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### **Isaiah chapter 56** **English Standard Version**

**1**Thus says the LORD: “Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come, and my righteousness be revealed.

**6**“And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant— **7**these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” **8**The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares, “I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered.”

### **Psalms chapter 67** **English Standard Version**

**1**To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song. May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, Selah **2**that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. **3**Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! **4**Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. Selah **5**Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! **6**The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, shall bless us. **7**God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!

## Romans chapter 11

### English Standard Version

**1**I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. **2**God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel?

**13**Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry **14**in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. **15**For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?

**28**As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. **29**For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. **30**For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, **31**so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. **32**For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.

## Romans 11:1

### ESV

I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.

**What does Romans 11:1 mean?** As Paul often does in Romans, he responds to his own statement with a question. In this case, Paul has just written that God has offered Himself to the non-Jewish nations through faith in Jesus, while Israel has rejected the gospel of faith in Christ.

Now Paul asks if this means that God has rejected His previously chosen people Israel. It's a question that expects a negative answer, and Paul gives that familiar answer: "By no means!" This again uses the phrasing *mē genoito* in the original Greek, a strong, emphatic "may it never be!"

Paul points to himself as the first evidence that God has not rejected Israel. After all, Paul is an Israelite and descendant of Abraham. More specifically, Paul writes that he belongs to the tribe of Benjamin. Paul may have become one of the most vocal promoters of Christianity of his day, but he still held on to his status as an Israelite. He insists that God's relationship with Israel as a nation continues.

## **Romans 11:2**

### **ESV**

God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel?

**What does Romans 11:2 mean?** Paul asked rhetorically in the previous verse if God had rejected His people Israel. Now Paul states definitively that God has not rejected His people. Paul describes them as a people God "foreknew." Paul described God as foreknowing another group of people earlier in this letter. He wrote that those God foreknew He also predestined to become like Christ (Romans 8:29). In that passage, Paul described all who trust in Christ for salvation, including both Jews and Gentiles.

Here, though, Paul seems to describe God as foreknowing Israel as a nation or a family (Amos 3:2). God knew Israel as His people before they existed as a people. One of God's many promises to Israel is that He would never forsake or abandon His them (Psalm 94:14; 1 Samuel 12:22). That promise stands, Paul writes.

He then introduces new evidence, pointing to a conversation between the prophet Elijah and God about the people of Israel. Paul will quote Elijah's complaint in the following verse.

## **Romans 11:13**

### **ESV**

Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry

**What does Romans 11:13 mean?** Paul has been writing about God's relationship with His chosen people, Israel. He described how and why God hardened most Israelites to faith in Christ. God's purpose was, in part, to include

Gentiles—non-Jews—in the promise of salvation through faith in Christ. In the previous verse, Paul introduced the idea that at some point in the future, the full inclusion of Israel to faith in Christ will result in great things for all people.

Now Paul addresses Gentiles directly, beginning a thought he will complete in the following verse. Paul describes his identity and purpose to be an apostle to the Gentiles. Christ Himself gave this role to Paul in Acts 9:15. Paul writes that he magnifies his ministry to take the good news about faith in Jesus to all Gentiles. In other words, he glorifies his ministry. He goes big. He works hard at it. He is bold and strategic and amplifies the message of God's grace for the Gentiles through faith in Christ.

In part, as Paul reveals in the next verse, he does this to provoke jealousy among his own Jewish people. He wants to see them saved, to have the same special relationship with God that the Gentiles have now received.

### **Romans 11:14**

#### **ESV**

in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them.

**What does Romans 11:14 mean?** This completes Paul's thought begun in the previous verse. He cited his calling as an apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). Though Paul himself was a "Hebrew among Hebrews" (Philippians 3:4–7), he was converted (Acts 9:1–6) in order to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to the non-Jewish people: the Gentiles. An *apostle* is a person sent to represent another with an important message. In Paul's case, that message is that the Gentiles can be saved and come into relationship with God through faith in Christ.

Paul now declares that he magnifies—he works hard at—this ministry, in part, to help save some of his fellow Jews. How would that work? His aim is to provoke the Jews to become jealous of the special relationship the Gentiles now have with God through faith in Christ. Paul wants his fellow Jewish people to see that and want it too. Some will come to faith in Christ in that way, Paul believes.

### **Romans 11:15**

#### **ESV**

For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?

**What does Romans 11:15 mean?** Paul answers a question in this verse that he posed in verse 12, as well. There, he wrote that Israel's full inclusion in faith in Christ will mean a great deal for the Gentiles. It will be even greater than the riches of God's glory, received through faith in Christ, made available when Israel rejected Christ.

Now he asks a similar question. If Israel's rejection, by God and for a certain period, led to reconciliation with God for the rest of the world, what will be the benefit to the rest of the world when the fullness of Israelites is eventually accepted by God through faith in Christ? Paul writes that it will mean life from the dead.

Paul seems to be saying that God's eventual acceptance of Israel is somehow connected to the idea of resurrection, perhaps the future resurrection of the bodies of all who are in Christ at some future moment. The exact meaning of "life from the dead," however, is debated by Bible scholars.

## **Romans 11:28**

### **ESV**

As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.

**What does Romans 11:28 mean?** Paul is addressing Gentile Christians. He has warned them not to be arrogant toward Jewish people who have rejected Christ (Romans 11:18). He has revealed to them that the people of Israel have been hardened in their unbelief by God so that Gentiles could come to God through faith in Christ (Romans 11:15), and that Israel will return to God through faith in Christ once that hardening is lifted (Romans 11:26).

Now Paul agrees that Israel has become an enemy of the gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul should know. He has suffered great persecution at the hands of the Jewish religious leaders for preaching the gospel. This makes what he says about the Jewish people next even more significant. His words here clarify that anti-Jewish sentiments are not only foreign to the Bible's depiction of Jews, they are contradictory to the character of God.

Paul describes the Jewish people as "beloved," meaning that they are still loved and cherished by God. This is in regard to "election," Paul writes, meaning that God has destined that Israel will return to close relationship with Him as her people come to faith in Christ at some point in the future (Romans 11:25–27).

Why has God elected the people of Israel—meaning a representative number, not necessarily every single Israelite—to return to Him at this future time? It is for the sake of their forefathers, the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God's promises to Israel's founding fathers were unconditional and irrevocable, as the following verse will declare.

### **Romans 11:29**

#### **ESV**

For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

**What does Romans 11:29 mean?** Paul has written in previous verses that God's people Israel will return to God. This will be through faith in Christ, at some point in the future. Through election—God's sovereign choosing beforehand—this is the purpose for which God has destined the nation of Israel.

Why has God done this? The prior verse said that it is because of their forefathers. Those are the patriarchs of Israel: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God gave to these three men great and unconditional promises that He would bless them and make of them a mighty nation. Since these promises were given by God, they carried the weight of certainty. The promises were God's gifts. God called the patriarchs to follow Him and He made an everlasting covenant with them that included their descendants.

Paul writes that these gifts and calling are irrevocable. Though God later made conditional covenants to bless Israel if they would keep the law, His promises to the patriarchs were mostly one-sided promises based only on His own goodness. Those promises will not be revoked no matter how deeply Israel sins in rejecting faith in Christ as the Messiah. He will always call Israel back into relationship with Himself, even bringing the people of the nation to faith in Christ in due time.

**Romans 11:30****ESV**

For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience,

**What does Romans 11:30 mean?** Paul, still talking to the Gentile Christians, has warned them not to be arrogant and dismissive of the Jewish people who have rejected faith in Christ as the way to be righteous before God. He repeats a theme of this chapter, that the Gentiles were once disobedient to God, but those who trusted in Christ have received mercy from God. That mercy was available for a specific reason: Israel disobeyed the gospel; the people did not believe in Christ. God chose to apply His mercy to the Gentiles, in part, to encourage Israel to come back to God (Romans 11:11–14). Gentiles are no better than Jews, since both people have demonstrated disobedience to God.

Paul continues to urge the Gentile Christians to remain respectful of the Israelites; some of the Israelites will eventually share eternity with them as brothers and sisters in Christ. All who are saved are saved for the same reason: God's merciful and undeserved grace (Romans 3:10; 3:23).

**Romans 11:31****ESV**

so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy.

**What does Romans 11:31 mean?** Paul is repeating one of the main themes of this chapter. He is saying once more to the Gentile Christians that, though they were disobedient and did not deserve it, they received mercy from God. This is true, in part, because of Israel's disobedience in rejecting Christ.

Does that mean that the Gentile Christians should be done with Israel? Should they mock Israel? Paul insists that they do not. Israel is in a season of disobedience to the gospel of Christ now, just as the Gentiles were—and for the most part still are—in a season of rejection of God. One day, however, Israel's people will see the mercy shown to the disobedient Gentiles, believe in Christ, and turn to receive mercy from God, as well.

Paul has described this as God making Israel jealous of His now special relationship with believing Gentiles in order to provoke some Jewish people to

return to Him through faith in Christ and be included in that relationship (Romans 11:11–14).

## Romans 11:32

### ESV

For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.

**What does Romans 11:32 mean?** This verse is a profound declaration of truth, but it must be understood in the narrow context of this specific passage. Paul is not teaching that *every single person*, of all time, will receive God's mercy. This idea, known as universalism, would contradict what Paul has written previously: that the only way to be saved is by accepting Christ (Romans 10:9–10). Paul has made abundantly clear that the opportunity to receive God's mercy, instead of the deserved payment for our sin (Romans 6:23), is something accessible only through Jesus Christ.

Instead, the word "all" should be understood in reference to the two people groups Paul has been discussing throughout this chapter: the Jews and the Gentiles. God has turned both groups— "all" —over to their disobedience for a time so that people from both groups may receive mercy from Him in the right time through faith in Christ.

What does it mean that God consigned each group to disobedience? In Romans 1, Paul described God's reaction to the sinful unbelief of the Gentiles. He gave them up or turned them over to their own sinful desires (Romans 1:24, 26, 28). In a similar way, God is described as having hardened the Israelites in their initial unbelief in Christ for a season (Romans 11:25).

In the end, though, God will show mercy to people in both groups— to "all" —by His grace and through their faith in Christ.

## Matthew chapter 15

**21**And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. **22**And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon." **23**But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying out after us." **24**He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." **25**But

she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” **26**And he answered, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” **27**She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” **28**Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

### **Matthew 15:21**

#### **ESV**

And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon.

**What does Matthew 15:21 mean?** Jesus had attempted to withdraw from the religious leaders and the crowds before (Matthew 14:34–35). However, too many desperate people wanted His help, willing to travel far and wide and hunt Him down wherever He went. Now Jesus and His disciples make another attempt to withdraw from the people and the Pharisees. He leaves Israel and enters pagan Gentile territory. Specifically, Jesus travels east from Galilee to the district of the Gentile towns of Tyre and Sidon. Jesus was much less likely to be known and pursued outside of Israel.

This is the region to which Jesus had referred when condemning the unwillingness of fellow Israelites to repent (Matthew 11:20–24). In a virtual fulfillment of those words, this thoroughly pagan region will produce a famous example of faith (Matthew 15:22).

### **Matthew 15:22**

#### **ESV**

And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.”

**What does Matthew 15:22 mean?** In a further effort to withdraw from crowds, Jesus has withdrawn from Israel entirely. He has travelled into pagan Gentile territory east of Galilee. Even here, though, it seems He is known at least by some. This is somewhat ironic, as Jesus had earlier referred to this region of "Tyre and Sidon" in His criticism of Israel's stubbornness (Matthew 11:20–24).

Here, a non-Israelite Canaanite woman comes to Him. She is crying, and she asks Jesus for mercy, addressing Him as Lord and Son of David. This woman's

reference indicates she knows something about Israel and Judaism. She tells Christ that her daughter is severely oppressed by a demon. His response seems confusing, at first, but proves to have an important lesson attached (Matthew 15:23, 28).

Demon oppression and possession were common around the known world of this era. The existence of demons was not debated. Too many people had seen a person oppressed by a demon to doubt it. Various symptoms of demon oppression witnessed in the New Testament include drastic personality change, refusal to wear clothes, supernatural strength, violent actions, illness, being mute or deaf, and intentional self-harm.

### **Matthew 15:23**

#### **ESV**

But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying out after us."

**What does Matthew 15:23 mean?** Jesus has done something unusual to withdraw from the crowds and religious leaders. He has left the borders of Israel, travelling to Tyre and Sidon, east of Galilee, with His disciples. This area is not only dominated by Gentiles, it's the example Jesus used to shame Israelites for their lack of repentance (Matthew 11:20–24). Jesus knows He is much less likely to be recognized and mobbed outside of Israel, and Mark tells us that He is staying in a house and didn't want anyone to know He was there (Mark 7:24).

All the same, He is approached in the house by a Canaanite woman. She seems to know exactly who He is and what He can do for her "little daughter" (Mark 7:25), who is severely oppressed by a demon. She calls Jesus the "Son of David," suggesting she knows Him to be the Messiah of Israel. She wants Jesus to free her daughter from the demon.

At first, Jesus remains silent. In fact, He seems to ignore the woman completely, the exact opposite of His normal response to such requests (Matthew 14:35–36; 15:29–30). The woman will not take His silence for an answer, however, and continues to cry loudly. The disciples eventually lose patience and ask Jesus to send the loud woman away.

It's unclear if the disciples wanted Jesus to send her away without helping her. More likely, they wanted the Master to heal the woman's child, so she'd go away and leave them alone (Luke 18:1–8).

**Matthew 15:24****ESV**

He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

**What does Matthew 15:24 mean?** Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus acted with a crystal-clear sense of His purpose. Eventually, all nations of earth would be blessed through Israel, in the person of Jesus, as the Son of God gave His life as the sacrifice for the sins of humanity. For that to happen, however, Jesus needs to accomplish certain things within the people of Israel. So, for now, Jesus has come to serve and heal God's chosen people as the promised Messiah. Only after His own people officially reject Him will the offer be made for all to come into the family of God through faith in Christ (John 1:11–12).

Jesus uses the same language with her as when He sent disciples out in pairs to the towns and villages of Galilee (Matthew 10:5–6). He strictly forbids them from going into the Gentile territories. They are only to take the message of the kingdom to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This is the same reason given here for refusing—for now—to cast the demon from the daughter of this Canaanite woman begging Him for help. He has not been sent by His Father to heal the Gentiles, yet.

**Matthew 15:25****ESV**

But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me."

**What does Matthew 15:25 mean?** Jesus has made His position about performing miracles in Gentile territories very clear. He was sent only to the "lost sheep" of the house of Israel. The apostles will later take the gospel of Jesus to all people. Jesus' specific mission, during His ministry on earth, is to heal and teach Israelites as Israel's promised Messiah. At this moment, He is in the Gentile region of Tyre and Sidon.

A non-Israelite woman has approached Jesus, suggesting she knows He is the Messiah, and begging Him to heal her daughter. She has heard His initial refusal, but she refuses to leave. In fact, she pesters to the point the disciples lose patience and ask Jesus to deal with her (Matthew 15:21–25).

All the same, the woman once again kneels and begs Christ for help. This woman has something in common with two women who asked for help from prophets in the Old Testament. The Sidonian woman and the Shunammite woman would not take a no answer from Elijah (1 Kings 17:18–19) and Elisha (2 Kings 4:28) respectively. God honored their perseverance and their faith. Jesus will do the same—His initial delay is for a purpose (Matthew 15:28).

### **Matthew 15:26**

#### **ESV**

And he answered, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”

**What does Matthew 15:26 mean?** To avoid crowds and religious leaders for a while, Jesus is in the Gentile district of Tyre and Sidon. He is likely exhausted at this point in His ministry (Matthew 13:1–2; 14:13–14, 34–36).

Somehow, a believing Canaanite woman has found Him here. She is not Jewish, but she likely believes He is the Messiah and that He can cast a demon from her daughter (Matthew 15:21–23). Jesus has refused because His designated mission—for now—is only to Israelites (Matthew 15:26). What Jesus says in this verse is often torn from that context, and the words which follow, to make it seem derogatory, or even hateful. It's neither: Jesus has a purpose for this dialogue (Matthew 15:28).

However, these words would have been difficult for the woman to hear, regardless. Christ's intent, apparently, is to test the woman's commitment to her request, and her faith in Him. Jewish people sometimes called Gentiles "dogs" to show their disrespect for them. Dogs in the ancient middle east were most often seen running in packs, as dangerous scavengers. Jewish people would not, in general, think of them as either pets or friendly creatures.

However, the word Jesus uses is not as harsh as it sounds when translated into English. The Greek term He uses, *kynariois*, literally means "little dog." In the context of children and food, this seems to be a reference to a pet; this would have been a more common use of dogs in a Gentile region.

There's no question that Jesus' symbolism here depicts Israelites as God's children and this woman—or her child—as a "little dog;" not even as a person. However, Jesus is not trying to be hurtful. He is comparing the nature of God's relationship with His chosen people Israel to those in the rest of the world who

practice pagan idolatry. He says this to prove the woman's humility and faith, knowing He will shortly reward both (Matthew 15:28).

### **Matthew 15:27**

#### **ESV**

She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

**What does Matthew 15:27 mean?** The Canaanite woman who approached Jesus seeking healing for her daughter has already proven herself loud and persistent (Matthew 15:21–26). Here, she shows she is also wise and spiritually humble. That Christ would initially deny such a request is new in Matthew's gospel (Matthew 13:1–2; 14:13–14, 34–36) and reveals that Jesus' mission has been focused only on the people of Israel.

He has said something to the woman that sounds harsh, at least to modern English readers. According to Jesus, for Him to heal her daughter would be as inappropriate as taking food from a child to give to a pet dog (Matthew 15:26). Rather than being offended, the woman seems to clearly grasp the analogy. The children are God's chosen people Israel. The bread is Jesus' ability to heal and cast out demons. The dogs are the pagan Gentiles. That "food" has a primary purpose, and a primary recipient—there's an obligation to use it correctly.

And yet, she is not deterred. Her response doesn't, at all, challenge Jesus' position. Rather, she echoes a sentiment Christ used earlier. Then, He had condemned Israel's lack of belief by referring to this very same Gentile territory (Matthew 11:20–24). She quickly answers the Lord that even dogs can eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table. This analogy raises a question of the master's compassion—and does so without denying the truth of what Jesus is saying. Would any dog owner refuse to allow the dogs to eat crumbs from the floor?

Christ sees great faith in her response. She acknowledges that He is the Master and suggests that He can serve whomever He chooses with the crumbs of His time and power in this moment outside of Israel. That which the "children" have either ignored or rejected is all she is asking for. This reflection, it seems, was the purpose of Jesus' initial delay (Matthew 15:28).

**Matthew 15:28****ESV**

Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly.

**What does Matthew 15:28 mean?** Jesus initially resisted healing a Canaanite woman's daughter. At least, He has given the appearance of resisting. He has told her His mission is only to the lost sheep of Israel. In a statement easily misunderstood, He told her that children's bread should not be given to dogs (Matthew 15:21–26).

The woman persisted as only the parent of a sick child can. She has knelt and pleaded. She has refused to take offense at an analogy that pictures her people as dogs. Instead of focusing on what symbols were used, she fully understood the point being made. Christ is not insulting her, or her people, but pointing out that He has an obligation to offer His "bread" to the children of God.

In response—showing both great wisdom and great humility—she answered that the Master, Jesus, can choose to allow the dogs to eat the *crumbs*. In other words, that which was offered to "the children," and either wasted or rejected, is something the master would happily let others take. In all this, she has never wavered in being convinced that Jesus is truly the Messiah and that it is within His power to cast the demon from her daughter.

Apparently in delight, Jesus praises the greatness of her faith and says it will be done for her as she desires. His intent was never to deny her a miracle, but to demonstrate and illustrate her faith.

Instantly, her daughter is healed. The term used implies the demon had caused the girl to be sick or afflicted in some way. With the demon gone, the affliction is gone, as well.