

Rom. 11:1 I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

This is an emphatic statement by Paul that God has not disowned the nation of Israel. That would be a horrible thing to contemplate for Paul because he is an Israelite descended from Abraham through the tribe of Benjamin.

In Paul's day the Jews were still well aware of their genealogy. When Titus conquered Jerusalem and burned the temple in 70 AD, all the genealogical records were destroyed. Today, no Israeli can *prove* their lineage (unless there has been a personal written record maintained for a given family). This provides another piece of evidence regarding Jesus as the Messiah. It was prophesied that He would be a descendant of David, of the tribe of Judah, born in Bethlehem. No one coming on the scene these days could establish that proof.

Rom. 11:2 God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying,

Rom. 11:3 Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.

Rom. 11:4 But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to *the image of Baal*.

When Israel rebelled against God, it wasn't something that caught Him off guard or surprised Him; He knew how they would respond to Him from the moment of creation, from the time He singled out Abraham. *Elias* is the Greek for Elijah. When Jezebel threatened to kill Elijah after he had demonstrated God's power over the prophets of Baal, that mighty man of God became fearful and despairing. (1Kings 18-19) He was weary in the battle and decided that he was fighting a losing battle and was the only one left that was faithful to God, but God assured him that there were 7,000 others who had remained faithful.

The key phrase in this section seems to be "I have reserved to myself." God is ever interacting with man to ensure that His will be done. My simple mind tells me that the sovereign God who chose to give man a will, the power to make choices, through His foreknowledge ensured that these 7,000 men were living at this time to accomplish His purpose. To me that is an awesome demonstration of the power and authority of God.

Rom. 11:5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

Paul makes application of that truth to the present. Just as surely as those 7,000 Israeli's were the remnant of Elijah's day, God had preserved a remnant during Paul's day that was following Him through faith in His Son Jesus. God's provision for His elect is and always has been an act of His grace—divine favor, kindness, and mercy.

God has promised that there would always be a remnant preserved in Israel.

Isaiah 10:20-22 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return:

Jeremiah 23:2-4 Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD. And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD.

Ezekiel 6:-87 And the slain shall fall in the midst of you, and ye shall know that I am the LORD. Yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may have some that shall escape the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries.

Micah 2:12 I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men.

Zechariah 8:12-13 For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong.

Rom. 11:6 And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

Grace and works are like oil and water; they don't mix. Grace is a work of God. If man could provide for himself through works, then God's grace would be unnecessary. God by grace provides for people of faith in ways that we cannot provide for ourselves. As I looked for connections with grace and faith, I was pointed to the following references:

Romans 4:16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace....

Romans 5:2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand....

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith....

God's grace in our lives is directly connected to our faith. Verse 5 above says that the election of the remnant is according to grace. Those who had not bowed the knee to Baal in Elijah's day pictured the remnant of faith, the elect, the

chosen. It would seem to me that God's sovereign choice to give man a will in no way contradicts election by faith through grace. *Grace* is His divine influence on the heart; *faith* is man's response to that influence; *elect* is the privileged designation of the person of faith known by God before the foundation of the world.

Rom. 11:7 What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded

Rom. 11:8 (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.

What does the truth stated above lead us to conclude? The nation of Israel as a whole had been seeking God's approval through a legalistic system of works. Only those who accepted salvation through God's gift of His Son Jesus in faith had attained that position of approval. Those who rejected Him were spiritually blind and deaf; it's like they were sleepwalking through a life filled with ritual and actions that were performed without a heart connection to God. God's response—He gave them over to pride in their works.

Rom. 11:9 And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them:

Rom. 11:10 Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.

“table” = a table or stool (as being four-legged), usually for food (figuratively, a meal); also a counter for money (figuratively, a broker's office for loans at interest)

These words are from Psalm 69. David is praying for God to intercede for him against his enemies. This particular section of the Psalm appears to have prophetic application as well to the Messiah.

Psalm 69:19-23 Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all before thee. Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake.

Verse 22 of the Psalm defines the table as “welfare,” which Webster defines as “well-doing or well-being in any respect; the enjoyment of health and the common blessings of life; exemption from any evil or calamity; prosperity; happiness.” The Psalmist seems to be asking for the appearance of blessing and approval to serve as a deception to his enemies' and the Messiah's enemies' (whom he considers one and the same) understanding of their true condition. The Psalmist was asking for this to be a permanent condition of the enemies of

God. It seems to me that would be a classification known only to God. Paul tells us in Timothy that he obtained mercy because he acted ignorantly in unbelief.

1Timothy 1:12-13 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

He was not an enemy of God; he accepted the truth when Christ confronted him. Others rejected Christ knowingly and willingly, such as the Pharisees of Jesus' day who refused to acknowledge the truth He presented to them. They were enemies of God who were more concerned about their pride and reputation before men than before God.

Rom. 11:11 I say then, **Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.**

To stumble implies a misstep, an error, a mistake; fall implies failure, "beyond recovery" (as the NIV puts it). Paul's question then, "Have the Israelites put themselves in a place of total rejection by God?" His answer—an emphatic NO!

The second "fall" in the verse is a different Greek word that references "a side-slip (lapse or deviation), i.e., (unintentional) error or (willful) transgression." Because of the choice of the Jews to deviate from the course God had set for them and willfully reject the Son of God, the Gentiles are coming to saving faith in Jesus. The Jews were meant to draw the Gentiles to God through their testimony of the blessings associated with submitting in obedience and faith to God. Because they rejected God by rejecting Jesus, God is revealing Himself through the Gentile body of believers to provoke the Jewish people to jealousy—to make them want the salvation that was first presented to them.

I thought the Greek for "provoke them" was interesting; it stated "through the idea of a baffling wind (backward)." In other words, just opposite of God's original intention. Again, this was not a surprise to YHWH; He knew it before the foundation of the world and provided for that knowledge in His plan of salvation. Webster defines *jealousy* as "earnest concern or solicitude; painful apprehension of rivalry in cases nearly affecting one's happiness; painful suspicion of the faithfulness of husband, wife, or lover." That poses an interesting perspective. The Jews prided themselves on being God's chosen people; now they would have cause to question whether God had decided to bestow His favor on another group of people. Hopefully, that concern would translate into a response of repentance and faith. The Gentiles were responding with hearts of gratitude for their salvation; they had no reason to be jealous. Israel, on the other hand, would see that the Gentiles had appeared to replace them in the eyes of God and would desire to have their position restored.

Rom. 11:12 Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

I think the wording of the CJB is very clear for this verse.

Moreover, if their stumbling is bringing riches to the world — that is, if Isra'el's being placed temporarily in a condition less favored than that of the Gentiles is bringing riches to the latter — how much greater riches will Isra'el in its fullness bring them!

Paul is pointing to the good that has come out of something bad. It is not good that the Jewish people rejected God's Son, but something good did come of it. The *church* was born and resulted in a body of believers that were bold in their faith and committed to sharing the gospel message. The church was/is rich in the spiritual provision of God through the Holy Spirit. The inclusion of believing Israel into the body of believers only serves to make that body stronger and more powerful in its influence on the unsaved world.

Thinking—Israel as a whole will not really turn to God in faith until after the “church” has been removed. Though God has provided for our every need through the ministry of the Holy Spirit now, the day is coming when the Messiah, Jesus, will come to rule on His throne personally in His kingdom. That day will not come until the nation of Israel as a whole desires Him to return. So, when Israel turns to God in true faith in His Son; Jesus will return as King of kings, and the blessings of the kingdom age will be ushered in! “How much more their fullness” is a reference to the Messianic Kingdom of 1000 years on planet earth.

Rom. 11:13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

Rom. 11:14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation *them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.*

It is logical to assume that the majority of believers at Rome were Gentiles. Paul loved the Jewish people, but was also aware that his ministry to the Gentiles was a privilege and of great importance in getting out the gospel truth. He is hoping that his ministry to the Gentiles will have an impact on many of his Jewish brethren. He wants them to recognize the mighty work that God is doing on behalf of the Gentile believers, so that they will desire to experience the same. Paul wasn't thinking years and years down the road; he was concerned about the Jews of his day.

Rom. 11:15 For if the casting away of them *be* the reconciling of the world, what *shall* the receiving of *them be*, but life from the dead?

The Jews' rejection of Jesus caused God to set them aside for the time being and empower and bless a people of faith from among the Gentile nations. The message of salvation was taken all over planet earth. When Israel turns back to God through faith in His Son, He will gladly restore them to fellowship and their place of favor among the nations. This pictures resurrection from the dead. A nation that has been dead in trespasses and sin will find new life in Christ.

Rom. 11:16 For if the firstfruit *be* holy, the lump *is* also *holy*: and if the root *be* holy, so *are* the branches.

Rom. 11:17 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;

Rom. 11:18 Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

“if the firstfruit be holy” – The *firstfruits* are the first crops harvested. In my mind Jesus is the holy firstfruit of all people of faith with distinct relationship to all Jewish people of faith since He is a descendant of Abraham through Jacob through Judah through David. The context of this chapter is regarding Israel’s future in relationship to God. The *lump* would most logically refer to the nation of Israel. Through Jesus, God imparts holiness / righteousness to people of faith (past, present and future).

Paul gives a second word picture. Christ is pictured as a root that grows into a tree with branches (the nation of Israel). Again, Christ represents the whole nation through Abraham, the Father of the nation of Israel. Remember that Paul is addressing a Gentile body of believers in Rome. He compares those of the nation of Israel who rebelled against God and rejected Him in favor of idols and rejected His Son whom He sent to redeem them to branches that were broken off (because he is only referencing some of the branches). The Gentile believers who accepted Christ as Savior, the church, are pictured as a wild olive tree grafted in to the original tree to become part of the whole. Both the original branches of the tree and the branches that were grafted in are sustained by the root (Christ) and its oil (from the Greek for “fatness”). Oil often represents the Holy Spirit in Scripture (anointing for special service, used to bring light, comfort, healing, and refreshment).

Paul now warns the Gentiles not to “boast against the branches.” Don’t rejoice or brag as though you have replaced the original branches. You aren’t the one supporting the root of the tree; the root is supporting you. The root is Christ as representative of the nation of Israel through Abraham.

Rom. 11:19 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

In this verse, Paul seems to be anticipating an argument to his conclusion. The Gentile church will reason, “The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.” The key is in verse 17. Some of the branches were broken off—not all. You were grafted in *among* them to partake of the root and oil *with them* (as companions or co-participants from the Greek).

Rom. 11:20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:

Rom. 11:21 For if God spared not the natural branches, *take heed* lest he also spare not thee.

The branches that were broken off were broken off because of unbelief. The Gentile believers are accepted as branches of the original tree because of their faith. Israel was set apart as a nation of faith before the nations. The nation as a whole did not fulfill their purpose; but there were many Jewish people of faith throughout their history. This should serve as a notice of warning, not as a reason to boast. The church should not have an attitude of arrogance, but should rather have an attitude of reverential fear. If God discarded some of the original branches because of unbelief, you can be sure that He would do the same to you. (I have to remind myself that every body of believers includes impostors. Paul is obviously not threatening true men of faith, but is exhorting the body of believers to examine themselves as to whether their faith is real. Does their life prove their faith?)

Rom. 11:22 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.

God's severity is demonstrated by cutting off His relationship with people of unbelief. The Greek for *severity* references "decisiveness" and is from a root that means "to cut."

God's goodness is shown by His acceptance and provision for people of faith. I thought it was interesting that the Greek for *goodness* included "usefulness, employed" as well as graciousness and kindness; in fact, the root word stated "to furnish what is needed." God is useful to us; He is employed in providing our every need.

Again, continuance/endurance is the key proof of true faith. You may mess up a million times; but as long as you are repentant and ever seeking Him in faith, you will never be cut off.

Rom. 11:23 And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again.

God sovereignly determines when to cut a branch off, and also determines when to graft a branch in. Part of the difficulty of this chapter is determining when the reference is to a group (i.e., the nation of Israel or the church) or an individual. This verse is referencing the nation of Israel as a whole. (Note the use of the words *they* and *them*.) When Israel as a nation turns back to God in faith and repentance, God will restore them to fellowship and their favored position among the nations; He will graft them back in to the tree.

Rom. 11:24 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?

I liked the phrasing of the NLT for this verse: *For if God was willing to take you who were, by nature, branches from a wild olive tree and graft you into his own good*

tree—a very unusual thing to do—he will be far more eager to graft the Jews back into the tree where they belong.

The Gentile believers, the church, gained the favored position as God's chosen people in an unusual way. Not many horticulturists would choose to graft from a wild plant to a cultured plant. Grafting is usually done to make a plant more desirable, stronger, or to provide variety; it would be done using strong, healthy, desirable plants—not wild ones. Although unusual as well, it would be more natural to graft original branches back in to the tree than to use wild branches.

Rom. 11:25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest 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.

"I would not...be ignorant" – Paul uses this type of terminology in his letters when he is making an important point.

"mystery" = revelation of something previously unknown (It has always been a part of God's plan, but He hasn't revealed it to man before now.)

the mystery = "that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in."

The blindness is spiritual blindness. "The fullness of the Gentiles" is a reference to the completed body of believers composed mainly of the Gentiles, the church; just as the "fulness" referenced in verse 12 speaks of the whole of the nation of Israel turning back to God in faith.

"in part" – In other words, there are still Jewish people coming to faith in God through Jesus as part of the church, just as there will continue to be Gentile believers coming to faith once God's focus returns to Israel. Turning to God in faith has always been an option for every man and woman born on planet earth.

"lest ye be wise in your own conceits" – The CJB puts it this way, "*so that you won't imagine you know more than you actually do.*"

I found this quote from Jack Kelley that was enlightening on the phrase "fulness of the Gentiles be come in."

"The Greek word translated "full number" is a nautical term and refers to the number of crewmen necessary for a ship to set sail. And the phrase "come in" means to arrive at a destination. Once the required complement of soldiers and sailors was aboard, the ship could leave the harbor and set sail for its destination. So it is with the Church. Once the number required to make up its membership is reached the Church will depart for its destination in Heaven, and God will open the eyes and soften the hearts of His people Israel."

Rom. 11:26 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:

Rom. 11:27 For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

Instead of being a nation composed of men of faith and those who have rebelled against God, Israel will become a nation composed only of men of faith.

“as it is written” – Where? This appears to be a quote from Isaiah 59; it was the closest I could find by searching with different word combinations.

Isaiah 59:20 And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD.

In truth the Redeemer / Deliverer (Messiah Jesus) came out of Sion / Jerusalem (where He was crucified, buried and resurrected) and He is the one that will turn away ungodliness from Jacob. In Isaiah, the emphasis is on the Redeemer returning to Zion and to His people (Israel) who have turned to Him in repentance and faith.

Matthew 23:37-39 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

The next verse in Isaiah connects with verse 27.

Isaiah 59:21 As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.

This is the new covenant that God will establish with His people; it is unconditional and will become effective once they have responded to Him in faith and He returns to Zion as the King. He will give them His Holy Spirit, just as He has believers in the church age. The power of the Spirit at work in their lives individually and the nation as a whole will secure their position of restoration and deliverance. God promises that from the beginning of the Messianic Kingdom, every descendant of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, every Jewish person will treasure the word of the Lord and the ministry of the Spirit in their midst—forever, time without end.

Rom. 11:28 As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.

The NLT wording is more easily understood.

Many of the Jews are now enemies of the Good News. But this has been to your benefit, for God has given His gifts to you Gentiles. Yet the Jews are still His chosen people because of his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Rom. 11:29 For the gifts and calling of God *are* without repentance.

In other words God doesn't change His mind regarding the gifts He gives and the invitations He issues. Once you receive a gift from God, it is yours. Once an invitation is accepted, He won't rescind the offer. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob accepted God's call. (Note: Once Abraham responded to God's call, His invitation to follow Him in faith, God's commitment to Abraham was sure.) Their descendants ended up behaving wickedly, but God didn't renege on His promise to Abraham.

The culture of today, at least in America, has a hard time understanding this type of integrity. Our society is full of loopholes to contracts; divorce is a quickie process in many instances; a man's word is certainly not the binding factor it once was. Man's tendency is always to justify his actions and to view himself from the most favorable position possible. I wonder if this is part of why certain sections of the "church" have twisted the scripture to support the idea of "replacement theology"—the belief that the church has replaced Israel, the Jewish people, in God's economy permanently.

Rom. 11:30 For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief:

Rom. 11:31 Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.

The first thought that crossed my mind as I read these verses was that God is no respecter of persons. He always acts according to His unchanging character. He set a plan in motion for the nation of Israel. Along with His plan He provided certain guidelines to ensure their blessings. Disobedience and rebellion would result in their being cursed according to His word. These guidelines were all clearly set before the people by Moses. Since Israel chose to rebel against God and reject Him (as a nation), God chose to set them aside for a while and work through the Gentile nations in an elect group of people of faith known as the "church." This was an act of mercy by God. This act of mercy would spill over to the people of Israel as they responded to God's provocation (cf v11), their desire to regain favored status before God.

The facts fall out as follows:

- Israel established in favored position with God through faith; the Gentiles are in unbelief.
- Israel rejects God; God in mercy turns to the Gentiles to establish a people of faith to assume the position rejected by Israel.
- Israel is provoked to jealousy by the Gentiles, and returns to God in faith and repentance; they are restored to favored position.
- All dealings of God with both groups are according to His mercy.

Israel's purpose in God's plan was to reveal God to the nations and to be examples that would cause men to turn from their wicked ways and to God in faith. When Israel rejected God, He had to establish another people of faith to

continue to fulfill His purpose. In the end God's plan will have been accomplished in spite of the failures of His chosen people. The fact that Israel returns to God in faith and is restored to favored status in no way takes away from the blessings and privileges that He has given the church (cf v29). It is a result of God working to ensure that His covenant with Abraham is fulfilled to the last detail.

Rom. 11:32 For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

“concluded” = to shut together, i.e. include or (figuratively) embrace in a common subjection to...

Galatians 3:22 makes it clear how that mercy was shown—through the gift of Jesus.

Galatians 3:22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

Based on the earlier chapters in this book, we know that all men are sinners (cf 3:23). When God looked down at man, he saw His favored creation bound together in sin. His response was to show mercy and provide a way to deliver them from that bondage. That plan had to answer to God's character in every aspect. There had to be a man without blemish or sin willing to sacrifice himself on behalf of his fellowman. The only solution was for God to send His only Son, Jesus, to become a man. He was not of the seed of Adam, so He did not have a sin nature. He became the new Adam. He lived the type of life that God had created Adam to live. He came in willing obedience to His Father. The Father gave proof of His acceptance of Jesus' sacrifice by raising Him from the dead. Only those men who acknowledge their need for His sacrifice and willingly accept His provision as a gift of God in faith will benefit from that mercy.

Rom. 11:33 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!

Depth has a reference to profundity and extent; Webster defines profound as “reaching to the bottom of a matter.” *Riches* has a reference to wealth and abundance. The two things being referenced—God's wisdom and His knowledge. *Wisdom* is the capacity to make the best use of knowledge with discernment, judgment and skill (from Webster). *Knowledge* is a “clear perception of fact, truth or duty.” Paul is saying that God knows all that there is to know and has the capacity to put that knowledge to the greatest use for good.

The Greek for *unsearchable* stated “inscrutable,” which Webster defined as “incapable of being searched into and understood by inquiry or study; impossible or difficult to be explained or accounted for satisfactorily....” The Greek for *judgments* references making decisions—for *ways* references “a road, a mode or means.” In other words, we are not capable of understanding why He makes the decisions He makes and does things the way He does them—unless

He so chooses to make us understand. This verse immediately brings to mind a couple of my favorite verses in Isaiah.

Isaiah 55:8-9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Rom. 11:34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

The first half of verse 34 made me think of a verse from my study in 1Corinthians.

1Corinthians 2:11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

The second half reminded me of verse in my study of Isaiah.

Isaiah 40:13-14 Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?

In his letter to the Corinthians the answer is clear that only the Spirit of God knows the mind of God. The rhetorical questions in Isaiah as well as the last half of verse 34 have only one implied answer—No one.

Rom. 11:35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

Another rhetorical question with the same implied answer—No one. God is the Creator of all things. Everything man has (including his abilities) is a gift from his Creator. There is nothing we can give to Him that we have not first received from Him.

Rom. 11:36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

“of” = denotes origin

“through” = denoting the channel of an act, the causal agent

“to” = of place, time or purpose

God is the Creator and the provider of all things according to His purpose. He only is worthy of glory (praise, honor, worship). Amen = the exclamation point of that truth.