

The Book of Romans
11:1-10
04/03/2019 Wednesday PM

Introduction

- In **Romans 9:6** Paul said, “It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.”
- God had made promises to Israel and he was certainly going to deliver on those promises, Paul was explaining what those promises did not mean.
- Specifically, God did not guarantee salvation for all the physical descendants of Israel and he did not limit himself to simply the Jews, but also to the Gentiles as well.
- Paul used **Romans 9:30-10:21** to explain the exclusion of Jews and inclusion of Gentiles and now he is ready to explore what God’s promise to Israel does mean.

Romans 11:1-10

¹I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. ²God 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"? ⁴And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal." ⁵So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. ⁶And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace. ⁷What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened, ⁸as 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." ⁹And David says: "May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. ¹⁰May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever."

- **V.1** – The trigger for Paul’s question in this verse, “Did God reject his people?” is his condemnation of Israel in **9:30-10:21**.
 - Paul has claimed that Israel stumbled over the rock of Christ. (**9:33**)
 - They willfully turned away from God’s righteousness in Christ. (**10:3**)
- Did that mean that Israel now forfeited any claim on God’s promises? “By no means!”
- Paul goes on to reassure the people by reminding them that he is himself an Israelite from the tribe of Benjamin.
- **V.2-3** - He follows up his claims in **v.1** by stating that “God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew.”
 - As in **8:29**, the verb “foreknew” (*proginosko*) means “choose ahead of time.” Here Paul is speaking of the Jews as a whole.
- God knew the Jews would be unfaithful to him; however he still chose them to be his people.
- Paul then reminds his readers of a time when all Israel had deserted God, but God had preserved a remnant.
- After Elijah’s stunning demonstration of God’s power over Baal’s prophets at Mount Carmel, Elijah fled for his life from Queen Jezebel. She had already a great number of the prophets of God by that time.
- At that time Elijah cried out to God, “Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me?”
- Elijah thought that he was the only prophet left, however he was wrong.
- **V.4** – God answered Elijah and said, “I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” Hallelujah! God kept a remnant!
- **V.5** – Paul goes on to say, “So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.”
- No matter how grim and hopeless the situation might seem, because of God’s sovereignty we can say with confidence that at the present time there is still a remnant chosen by grace!
- **V.6** – Paul then clarifies yet again that this is on the basis of grace and not works. It is all up to God!
- Salvation is never on the basis of works, but by God’s grace and mercy!
- **V.7** – This verse provides an excellent summary of **Romans 9-11**.
- They had earnestly sought God’s acceptance by doing works of the law (**10:2-3**), but God did not accept them.

- Instead, he accepted “the elect,” which is the remnant chosen through his sovereignty and grace.
- Throughout the Old Testament, God dealt with the people of Israel in two ways:
 1. As individuals
 2. As a corporate community
- At times, God emphasized the responsibility that each person bears for his or her own sins.
- At other times, God emphasized the fact that the entire nation might be affected by the acts of a few.
- Paul uses the name *Israel* to indicate the community of Jews, most of whom rejected Jesus and most of whom were pursuing righteousness under the law.
- The chosen remnant were among the chosen people and they did respond and they did “obtain.”
- The last part of **v.7** says, “the others were hardened.”
- Israel’s failure was foreseen by God and, in fact, brought about by him. (**9:22-23, 33**)
- This “hardening” was confirmation of their inability to understand and their insensitivity to God’s Word and his call.
- When God judged them, he removed their ability to see, hear, and repent so they would experience the consequences of their rebellion.
- However, this hardening is not the same as “rejection;” rather, it confirms their response to God.
- Paul goes on to illustrate this hardening from two passages in Scripture as we will see in the next verses.
- **V. 8** – “⁸as 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." Paul is quoting from **Deuteronomy 29:4** and **Isaiah 29:10**.
- This “stupor” is a kind of numbness that results in blindness (“eyes...could not see”) and deafness (“ears...could not hear.”)
- When people repeatedly refuse to listen to God’s Good News they eventually will be unable to hear and understand it.
- **Vv.9-10** – “⁹And David says: "May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. ¹⁰May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever.""
- These verses are from **Psalms 69:22-23**. This was a psalm that was thought to be prophetic about the suffering of the Messiah.
- Paul turns the curse mentioned here from pointing to Israel’s enemies, to pointing to them directly.
- “Their table” refers to the blessings that God had given them which should have drawn them to him and thus led them to Christ.
- Instead, they became “a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them.”
- Israel’s blessings had led to pride that led them away from God.
- The Jews refused to see God’s truth when it was set before them (**Isaiah 6:9-10**), so they are cursed with eternal blindness and the back-breaking burden of their self-imposed law keeping and regulations, their sins, and their guilt.
- Jesus addressed this blindness with the Pharisees in **John 9:35-41**, “³⁵Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" ³⁶"Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." ³⁷Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." ³⁸Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. ³⁹Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." ⁴⁰Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?" ⁴¹Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.”
- For Jesus, those who claimed to see but could not recognize his true identity were afflicted with the worst possible blindness.

Next Week’s Study

Romans 11:11-24