Israel! Not only should this keep us **humble** in how we look at the Jews, but it should also deeply **encourage** our hearts because our God will **always be faithful** to His **promises** to us as well!

Therefore, no matter how **difficult** the **trials** may be in our lives that **challenge** our **faith**, we must **continually** hold fast to the **truths** of God’s Word and make the **conscious choice** to **trust** Jesus. He is **worthy** of our **trust** because **He is faithful! He never fails!**