

Romans 11:1-6 - God Has Not Cast Away the Jews

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COURSE 

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11:1 - Has God Cast Away His People?

- "I say then"
The conjunction *then* indicates that what Paul is about to say next is connected to what was communicated in the previous chapter: God revealed Himself to the Gentiles in response to Israel's disobedience. This might lead one to believe that the nation was irretrievably rejected by God, but Paul is now going to balance the truth of chapter 10 with another important truth--the electing purposes of God for the Jewish nation.
- "has God cast away His people?"
Casting away is emphasized by its appearance at the beginning of the Greek: "Not He has cast away, God, the people of Him [has He]?" "Cast away" is *aPōSato*, meaning "reject," "push aside," "repudiate." To *repudiate* is to divorce or separate from someone or something once held near. The verb is in the middle voice: "Has God [Himself] cast away . . . ?"
- "His people"
TAKE NOTE! Paul is writing *after* the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus. Israel has already rejected her king! Yet Paul refers to *Israel -- the Jews as God's people!* The context makes it impossible to take this phrase as denoting Gentile believers.

11:1 - Certainly not!

- "Certainly not!"
Paul uses a unique expression of his emphasizing the impossibility of answering "yes." The phrase is *me GENoito*, meaning "You should never conclude such a thing! God forbid that you should think this! No way!"
[Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*]
- "For I also am an Israelite"
Paul himself serves as a counter-example to the claim by some that the Jews have been rejected. The Greek emphasizes Paul as an example: "For even I [an] Israelite I am." This is not just about the status of *believing* Jews, but of *unbelieving* Jews ([Rom. 11:28](#)) .
- "of the seed of Abraham"
Paul traces his ancestry in both directions from Jacob (who was renamed Israel):
 1. through Abraham (Jacob's grandfather),
 2. through Benjamin (Jacob's son).
Although all believers are *Abraham's* seed by faith ([Gal. 3:29](#)) , they are never identified as being *Jacob's* descendants or an Israelite tribe in any sense.

11:2 - God Has *Not* Cast Away

- **"God has not cast away His people"**
The Greek emphasizes the *not casting away* by placing it first: "Not He [Himself] has cast away, God, the people of Him."
- **"whom He foreknew"**
"Foreknew" is from *progiNŌSkō*, meaning more than "known in advance," but "chosen" -- known intimately as His elect from before the dawn of history. This is an *active determination*, not just a passive observation ([Rom. 8:29-30](#) ; [1Pe. 1:20](#)). Election is the central theme of Romans 8-11!
- **"Elijah . . . pleads with God against Israel"**
"Pleads . . . against" is *entunCHANō*, meaning "to appeal to someone against a third party," "to make a complaint against."

11:3-4 - I Have Reserved For Myself

- **"and I alone am left"**
Elijah emphasizes his uniqueness, as if he was the only one that remained true to God: "and I [even] I have been left [surviving the] only one!" It is important to see the full context of the passage Paul is quoting which indicates Elijah is *complaining against His Jewish brethren* ([1K. 19:10](#)).
- **"I have reserved for Myself"**
The corresponding Hebrew verb in [1K. 18:18](#) is *hishe'arettiy*, which is in the *hiphil* form which indicates causative action by the subject of the verb (God). The verb is based on the root *she'ar*, meaning "remnant" and ends with a pronominal suffix indicating "to Me." The phrase could be translated: "I [Myself] caused to remain for Me." It is important to see the sovereignty of God-- those who remain true to Him only do so **by His electing and keeping power**. He "kept them" for Himself!

11:5 - A Remnant

- **"there is a remnant"**
Jews whom God has reserved for faith throughout history. Because of God's electing purposes for the nation Israel, there are *always* Jews who believe everything God has revealed. At the coming of Christ, Jews such as Simeon ([Luke 2:25-34](#)) and Anna ([Luke 2:36-38](#)) were part of the believing remnant. Today, Jews who believe in Christ are known as *Messianic Jews* or *Jewish Christians* and are members of the church, the body of Christ, like all other believers. However, they are physically, nationally, Jews--and represent the stream through which God's promises to the Jewish nation will be eventually fulfilled. The doctrine of the remnant is an extensive teaching throughout Scripture, as can be seen by looking up the word **remnant** in a concordance.
- **"according to the election of grace"**
"Election" is a verb form in the perfect tense indicating the choice was made some time in the past with results which continue into the present. Like all believers, the believing Jewish remnant was elected to belief in God before the foundation of the world ([Eph. 1:4](#)). Paul's teaching on the elect remnant within Israel dovetails with his earlier teaching ([Rom. 9:11](#)).

11:6 - Unmerited Favor

- **"Grace versus Works"**
"Grace" is *CHARis*, meaning "favor." A closely-related word, *CHARisma*, means "a free gift." For

a gift to truly be a gift, it must be unmerited and unearned. Once you mix one particle of work into the transaction, it is no longer fully grace since merit becomes involved.

- **Israel Does Not Deserve God's Continued Favor**

Like all who have been chosen by God, the nation Israel--as represented by the believing remnant among the Jews--does not deserve God's continued election. Paul emphasizes that it is by God's undeserved, unmerited favor--which overcomes the rejection and crucifixion of Israel's own Messiah. Israel neither earned nor deserves God's favor. He stands by Israel because of His *name's sake* ([Eze. 36:20-24](#)) . Concerning the gospel, unbelieving Jews are enemies, but concerning election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ([Rom. 11:28-32](#)) .

Application

1. **We Are Never "The Only Believer Left"** - No matter how discouraged and isolated we feel, we can know for certain that God has other believers in places we might not expect them.
2. **Sinful Actions Cannot Thwart God's Sovereign Will** - In God's inscrutable sovereignty, every sin works out according to His plan. God's plan for Israel will not be derailed by the unbelief of the majority in the nation.
3. **God Generally Works With a Faithful Remnant** - A frequent pattern in Scripture indicates God often works with a small group of faithful believers within a much larger group. Don't look at size or popularity to measure a work of God.
4. **Like Israel, Our Standing in God's Favor is Also Undeserved** - If we reject Israel in the plan of God and assert our own superiority in having exercised faith, then we have lost sight of our own undeservedness. Remember: God revealed Himself to the Gentiles *while the Gentiles where continually not seeking Him!*
5. **The Jews Are Still God's Chosen People** God's promises to Israel remain today because they are based on His choice of and promises to the nation which will eventually be fulfilled through the believing Jewish remnant. God judges the nations by their treatment of Israel ([Gen. 12:3](#) ; [Num. 24:9](#) ; [Isa. 49:14-26](#) ; [Mat. 25:40](#)) . A wise nation is careful how it treats Israel!

