

The Solid Truth of God Romans 11:1-6

We have been going through chapters 9-11 and looking at the statement that was made way back in Romans 9:6 and that is that even though the vast majority of Israel has not believed the gospel, have rejected Christ, it is not as though the word of God has failed. And Paul has given two reasons why in the last two chapters. In chapter 9 the answer was that salvation was always according to his choice. That is one of the explanations of why there is more Gentiles than Jews in the church is because of God's choice. So the purposes of God have come to pass just as God has said. The second reason is that unbelieving Israel is responsible for their own rejection of Christ. God in his goodness sent preachers and teachers to herald the gospel, and they made the message clear and simple, yet in their rebellion and pride refused to bow the knee to Jesus Christ, and are therefore culpable for their sin.

But there is one more thing to deal with, if God's word has not failed to Israel, and that is to do with how the current state of Israel's unbelief is consistent with the promises that were given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; promises that were unconditional in nature, and were certainly not given because of those men's moral character but were given to them and their posterity by divine grace alone. Scripture is filled with statements that God will never forsake his chosen people. After Israel chose King Saul, a king after their own liking, the people were afraid that God would cast them aside and Samuel replied with these words in 1Sam. 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."** Listen to Psalm 89:30-37, **"If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my rules, if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes, but I will not remove from him my steadfast love or be false to my faithfulness. I will not violate my covenant or alter the word that went forth from my lips. Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me. Like the moon it shall be established forever, a faithful witness in the skies."** And Psalm 105:8-10, **"He remembers his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac, which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant."**

So as we come and hear those words we have to come to the conclusion for God's word not to fail there has to be some kind of history for the Jewish people. God promised to be faithful to Israel in not just spiritual terms but also physical terms. And the way that this chapter answers that question is in two ways. One is in the opening 11 verses he deals with Israel today, and the message is that he is merciful to the Jewish people even today. And then in verses 12-32 he shows the future of Israel, that God will bring full and plentiful salvation to them as a people and nation. And the message, although in many ways not a popular one is that God is not finished with His Chosen Old Testament people.

And there is much at stake in these verses. What is at stake is the integrity and truthfulness and the faithfulness of God. If God does not preserve the nation then God's word has failed, and the fame of his very character is blemished. He obligated himself to redeem Israel through the promises he made to the nation, and to give them a kingdom above all other kingdoms of the world. God honours his covenants. And what is also at stake is our evangelism. How could we ever preach Christ Jesus as the answer of human sin, and the promise of life eternal if God's promises have failed in the past? Who among either Jew or Gentiles would trust a God like that? And for us as the people of God who have been engraftment in to that tree of salvation, how could we ever trust in the precious promises and truths of Romans 8 if God's promises have failed to the Jews in the past? But Paul's message here is that God is faithful. He is God. His word cannot and never fails, and we should take such great comfort in that truth. God cannot lie and he cannot fail. There is so much at stake in this passage, and we will just get started this morning. I want us to understand the question and answer, and then look at God's faithfulness in verse 1.

1. We need to understand the question and answer. V.1a.

Now Paul up until this point has laid the blame of Jewish rejection of God at the feet of the Jews who because of pride and jealousy have rejected Christ. But this does not mean that God has moved on to the Gentiles because of the response of the Jews, and has cast them off eternally. It is amazing how often we start by grace, but end up in some meritorious place. Certainly when you look at Gentile rejection it is just as great. We see the vast majority of Gentile people in our own land, even though they have access to church this morning, or could watch on electronic devices chose to reject Christ. This is not a case of worthiness, just like the whole selection of the Jewish nation was never about them being great, but about God being great and showing that greatness, displaying his character and the glory of his grace. If he just cast Israel aside what would that show about his glory?

So look at what Paul says here because he asks the question so clearly, **"I ask then, has God rejected his people?"** This is talking about God's response to Israel's unbelief. And notice what he calls them - "his people." These were the ones chosen as God's peculiar people over all the people of the world. He chose them, they did not chose him. Right after commanding them not to intermarry with the nations around them, God says through Moses in Deut. 7:6-8, **"For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."** They are known as his people, and they have this status above all the people of the earth.

And the key word in this question is the word "rejected." It means to thrust away, to abandon. And the question that Paul is asking is has God thrust away his people that he had chosen and received such a long time ago? And the answer should

be so obvious based on the character of God, and that answer is, “**By no means.**” The simple meaning is “impossible.” We should perish the thought because we already know the character of God. We know who he is, and what he is like. I don’t know if there is a clearer message in Scripture than this: God can be trusted. Whatever he says can be banked on. Whatever he says is true, and whatever he promises will come to pass. Titus 1:2 says that God cannot lie. 2Tim. 2:13 says, “**if we are faithless, he remains faithful- for he cannot deny himself.**” Part and parcel of the nature of God is he is always faithful, and always truthful. It is what sets himself apart from us. Proverbs 30:5 says, “**Every word of God proves true.**” Not most or the majority or some but “every word.” So you can see why Paul wants us to perish the thought.

And it is not like Israel deserved God’s blessing and grace upon them. Listen to the Levites as they prayed after the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem, and they rehearse the disobedience of Israel, and God’s punishment of the nation, In Neh. 9:26-27, “**Nevertheless, they were disobedient and rebelled against you and cast your law behind their back and killed your prophets, who had warned them in order to turn them back to you, and they committed great blasphemies. Therefore you gave them into the hand of their enemies, who made them suffer. And in the time of their suffering they cried out to you and you heard them from heaven, and according to your great mercies you gave them saviors who saved them from the hand of their enemies.**” And then they go in that same cycle and they are taken out of the land. And then we read in Neh. 9:31, “**Nevertheless, in your great mercies you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.**” Why did Israel continue on? It was because of the faithfulness and grace of God not because they deserved it. And then as they continue to pray, they gain confidence because in verse 32, “**Now, therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love,**” and they go on and pray. But who is God. He is great and mighty and awesome; able to do whatever he wants to do. But look at what he does, “who keeps covenant and steadfast love.” He is a God who keeps his promises.

And here is the promise in this context - he has not rejected or abandoned or cast off his people, his chosen people the ethnic Jew. And all of us should take such great comfort in that because we realize that all the promises that are given to us are yea and amen in him. But it is one thing to say that God is faithful but another thing to prove that he has been faithful to his chosen Old Testament people. And that is where Paul directs his attention.

2. We see an illustration of God’s faithfulness. V.1b.

It is amazing that throughout this whole section, we see one who is true to his word is the one who is controlling history. Whether there was a remnant in the past, or the present, or what will happen in the future is all under God’s sovereign hand and doing. He has the power and wisdom to bring his purposes to past. And really history is just the unfolding of the plan of God and the faithfulness of God. As we look and see evidence of that truth - of God’s faithfulness, then it just gives us further reason, zeal, and enthusiasm to want to know His Word, and know the God of truth, and his purposes and his promises. And let me ask you: do you know the promises in God’s

Word? Do you see his faithfulness to those promises all around you? And if the answer is yes, then is it giving you a great zeal to trust him, love him, and know his word? There are living illustrations of God's faithfulness all around us.

And Paul is one of those living illustrations of his faithfulness. Look at what he says here, "**For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.**" And this is one of the most amazing conversions that happen to be in all of Scripture, and really in all of redemptive Scripture. We have to remember that in the founding of the church, most of those who were believers were actually "Israelites." The gospel and the founding of the church started at Pentecost in Acts 2, and persecution quickly spread from the Jews because most were Jewish believers. And one of the most zealous individuals in persecuting early believer happen to be Paul. Paul speaks of himself in Gal. 1:13, "**For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.**" So think about it, because when Paul says, "for I myself an Israelite," he is saying he is among those who are the Old Testament ethnic people of God. Has God cast away his people, and the answer that Paul gives is perish the thought, and then gives an example of how God has not thrown off his people. He is just one example of many Jews that have come to Christ. And if you look at his life you have to realize that he is saved because of God's unconditional choosing because he certainly is not saved because of any merit in himself. What is it a message of? God is faithful. He is faithful to His Word, to his promises and covenants. He is the ever faithful God.

And he gives his credentials in this verse. He is "a descendant of Abraham." And earlier Paul wrote in 9:7, "**and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring.**" And right there he is talking about spiritual children who are children of Abraham because they have the same faith in God and his promises as Abraham. Here it is not only talking about that but also talking about his physical lineage. He is one who descended from the physical line of Abraham, and yet at the same time has been saved by divine grace and has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. And then he goes further and says that he's is of the tribe of Benjamin. And Benjamin, although a small tribe in Israel was a prominent tribe. This is the descendant of Jacob and the youngest son of Israel, and the second son born of Rachel. Benjamin was the only tribe that remained faithful to the tribe of Judah when we have a separation of the nation of Israel into two nations. So here is the message, and it is so loud and clear: if God had rejected his own chosen people then he would have rejected Paul. And if he was the only Jew that was saved, and there are many more, then God would be true to his name. He is an example of one of many.

But here is the amazing thing about Paul, although a Jew and realizing that the promises to this particular people group can never fail, being a Jew was not what Paul gloried in. We see this in Phil. 3 where Paul goes over his Jewish credentials in verses 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.**" What Paul used to glory in has lost all of its value because it has been replaced by something of greater efficacy and great value. He continues in Phil. 3:7-8, "**But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss**

because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.” Here is true gain, and here is true salvation. Here is true life, and here is where the indestructible promises of God are ours through Jesus Christ our Lord. His Word shall not fail!

Now let me give a couple of applications to this passage as we close. One is that this should encourage us so much in our evangelism. We often look at all the unbelief around us, and even the growing hostility toward God, and think there is no way that God’s purposes could ever come to pass except for his judgment against such wickedness. But if God is true to his word and the promises to his chosen people, and he is still calling some, then it is true also of Gentile people, that he has chosen this time to call a people after his own name. It should encourage us that the promises and the Word of God, the faithfulness of God to call a people to himself cannot fail. He will still save people like Paul and people like you and me. He is still opening up hearts and will open up hearts through the preaching of the gospel. And as we will see next day, appearances can be deceptive. We can feel many times that so few, and although always only a remnant, we only ever see a fraction of the people of God and how many people have believed and have called, and will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And this passage should encourage us so much in our evangelism.

The second application is to be encouraged by the God who speaks and the God who promises. Many believers who are exhausted by all the trials and difficulties in their lives, and all the evil around them in the world often in frustration will blurt out, “Why doesn’t God do something?!” I can remember someone asking me that question, and the answer that I gave is that he has done something, so extraordinary and that is he sent his son, to live that life that we could never live, to die that death taking the punishment that we deserve, that we might have life, eternal life that we would never have. And if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ came and died for his people. And we could ask the question a little bit different than what Paul asked, “Has God rejected the Gentile people, he said that he would save and call a people who were not his people, has God been true to his word?” And the answer is “perish the thought.” Am not I myself a descendant of the Gentile people, with my Irish and Ukrainian roots?” And the answer is yes. And all of us who have called on the name of the Lord are an example of the amazing faithfulness of God, that his word has not failed, that he has not abandoned his promises or his purposes. And therefore we are absolutely secure in him.

Praise God for the God who cannot, will not, and who has never failed, nor can he fail. He is a God of truth, and a God who is able and will keep his promises. That is why we can walk by faith. that is why we can have so much security as believers in Christ. Let us bask in the God who cannot fail.