

Romans 11:1-6 NASB

“Who are God's remnant?”

“I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 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? ‘Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE.’ 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.’ ⁵ In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice. ⁶ But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.”

You noticed the word *remnant* in our text.

Remnant suggests leftover carpet or linoleum.

We have linoleum remnants in our downstairs. I refer to basement space that consists of my man cave, not the parts Norma allows guests to see.

I have to admit that I've seen carpet remnants so badly arranged, even I thought them gross.



We associate remnant in other ways:

BBQ steaks for a college football team and the only remnants you'll have are pieces of gristle.

BBQ steaks at a PETA convention and you'll have lots of remnants, but you may not be one of them.

Remnant stands among the least appreciated and most misunderstood words in the Bible.

The Bible uses several words to convey remnant.

They all carry the same idea remnant suggests.

How did a word like *remnant* gain such prominence in the Bible?

You're possibly thinking right now, “Do I really want to know what *remnant* means? And you've already concluded, “Bob's going to tell us anyhow.”

What remnant means puzzled the early church.

Scholars still argue about *the remnant*.

Most church people barely know of the subject.

You likely wonder why the hullabaloo.

What makes this harmless sounding word *remnant* so controversial?

Fallouts from the implication of *remnant* led to false accusations against Jesus.

Resulting mob violence led to Jesus' execution.

This type of hostility and brutality make *remnant's* meaning very important.

A bit of Israel's history helps us understand.

- Israelites wrote most of the Bible and the prophets came from Israel.
- **Jesus and the Apostles were Jews.**
For the first ten years the Church existed, Jewish missionaries preached only to Jews.
But within another ten years, most converts to Christ were Gentiles.
In the church, Jews became the minority.

What happened?

People wondered:

“Did God reject his chosen people?”

I can best explain this by asking a question

Did Kingsley-Pierson ever win a state football championship?¹

Imagine coaches, student bodies, and town-folks dreaming of a K-P state championship.

Kingsley and Pierson folks talk constantly about it.

They fantasize about a great coach, star players and a team that wins the championship and brings glory to the towns.

That dream comes true; K-P goes undefeated, wins the playoffs, and brings the trophy home.

Recognition day arrives; a grand event to honor the players and coaches.

But a strange thing occurs.

Loyal fans pack the stands and crowd the field to honor the team and see the trophy.

Yet you find hardly anyone in the crowd from Kingsley or Pierson.

The folks in the stands came from distant towns.
Kingsley and Piersonites mostly stay home.

Would you wonder why this happened?

A dream comes to true, but locals don't cheer.

Very few K-P supporters show.



Romans 11 deals with this type of mystery.

Why didn't the Jews accept Jesus as Messiah?

Their book, the Old Testament, foretold the Messiah.

- Jesus was born in Israel to Jewish parents.
- **He attended synagogues and kept the Law.**
- His disciples were all Jews.
- For the first ten years the Church existed, Jewish missionaries preached only to Jews.

Why didn't the Jews accept Jesus as their Christ?

Further, because the Jews rejected Christ, did that mean was God upset with them?

Though the Jews largely spurned Christ, our text tells us that God hadn't rejected the Jews.

A remnant of Jews remained faithful.

¹ Readers can easily substitute the names of their towns and/or schools for K-P.

What is this strange word *remnant* that appears many times in the Bible?

Is it worth trying to understand?

Imagine being a cowboy or cowgirl working cattle on your ranch.

You come home late in the afternoon, pop open a soft drink, and kick off your boots.

You check to see the time and you discover that your diamond-studded Rolex watch is missing.

You go back out to search for your timepiece.

After looking a long time, you finally find it.

There's good news, and there's bad news.

Good news: you located your precious keepsake.

And the bad news?

You find your valuable diamond studded Rolex deeply imbedded in a cow pie.

How badly do you want that watch?

Is it worth extracting from the mess it's in?

You might ask: **"Is the word *remnant* worth all it takes to separate it from its theological mess?"**

Let's clean it quickly.

***Remnant* suggests "what's left over or remains."**

We start in Genesis 12:1-3 (NIV) when God told Abraham:



"Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

The Lord promised Abe:

- **His descendants would become a great nation,**
- **One of his descendants would bless the world.**

Abraham likely didn't understand, though, that God intended to visit this planet in human form and be born as one of Abe's descendants.

- **Abe's great, great grandkids would become a nation.**
- **And from his grandkids' nation, this special person (the incarnate God) would be born.**
- **That descendant would bring the potential to save all human beings from death.**

God gave this nation descended from Abe a life-saving mission.

- **God gave the nation a special purpose.**
- **But, that nation had to trust God and his plan.**
- **It had to continue existing as a nation.**

- **The nation also had to follow God's will and accept the teachings of God's incarnate Son.**

In the same way, to see a #1 Trophy, Kingsley & Pierson and their schools must stay in existence.

The school must also field a good football squad and the team must play well.

Let's adjust our parable a little.

Let's focus on the football team that locals hope to see.

Expectation grows that exceptional players will bring attention to the town and help the team win the championship.

The school forms a huge rally squad of young people to cheer and support the team.

The town helps outfit them with special uniforms, feed them, house them, and train them.

They should be honored and grateful for the exceptional favor they receive, shouldn't they?

- They receive classy uniforms;
- exceptional living facilities;
- the finest cuisine;
- and special attention.

No other school has anything like this rally squad in whom you make such an investment.

The towns have great expectation for them and for the honor they'll bring to the team.



Soon you notice changes in the rally squad.

- **Members begin losing their enthusiasm.**
- **Though they've been given everything, they become conceited and brag about their status.**
- **Many of the girls date guys from Lawton and start cheering for Lawton-Bronson.**
- **The guys date girls from Quimby, Washta, & Correctionville, and support their school.**

Only a few of the original rally squad stay faithful to the Panthers.

The Lord chose Abe's descendants when they were a tiny group.

- **He gave them a mission and a land.**
- They lived in houses they didn't build and ate from fruit trees they didn't plant.
- He gave them many privileges and special protection.

They should have been grateful. God meant for them to be a cheering squad and support group for the Messiah.

Instead they became proud, lapsed into immorality, and worshipped other gods.

God didn't give up his plan.

By his grace he preserved a few, who remained faithful.

The Lord always does that.

God's people sometimes get discouraged by their minority status.

Most folks like to attend churches with overflow crowds; at times, devotion to Christ comes 2nd. Many others would rather sleep in, read the paper, watch NFL, or the NBA.

The majorities don't make Jesus # 1.



Even the prophet Elijah got discouraged.

He thought that he was the only believer left.

In our Roman's text, Paul wrote,

"Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah--how he appealed to God against Israel:

(3) "Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me"?

(4) And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

Don't get down Elijah. You're not the sole survivor here. I've got 7,000 others out there.

Three quick thoughts.

- 1. The Lord always completes his plans. He started this Universe billions of years ago.**
- 2. The Lord doesn't need majorities.**

In *Isaiah 7*, we learn that Isaiah had a son named *Shear Jashrub*.

That's an everyday name, isn't it?

Due to their sins, about 700 BC, the Lord reduced Israel to a tiny fraction of their former glory. Two larger neighboring nations brought their armies to Jerusalem, surrounded it, and threatened to destroy it. That's when the Lord told Isaiah; go outside town with your son Shear Jashrub to a certain location. The Lord wanted Isaiah to give a message to the king. The Lord's dispatch was, "The two kings that now threaten you are a couple of sticks pulled out of the fire. They won't succeed. Your son Shear Jashrub will be a sign of that."

Why Shear Jashrub?

"Shear" means "remnant;" "Jashrub" means "will return."

Isaiah's son's name meant "a remnant will return."

3. The Bible soberly warns us about any *remnant*. Ought anyone to proudly talk of being near to God?

About 35 years ago, Norma and I sat in the old Boston Gardens with a huge crowd listening to a preacher of a fast-growing religious group.

The preacher said his group was God's remnant.

His claim impressed us as prideful.

Within a decade, the movement was in disarray.



At great risk, we boast about being God's chosen or His remnant. God's teacher Ezra prayed wisely: O LORD, God . . . you are just. We come before you in our guilt as nothing but an escaped remnant, though in such a condition none of us can stand in your presence." Ezra 9: 15 NLT

- **There's never place for human pride.**
- **If we stand, it's because of God's grace.**
- **He preserves us to bring glory to Jesus, not us.**

Romans 8:28-39 tells: us that God always fulfills his plans, finishes his work, and wins: "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of

His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren . . .

Our part includes:

Not think we're special, but daily, gratefully, strive to make ourselves more like Jesus.

³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? ³³ Who will bring a charge against God's elect? . . .

Why must have this relationship with Jesus?

³⁴ Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

No one ever did what God's incarnate Son did.

³⁷ But in all these things (our daily trials) we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

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