

God Has Preserved a Remnant of Israel
Romans 11:1-10

Introduction

1. We are in the middle of a five part series on God's plan for Israel from Romans 9-11
2. In week 1 we saw Paul's burden for the salvation of Israel
3. In week 2 we learned that God's plan for Israel did not fail because it is based on His sovereignty
4. In week 3 we learned that salvation is available to Israel through faith in Christ
5. Today we are going to learn about the Remnant

A. God has—in the past, present and future—preserved a remnant of Israel (11:1-6)

1. God has not rejected His people (1): **“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.”**
 - a. Paul begins with a rhetorical question and answers it definitively: No, God has not rejected His people.
 - b. Paul himself is the proof of this
 - c. For good measure, Paul states it definitively (2a): **“God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew.”**
 - 1) Greek προγινώσκω: two primary meanings
 - a) To know beforehand (Acts 26:5; 2 Peter 3:17)
 - b) To choose or select in advance (Romans 8:29; 1 Peter 1:20)
 - 2) Either meaning here is possible, and while both are true in this case Paul is likely emphasizing the sense of God's previous relationship with Israel (e.g. “God has not rejected His people with whom He has had a previous relationship”); This is likely due to the fact that Paul uses a different word to refer to their election or predestination later (ἐκλογή in 7b)
2. Paul provides proof that God has not rejected His people (2-6):
 - a. The first proof is from the past—the story of Elijah (2-4):
 - 1) Summarize the Elijah story (1 Kings 16:29ff.)
 - a) Ahab became King of Israel in the mid 800s BC
 - b) Ahab's wife, Jezebel, was a wicked woman who encouraged the Israelites to worship Baal
 - c) In 1 Kings 17, God sends Elijah to Ahab to punish him with three years of drought
 - d) After the drought ended God sent Elijah back to Ahab, this time in preparation for a confrontation between Elijah and the prophets of Baal
 - e) In 1 Kings 18 we see this amazing display of God's power and judgment at Mt. Carmel to prove who the real God was
 - f) After Elijah has all the false prophets killed, Jezebel sets out to kill Elijah so he flees to a cave in Mt. Horeb
 - g) While there, Elijah bemoans the fact that he alone is left of all of God's prophets, to which God ultimately responds that He has kept 7000 people in Israel that had not bowed the knee to Baal

- 2) Paul quotes part of this story from 1 Kings (Romans 11:2-4): **“Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? 3 “Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE.” 4 But what is the divine response to him? “I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL.”**
 - a) Notice the “I HAVE KEPT” which again emphasizes God’s sovereignty
 - b) Notice also “for Myself”—God chose Israel not for their benefit but for His, though they are blessed as a result

- b. The second proof is from the present (5-6): **“In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God’s gracious choice.”**
 - 1) Define remnant:
 - a) The word refers to a relatively small part of something larger
 - b) Here it refers to a small part of Israel
 - c) Paul used this word in 9:37 (a quote from Isaiah)

 - 2) So, who was this remnant in Paul’s day and in our present day?
 - a. Paul Himself (see verse 1)
 - b. The Apostles, on whom the Church was built, were Jewish believers
 - c. The 3000 Jews that were saved at Pentecost (Acts 2:37-41)
 - d. The Jewish believers found throughout the first century churches
 - e. Messianic Jews are the remnant in our present day

- c. A third proof—though not mentioned in our immediate passage by Paul—is what the Scripture says about the future remnant:
 - 1) Ezekiel 37:1-14
 - 2) Isaiah 11:12-16
 - 3) Zechariah 8:7-8
 - 4) Revelation 7:1-8

- d. I want you to notice something else Paul says about this remnant (5b-6): **“according to God’s gracious choice. 6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.”**
 - 1) Other English translations render 5a this way: **“a remnant chosen by grace”**
 - 2) More literally it reads, **“according to a special choice of grace”**
 - 3) Paul repeats what he did in chapter 9 that God’s plan for Israel is based on His sovereign choice, not on Israel’s work, and is based on grace (6): **“But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.”**
 - 4) He wrote in 9:11 that God did it this way so that His plan for Israel would stand

B. This remnant will be saved, but the rest will be hardened (11:7-10)
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1. These next few verses are some of the most difficult in this passage and parallel what Paul wrote in 9:15 and 18
2. Israel did not obtain what it was seeking—they sought righteousness but failed (7a): **“What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained...”**
 - a. They sought a righteousness based on works (Romans 9:30-33)

- b. They sought a righteousness of their own (Romans 10:1-4)
3. However, there were some who did obtain it (7b): **“but those who were chosen obtained it;”**
- a. Who were/are the **“chosen”**?
- 1) The phrase **“those who were chosen”** is a single Greek noun, ἐκλογή, which refers to something that has been chosen, but it’s in the singular (not plural) so it is referring to the remnant of Israel (e.g. “that which has been chosen”)
 - 2) This is the same word Paul used in 11:5 to refer to the remnant (5): **“a remnant according to God’s gracious choice.”**
 - 3) Most translations use the word **“elect”** here in 7b: **“but the elect obtained it”**
 - 4) So, it’s the remnant of Israel who were chosen by God who obtained what most of Israel did not obtain
- b. What did they obtain? (see Romans 10:8-13)
- 1) Righteousness
 - 2) Salvation
4. The rest of Israel was hardened (7c): **“and the rest were hardened;”**
- a. Define hardened
- 1) From the Greek word **παρώω** meaning to harden or petrify
 - 2) Used as a medical term to refer to a thick covering, callouses
 - 3) Used figuratively in the NT to refer to becoming closed minded, unwilling to listen or learn, spiritually callous
- b. Paul uses the passive voice which places the emphasis on an external cause for the hardening which he then identifies as God (8): **“just as it is written, “GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY.”**
- 1) Paul combines and paraphrases two OT passages--Deut 29:4 and Isa 29:10—which were warnings to Israel and descriptions of the consequences they would face for turning their hearts and minds away from the Lord:
 - a) They became unable to think clearly (11a): the Greek word for stupor here refers to not being able to think clearly because of complete bewilderment
 - b) They became blind (11b)
 - c) They became deaf (11c)
 - d) Isaiah describes this like being given a book that is sealed so that not even the literate can read its contents (Read Isa 29:11-12)
 - 2) There is no way to escape the fact that God clearly hardened/hardens Israel:
 - a) This aligns with Romans 1:24, 26 and esp. 28 (**“God gave them over to a depraved mind”**)
 - b) It also aligns with Romans 9:18 and God’s hardening of Pharaoh
 - c) However, we need to keep in mind that with each of these cases, God’s hardening is a response to sin
 - He gives man over to a depraved mind because he suppresses the truth in unrighteousness and worships the creation over the Creator
 - He hardened pharaoh’s heart because pharaoh hardened his own heart
 - Likewise, He hardened Israel because of their rebellion and disobedience

- d) This is supported by the last two verses of our passage today (9-10): **“David says, “LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP, AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM. 10 “LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT, AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER.”**
- By quoting David from Psalm 69 Paul makes it clear that God’s hardening of Israel is His judgment for their sin (Read Psalm 69-22-28)
 - It is not some willy-nilly game of enie-meenie-minie-moe who am I going to harden today

Conclusion

1. So, we see that God has not failed in His word/promises to Israel
2. In spite of Israel’s disobedience, God has and will preserve a remnant of Israel that will be saved and receive His promises
3. The rest have been and will be hardened as a consequence of their own unbelief and disobedience
4. What do we learn from this?
 - a. First we see the trust-worthiness of God in keeping His Word (if He kept His word to Abraham and Israel, He will keep His word to us)
 - b. Second, we learn that God’s plans cannot be thwarted, not for Israel and not for us
 - c. What He has promised—both temporal and eternal—will come to pass