

## Romans 11

The tone of Romans 9:25-10:21 – The reader is left with the information that God is no longer using Israel in His current administration. In reviewing this section, this is what Paul has said:

1. Israel is not My people.
2. Only a small portion of Israel will be delivered.
3. Except for God's promises, Israel would have been utterly destroyed.
4. Israel pursued righteousness but not by faith; therefore, they did not obtain righteousness.
5. Israel has not believed.
6. Israel has not heeded the report.
7. Israel has been warned about this.
8. God is perpetually reaching out to Israel.
  - a. Israel is unbelieving.
  - b. Israel is obstinate.

**Romans 11:1-6** I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in *the passage about* Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? "Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE." But what is the divine response to him? "I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL." In the same way, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to *God's* gracious choice. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise, grace is no longer grace.

In this first statement, the way that it is translated presents the question a little incorrectly. The first statement begins with postpositive conjunction "*oun.*" The "therefore" is in retrospect to the previous information. There is no interrogative pronoun. The negative particle can modify "I say" of "God Has Rejected." Proposal: Paul is not insinuating that the natural thought is that Israel is rejected, but rather Paul is clarifying that he is not saying that Israel is rejected. The LCV of this first question is actually an emphatic statement and would be: "Therefore, I say not, God has rejected His people, Inconceivable!" Paul is clarifying that he is not saying that God has **rejected** Israel.

There are two main reasons that this is more accurate. First, the verb "I say" is used. This is not the structure used in other "*me genomai*" statements. The previous structures do not have Paul using a 1<sup>st</sup> person plural

present indicative verb for part of the inferential. The "therefore" statements normally have a literal phrase of "Therefore what shall we say?" Here in Romans 11:1 – Therefore, I say not...

The second reason this is more accurate is the reason immediately following. Paul states "for I too am an Israelite." Why does this reason show that the translation is incorrect? Paul uses this reason to clarify that his truth statement is not a statement of final judgment against Israel, but rather he's giving biblical clarity about the historical and current state of Israel. Speaking facts is not judging. Paul is heading off critics over a perceived disdain they may believe he has for Israel.

The word for rejected is "**ἀπωθέω** *apōtheō* (*ah-poh-theh'-oh*)" and is a compound word which means "to shove away." The figurative usage includes rejection or repelling. This is the only context in which the context is God's rejection of Israel, and in verse two, it is clear that God did not reject Israel. In Acts 7, Stephen, in recounting the history of Israel, speaks of Moses. In verses 25-28, the man who was injuring his neighbor "pushed away" Moses. The same word is used against Moses in verse 39. The physical aspect of shoving away may be present in verse 27, but it is clear that Israel rejected Moses in verse 39 (Acts 13:44-46; 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:19).

The false premise that Paul is saying that God has forsaken Israel is refuted in two points. First, Paul would be self-repudiating; this is why he begins with his heritage. The next point (and more poignant) is that there is still a number of Israelites that are believers. They are preserved in the present according to the grace of God.

In verse 1, Paul states that he is an Israelite, a descendant (seed) of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. Paul is again demonstrating that if he despised Israel, he would be wishing self-harm. The way that he states this should cause the reader to remember 9:6-12 where Paul states that an Israelite must be one of a specific line.

Today there are many efforts to delineate the tribes. Most of the historical records were destroyed in the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Only three or four remained (Judah, Levi, Benjamin, and possibly Simeon). Since the destruction of the temple and of Jerusalem in 70 AD, all records have been lost. DNA has been shown to determine if you are Semitic with particular markers that indicate Jewish roots, but no DNA markers have been shown to determine a subset of tribes (Bennett Greenspan).

The next point Paul makes is that of a remnant. He takes an indirect route to get there by invoking a low point in the life of Elijah in which he exclaims that he is alone, there is no one else. God assures him that he is in fact not alone but there are seven thousand who are with him.

In order to study the life of Elijah, one would have to read 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings. He comes on the scene in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 17 and is last mentioned in 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 2 where he is taken up into heaven. In Malachi 4:5, Elijah will precede the coming of the Lord in which John the Baptist fulfilled this role (Matthew 17:10-11). His ministry was primarily

to Israel (Northern Kingdom) while under the rule of Ahab and Jezebel. Ahab was one of the worst kings and turned the nation to serve Baal and built altars to him.

Elijah is one of the most prominent prophets.

He fought against the most spiritually bankrupt society in the history of Israel.

He raised a widow's son from death.

He confronted the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel.

He is the only person recorded who went back to Horeb (Mt Sinai).

He trained Elisha who had the most recorded miracles in the Bible except for Jesus.

Elijah was taken up into heaven, one of two in the Old Testament who did not die.

The New Testament speaks of him more often than any other Old Testament prophet.

Elijah was chosen to appear with Moses at our Lord's transfiguration.

"One of Israel's most startling characters, he suddenly appears on the scene as the crisis-prophet, with thunder on his brow and tempest in his voice. He disappears just as suddenly, swept skywards in a chariot of fire."

The passage that Paul quotes is from 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 19:8-10,14-18. Jezebel is plotting against Elijah after he killed the prophets of Baal. In fact, before the trip to Horeb, Elijah requested that he would die (19:3-4).

During the most corrupt situation in Israel, God assures Elijah that not only will Elijah be successful but that there are many more that are believers in the Lord. Paul takes this message of God intervening in the history of Israel and sustaining Elijah and applies this to the current state of Israel in verse 5. Israel has rejected Jesus. Not only do the Jewish authorities and Jews everywhere not believe, but they are also rising against the truth and trying to stop it from being spread. But God's truth cannot be thwarted and there were (at that time) and still are some that have believed in Jesus as Messiah and are functioning in His administration.

In this verse, we have the word to "remnant." It is the Greek word **“λεῖμμα *leimma (lay'-mah)*”** which means “that which is left.” Remember 9:27 where the word is **“κατάλειμμα *kataleimma (kah-tah'-lay-mah)*”** and is preceded by a definite article. Obviously, there is the same root, but in 9:27, it is specific and used for the group that will be part of the restoration in the last day. In 11:5, it is used for a perpetual number of believers that there has always been since the inception of Israel.

This remnant is “according to God's gracious choice.” In the NASB, we see that “God's” is in italics, but it is not a bad addition and is accurate. But it would be more accurate to translate this “election by grace.”

In fact, the LCV would be “remnant there has been according to election of grace.” Election is “ἐκλογή *eklogē*” which is the noun form of the verb to chose. This noun stays in form as always being used in regards to service, not salvation. The perpetual remnant of Israel has always been used by God for a purpose. So a saved Jew, no matter the dispensation, will always be able to participate in the administration of God.

This is true now even in light of the fact that Israel as an entity is set aside for now. A believing Israeli is still able to participate in the “ekklesia” now. After the rapture, the mantel will fall again to Jews in the sealing of the 144,000 to be witnesses. In the Millennial Reign, as we have seen, Israel will be restored and will be the Kingdom through which God will rule all of creation.

Verse 6 must first be understood in regards to the primary purpose, but there is also an important principle that can be understood.

First, there is a textual criticism here. It is clear that the text, “But if *it be* of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work,” is not original to the text but only appears in later manuscripts. Plus, this really does not add to any meaning and is redundant and somewhat confusing.

Now Paul states that if by grace.... The first question in the context is if what is by grace? Verse 5 is clear that the perpetual remnant has “election” by grace. Truly amazing, Israel is preserved nationally and is still used spiritually regardless of the 3,400 years of obstinate rebellion that has marred this people. It obviously cannot be based upon any work (effort, energy) of the ones elected. If it were, they would have been destroyed long ago. But being that it is by grace, it is both free and eternal based upon the promises made to the Fathers.

The principle is that the nature of grace is constant. Grace plus works only nullify grace. This is true of God’s selection of Israel, but it is also true wherever grace is found to be the means. The picture we have of grace extends to the Gospel and to our lives as well. First, we must understand that salvation, initial justification, is provided by grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). Romans 4:13-16 — If there is one rule, one principle added to grace the promise is nullified. Galatians 2:16 — If we make one aspect of salvation based upon human effort or work then it nullifies that by which we are saved.

Secondly, we understand that we are to live by grace through faith; there is nothing to obtain from God by our works now. Believing that one is provided for (blessed) or denied/punished (cursed) by means of works as a believer is placing us back under the law system and the activity of grace is nullified in our lives. Galatians 3:1-5; 5:1-6 – Read it plainly and understand that Paul is referring to the life of the believer, not initial justification.

Why live life appropriately?

First, out of appreciation for all that we do have, one must not rely on fear to perform.

Second, it provides for our best now. There are principles that are contrary to human reasoning that when tested actually work in the real world.

Third, God will evaluate our life for rewards later.

Recap:

1. Paul is not saying that God has cast away (rejected) His people.
2. Elijah was provided with the truth that there are always some in Israel who believe.
3. The ones remaining (a perpetual remnant) have always had a use in the administration of God.
4. This election of the perpetual remnant is based on grace — always.
5. Grace Principle — Any works added to grace nullify grace.