

Paul's Epistle to the Romans

LESSON **XXVI** : THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL, PART TWO — CHAP 11:16-36

*“The theme of the whole section is categorically stated in v. 2a: ‘God has not cast off his people whom he foreknew.’ That even at the present time the disobedience of Israel is not complete (there exists ‘a remnant according to the election of grace’, Jews who are believers in Christ) is the burden of the first subsection (vv. 1-10), while the second (vv. 11-24) contributes the assurance that the exclusion of the majority of Jews is not going to last for ever. The third subsection (vv. 25-32) gives an insight into the mystery of the divine plan of mercy concerning both Jews and Gentiles, and finally vv. 33-36 conclude both this section and the whole of main division with expression of adoring wonder and praise.” [Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, pg 542]*

The Future of Israel – part 2 (11:16-24)

For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? (Rom 11:16-24 KJV)

If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches. If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.” Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree! (Rom 11:16-24 NIV)

and if the first-fruit [is] holy, the lump also; and if the root [is] holy, the branches also. And if certain of the branches were broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wast grafted in among them, and a fellow-partaker of the root and of the fatness of the olive tree didst become — do not boast against the branches; and if thou dost boast, thou dost not bear the root, but the root thee! Thou wilt say, then, ‘The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in;’ right! by unbelief they were broken off, and thou hast stood by faith; be not high-minded, but be fearing; for if God the natural branches did not spare — lest perhaps He also shall not spare thee. Lo, then, goodness and severity of God — upon those indeed who fell, severity; and upon thee, goodness, if thou mayest remain in the goodness, otherwise, thou also shalt be cut off. And those also, if they may not remain in unbelief, shall be grafted in, for God is able again to graff them in; for if thou, out of the olive tree, wild by nature, wast cut out, and, contrary to nature, wast grafted into a good olive tree, how much rather shall they, who [are] according to nature, be grafted into their own olive tree? (Rom 11:16-24 Young’s Literal Translation)

“The argument of v. 16, that the ‘part’ of something can convey holiness to the ‘whole,’ is transitional. On the one hand, it reinforces the hope for a spiritual renewal of Israel that vv. 11-15 have implied: the holiness of ‘part’ of Israel is good reason to anticipate a ‘fullness’ and ‘acceptance’ for the whole of Israel. On the other hand, v. 16 paves the way to vv. 17-24 by introducing the metaphor of the root and the branches that dominates these verses. As Paul develops this metaphor, he compares the root of the tree to the patriarchs and the promise of God to them, the ‘natural branches’ to Jews, and ‘wild olive tree shoots’ to the Gentiles. As these identifications suggest, the tree itself represents the people of God in the broadest sense of that concept — a people spanning both ages of salvation history and both major ethnic / religious groups, Jews and Gentiles. Paul makes two points with this olive tree image.

- The first, and most obvious, is **hortatory**. Throughout this text he continues (cf. v. 13) to address the Gentile Christians in Rome directly, using the second person singular [‘you, thou’] to make his address all the more pointed. The olive tree image makes clear that the Gentiles’ very spiritual existence depends on their partaking of the tree whose indispensable nourishing roots are planted in the soil of Jewish patriarchs and promises and to which, therefore, Jews naturally belong. This being the case, any boasting on the part of the Gentile Christians is clearly out of place: whether it be boasting over Jews (v. 18) or boasting about their own spiritual accomplishments (vv. 19-22).
- Paul’s second purpose is **didactic**. By emphasizing the ease with which natural branches can be grafted back into

‘their own’ olive tree (vv. 23-24), Paul provides further support for his key theme in 11:11-32: hope for a spiritual future for Israel.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 697f]

v 16 — PAUL GIVING SUBSTANTIATION FOR THE SPIRITUAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL HE JUST MENTIONED —

“The imagery of root and branches forges an obvious connection between this verse and what follows. The connection with vv. 11-15 is not as obvious but can be readily supplied. For Paul’s sketch of the future of salvation history includes one critical stage that is introduced without explanation or substantiation: the spiritual restoration of Israel (‘their fullness’ in v. 12; ‘their acceptance’ in v. 15). This Paul now provides by arguing that the holiness that characterized the beginnings of Israel is an indelible mark on that people, fraught with significance for her present and her future.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 698]

TWO METAPHORS: “ISRAEL SET APART DUE TO THE PATRIARCHS” — “Paul uses two parallel metaphors, each arguing from the part to the whole, to make this point. The first is drawn from Num. 15:17-21. In this passage, the Lord commands the people of Israel, after they enter the promised land, to offer to the Lord a donation from the ‘first fruits’ of the ‘lump of dough’ that they use to bake their bread. Paul’s point is that the holiness of this first part of the dough extends to the whole lump of dough. To what set of circumstances does Paul intend this metaphor to apply? Since Paul gives no hint, it seems reasonable to look for our answer to the second metaphor in the verse, which appears to be parallel to the first. Here we are given help in interpreting the elements in the metaphor by the context and by other Jewish texts. The ‘branches,’ as vv. 17-18 reveal, are the Jews. Paul does not so clearly identify the ‘root,’ and this has given scope to various suggestions, including Christ, Jewish Christians (the remnant), and the patriarchs. *But the last of these receives decisive support from the imagery of vv. 17-18, the somewhat parallel concept in v. 28 — God loves Israel ‘because of the fathers’ (cf. also 9:5) — and from Jewish texts in which Abraham and the patriarchs are called a root.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 699] Note that while this application of the second metaphor is generally accepted (*branches = Jews, root = Israel’s patriarchs*), there is not the same agreement on the first metaphor. While almost all students agree the “*lump of dough*” = the Jews, some of the opinions noted for the “*first fruit of dough*” are as follows: the patriarchs, Adam, Christ, or Jewish Christians (the remnant). Moo observes that while there are a growing number of scholars that believe the “*first fruit of dough*” = the remnant, Moo argues for the historic and traditional application of the “*first fruit of dough*” = the patriarchs.

HOLINESS FROM THE PATRIARCHS? — “Both of the metaphors in v. 16, then, assert that the ‘holiness’ of the patriarchs conveys to all of Israel a similar holiness. *In according such significance to the patriarchs, Paul of course does not mean that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob possessed any qualities that earned spiritual benefits for themselves and their descendants. As both the OT and Paul makes clear (see esp. Rom. 4 and Gal. 3), the patriarchs conveys spiritual benefits on their descendants only as recipients and transmitters of the promises of God. Their ‘holiness’ consists in their having been set apart by God for this salvation-historical role.* Moreover, the word ‘holy’ is taken from OT sacrificial language. The word will not, then, have the technical sense of ‘set apart by God for salvation’ that it usually has in Paul but will connote a being ‘set apart’ by God for special attention in a more general way. *Paul is not here asserting the salvation of every Israelite but the continuing ‘special’ identity of the people of Israel in the eyes of the Lord.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 700f]

FIRST FRUITS — “first, chief part, choice part, first fruits”; usually denoting an initial stage of something that gives promise of more to come. “The word is common in both secular Greek and in the OT to denote the initial or representative portion of a commodity that was to be offered in sacrifice to God (cf., e.g., Lev. 2:12, grain; 23:10, the harvest; Deut. 18:4, grain, wine, the fleece of sheep). This ‘first fruits’ was often reserved for the priests (e.g., Num. 18:8).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 699]

FIRST FRUITS OF THE DOUGH — “The text in Numbers does not indicate that this ‘first fruits’ of the dough had any affect on the lump of dough as a whole; nor do other OT or Jewish texts clearly assert such a relationship generally between ‘first fruits’ and the remainder. Paul may therefore apply to this circumstance a principle derived from elsewhere; Dunn, e.g., notes that Jews thought the temple conveyed holiness to all of Jerusalem (he cites Neh. 11:1, 18; Isa. 11:9; 48:2; 66:20; Jer. 31:23, 40; Ezek. 20:40) and that the Pharisees apparently sought to extend the temple’s holiness throughout the land by their scrupulous observances. Perhaps Paul is also influenced by the principle ‘a little leaven leavens the whole lump’ (1 Cor. 5:6; the word here is [the same word used here for ‘dough’]).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 699]

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS — “Some translations (NIV, NASB, NRSV) put a paragraph division between vv. 16 and 17. But TEV and NJB, as well as almost all the commentaries, place the division between vv. 15 and 16. If a choice has to be made, the latter is the better option because v. 16 is more closely related to vv. 17ff than it is to vv. 11-15.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 697]

v 17, 18a — WARNING TO THE GENTILES / ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL —

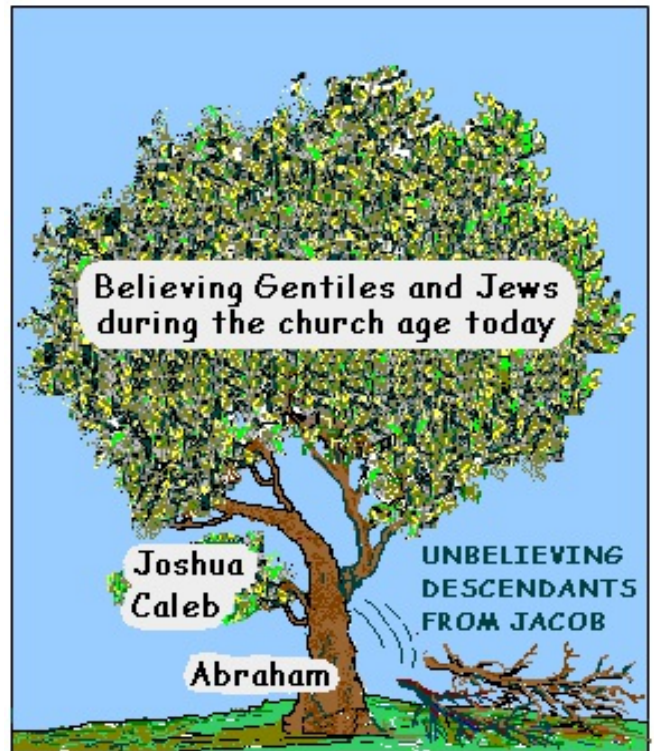
“This continuing special relationship between God and Israel is, however, reason to hope that Israel might one day be spiritually renewed, hope that Paul enunciates in vv. 23-24. First, however, he exploits the metaphor of root and branches to chastise and warn Gentile Christians (vv. 17-22).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 701]

“Verse 17 is the protasis (the ‘if’ clause) of a conditional sentence, whose apodosis (the ‘then’ clause) comes in v. 18a: ‘do not boast over the branches.’ The condition in this case is one that Paul obviously views as fulfilled. There are two parts of this condition.

- First, **‘some of the branches have been cut off.’** Here in a new image Paul restates the essential tragedy that sparks Rom. 9-11: *Jews, the recipients of God’s blessings through their ancestry, have been severed from those blessings — through both God’s hardening (cf. vv. 7b-10) and their own unbelief (cf. v. 20).* ... Paul uses τινες [tines, ‘some’] not because he knows that the number of branches that have been cut off is small but because he wants to stress to the Gentiles that not all the branches have been cut off.

- Second, however, we find **‘grafted in’ among the branches that remain other branches — branches that come from ‘a wild olive tree.’** With this image, as Paul’s direct address makes clear (see v. 13), *he refers to Gentile Christians. As Gentiles, they have no ‘natural’ relationship to the patriarchs and the promises given to them. Only by God’s grace (v. 20) have they been able to become ‘fellow participants’ (with Jewish Christians) of the ‘rich root of the olive tree.’*” [Moo, Romans, pg 701f]

THE OLIVE TREE — *The choice of the olive tree for this metaphor “... probably reflects both its use as a symbol of Israel in the OT and Judaism and the fact that the olive tree was the most widely cultivated fruit tree in the Mediterranean area. ... See esp. Jer. 11:16: ‘A green olive tree, beautiful with valuable fruit, the LORD called your name, but with the voice of a great storm he will set fire to it, and its branches will be broken.’ Note also Hos. 14:5-6: ‘I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily, he shall strike root like the forests of Lebanon. His shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the olive tree, and his fragrance like that of Lebanon.’ References to Israel as ‘God’s planting’ are more frequent [among Jewish apocryphal literature].... [The Jewish philosopher] Philo writes that God, in accepting proselytes, ‘takes no account of the roots but accepts the full-growth stem, because it has been changed from a weed into fruitfulness.’ ... The ‘wild olive tree,’ by contrast, was notoriously unfruitful, and Paul’s comparison of Gentiles to it may be intended to prick the Gentiles’ pride and sense of superiority.”* [Moo, Romans, pg 702]



GRAFTING IN WILD BRANCHES — Paul’s reference of grafting branches from a wild or uncultivated tree into a cultivated one is the reverse of the usual practice. “Some scholars find here evidence of Paul’s urban roots — he simply did not know arboriculture. Others have rushed to Paul’s defense, citing evidence in ancient sources showing that farmers did occasionally graft a wild olive shoot into a cultivated tree. Still others argue that Paul has knowingly cited a practice that is ‘contrary to nature’ as a way of illustrating the grace of God at work in the incorporation of Gentiles into the people of God (see ‘against nature’ in v. 24). None of these conclusions is warranted. Writers and speakers frequently transgress the natural boundaries of a metaphor in their application of it. We should therefore be content to recognize that Paul has allowed the theological process he is illustrating to affect the terms of his metaphor. We cannot be sure, then, whether he knows he is citing an actual arboricultural practice or not; and we certainly cannot draw any theological conclusions from the fact.” [Moo, Romans, pg 702f]

GENTILES PROHIBITED FROM BOASTING OVER JEWISH CONDITION — “The prohibition ‘do not boast over the branches’ completes the condition sentence begun in v. 17. The verb ‘boast over’ combines the ideas of sinful pride and arrogant superiority: ‘boast in triumphant comparison with others.’ The ‘others’ over whom the Gentile Christians are not to exult are ‘the branches.’ But does Paul have in mind the branches that have been broken off the tree (unbelieving Jews), the branches that remain in the tree (Jewish Christians), or both? Probably both. Paul’s comparison between the Gentile Christians who stand in God’s grace by their faith with Jews who have been cut off because of their unbelief (vv. 20-22) shows that he must have unbelieving Jews in mind. Yet 14:1-15:13 manifests a concern to reconcile Jews and Gentiles within the church; and Paul almost certainly has this situation in mind here. *Gentile-Christian boasting over Jews is probably not the result of anti-Semitism generally, but of a mistaken reading of the course of salvation history. These Gentile Christians appear to have concluded that the unprecedented degree in which the doors of salvation were open to Gentiles after the coming of Christ meant the closing of those same doors to Jews. As the same time, these Gentile believers were apparently convinced that they belonged to a new people of God that had simply replaced Israel. Those Jews who believed, they apparently assumed, could become part of their community and on their terms (see 14:1-15:13). It is to this kind of attitude that Paul responds in vv. 18b-22, where he expands on the basic imagery of v. 17 to back up his prohibition of Gentile-Christian boasting.*” [Moo, Romans, pg 703f]

GRAFTED IN — a technical arboricultural term; the verb occurs only in this passage in the NT

v 18b — “[Paul] begins with another conditional sentence, in which, for the sake of argument, he assumes that, despite his



of ‘Abraham’s seed’: the people of God are one, and that people has both a Jewish root and a continuing Jewish element.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 704]

prohibition, the Gentile Christians will insist on continuing to boast over Jews. In that case, Paul warns: ‘remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root that supports you.’ Gentile Christians who boast over Jews are demonstrating an attitude of disdain for the Jewish heritage. Yet it is that very heritage upon which the Gentile Christians themselves depend for their own spiritual standing. For ‘the root’ that gives spiritual nourishment to Jewish and Gentile believers alike is the patriarchs as recipients and transmitters of the promises of God. And that root is not only of historical interest. *As the present tense Paul uses here indicates, the root of the patriarchs continues to be the source of spiritual nourishment that believers require. There is only one root and only one tree; branches, whether Jewish or Gentile, that do not remain attached to that tree are doomed to wither and die. Here again we see the careful balance of Paul’s argument in Romans. Physical descent from the patriarchs does not, in itself, bring salvation (2:25-29; 9:6b-29); Jews are in the same position as Gentiles, held under sin’s power (2:1-3:20) and needing to respond to God in faith to be saved (3:21-4:25). Yet salvation comes only to those who are*

v 19, 20 — PAUL’S RESPONSE TO THE (IMAGINED) GENTILE RESPONSE — “In good diatribe style, Paul now puts a further argument on the lips of a hypothetical Gentile Christian who seeks to justify his feeling of superiority over the Jews: ‘Branches have been broken off in order than I might be grafted in.’ Paul responds in v. 20 with a qualified agreement. He does not straightforwardly deny the point that the Gentile Christian has made; for, indeed, as Paul himself has argued, the hardening of Jews has led to the extension of salvation to Gentiles (vv. 11-15). But Paul also argues that this salvation is, in turn, designed to stimulate Jews to jealousy as the means of their spiritual restoration. God’s purposes in ‘cutting off’ natural branches extend far beyond the inclusion of Gentiles. It is the egotism of Gentile Christians who present God’s manifold plan as having the salvation of themselves as its focus that Paul wishes to expose and criticize.

“Another fact of the egotism of the Gentile Christians is their sense of pride in having attained a place in the people of God. This attitude Paul seeks to deflate by reminding them that it is faith that makes the difference. It is because of their faith that the Gentile Christian has attained a standing within the people of God. What Paul says here to the Gentile Christian echoes what he said earlier to the Jews. *In response to the Jews’ tendency to boast in their status and accomplishments, Paul emphasized that the gracious nature of God’s dealings with human beings excluded all boasting. It is faith, and faith alone — characterized by humility and receptivity — that is the only way to establish or to maintain a relationship with God (3:27-4:5). Recognizing that every spiritual benefit comes as a sheer gift from our gracious God, the Gentile Christian must stop thinking so highly of his or her accomplishments and take up an attitude of reverential fear. This basic biblical concept combines reverential respect for the God of majesty and glory with a healthy concern to continue to live out of the grace of God in our lives* (see esp. Phil. 2:12; also 2 Cor. 5:1; 7:1, 11; Col. 3:22).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 705f]

v 21 — “Paul now explains why the Gentile Christian should fear: ‘if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you.’ A failure to continue in faith — thus a failure to display an appropriate ‘fear’ of God — has led to judgment for many Jews. And if God so judged Jews, who had a natural connection to the tree and its sustaining root, he will surely judge those who have been grafted in as alien branches.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 706]

v 22 — “In this verse, Paul states in more theological language an implication [note the ‘therefore’] that picks up a number of points he has made in vv. 17-21. His emphasis on God’s ‘goodness’ makes clear that the representative Gentile Christian Paul addresses has been ‘grafted into’ God’s people (vv. 17 and 19) and thus ‘stands’ (v. 20) in faith through God’s gracious initiative. The reference to God’s ‘severity,’ on the other hand, reinforces the note of condemnation found in the ‘not spared’ of v. 21. By denoting those upon whom God’s severity is visited as ‘those who have fallen,’ Paul draws our attention back to an even earlier verse (v. 11). *But Paul’s main purpose in this verse appears at its end: to repeat his warning to the Gentile believer who may (like the Jew; cf. 2:4-5) presume on God’s goodness. For the goodness of God is not simply a past act or automatic benefit on which the believer can rest secure; it is also a continuing relationship in which the believer must remain.* ‘Otherwise’ — that is, if the believer does not continue in the goodness of God — the believer will, like the Jew, be ‘but off’ — severed forever from the people of God and eternally condemned. In issuing this warning, Paul echoes a consistent NT theme: ultimate salvation is dependent on continuing faith; therefore, the person who ceases to believe forfeits any hope of salvation (cf. also Rom. 8:13; Col. 1:23; Heb. 3:6, 14).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 706f]

HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO ETERNAL SECURITY? — “Does this then mean that a genuine Christian can lose his faith and thus be eternally condemned? Certainly it is possible to infer this from Paul’s warning. But it is no necessary inference. For there is clearly an element of phenomenology in the metaphor that Paul uses throughout these verses. *While the olive tree represents the true, spiritual people of God, those who are said to belong to this tree are not only those who, through their*

*faith, are actually part of the tree but also those who only appear to belong to that tree. This is evident from the fact that Paul speaks of unbelieving Jews as having been ‘cut off’ from the tree (v. 17). In reality, these Jews had never been part of the tree at all; yet to preserve the metaphor he is using, Paul presents them as if they had been. In the same way, then, those Gentiles within the church at Rome — and elsewhere — who appear to be part of God’s people, yet do not continue in faith, may never have been part of that tree at all. See, for this general approach, Calvin. Other commentators deny any implications for the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints by arguing that Paul’s warning is directed to the Gentiles as a people rather than to individuals (cf. Hodge; Godet).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 707]*

v 23 — “Paul has stressed God’s equal treatment of both Jew and Gentile in judgment: just as Jews who do not believe are ‘cut off,’ so Gentiles who do not continue in God’s goodness will be ‘cut off.’ In vv. 23-24, he uses this same principle of equal treatment positively to offer hope for the eventual spiritual renewal of Jews. ‘Those also’ can be grafted back into the olive tree ‘if they do not persist in their lack of faith.’ In speaking of such a regrafting, Paul again reveals how little he is concerned to stick to the details of actual olive cultivation in his metaphor. It is not the logic of nature that explains this regrafting, but the *theo*logic of the God who ‘gives life to the dead and calls things that do not exist as if they did’ (4:17); the ‘power of God’ that is at work in the gospel (1:16). Paul’s stress on God’s ability here may seem redundant; but he is probably thinking of the attitude of certain Gentile Christians who might question the appropriateness of God extending his grace to those who had already been cast off.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 707]

v 24 — “Even though Paul has stretched the limits of his metaphor to the breaking point, he continues to exploit it to give further reason for God’s ability to restore Jews who turn from unbelief to belief. Paul utilizes the familiar ‘how much more’ argument. He reminds Gentile Christians that they, who belong to a wild olive tree by nature, have been cut off from that tree and grafted into the cultivated olive tree (cf. v. 17). Now if God can so graft branches into the cultivated olive tree that do not naturally belong to it, he is certainly able to graft back into this tree those branches who do belong to that tree by nature — the Jews. For it is, after all, ‘their own’ tree.

“We must allow for Paul’s hortatory purpose in evaluating this ‘how much more’ argument. For just as Paul dwelt on Jewish sin in chap. 2 to counter Jewish boasting over Gentiles, so he now accentuates Jewish advantages to save a Jew than a Gentile or that the Jew, by reason of being a Jew, can make any claim on God; for this would be to give the Jew an ‘advantage’ in salvation that Paul has plainly denied (see chap. 2). Every person, Jew or Gentile, stands under sin’s power (3:9) and can be saved only by a special act of God’s grace. Just like Gentiles, Jews can be saved only if they are grafted by God into the tree. But even when cut off from the parent tree because of unbelief, they retain the stamp of their origin. They belong to that people which God has chosen, through which he has manifested himself to the world, and to which he remains committed (11:1-2). Their quality as ‘natural branches’ does not itself qualify them for regrafting onto the tree. But, as branches that trace their origin to a ‘holy’ root (v. 16), their regrafting is easier to understand than the grafting in of those alien, wild olive branches.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 707f]

THE UNITY OF GOD’S PEOPLE — “Paul skillfully mixes theology and exhortation in this paragraph. His olive tree metaphor makes an important contribution to our understanding of the people of God. It is notoriously easy to squeeze more theology out of such a metaphor than it is intended to convey. But basic to the whole metaphor is the unity of God’s people, a unity that crosses both historic and ethnic boundaries. The basic point of the metaphor is that there is only one olive tree, whose roots are firmly planted in OT soil, and whose branches include both Jews and Gentiles. This olive tree represents the true people of God. The turn of the ages at the coming of Christ brought an important development in the people of God: the object of one’s faith became clearer and more specific and the ethnic makeup of that people changed radically, as God extended his grace in vastly increased measure to Gentiles. But Paul’s metaphor warns us not to view this transition as a transition from one people of God to another. Gentiles who come to Christ become part of that community of salvation founded on God’s promises to the patriarchs. And ‘messianic Jews,’ following in the footsteps of their believing ancestors, belong to this same community.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 708f]

GOD’S CHURCHES HAS NOT “REPLACED” ISRAEL — “The picture Paul sketches reveals the danger of the simple and popular notion that the church has ‘replaced’ Israel. For this formula misses the stress Paul places on historical continuity in the people of God. Paul suggests that the church, defined as the entire body of believers in Jesus Christ, is simply the name for the people of God in this era of salvation history — as ‘Israel’ was the name of that people in the previous age. To be sure, the dual nature of OT Israel — both spiritual and national — complicates the matter, but in neither sense does the church simply ‘replace’ Israel. As a spiritual entity, Israel is organically connected to the church; and as a national entity, as Paul has made clear (11:1-2), Israel continues to exist as the object of God’s care and attention. Perhaps a better word to describe the movement from OT Israel to NT church is the same word that the NT so often uses to denote such relationships: ‘fulfillment.’ We thereby capture the necessary note of continuity — the church is the continuation of Israel into the new age — and discontinuity — the church, not Israel, is now the locus of God’s work in the world.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 709]

The Salvation of “All Israel” (11:25-32)

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be ignorant, brethren, of this secret — that ye may

ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. (Rom 11:25-32 KJV)

conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins." As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all. (Rom 11:25-32 NIV)

not be wise in your own conceits — that hardness in part to Israel hath happened till the fulness of the nations may come in; and so all Israel shall be saved, according as it hath been written, 'There shall come forth out of Sion he who is delivering, and he shall turn away impiety from Jacob, and this to them [is] the covenant from Me, when I may take away their sins.' As regards, indeed, the good tidings, [they are] enemies on your account; and as regards the choice — beloved on account of the fathers; for unrepented of [are] the gifts and the calling of God; for as ye also once did not believe in God, and now did find kindness by the unbelief of these: so also these now did not believe, that in your kindness they also may find kindness; for God did shut up together the whole to unbelief, that to the whole He might do kindness. (Rom 11:25-32 Young's Literal Translation)

“In these verses Paul brings the argument of vv. 11ff to its climax. This argument comes in response to the notion that Israel had ‘stumbled’ so as to ‘fall’ irretrievably (v. 11). No so, Paul has contended. For Israel’s ‘stumble’ has been but the first act in an unfolding salvation-historical drama. In this drama Israel and the Gentiles take turns on center stage. Israel, the focus of salvation history throughout the OT, has now, as a result of the gospel, given place to the Gentiles: because of Israel’s ‘trespass,’ salvation has come to the Gentiles (v. 11), and God’s riches and the blessing of reconciliation have come to the world (vv. 12, 15). But the Gentiles will, in turn, be replaced in the limelight by Israel, as her ‘defeat’ gives way to her ‘fulness’ (v. 12), her rejection to acceptance (v. 15). The Jews, like branches that retain the qualities of the tree from which they were cut, can be grafted back in again (vv. 16-24).

“***In vv. 25-32 Paul rehearses this salvation-historical drama for a final time.*** But he draws our special attention to this restatement by introducing it as a ‘mystery.’ And, in contrast to his earlier sketches of the drama of God’s work with the Gentiles and Israel, he now focuses especially on the last act of the drama, the heart of the mystery: the restoration of Israel. ‘And in this way all Israel will be saved’ (v. 26a) is the center of this paragraph. Verse 25 stresses the temporal limits on the present situation to explain *how* ‘all Israel will be saved’: in a final act *after* the hardening of Israel is removed and the destined number of Gentiles enter the kingdom. Verses 26b-32 back up Paul’s climatic prediction about Israel’s salvation by showing that (1) it is confirmed by Scripture (vv. 26b-27); (2) it is rooted in God’s unswerving faithfulness to his promise and his election (vv. 28-29); and (3) it manifests God’s impartiality to all people, as the capstone of the drama of salvation history (vv. 30-32).

“But 11:25-32 is not only the climax of 11:11-32; it is also the climax to all of Rom. 9-11. This is revealed particularly in the themes that Paul develops in vv. 28-32. Here we find juxtaposed the two apparently conflicting factors that give rise to the argument of these chapters: Israel’s current hostile relationship with God (v. 28a; cf. 9:1-3) and God’s expressed and irrevocable promises to Israel (v. 28b; cf. 9:4-5; 11:1-2). Paul suggests that the resolution of this tension is to be found in a divinely given insight (‘mystery’) into the way in which God’s purposes are working themselves out in salvation history. Israel’s present hostility toward God, manifested in her general refusal of the gospel (cf. 9:30-10:21), is itself part of God’s plan, for it is the result of God’s act of hardening (‘hardening has come’ in v. 25b; cf. 11:7b-10; 9:17-18). But this hardening is both limited (‘partially’ in v. 25b; cf. 11:3-7) and temporary (‘until’ in v. 25b), designed both to allow Gentiles to ‘come in’ (vv. 25b, 30; cf. 11:11-15) and to stimulate Israel herself to repentance (v. 31; cf. 11:11). It is by means of this salvation-historical process that God’s faithfulness to his promises to Israel is manifested. That faithfulness presently takes the form of a preservation of a remnant (11:3-6). But in the future God’s unwavering commitment to Israel will be spectacularly revealed in the salvation of the nation as a whole (v. 26a). At the same time, Paul suggests, this salvation of Israel in the last days will vindicate God’s impartiality (v. 32). For Israel’s present hardening could suggest an imbalance in God’s treatment of ethnic groups, as if he preferred Gentiles to Jews. The last day, however, will reveal that God has treated all equally: ‘imprisoning’ all in disobedience — Gentiles before Christ; Jews since Christ’s coming — so that he could have mercy on all — Gentiles in the present age; Jews (making up for their small numbers now), in great numbers at the end of the age.

“***This profound theological mystery has a specific practical purpose. Paul continues to address the Gentile Christians in Rome in these verses (he uses the second person plural throughout, vv. 25, 28, 30-31; cf. v. 13). And he leaves no doubt about what he wants his readers to learn from this mystery: to stop thinking so highly of themselves in comparison with Jews (v. 25a). We***

who are Gentiles should likewise take these verses as a reminder that we are only part of the great salvation-historical plan of God and that that plan has its climax in the salvation of Israel.” [Moo, Romans, pg 712f]

v 25 — PAUL GIVES THE FOUNDATION FOR HOPE IN THE PREVIOUS VERSE BASED ON THE “MYSTERY”

— “The ‘for’ at the beginning of this verse ties vv. 25-32 to v. 24: ‘hope that natural branches will be grafted in again is well founded, *for* Paul has been given the knowledge of the mystery that...’. But since the hope expressed in v. 24 is a theme that pervades vv. 11-24, this ‘for’ ultimately connects vv. 25-32 with the whole preceding argument. Paul draws attention to the importance of the mystery he is about to reveal with the formula ‘I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers and sisters.’” [Moo, Romans, pg 713f]

HOW DOES PAUL USE THE WORD “MYSTERY”? — *“Paul uses the word ‘mystery’ with a technical theological meaning derived from Jewish apocalyptic. In these writings ‘mystery’ usually refers to an event of the end times that has already been determined by God — and so, in that sense, exists already in heaven — but which is first revealed to the apocalyptic seer for the comfort and encouragement of the people of Israel. Paul also speaks of a mystery as something that had been ‘hidden’ from God’s people in the past but had now been revealed in the gospel. Usually the mystery involves an event or insight associated with Christ’s coming and the preaching of the gospel, but here and in 1 Cor. 15:51 it refers to an event at the end of history. ... This use of the word ‘mystery’ is found first in Daniel (2:17-18, 27-30, 47), with reference to the content of the dreams of King Nebuchadnezzar. It is expressly said in this context that ‘the God of Heaven’ is the revealer of these mysteries (v. 28). A typical example of the word in Jewish apocalyptic ... ‘And when you [Levi, being addressed by an angel] have mounted up there [to ‘another heaven’], you shall stand near the Lord. You shall be his priest and you shall tell forth his mysteries to men. You shall announce the one who is about to redeem Israel.’” [Moo, Romans, pg 714]*

PAUL’S PRACTICAL PURPOSE FOR REVEALING THE “MYSTERY” — “Paul interrupts his discussion of this mystery with a reminder to his readers that his purpose is ultimately a very practical one. He divulges this mystery, he says, ‘in order that you might not be wise in your own estimation.’ As vv. 17-21 show, *Paul’s concern is with Gentile Christians who are boasting over Jews and Jewish Christians because of their assumption that they — the Gentiles — had ousted the Jews as the focus of God’s purposes in history.* ‘Wise in your own estimation,’ then, will refer not to a sense of superiority engendered by spiritual giftedness or accomplishments, but to an attitude of ethnic pride and exclusiveness.” [Moo, Romans, pg 715]

THE CONTENT OF THE “MYSTERY” — Paul describes the mystery in three separate clauses found in vv. 25, 26a:

- ‘a hardening has come partly on Israel’
- ‘until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in’
- ‘and in this way all Israel will be saved’

“[W]hat is the real ‘core’ of the mystery? The fact of Israel’s hardening? The fact that Israel’s hardening is only partial and temporary? The fact that ‘all Israel will be saved’? Or some combination of these? An important clue in answering this question is the sense of something new in Paul’s argument that his use of the word ‘mystery’ suggests. This consideration would seem to rule out the fact of Israel’s hardening since Paul had plainly taught it earlier (11:7b-10). It also suggests that the focal point of the mystery is not the salvation of all Israel since this was an expectation widely held among Jews in Paul’s day. *What stands out in vv. 25b-26a, what Paul has not yet explicitly taught, and what entails a reversal in current Jewish belief, is the sequence by which ‘all Israel’ will be saved: Israel hardened until the Gentiles come in and in this way all Israel being saved. Some OT and Jewish texts predict that Gentiles will join the worship of the Lord in the last day; and some of them suggest that it is the Lord’s glory revealed in a rejuvenated and regathered Israel that stimulate the Gentiles’ interest. But wholly novel was the idea that the inauguration of the eschatological age would involve setting aside the majority of Jews while Gentiles stream in to enjoy the blessings of salvation and that only when that stream had been exhausted would Israel as a whole experience these blessings.*” [Moo, Romans, pg 716f]

v 26a — THE “STORM CENTER” OF THE NT’S TEACHING CONCERNING THE JEWS — Without question this verse is, in the words of one commentator, “the storm center in the interpretation of Romans 9-11 and of NT teaching about the Jews and their future.” In evaluating this verse, we will look at three specific issues: *the meaning and reference of “in this way”; the reference of “all Israel”; and the time and manner of “all Israel’s” salvation.*

THE MEANING AND REFERENCE OF “IN THIS WAY” [οὕτως, houtōs] —

- **a temporal meaning:** ‘and then [after the events depicted in v. 25b] all Israel will be saved.’ The problem with this interpretation is that this use of the Greek word is not found anywhere else in Greek writings.
- **a consequence or conclusion:** ‘and in consequence of this process [v. 25b] all Israel will be saved.’ This is found in Greek writings but rarely; therefore there seems to be no good reason to abandon the usual meaning of the word (Paul uses this word 74 times with only four times to mean ‘a consequence or conclusion,’ all the other references is used to indicate ‘manner’).
- **the manner in which an action takes place, connected with ‘as it is written’:** ‘it is this way that Israel will be

saved: namely, just as it is written...'. While this does use the word houtōs in its usual sense, Paul never elsewhere combines the use of this word with 'it is written' and therefore should be rejected.

● **the manner in which an action takes place, connected with the immediately preceding comments: 'and in this manner all Israel will be saved.'** This is the preferred interpretation, the sense being as follows: *"The 'manner' of Israel's salvation is the process that Paul has outlined in vv. 11-24 and summarized in v. 25b: God imposes a hardening on most of Israel while Gentiles come into the messianic salvation, with the Gentiles' salvation leading in turn to Israel's jealousy and her own salvation."* [Moo, Romans, pg 720]

THE REFERENCE OF "ALL ISRAEL" —

● **all the elect, both Jew and Gentile** — This interpretation received some support among the church fathers and became especially widespread in the post-Reformation period, led by Calvin. But support for this interpretation has lessened in recent times. "Although they interpret the phrase differently in different places, both Origen and Augustine apply the phrase to ethnic Israel; cf. also Chrysostom. This was the standard view among English Puritans." [Moo, Romans, pg 721] See below under '*national Israel*' for reasons to reject this interpretation.

● **the elect within Israel (the remnant)** — This interpretation is held by Lenski, Ridderbos and Hendriksen. "Some have dismissed this interpretation because it would turn Paul's prediction into a purposeless truism: after all, by definition those who are elect will be saved. But this objection is not decisive. As we have seen, Paul's focus is not so much on the *fact* that all Israel will be saved as on the *manner* in which it will be saved. A more serious objection to this interpretation is that it requires a shift in the meaning of 'Israel' from v. 25b to v. 26a since the Israel that has been partially hardened is clearly national Israel. For this reason, and also because of the usual meaning of the phrase 'all Israel,' I incline slightly to the view that Israel in v. 26a refers to the nations generally." [Moo, Romans, pg 722]

● **the nation of Israel** — "Paul has used the term 'Israel' ten times so far in Rom. 9-11, and each refers to ethnic Israel [note Moo interprets 9:6b as elect Jews, the remnant, elect Jews within national Israel]. This clearly is the meaning of the term in v. 25b, and a shift from this ethnic denotation to a purely religious one in v. 26a — despite the 'all' — is unlikely. But another factor is even more damaging to the idea that Paul uses Israel in v. 26a to refer to the church generally: the hortatory purpose of Rom. 11:11-32. Paul's view of the continuity of salvation history certainly allows him to transfer the OT title of the people of God to the NT people of God, as Gal. 6:16 probably indicates (cf. also Phil. 3:3). And this same theology surfaces in Romans itself, as Paul argues that Abraham's 'seed' consists of faithful Jews *and Gentiles* (4:13-18). But the difference in purpose between Rom. 11 and these other texts makes it unlikely that Paul would make the semantic move of using Israel to denote the church here. In both Galatians and Rom. 4 Paul is arguing that Gentiles, as Gentiles, can become recipients of the blessings promised to Abraham and full members of the people of God. Paul's application to Gentiles of OT people-of-God language is perfectly appropriate in such contexts. *But Paul's purpose in Rom. 11 is almost the opposite. Here, he counters a tendency for Gentiles to appropriate for themselves exclusively the rights and titles of 'God's people.'* For Paul in this context to call the church 'Israel' would be to fuel the fire of the Gentiles' arrogance by giving them grounds to brag that *'we are the true Israel.'*" [Moo, Romans, pg 721] Note Moo adds in a footnote that he is not denying that Paul can and does use the term 'Israel' in such a manner; but only that in this context it seems to use the word in that sense would be totally inappropriate.

● **possible objection to "all Israel" = national Israel** — *"'All Israel,' as the OT and Jewish sources demonstrate, has a corporate significance, referring to the nation as a whole and not to every single individual who is a part of that nation. The phrase is similar, then, to those that we sometimes use to denote a large and representative number from a group; that is, 'the whole school turned out to see the football game'; 'the whole nation was outraged at the incident.' ... We conclude that Paul is probably using the phrase 'all Israel' to denote the corporate entity of the nation of Israel as it exists at a particular point in time."* [Moo, Romans, pg 722f] Scriptural examples of such word usage is not difficult:

"And Joshua said to Achan, 'Why did you bring trouble on us? The Lord is bringing trouble on you today.' And all Israel stoned him with stones." (Josh 7:25)

"And they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and Absalom went in to the concubines of his father before the eyes of all Israel." (2 Sam. 16:22)

"And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD." (1 Sam. 7:5)

"And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran." (1 Sam. 25:1)

"And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king." (1 Kings 12:1)

"And it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him." (2 Chron. 12:1)

"Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is

poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.” (Dan. 9:11)

THE TIME AND MANNER OF “ALL ISRAEL’S” SALVATION — Paul seems to place this salvation of “all Israel” at the end of the age. “[P]aul, we must remember, is not consciously thinking in terms of the passing of many centuries before these events are completed, but of a potentially very short time.... We do not mean by this that Paul was certain, or that what he writes in Rom. 11 requires, that the coming of Christ and wrapping up of human history would take place within his own generation or within a very short period of time (as many scholars think). *But we must take seriously the fact that Paul, like other NT authors and, indeed, Jesus himself (cf. Mark 13:32 || Matt. 24:36) did not know when the consummation of the kingdom would take place. Paul seems to have hoped that the consummation would be soon. At least we must recognize that our own perspective, twenty centuries after the prediction, is quite different from Paul’s.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 723] Evidences that Paul expected the salvation of “all Israel” at the end of the age are as follows:

- “The prediction of v. 26a seems to match the third step in the salvation-historical process that Paul describes throughout these verses (‘their fullness,’ v. 12; ‘their acceptance,’ v. 15; ‘the grafting in again of natural branches,’ v. 24; cf. also vv. 30-32). *Since Paul makes clear that this reintegration of Israel is in contrast to the situation as it exists in his own time — when Israel is ‘rejected’ — it must be a future event.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 723f]
- “The specific point in the future when this will occur is indicated by Paul’s probable connection between Israel’s ‘acceptance’ and the eschatological resurrection of the dead (v. 15).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 724]
- “The implication of v. 25b is that the current partial hardening of Israel will be reversed when all the elect Gentiles have been saved; and it is unlikely that Paul would think that salvation would be closed to Gentiles before the end.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 724]
- The quotation made by Paul in v. 26b-27 is taken from an OT text which probably refers to the second coming of Christ.
- “[T]he hope of a spiritual rejuvenation of the nation of Israel is endemic in the OT prophets and in Jewish apocalyptic. This rejuvenation is often pictured as a regathering of Jews that reverses the judgment of Israel’s exile and that ushers in the eschatological age. Paul — and the rest of the NT — teaches that the coming of Christ has brought the fulfillment of many of these prophecies about Israel’s renewal. But Paul’s language in Rom. 11 seems deliberately calculated to restate this traditional hope for Israel’s renewal. His point seems to be that the present situation in salvation history, in which so few Jews are being saved, cannot finally do full justice to the scriptural expectations about Israel’s future. Something ‘more’ is to be expected; and this ‘more,’ Paul implies, is a large-scale conversion of Jewish people at the end of this age. The corporate significance of ‘all Israel’ makes it impossible to reckon the actual percentage of Jews living at that time who will be saved. But the contrast between the remnant and ‘all Israel’ would suggest a significantly larger percentage than was the case in Paul’s day. Nor is it possible to be precise about the exact timing of the conversion of Israel in comparison with other events of the end times, although the fact that it will take place only after the salvation of all elect Gentiles suggest that it will be closely associated with the return of Christ in glory. ... The OT / Jewish tradition that Paul uses usually makes prominent reference to a restoration to the land as integral to the eschatological rejuvenation of Israel. Some think that Rom. 11 includes this physical dimension of Israel’s restoration. But we find no evidence of this; accepting such a hope as part of NT eschatology will require evidence in texts other than Rom. 11.... Murray (*Puritan Hope*, pp. 39-55) notes that the Puritans, who almost unanimously held to a future conversion of Israel, were quite divided over its timing, arguing about whether it would take place only after the Gentile mission and about its relationship to the millenium.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 724f]

“There are those who interpret this as meaning salvation to individuals through the Gospel, but it is my conviction that the prophet has national conversion in mind. ‘All Israel shall be saved’ does not mean that every Jew who has ever lived will be converted, but that the Jews living when the Redeemer returns will see Him, receive Him, and be saved. Zechariah 12-13 give the details. It seems to me that there are too many details in these Old Testament prophecies of national restoration for Israel for us to spiritualize them and apply them to the church today.” [Wiersbe, *Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol 1 pg 552f]

“Therefore, since God’s free and unconstrained election of Israel from all the nations of the earth (Deut 7:6) embraced from the outset his intention to bless Israel for centuries in unique ways among the nations and in the last days to purify and save the whole people, his fulfillment of this intention is just as free from human constraints as the initial election of Abraham. We may infer from Rom 9:6ff that God has employed four thousand years of redemptive history to teach that he is free and not bound to save anyone because of his Jewishness nor to condemn anyone because of his non-Jewishness. Can he not at the end of the age, having demonstrated his freedom beyond the shadow of a doubt, bring his free and sovereign election of Israel to a climax by banishing ungodliness from Jacob and save the whole people? But, someone may say, if he saves the whole end-time generation, an Israelite will be able to boast legitimately: I was saved because I am a descendant of Abraham and so had a sufficient merit in God’s eyes! There are two responses to this objection: (1) the banishing of ungodliness from Israel (Rom 11:26) will mean the elimination of precisely that attitude; (2) if anyone does manifest that attitude he will not be saved, since salvation is always on the same basis for

Jew and Gentile (Rom 2:6-10; 3:21-26). ***This loss would not jeopardize the fulfillment of the promise, because ‘all Israel’ need not be taken with mathematical rigidity*** (cf. 1 Kings 12:1; 2 Chron 12:1; Sanhedrin 10:1).” [Piper, *The Justification of God*, pg 27]

v 26b, 27 — THE REDEEMER OUT OF ZION — “As Paul has done in the conclusions of each of the other main parts of his argument in Rom. 9-11 (cf. 9:25-29; 10:21; 11:8-10), he reinforces his teaching with a composite quotation from the OT. He quotes Isa. 59:20-21a in vv. 26b-27a and a clause from Isa. 27:9 in v. 27b. Both parts of the quotation follow the LXX closely, with one notable exception: where the LXX of Isa. 59:20 says that ‘the redeemer will come *for the sake* of Zion,’ Paul says ‘the redeemer will come *out of* Zion.’ And not only does Paul’s reading differ from the LXX, it differs also from the Hebrew text and from every known pre-Pauline text and version.... [I]t is perhaps on the whole best to think that Paul is assuming the tradition that surfaces in Heb. 12:22, according to which ‘Zion’ is associated with the heavenly Jerusalem, the site of Christ’s high-priestly ministry. If so, he probably changes the text in order to make clear that the final deliverance of Israel is accomplished by Christ at his parousia.... Note Gal. 4:26, where Paul refers to the ‘Jerusalem above’ to which Christians belong. Paul does not use ‘Zion’ with any theological significance. He only uses the term once elsewhere, in a quotation of Isa. 28:16 in Rom. 9:33. It would make sense to interpret ‘out of Zion’ in 11:26 in light of this earlier text, but it is difficult to see how it helps explain Paul’s reference here. ‘Zion’ occurs in the NT only elsewhere in quotations of Zech. 9:9 in Matt. 21:5; John 12:15; in another quotation of Isa. 28:16 in 1 Pet. 2:6 and in Rev. 14:1: ‘*And I looked, and behold the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him the 144,000 who had his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads.*’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 727f]

CHRIST THE REDEEMER — “While, therefore, the ‘redeemer’ in Isa. 59:20 is Yahweh himself, Paul probably intends to identify Christ as the redeemer. It is when Christ comes ‘out of’ heaven that he will ‘turn away ungodliness from Jacob’ and thus fulfill the covenant with Israel. In light of Paul’s reference to the patriarchs in the next verse and his extensive use of the OT traditions about God’s covenant with Abraham, we are justified in assuming that he would identify this covenant with the promise-covenant that God entered into with Abraham and his descendants. Paul, of course, insists that this covenant has been fulfilled in the first coming of Christ and his provision for both Jews and Gentiles to enter, by faith, into the people of God (Gal. 3; Rom. 4). But, in a pattern typical of the NT, Paul suggests that this covenant with Abraham still awaits its final consummation — a consummation that will affect Israel in particular.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 728f]

PAUL’S QUOTE IN CONTEXT: THE LORD DELIVERING ISRAEL TO WORSHIP IN JERUSALEM — “Paul uses a clause from Isa. 27:9 to interpret this covenant in terms of the forgiveness of sins. Some similarity in wording between this verse and Isa. 59:20-21 probably helped draw Paul’s attention to this verse; but more important is the context from which it is taken. For Isaiah 27, like Isa. 59:20-60:7, predicts that Yahweh will deliver ‘Jacob’ from her exile / sins, bringing the scattered people back to their own city. Isaiah 27 notes that the judgment God has brought on Israel (in the Exile) is different from the judgment God brings on other nations: for Israel’s judgment, it is implied, will be both temporary and sanitive (vv. 7-8). The prophet therefore foresees ‘days to come’ when ‘Jacob shall take root, Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots, and fill the whole world with fruit’ (v. 6); when God will regather his people and the exiles will return to ‘worship the LORD on the holy mountain at Jerusalem’ (vv. 12-13). The parallel between this scenario and Paul’s teaching in 11:11-32 that the hardening of Israel is temporary and intended to lead to her ultimate deliverance cannot be missed. Moreover, by focusing on ‘the forgiveness of sins’ as integral to the fulfillment of God’s covenant with Israel, Paul ties this final deliverance to the cross, where the price for these sins has been paid (cf. 3:21-26). With this quotation, then, Paul not only suggests when Israel’s deliverance will take place; he also makes clear how it will take place: by Israel’s acceptance of the gospel message about the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 729]

v 28 — “The lack of any connecting words between vv. 27 and 28 suggests that a break in Paul’s argument occurs here. With the obvious shift in thought between vv. 32 and 33, then, verses 28-32 becomes a discrete paragraph. The immediate purpose of this paragraph is to ground and elaborate Paul’s prediction of Israel’s final salvation. Paul does this by highlighting God’s purpose of showing mercy to Israel, the central theme of vv. 28-32 (it is the climactic point in each of the arguments: cf. vv. 28b, 31b, and 32b). It is because God has chosen Israel to be his ‘beloved’ that he will bring salvation to the people in the last day. But the paragraph also rounds off Paul’s discussion in chap. 11. his assertion of Israel’s election (v. 28b) brings his argument back to where it began (vv. 1-2), while vv. 30-31 summarize the process of interaction between Gentiles and Israel that Paul has throughout vv. 11-27 highlighted as the vehicle by which God manifests this election. Finally, however, these verses serve to recapitulate and wrap up the argument of chaps. 9-11 as a whole. Paul’s assertion of Israel’s dual status in v. 28 succinctly summarizes the dilemma that drives the whole argument of these chapters: the Israel now at enmity with God because of the gospel is nevertheless the Israel to whom God has made irrevocable promises of blessing. In broad terms, as 9:30-10:21 has elaborated the former, negative side of this dilemma, so 9:6b-29 and 11:1-27 have explained the second, positive side.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 729f]

ENEMIES ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL — “‘Enemies according to the gospel’ succinctly summarizes the point that Paul has made in 9:30-10:21: through their failure to respond to the revelation of God’s righteousness in Christ, the heart of the gospel, Israel as a whole has failed to attain the eschatological salvation manifested in the gospel. ‘According to’ will then express the standard by which Israelites can be judged to be ‘enemies.’ The word ‘enemies’ can have an active sense — ‘those who hate God’ — or a passive meaning — ‘those who are hated by God.’ ... [I]t is best to give the word both an active and passive sense,

captured adequately in the English word ‘enemies.’ This meaning effectively captures the dual note Paul has sounded throughout Rom. 9-11 when speaking of Israel’s failure: ‘hated,’ ‘hardened,’ and ‘rejected’ by God (cf. 9:13, 17-23; 11:7b-10, 15, 25); for their part, disobedient, unbelieving, and stubborn (9:31-32; 10:3, 14-21; 11:11, 12, 20, 23, 30-31).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 730f]

BELOVED “BECAUSE OF” THE FATHERS — “In saying that God’s love for Israel is ‘based on’ the patriarchs, Paul is not of course suggesting that the patriarchs have done anything to merit God’s love for themselves or their descendants. As Gal. 3 and Rom. 4 make clear, the significance of Abraham and the other patriarchs in the plan of salvation rests not on their own actions but on the gracious promises that God has made to them. So it is not because of the patriarchs in and of themselves that the Jews are still beloved; it is because of the promises God made to them. As it is by the standard of the gospel that the Jews are now judged to be enemies of God, so it is by the standard of ‘election’ that they are loved by God.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 731]

THIS ELECTION MUST BE CORPORATE ELECTION — “*Some think, because of the way that Paul describes election in 9:6b-13 — an act by which God brings people into relationship with himself — that Paul must be referring here to the remnant. But a switch in subject in mid-verse, from the Jews who are God’s enemies in light of the gospel, to Jews who are beloved by God as elect members of the remnant, seems unwarranted. It is better, then, to understand the election Paul speaks of here to be the same corporate election of the people of Israel as a whole that he referred to in vv. 1-2. This election, as I argued at that point, is that choosing as a nation which the OT frequently emphasizes, a choice that does not mean salvation for every single member of the nation, but blessings for the nation as a whole. All Jews, therefore, are ‘beloved by God’; but, as Paul has made clear, this status will eventuate in salvation only for those whom God individually chooses for salvation in this age (the remnant) and in the last days (‘all Israel’).*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 731f]

v 29 — THE GIFTS AND CALL OF GOD — “Paul now grounds the last part of v. 28: the Jews, despite their rejection of the gospel, remain God’s beloved ‘because the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.’ The ‘call’ of God clearly refers to the election according to which the Jews are beloved. The ‘gifts’ may then be combined with ‘call’ as one idea — ‘the benefits of God’s call’ — or be taken as a distinct category — ‘the gifts and the call of God.’ The relationship between this paragraph and 9:1-5 suggests that Paul would intend ‘gifts’ to summarize those privileges of Israel that he enumerated in 9:4-5. God’s ‘call,’ then, is probably to be seen as one of the most important of those gifts: ‘the gifts and especially, among those gifts, the call of God.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 732]

IRREVOCABLE — “Greek ἀμεταμέλητος [ametamelētos], lit. ‘without regret’; cf. the only other occurrence in biblical Greek, in 2 Cor. 7:10: ‘godly pain brings a repentance that leads to salvation and *brings no regret.*’ ... The rare word ‘irrevocable’ emphasizes the point that Paul made at the beginning of his argument: ‘The word of God has not failed’ (9:6a). However, while this initial statement of God’s faithfulness to his promises was defensive — just because Israel has not believed, *‘it is not as though’* God is not faithful — this second assertion is positive — Israel still has a place in God’s plan *because* God is faithful. In this way Paul marks the movement of his argument. *He began with a defense of God’s word and constancy against a Jewish assumption of assured access to God’s grace (9:6b-29); he ends with a defense of Israel’s continuing privileges on the basis of God’s word against a Gentile assumption of superiority.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 732]

v 30, 31 — “Verses 30-31 explain how God’s continuing elective love of the Jews will be manifest. The argument recapitulates the process that Paul has described several times already, according to which God works out his purposes of salvation in history through an oscillation between Jews and Gentiles (cf. vv. 11-12, 15, 17-24, 25). Paul uses the familiar ‘just as’ — ‘so also’ logic to argue that the sequence of ‘disobedience’ — ‘mercy’ experienced already by the Gentiles (v. 30) will also be experienced by the Jews (v. 31). Paul again uses formal parallelism to enhance this similarity in treatment, with a chiasm linking the end of v. 30 and the beginning of v. 31:

v. 30	v. 31
‘Just as’	‘so also’
‘you’	‘they’
‘at one time’	‘now’
‘disobeyed God’	‘have disobeyed’
	‘for the sake of mercy for you’
‘and now’	‘in order that [now]’
‘you have received mercy’	‘they might also receive mercy’
‘because of their disobedience’	

As the second person plural verbs and pronouns show, Paul continues to address the Gentile Christians in Rome. He reminds them in v. 30 of their own experience. They were at one time ‘disobedient’ to God, as Paul has shown at length in 1:18-32 (and cf. 2:8, where ‘disobedience’ is one reason why God’s wrath falls on both Jew and Gentile alike). Paul undoubtedly characterized the Gentiles’ sin in terms of disobedience because this renunciation of God is equally applicable to both Jews and Gentiles (see the reference to Israel’s ‘disobedience’ in 10:21).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 732f]

“BUT NOW” : A SHIFT FROM THE OLD ERA TO OUR PRESENT GOSPEL AGE — “‘But now’ signals, as so often in Romans and in Paul, the salvation-historical movement from the old era to the new. It is not so much, then, the conversion of each of the Gentile Christians that Paul alludes to as the shift from the era when Gentiles were ‘alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world’ (Eph. 2:12b) to the present era in which God’s righteousness has been manifested ‘for all who believe,’ whether Jew or Gentile (1:16; 3:22; 10:11-13). Yet Paul’s particular emphasis in this verse is on the last phrase, in which he reminds the Gentiles that the mercy they have experienced came as a result of the disobedience of ‘them,’ the Jews. As Paul has already made clear, it was Israel’s ‘trespass,’ her ‘rejection,’ that made it possible for the gospel to be preached to and received by the Gentiles (vv. 12, 15, 17).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 733]

THE NT EMPHASIS ON IMMINENCE — “As Paul has shown in his earlier sketches of the process of salvation history, however, the Jews’ disobedience is not God’s final word about them. ‘They have not stumbled so as to have fallen’ (v. 11). The Jews’ disobedience, precisely because it leads to the inclusion of the Gentiles, has the purpose that they, too, might receive mercy.... [Paul’s use of the adverb ‘now’ might best be treated] as an expression of imminence, expressing his conviction that this final manifestation of God’s mercy to Israel could take place ‘now, at any time.’ *It need not mean that the event will infallibly take place within a few years, but it reveals that typical NT perspective which views the new era of fulfillment as already having dawned and all the events belonging to that era as therefore near in time. The salvation experienced by the Gentiles means that Israel is ‘now’ in the position to experience again God’s mercy.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 735]

v 32 — PUNISHMENT WHICH LEADS TO MERCY — “Paul now makes a final comment on this process by which God has used the disobedience of the Gentiles and the Jews to bring about mercy to both Jews and Gentiles. The image of God ‘enclosing’ in disobedience reminds us of Paul’s language about God ‘handing over’ Gentiles to the consequences of their sins in chap. 1 (cf. vv 24, 26, and 28). And as there, this ‘enclosing’ probably involves God’s decision to ‘confine’ people in the state that they have chosen for themselves. But God’s punishment, while still a punishment, has an ultimately redeeming purpose: to bestow mercy.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 735f]

SHUT UP, BOUND — “The Greek verb is συγκλείω [sugkleiō], meaning, according to its roots, ‘close up together’ (cf. Luke 5:6, with reference to fish in a net). The verb is then frequently used in Hellenistic Greek to mean ‘imprison’, and from this the metaphorical usage here and in Gal. 3:22, 23 (‘shutting up in sin’) develops. Paul may be dependent on the LXX, where the verb is used of God’s act of ‘enclosing,’ or ‘giving over,’ people to their enemies (Ps. 31:8) or to the plague (Ps. 78:50) or to death (Ps. 78:62).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 735f]

A VERSE PRONE TO MISINTERPRETATION — This verse has been wrestles out of its context and misused more than once. Some Church fathers used this verse to teach universal salvation: as God has placed all in a state of sin, so he will ultimately have mercy on all, meaning each and every individual ever to live will inherit eternal life (see Origen; Augustine was among those who opposed this teaching). “When we put this verse in its context we get a very different result. Paul is commenting on the process that he has outlined in vv. 30-31 (and several other times in this chapter). That being the case, ‘all’ might refer to the unbelieving Jews about whom he has been speaking in v. 31. But we can hardly eliminate from Paul’s reference the Gentiles in the church at Rome whom Paul has been addressing throughout this section. *Considering the corporate perspective that is basic to chap. 11, then, it seems best to think that ‘all’ refers to ‘all the groups’ about which Paul has been speaking; for example, Jews and Gentiles. Paul is not saying that all human beings will be saved. Rather, he is saying that God has imprisoned in disobedience first Gentiles and now Jews so that he might bestow mercy on each of these groups of humanity. How many from each of these groups will ultimately be saved Paul does not say.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 736f]

IS GOD SHOWING FAVORITISM BY ETHNIC CONSIDERATIONS? — “In our comments on v. 28, we noted how vv. 28-32 wrap up the argument of chaps. 9-11 as a whole. But these verses also bring to a climax a line of thinking that appears to create tension with what Paul teaches earlier in these chapters and, indeed, in his writing elsewhere. For in chap. 9 Paul seems to teach that God elects individuals on the basis of his pure grace, without any consideration of ethnic origin — a perspective consonant with Paul’s vision of the church of Jew and Gentile as the fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham (Rom. 4; Gal. 3). Yet in chap. 11 Paul seems to smuggle back into salvation history the principle of ethnic privilege that he excludes in chap. 9 and elsewhere: Jews, just because they are Jews, can look forward to a time when a great number of them are saved.

“Many scholars despair of reconciling these two viewpoints and conclude that Paul expresses contradictory viewpoints on this matter. They believe that Paul’s thinking on this issue may have developed over time (even from the time he wrote chap. 9 to the time he wrote chap. 11!) or that his teaching in chap. 11, as elsewhere, is directed to specific practical purposes with little concern about consistency. But this conclusion — one that calls into question Paul’s right to inform on this or on any issue — is unnecessary. For this negative opinion about Paul’s consistency in his teaching about Israel’s election fails to give due attention to larger theological presuppositions and frameworks of reference that enable us to solve the apparent contradiction at the conceptual level.

“A critical frame of reference in Paul’s treatment of Israel’s salvation is a distinction between corporate and individual election. Those traditional explanations that treat Rom. 9-11 as an exposition on predestination have overemphasized the individual perspective. But some contemporary approaches err in the opposite direction. The situation Paul confronted required him to integrate the two perspectives, or, better, to interpret one in the light of the other. Paul inherited from the

Scriptures and his Jewish heritage the teaching of a corporate election of all Israel. But his experience of and understanding of the gospel required a revision, or addition, to this perspective. That not all Jews were responding to the gospel did not itself overturn the traditional understanding of Israel's election; for that tradition never insisted that Israel's election required the salvation of every single Israelite. On the other hand, the relatively small number of Jews responding to the gospel must at least have pushed the boundaries of that tradition. But it was the great influx of Gentiles — as individuals, not as a 'people' — that broke those boundaries altogether. Thus Paul, like some other Jewish thinkers before him (e.g., the Qumran covenanters), had to develop a concept of individual election within, or alongside of, the corporate election of Israel.

“Once we recognize that Paul must deal with both individual and corporate election in Rom. 9-11, it is no ‘harmonizing expedient’ to ask which perspective Paul might have in mind in a given text. Paul has framed his discussion in Rom. 9-11 with reassertions of the continuing validity of Israel’s ‘corporate’ election (9:4-5; 11:28b-29; cf. also 11:1-2). But Paul’s key task is to explain how individual election qualifies the nature and significance of this corporate election. This he does in 9:6-29. This text does not revoke Israel’s election, but shows that it does not have a necessary salvific significance. Within the corporate election of Israel, there is operating, Paul shows, an election of individuals. This individual election in Paul’s day is being extended to Gentiles and restricted to a remnant among Israel. But his focus is on his own time in salvation history. ‘Only the remnant will be saved’ is not Paul’s final word on the salvation of Israel.

“Nor does Paul’s teaching about the freedom of God to elect whomever he chooses mean that God cannot take into consideration ethnic identity; only that ethnic identity is never the basis for God’s choice. There is, therefore, nothing contradictory to chap. 9 if Paul in chap. 11 affirms that God, in faithfulness to his own pledged word, will choose to save a great number of Jews in the last days. Paul’s reassertion of this traditional hope contradicts his teaching in Rom. 9 only if that chapter claims that the election of Israel is exhaustively fulfilled in the remnant of Paul’s day or if it teaches that God cannot take ethnic identity in account in his decision about whom to save. But Paul affirms neither of these there.” [Moo, Romans, pg 737ff]

Conclusion: Praise to God in Light of His Awesome Plan (11:33-36)

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. (Rom 11:33-36 KJV)

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?” “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen. (Rom 11:33-36 NIV)

O depth of riches, and wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable His judgments, and untraceable His ways! for who did know the mind of the Lord? or who did become His counsellor? or who did first give to Him, and it shall be given back to him again? because of Him, and through Him, and to Him [are] the all things; to Him [is] the glory — to the ages. Amen. (Rom 11:33-36 Young’s Literal Translation)

PRAISE TO GOD FOR HIS WONDERFUL PLAN — “Paul appropriately concludes one of his most profound and difficult theological discussion with a hymn in praise of God for his purposes and plans. Many readers of this response to the theological argument of Rom. 9-11 think that Paul is communicating a sense of frustration: confronted with the mysteries of election and the future of Israel, Paul confesses that the truth of these matters can be known finally only by God himself. Certainly in these chapters Paul touches on matters, such as the interplay of divine sovereignty and human responsibility, that are ultimately beyond our ability as humans to understand fully; and Calvin’s warning about our limitations at this point are well taken. But we must not push this line of interpretation too far. For Paul, after all, claims to have received revelation into a ‘mystery’ concerning the future of Israel that gives us access to the mind of God. Throughout Rom. 9-11, while certain points remain hard to understand, Paul is claiming to be transmitting truth to which his readers are to respond. And Paul certainly teaches elsewhere that in Christ, and through the Spirit, we have access to ‘the secret and hidden wisdom of God’ (1 Cor. 2:6-16). We should, then, perhaps understand Paul’s praise to be motivated not so much by the hiddenness of God’s ways but by the (admittedly partial) revelation of those mind-transcending ways to us.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 740]

PAUL THE COMPOSER? — “This expression of praise falls into three strophes:

- v. 33, containing three exclamations about God’s wise plan
- vv. 34-35, featuring three rhetorical questions that emphasize human inability to understand God’s ways
- v. 36, containing a declaration about the ultimacy of God that calls forth a final doxology.

This arrangement of the material, the short, roughly parallel lines, and some unusual vocabulary suggest that we should treat the passage as a hymn. Paul probably composed it himself, borrowing extensively from OT wisdom traditions, apocalyptic, and Hellenistic Jewish teachings.... Note the triads: in addition to the three strophes, we find three words dependent on ‘depths’ (v. 33), three questions (vv. 34-35), and three prepositional phrases in v. 36a.... Wisdom concepts are especially clear in vv. 34-35; apocalyptic parallels in v. 33, and a Hellenistic Jewish tradition in v. 36. Some think Paul may have taken over a hymn from

the synagogue, but it is more likely that he assembled elements from traditions to compose it himself." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 740f]

v 33 — AN EMOTIONAL ASSERTION OF AWE! — “The particle ‘O’ shows that the first line in Paul’s hymn is an exclamation, an emotional assertion of awe. Paul’s awe is stimulated by his contemplation of the ‘depth,’ or the inexhaustible magnitude, of three divine qualities. These qualities are not intrinsic ‘attributes’ of God, but are what theologians have called ‘communicable’ attributes of God: aspects of God’s character that have partial parallels among human beings and that involve God’s interaction with the world he has created.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 741]

DEPTH — “Greek βάθος [bathos]. The word is always used metaphorically in Paul. In Rom. 8:39, used absolutely, it probably refers to hell; in Eph. 3:18 Paul speaks of the ‘depth’ of love; while in 1 Cor. 2:10, the verse most relevant to Paul’s use here, he says that ‘the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 741]

RICHES ... WISDOM ... KNOWLEDGE — “‘Riches’ might refer generally to the infinite resources of God, but, in light of 11:12, probably connotes especially God’s kindness as it is expressed in the blessing he brings on undeserving sinners — both Jew and Gentile alike. God’s **wisdom** is an extremely rich biblical theme. But Paul is undoubtedly thinking of God’s wisdom as it has been revealed and expressed in his plan for the salvation of human beings. ‘**Knowledge of God**’ clearly means God’s knowledge of us and not our knowledge of God. The occurrence of the cognate verb ‘foreknow’ in 11:2 (cf. also 8:29) suggests that God’s knowledge here is that special relational ‘knowing’ which comes to expression in his election of individuals to salvation (and perhaps also of Israel to her corporate blessing).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 741f]

GOD’S UNFATHOMABLE JUDGMENTS AND INSCRUTABLE WAYS — “The second and third lines of Paul’s hymn are both introduced with another exclamatory particle, ‘How!’ Paul’s stylistic care is evident here again.... The first ... adjective is rare but seems to mean ‘unfathomable,’ ‘unsearchable.’ Paul applies this description to God’s ‘judgments,’ which will not refer here, as the word usually does in Paul, to God’s judicial decisions, but to his ‘executive’ decisions about the direction of salvation history. The word ‘ways’ in the last line has essentially the same meaning; they, too, Paul exclaims, are ‘inscrutable.’ *In synonymous parallelism, then, the second and third lines of Paul’s hymn extol God’s providential control of salvation history as something beyond human understanding.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 742]

v 34, 35 — THREE QUESTIONS POSSIBLY RELATING BACK TO THE FIRST STROPHE — “The second strophe in Paul’s hymn comprises three questions, the first two of which come from Isa. 40:13 and the third from (perhaps) Job 41:3. It is possible that each question relates, in reverse order, to one of the exclamations in v. 33. ‘Who knows the mind of the Lord?’ would then expand the inscrutable ways of God, ‘Who has been his counselor?’ would draw out the implications of his unsearchable judgments, and ‘Who has given to him in advance, so as to give back to him?’ would suggest an implication of God’s riches (= his kindness and mercy).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 742f]

RHETORICAL QUESTIONS: MAN BEFORE HIS ALMIGHTY CREATOR — “*The questions in these verses are obviously rhetorical, expecting the answer ‘no one.’ The first two stress that no human being can understand what God is doing in the world. But, as the wisdom tradition from which these questions are drawn teaches, what no human being can understand, ‘wisdom’ can. And since Paul sees Christ as the embodiment of wisdom, we are probably justified in adding to our expected answer ‘no one’ a qualification: ‘no one, except Jesus Christ, who has revealed to us in his own person the plan of God for salvation history.’ The third question moves from the issue of our knowledge of God’s plan to the way in which we experience it. No one, Paul claims, is ahead of God in giving, as if to earn a recompense from him. Paul thus reminds us that it is only by God’s grace that we can experience the ‘depth of riches’ that his plan is designed to communicate.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 743]

v 36 — “Paul’s affirmation of the centrality of God in all of creation may relate specifically to v. 35 — no one is in a position to demand anything from God, for he is ... — but probably reflects on all of vv. 33-35. The concept of God as the source (*ek*), sustainer (*dia*), and goal (*eis*) of all things is particularly strong among the Greek Stoic philosophers.... An ancient and widespread interpretation finds a reference to the Trinity in the three prepositional phrases. But this view is now, correctly, almost universally rejected. *Paul is clearly speaking of God the Father; and his purpose is to underline the uniqueness and sovereignty of God that has been the focus of these verses. What should be our response to our contemplation of God’s supremacy in all the universe? Like Pauls, doxology.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 743f]