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**Series: Romans: The Just Shall Live by Faith**  
**Message: God's Plan for Israel**

**Transcribed Message**  
**March 6, 2022**  
**Romans 11**

Dr. Charles Ryrie was a professor at Dallas seminary. He was a theologian, an author. He wrote a book called *Basic Theology* and at the beginning of that systematic theology, he says, "Theology is for everyone. Indeed, everyone needs to be a theologian. In reality, everyone is a theologian of one sort or another. It's not wrong," he says, "to be an amateur theologian any more than it is to be a professional theologian. But," he says, "what is wrong is when we're a bad theologian or when we are a sloppy theologian or when we are a careless theologian." I think he says that because theology is the study of God. It's the study of the purposes of God. It is the study of the plans of God. It is the study of the very ways of God.

When we think in terms of systematic theology, when we study God Himself, we call that Theology Proper. When we study the idea of the Bible and we're digging into the Bible, that is Bibliology. Christ is Christology and the Holy Spirit is Pneumaology. The doctrine of man is Anthropology and the doctrine of sin is Harmatology. You go right down to the very end of that list and we come finally to Eschatology, which of course is the end things. Appropriately it comes at the very end of systematic theology. To study the book of Romans as we are it is really to step in to Paul's volume of systematic theology because he deals with every one of these areas of the study of God and the ways of God and the purposes of God. He takes this last one on in this 11<sup>th</sup> chapter that we come to this morning. This really brings to us this matter of eschatology and what God is going to do in the end times.

We're going to do something a little bit different this morning because we're coming to this 11<sup>th</sup> chapter. I thought it might be helpful for us as we wrap up this triad of chapters 9, 10, and 11 to just kind of elevate ourselves to about 30,000 feet this morning and fly a little bit over the top of this topic that is brought to us in this 11<sup>th</sup> chapter. Then next week, Lord willing, we'll dive back down into the exposition of these

verses. But this is what I'd like for us to see this morning. God's plan for this world revolves around one people. God chose the Jewish people to be the vehicle for His plan to reach into this world.

If you wonder about that statement, think for a moment of the fact that it is the Jewish people who gave us the Word of God. I mean, almost with just a couple of exceptions, we have the Bible that we have, we have the books that we have because God in His great grace and mercy used the Jewish people to give to us His very Word. Isaiah 43 says that God has raised up the Jewish people to show forth His praises to the world. And if we doubt at all what God is intending to do, we know we simply have to realize that it is through the Jewish people that God has given us our Savior. It is through the Jewish people that we have the Messiah. It is through the Jewish people that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself came.

In 1948 when modern-day Israel was constituted as a nation/state and was given a piece of geography in the Middle East, it literally shook the world to its core. It had not happened in modern history that Israel as a Jewish nation and as a Jewish people had a piece of property that they could call home. When Bonnie and I were there many years ago, our guy was a Lieut. Col. in the IDF, the Israeli Defense force, or he had been. He assured us that Israel as a nation and as a people would never give up their homeland again. He said the history of our people is that we never had a place to go when trouble came upon us. We know that because in World War II nobody welcomed the Jewish people even from the Holocaust that was going on in Europe. In 1948 when God allowed for that series of events to take place, Israel was reestablished with a homeland in the Middle East. Was that a fulfillment of prophecy? Is there going to be a future spiritual awakening and spiritual revival within the nation of Israel at some point yet to come? Or has God completed the work that He's going to do with Israel? How you understand and answer those questions and many others like it is going to be fundamentally affected by how you view Romans chapter 11.

Here's what we're going to do at the beginning here. With the backdrop of Romans 11, let's look at some things that are related to the end times. There are many differing opinions about some of the things that the Bible says about the last days. I'd like to start off by just establishing some things that we all agree on. I've listed four of

them. There are obviously more than that, but I think these are fundamental to our understanding. The first one is a very simple statement that Jesus is coming again. Amen. Can we all agree with that? Jesus is coming again. In fact, I would say if you don't believe Jesus is coming again, you're certainly not within the orthodox evangelical faith. One of the few basic things that defines who an evangelical Christian is we all believe that Jesus is coming again. That is fundamental.

Secondly, we're to look forward to Christ's return. We're to look forward to Christ's return. The Bible speaks of that. Paul in 2 Timothy chapter 4 verse 8 tells us that there is actually a reward for those of us who look forward to Christ's return. Those of us who daily think could it be today, or many times during the day have that thought come to mind Jesus could come back today. Paul says there's a reward for believers who faithfully look forward to the Lord's return.

Thirdly, we don't know when Christ will return. we can all agree ... well, not all of us because down through history there's always been somebody who thought they knew. They'd get a bunch of people excited about a day and a date that they picked, and lo and behold it comes and goes. I think the Bible has a word for those people and it's called false prophets because Jesus said nobody knows the day of His return.

The fourth thing would be the final outcome. The final outcome. In the broadest sense of that, we understand that as we read our Bible that Jesus is victorious in His return. Jesus is triumphant. All those who have rejected Christ face a judgment and then eternal separation from God forever in hell. Those who have believed and put their faith in Christ go on to an eternity with Christ. Those would be some things that we would say in a basic overview of things that are yet to come we could find ourselves agreeing on.

But then the other side of that is there are some things, many things, that we don't agree on. There's more than four, but I've just listed four again. The first one is whether Jesus could return at any time. Whether Jesus could return at any time. so if I were to ask you right now, do you think Jesus could come back before I finish this teaching this morning. A lot of you are like amen, I hope so. Let's do this. If you believe that statement, then you believe in the doctrine of imminency. You believe that Jesus could come back at any time. Everybody doesn't believe that. Some people would

suggest that there are conditions that have to be met, that there are events that are going to take place so that when you're living in the end times you literally see these conditions being met and you'll see these events taking place and you'll know Jesus is coming back very soon. Others say no, there are no conditions to be met. There are no events that have to take place. He could literally come at any time.

A second thing we don't all agree on is whether there is one return or two. 1 Thessalonians 4 when he describes an event in which he says we are going to meet the Lord in the air. We're going to be caught up. *Rapturo* is the Latin word from which we get the word "rapture". We're going to be caught up. We're going to meet the Lord in the air. That would be phase I, if you will. That would be the first part of His coming. Then there would be a second coming at a later time as we understand after the tribulation. Other people look at that described in Scripture and say there really is only one return. There is one return of Christ and it is at the end of all of these events and Jesus comes back and He is victorious over all who have opposed Him.

Thirdly, there is not necessarily agreement on this seven-year period of tribulation that the Bible speaks of. Is the tribulation something that has happened in the past? It is already done. Or is it something yet to come in the future? Those who would suggest that it has already happened would point to all of the events that happened in 70 A.D. and the destruction of Jerusalem and the havoc that was brought up on the people of God during that period of time. They would look at that time as a time of tribulation. Jeremiah specifically refers to this period of time in the 30<sup>th</sup> chapter as a time of Jacob's trouble. Then the other perspective on this is to say it is yet future, that what we read in Revelation beginning in the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter going all the way the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter is describing a whole series of events that have yet to happen. And the world has never seen anything like what is described in Revelation 6 to 18, so there are two differing ideas on that.

Then the last one is will there be a literal millennial reign of Christ on the earth? That is, is King Jesus when He returns going to set up a government on this earth in which He rules and reigns for a period of the thousand years? Look at those eight statements. How you deal with those eight statements really is going to determine and define what you think is going to happen with the nation of Israel going forward. It is

going to define your understanding of what is God's dealings with the nations of the world going to look like. It is certainly going to be impactful in terms of what you believe about the church and what is going to happen in the church in the last days. All of those things are defined by how we answer and respond to those eight points. It also is likely depending on how you answer it's going to tie you to certain terms.

Let's look at this third point just by way of giving us some understanding of background. As you're reading and studying in this area, you will have some sense of what I'm talking about. Some of you know these terms and you can define them and help explain them. Some of you have heard these terms and you're not altogether sure of what they mean. Some of you have never heard these terms and you don't know what they mean. It's okay to be in any three of the above categories.

The first set of terms I'm simply calling covenant theology, reformed theology, and amillennialism. Covenant theology. There are those within this understanding of God's work and God's purposes who are described as being covenant theologians. They're usually within the reformed faith. They're of reformed theology and the end product of their understanding of the storyline of the Bible is they're amillennialist. Their answer to question number four – is there going to be a literal reign of Christ on the Earth? – is no, there is not. That is what amillennial means. That “a” is a negation. No millennium. No literal reign of Christ on the Earth. The Puritans were largely of this viewpoint. So was Jonathan Edwards, probably the greatest if not one of the greatest theologians of American history. So were men like RC Sproul, Tim Keller. They fall within that understanding of how God is going to work out these end time events.

The other perspective, the other set of terms we could look at is dispensational theology and premillennialism. Now understand, these are broad categories and I'm not trying to say that everybody that is a dispensationalist is a premillennialist, nor that everybody that is a premillennialist is a dispensationalist. That's not necessarily the case. What I am saying is there is a broad perspective depending on your theological understanding of what God is doing with Israel, with the nations, and with the church. You're largely going to fall into one of these. Premillennialism says pre-, before the millennium. Premillennial. Jesus is going to come back before the millennium because He is going to establish His reign on the earth for literally that thousand year rule.

Charles Ryrie, who I quoted at the beginning, Chuck Swindoll, John MacArthur, John Piper, James Boice. Those would be names that would have fallen within either historic premillennialism or a dispensational perspective. Therefore, I will cast my lot with them as well.

But number three. Not to tip my hand going forward here. Number three. Here is the good part. Both of these perspectives are represented here at Covenant with both of these perspectives. We both have similar goals. We both have similar goals. We're both trying to understand the story line of the Bible. It's just as if we're putting on a pair of glasses, as someone described it. It is helping us to figure out what this story looks like. We're trying to provide a framework for understanding the events that are going to unfold. As we do that, we realize that whichever of these camps you're in, we're both committed to the Word of God. We're both committed to the gospel. We're both committed to Christ. We're both committed to the church. That's the good part of it all.

But there are differences that we bring in some very practical ways. Let me hit five of them for you really quickly. As we walk through these, these are some practical expressions of how it is a particular perspective influences the way you see some of these things. For instance, the very basic question of God's people. How do we understand who are God's people? What is the relationship between the Jewish people, between Israel and the church? Are they one and the same? Or are they different? Should we see them as being different? What about God's plan?

Secondly, it leads us to differences with regards to God's plan. Is there is going to be a future literal millennial reign of Christ on the earth? Or is that to be understood in a spiritual sense that it's perhaps already happened? It is happening in heaven. It is being fulfilled in Christ and the church. There are differences with regard to how God's plans are to be worked out.

Even with regard to God's promises, thirdly. God's promises. Are there Old Testament promises that God made to Israel that have not yet been fulfilled? Or have they been fulfilled in Christ? Or are they being fulfilled right now in the church? That's going to be very impactful for how you understand Romans 11. It's basically asking the question is there still a future for the nation of Israel? The church. Did the church begin in the Old Testament with Adam? Or did the church begin in the New Testament on the

day of Pentecost in the book of Acts? That's two very different beginning points with lots of ramifications for how you understand and interpret Scripture.

Then this very basic one of just life in the church. Life in the church. Is there to be an observance in some way of the Sabbath? Are we in some respects still under the Mosaic law? Any part of the Mosaic law? Is the Mosaic law still the guiding light for the church and believers today? Or not. Do we baptize infants or do we baptize people on the basis of their statement of faith? Do we see elders as being present day priests of the Old Testament, deacons as being a picture of Levites in the Old Testament? Do we bring our offerings and call them tithes and put them in the storehouse of the church? Do we call this a sanctuary? Is this a tabernacle as some churches refer to it? Is it a worship center? All of those words and terms do have some meaning and some influence with regard to how we understand these issues.

You might be asking right now what in the world does really all of this have to do with Romans 11? I thought we were studying Romans 11. My answer to you is it has everything to do with how we understand Romans 11. Your understanding again of how you see the storyline of the Bible playing out with regard to Israel, the nations, and the church is going to be impacted by how you see Romans 11. Let's go to Romans 11. We're not going to dive into the verses but I want to give you an overview of what's coming in the weeks ahead.

There are three things in particular that we want to touch on in this 11<sup>th</sup> chapter overview. The first is the theme. The theme. The theme of Romans 11 could be asked in the form of the question: "Has God rejected Israel? Is God finished with His people Israel?" If you've been with us in our study to this point, especially of Romans 1 through 8, you know that in Romans 1 through 8, the apostle Paul is basically doing an exposition in Romans 1 through 8 of Habakkuk's statement in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter and the 4<sup>th</sup> verse that the just shall live by faith. The theme of Romans is the just shall live by faith. Paul takes that concept from Habakkuk, the just shall live by faith, and as he brings it over into the book of Romans, he literally in the Greek text it says the just by faith shall live. That's Romans 1 to 8. The just by faith shall live.

Romans 1:1 to Romans 3:20 Paul is dealing with the whole idea of who the just are. Who are the righteous and what did he conclude? There ain't nobody righteous.

No, not one. He gets to the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter. There is none righteous; no, not one. In those first three chapters, he is dealing with the righteous. Then, he steps into that next category of faith. The just by faith shall live. Beginning at chapter 3:21 through 5:21, he dives into this great exposition of the doctrine of justification. He comes to that 5<sup>th</sup> chapter therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. He zeroes in on this great doctrine of justification from 3:21 to 5:21. The righteous by faith shall live. Then you get to chapter 6, 7, and 8 and it's how to live. In chapter 6, 7, and 8 he sets forth the doctrines of sanctification and the ultimate of glorification as you get to the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter.

Now here's the interesting thing. You walk your way through those eight chapters. The just by faith shall live. You're like, Paul, you haven't hardly said a word about the Jewish people. Here is the church of Rome 57 A.D. perhaps when they get this letter. This church started out, as we said many times, almost entirely Jewish. Through persecution of the Roman Emperor, the Jews fled Jerusalem, left behind what was then a largely Gentile church, and now they have returned and it is again a mixed group although probably predominantly or more so Gentile. But there are Jews and Gentiles. They're hearing Paul give this exposition of the just by faith shall live and this great recounting of all these wonderful promises of what God is going to do.

Somebody at some point says Paul, I've got a question. I've loved all that you said. I'm greatly encouraged by this promise keeping God. I just have a question. Why are so few Jews believing this wonderful gospel that you're always talking about? How are we to understand all of these Old Testament promises to the people of God when it seems that they are largely unresponsive to what God is doing in the world? Paul steps in in chapters 9, 10, and 11 to this great theodicy, this great defense of God and His purposes. He says good question. Here let me take a little bit of a break, not a parenthesis we said, but let me take a break and step into this because it's relevant to what I'm teaching. 9, 10 and 11 is all about God's dealings with the nation of Israel. The theme of Romans is this matter of the just shall live by faith. As Paul is going to develop this, he's going to be helping us to answer this question. How we answer the question determines our understanding of the future.



When we think of this theme, the just shall live by faith and its relationship to the Jewish people, Paul starts off in verse 1: "I ask then, has God rejected His people?" He finally has broached the question straight on. Chapter 11 verse 1. And the answer back, and it's a warm-up for next week, is *me genoita*. You've got your Greek text in front of you and you know that he is going to shout back "may it never be!" Perish the thought. It couldn't possibly happen. That's what he is going to tell us next Sunday, Lord willing. How we answer that question determines our understanding of these future events.

People can answer that question in one of three ways. Some are going to answer and say everything that God has promised will yet come about. That's where I'm staking my position. Everything that God has promised is going to yet come to pass. A second group – remember they love God, they love His Word, they love the church, they love Christ – they look at this and they say no, God has abandoned ... maybe, that's too harsh ... God has forsaken, God has set aside, however you want to say that, the promises have been canceled. Because of sin, the promises have been canceled. They would understand these Old Testament promises to have been conditional. If you will, then I will. There are promises like that, aren't there? There are promises like that. All within the Mosaic covenant there are promises like that. But I would suggest to you that the overriding covenant, the Abrahamic covenant, was God's unconditional promise to Israel saying you are My people. You're Mine, no matter. Here would be an understanding that says no, God is finished with Israel. The third one is a kind of a counterpart to that which says the Old Testament promises are fulfilled in the church or they're fulfilled in Christ. There is a keeping of the promises but not to the nation of Israel per se.

We are confronted then with this question: Who are His people? Who are His people? Look at verse 1. "I ask then, has God rejected His people?" Who are His people? That was one of his first fundamental questions. Who are His people? Is Israel distinct from the church? Or is the church and Israel just one in the same, just in different covenants and different parts of our Bible? Old Testament/New Testament. I think the answer is given to us in chapter 10 verse 21. We've mentioned in the past that some of our chapter breaks aren't at the best spot. They were added later. They weren't a part of God's giving us His Word. Chapter 10 verse 21 says, "But of Israel He says,

‘All day long I've held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people’”. It's Israel who are His people. That's the answer to the question. Verse 1. “I asked then, has God rejected His people?” who are His people? His people are the nation of Israel.

Listen to what Jeremiah says back in Jeremiah chapter 31 and in verse 35: “Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar, the Lord of hosts is His name. If this fixed order departs from before Me, declares the Lord, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before Me forever.” That was God's promise. The heavens themselves would have to undergo some great cataclysm, but still yet God would be faithful to His people. That's the theme. The theme of this 11<sup>th</sup> chapter is going to center around the question: Is God finished with His people Israel?

The content of this chapter then breaks out like this. God's rejection of Israel is partial. It's not total. That'll be the first 10 verses. The first 10 verses will speak to that, that God's rejection is partial. It is not a total. In the past and even now there has always been a remnant. Look at Romans 9:27. Remember: “and Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved.” There's always been a remnant, hasn't there? We're a remnant today. Just think of the 6.8 billion people in the world today and the believing community is a teeny tiny small remnant of humanity in that sense. God says there's a remnant and he's going to remind us in that 5<sup>th</sup> verse just as Elijah looked around and said where is everybody? I'm all alone. God says no, you're not. There's a whole bunch of you. there's a remnant that I have among the nations.

Secondly, the rejection is temporary. It's not permanent. And that will be 11 through 24. Paul is going to tell us two important things. He's going to remind us that the rejection has brought blessing to the nations to the Gentiles. We step in to some deep theological truths, but look at chapter 11 verse 11. “So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles so as to make Israel jealous.” We saw that last week. Verse 12. “now if their trespass means riches for the world and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean?” we as Gentiles because Israel has undergone this period of discipline and being set aside, we as Gentiles largely most

of us here, a couple of you may be Jewish in your heritage, but most of us are Gentiles. We step in to blessing because God has set aside for this time His people and He has brought us in to this blessing.

Then he gives us this added word of warning in 11:18. He reminds us yes, you've received blessing. Verse 18. "Do not be arrogant towards the branches if you are. Remember it is not you who supports the root, but the root that supports you." Remember, he says to us. Listen, you Gentiles, you been brought into blessing, but don't for a moment become arrogant and proud about your status and standing before God. No, don't do that. That was the very thing, it was the very spirit of pride that hindered the Jewish people from responding positively to the gospel. So, he says, don't do that. Don't repeat what they have done, but rather maintain the spirit of humility.

Then thirdly, there will be this final restoration. In verses 25 to 36, God's covenant will be kept. God's mercy will be realized. Wow! I can't wait to get to the end of chapter 11 because God's glory will be magnified in those final amazing climactic verses of this chapter.

Then, there is thirdly this continuing tension. There's this tension that's been with us all through these chapters. Chapter 9 was God's sovereignty. His choosing of Israel. God saying in no uncertain terms I've chosen you. that's right. Jacob, I have loved you. I loved you when you were still in your mother's womb. Jacob, I loved you before you did anything good or anything bad. I had set my love upon you. I chose you, Jacob, and from you, Jacob, was going to come the people that I have chosen for Myself. God's divine electing purposes. chapter 9.

In chapter 10 we have Israel's rejection of God's righteousness and Israel in effect saying back to God, You may have chosen us but we're not choosing You. We reject You. We're not accepting Your Savior, Your Messiah. It's a picture of human responsibility. It is Paul's way of saying don't blame God. I know there's a tension here. I know that God has spoken of His sovereign electing purposes. Chapter 10 was written to say to us but don't you dare start accusing God of being unfair in this process because He'll have none of it because we are responsible before God. You say I don't understand that, and I think that's okay. I don't understand it either. We haven't been asked to understand it. Here it is. It's taught. Believe it. Read it. Accept it.

Chapter 11. Will Israel's sin then defeat God's choice? Will Israel's sin defeat God's choice? Will God find a way to safeguard His purposes? That's what we face in this 11<sup>th</sup> chapter. Paul is going to make clear that Israel's rejection of God did not catch God off guard. It did not surprise Him. He didn't say there went plan A. I better put in place plan B. of course not. God knew from the beginning what would be transpiring within the constraints of His plan. Again, we are left with this remarkable tension of divine sovereignty and human responsibility and the outworking of that in our lives and in our world and literally in the nations of the world. Paul knew that whether you're Jewish or whether you're a Gentile, you're not going to trust in a God who does not keep His Word. You're not going to trust in a God who does not keep His promises. That's why when you come to the end of that 8<sup>th</sup> chapter, you have this glorious presentation of all of these promises that come to the end of that chapter. That is why Paul pauses at that point and says but understand in 9, 10 and 11 God's purposes are yet to be realized. He is yet working out His plan. His promises are grounded in His character. God's Word is trustworthy. It is to be believed and held on to.

I ask you this morning, what do we take away? Now more than ever we need to know God's promises. Now more than ever we need to believe God's promises. Now more than ever we need to be resting in those promises that God has given to us. It was GK Chesterton who 100 years ago said, "There is one thing that the world does. It wobbles." The world wobbles. We're living, my friends, in a wobbly world. We're living in a wobbly world. In the midst of this world that is filled with turmoil and war and upheaval and everything that is imaginable that would seek to rob us of our peace and of our trust in God, God reminds us that while the world may be wobbling His Word is anchored to His character. His word is anchored to who He is. He cannot and will not deny Himself. He will be faithful to His promises and to His word.

My friends, I commend to you this morning this God, this covenant keeping God, this promise keeping God. I commend Him to you this morning. I hope you know Him in a personal way. I hope you know Him through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. If you do not, and if your heart is troubled, if your heart is anxious, God has a better way. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your path. One of the things that He would love to

do this morning is He would love to direct your attention to the glorious gospel of His Son Jesus.

Jesus, as the Son of God, left the glory of heaven came to this wobbly world, and died on the cross for my sin and yours. But if you and I will believe that and trust that and let go of our human efforts and our works and say God, I can't do it but thank You that You have done everything for me. God will forgive you. He will give to you the gift of eternal life.

Let's pray. Gracious Father, this glorious gospel that comes to us and Jesus reminds us again and again of the grace and mercy of our God towards us. It reminds us again and again that You are a promise keeping God. It reminds us again and again that Your Word and Your promises are anchored to Your character. We are grateful for that, Father. I pray that by Your Spirit even this morning someone who's listening would put their faith and their trust in Jesus alone as their Savior, that would have their sins forgiven and would enter into life that is everlasting. We pray in Jesus's name, amen.