

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MAY 29TH-30TH, 2021 // BOOK OF ROMANS

A REMNANT (ROMANS 11:1-10)

Paul has been explaining the gospel for the Roman church and wrestling with the question of God's plan for the Jewish people (Romans 9, 10).

- The question might be asked by a thoughtful reader, "If God had a plan for the Jewish people (as the CHOSEN nation), and they rejected their Messiah, does that mean that God has rejected them?"
- The promises God gave to Israel (Gen. 12, 15) certainly seemed unconditional - so does that mean God broke His promise?

Paul asks, "Has God rejected his people?" (vs. 1a)

- Many Christians throughout the ages have embraced a theology that states that because Israel crucified their Messiah, God rejected them and moved on to the Church.
- Sometimes this mindset has led to animosity and hatred towards the Jewish people (the crusades, the renaissance, the reformation, Nazi Lutheranism), other times it's led to an indifference towards seeing them evangelized.

Paul says, "I'm a Jew, and I received Jesus! Therefore God CAN'T be done with all the Jews!" (vs. 1b).

- Paul's radical conversion is seen by many scholars to be a picture of how the nation of Israel will be saved when Jesus returns to establish His Kingdom on the earth (Zech. 12:10-13:1).
- There is a day coming when hardened Israel will see Jesus, recognize Him as Messiah, repent, and receive Him just as Paul did on the road to Damascus.

The ones that God foreknew, and who demonstrated that reality by embracing God's promises personally, still belong to God (vs. 2).

- There is still a "remnant" (a small remaining quantity of something) of believing Israel, just as there was in the days of Elijah (vs. 2-5).
- Elijah was God's prophet during a very dark time in the history of Israel, during the reign of the wicked King Ahab and Queen Jezebel.

Elijah lamented to God that he was the only one left who was truly serving the Lord (vs. 3).

- God replied to him, "I have kept for myself 7,000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal" (vs. 4).
- God's response encouraged Elijah and humbled him to show that he wasn't the only one left!
- In the same way, there was then (and has always been) a small community of ethnic Jews in the Christian Church who embrace Jesus as Messiah- a "remnant" (vs. 5).

This "remnant" of believing Jews God chose according to the election of grace - the free gift of God, not given to them because of performance or their potential (vs. 5b-6).

- Those who were elect among Israel received and responded to the mercy of God by receiving Jesus as Messiah, but the rest were hardened by their rejection of Him (vs. 7).
- This was a fulfillment of Biblical prophecy.

Verses 8-10 are quotations from Isaiah 29 and Psalm 69 that tell us that God can give a "spirit of stupor," "eyes that would not see," and "eyes that are darkened" if He so chooses to do so.

- God delivers us over to our hardness of heart and to this attitude of deadness towards spiritual things if we harden our hearts to His Word and His Son.
- This describes the majority of the nation Israel at this present time- but there is future glorious plan.

GRAFTED IN (ROMANS 11:11-24)

Israel's mostly negative response to Jesus as the message doesn't mean that have fallen away permanently - through their "trespass" salvation has come to the Gentiles (vs. 11a).

- In the book of Acts, the gospel would go first to the Jews, then if they would reject it, it would be preached to the Gentiles.
- Because most Jewish communities rejected it, the gospel message was spread across the Gentile world!

God's plan was for these Gentile believers to make ethnic Jews, "jealous" (vs. 11b).

- This is not intended to be a sinful jealousy- but rather it's that such a loving, close-knit Christian community would be created amongst Gentile believers that Jews would see the closeness they have with God and feel, "jealous."
- That closeness with the God of Israel should be theirs!
- Are we living such lives of closeness to God that others who don't know Him see and feel, "jealous"?

God promised that Israel will be a blessing to the nations - even their rejection of Christ gave "the nations" the opportunity to know the gospel.

- So if their rejection of God blessed the Gentiles, how much more will their obedience?
- At some point in the future, Israel as a nation will come back to God, leading to a worldwide gospel movement - "how much more [blessing] will their full inclusion bring?" (vs. 12-16).

Gentile love of the gospel will eventually cause Israel to be saved - that doesn't mean every single Jewish person alive will become a Christian.

- It does mean that there will be such a massive movement to the gospel that it will seem like a national conversion (vs. 26).
- Some believe this is the 144,000 Jews in Revelation 7 that are appointed as worldwide witnesses to Christ, and many believe that this will be the national return of Israel.

So God still has a plan for Israel! Many Jewish have been saved, are being saved, and even their rejection of Jesus has led to Gentile salvation.

- But the best is yet to come for Israel!
- So we pray for Israel and our Jewish neighbors/friend, we support the people of Israel, and we contribute to gospel work amongst the Jewish people.
- But we also pay close attention in making sure that we don't harden our hearts just as many Jews did towards their Messiah (vs. 17-22).

Paul pictures unbelieving Jews as branches broken off a tree, and other branches "grafted in" to that tree to share the life of that tree (vs. 17-18).

- The Jews are the natural branches that were broken off because of their unbelief, and Gentiles are the "wild olive shoots" grafted into God.
- If God was willing to cut off branches from His own original tree because of their unbelief, why would we (the wild olive shoots) ever think we can get away with the very things that got them removed?

What was it that got the natural branches removed?

- Unbelief expressed in compromise, indifference, taking their promise of salvation for granted, and giving lip service to God while going through the religious motions without their hearts truly belonging to Him.
- So God cut off those branches! And He will also cut you off if you do the same thing (vs. 21-22).
- Only if you maintain your confession of faith and surrender to the end will you be saved (22b).

Many use the doctrine "once saved, always saved" to assure them of salvation even as they're not living with Jesus as Lord.

- Verse 22 and Heb. 3:12-14 make clear to us that "once truly saved, forever following" is a clearer description of what the Bible says about eternal security.
- The evidence of saving faith is not the intensity of emotion at the beginning, but the endurance of that faith over time.

If your faith endures to the end, that's evidence you had salvation you could never lose- but if it doesn't, you never had it to begin with!

- In the end, God will cut off those who don't bear fruit (cultural Jews and Christians that appear to be connected to the life source but aren't), and He will graft natural branches back into the tree (vs. 23-24).
- Beware of compromise, being casual, and being complacent in your spiritual growth - branches connected to the source of life bear fruit!

A PARTIAL HARDENING (ROMANS 11:25-32)

We're not to be "unaware of this mystery"- God has a plan for Israel and His purpose in allowing this "partial hardening" is so that "the fullness of the Gentiles can come in" (vs. 25).

- At the time when all the nations of the earth hear of Jesus as Messiah, God will once again turn the attention of His plan back on Israel so that, "all of Israel will be saved" (vs. 26-27).
- These are ethnic Jews that Paul is referring to.

Some might say that Paul is talking about "spiritual Israel" here- but the entire context makes it clear he's talking about "his kinsmen" & "brothers."

- This is clearest statement we have in the Bible that God is not finished with Israel as a nation or a distinct ethnic group.
- Zechariah 12:10-11 and Matthew 23:39 tell us that Jesus will not return until Israel responds to God through Jesus Christ.

In regards to the gospel, the Jews were "enemies,"- but when it came to their election as God's people, they were still called, "beloved for the sake of their forefathers" (vs. 28).

- The gifts and calling God has upon Israel to be a light to the nations are "irrevocable" (vs. 29).
- God doesn't give up on His people and most certainly doesn't give up on us- redemption and restoration are always available to us.

We're cautioned as Gentiles to remember where we came from and where God has promised to take the Jewish people (vs. 30-32).

- One day in the Kingdom as the glory of the Lord covers the earth, it will be God's mercy that's praised by both Jews & Gentiles alike - both groups have been/are/will be disobedient, but God's mercy has been, is and will be shown to both!

WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD? (ROMANS 11:33-36)

As Paul considers God's sovereign, perfect plan to save both Jew & Gentile, he breaks into spontaneous praise.

- Who could have planned the whole scenario with Israel, the Gentiles, and the Church as God has planned it?
- God has shown such mercy, wisdom, knowledge, in His unsearchable judgments and inscrutable ways (vs. 33).

We can't give God advice or even begin to understand the perfection of His thoughts (vs. 34, Isaiah 40:13).

- We can't ever make a God a debtor to us - we can't out-give Him or earn His grace (vs. 35, Job 41:11).
- No one can ever do anything that would cause God to have to repay a debt to them - God gives grace and mercy, not paychecks.

This perfect plan is "from Him"- we didn't come up with the plan of salvation or the gospel message, God did!

- This perfect plan is "through Him"- Jesus is the instrument of salvation that brings redemption.
- This perfect plan is "to Him"- we're reconciled to God and brought into a relationship with Him.
- He's the only one deserving of all glory for all eternity (vs. 36).

GOD IS NOT FINISHED.