

Two weeks ago we ended chapter ten with words from the prophet Isaiah, ²¹ But of Israel he says, *"All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."* Romans 10:21 Paul had explained from Scripture that though the Jewish people had the words of the Apostles and the message of creation, they had refused the faith that comes through the message. This is what prompted the question Paul assumed would come from the readers of his letter to the Romans.

¹ I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. If God completely rejected the Jews, as some have erroneously claimed (Hosea 9:17), then what about the writers of the New Testament? Paul used himself as an example. He was a descendant of Abraham and a member of the tribe of Benjamin. In another passage he tells of how very Jewish he was in his upbringing and life (Philippians 3:5-6). He is still a Jew, but one that has discovered that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah predicted in the Scriptures. God chose Rabbi Saul who became the Apostle Paul. Paul said in another letter that he was chosen as a demonstration of the greatness of God's unlimited patience (1Timothy 1:16).

Paul has given himself as an example that God has not rejected the Jews. Now just as he used Scripture to point out their disobedience, he will turn to Scripture to

show that God always has had a remnant of Jews that place their faith in God. ² *God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel?* ³ *"Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life."*

Paul pointed to the days of Elijah when most of the nation had turned to idolatry and Baal worship (1Kings 16:30). In those days Elijah felt like he was the only one left that was following God. The prophet Jeremiah felt that way too. Not only did Elijah feel he was the only believer, but he knew there were people who wanted to silence his message by killing him. Had God forsaken the Jews then? Elijah wondered if that was the case. ⁴ *But what is God's reply to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."*

Elijah didn't know those seven thousand believers in YHWH, but they were there amongst the Baal worshiping Jews. Two persecuted believers in a closed country told me about working with each other in a secular job not knowing that they were brothers in Christ. It happens today. To expose yourself as a believer in Christ in many nations today can mean losing your job or even the end of your life. We often feel alone and long for the fellowship of believers. We had a couple from Germany visit this church. They said that could not find believers in their town. They loved the open fellowship that we take for

Commented [notes4]: Philippians 3:5-6 (ESV)

⁵ 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;
⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Commented [notes1]: Hosea 9:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ My God will reject them because they have not listened to him; they shall be wanderers among the nations.

God did indeed reject Israel several times in their history and yet always had a remnant and restored them to Himself in love as the story of Hosea demonstrates. See Hosea 14:7

Commented [notes2]: Philippians 3:5-6 (ESV)

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Commented [notes3]: 1 Timothy 1:16 (NIV)

¹⁶ But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

granted. Pray for Stephen and Veronica to find brothers and sisters in Christ. Surely there are some that they may have even met that have not bowed their knee to secular humanism.

Paul's point in reminding us of Elijah is made clear in the next verse. ⁵ *So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.* God always has those He foreknew as verse two declared. They were chosen by grace. Once again we see the word "foreknew". We saw it in chapter eight verse 29. Those He foreknew He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. They weren't chosen because they kept the Law. They weren't chosen because their hearts were any purer than anyone else's. They were chosen by grace. (1 Samuel 12:22) He gave them the faith to believe through the word of Christ. He foreknew they would willingly act on that faith and receive the grace of God. Just as in the days of Elijah or Jeremiah, there were Jews in Paul's day that would act on the faith they received through the grace of God. There has always been a remnant (Genesis 45:7).

The remnant theme has been taken by numerous cults and used to promote a sense of elitism. The remnant Paul is writing about is not about those with some secret knowledge, or a special interpretation of Scripture, or followers of an end time prophet. It is those who receive the word of Christ, the gospel of Jesus (Romans 10:17).

Because we live in a culture with such a large Christian influence, we don't know

what it was like to be a persecuted minority. That is changing as our culture becomes increasingly indoctrinated with the post-modern mindset. It was difficult to be a Christian in Paul's day. He would one day be beheaded for his faith. **The remnant consisted of those who received the gospel and were willing to live out their faith** regardless of the cost. It is the same today.

God has those who have called on the name of the Lord in every culture and language (Revelation 7:9-10). They were chosen by grace. They heard the message from missionaries or the Holy Spirit speaking through nature (Romans 1:20; 10:18). They were convicted by the Holy Spirit, exercised the faith given to them and placed their trust in God. It is all the grace of God. They simply accepted what He put in their mouth and heart (Romans 10:8).

⁶ *But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.* The basis of the salvation of the remnant has never been works. You can't be too bad for God, only too good. What that expression means is that **if you think you are someone special and have it all together, you've missed the main thing.** The main thing is that we are fallen and need a Savior (Romans 3:23). It's only when you receive the conviction of sin from the Holy Spirit that you will begin to seek the Savior. If you think you are good, you haven't begun to see the truth. That message is utterly rejected by our culture and the popular religions of today, but it is the starting point for Christianity. It is

Commented [notes5]: Romans 8:29 (ESV)

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.

Commented [notes9]: Revelation 7:9-10 (ESV)

⁹ After this I looked, and behold, a 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, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

Commented [notes10]: Romans 1:20 (ESV)

²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

Commented [notes11]: Romans 10:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."

Commented [notes6]: 1 Samuel 12:22 (ESV)

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.

Commented [notes12]: Romans 10:8 (ESV)

⁸ But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart. E(that is, the word of faith that we proclaim);

Commented [notes7]: Genesis 45:7 (ESV)

⁷ And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors.

Commented [notes13]: Romans 3:23 (ESV)

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Commented [notes8]: Romans 10:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

from the place of recognizing our depravity and sinful nature that we come humbly to God and seek His provision for our condition. The provision is Jesus. **All religions other than Christianity are based on works.** Christianity is a grace based religion.

I believe that one of Satan's greatest deceptions is this idea that man is basically good. Some people will even tell you the horror stories of how others treat them and then claim they are a good person. They don't realize that what they are saying is most people are bad, but I'm not. Pride blinds us to the obvious truth. We are in this boat of fallen humanity together. We were born with Adam's fallen nature (Psalm 51:5). The only way out is the provision of God, Jesus Christ. You can only accept that provision as His gift of grace (Ephesians 2:8-9).

So here is what the Apostle Paul concludes from the Scriptures. ⁷ *What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, 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."* Israel was seeking holiness and to please God by obeying all their rules to help them keep the laws of Moses. But because they trusted in works (Romans 10:3), they failed to see the grace that was expressed in those arms of God stretched out to them all day long. A few did. They repented and received the grace offered to them through the sacrifice of Jesus. The rest were hardened.

We have seen before that God would not harden anyone who would receive Jesus, for it is not His will that any should perish (2Peter 3:9). But those who will refuse that grace He can harden at will so that they will not be even more accountable. That is why He spoke in parables. It is not as if He just randomly decides He'll send someone to hell for all eternity. It was the fact that He loved the world that motivated Him to send His Son so that *whoever* believes in Him would not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

Paul is combining a passage from Isaiah and one from Moses (Isaiah 29:10; Deuteronomy 29:4). The first passage refers to God speaking to Isaiah regarding Israel's unwillingness to recognize their hypocrisy. They spoke in religious terms but their hearts were far from God (Isaiah 29:13). They were like a pot that denied that the Potter made them (Isaiah 29:16).

Is not the same spirit of stupor over much of the world today? For the last few centuries man thinks he has become so clever that he has discovered he is the result of an incredible accident. Now that we know the complexity of life, those "clever" men have decided some intelligent life form somewhere seeded this planet with DNA. Of course they dare not call that God, for that would be to acknowledge the need to submit to Him and discover His will. The spirit of stupor is upon all who reject the gospel because of their pride and stubborn self-exaltation. They will not consider the obvious, and when we bring it up, they call us ignorant (Psalm 14:1).

Commented [notes17]: 2 Peter 3:9 (ESV)

⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Commented [notes18]: John 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Commented [notes19]: Isaiah 29:10 (ESV)

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).

Commented [notes20]: Deuteronomy 29:4 (ESV)

⁴ But to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear.

Commented [notes14]: Psalm 51:5 (ESV)

⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Commented [notes21]: Isaiah 29:13 (ESV)

¹³ And the Lord said: "Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men,

Commented [notes15]: Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Commented [notes22]: Isaiah 29:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, "He did not make me. E or the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding"

Commented [notes16]: Romans 10:3 (ESV)

³ For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

Commented [notes23]: Psalm 14:1 (ESV)

¹ The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none who does good.

The last part referring to blind eyes and ears that will not hear was first spoken during the renewal of the covenant with God before Moses died. Moses reminded Israel of all that God had done for them and the miracles they had seen. Yet they still did not have eyes to see or ears to hear what God was doing. While the people in Moses' day did not take to heart the miracles God did through Moses, the people in Paul's day had not taken the miracles of Jesus to heart (John 15:24). In rejecting Jesus, the One to whom the law was pointing, they had rejected God.

⁹ And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; ¹⁰ let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever." Surprisingly, Paul was not the first to apply Psalm 69:23-24 to Israel. Other Jewish extra-biblical texts did as well¹¹. Just as David once pronounced a curse on his enemies, so now there was a curse on those who had rejected their own Messiah. In chapter 15 of Romans, Paul will apply verse 9 from this Psalm to Jesus. So it is Christ calling down this curse upon those who reject what He has done for them. The table most likely refers to their fellowship with God at the feasts. Instead of meeting God at the observance of the feasts, the religious ritual became the works that cause them to think they had no need of repentance. "Bent backs" implies servitude. Those who reject Jesus' offer of freedom from sin will inevitably become the servants of sin (John 8:34). The former judgments of God on Israel are seen as being repeated in their rejection of the Messiah.

This is really where the chapter divides. Paul has first shown us Israel's problem and their current condition before he moves on to the hope that lies in the future. ¹¹ So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. Just as the return from captivity offered a new hope that culminated in the coming of the Messiah, so now the rejection of the Messiah is seen with the future hope of salvation. First, Paul asks if the purpose of their rejection of Christ was so they might fall. In a way it is a repetition of the opening question. Has God rejected His people? Once again Paul answers with and emphatic, "By no means!" He sees the reason behind their trespass as serving the purpose of the gospel going to the Gentiles (Isaiah 49:6).

What would have happened if the Jews had accepted Jesus as their Messiah? If Jesus reestablished the throne of David, we wonder if the Jews would have continued their "too holy for you" attitude toward the rest of the world (Isaiah 65:5). Instead, through their fall, they are made jealous of a genuine personal relationship with God that Jew and Gentile experience with Jesus as their Savior.

¹² Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean! Just as Israel failed to enter the Promised Land under Moses because of unbelief (Hebrews 3:19) but later entered in under Jehoshua (Joshua), so now Paul

Commented [notes24]: John 15:24 (ESV)

²⁴ If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.

Commented [notes29]: Isaiah 49:6 (ESV)

⁶ he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

Commented [notes25]: Odes Solomon 5:5; Midrash Esther 7:9

Commented [notes26]: Romans 15:3 (ESV)

³ For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me."

Commented [notes27]: Psalm 69:9 (ESV)

⁹ For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.

Commented [notes30]: Isaiah 65:5 (ESV)

⁵ who say, "Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am too holy for you. E These are a smoke in my nostrils, a fire that burns all the day.

Commented [notes28]: John 8:34 (ESV)

³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.

Commented [notes31]: Hebrews 3:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

looks forward to the day they will enter into the rest found in the Messiah not by the works of the law but through the leadership of Jeshua (Jesus). **Yehoshua led the Jews into the Promised Land of Israel. Yeshua leads us into the Promised Land of salvation and life everlasting.**

Paul sees a repeated pattern in history. Solomon wrote, "That which has been is that which shall be, and there is no new thing under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9)."

The plan doesn't end with the inclusion of the Gentiles, as wonderful as that is. The climax of the work of salvation is when the full inclusion of the Jewish people takes place. We see the conclusion of "the time of the Gentiles" rapidly approaching as an increasing number of Jews accept Jesus as their Messiah (Luke 21:24).

¹³ Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry ¹⁴ in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. Paul saw an additional benefit of his apostolic calling to the Gentiles in the jealousy it aroused in his fellow Jews. The more dedicated the Gentile church was to Jesus because of Paul's ministry, the more attention Jesus received from the Jews and thereby some of them would be saved. This was the longing of Paul's heart.

Think of it this way: If you were called to evangelize a people group on the other side of the world, you would certainly have a heart for them, but you would also long for your own people to know Christ. And if somehow those people you

led to Jesus were so in love with Him that it stirred up your fellow Americans from their complacent, comfortable lives to get more serious about their relationship with God, wouldn't that be a great side benefit of your ministry? That may help to give you a sense of what Paul meant.

¹⁵ For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?

¹⁶ If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches. Paul saw the future salvation of the Jewish people as a great wonder that is inevitable. God chose them. The writings came from them (Romans 3:1-2). The Messiah came through them. They were the Apostles. What does God have in store when they finally find Him as their Messiah?

While some Jews do come to Christ stirred by the jealousy aroused in them through Gentiles' relationships with God, many more go on their own way without concern for God. The prophets tell us of the climactic events of the end-time that will bring about this change (Zechariah 13:8). It will come at a great cost, but it will come. In the meantime, let us be so passionately in love with Jesus and so vibrantly alive in Him that we stir as many as possible to a relationship with their Messiah. Those that are Messianic believers today will no doubt be there to help guide the multitude that come to Christ in the end-time. The Messianic believer you disciple today may be an instrument in the fulfillment of the very passage we are studying (Romans 11:26-27).

Commented [notes32]: Ecclesiastes 1:9 (ESV)

⁹ What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.

Commented [notes34]: Romans 3:1-2 (ESV)

¹ Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?

² Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.

Commented [notes33]: Luke 21:24 (ESV)

²⁴ They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

Commented [notes35]: Zechariah 13:8 (ESV)

⁸ In the whole land, declares the LORD, two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one third shall be left alive.

Commented [notes36]: Romans 11:26-27 (ESV)

²⁶ And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"

²⁷ "and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

Questions

- 1 What is the first question and answer?
- 2 How did Paul apply the story of Elijah?
- 3 Who makes up the remnant?
- 4 What is the main thing to know?
- 5 What is different about Christianity?
- 6 Is the spirit of stupor present today?
- 7 Why would God harden hearts?
- 8 Why was Israel's rejection of the Messiah a blessing to the world?
- 9 How do Christians convert Jews?
- 10 What is Paul looking forward to?