

Timeless Truth



ROMANS: CHAPTER ELEVEN

WEEK ELEVEN | JILL SNODGRASS

TIMELESS TEACHING |

Romans 11

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS AND SOVEREIGNTY

The believers in Paul's day needed some reassurance, when they saw how so many of God's chosen people (Jews) blatantly rejected Him and condemned themselves to His eternal punishment. It left them questioning is God not who He says He is? Did He reject His own people? Had He discarded them?

Paul's response to these questions is: May it never be. He assures that victory for the true believer is certain and can never be undone.

Paul uses four illustrations to showcase God's glorious ways and prove His faithfulness and sovereignty.

I. PAUL HIGHLIGHTS GOD'S FAITHFULNESS AND SOVEREIGNTY IN HIS REMNANT. (v. 1-15)

The definition of remnant is a small remaining or surviving part or quantity of something. It could be of an object, a custom, or a people. And in this case, the remnant is of course the Jewish nation.

The word "remnant" appears 62 times in the Old Testament but only three times in the New Testament with each referring back to the Old Testament.

A. Paul uses himself as an example.

- He was once a Jew that rejected the Messiah and persecuted believers. That is until he encountered Christ on the way to Damascus. He believed from that moment on, and became living proof of the remnant.

B. Paul uses Elijah as an example.

- It shows that God, having saved Paul, was enough to prove God's faithfulness to keep His promises. But the fact that there were 7,000 in Elijah's day proves God's grace extends far beyond that.

- Paul is pointing out the fact that a remnant (a small part) of the Jewish nation has always been a part of God's redemptive plan. And it is still a part of that plan today as God is not done working. God is not through with Israel.

II. PAUL HIGHLIGHTS GOD'S FAITHFULNESS AND SOVEREIGNTY IN HIS DISCIPLINE. (V. 1-15)

Scripture tells us that God's hand of discipline comes upon those He loves. This shows there is a big difference between His discipline and punishment. His discipline is temporary and meant to grow our character into more like that of Christ's. On the contrary, His punishment is eternal and both demonstrates and satisfies His justice.

Paul gives two examples of God's discipline by quoting two Old Testament Scriptures. He wanted to show his readers that the entire Hebrew race is under God's discipline and currently still is today.

A. First Old Testament Scripture in verse 8 refers back to Deut. 29: 4-6.

- God disciplined the Israelites for their unbelief and sent them wandering in the desert. But even still, God provided and cared for them the entire time.
- Although the fault landed on those 10 spies that came back with their negative report of the Promised Land, the entire Israelite nation was penalized. But in turn that also meant that everyone benefited from it.
- God's discipline is meant for our good, and His glory.

B. Second Scripture in verses 9 and 10 come from Psalm 69: 20-24.

- Paul recited King David's words to show that God's discipline eventually comes to an end.

In both of these illustrations, through His discipline, God hit the *pause* button in His plan for Israel, or at least it seems He did from a human perspective.

In the illustration with David, we don't know how long God's disciplined lasted, but we know with Moses, God hit the *pause* button for 40 years. Forty years they wandered aimlessly, instead of moving right on ahead into the Promise Land.

This pause or grace period benefited both Jew and Gentile alike.

- *For the Gentiles:* It gave them time to hear and accept God's plan of salvation for them.
- *For the Jews:* It made them jealous for what the Gentiles were getting to enjoy. God wanted the Jewish nation to take back what they gave up, what was meant to be theirs all along. And Paul is saying that it's no different now with the gentiles accepting the Messiah and enjoying salvation.

The Jews today are experiencing a grace period. This is true for all those who are lost in our world today, wandering aimlessly without hope.

It may appear from our limited perspective that God hit pause and then the resume button 40 years later, but in actuality, it was all a part of His original plan.

III. PAUL HIGHLIGHTS GOD'S FAITHFULNESS AND SOVEREIGNTY IN A BATCH OF DOUGH. (V. 16-29)

This points back to a Jewish custom (first fruits) found in Numbers 15: 17-21. A farmer would dedicate the first portion of his crop as an offering to God. This was a way to thank God for His provision and allow the crop to be used for God's glory. This first sample was a sign indicating what he could expect the quality of the rest of the crop to be.

In the same way, when a woman mixed a batch of dough and gave a small portion of it to the priest, the sample represented the whole batch.

Abraham was the "first fruits" of the whole Israelite nation, and since God accepted Abraham, He would also accept the patriarchs and descendants that would come from him.

This doesn't mean God's acceptance guaranteed their salvation; it only guaranteed their special place in His plan to be "set apart" for His purposes.

This truth should remind us that as Christ is holy, we are to be holy, since we (who believe) are found in Him.

IV. PAUL HIGHLIGHTS GOD'S FAITHFULNESS AND SOVEREIGNTY THROUGH THE GRAFTING OF AN OLIVE TREE. (V. 16-29)

In Paul's day, stocks of a wild olive tree were much hardier and could tolerate harsh conditions better than cultivated ones. On the flip side, the cultivated trees were the ones that were fruitful. So they combined the two to get the best of both worlds.

A commentator wrote, "Paul's illustration, however, gave the image a surprising twist. In his example, wild olive branches draw nourishment from the sap and roots of a cultivated stock. This is a dramatic picture of grace."

Abraham is the "rich root" that represents the privileged position in God's plan to redeem the whole world. Many of the Jews did not believe. In this illustration, Paul sees them as broken off branches, because of their unbelief. But it was because of these broken branches that allowed the other, wild Gentile branches to be grafted in.

So with these two illustrations, Paul affirms his point that though Jews have a distinguished place in God's plan, this doesn't make them true spiritual children of

Abraham, and furthermore it doesn't make them better than the Gentiles. Faith is the only means to righteousness, which God has the authority over.

You can almost always see the distinction between the branches or the fruit on a tree or plant that has been grafted. But when God grafts something, in His eyes there is no distinction. God does not see Jew or Gentile; He sees His child. Therefore, we must be careful not to view the church like a grafted tree. All true believers are covered by the blood of Christ just the same.

Four implications from Paul's words:

1. We must not become proud and boastful.

Salvation is for everyone. And it's only by God's grace and faith in Him that we have been given a place in God's plan. The fact we have salvation is a gift and something we can't boast, or take credit for.

2. We must honor the Jews.

Whether they believe or not, we must highly regard the Jews, because God gave them a very special place in His plan of redemption.

3. We must appreciate what God has done for us and honor Him with our lives.

Everything we do should come from a place of gratitude for everything God has done for us.

4. We, like Paul, must give praise to our God who is worthy of it all.

Paul, in awe of God's glorious ways and marvelous grace broke out in worship, giving praise to the God that is forever faithful and sovereign.

Paul believed that grace was found in everything, because God is found in everything. And he wanted believers to see and appreciate that fact too.

Paul also understood the beauty and simplicity of grace. That it needs nothing added to it. By the blood of Jesus, it stands alone.

Grace:

- No one deserves it.
- No one can earn it.
- It can't be explained.
- A gift from God.

Paul knowing this and having been transformed by it, couldn't help but breakout in worship and praise to the all-knowing all-powerful God in light of these truths. Paul demonstrates that theology should lead to doxology. He knew grace and goodness was found in everything God does.

WEEK ELEVEN

ROMANS: CHAPTER ELEVEN

IT IS THE SAME TODAY, FOR A FEW OF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL HAVE REMAINED FAITHFUL BECAUSE OF GOD'S GRACE—HIS UNDESERVED KINDNESS IN CHOOSING THEM. AND SINCE IT IS THROUGH GOD'S KINDNESS, THEN IT IS NOT BY THEIR GOOD WORKS. FOR IN THAT CASE, GOD'S GRACE WOULD NOT BE WHAT IT REALLY IS—FREE AND UNDESERVED.

ROMANS 11:5-6 NLT

DAY ONE

ROMANS 11:33-36 | God's Sovereignty
& Knowledge



TIMELESS TRUTH |

FOR WHO CAN KNOW THE LORD'S THOUGHTS? WHO KNOWS ENOUGH TO GIVE HIM ADVICE? AND WHO HAS GIVEN HIM SO MUCH THAT HE NEEDS TO PAY IT BACK? FOR EVERYTHING COMES FROM HIM AND EXISTS BY HIS POWER AND IS INTENDED FOR HIS GLORY. ALL GLORY TO HIM FOREVER! AMEN.

ROMANS 11:34-36 NLT

Read Romans 11:33-36

We begin today where Paul ended this chapter—in complete awe of the riches of God's wisdom. To fully appreciate God's sovereignty and knowledge, it calls for us to stand in awe of God and His infinite wisdom just as Paul did. This requires the proper vantage point. We must see how *lowly* we are and how *lofty* He is.

If you are familiar with the story of Job, you know that he endured suffering and loss more than most of us will, or can ever imagine in our lifetime. Job, although he wasn't perfect, knew that he had done nothing to deserve this kind of pain, and was at a loss and wrestling as to why God would allow such hardship to come upon him.

Finally, near the end of the book, God speaks. Chapters 38-41 record God's response to Job.

Read some of God's response to Job in these chapters.

Instead of giving Job answers, God asks Job some very hard questions. What was God purpose in His response to Job?

Read Job 42: 1-6.

What was Job's response back to God?

Based on Job's response, what attitude should we have in light of God's infinite, perfect knowledge?

When we fully appreciate God's infinite, perfect knowledge, and realize just how finite and fallible our thinking is, we will humbly submit to God's authority and sovereignty.

Read Psalm 139: 1-18.

What do these verses show God's knowledge of?

Does it bring you comfort, knowing that God knows everything about you from the inside and out, and is still with you? Why or why not?

Lastly, read Matthew 10: 29-31.

With His care and knowledge of you and everything concerning you, how do these verses encourage you to trust God?

You are so valuable to God that He sent His one and only Son to die for you. In Paul's eyes, salvation in Jesus, is where God's perfect wisdom is seen—not in the wonderful, miraculous ordering of creation, but rather in His wisdom of rescuing, redeeming, and restoring lost souls like yours and mine. This is the riches of God's wisdom that leads to Paul's amazement and worship of our all-knowing, powerful, and merciful God.

PRAYER MOMENT |

Heavenly Father, thank you for Your infinite, perfect knowledge, and through it, how You perfectly care for me. Help me to see the depths and heights of Your wisdom through the gospel the same way Paul did. May I truly worship you today for being our all-knowing, powerful, and merciful God.

DAILY REMINDER |

As you go about your day, reflect on why God's sovereignty and knowledge should humble us, comfort us, and cause us to trust Him.

FURTHER READING |

Job chapters 38-42; Psalm 139, and Matthew 10: 26-3, Romans 11

Paul did not write Romans to tell the Romans how to be saved—for they were already saints. He wrote to explain to them what was really involved in their salvation. It was an explanation of the "deep things of God" and how they applied to daily life.

Warren Wiersbe

DAY TWO

ROMANS 11:1-4 | Elijah & the Remnant



TIMELESS TRUTH |

NO, GOD HAS NOT REJECTED HIS OWN PEOPLE, WHOM HE CHOSE FROM THE VERY BEGINNING. DO YOU REALIZE WHAT THE SCRIPTURES SAY ABOUT THIS? ELIJAH THE PROPHET COMPLAINED TO GOD ABOUT THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL AND SAID, “LORD, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS AND TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS. I AM THE ONLY ONE LEFT, AND NOW THEY ARE TRYING TO KILL ME, TOO.

ROMANS 11:2-3 NLT

Read Romans 11:1-4.

I admit when I look at the state of our world today, even compared to when I was a kid, I often think *who truly follows God anymore?* The truth is, there are way more believers out there than you and I realize. I love that Paul so fittingly placed this illustration here in Romans to encourage his readers. And so I want us to take a look at this story today to also be encouraged and be reminded that God is on His throne, and He is still working and moving mightily in each of our lives as well as in this dark, scary world today.

If you're not familiar with this story of Elijah. It begins in 1 Kings 18. If you have time, I encourage you to go and read it. But if not, here is a very brief (and I mean very brief) synopsis:

God's prophet Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal to a fiery showdown and God shows up and shows out, giving Elijah the clear win, proving that the Lord is the true God, not Baal.

But as it is with most spiritual victories, the enemy is not far behind ready to steal the joy of the moment and derail us from continuing on in our mission.

Read 1 Kings 19: 1-18.

Why did Elijah seek refuge in the wilderness?

Elijah went there alone, but who met him there and helped him in his despair? (vs. 5-8)

Notice God didn't chastise Elijah for fleeing, but rather comforted him and gave him what he needed in that moment to strengthen and sustain him.

Twice, God asks Elijah the same question. What was it? (vs. 9 and 13)

What was Elijah's response both times?

Elijah's response shows that he had no idea of all that God was doing and had been doing, because his focus was on himself. But again, even in his little pity party, God was patient and lovingly redirected Elijah to retrace his steps back to the place where he went off course.

Sometimes the Lord has to ask you and me the same question: *What are you doing here?* He knows we just need a fresh vision from Him to get back on track for Him.

God showed up and showed out more than once for Elijah, letting him know that He was, is, and will always be with him, equipping him for the task and journey ahead. How does this strengthen and encourage you?

God kindly showed Elijah that he was not alone. There were 7,000 others in Israel who truly followed Him. How does this motivate you to keep serving God, even when that task seems daunting and you may feel you fail more than you succeed?

PRAYER MOMENT |

Dear Father, thank you for Your patience and understanding when I become discouraged and feel alone in my struggles. I praise You that You are always with me, giving me comfort and what I need to forge ahead in my life with You. God, you never get befuddled at what to do and do immeasurably more than I realize and can even imagine. Lord, help me to keep my eyes on You and finish the work You have set out for me to do. In Jesus name. Amen.

DAILY REMINDER |

As you go about your day, remember that no matter how wicked the world has become, God always has a faithful remnant (true believers) following Him. It may be small in comparison to the world, but we serve a big and mighty God who always accomplishes His purposes. Take comfort in the fact that you are not the only one.

FURTHER READING |

1 Kings 18 and 19, Romans 11

God never calls a person [into His service] without equipping him. I know that from experience.

Billy Graham

DAY THREE

ROMANS 11:5-10 | God's Grace



TIMELESS TRUTH |

IT IS THE SAME TODAY, FOR A FEW OF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL HAVE REMAINED FAITHFUL BECAUSE OF GOD'S GRACE—HIS UNDESERVED KINDNESS IN CHOOSING THEM. AND SINCE IT IS THROUGH GOD'S KINDNESS, THEN IT IS NOT BY THEIR GOOD WORKS. FOR IN THAT CASE, GOD'S GRACE WOULD NOT BE WHAT IT REALLY IS—FREE AND UNDESERVED.

ROMANS 11:5-6 NLT

Read Romans 11:5-10

These verses on grace here in Romans may seem out of place. Why would Paul mention grace in the middle of discussing the remnant and God's discipline? Well both, are acts of God's grace. These verses don't interrupt Paul's train of thought, they show it.

Paul proves that the remnant only exists because of God's grace. And the fact that He disciplines those He loves in an effort to get their attention and give them time to repent and turn to Him is also a display of His grace.

Why are grace and works incompatible?

Why does trusting in Christ and relying on the grace of God, rather than our good works bring us peace?

Most of the Jewish nation, rejected the righteousness of Christ, placing their trust in their own good works and self-righteousness. Warren Wiersbe writes, "Their very religious practices and observances became substitutes for the real experience of salvation."

Re-read verses 9-10.

Their blessings became burdens and a snare keeping them from turning to Christ. Therefore, by His divine discipline, God hardened their hearts. The consequences of their choosing to resist Him proved their continued stubbornness.

Have you ever thought of God's discipline as an act of His grace? Why or why not?

Why should our blessings, both physical and spiritual, draw us closer to Jesus, instead of further away from Him?

What warning should we heed from these verses?

What can we do to keep hearts open and responsive to Him?

PRAYER MOMENT |

Heavenly Father, I pray You give me eyes to see You, ears that hear You, and a heart that obeys You. Thank you for all my many blessings. May they draw me closer to You and bring You glory. And Lord help me to fully rely and rest on Your grace, not my works. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

DAILY REMINDER |

Remember that in salvation, grace and works are like oil and water. They don't mix. And without a proper sense of our sin, we will not fully appreciate His grace.

FURTHER READING |

Deuteronomy 29: 4-6, Psalm 69: 20-24, Romans 9 and 11

Grace has been the subject of this study. It refers to God's unmerited favor apart from anything seen or foreseen in us. It is utterly contrary to works. For work is something we do, and grace does not look to us but flows from the unfettered will of God.

James Montgomery Boice

DAY FOUR

ROMANS 11:16-24 | “Set Apart” by & for God



TIMELESS TRUTH |

AND SINCE ABRAHAM AND THE OTHER PATRIARCHS WERE HOLY, THEIR DESCENDANTS WILL ALSO BE HOLY—JUST AS THE ENTIRE BATCH OF DOUGH IS HOLY BECAUSE THE PORTION GIVEN AS AN OFFERING IS HOLY. FOR IF THE ROOTS OF THE TREE ARE HOLY, THE BRANCHES WILL BE, TOO.

ROMANS 11:16 NLT

Read Romans 11:16-24

God, being holy, means He is “set apart” from us. Therefore, being “set apart” by God is the foundational meaning of being holy.

In this passage of Scripture, both illustrations, the dough and the rich root of the olive tree, are a picture of Abraham’s privileged position in God’s plan of redemption. In other words, God chose and called Abraham to be “set apart” for His purposes and glory. Therefore, this special place in God’s plan gave him a *positional* holiness. And this means all his descendants inherited this positional holiness too, and remain today a people set apart by God for His purposes. However, this positional holiness doesn’t mean that all Jews are saved and without sin.

When Abraham believed God by faith and God counted him as righteous, Abraham’s holiness became both *positional* and *promised*. Holiness is our destiny. If we belong to Jesus Christ, one day we will be made like Him in holiness one day as John tells us in 1 John 3:2.

Why is the call to be “set apart” not about us, but all about God?

Why did Paul refer to some of the people of Israel as broken off branches?

In Paul's illustration of the grafting of the olive tree, why have the Gentiles now been given the blessing God has promised Abraham and his children?

James Montgomery Boice writes: "Paul does not speak of fruit bearing specifically in these verses. But that is the whole point of grafting, to produce a more fruitful tree. Besides, although Paul does not speak of fruit by the term, this is certainly what he has in mind when he writes of unbelieving Jews broken off "because of unbelief" and believing Gentiles being grafted into the Jewish tree "by faith" (v.20) Unbelief is the ultimate expression of fruitlessness, and faith is the first of all fruits."

Abraham's righteousness came from his believing God, and his actions proved His faith in God to be genuine. True righteousness brings forth fruit. Without fruit we are not truly His. And the only way to become His, is through faith, believing in His Son, Jesus. Therefore, the beginning of our faith activities our pursuit of *practical* holiness.

Read 1 Peter 1: 14-16, 2 Timothy 2: 21, and 1 John 3: 2-3

Why must we pursue practical holiness now, before we one day achieve our promised holiness?

Why does growing in Christlikeness (holiness) mean that we should be increasing in spiritual fruitfulness?

PRAYER MOMENT |

Heavenly Father I praise You that You called and chose me to be “set apart” for Your purposes and glory. Thank you that holiness is my destiny. Help me to keep my eyes fixed on You and this truth, and that I will become more like You as You are holy. May my actions prove my faith in You to be genuine. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

DAILY REMINDER |

The pursuit of holiness doesn’t mean to follow the letter of the law, a set of rules, or dos and don’ts. It is allowing the Holy Spirit to lead and guide you to love God and others the way Christ does.

FURTHER READING |

Exodus 19: 4-6, John 15: 1-5, Romans 11

Holy is the way God is. To be holy He does not conform to a standard. He IS that standard.

Aiden Wilson Tozer

DAY FIVE

ROMANS 11:25-32 | God's Keeps His Word



TIMELESS TRUTH |

FOR GOD'S GIFTS AND HIS CALL CAN NEVER BE
WITHDRAWN.
ROMANS 11:29 NLT

Read Romans 11:25-32

Isn't comforting to know that God's plans don't change, no matter how we humans might change or behave? That's because God doesn't change. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Though the Jewish people have been temporarily set aside until the full amount of Gentiles comes to Christ, God will keep His *promise* to them.

A commentator wrote: "God chose the Jews to be His special people, and nothing that has happened since, or will happen, can change this choice or relationship."

Look up the following verses: John 6: 37-40, John 10: 27-30, Romans 8: 31-39, and Philippians 1: 6.

How do these verses assure us that God's call and gifts can't be undone and encourage us to persevere in our faith?

Look up the following verses: Joshua 21: 45, Numbers 23: 19, 2 Corinthians 1:20, Hebrews 10: 23, Psalm, 119: 90, and Isaiah 55: 11.

What do these verses say about God's faithfulness and ability to keep His Word?

How do these verses encourage you today?

One day every Jew and Gentile that belongs or will belong to God will be gathered together as one big family covered in His mercy and His rich blessings. Isaiah chapter 60 is both a radiant picture and promise of the restoration and future glory of God's people.

Take a brief moment to read some or all of chapter 60 in Isaiah.

How does this chapter speak to you heart today?

PRAYER MOMENT |

God, thank you that when You make a promise, You keep it. You are forever faithful and nothing can thwart Your plans. You are a merciful, loving God. Help me to rest on your promises. In Your holy name. Amen.

DAILY REMINDER |

One day we will fully see God and the fruition of all His plans and promises.

FURTHER READING |

Isaiah 60, Romans 11

*Rest all your weight on God's promises. When heart and
flesh fail, God will be your strength.*

Charles Spurgeon