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Class Notes

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The Remnant Chosen by Grace

Romans 11:1-10

¹ I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. ² God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah—how he appealed to God against Israel: ³ "Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me"? ⁴ And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal." ⁵ So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. ⁶ And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

⁷ What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened, ⁸ as it is written: "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day."

⁹ And David says: "May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. ¹⁰ May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever."

I. Main Questions:

1. What is Paul seeking to prove in this section of his epistle? What question does he raise and how does he answer it?
2. What is the significance of the example of Elijah and the seven thousand whom God had reserved for himself?
3. What does it mean that there is a “remnant chosen by grace”? How does it help the overall effort in Romans 9-11 to explain the situation of the Jews with the gospel of Jesus Christ?
4. How do you understand the quote from David, “May their table be a snare and a trap for them”?

II. Verse by Verse Questions:

The Key Question, It's Answer and Paul's Proof:

Romans 11:1-2 I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. ² God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew.

1. How does Paul begin this section of Romans? What question does he ask? Why does he ask that particular question? (1)
2. What is Paul's answer? What is Paul's proof? (1)

There are an estimated 350,000 Messianic Jews worldwide. They are clear evidence that God has not rejected his people. Sadly, that makes up only 2.22% of the world Jewish population, which is estimated at 15.7 million. But their present ongoing existence is a miracle.

What cause would God have to reject his people?

Exodus 32:9-10 "I have seen these people," the LORD said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people. ¹⁰ Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation."

Before the Exodus even occurred:

Ezekiel 20:5-10 On the day I chose Israel, I swore with uplifted hand to the descendants of the house of Jacob and revealed myself to them in Egypt. With uplifted hand I said to them, "I am the LORD your God." ⁶ On that day I swore to them that I would bring them out of Egypt into a land I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most beautiful of all lands. ⁷ And I said to them, "Each of you, get rid of the vile images you have set your eyes on, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am the LORD your God."

⁸"But they rebelled against me and would not listen to me; they did not get rid of the vile images they had set their eyes on, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. So I said I would pour out my wrath on them and spend my anger against them in Egypt. ⁹ But for the sake of my name I did what would keep it from being profaned in the eyes of the nations they lived among and in whose sight I had revealed myself to the Israelites by bringing them out of Egypt. ¹⁰ Therefore I led them out of Egypt and brought them into the desert.

This pattern continued throughout Israel's history. As Stephen summarized:

Acts 7:51-53 "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! ⁵² Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him-- ⁵³ you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it."

So the earlier statement Paul made:

Romans 9:29 It is just as Isaiah said previously: "Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah."

So, the fact that 1) Israel still exists as a known entity in the world; 2) many of the Jews have found salvation in Christ proves that God has not rejected the Jews.

3. What does "His people" mean in verses 1-2? (1-2)

4. What is the significance of the addition of the phrase “whom He foreknew” in verse 2? (2)

The Example of Elijah:

Romans 11:2-6 Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah-- how he appealed to God against Israel: ³ "Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me"? ⁴ And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal." ⁵ So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. ⁶ And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

5. What example from the Old Testament does Paul reach for at this point to prove what he's saying about the Jewish nation? How does this example help prove his point? (2-6)
6. What happened in the time of Elijah? What was Elijah's attitude toward the Jewish nation? Why did he have such a negative attitude? What did he conclude when he said “I am the only one left”? (3)
7. How did God correct him? (4)
8. What is the significance of the expression “I have reserved for myself seven thousand...”? (4)
9. How is this a very clear example of God's sovereign election in the history of Israel? (4)
10. How does Paul link it to his present time? (5)
11. What does the word “remnant” mean? What does it imply about the nation as a whole? (5)
12. Paul comments on the fact that this remnant is “chosen by grace”. What does this mean? How does it line up with the teaching he's already given in Romans 9? (5)
13. Paul sets off grace versus works in verse 6. Why? What point is he making about grace and works here? (6)

Paul's Summary, and Explanation of Israel's Present Condition:

Romans 11:7-10 What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened, ⁸ as it is written: "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day."

⁹ And David says: "May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. ¹⁰ May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever."

14. What conclusion does Paul give us in verse 7? How does it address the overall issue of the state of Israel with the gospel of Jesus Christ? (7)
15. Is it true that every Jew is either chosen by grace to believe in Jesus Christ or hardened to not believe in Him? Do you think that is what Paul is saying here? (7)
16. How does Paul use the two Old Testament quotes of verses 8-10? How do they add to his argument? (8-10)
17. What is a “spirit of stupor”? What is the significance of the fact that God gave it to them? How is this hard for people who emphasize free will to accept? (8)
18. What does it mean that God gave them “eyes so they could not see and ears so they could not hear”? (8)

How does this passage corroborate what Paul is saying in Romans 11?

2 Corinthians 3:14-16 *But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. ¹⁶ But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.*

19. What does David say that also lines up with this same idea? What language does he use? Does David desire people to be snared and trapped? How are we to understand this? (9-10)
20. How is a table a “snare and a trap”? What does a table usually represent in Scripture?

Psalm 23:5 *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.*

2 Samuel 9:11 *So Mephibosheth ate at David's table like one of the king's sons.*

21. How could God use the rich earthly blessing of life as a “snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution” to them? How does God use good things to harden non-elect people? (9-10)

Proverbs 30:8-9 *give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. ⁹ Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.*

Proverbs 18:11 *The wealth of the rich is their fortified city; they imagine it an unscalable wall.*

22. How does this passage help address the issue of the prosperity of the wicked? (9-10)
23. How does verse 10 show the seriousness of this doctrine? (10)

III. Summary:

Paul goes into greater detail about the elect and the hardened among the nation of Israel, and describes a “remnant chosen by grace” and the rest who are hardened by their blessings.