

## Looking Back: The Reason This Is Important (11:1a)

11:1a *I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be!*

- The “Israelites,” Paul’s “kinsmen according to the flesh,” rejected Jesus as Messiah in the majority, and are therefore, “accursed, separated from Christ” (9:3). But what about all the promises concerning Israel in the Old Testament?
- If those promises have failed, how can we trust God when He makes such wonderful promises to us in Christ?
  - “...there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (8:1).
  - “...if the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He Who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit Who dwells in you” (8:11).
  - “...you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” (8:15-17).
  - “...the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (8:18).
  - “...the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words” (8:26).
  - “...we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (8:28).
  - “If God is for us, who is against us?” (8:31).

- Nothing “will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (8:39).
- Building on these chapter 8 promises, Paul wants us to see that God keeps His promises, even when Israel (in the majority) rejected Jesus as Messiah.
- The main argument of chapters 9-11 is: “...it is not as though the word of God has failed” (9:6).

## Proof of God’s Promise-Keeping (11:1-5)

### Paul’s Testimony (11:1b)

11:1b *For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.*

- Paul’s first proof that “God has not rejected His people” is that he himself is an Israelite “according to the flesh” who is part of the true spiritual Israel by faith in Jesus Christ. **God is keeping His promises to Israel by bringing physical Israelites into the spiritual, heavenly Israel through faith in Jesus Christ.**
- The tribe of Benjamin was almost completely wiped out in the time of the Judges (chapters 19-21), but was preserved by God’s care. There is nothing past, present, or future, that can prevent God from saving those whom He chooses to save.

### God’s Foreknowledge (11:2a)

11:2a *God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew.*

- There is a caution here, as well. We saw in chapter 9 that God’s “people” were not determined “according to the flesh” (9:3,8), but according to His “promise” (9:8), which included people “not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles” (9:24). In other words, if you are not saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, it doesn’t matter what ethnicity or nationality you are Jesus is the only way of salvation. The “promise” is fulfilled in Him alone.
- God’s “people” are defined not by ethnicity or nationality, but by His foreknowledge: READ 8:29,30. If you are

foreknown of God, your destiny is Christ-likeness and glory.

- Not all Jews will be saved through faith in Jesus Christ - not all physical Jews are part of Israel. **God’s saving foreknowledge, not ethnicity or nationality, is the determiner for salvation.**

### God’s Testimony to Elijah (11:2b-4)

11:2b *Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah [in 1 Kings 19:10,14], how he pleads with God against Israel?* 11:3 *“Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life.”* 11:4 *But what is the divine response to him [in 1 Kings 19:18]? “I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.”*

- “Israel,” those who had God’s Word and worship, had, in the majority, degraded so much that they were killing God’s messengers of His Word and destroying His commanded worship. In other words, it looked like the Church had rejected God as much as the world had. Elijah was understandably deep in despair over this. God assured him, however, that He had preserved a remnant who were the true, spiritual Israel.
- In your workplace, your classroom, or maybe even your family, you may feel outnumbered and discouraged by the unbelievers around you.<sup>1</sup> These passages

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<sup>1</sup> It’s easy for me to feel this way sometimes, especially when efforts to warn people about very popular false teachers or false teaching is met with anger rather than teachability or discernment. I have to remind myself that our job is to proclaim truth and warn against error while trusting the outcome to God. In our Thursday men’s theology reading group, we read John Calvin’s description of the struggle 458 years ago: “...by the dreadful madness that has heretofore occupied the world almost to the total destruction of godliness” (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.11.13) – I would imagine every generation

remind us that God’s preservation of you as part of His saved remnant is purposeful and planned.<sup>2</sup> Connect this back to that wonderful promise from a few chapters ago: READ 8:31-39.

## God’s Saving Grace (11:5,6)

### Old Testament Promises Fulfilled in the Church Age (11:5)

11:5 *In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God’s gracious choice.*

#### The Present Time: the Church Age

- Some people regard Romans 11 as teaching a future, “end-times” mass revival of Jews. I do not. I believe Paul is teaching that Jews will continue to come to Christ throughout the Gospel Age, just as non-Jews will.<sup>3</sup> Notice Paul’s emphasis on “at

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could feel that way. It is the responsibility of every generation to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints” (Jude 3), and not be “tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:14). Are you standing firm on and growing in the Christian faith of the ages, or being attracted to all the latest slickly-packaged and popular heresy? How would you know the difference? Do you seek to have biblical discernment, or follow what feels good? Are you teachable if someone tells you something you like or someone you listen to is a heretic or spiritually harmful to you?

<sup>2</sup> “The purest churches under heaven are subject to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan; nevertheless **Christ always hath had, and ever shall have a kingdom in this world, to the end thereof, of such as believe in Him, and make profession of His name**” (1689 Baptist Confession, 26.3).

<sup>3</sup> When I said “Gospel Age,” I mean the time between Christ’s first coming and His second coming.

*the present time*” in 11:5, and the repetition of the word “*now*” – 3 times in 11:30,31. Also, Paul speaks of his Gospel ministry in 11:13,14, not some future work that would save Jews.

- What else has Paul said about “*the present time*” (this Gospel Age between Christ’s first and second coming) in his letter to the Romans:
  - “...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness **at the present time**, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (3:23-26).
  - “...I consider that the sufferings of **this present time** are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (8:18).
- In this age, Jews and non-Jews are being saved by God through faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ: “...working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain - for He says [in Isaiah 49:8], ‘At the acceptable time I listened to you, and on the day of salvation I helped you.’ Behold, **now is ‘the acceptable time,’ behold, now is ‘the day of salvation’**” (2 Corinthians 6:1,2).

### Remnant

- This is the third (and last) mention of the Old Testament idea of “*remnant*” in the New Testament:

- The first mention is at the great Church Council, where there was debate over whether or not non-Jews had to obey Jewish ceremonial laws to be Christian. James quotes from Amos 9:11,12 in Acts 15:16,17, where non-Jews (“*Gentiles*”) are added to “*the remnant*” of God’s people being restored.
- The second mention was in Romans 9:27 (quoting Isaiah 10:22,23), where there is a promise that “*the remnant...will be saved.*”

### God’s Gracious Choice

- God can save anyone. He can soften any heart. Nobody is unworthy to hear the Gospel. Nobody. God rejects nobody because of ethnicity or nationality. We are under commanded obligation to work toward the sharing of the Gospel with all people in all places.

### Works Don’t Save – God Saves By Grace (11:6)

11:6 *But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.*

- This has is a major theme throughout all of Paul’s letters – we boast of nothing in our salvation, for our salvation is all of God’s grace.
- In the previous chapter, Paul highlighted God’s choice of Jacob over Esau before they were “*born and had not done anything good or bad.*”<sup>4</sup> Both being lost in sin, God chose to save Jacob by His right to exercise

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<sup>4</sup> It is always important to remember Paul’s testimony: “...we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; as it is written [in Psalm 14:1-3//51:1-3], ‘There is none righteous, not even one; There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; All have turned aside, together they have become useless; **There is none who does good, There is not even one**’” (3:9-12).

grace on whomever He wishes: “...*there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God’s purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him Who calls, it was said to her [in Genesis 25:23], ‘The older will serve the younger.’ Just as it is written [in Malachi 1:2,3], ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated’*” (9:10-13).

- Paul also told us that physical Israel’s effort to be righteous by keeping God’s Law kept them from God’s true righteousness, which comes by faith in Jesus Christ alone: “...*Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works*” (9:31,32). When a person trusts in their good works for their standing before God, their good works are actually stumbling blocks sending them to hell.
- Can we take a moment to read and rejoice in God’s gracious salvation?
  - “...*by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast*” (Ephesians 2:8,9).
  - “...*God...has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity*” (2 Timothy 1:8,9).
  - READ Titus 3:4-7.
- We don’t believe in God’s preservation of the Church because we see good, moral, hard-working people who claim to be “*God’s people.*” We believe in God’s preservation of a people for Himself through faith in His Son because we

**believe Him to be a God of grace Who saves in spite of who we are, not because of who we are.**

### **Grace is Evangelism’s Power**

- Peter, on the day of Pentecost, looks at the Jewish crowd and makes the accusation, “*you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death*” (Acts 2:23). We could ask Paul’s question: “*God has not rejected His people, has He?*” Peter, speaking to this people who had rejected Jesus as Messiah and shouted, “*crucify,*” issues the call to repent and have faith in the resurrected Jesus: “*Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*” (2:38). What is the result? “...*those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls*” (2:41).
- Did anyone in that crowd deserve “*forgiveness of...sins*”? Is there a worse sin than shouting for the crucifixion of the sinless Son of God? Who are you tempted to think is beyond hope, unable to be saved? Do you need to repent of this lack of faith in the power of God’s grace? Commit to praying for and sharing the Gospel with even those who seem beyond salvation’s touch – because they aren’t beyond the reach of God’s grace.

**If you trust Jesus Christ alone for your salvation and eternal life, you are God’s remnant according to His great grace. God will use your sharing of the Good News of Jesus Christ to bring others into the remnant.**