If God can bring blessing from the broken body of Jesus and glory from something that's as obscene as the cross, He can bring blessing from my problems and my pain and my unanswered prayer. I just have to trust Him.
Anne Graham Lotz

ROMANS 11
Prayer Study # 451
First Love Ministries, Inc., of Perry, Georgia USA

Romans 11 Amplified Bible (AMP)

11 *I ask then: Has God totally rejected and disowned His people? Of course not! Why, I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin!*
2 *No, God has not rejected and disowned His people [whose destiny] He had marked out and appointed and foreknown from the beginning. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?*
3 *Lord, they have killed Your prophets; they have demolished Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.*
4 *But what is God's reply to him? I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal!*
5 *So too at the present time there is a remnant (a small believing minority), selected (chosen) by grace (by God's unmerited favor and graciousness).*
6 *But if it is by grace (His unmerited favor and graciousness), it is no longer conditioned on works or anything men have done. Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace [it would be meaningless].*
7 *What then [shall we conclude]? Israel failed to obtain what it sought [God's favor by obedience to the Law]. Only the elect (those chosen few) obtained it, while the rest of them became callously indifferent (blinded, hardened, and made insensible to it).*
8 *As it is written, God gave them a spirit (an attitude) of stupor, eyes that should not see and ears that should not hear, [that has continued] down to this very day.*
9 *And David says, Let their table (their feasting, banqueting) become a snare and a trap, a pitfall and a just retribution [rebounding like a boomerang upon them];*
10 *Let their eyes be darkened (dimmed) so that they cannot see, and make them bend their back [stooping beneath their burden] forever.*
11 *So I ask, Have they stumbled so as to fall [to their utter spiritual ruin, irretrievably]? By no means! But through their false step and transgression salvation [has come] to the Gentiles, so as to arouse Israel [to see and feel what they forfeited] and so to make them jealous.*
12 *Now if their stumbling (their lapse, their transgression) has so enriched the world [at large], and if [Israel's] failure means such riches for the Gentiles, think what an enrichment and greater advantage will follow their full reinstatement!*

Chapters 9 and 10 would force any Jew to ask if all that Paul had written in these chapters meant that God has disowned his people. Remembering Elijah, who in 1st Kings 19:10-18 was going through a difficult time and believed he was the only person in Israel who had stayed true to the God of Israel, Paul, remembering the 7000 in Elijah's day who had not bowed to Baal, reminded the Jews of the remnant. There was never a time when the entire nation of Israel had been true to God, but the Lord had always had a remnant who did stay true. All the prophets, including Amos, Micah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and especially Isaiah saw this remnant. In fact, Isaiah named his second son Shear-Jashub, which means *the Salvation of the Remnant.* Relationship with God is not a group effort but an individual relationship. Paul's argument is that the nation of Israel as a whole has not been rejected because there still was a faithful remnant within it who had accepted Messiah and were the true Jews.

In this passage the subject of grace versus works emerges again. The grace and mercy of God brought salvation and righteousness to man through the blood of Jesus. It cannot be grace and law or works and faith together. No man can be saved by works of the law, and grace is not grace if it is by works. Grace is the undeserved, unmerited, and unearned favor of God bestowed on sinful man. As Kevin Conner puts it, "It is undeserved because all we deserve is wrath; it is unmerited because nothing we are deserves it; and it is unearned because nothing we do can earn it."

Because the Jews rejected Messiah, God has sent a kind of torpor upon them, a spiritual drowsiness which prevents them from hearing and seeing clearly. They are so secure in their own safety and are feasting comfortably at their banquet that the enemy can creep in on them and take them by surprise. They were so confident that they were secure in the fact of being God's chosen people that they no longer were sensitive to the appeal of God. If they keep on sinning, they will become insensitive to the wages of sin and reap death.

This was a tragic circumstance, but what the enemy meant for evil, the Lord turned to good. Because Israel did not want the message of the Gospel and rejected the Messiah, the message of the good news went to the Gentiles who were ready to welcome it. The hope in all of this is that the Jews will be provoked to jealousy by the Gentiles and the love of God will again be able to penetrate the hardness of the heart of the Jew and bring both Gentiles and Jews into the Kingdom.

13 *But now I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I lay great stress on my ministry and magnify my office,*
14 *In the hope of making my fellow Jews jealous [in order to stir them up to imitate, copy, and appropriate], and thus managing to save some of them.*
15 *For if their rejection and exclusion from the benefits of salvation were [overruled] for the reconciliation of a world to God, what will their acceptance and admission mean? [It*

will be nothing short of] life from the dead!
16 *Now if the first handful of dough offered as the first fruits [Abraham and the patriarchs] is consecrated (holy), so is the whole mass [the nation of Israel]; and if the root [Abraham] is consecrated (holy), so are the branches.*
17 *But if some of the branches were broken off, while you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among them to share the richness [of the root and sap] of the olive tree,*
18 *Do not boast over the branches and pride yourself at their expense. If you do boast and feel superior, remember it is not you that support the root, but the root [that supports] you.*
19 *You will say then, Branches were broken (pruned) off so that I might be grafted in!*
20 *That is true. But they were broken (pruned) off because of their unbelief (their lack of real faith), and you are established through faith [because you do believe]. So do not become proud and conceited, but rather stand in awe and be reverently afraid.*
21 *For if God did not spare the natural branches [because of unbelief], neither will He spare you [if you are guilty of the same offense].*
22 *Then note and appreciate the gracious kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's gracious kindness to you—provided you continue in His grace and abide in His kindness; otherwise you too will be cut off (pruned away).*
23 *And even those others [the fallen branches, Jews], if they do not persist in [clinging to] their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again.*
24 *For if you have been cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and against nature grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much easier will it be to graft these natural [branches] back on [the original parent stock of] their own olive tree.*

Paul is a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin and an Israelite. He has been talking about his own nation's blindness to the Gospel and the blessing of God and his own ministry to the Gentiles. He is not operating in pride here. He is trying to promote his apostolic ministry to the Gentiles to provoke his own people to jealousy so that they would listen to the Gospel message. One of the surest way to win people to Christ is to let them see what living the Christian life in actual life does for people. To Paul seeing the Jews come to Jesus would be paradise. It would be like seeing the dry bones of Ezekiel come from death to life.

The firstfruits are the first offering to the Lord. Thus, both the patriarchs and the remnant or seed were a kind of firstfruits to God and represent the full offering. The root and branches of the olive tree were holy (Jeremiah 11:16, Psalm 52:8). The olive tree is the oil tree, the source of the oil used in the anointing of prophets, kings, and priests, and Israel was symbolized by the olive tree. The root (Abraham) was holy, so the branches (the nation that sprang from him, the faithful) were also holy (Judges 9:8-15; Romans 11:16-24; Matthew 21; John 15:1-5). The vine, the fig tree, and the olive tree are all

symbols of Israel. The root is Abraham, the trunk is the nation of Israel, the two main branches are the house of Israel and Judah, and the wild branches are the Gentiles grafted in. The Jews who did not accept Messiah were broken off. Yet not all the branches were broken off because many Jews did accept Messiah. The Jewish branches that were broken off were not just cast off to allow the Gentiles to be grafted in but were also cast off because of unbelief. If God broke the natural Jewish branches off, he would also break off the grated in Gentile branches if they do not abide in faith. The rejection of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD70 shows the severity of God. The goodness of God is shown by the Gentiles being grated in. God will graft the Jew back into the tree when they become believers in Messiah.

25 *Lest you be self-opinionated (wise in your own conceits), I do not want you to miss this hidden truth and mystery, brethren: a hardening (insensibility) has [temporarily] befallen a part of Israel [to last] until the full number of the ingathering of the Gentiles has come in,*
26 *And so all Israel will be saved. As it is written, The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will banish ungodliness from Jacob.*
27 *And this will be My covenant (My agreement) with them when I shall take away their sins.*
28 *From the point of view of the Gospel (good news), they [the Jews, at present] are enemies [of God], which is for your advantage and benefit. But from the point of view of God's choice (of election, of divine selection), they are still the beloved (dear to Him) for the sake of their forefathers.*
29 *For God's gifts and His call are irrevocable. [He never withdraws them when once they are given, and He does not change His mind about those to whom He gives His grace or to whom He sends His call.]*
30 *Just as you were once disobedient and rebellious toward God but now have obtained [His] mercy, through their disobedience,*
31 *So they also now are being disobedient [when you are receiving mercy], that they in turn may one day, through the mercy you are enjoying, also receive mercy [that they may share the mercy which has been shown to you—through you as messengers of the Gospel to them].*
32 *For God has consigned (penned up) all men to disobedience, only that He may have mercy on them all [alike].*

Paul sees hope. He says that the hardening of the hearts of the Jews was neither total nor permanent. Because the Jews initially rejected the Messiah, the door was opened for the Gentiles to be saved. Paul says that God involved the Jews in disobedience so that when His salvation did come to them, they would realize that they in no way had earned it, and that it came only by the mercy of God. In the end it was not the wrath of God but

the love of God that was pursuing and tracking both Jew and Gentile down.

33 *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unfathomable (inscrutable, unsearchable) are His judgments (His decisions)! And how untraceable (mysterious, undiscoverable) are His ways (His methods, His paths)!*
34 *For who has known the mind of the Lord and who has understood His thoughts, or who has [ever] been His counselor?*
35 *Or who has first given God anything that he might be paid back or that he could claim a recompense?*
36 *For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. [For all things originate with Him and come from Him; all things live through Him, and all things center in and tend to consummate and to end in Him.] To Him be glory forever! Amen (so be it).*

Paul ends his explanation of the "Jewish problem" with some beautiful, almost poetic language. Barclay writes of this passage: "Paul has battled with a heartbreaking problem with every resource which his great mind possessed. He does not say that he has solved it, as one might neatly solve a geometrical problem; but he does say that, having done his best, he is content to leave it to the love and power of God. At many times in life, there is nothing left but to say: 'I cannot grasp Your mind, but with my whole heart I trust Your love. Your will be done!"