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**I. Rejected But Not Forsaken**

{Romans 10:16 - 11:10}

**Introduction:** This final portion of chapter 10 continues to deal with the issue of Israel’s stumbling in unbelief (9:30-33). Israel had pursued a law of righteousness but could not attain it, because they pursued it not by faith but by works. Zealous for God, their zeal was not based on true knowledge (10:2). They sought to establish their own righteousness, because they would / could not submit to God’s righteousness (10:3).

Today’s passage jumps us into the argument mid-stream, as Paul heavily relies upon the prophecies of Isaiah to strengthen his previous line of reasoning at the end of chapter 9. Then in chapter 11, he sets forth two questions in answer to one main issue. This study will only include Paul’s thinking on the 1st of these.

1. **Israel’s Unbelief {10:16-21}**

* It is undeniable that Israel had heard the Gospel message. The problem was that their hearing had not been joined to true understanding, a genuine trust, or a living faith. These only occur as God’s Spirit enables the human heart to embrace the ***“word of Christ”*** (10:17). In contrast to believing Gentiles, together with a remnant of believing Jews, the nation Israel had outright rejected Christ and spurned the Gospel.

1. **God spoke to Israel though they remained in their stubborn unbelief (10:16-18)**

1. Chapter 10 is pregnant with references to the O.T. [***v.5*** – Lev 18:5 ; ***vs.6,7,8*** – Deut 30:12-14 ; ***v.11*** – Isa 28:16 (Rom 9:33) ; ***v.13*** – Joel 2:32 ; ***v.15*** – Isa 52:7 ; ***v.16*** – Isa 53:1 ; ***v.18*** – Ps 19:4 ; ***v.19*** – Deut 32:21 ; ***vs.20, 21*** – Isa 65:1,2]. Some of these are ‘broadly’ referred to as Paul marshals a strong argument to show how God has revealed the gospel message to the Israelite people throughout the OT.
2. In this section Paul quotes Psalm 19:4, which certifies knowledge of God through general revelation, but Paul uses it in a context that distinctively points to God’s special revelation in the Gospel.

*“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.* ***Their voice goes out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world.”*** (Ps 19:4)

All Israel had heard the voice of ***“those who preach the good news”*** (10:15), or again,***“… the word of faith that we proclaim”***(10:8). And clearly the Israelites had***“… not all obeyed the Gospel”*** (10:16), for the nation Israel foolishly remained in stubborn unbelief, though privileged to be the 1st to hear the message and the 1st to encounter the Christ.

1. Paul lets us know that not all Israel will be “saved” – among the “elect”. Israel largely remained a disobedient and obstinate people. Paul points us back to Isaiah’s commission where it becomes plain that God sent the prophet to a people who would **“*be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving*”**(Isa 6:9). The hindrance to Gospel evangelism focuses the problem squarely upon the unbelieving hearts of Israel, those who heard but in no measure were prepared to accept it.
2. **In contrast to Israel’s hardness of heart, the Gospel is revealed to the Gentiles (10:19-21)**
3. Paul makes a clear distinction between unbelieving Israel and those Gentiles who became faithful believers. First he uses Deut 32:21 to refer to believing Gentiles, ***“those who are not a nation”*** (10:19) and then Isaiah 65:1 in a similar manner, ***“those who did not seek me”*** (10:20). But when Paul quotes Isaiah 65:2, ***“a disobedient and contrary people”***,he has in full view the unbelieving nation of Israel (10:21). Israel appears as being in knowledgeable rejection of God’s call. (Com. Mark 4:12ff).
4. Appreciably, Israel’s rejection was not due to the impotency of the message, for we know that ***“faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ.”***(10:17) and many Gentiles had been brought to faith in Christ. Rather, Paul contests it was simply Israel’s hardness of heart, where Israel failed to respond to Christ’s unique, gracious offer of salvation: ***“All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people*”**(10:21).
5. 21st century Christians can easily make the same mistake. Some church attenders hear the message each Sunday, yet live disobedient lives. For those within the bounds of the Church who do not evidence lives that live by the truth, the privilege of God’s divine favor remains lost to them: just like the nation Israel of Jesus’ day.
6. **Israel’s Remnant: “Did God reject His people?” {11:1-10}**

* The early portion of chapter 11 brings us to the first of Paul’s two overlapping questions: ***Did God reject His people?*** Paul begins his answer with a resounding ***“By NO means”*,**and Paul gives support to his answer with some acute reasoning.

**Reason # 1: Paul’s N.T. conversion** (v. 1)

Paul offers himself as a prime example of God’s continued faithfulness to some of the Jews. He was a bona fide member of Israel, yet still given God’s grace in salvation. (Phil. 3 lists some credentials.)

**4.** *……“If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more:* **5.** *circumcised on the*

*eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a*

*Pharisee;* **6.** *as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless*.” (Philippians 3:4-6)

**Reason # 2: God’s foreknowledge** (v. 2)

The concept of a “foreknowing God” also conveys the reality of a fore-loving and forgiving God. Paul acknowledges that there will always be Jewish believers among those who follow Christ. ***“God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew.”***(11:2). Paul’s uses God’s “foreknowledge” in connection with words such as “election” and “predestination”; and certainly Jews will be a part of the ***“…. great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes, and peoples and languages standing, before the throne and before the lamb….”*** (Rev 7:9)

“*For those* ***God foreknew*** *he also* ***predestined*** *to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*” (Rom 8:29)

“*1. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to* ***God's elect****, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, 2.* ***who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father****,**through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood*.” (1 Pet 1:1-2)

**Reason # 3: An O.T. example of the remnant** (vs. 2-5)

Paul points out the example of Elijah who mistakenly assumed that God had given up on his people, and that he was the only faithful one left in Israel under the evil reign of King Ahab. ***4. “But what is Gods’ reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.”*** (Rom 11:4 ; 1 Kings 19:10,14,18).

Though God had kept 1000s faithful to his purpose, Elijah somehow discounted God’s remnant. In this, Paul illustrates that God’s purpose for Israel as a part of the people of God is still not finished.

**Reason # 4: The nature of grace** (vs. 5-6)

Though Israel failed miserably again and again, God always kept a ***“remnant chosen by grace”*** (11:4). With the constant danger of slipping into a works-righteousness understanding of salvation (Gal 1:6-9 3:1-5), Paul reiterates again that ***“if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace”*** (11:6). When Paul states that **“*Christ is the end of the law*”** (10:4), he did not mean by this the termination of law, but rather Christ’s fulfillment of it. Paul constantly upheld a conviction consistent with the teaching of God’s moral law. According to God’s divine plan, Christ’s fulfillment of the law secured salvation for any and all who trust in him as Lord and Savior.

**Reason # 5: Election** (vs. 7-10)

So Paul asks, ***“What then?***Until Christ’ arrival, God had a special purpose for Israel, so what next? If the “elect” of God are said to include all Gentile believers, then you might make the case that there is no longer anything special about the nation of Israel. Israel has served its purpose: for in reality ***“Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, …”*** (11:7). So, is there still a need for Israel’s continued position as the chosen people? Hasn’t Israel’s favored position now been replaced by the existence of the church, as God’s “elect”!

In support of this, Paul selects a modified rendering of Moses, Isaiah (Deut 29:4; Isa 29:10) and David (Ps 69:22-23) to make the case that Israel did not gain salvation because their hearts were hardened just like Pharaoh’s. ***“… God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this day”*** (11:8) and again, ***“…let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever”*** (11:9b).

Paul’s desire to pray for the Nation Israel (10:1) recognizes their defiant and disobedient mindset. It is common knowledge that the periodic rejection of the nation Israel is not a new occurrence (compare Deut 29:4 Isa 6:9-10 ; 29:10 & Ps 69:22-23). Yet, neither is God’s promised not to cast off His ***“chosen”*** people (1 Sam 12:22 Ps 94:14 & Rom 10:21); for God works His mercy and compassion when and where He chooses (Rom 9:14-16).

**In Summary:**

If we were to simply stop at this point, it might appear that Israel may have lost its privileged position. The nation Israel heard but did not believe the good news, yet Paul leaves the door ajar for a remnant of Israel to be saved ***“I will make you jealous …”*** (10:19). God will not reject His children whom he foreknew, but rather He preserves those faithful to Him throughout history; ***“so too at the present time there is a remnant saved by grace”*** (11:5). Paul’s greater focus is always upon the redeemed: those whom God has kept faithful, and who obtained the salvation that the nation Israel had sought for so ardently. Thus, Paul sets forth two overlapping questions in answer to this issue (11:1, 11). We must deal with the 2nd of these questions next week to try to get a more complete overall picture.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What do you understand Paul to be actually teaching about Israel’s unbelief?
2. Paul asked a pertinent yet sensitive question “***Did God reject His people?***” Is Paul’s reasoned answer convincing?
3. Can 21st century Christians easily make the same mistake that the nation Israel did? Please explain?