

Romans

Romans Chapter Eleven

Romans 11:1-10

April 24, 2011

This is lesson number **87** in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

The Theme of the Letter

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ” Romans 1:16-17

Title: Has God Completely Forsaken Israel?

Open your Bibles to Romans Chapter 11.

After dealing with the absolute **sovereignty of God** in salvation in Romans 9 and the **method of God’s providence** in reaching the lost with the Gospel then in Romans 10 we arrive at Romans 11 with the question, “What about the Jews?”

My approach to the exposition of Romans Chapter 11 was to go to the “bottom line” and deal with verse 26 first, which I did last Sunday.

“And so all Israel will be saved...”

The “bottom line” is that “all Israel” cannot be Jews because they are Jews!

An important point is to keep in mind that “saved” means “justified.” Justification is the opposite of condemnation!

God does not promise to justify Jews because they are Jews!

As ridiculous as this may sound, men have actually taught that God is going to resurrect all of the Jews who have died and together with those living, will finally save them all. This would have to include even Judas Iscariot!

Well if not all of the Jews maybe an entire generation of Jews?

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Heeding the warning in 9:20 not to “reply against God” I simply ask if God ever saved [justified] all the Jews or even a majority of the Jews of a single generation?

How then could the salvation of a single generation be “all Israel”?

If we saw anything in the last lesson it is that God has no respect of persons and God has never justified anyone on the basis of their **birth certificate**.

God has chosen a people before the foundation of the world, those whom He **foreknew**. **Romans 8:29-30** And God foreknew Gentiles as well as Jews.

“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”

You must not come to Romans 11:26 with preconceived notions of a future restoration of national Israel and simply ignore what God’s Word says about how and why God justifies a sinner, any sinner, Gentile or Jew.

And so my interpretation of Romans 11:26 is that “all Israel” is indeed the **“Israel of God”** and is the **church** as referred to in Galatians 6:16 and is made up of **elect Gentiles** and the **elect remnant of Jews** from all periods of this present age from Adam until our Lord Jesus Christ returns at the end of this present age and consummates the “age to come”.

Search your Bible and you will find only this present age and the age to come. All of the other “dispensations” must be brought to the Bible and imposed on it because they are not in the Bible!

The correct way to read 11:26 **is not** “until the fullness of the Gentiles” **and then** “all Israel will be saved” with the idea that **after** the Gentiles **then** the Jews. But rather read it “until the fullness of the Gentiles” **and in this manner** “all Israel will be saved”.

Let me say a word about ‘until’.

The word “until” does not necessarily mean that an action ceases.

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E.g., Most people read Romans 11:25-26 “hardening in part has happened to Israel **until** the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so [**then, after the Gentiles**] all Israel will be saved...” Will they be “unhardened”?

But take that same meaning of **until** in Matthew 22:44 quoting Psalm 110:1

**The LORD said to my Lord,
Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.**

Can that possibly mean that **after** the enemies of Christ are made His footstool that Christ is no longer at the “right hand” of God the Father?
The “right hand” means power and authority.

So it is quite legitimate to read 11:25-26 “until the fullness of the Gentiles” **and in this manner** “all Israel will be saved”. The action continues with Gentiles and Jews being saved in the church universal.

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But even though I have given you my conclusion, there is much for us to learn in Chapter 11. My breakdown of Chapter 11 is as follows:

Vs. 1-10 The election of grace.
Vs. 11-15 How God brings good out of evil.
Vs. 16-24 The single olive tree.
Vs. 25-32 The covenant.
Vs. 33-36 The Doxology.

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Vs. 1-10 The election of grace.

Romans 11:1-10

I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, 3 "LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life"? 4 But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

5 Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 6 And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work. 7 What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded.

8 Just as it is written:

**"God has given them a spirit of stupor,
Eyes that they should not see
And ears that they should not hear,
To this very day."**

9 And David says:

**" Let their table become a snare and a trap,
A stumbling block and a recompense to them.
10 Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see,
And bow down their back always."**

Don't you love the way Paul makes his arguments and proves his points? He uses the OT Scriptures {Romans 1:2}. He asks an obvious question, at least he asks a question that should be asked by anyone paying attention, and then he answers the question with an example from the OT Scriptures.

1 I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not!

For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

The question then is "What about national or ethnic Israel?"

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When Paul comes to the end of Chapter 10 he quotes Moses and Isaiah.

Romans 10:19-21

19 But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: [Deut 32:21]
"I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation,
I will move you to anger by a foolish nation."

20 But Isaiah is very bold and says: [Isa 65:1-2]

"I was found by those who did not seek Me;
I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me."

21 But to Israel he says:
"All day long I have stretched out My hands
To a disobedient and contrary people."

The Gentiles who are a 'no-nation' have been brought in as the children of God and Israel continues to be a disobedient and contrary people.

Then what about national Israel? Will God keep His promise to Israel?

How could you imagine that God would not honor His Word?

Your problem, says Paul, and the reason you even ask this question about national Israel is because you are ignoring the **"election of grace."**

If God justified the Jews or ethnic Israel **because** they were Jews, it would not be grace!

So, says Paul, look at me! I am a Jew! My pedigree is as good as any other Jew. I am a Hebrew of the Hebrews. My parents were Jews. I can read and speak Hebrew. I am a child of Abraham after the flesh, of the tribe of Benjamin. You can't be more Jewish than I am, says Paul. So God has not cast away His people and I am proof of that.

Your problem, says Paul, is that you thought the children of the flesh were the children of Abraham but I have already told you that **"those who are of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed."**

Romans 9:8

God did not justify me, says Paul, **because** I am a Jew.

Why **did** God justify you Paul? Because I am one of God's elect!

And here I stand, says Paul, as proof that God has not cast away His people!

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2a God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew.

God's people are those whom He foreknew!

And those people whom He foreknew are **individual** Gentiles and **individual** Jews, for there is no difference!

So don't come to the place [verse 26] where in few moments I will write, "And so all Israel will be saved" says Paul, and imagine that I have changed my mind or, even worse, to have the Holy Spirit contradict Himself!

2 God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew.

Where have we seen the word "foreknew"?

Romans 8:29-30

"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."

Do you see how simple it is to interpret verse 26 if you do not ignore the context of the Scripture? The only way a person can make "all Israel" mean only the Jews is to bring that preconceived notion to the verse because it is not in the context of Romans 9, 10, and 11. You must compare Scripture with Scripture in order to interpret Scripture.

Paul has told us that God's people are those whom He foreknew and that **"God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew."**

And then Paul continues with another reference to OT Scripture:

2b Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, 3 "LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life"? 4 But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

Why does Paul refer to Elijah?

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Paul is proving that God's people are not the children of Abraham according to the flesh but that the purpose of God according to election might stand.

Elijah was the fiery prophet who confronted the wicked King Ahab and his evil queen Jezebel. The story of Elijah stands for God's rejection of Israel because of their spiritual adultery with idols. Israel rejected God and God gave them up and Elijah was God's messenger of condemnation.

Elijah is a prophet but more than that he is a **prophetic character**. About 400 years before the Lord Jesus came into the world to save sinners Malachi prophesied:

“Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”

Malachi 4:5-6

This is fairly complex because Paul refers to Elijah and when Malachi prophesies that Elijah is to come back Paul also ties in prophesies of Isaiah and Joel. The only point that you need to get is that Paul's Jewish hearers would make all the appropriate associations and know that he is referring to the rejection of Israel foretold by the OT prophets.

Our Lord Jesus said that John the Baptist was the **spiritual** fulfillment of a **literal** prophecy. Elijah came back as John the Baptist and judgment fell on Israel because they rejected the promised Messiah.

The life of Elijah was prophetic. That is why Paul refers to Elijah. Elijah stands for the rejection of Israel by God!

Matthew 11:13-15

13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.14 And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come.15 He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

When you read the story of Elijah in 1 Kings 17-19 you might be puzzled by the flight of Elijah from the threat of Jezebel. Elijah had just faced Ahab and had exercised great faith in God as he had defeated “450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table.”

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Then Elijah flees from the threat of Jezebel.

Elijah stands in the mouth of a cave: wind, earthquake, and fire. God is not in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire, but He is a “still small voice.”

Why, then would he flee into the wilderness at the threat of Jezebel?

Charles Alexander taught me the answer to this dilemma.

Elijah was not a coward as some Bible scholars have said.

One man writes, “a craven coward...unworthy renegade...paralyzed with terror...drifting on he knows not where...demoralized and panic-stricken...lost all confidence in God and trust in man...THE CROUCHING COWARD IN THE WILDERNESS”

Nowhere does the Bible assign guilt to Elijah for fleeing for his life.

God does not translate cowards!

Since when is a man a coward if he escapes from danger?

Did Jacob run away from Esau?

Did Moses escape after he killed the Egyptian?

Did David flee from King Saul?

Did Joseph and Mary take the baby Jesus into Egypt to escape Herod’s slaughter of the innocents?

It is not a necessary part of the exposition of the text that we are dealing with but each of these examples of men fleeing from danger has a **prophetic** meaning. These men were not cowards they stand as **prophetic figures**.

And so does Elijah stand as a prophetic figure.

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The following is a quote from Charles Alexander on Elijah.

“Elijah was raised up to portray in advance the awful judgment upon a nation which already in his day had repudiated their God and given only too sure a sign that it would in due time repudiate the Just One of whom they became the betrayers and murders.

Elijah was translated that he should not see death, solely to enforce upon the nation the warning that his ministry was by no means ended, but would be resumed with even greater significance by one who was to come “in the spirit and power of Elijah” preparing the way for the glorious Savior and Redeemer, our Lord Christ, Emmanuel.”

Elijah you are not alone, "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

Elijah you were not alone then and God's promise to His children [true Israel] whom He foreknew is sure.

How do you know that?

5 Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

There was a remnant in the day of Elijah and even now there remnant and it is only by grace and never because of a **birth certificate**.

6 And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.

How many ways do men confuse grace and works?

Let me give you some ways to decide if something is works.

Grace is what only God can do and works are what men can do!

If you can control it is not grace! Be it baptisms or decisions.

If you can claim any merit in it is not grace!

“God saved me because ____”

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If it is anything but Christ alone by faith alone it is not grace!

Good works are as certain as the effectual call of God's elect.
In fact, if you do not produce good works you are not saved.
Can I back that up? Ephesians 2:8-10

**7 What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks;
but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded.**

I'm sorry to repeat my **astonishment** but how can anyone interpret "all Israel" in verse 26 to mean the nation of Israel when Paul clearly says the nation as a people have been hardened and rejected and only the elect remnant will be saved?

Isaiah 29:10
8 Just as it is written:

"God has given them a spirit of stupor,

**Eyes that they should not see
And ears that they should not hear,
To this very day."**

Psalm 69:22-23

9 And David says:

**" Let their table become a snare and a trap,
A stumbling block and a recompense to them.
10 Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see,
And bow down their back always."**

Again I call on Charles Alexander and his commentary on Romans 11.

"The apostle uses the case of Elijah to prove that true Israel always existed as a remnant, and not as a nation [vs.2-4]. The nation was, and is, and always will be, composed on the one hand of those who are elected to glory, and on the other, those who are 'blinded' [hardened].

[Cf. Romans 9:18]

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“The hardening of earthly Israel because of unbelief is confirmed by quotations from Isaiah 29:10 and Psalm 69:22-23. God gives them the spirit of slumber that they should not see nor hear. Their table [that is the OT privileges, ordinances and promises] becomes a snare and a trap and a stumbling block to them. Thus was the unbelieving nation ensnared by its own privileges. They relied upon their birth certificates instead of repentance and faith. They proudly flaunted their national origin in Abraham - “We be Abraham’s children and were never in bondage to any man” John 8:33. This their boast became their grave and will remain so, though every evangelical and futurist philosopher the world has ever seen, stand outside their tomb and shout down into the darkened vault the very texts of Scripture that put them there.

“This is what our opponents [by this Alexander means those who predict a restoration of national Israel] have been doing all our lifetime and long before, and in the process have perverted the true study and understanding of Holy Scripture till it becomes impossible for most of our preachers to make any pretense at expounding the spiritual riches of the prophets.”

This commentary by Charles Alexander was published over 40 years ago and the copy that I have has no date on it. Mr. Alexander has gone to be with the Lord because he was an old man when I last talked with him in the late 1960’s. He was mercifully spared the frenzy of the “Left Behind” series.

I am not trying to be mean-spirited about the “Left Behind” series of books but they represent the view that in spite of what Paul writes in Romans and Galatians and Ephesians about the election of grace that God will restore the Jewish nation in the future.

In the face of all the Scriptures that say that God does not make a distinction between Jew and Gentile as to their justification men still believe that God will save the Jews because they are Jews, based on their birth certificates!

If you can tell me how that is consistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, I would like to hear it. The theme of Romans:

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ” Romans 1:16-17

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Are you a child of God? Do you really need a Savior? Does God's holy law justly condemn you? Jesus Christ saves sinners do you qualify for salvation?

A man wondered, "Why would God save me?"

Then he realized that God saves sinners.

"Why wouldn't God save me, "the sinner?"