



This week...

Chapter 11a:

Israel Has Not Been Rejected



Chapter 11

Verse 1- *I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? Far from it! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.*

Sometimes Paul asks and answers his own rhetorical questions. In this case, a negative answer is expected, but again, Paul uses the phrase *mē genoito*, a strong, emphatic “may it never be!”

Using himself as an example, has God rejected His people, the Jews, because of their unbelief? No, not only was he a Jew, but he was also of the tribe of Benjamin. He insists that God's relationship with Israel as a nation continues.

Chapter 11

Verse 2- *God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?*

In the last verse, he asked if God has rejected his people whom He chose to be a missionary nation to all other nations. Paul states that He has not and explains why by using Elijah as an illustration (1 Kings 19).

Elijah defeated the prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel and then ran for his life and hid in a cave in fear of Jezebel's threats. He complains to God that he is the only one left serving the LORD.

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Verse 3- *"Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life."*

Paul quotes 1 Kings 19:10-

And he said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of armies; for the sons of Israel have abandoned Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they have sought to take my life."

Chapter 11

Verse 3- *“Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life.”*

Paul's point is that there is always a believing remnant. There was a faithful remnant of Jews who believed Jesus was the risen Lord, although the majority were still in unbelief.

It would have been easy for Paul to be consumed with self-pity, much like Elijah, thinking that he was standing alone against Jewish leaders in opposition to believers.

Chapter 11

Verse 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.”*

God's promise to Israel was unilateral. Even though they had been faithless overall, He would be faithful. Even though Christ ushered in the Church age, Israel was still His missionary nation.

Most of Israel missed the righteousness of God by rejecting faith in Christ, but a remnant of Israelites was faithful to God by believing in Christ, just as the seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

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Verse 5- *In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice.*

The remnant of believing Jews is much like the seven thousand Jews who did not bow the knee to Baal. God preserved a remnant of those who refused to believe in Baal and kept faithful to their belief in the LORD.

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Verse 6- *But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, since otherwise grace is no longer grace.*

There was nothing this faithful remnant in Elijah's day did other than believe in what God said. This contrasts with the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18:

Then they took the ox, they called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, they limped about the altar which they had made, they cried out with a loud voice, and cut themselves according to their custom with swords and lances until blood gushed out on them, they raved until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice.

Chapter 11

Verse 6- *But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, since otherwise grace is no longer grace.*

In Paul's day, circumcision, dietary laws, etc., could not bring salvation.

There is nothing we can do to earn salvation. Our only decision is to believe or reject what Christ has done on the cross. It is Christ alone.

There is no gray area between works-based salvation and grace-based salvation.

Chapter 11

Verse 7- *What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;*

Most of Israel sought (and is seeking today) salvation by personal righteousness. They did not and will not obtain salvation by keeping any portion of the Law (Romans 9:30).

Salvation is not obtained; it is given by God's grace. A smaller remnant received God's grace, and others were judicially hardened (they hardened their hearts, and God continued to harden them).

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Verse 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.”*

Paul quotes Isaiah 29:10 and Deuteronomy 29:4 to show that God judicially hardened Israel in the Old Testament. First, the city of Jerusalem for their disobedience to the Lord, and second, their disobedience in the wilderness.

Their disobedience separates and hardens them from God, and they are dulled by disobedience, much like a drunkard is responsible for his actions even though he is not aware at the time.

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Verse 9- *And David says, “May their table become a snare and a trap, And a stumbling block and a retribution to them.”*

Paul quotes Psalm 69:22-23. This is a psalm quoted often in the New Testament about the passion of Christ. Originally, David wrote it to describe how he was being persecuted by his own people. A “table” (*trapeza*) is a place where you receive food, but it has become a symbol of devotion to Jewish feasts and festivals. They were meant to remind the eater of the Lord, but they became a sense of pride in keeping dietary and cultural laws. In a sense, Paul is saying the Jews, except the remnant, stumble over the eating table.

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Verse 10- *May their eyes be darkened to see not, And bend their backs continually."*

Because they refused to open their eyes and see the truth of the Messiah, God judicially hardened their hearts and closed they eyes. Their backs are bent over under the heavy weight of the Law.

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Verse 11- I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? Far from it! But by their wrongdoing, salvation *has come* to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

Did God harden their hearts and close their eyes so they would stumble and fall, never to rise up and walk again? Once again, Paul exclaims, *mē genoito*, a strong, emphatic "may it never be!"

As a result of their hardness of heart and blindness, God opened salvation to Gentiles and used His relationship with them to make Jews jealous enough to come back to Him (Romans 10:19).

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Verse 12- *Now if their wrongdoing proves to be riches for the world, and their failure, riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!*

There is a contrast between the Jews and Gentiles. Paul defines Israel's current situation as *trespass* and *failure* and the current Gentile experience as *riches* or *abundance*.

If Israel's rejection of Jesus as Messiah brought spiritual riches (salvation) to non-Jews, how much more will their belief bring when they are saved by His grace alone?

Chapter 11

Verse 13- *But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Therefore insofar as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry*

Paul has been speaking to Jewish believers, and now he writes this portion to Gentile Christians. God has given him a special responsibility to bring the gospel to non-Jews. His attitude should be ours- If God gives us a job to do, we should do it to the best of our ability for His glory!

Chapter 11

Verse 14- *if somehow I may move my own people to jealousy and save some of them.*

A second reason Paul magnifies his ministry is to not only do what God has called him to to the best of his ability but to make his fellow Jews “jealous” (*parazēlōsai*- *para*= alongside + *zēlóō*= to boil over with desire). He wanted the Jews to want what the Gentiles were experiencing- rich and rewarding salvation as followers of Jesus Christ.

Even though Paul knew that most Jews would resist Jesus as Messiah, others might accept Him as Paul did.

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Verse 15- *For if their rejection proves to be the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?*

Paul asks a similar question to the one in verse 12. If Israel rejected God for a certain period, but it led to reconciliation with God for the rest of the world, it would benefit the rest of the world when Jews and Gentiles put their faith in Christ. Paul writes that it will mean life from the dead.

Paul seems to be saying that Israel is dead spiritually, but eventually, a remnant will be made alive and will experience resurrection and eternal life. Even though they are estranged now, some Jews will once again enjoy a special relationship with God in eternity.

Chapter 11

Verse 16- *If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are as well.*

Paul uses two illustrations to describe Israel's relationship to God- a lump of dough and a root and branch. Paul writes of Israel's practice of offering the first dough made from each year's harvest as a loaf of bread to the Lord (Numbers 15:20–21):

Of the first of your dough you shall lift up a loaf as an offering; as an offering of the threshing floor, so you shall lift it up. From the first of your dough you shall give to the Lord an offering throughout your generations.

Chapter 11

Verse 16- *If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are as well.*

The first fruits (lump of dough that makes the whole lump the same) were either the patriarchs or the first Jewish converts to Christ. They were set apart and are indicators of things to come.

Whatever is present in a root is shown in the branches of the bush or tree because it grows out of the root. Many scholars believe Paul is writing of Abraham as the “root” of their faith.

Chapter 11

Verse 17- *But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree,*

Paul continues his analogy of the root and branch. Some of the branches of the tree were deliberately broken off (exeklasthēsan-ek = off + klao = to break). It was done to them (passive voice) by God.

As some branches were broken off deliberately, others were grafted on deliberately to become partakers of the blessing of the root.

Chapter 11

Verse 17- *But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree,*

The normal process was to take a shoot from an olive that bears good fruit though it does not grow vigorously and graft it onto a wild olive stock, whose fruit is poor but which grows strongly. The result is a tree with vigorous growth which bears good olives. Paul, however, talks of the reverse process of grafting a wild olive onto the stock of a good olive (Morris).

The benefit is that the wild olive is now part of the good olive tree.

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Verse 18- *do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you.*

Paul commands the Gentile believers to stop being arrogant (*katakauchasai*- *kata* -according to + *kauxáomai* = boast, speak loudly. This was used by gladiators boasting over a defeated foe.)

There has been an ugly history of Christian antisemitism (e.g., “Christ-killers”). Paul reminds Gentile believers not to feel superior as they had to be grafted into the tree.

Next week...

Chapter 11b:

**Israel Has Not Been
Rejected, Part 2**

