

CHAPTER 11

The apostle, having reconciled that great truth of the rejection of the Jews with the promise made unto the fathers, is, in this chapter, further labouring to mollify the harshness of it, and to reconcile it to the divine goodness in general. It might be said, “Hath God then cast away his people?” The apostles therefore sets himself, in this chapter, to make a reply to this objection, and that two ways: —

I. He shows at large what the mercy is that is mixed with this wrath (v. 1-32).

II. He infers thence the infinite wisdom and sovereignty of God, with the adoration of which he concludes this chapter and subject (v. 33-36).

◀511▶ ROMANS 11:1-32

THE STATE OF THE JEWS AND GENTILES

The apostle proposes here a plausible objection, which might be urged against the divine conduct in casting off the Jewish nation (v. 1): “*Hath God cast away his people?* Is the rejection total and final? Are they all abandoned to wrath and ruin, and that eternal? Is the extent of the sentence so large as to be without reserve, or the continuance of it so long as to be without repeal? Will he have no more a peculiar people to himself?” In opposition to this, he shows that there was a great deal of goodness and mercy expressed along with this seeming severity, particularly he insists upon three things: —

- 1.** That, though some of the Jews were cast off, yet they were not all so.
- 2.** That, though the body of the Jews were cast off, yet the Gentiles were taken in. And,
- 3.** That, though the Jews were cast off at present, yet in God's due time they should be taken into his church again.

I. The Jews, it is true, were many of them cast off, but not all. The supposition of this he introduces with a *God forbid*. He will by no means endure such a suggestions. God had made a distinction between some of them and others.

1. There was a chosen remnant of believing Jews, that obtained righteousness and life by faith in Jesus Christ, v. 1-7. These are said to be such as he *foreknew* (v. 2), that is, had thoughts of love to, before the world was; for whom he thus foreknew he did predestinate. her lies the ground of the difference. They are called the *election* (v. 7), that is, the elect, God's chosen ones, whom he calls the election, because that which first distinguished them from the dignified them above others was God's electing love. Believers are the *election*, all those and those only whom God hath chosen. Now,

(1.) He shows that he himself was one of them: *For I also am an Israelite*; as if he had said, “Should I say that all the Jews are rejected, I should cut off my own claims, and see myself abandoned.” Paul was a chosen vessel (^{<4015>}Acts 9:15), and yet he was of the *seed of Abraham*, and particularly of the tribe of Benjamin, the least and youngest of all the tribes of Israel.

(2.) He suggests that as in Elias's time, so now, this chosen remnant was really more and greater than one would think it was, which intimates likewise that it is no new nor unusual thing for God's grace and favour to Israel to be limited and confined to a remnant of that people; for so it was in Elijah's time. The scripture saith it of Elias, *en Elia* — *in the story of Elias*, the great reformer of the Old Testament. Observe,

[1.] His mistake concerning Israel; as if their apostasy in the days of Ahab was so general that he himself was the only faithful servant God had in the world. He refers to ^{<1104>}1 Kings 19:14, where (it is here said) *he maketh intercession to God against Israel*. A strange kind of intercession: *entynchanei to Theo kata tou Israel* — *He deals with God against Israel*; so it may be read; so *entynchano* is translated, ^{<4021>}Acts 25:24. The Jews *enetychon moi* — *have dealt with me*. In prayer we deal with God, commune with him, discourse with him: it is said of Elijah (^{<5187>}James 5:17) that he *prayed in praying*. We are then likely to pray in praying, to make a business of that duty, when we pray as those that are dealing with God in the duty. Now Elijah in this prayer spoke as if there were one left faithful in Israel but himself. See to what a low ebb the profession of

religion may sometimes be brought, and how much the face of it may be eclipsed, that the most wise and observing men may give it up for gone. So it was in Elijah's time. That which makes the show of a nation is the powers and the multitude. The powers of Israel were then persecuting powers: They have *killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars*, and they *seek my life*. The multitude of Israel were then idolatrous: *I am left alone*. Thus those few that were faithful to God were not only lost in the crowd of idolaters, but crushed and driven into corners by the rage of persecutors. *When the wicked rise, a man is hidden*, ¹⁸⁸²Proverbs 28:12. — *Digged down thine altars*; not only neglected them, and let them go out of repair, but digged them down. When altars were set up for Baal, it is no wonder if God's altars were pulled down; they could not endure that standing testimony against their idolatry. This was his intercession *against Israel*; as if he had said, "Lord, is not this a people ripe for ruin, worthy to be cast off? What else canst thou do for thy great name?" It is a very sad thing for any person or people to have the prayers of God's people against them, especially of God's prophets, for God espouses, and sooner or later will visibly own, the cause of his praying people.

[2.] The rectifying of this mistake by the answer of God (v. 4): *I have reserved*. Note, *First*, Things are often much better with the church of God than wise and good men think they are. They are ready to conclude hardly, and to give up all for gone, when it is not so. *Secondly*, In times of general apostasy, there is usually a remnant that keep their integrity — some, though but a few; all do not go one way. *Thirdly*, That when there is a remnant who keep their integrity in times of general apostasy it is God that reserves to himself that remnant. If he had left them to themselves, they had gone down the stream with the rest. It is his free and almighty grace that makes the difference between them and others. — *Seven thousand*: a competent number to bear their testimony against the idolatry of Israel, and yet, compared with the many thousands of Israel, a very small number, one of a city, and two of a tribe, like the grape-gleanings of the vintage. Christ's flock is but a little flock; and yet, when they come all together at last, they will be a great and innumerable multitude, ¹⁸⁸³Revelation 7:9. Now the description of this remnant is that *they had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal*, which was then the reigning sin of Israel. In court, city, and country, Baal had the ascendant; and the generality of people, more or less, paid their respect to Baal. The best evidence of integrity is a freedom from the present prevailing corruptions of the times and places that we live

in, to swim against the stream when it is strong. Those God will own for his faithful witnesses that are bold in bearing their testimony to the *present* truth, ^{<411>}2 Peter 1:12. This is thank-worthy, not to bow to Baal when every body bows. Sober singularity is commonly the badge of true sincerity.

[3.] The application of this instance to the case in hand: *Even so at this present time*, v. 5-7. God's methods of dispensation towards his church are as they used to be. As it has been, so it is. In Elijah's time there was a remnant, and so there is now. If then there was a remnant left under the Old Testament, when the displays of grace were less clear and the pourings out of the Spirit less plentiful, much more now under the gospel, when the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, appears more illustrious. — *A remnant*, a few of many, a remnant of believing Jews when the rest were obstinate in their unbelief. This is called *a remnant according to the election of grace*; they are such as were chosen from eternity in the counsels of divine love to be vessels of grace and glory. Whom he did predestinate those he called. If the difference between them and others be made purely by the grace of God, as certainly it is (*I have reserved them*, saith he, *to myself*), then it must needs be according to the election; for we are sure that whatever God does he does it according to the counsel of his own will. Now concerning this remnant we may observe, *First*, Whence it takes its rise, from the free grace of God (v. 6), that grace which excludes works. The eternal election, in which the difference between some and others is first founded, is purely of grace, free grace; not for the sake of works done or foreseen; if so, it would not be *grace*. *Gratia non est ullo modo gratia, si non sit omni modo gratuita* — *It is not grace, properly so called, if it be not perfectly free*. Election is purely according to the good pleasure of his will, ^{<405>}Ephesians 1:5. Paul's heart was so full of the freeness of God's grace that in the midst of his discourse he turns aside, as it were, to make this remark, *If of grace, then not of works*. And some observe that faith itself, which in the matter of justification if opposed to works, is here included in them; for faith has a peculiar fitness to receive the free grace of God for our justification, but not to receive that grace for our election. *Secondly*, What it obtains: that which Israel, that is, the body of that people, in vain sought for (v. 7): *Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for*, that is, justification, and acceptance with God (see <ch.> 9:31), but the *election have obtained it*. In them the promise of God has its accomplishment, and God's ancient kindness for that people is remembered. He calls the remnant of believers, not the elect, but the

election, to show that the sole foundation of all their hopes and happiness is laid in election. They were the persons whom God had in his eye in the counsels of his love; they are the election; they are God's choice. Such was the favour of God to the chosen remnant. But,

2. *The rest were blinded*, v. 7. Some are chosen and called, and the call is made effectual. But others are left to perish in their unbelief; nay, they are made worse by that which should have made them better. The gospel, which to those that believed was the savour of life unto life, to the unbelieving was the savour of death unto death. The same sun softens wax and hardens clay. Good old Simeon foresaw that the child Jesus was set for the fall, as well as for the rising again, of many in Israel, ^{<230>}Luke 2:34. — *Were blinded; eporothesan* — *they were hardened*; so some. They were seared, and made brawny and insensible. They could neither see the light, nor feel the touch, of gospel grace. Blindness and hardness are expressive of the same senselessness and stupidity of spirit. They shut their eyes, and would not see; this was their sin: and then God, in a way of righteous judgment, blinded their eyes, that they could not see; this was their punishment. This seemed harsh doctrine: to qualify it, therefore, he vouches two witnesses out of the Old Testament, who speak of such a thing.

(1.) Isaiah, who spoke of such a judgment in his day, ^{<230>}Isaiah 29:10; 6:9. The *spirit of slumber*, that is, an indisposedness to mind either their duty or interest. They are under the power of a prevailing unconcernedness, like people that are slumbering and sleeping; not affected with any thing that is said or done. They were resolved to continue as they were, and would not stir. The following words explain what is meant by the spirit of slumber: *Eyes, that they should not see, and ears, that they should not hear*. They had the faculties, but in the things that belonged to their peace they had not the use of those faculties; they were quite infatuated, they saw Christ, but they did not believe in him; they heard his word, but they did not receive it; and so both their hearing and their seeing were in vain. It was all one as if they had neither seen nor heard. Of all judgments spiritual judgments are the sorest, and most to be dreaded, though they make the least noise. — *Unto this day*. Ever since Esaias prophesied, this hardening work has been in the doing; some among them have been blind and senseless. Or, rather, ever since the first preaching of the gospel: though they have had the most convincing evidences that could be of the truth of it, the most powerful preaching, the fairest offers, the clearest calls from Christ himself, and

from his apostles, yet to this day they are blinded. It is still true concerning multitudes of them, even to this day in which we live; they are hardened and blinded, the obstinacy and unbelief go by succession from generation to generation, according to their own fearful imprecation, which entailed the curse: *His blood be upon us and upon our children.*

(2.) David (v. 9, 10), quoted from ^{<1602>}Psalm 69:22, 23, where David having in the Spirit foretold the sufferings of Christ from his own people the Jews, particularly that of their giving him *vinegar to drink* (v. 21, which was literally fulfilled, ^{<1748>}Matthew 27:48), an expression of the greatest contempt and malice that could be, in the next words, under the form of an imprecation, he foretels the dreadful judgments of God upon them for it: *Let their table become a snare*, which the apostle here applies to the present blindness of the Jews, and the offence they took at the gospel, which increased their hardness. This teaches us how to understand other prayers of David against his enemies; they are to be looked upon as prophetic of the judgments of God upon the public and obstinate enemies of Christ and his kingdom. His prayer that it might be so was a prophecy that it should be so, and not the private expression of his own angry resentments. It was likewise intended to justify God, and to clear his righteousness in such judgments. He speaks here,

[1.] Of the ruin of their comforts: *Let their table be made a snare*, that is, as the psalmist explains it, Let that which should be for their welfare be a trap to them. The curse of God will turn meat into poison. It is a threatening like that in ^{<3112>}Malachi 2:2, *I will curse your blessings*. Their table a snare, that is, an occasion of sin and an occasion of misery. Their very food, that should nourish them, shall choke them.

[2.] Of the ruin of their powers and faculties (v. 10), their eyes darkened, their backs bowed down, that they can neither find the right way, nor, if they could, are they able to walk in it. The Jews, after their national rejection of Christ and his gospel, became infatuated in their politics, so that their very counsels turned against them, and hastened their ruin by the Romans. They looked like a people designed for slavery and contempt, their backs bowed down, to be ridden and trampled upon by all the nations about them. Or, it may be understood spiritually; their backs are bowed down in carnality and worldly-mindedness. *Curvae in terris animae* — *They mind earthly things*. This is an exact description of the state and temper of the present remainder of that people, than whom, if the accounts

we have of them be true, there is not a more worldly, wilful, blind, selfish, ill-natured, people in the world. They are manifestly to this day under the power of this curse. Divine curses will work long. It is a sign we have our eyes darkened if we are bowed down in worldly-mindedness.

II. Another thing which qualified this doctrine of the rejection of the Jews was that though they were cast off and unchurched, yet the Gentiles were taken in (v. 11-14), which he applies by way of caution to the Gentiles, v. 17-22.

1. The rejection of the Jews made room for the reception of the Gentiles. The Jews' leavings were a feast for the poor Gentiles (v. 11): "*Have they stumbled that they should fall? Had God no other end in forsaking and rejecting them than their destruction?*" He startles at this, rejecting the thought with abhorrence, as usually he does when any thing is suggested which seems to reflect upon the wisdom, or righteousness, or goodness of God: *God forbid! no, through their fall salvation is come to the Gentiles.* Not but that salvation might have come to the Gentiles if they had stood; but by the divine appointment it was so ordered that the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles upon the Jews' refusal of it. Thus in the parable (⁴²⁸Matthew 22:8, 9), *Those that were first bidden were not worthy — Go ye therefore into the highways,* ⁴²⁹Luke 14:21. And so it was in the history (⁴³⁵Acts 13:46): *It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but, seeing you put it from you, lo, we turn to the Gentiles;* so ⁴⁴⁶Acts 18:6. God will have a church in the world, will have the wedding furnished with guests; and, if one will not come, another will, or why was the offer made? The Jews had the refusal, and so the tender came to the Gentiles. See how Infinite Wisdom brings light out of darkness, good out of evil, meat out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong. To the same purport he says (v. 12), *The fall of them was the riches of the world,* that is, it hastened the gospel so much the sooner into the Gentile world. The gospel is the greatest riches of the place where it is; it is better than thousands of gold and silver. Or, The riches of the Gentiles was the multitude of converts among them. True believers are God's jewels. To the same purport (v. 15): *The casting away of them is the reconciling of the world.* God's displeasure towards them made way for his favour towards the Gentiles. God was in Christ *reconciling the world,* ⁴⁵⁹2 Corinthians 5:19. And therefore he took occasion from the unbelief of the Jews openly to disavow and disown them, though they had been his peculiar favourites, to show that in dispensing his favours he would now

no longer act in such a way of peculiarity and restriction, but that in every nation he that feared God and wrought righteousness should be accepted of him, ^{<401>}Acts 10:34, 35.

2. The use that the apostle makes of this doctrine concerning the substitution of the Gentiles in the room of the Jews.

(1.) As a kinsman to the Jews, here is a word of excitement and exhortation to them, to stir them up to receive and embrace the gospel-offer. This God intended in his favour to the Gentiles, to provoke the Jews to jealousy (v. 11), and Paul endeavours to enforce it accordingly (v. 14): *If by any means I might provoke to emulation those who are my flesh.* “Shall the despised Gentiles run away with all the comforts and privileges of the gospel, and shall not we repent of our refusal, and now at last put in for a share? Shall not we believe and obey, and be pardoned and saved, as well as the Gentiles?” See an instance of such an emulation in Esau, ^{<406>}Genesis 28:6-9. There is a commendable emulation in the affairs of our souls: why should not we be as holy and happy as any of our neighbours? In this emulation there needs no suspicion, undermining or countermining; for the church has room enough, and the new covenant grace and comfort enough, for us all. The blessings are not lessened by the multitudes of the sharers. — *And might save some of them.* See what was Paul's business, to save souls; and yet the utmost he promises himself is but to save some. Though he was such a powerful preacher, spoke and wrote with such evidence and demonstration of the Spirit, yet of the many he dealt with he could but save some. Ministers must think their pains well bestowed if they can but be instrumental to save some.

(2.) As an apostle to the Gentiles, here is a word of caution for them: “*I speak to you Gentiles.* You believing Romans, you hear what riches of salvation are come to you by the fall of the Jews, but take heed lest you do any thing to forfeit it.” Paul takes this, as other occasions, to apply his discourse to the Gentiles, because he was the apostle of the Gentiles, appointed for the service of their faith, to plant and water churches in the Gentile nations. This was the purport of his extraordinary mission, ^{<407>}Acts 22:21, *I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles;* compare ^{<408>}Acts 9:15. It was likewise the intention of his ordination, ^{<409>}Galatians 2:9. Compare ^{<410>}Acts 13:2. It ought to be our great and special care to do good to those that are under our charge: we must particularly mind that which is our own work. It was an instance of God's great love to the poor Gentiles that he

appointed Paul, who in gifts and graces excelled all the apostles, to be the apostle of the Gentiles. The Gentile world was a wider province; and the work to be done in it required a very able, skilful, zealous, courageous workman: such a one was Paul. God calls those to special work whom he either sees or makes fit for it. — *I magnify my office*. There were those that vilified it, and him because of it. It was because he was the apostle of the Gentiles that the Jews were so outrageous against him (~~4021~~ Acts 22:21, 22), and yet he thought never the worse of it, though it set him up as the butt of all the Jewish rage and malice. It is a sign of true love to Jesus Christ to reckon that service and work for him truly honourable which the world looks upon with scorn, as mean and contemptible. The office of the ministry is an office to be *magnified*. Ministers are ambassadors for Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God, and for their work's sake are to be esteemed highly in love. — *My office; ten diakonian mou* — *my ministry*, my service, not my lordship and dominion. It was not the dignity and power, but the duty and work, of an apostle, that Paul was so much in love with. Now two things he exhorts the Gentiles to, with reference to the rejected Jews: —

[1.] To have a respect for the Jews, notwithstanding, and to desire their conversion. This is intimated in the prospect he gives them of the advantage that would accrue to the church by their conversion, v. 12, 15. It would be as life from the dead; and therefore they must not insult and triumph over those poor Jews, but rather pity them, and desire their welfare, and long for the receiving of them in again.

[2.] To take heed to themselves, lest they should stumble and fall, as they Jews had done, v. 17-22. Here observe,

First, The privilege which the Gentiles had by being taken into the church. They were grafted in (v. 17), as a branch of a wild olive into a good olive, which is contrary to the way and custom of the husbandman, who grafts the good olive into the bad; but those that God grafts into the church he finds wild and barren, and good for nothing. Men graft to mend the tree; but God grafts to mend the branch.

1. The church of God is an olive-tree, flourishing and fruitful as an olive (~~1578~~ Psalm 52:8; ~~2846~~ Hosea 14:6), the fruit useful for the honour both of God and man, (~~1099~~ Judges 9:9).

2. Those that are out of the church are as wild olive-trees, not only useless, but what they do produce is sour and unsavoury: *Wild by nature*, v. 24. This was the state of the poor Gentiles, that wanted church privileges, and in respect of real sanctification; and it is the natural state of every one of us, to be wild by nature.

3. Conversion is the grafting in of wild branches into the good olive. We must be cut off from the old stock, and be brought into union with a new root.

4. Those that are grafted into the good olive-tree partake of the root and fatness of the olive. It is applicable to a saving union with Christ; all that are by a lively faith grafted into Christ partake of him as the branches of the root — receive from his fulness. But it is here spoken of a visible church-membership, from which the Jews were as branches broken off; and so the Gentiles were grafted in, *autois* — among those that continued, or in the room of those that were broken off. The Gentiles, being grafted into the church, partake of the same privileges that the Jews did, *the root and fatness*. The olive-tree is the visible church (called so ²⁴¹¹⁶Jeremiah 11:16); the root of this tree was Abraham, not the root of communication, so Christ only is the root, but the root of administration, he being the first with whom the covenant was so solemnly made. Now the believing Gentiles partake of this root: *he also is a son of Abraham* (²⁴¹¹⁹Luke 19:9), *the blessing of Abraham comes upon the Gentiles* (²⁴¹¹⁴Galatians 3:14), the same fatness of the olive-tree, the same for substance, special protection, lively oracles, means of salvation, a standing ministry, instituted ordinances; and, among the rest, the visible church-membership of their infant seed, which was part of the fatness of the olive-tree that the Jews had, and cannot be imagined to be denied to the Gentiles.

Secondly, A caution not to abuse these privileges.

1. “Be not proud (v. 18): *Boast not against the branches*. Do not therefore trample upon the Jews as a reprobate people, nor insult over those that are broken off, much less over those that do continue.” Grace is given, not to make us proud, but to make us thankful. The law of faith excludes all boasting either of ourselves or against others. “Do not say (v. 19): *They were broken off that I might be grafted in*; that is, do not think that thou didst merit more at the hand of God than they, or didst stand higher in his favour.” “But remember, *thou bearest not the*

root, but the root thee. Though thou art grafted in, thou art still but a branch borne by the root; nay, and an engrafted branch, brought into the good olive *contrary to nature* (v. 24), not free-born, but by an act of grace enfranchised and naturalized. Abraham, the root of the Jewish church, is not beholden to thee; but thou art greatly obliged to him, as the trustee of the covenant and the father of many nations. Therefore, *if thou boast*, know (this word must be supplied to clear the sense) *thou bearest not the root but the root thee.*”

2. “Be not secure (v. 20): *Be not high-minded, but fear.* Be not too confident of your own strength and standing.” A holy fear is an excellent preservative against high-mindedness: happy is the man that thus feareth always. We need not fear but God will be true to his word; all the danger is lest we be false to ours. *Let us therefore fear,* ~~3012~~ Hebrews 4:1. The church of Rome now boasts of a patent of perpetual preservation; but the apostle here, in his epistle to that church when she was in her infancy and integrity, enters an express caveat against that boast, and all claims of that kind. — *Fear* what? “Why fear lest thou commit a forfeiture as they have done, lest thou lose the privileges thou now enjoyest, as they have lost theirs.” The evils that befall others should be warnings to us. *Go* (saith God to Jerusalem ~~3012~~ Jeremiah 7:12), and *see what I did to Shiloh*; so now, let all the churches of God go and see what he did to Jerusalem, and what is become of the day of their visitation, that we may hear and fear, and take heed of Jerusalem's sin. The patent which churches have of their privileges is not for a certain term, nor entailed upon them and their heirs; but it runs as long as they carry themselves well, and no longer. Consider,

(1.) “How they were broken off. It was not undeservedly, by an act of absolute sovereignty and prerogative, but *because of unbelief.*” It seems, then, it is possible for churches that have long stood by faith to fall into such a state of infidelity as may be their ruin. Their unbelief did not only provoke God to cut them off, but they did by this cut themselves off; it was not only the meritorious, but the formal cause of their separation. “Now, thou art liable to the same infirmity and corruption that they fell by.” Further observe, They were *natural branches* (v. 21), not only interested in Abraham's covenant, but descending from Abraham's loins, and so born upon the premises, and thence had a kind of tenant-right: yet, when they sunk into unbelief,

God did not spare them. Prescription, long usage, the faithfulness of their ancestors, would not secure them. It was in vain to plead, though they insisted much upon it, that they were Abraham's seed, ^{<400>}Matthew 3:9; ^{<400>}John 8:33. It is true they were the husbandmen to whom the vineyard was first let out; but, when they forfeited it, it was justly taken from them, ^{<401>}Matthew 21:41, 43. This is called here *severity*, v. 22. God laid righteousness to the line and judgment to the plummet, and dealt with them according to their sins. Severity is a word that sounds harshly; and I do not remember that it is any where else in scripture ascribed to God; and it is here applied to the unchurching of the Jews. God is most severe towards those that have been in profession nearest to him, if they rebel against him, ^{<300>}Amos 3:2. Patience and privileges abused turn to the greatest wrath. Of all judgments, spiritual judgments are the sorest; for of these he is here speaking, v. 8.

(2.) "How thou standest, thou that art engrafted in." He speaks to the Gentile churches in general, though perhaps tacitly reflecting on some particular person, who might have expressed some such pride and triumph in the Jews' rejection. "Consider then,"

[1.] "By what means thou standest: *By faith*, which is a depending grace, and fetches in strength from heaven. Thou dost not stand in any strength of thy own, of which thou mightest be confident: thou art no more than the free grace of God makes thee, and his grace is his own, which he gives or withholds at pleasure. That which ruined them was unbelief, and by faith thou standest; therefore thou hast no faster hold than they had, thou standest on no firmer foundation than they did."

[2.] "On what terms (v. 22): *Towards thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness*, that is, continue in a dependence upon and compliance with the free grace of God, the want of which it was that ruined the Jews — if thou be careful to keep up thine interest in the divine favour, by being continually careful to please God and fearful of offending him." The sum of our duty, the condition of our happiness, is to keep ourselves in the love of God. *Fear the Lord and his goodness.* ^{<300>}Hosea 3:5.

III. Another thing that qualified this doctrine of the Jews' rejection is that, though for the present they are cast off, yet the rejection is not final; but, when the fulness of time is come, they will be taken in again. They are not

cast off for ever, but mercy is remembered in the midst of wrath. Let us observe,

1. How this conversion of the Jews is here described.

(1.) It is said to be their fulness (v. 12), that is, the addition of them to the church, the filling up again of that place which became vacant by their rejection. This would be the enriching of the world (that is, the church in the world) with a great deal of light and strength and beauty.

(2.) It is called the receiving of them. The conversion of a soul is the receiving of that soul, so the conversion of a nation. They shall be received into favour, into the church, into the love of Christ, whose arms are stretched out for the receiving of all those that will come to him. And this will be as *life from the dead* — so strange and surprising, and yet withal so welcome and acceptable. The conversion of the Jews will bring great joy to the church. See ~~425~~ Luke 15:32, *He was dead, and is alive; and therefore it was meet we should make merry and be glad.*

(3.) It is called the *grafting of them in again* (v. 23), into the church, from which they had been broken off. That which is grafted in receives sap and virtue from the root; so does a soul that is truly grafted into the church receive life, and strength, and grace from Christ the quickening root. They shall be *grafted into their own olive-tree* (v. 24); that is, into the church of which they had formerly been the most eminent and conspicuous members, to retrieve those privileges of visible church-membership which they had so long enjoyed, but have now sinned away and forfeited by their unbelief.

(4.) It is called the *saving of all Israel*, v. 26. True conversion may well be called salvation; it is salvation begun. See ~~426~~ Acts 2:47. The adding of them to the church is the saving of them: *tous sozomenous*, in the present tense, *are saved*. When conversion-work goes on, salvation-work goes on.

2. What it is grounded upon, and what reason we have to look for it.

(1.) Because of the holiness of the first-fruits and the root, v. 16. Some by the first-fruits understand those of the Jews that were already converted to the faith of Christ and received into the church, who were as the first-fruits dedicated to God, as earnest of a more plentiful and sanctified harvest. A good beginning promises a good ending. Why may we not suppose that others may be savingly wrought upon as well as those who are already

brought in? Others by the first-fruits understand the same with the root, namely, the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, from whom the Jews descended, and with whom, as the prime trustees, the covenant was deposited: and so they were the root of the Jews, not only as a people, but as a church. Now, if they were holy, which is not meant so much of inherent as of federal holiness — if they were in the church and in the covenant — then we have reason to conclude that God hath a kindness for the *lump* — the body of that people; and for the *branches* — the particular members of it. The Jews are in a sense a holy nation (⁽¹²⁹⁶⁾Exodus 19:6), being descended from holy parents. Now it cannot be imagined that such a holy nation should be totally and finally cast off. This proves that the seed of believers, as such, are within the pale of the visible church, and within the verge of the covenant, till they do, by their unbelief, throw themselves out; for, *if the root be holy, so are the branches*. Though real qualifications are not propagated, yet relative privileges are. Though a wise man does not beget a wise man, yet a free man begets a free man. Though grace does not run in the blood, yet external privileges do (till they are forfeited), even to a thousand generations. Look how they will answer it another day that cut off the entail, by turning the seed of the faithful out of the church, and so not allowing the blessing of Abraham to come upon the Gentiles. The Jewish branches are reckoned holy, because the root was so. This is expressed more plainly (v. 28): *They are beloved for the fathers' sakes*. In this love to the fathers the first foundation of their church-state was laid (⁽¹²⁹⁷⁾Deuteronomy 4:37): *Because he loved they fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them*. And the same love would revive their privileges, for still the ancient loving-kindness is remembered; they are *beloved for the fathers' sakes*. It is God's usual method of grace. Kindness to the children for the father's sake is therefore called the *kindness of God*, ⁽¹²⁹⁸⁾2 Samuel 9:3, 7. Though, as concerning the gospel (namely, in the present dispensation of it), they are enemies to it *for your sakes*, that is, for the sake of the Gentiles, against whom they have such an antipathy; yet, when God's time shall come, this will wear off, and God's love to their fathers will be remembered. See a promise that points at this, ⁽¹²⁹⁹⁾Leviticus 26:42. The iniquity of the fathers is visited but to the third and fourth generation; but there is mercy kept for thousands. Many fare the better for the sake of their godly ancestors. It is upon this account that the church is called their own *olive-tree*. Long it had been their own peculiar, which is some encouragement to us to hope that there may be room for them in it again, for old acquaintance-sake. That which hath been

may be again. Though particular persons and generations wear off in unbelief, yet there having been a national church-membership, though for the present suspended, we may expect that it will be revived.

(2.) Because of the power of God (v. 23): *God is able to graft them in again.* The conversion of souls is a work of almighty power; and when they seem most hardened, and blinded, and obstinate, our comfort is that God is able to work a change, able to graft those in that have been long cast out and withered. When the house is kept by the strong man armed, with all his force, yet God is stronger than he, and is able to dispossess him. The condition of their restoration is faith: *If they abide not still in unbelief.* So that nothing is to be done but to remove that unbelief that is the great obstacle; and God is able to take that away, though nothing less than an almighty power will do it, the same power that raised up Christ from the dead, ⁴¹⁹Ephesians 1:19, 29. Otherwise, can these dry bones live?

(3.) Because of the grace of God manifested to the Gentiles. Those that have themselves experienced the grace of God, preventing, distinguishing grace, may thence take encouragement to hope well concerning others. This is his argument (v. 24): “If thou wast grafted into a good olive, that was wild by nature, much more shall these that were the natural branches, and may therefore be presumed somewhat nearer to the divine acceptance.” This is a suggestion very proper to check the insolence of those Gentile Christians that looked with disdain and triumph upon the condition of the rejected Jews, and trampled upon them; as if he had said, “Their condition, bad as it is, is not so bad as yours was before your conversion; and therefore why may it not be made as good as yours is?” This is his argument (v. 30, 31): *As you in times past have not,* etc. It is good for those that have found mercy with God to be often thinking what they were in time past, and how they obtained that mercy. This would help to soften our censures of those that still continue in unbelief, and quicken our prayers for them. He argues further from the occasion of the Gentiles' call, that is, the unbelief of the Jews; thence it took rise: “*You have obtained mercy through their unbelief;* much more shall they obtain mercy through your mercy. If the putting out of their candle was the lighting of yours, by that power of God which brings good out of evil, much more shall the continued light of your candle, when God's time shall come, be a means of lighting theirs again.” “*That through your mercy they might obtain mercy,* that is, that they may be beholden to you, as you have been to them.” He takes it for granted that the believing Gentiles would do their

utmost endeavour to work upon the Jews — that, when God had persuaded Japhet, Japhet would be labouring to persuade Shem. True grace hates monopolies. Those that have found mercy themselves should endeavour that through their mercy others also may obtain mercy.

(4.) Because of the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament, which point at this. He quotes a very remarkable one, v. 26, from ^{<234D>}Isaiah 59:20, 21. Where we may observe,

[1.] The coming of Christ promised: *There shall come out of Zion the deliverer.* Jesus Christ is the great deliverer, which supposes mankind in a state of misery and danger. In Isaiah it is, *the Redeemer shall come to Zion.* There he is called the Redeemer; here the deliverer; he delivers in a way of redemption, by a price. There he is said to come to Zion, because when the prophet prophesied he was yet to come into the world, and Zion was his first head-quarters. Thither he came, there he took up his residence: but, when the apostle wrote this, he had come, he had been in Zion; and he is speaking of the fruits of his appearing, which shall come *out of Zion*; thence, as from the spring, issued forth those streams of living water which in the everlasting gospel watered the nations. *Out of Zion went forth the law,* ^{<231B>}Isaiah 2:3. Compare ^{<224F>}Luke 24:47.

[2.] The end and purpose of this coming: *He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.* Christ's errand into the world was to turn away ungodliness, to turn away the guilt by the purchase of pardoning mercy, and to turn away the power by the pouring out of renewing grace, to save his people from their sins (^{<402B>}Matthew 1:21), to separate between us and our sins, that iniquity might not be our ruin, and that it might not be our ruler. Especially to turn it away from Jacob, which is that for the sake of which he quotes the text, as a proof of the great kindness God intended for the seed of Jacob. What greater kindness could he do them than to turn away ungodliness from them, to take away that which comes between them and all happiness, take away sin, and then make way for all good? This is the blessing that Christ was sent to bestow upon the world, and to tender it to the Jews in the first place (^{<402B>}Acts 3:26), to turn people from their iniquities. In Isaiah it is, *The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto those that turn from transgression in Jacob,* which shown who in Zion were to have a share in and to reap benefit by the deliverance promised, those and those only that leave their sins and turn to God; to them Christ comes as a Redeemer, but as an avenger to those that persist in impenitence. See

Deuteronomy 30:2, 3. Those that turn from sin will be owned as the true citizens of Zion (Ephesians 2:19), the right Jacob, Psalm 24:4, 6. Putting both these readings together, we learn that none have an interest in Christ but those that turn from their sins, nor can any turn from their sins but by the strength of the grace of Christ. — *For this is my covenant with them* — this, that the deliverer shall come to them — this, that my Spirit shall not depart from them, as it follows, Isaiah 59:21. God's gracious intentions concerning Israel were made the matter of a covenant, which the God that cannot lie could not but be true and faithful to. They were the *children of the covenant*, Acts 3:25. The apostle adds, *When I shall take away their sins*, which some think refers to Isaiah 27:9, or only to the foregoing words, to *turn away ungodliness*. Pardon of sin is laid as the foundation of all the blessings of the new covenant (Hebrews 8:12): *For I will be merciful*. Now from all this he infers that certainly God had great mercy in store for that people, something answerable to the extent of these rich promises: and he proves his inference (v. 29) by this truth: *For the gifts and callings of God are without repentance*. Repentance is sometimes taken for a change of mind, and so God never repents, for he is in one mind and who can turn him? Sometimes for a change of way, and that is here understood, intimating the constancy and unchangeableness of that love of God which is founded in election. Those gifts and callings are immutable; whom he so loves, he loves to the end. We find God repenting that he had given man a being (Genesis 6:6, *It repented the Lord that he had made man*), and repenting that he had given a man honour and power (1 Samuel 15:11, *It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king*); but we never find God repenting that he had given a man grace, or effectually called him; those gifts and callings are without repentance.

3. The time and extent of this conversion, when and where it is to be expected. It is called a mystery (v. 25), that which was not obvious, and which one would not expect upon the view of the present state of that people, who appeared generally so obstinate against Christ and Christianity that it was a riddle to talk of their unanimous conversion. The conversion of the Gentiles is called a mystery, Ephesians 3:3, 6, 9. The case of the rejected Jews seemed as bad now as that of the Gentiles had been. The work of conversion was carried on in a mystery. Now he would have them know so much of this mystery as to keep them humble: lest you be wise in your own conceit, that is, lest you be so much puffed up with

your church-membership, and trample upon the Jews. Ignorance is the cause of our self-conceitedness. *I would not have you ignorant, lest you be wise in your own conceits.* Observe,

(1.) Their present state: *Blindness, in part, is happened to Israel, v. 25.* Here is something to qualify it, that it is but in part; there is a remnant that see the things which belong to their peace, though part, the far greater part, are in blindness, v. 7, 8. To the same purport (v. 32): *God has concluded them all in unbelief,* shut them up as in a prison, given them over to their own hearts' lusts. Shutting up is sometimes put for conviction, as ~~4RE2~~ Galatians 3:22. They all stand before God convicted of unbelief. They would not believe. "Why then," saith God, "you shall not." They peremptorily refused to submit to Christ and his government, which refusal of theirs was, as it were, entered upon record in the court of heaven, and was conclusive against them.

(2.) When this blessed change should be: when the *fulness of the Gentiles shall come in,* when the gospel has had its intended success, and made its progress in the Gentile world; compare v. 12. The Jews shall continue in blindness, till God hath performed his whole work among the Gentiles, and then their turn will come next to be remembered. This was the purpose and ordination of God, for wise and holy ends; things should not be ripe for the Jews' conversion till the church was replenished with the Gentiles, that it might appear that God's taking them again was not because he had need of them, but of his own free grace.

(3.) The extent of it: *All Israel shall be saved, v. 26.* He will *have mercy upon all, v. 32.* Not every individual person, but the body of the people. Not that ever they should be restored to their covenant of peculiarity again, to have their priesthood, and temple, and ceremonies again (an end is put to all those things); but they should be brought to believe in Christ the true Messiah whom they crucified, and be incorporated in the Christian church, and become one sheep-fold with the Gentiles under Christ the great Shepherd. But the question is concerning the accomplishment of all this.

[1.] Some think it is done already, when before, and in, and after, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, multitudes of the Jews were convinced of their infidelity, and turned Christians; so many that, considering how many millions of them were cut off in the destruction, we may reasonably conclude that of those who survived the greater part were Christians, and embodied in the Christian church, and it was a very

inconsiderable number that persisted obstinately. For many ages Judea had, as other Christian provinces, their ministers and churches, and a face of religion. And most of this work, they suppose, was done towards the close of the ministry of the apostles, when the Gentiles had generally come in.

[2.] Others think that it is yet to have its accomplishment towards the end of the world — that those Jews which yet wonderfully remain distinct from the rest of the nations by their names, customs, and religion, and are very numerous, especially in the Levant parts, shall, by the working of the Spirit with the word, be convinced of their sin, and brought generally to embrace the Christian faith, and to join in with the Christian churches, which will contribute much to their strength and beauty. Alas! who shall live when God doeth this?

ROMANS 11:33-36

THE DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY

The apostle having insisted so largely, through the greatest part of this chapter, upon reconciling the rejection of the Jews with the divine goodness, he concludes here with the acknowledgment and admiration of the divine wisdom and sovereignty in all this. Here the apostle does with great affection and awe adore,

I. The secrecy of the divine counsels: *O the depth!* in these proceedings towards the Jews and Gentiles; or, in general, the whole mystery of the gospel, which we cannot fully comprehend. — *The riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God*, the abundant instances of his wisdom and knowledge in contriving and carrying on the work of our redemption by Christ, a depth which the angels pry into, ¹ Peter 1:12. Much more may it puzzle any human understanding to give an account of the methods, and reasons, and designs, and compass of it. Paul was as well acquainted with the mysteries of the kingdom of God as ever any mere man was; and yet he confesses himself at a loss in the contemplation, and, despairing to find the bottom, he humbly sits down at the brink, and adores the depth. Those that know most in this state of imperfection cannot but be most sensible of their own weakness and short-sightedness, and that after all their researches, and all their attainments in those researches, while they are

here they cannot order their speech by reason of darkness. Praise is silent to thee, ^{<481>}Psalm 65:1. — *The depth of the riches.* Men's riches of all kinds are shallow, you may soon see the bottom; but God's riches are deep (^{<486>}Psalm 36:6): *Thy judgments are a great deep.* There is not only depth in the divine counsels, but riches too, which denotes an abundance of that which is precious and valuable, so complete are the dimensions of the divine counsels; they have not only depth and height, but *breadth and length* (^{<488>}Ephesians 3:18), and that passing knowledge, v. 19. — *Riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God.* His seeing all things by one clear, and certain, and infallible view — all things that are, or ever were, or ever shall be, — that all is naked and open before him: there is his knowledge. His ruling and ordering all things, directing and disposing them to his own glory, and bringing about his own purposes and counsels in all; this is his *wisdom.* And the vast extent of both these is such a depth as is past our fathoming, and we may soon lose ourselves in the contemplation of them. Such *knowledge is too wonderful for me*, ^{<496>}Psalm 139:6. Compare v. 17, 18. — *How unsearchable are his judgments!* that is, his counsels and purposes: and his *ways*, that is, the execution of these counsels and purposes. We know not what he designs. When the wheels are set in motion, and Providence has begun to work, yet we know not what he has in view; it is *past finding out.* This does not only overturn all our positive conclusions about the divine counsels, but it also checks all our curious enquiries. Secret things belong not to us, ^{<499>}Deuteronomy 29:29. God's way is in the sea, ^{<497>}Psalm 77:19. Compare ^{<498>}Job 23:8, 9; ^{<499>}Psalm 97:2. What he does we know not now, ^{<499>}John 13:7. We cannot give a reason of God's proceedings, nor by searching find out God. See ^{<499>}Job 5:9; 9:10. The judgments of his mouth, and the way of our duty, blessed be God, are plain and easy, it is a high-way; but the judgments of his hands, and the ways of his providence, are dark and mysterious, which therefore we must not pry into, but silently adore and acquiesce in. The apostle speaks this especially with reference to that strange turn, the casting off of the Jews and the entertainment of the Gentiles, with a purpose to take in the Jews again in due time; these were strange proceedings, the choosing of some, the refusing of others, and neither according to the probabilities of human conjecture. Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thing eyes. These are methods unaccountable, concerning which we must say, *O the depth!* — *Past finding out, [anexichniastoi](#) — cannot be traced.* God leaves no prints nor footsteps behind him, does not make a path to shine after him; but his paths of providence are new every morning. He does not go the

same way so often as to make a track of it. *How little a portion is heard of him!* ^{<834>}Job 26:14. It follows (v. 34), *For who hath known the mind of the Lord?* Is there any creature made of his cabinet-council, or laid, as Christ was, in the bosom of the Father? Is there any to whom he has imparted his counsels, or that is able, upon the view of his providences, to know the way that he takes? There is so vast a distance and disproportion between God and man, between the Creator and the creature, as for ever excludes the thought of such an intimacy and familiarity. The apostle makes the same challenge (^{<405>}1 Corinthians 2:16): *For who hath known the mind of the Lord?* And yet there he adds, *But we have the mind of Christ*, which intimates that through Christ true believers, who have his Spirit, know so much of the mind of God as is necessary to their happiness. He that knew the mind of the Lord has declared him, ^{<418>}John 1:18. And so, though we know not the mind of the Lord, yet, if we have the mind of Christ, we have enough. *The secret of the Lord is with those that fear him*, ^{<454>}Psalms 25:14. *Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do?* See ^{<455>}John 15:15. — *Or who has been his counsellor?* He needs no counsellor, for he is infinitely wise; nor is any creature capable of being his counsellor; this would be like lighting a candle to the sun. This seems to refer to that scripture (^{<213>}Isaiah 40:13, 14), *Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him? With whom took he counsel?* etc. It is the substance of God's challenge to Job concerning the work of creation (Job 38), and is applicable to all the methods of his providence. It is nonsense for any man to prescribe to God, or to teach him how to govern the world.

II. The sovereignty of the divine counsels. In all these things God acts as a free agent, does what he will, because he will, and gives not account of any of his matters (^{<823>}Job 23:13; 33:13), and yet there is no unrighteousness with him. To clear which,

1. He challenges any to prove God a debtor to him (v. 35): *Who hath first given to him?* Who is there of all the creatures that can prove God is beholden to him? Whatever we do for him, or devote to him, it must be with that acknowledgment, which is for ever a bar to such demands (^{<104>}1 Chronicles 29:14): *Of thine own we have given thee.* All the duties we can perform are not requitals, but rather restitutions. If any can prove that God is his debtor, the apostle here stands bound for the payment, and proclaims, in God's name, that payment is ready: *It shall be recompensed to him again.* It is certain God will let nobody lose by him; but never any

one yet durst make a demand of this kind, or attempt to prove it. This is here suggested,

(1.) To silence the clamours of the Jews. When God took away their visible church-privileges from them, he did but take his own: and may he not do what he will with his own — give or withhold his grace where and when he pleases?

(2.) To silence the insultings of the Gentiles. When God sent the gospel among them, and gave so many of them grace and wisdom to accept of it, it was not because he owed them so much favour, or that they could challenge it as a debt, but of his own good pleasure.

2. He resolves all into the sovereignty of God (v. 36): *For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things*, that is, God is all in all. All things in heaven and earth (especially those things which relate to our salvation, the things which belong to our peace) are of him by way of creation, through him by way of providential influence, that they may be to him in their final tendency and result. Of God as the spring and fountain of all, through Christ, God-man, as the conveyance, to God as the ultimate end. These three include, in general, all God's causal relations to his creatures: of him as the first efficient cause, through him as the supreme directing cause, to him as the ultimate final cause; for the Lord hath made all for himself, ^{<404>}Revelation 4:11. If all be of him and through him, there is all the reason in the world that all should be to him and for him. It is a necessary circulation; if the rivers received their waters from the sea, they return them to the sea again, ^{<400>}Ecclesiastes 1:7. To do all to the glory of God is to make a virtue of necessity; for all shall in the end be to him, whether we will or no. And so he concludes with a short doxology: *To whom be glory for ever, Amen*. God's universal agency as the first cause, the sovereign ruler, and the last end, ought to be the matter of our adoration. Thus all his works do praise him objectively; but his saints do bless him actively; they hand that praise to him which all the creatures do minister matter for, ^{<450>}Psalm 145:10. Paul had been discoursing at large of the counsels of God concerning man, sifting the point with a great deal of accuracy; but, after all, he concludes with the acknowledgment of the divine sovereignty, as that into which all these things must be ultimately resolved, and in which alone the mind can safely and sweetly rest. This is, if not the scholastic way, yet the Christian way, of disputation. Whatever are the premises, let god's glory be the conclusion; especially when we

come to talk of the divine counsels and actings, it is best for us to turn our arguments into awful and serious adorations. The glorified saints, that see furthest into these mysteries, never dispute, but praise to eternity.