

THE EPISTLES TO THE ROMANS

ROMANS 9:1-11:36, VINDICATION OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

INTRODUCTION

A. Outline of Romans

1. Introduction (1:1-17)
2. The need for God's righteousness (1:18-3:20)
3. Justification: the position of righteousness from God (3:21-5:21)
4. Sanctification: from position to practice (6:1-8:39)
5. Vindication of God's Righteousness (9:1-11:36)
 - a. Election by God (9:1-18)
 - b. Justice of God (9:19-33)
 - c. Israel and the righteousness of God (10:1-21)
 - d. The restoration of Israel (11:1-36)
 - 1) Her rejection is not total (11:1-10)
 - 2) Her rejection is not final (11:11-24)
 - 3) Assurance of her restoration (11:25-32)
 - 4) Praise for God's faithfulness to Israel (11:33-36)

B. Introductory notes on Romans 11

1. Thomas Constable, *In chapter 11 he revealed God's future plans for the nation that, when unfolded, will fully vindicate His righteousness.*
2. Warren Wiersbe, *Will God's patience with Israel wear out? Is there any future for the nation? Yes, there is, as the next chapter will show...Paul devoted all of Romans 11 to presenting proof that God is not through with Israel. We must not apply this chapter to the church today, because Paul is discussing a literal future for a literal nation.*
3. John Stott, *There is still an Israelite remnant in the present, and there is going to be an Israelite recovery in the future, which will itself lead to blessing for the whole world.*

ROMANS 11: 1-36, THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

ROMANS 11:1-10, ISRAEL'S REJECTION IS NOT TOTAL

A. Paul asks and answers his question (1-6)

1. The question concerns God's relationship to Israel (1a), *I ask, then, has God rejected his people?*
 - a. Chapter 10 would seem to imply that God has rejected His people.
 - 1) They rejected Jesus Christ.
 - 2) Grant Osborne looks back to Romans 9:25-26, *Now the imaginary opponent is asking whether God has made Israel a "not-my-people."*
 - 3) John Stott, *One might have expected that, since they have rejected God, God has rejected them.*
 - b. Paul asks a question which implies that God has not rejected His people.
 - 1) C. E. B. Cranfield, *The question is thus tantamount to asking, 'Has God broken His explicit promise not to cast off His people?'*
 - 2) The response should be that God's people have rejected Him.
 - c. It is against God's nature to reject those to whom He makes unconditional promises.
 - 1) 1 Samuel 12:22, *For the LORD will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you a people for himself.*
 - 2) Jeremiah 31:37, *Thus says the LORD: "If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done, declares the LORD."*

2. Paul provides answers (1b-5)
 - a. He gives a personal response (1b-2a), *By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew.*
 - 1) His answer is a forceful, *By no means!*
 - a) It was his favorite emphatic response to his rhetorical questions.
 - 1] Romans 3:31, *Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.*
 - 2] Romans 6:5, *For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.*
 - 3] Romans 9:14, *What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!*
 - b) He justifies his response with the following reasons.
 - 2) His first proof is his own life.
 - a) He is part of the believing remnant, a Christian Jew.
 - b) His Jewishness was undeniable.
 - 1] 2 Corinthians 11:22, *Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I.*
 - 2] Philippians 3:5-6, *circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.*
 - 3] Thomas Constable, *Paul even came from the small and sometimes despised tribe of Benjamin (cf. Judg. 19–21) yet God had saved him.*
 - c) His acceptance by God can't be denied.
 - 1] Acts 9:3-6, *Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."*
 - 2] 1 Timothy 1:15-16, *The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.*
 - 3] Warren Wiersbe, concerning Paul's conversion, *It is a picture of how the nation of Israel will be saved when Jesus Christ returns to establish His kingdom on earth...The nation shall see Him as He returns (Zech. 14:4; Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:7), recognize Him as their Messiah, repent, and receive Him. It will be an experience similar to that of Saul of Tarsus when he was on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians (Acts 9).*
 - 3) Paul affirms that God has not rejected His people.
 - a) He quotes from Psalm 94:14, *For the LORD will not forsake his people; he will not abandon his heritage;* note Romans 8:29, *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*
 - b) John Witmer, *God had chosen Israel as His covenant people from eternity past and entered into a relationship with them that will never be destroyed...*
 - c) Douglas Moo, *How could God reject a people whom he in a gracious act of choice had made his own? As Paul has made clear earlier in the letter (3:3–4), human sinfulness and disobedience cannot cancel his pledged word.*
 - d) C. E. B. Cranfield, *In his person the missionary vocation of Israel is at last being fulfilled and Israel is actively associated with the work of the risen Christ. This is a more cogent evidence of God's not having cast off His people than is the simple fact that one particular Jew has come to believe.*
 - e) Grant Osborne, *Scholars debate whether this refers to the special election of a select portion out of the nation or the general election of the nation as a whole. The Old Testament passages in the background here and several others along the same lines (Deut 7:6; Amos 3:2) favor general election in this verse, with special election in verse 5.*

- b. He gives an illustrations from Elijah (2b-4), ***Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? “Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.” But what is God’s reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.”***
- 1) Paul cites verses concerning the unfaithfulness of Israel during the ministry of the prophet Elijah.
 - a) 1 Kings 19:10f (and verse 14), *He said, “I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.”*
 - b) Elijah thought he was the only Israelite who had remained faithful because of the widespread unfaithfulness of Israel.
 - 2) Paul cites God’s response to Elijah’s words of despair.
 - a) 1 Kings 19:18, *Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.*
 - b) God declared that despite the seeming lack of faith in Israel, Elijah was not the only one who had remained faithful.
 - 1] There were 7,000 more who had not departed the God of Israel for worship of Baal.
 - 2] The remnant had been kept by God, John Witmer, *God was not limited to one fearful, depressed prophet; He had reserved for Himself a godly remnant in Israel that numbered 7,000 (1 Kings 19:18). The preservation of the faithful remnant was a work of God.*
 - 3] Douglas Moo, *For God’s preservation of a remnant is not only evidence of his present faithfulness to Israel; it is also a pledge of hope for the future of the people.*
 - 4] Micah 7:18-19, *Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.*
- c. Paul draws a theological conclusion from the Old Testament citations (5-6), ***So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.***
- 1) Not only was there a remnant during the time of Elijah but there is a remnant during the time of Paul, as well.
 - a) John Witmer, *Paul was only one of many in his generation elected to faith from the people of Israel. In every generation of the church “a remnant chosen by grace” has been called from among the Jews.*
 - b) Grace, the unmerited favor of God, is the reason there is always a remnant.
 - 2) A remnant is a result of the grace of God.
 - a) *chosen by grace*
 - 1] If choice involves any degree of human work then it is no longer by God’s grace.
 - 2] Grace and works are mutually exclusive.
 - a] Ephesians 2:8-9, *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*
 - b] Romans 4:4-5, *Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,*
 - 3] Concerning the priority of grace.
 - a] Thomas Constable, *It is the grace of God, not the works of the remnant that is the real cause of their condition. Believing Jews are not superior, just greatly blessed.*
 - b] C. E. B. Cranfield, *In Elijah’s time there was ...a remnant, but the ground of its existence was the initiative of the divine grace, God’s gracious election, and not human merit...It was God, by His own decision and for the accomplishment of His own purpose, who made the remnant to stand firm; and for this very reason its existence was full of promise for the rest of the nation.*
 - c] Douglas Moo, *Paul’s polemic, while focused on Israel because of his particular situation, is applicable to all human beings and finds its ultimate basis in the human condition. Because of their sin but also simply because of their creaturely status, people can make no claim on God.*

- b) Other Scriptural notations concerning God's remnant.
 - 1] Romans 9:27, *And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved,*
 - 2] Jeremiah 3:14, *Return, O faithless children, declares the LORD; for I am your master; I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.*
 - 3] Zechariah 13:8, *In the whole land, declares the LORD, two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one third shall be left alive.*

B. Paul summarizes his argument (7-10)

- 1. Israel as a nation did not obtain the righteousness of God (7), ***What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened,***

- a. *What then?*

- 1) Paul asks a rhetorical question and answers it with a comprehensive conclusion of verses 1-6.
- 2) He addresses remnant from a negative perspective in verses 7-10 whereas it was from a positive perspective in verses 1-6 and 9:26-29.

- b. *Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking.*

- 1) Israel was seeking without success the righteousness of God.
 - a) Romans 9:31, *but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law.*
 - b) Romans 10:2, *For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.*
- 2) Their failure was based on the false premise that the righteousness of God can be acquired by human works.
 - a) Romans 9:32, *Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone,*
 - b) Romans 10:3, *For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.*

- c. Paul declares that there are two groups within the larger group, the nation of Israel.

- 1) *The elect*

- a) The word means *that which has been chosen.*
- b) Those chosen by God obtain His righteousness.
 - 1] Romans 9:11, *though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—*
 - 2] Louw-Nida, *...what Israel sought so eagerly it did not gain, but those whom he chose did.*

- 2) *The rest*

- a) The word means *the others.*
- b) Those not chosen by God (*the others*) did not obtain His righteousness but were *hardened.*
 - 1] *Hardened* is used figuratively concerning the mind and/or the heart.
 - 2] God caused the others' minds *to be closed, unwilling to learn*, note Romans 11:25, *Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.*
 - 3] Douglas Moo, *...the hardening Paul speaks of here is...a spiritual insensitivity that prevents people from responding to God or to his message of salvation ...God's hardening permanently binds people in the sin that they have chosen for themselves.*
 - 4] Paul gives further understanding to what it means to be hardened in verses 8-10.

- 2. Paul supports his argument with two Old Testament quotes (8-10)

- a. His first quote (8), ***as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day."***

- 1) He makes his point from two verses.

- a) Deuteronomy 29:4, *But to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear.*
- b) Isaiah 29:10, *For the LORD has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes (the prophets), and covered your heads (the seers).*

- 2) Paul expands on the meaning of *hardening* in verse 8 by describing it as a *spirit of stupor*.
 - a) The word *stupor* means *not being able to think, complete bewilderment*.
 - 1] Paul defines *stupor* as the inability of one's eyes to see and one's ears to not hear.
 - 2] Isaiah 6:9-10, *And he said, "Go, and say to this people: "'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."*
 - b) Here, God is the cause for the bewilderment, a state of being spiritually insensitive.
 - 1] John Stott, *...a complete loss of spiritual sensitivity which (as the context makes clear) was self-induced before it became a divine judgment*.
 - 2] Grant Osborne, *As in Romans 1:24, 26, 28, this refers to the hardening process when God surrenders sinful people to the extremes of the evil they deliberately prefer*.
 - 3) The focus is on the nation of Israel's unfaithfulness despite God's never-ending faithfulness
 - a) Ezekiel 12:2, *Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, who have eyes to see, but see not, who have ears to hear, but hear not, for they are a rebellious house*.
 - b) Thomas Constable, *The Israelites did not follow God faithfully even though they saw God's miraculous deliverance from Egypt, experienced His preservation in the wilderness, and heard the warnings of the prophets. God gave them a spirit of stupor because they failed to respond to the numerous blessings that He bestowed on them*.
 - 4) *down to this day*
 - a) Paul provides the possibility that their eyes and ears will one day be opened.
 - b) Romans 11:25, *Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in*.
 - c) Warren Wiersbe, *Paul made it clear that the hardening of Israel is neither total nor final, and this is proof that God has a future for the nation...The existence of the believing Jewish remnant today, as in Elijah's day, is evidence that God still has a plan for His people*.
- b. His second quote (9-10), ***and David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever."***
- 1) It comes from Psalms 69:22-23, *Let their own table before them become a snare; and when they are at peace, let it become a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see, and make their loins tremble continually*.
 - a) Paul expresses the position that the Jews were experiencing what Paul had wished on his enemies because of their rejection of the Gospel.
 - b) Thomas Constable, *The quotation from this psalm (vv. 22–23) records David's desire. He wished that his enemies' table (i.e., blessings) would become something that they would stumble over. The enemies in view were the Lord's enemies as well as the king's since he was the Lord's anointed*.
 - c) C. E. B. Cranfield, *Paul here applies to the unbelieving majority of Israel words which were originally the psalmist's imprecation on his persecutors but which, when the psalm is understood messianically, are naturally referred to the opponents of Christ*.
 - 2) Comments on Psalm 69:22-23.
 - a) C. E. B. Cranfield, *The general sense of this is no doubt a wish that even the good things which these enemies enjoy may prove to be a cause of disaster to them*.
 - b) John Stott, *The imagery is not easy to interpret. But their table seems to be a symbol of the security, well-being and community which are enjoyed at home, and which somehow can be turned into the opposite, becoming a snare and a trap, a stumbling-block and a retribution for them. The reference to their backs being bent for ever is also obscure, although the bent back is normally a picture of carrying a heavy load, whether in this case of grief, fear or oppression*.
 - c) Warren Wiersbe, *Their "table to become a snare" means that their blessings turn into burdens and judgments. This is what happened to Israel: their spiritual blessings should have led them to Christ, but instead they became a snare that kept them from Christ. Their very religious practices and observances became substitutes for the real experience of salvation*.

CONCLUSION

- Thomas Constable, *Even though as a whole Israel had reaped the fruit of her own stubborn rebellion against God, God had called a remnant within the nation for salvation. The presence of this remnant shows that God has not cast off His chosen people completely or been unfaithful to His promises to them.*
- William Barclay, *Israel became insensitive, the nation with the callus on its heart; the Gentiles came by faith and trust into the love of God; but a day will come when the love of God will act like a solvent, even on the callus of the heart, and both Gentiles and Jews will be gathered in. It is Paul's conviction that nothing in the end can defeat the love of God.*