

“God’s Continuing Plan for the Jewish People”
Romans 11:1-15

WHERE WE ARE IN ROMANS:

1 – 5	6-8	9-11	12-16
Justification	Sanctification	Election	Living
by	by	unto	by
Faith	Faith	Faith	Faith

THE REASON FOR CHAPTERS 9 THROUGH 11:

Paul has asserted that the Christian can have great confidence that nothing can separate him/her from Christ’s love because God has an eternal purpose to glorify all those that he chose to be in Christ (8:28-30). This great assurance might be called into question because so many Israelites have rejected Jesus as the Messiah. Has God’s purpose for Israel failed? If it has, how can the Christian have any assurance that God’s purpose for him/her will not fail also? Paul responds by showing that God’s purpose has not failed (9:6), for he has elected (i.e. chosen) some Jews to faith in Jesus while others he has not (9:14-16). At the same time, people are responsible for their unbelief (9:30-10:4). In God’s wise plan, only a few Jews believe in Christ now as the gospel goes to the Gentiles, but in the future, most Jews will believe in Jesus (11:1-32).

I. A Remnant of Jews Believe the Gospel at Present, 11:1-10.

A. Paul is living proof that God has not completely rejected the Jewish people, 11:1.

1. “I ask, then” = In light of the persistent disobedience by so many Jews, one might well think that God would completely reject the Jews as his people.
2. “Has God rejected his people?” is written in such a way in Greek that it expects a negative answer.
 - a. This idea of one questioning if God would completely reject his people and then being assured that God would never do that is an echo from many Old Testament passages, such as 1 Sam. 12:22; Ps. 94:14; and Jer. 31:37.
 - b. In addition, the question is answered with the strongest possible negation: “By no means!”
3. Paul points to himself as evidence that God has not completely rejected the Jews, for he himself is a Jew!
 - a. This seems to be the point of giving his pedigree.
 - b. “I” is emphatic in the Greek text, and this underlines his point of him being evidence that God has not rejected his people.
 - i. The apostle Paul was as stubborn as any Jew in rejecting the gospel before his conversion!
 - c. In addition to the “mere” fact that Paul was a Jew, he may also have in mind that he, as a Jew and an apostle to the Gentiles, is fulfilling the role that God had given to the Jews to be a light to the Gentiles.

B. The situation in Paul’s day is similar to what it was in the day of Elijah, 11:2-5.

1. The idea of “foreknowing” refers back to the idea of God having a sovereign plan for his people (cf. 8:29), 11:2.
 - a. Some think that the object of “foreknow” here is the entire Jewish nation, but in context it seems to be the remnant. God has already shown that there is an Israel within Israel, and to be faithful to his promises to Abraham’s descendants, he need only continue his covenant with some of them and not all of them.
 - b. “God has not rejected his people” is highlighted in the Greek text by not having a conjunction to begin the sentence. (Almost every Greek sentence has a conjunction to relate it to the previous one, and when an author does not include a conjunction, it is for the purpose of highlighting that statement.)
2. Paul points to the illustration of Elijah in the Old Testament to prove his point, 11:3-4.
 - a. Elijah (1 Kings 19) thought he was the only true worshipper of God left, yet God had preserved 7,000 men to be faithful to him!
 - i. “I have kept for myself” = Notice that the existence of a remnant is attributed to God’s work (i.e his sovereign grace).
3. “So too at the present time” = Paul here directly compares Elijah’s situation to the present day; the vast majority of the Jews have rejected the gospel, but, owing to the sheer grace of God, there is a faithful remnant who believes.
 - a. “Chosen by grace” = The believing Jews can have no sense of self-righteousness towards the unfaithful majority, for it is God’s working that they have believed the gospel.
4. **DISCUSSION:** In what ways is God’s dealing with the Jews here analogous to his dealing with many Christians? How should the example of Paul and Elijah encourage us when we are in a situation where we think we are the only one that is trying to follow Christ?

C. It is God’s grace alone that has preserved a faithful remnant, 11:6-10.

1. Paul indicates that the existence of a remnant is not owing to any human effort, 11:6.
 - a. Sometimes Paul opposes “works” with “faith,” but at other times, such as here, “works” is in contrast to any human contribution whatsoever.

