



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Romans 11: 1-10

Romans

“The Remnant and the Rest”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We begin a new chapter in Romans this morning, Romans 11, and we're going to look at verses 1 through 10. Paul writes, "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. 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.' What is the divine response to him? 'I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.'" Same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; just as it is written, 'God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes to see not and ears to hear not, down to this very day.' And David says, 'Let their table become a snare and a trap, and a stumbling block and a retribution to them. Let their eyes be darkened to see not, and bend their backs forever.'" May the Lord bless this reading of His word. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank You for the time we have to be here together and to open the scriptures, to read them, to study them, to think upon Your word. What a privilege it is to have your inerrant word in our possession, and to be able to study it in some depth. That is a great privilege, but it would come to nothing if we were left to ourselves if we simply had the word of God, if we simply had the Bible to read and time to do it. We need

more than that. We need a teacher and you have given us that in the Holy Spirit. He is the anointing, and so, we are able to know these things and understand the meaning of the text as He opens our minds to understand it. And so, we pray for that ministry, pray that you would minister to us through the Spirit, that He would open our eyes to see the truth and giving us an understanding of these things, the proper application would be made, and we would come to understand you better and ourselves better as we always do when we study Your word. What a blessing it is, Father, to have that kind of revelation, to know You, to learn the things about You, the truths about You, and how they relate to us, and to learn about ourselves, the kind of people we are by nature, but then, the kind of people we are by Your grace and what You've made us to be, and all the blessings that You've given us, and we're reminded of those from our text.

You have given us revelation about the future and we consider that in this great chapter, chapter 11 of the book of Romans. But we learn other things as well, Father, and particularly, we consider this morning Your faithfulness to us. That is a great truth that we need to understand, we need to appreciate, and I pray, Father, that the would be the result of our time together, that we would come to know more and more Your faithfulness to us, and how reliable Your word is, how reliable Your promises are. And so, Father, through our time together this morning, may we come away from our time of study with a great confidence in You and a strength in confidence, so build us up in the faith. Make us stronger as Christians that we might go forth from this place as lights in the midst of a dark and an evil generation. We pray for our material needs as well.

We have a long list of prayer requests and we pray for those who are recovering from surgery and those who are sick. We pray that you give healing and encouragement. We pray for those who are simply undergoing difficulties due to the experiences of life, which often times become difficult for us. We pray that You give encouragement, as only You can. Help Your saints remember the promises of God and that You are always faithful. We have those great promises within the book of Romans. We know that You work all things together for good to those who love you and are called

according to Your purpose. That means everything, Father, is governed by You and worked to our good. What an amazing promise that is and help us to understand that, to live in light of it, and to be appreciative of who You are and what You're doing for us, and may that have an effect upon how we deal with the different events of life as they come upon us.

Bless our nation, Father. We pray that You give great wisdom our leaders, pray that the time of crisis, the time of warfare, we pray that You bless our leaders with wisdom at every level. We pray that You give our service men and women safety in the field of battle. We pray that you keep them well, and protected, and efficient in the mission that they have been given. And we pray for our government at the lower levels as well, the state and local governments, and we pray particularly for our local government as we face elections in the week to come. Give wisdom to the public. May wise choices be made.

And, Father, again, bless us. Bless us in this world that we would be effective ministers for Jesus Christ and representatives of Him. Bless us to that end this morning as we study. Bless us to that end this evening as we gather again to remember our Lord. Bless that worship service and bless us now as we sing our final hymn, prepare our hearts in that way for our time of study together. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] Last summer I stood beneath the Arch of Titus in the old Roman Forum. It is a first century monument that celebrates Rome's defeat of the Jews in A.D. 70. For a long time, I stared at the scene depicting Roman soldiers carrying off the menorah, the seven-branched lampstand from the temple. It's all victory and triumph for the empire. The Romans must've thought that was the end of the Jews, just as many Jews must've wondered the same as they were carried off into slavery and scattered across the earth. It wasn't the end, of course. Jewish people have continued on in what has been called one of history's most illogical survivals.

One historian wrote, "Great nations of the Pagan era, which appeared at the same time the Jews did have totally disappeared." The Babylonians, the Persians, the Phoenicians, the Hittites, the Philistines all have vanished from the face of the earth after having been great and mighty powers, but the Jews

remains. They have an ancient past, a history of 4,000 years, and they have a significant present. Few nations have influenced the modern world as much as the Jews. But do they have a future? For 2,000 years they've been enslaved, persecuted, forced into ghettos, made to wander the world. Will their illogical survival continue? Is there a future for Israel?

That is the question that Paul takes up in Romans 11, which begins, "I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? A question arises naturally from Israel's present condition of unbelief. Paul ended chapter 10 with a description of the Jews as a disobedient and obstinate people. They have rejected the Gospel. They have rejected Christ, rejected God. Has He rejected them? This is part of the larger question that Paul began to answer in chapter 9; has God's word failed? Israel is God's chosen nation. He made firm promises to her in 1 Samuel 12 in verse 22 after the nation had rejected God's rule and asked for a king, Samuel reassured the people, "Do not fear. The Lord will not abandon His people on account of His great name." On account of his great name; his name, his reputation, his character, his very being is attached to his faithfulness to His word, Samuel is saying.

In Jeremiah 31:35 and 37 the Lord said, "If the sun and the moon and the stars cease to be, then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done." That's a way of saying that He'll never cast them off because the stars, the moon, the sun are fixed. These are unconditional promises and the Bible is filled with them for Israel and the church. The Lord promised His disciples at the end of the Gospel of Matthew, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Hebrews 13:5, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you." John 10:28, "No one will snatch them out of My hand." Christians are eternally secure.

That is the promise, but the condition of the Jews, the condition of the Jewish people might seem to call all of that into question. They are in unbelief and unsaved. It might appear that they have been cast off. And if that is so, then what does that say about God's faithfulness, who promised that He will not cast off Israel? Has God's purpose towards Israel changed? And if it has, will it change toward the church? Can we rely on God's promises?

So this question about God's relationship to Israel is an important one.

It occupies three chapters of the book of Romans. Paul explained in chapters 9 and 10 that Israel's condition of unbelief is not due to unfaithfulness on the part of God, but to His purpose and election and to Israel's failure in stumbling over Christ. Now, in chapter 11, He explains that Israel's present condition of unbelief and rejection is not permanent and it is not complete. In verse 1, Paul asks, "Has God cast off His people?" And He answers, "By no means." In verse 11, he asks, "Did Israel stumble, so as to fall beyond recovery?" And again, He answers, "May it never be." Israel's fall is temporary. Israel's future is glorious. In fact, Israel's failure has resulted in gentile salvation, Paul will go on to explain, and gentile salvation will lead to Jewish recovery, which will result in blessing of the whole world and fulfillment of God's promises.

So Paul now takes up the question of Israel's future. Does it have one? Has God's word failed? Has He cast off His people? Paul answers with an emphatic denial, "May it never be." And in the next 10 verses, he supports that with what John Stott calls four pieces of evidence. First, personal evidence; second, theological; third, Biblical; and fourth, what he calls contemporary evidence. The first proof that God has not rejected His people is Paul himself. "I too am an Israelite," he said. "A descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin." The fact that God had saved one Israelite shows that He has not abandoned His people and that Paul was an Israelite was beyond dispute. He could trace his lineage by his tribe to Abraham, and his tribe is one of the most distinguished of Israel. Benjamin was the only son of Jacob born in the land of Israel.

It was in the territory of Benjamin that Jerusalem was located and the tribe of Benjamin was the one tribe that remained faithful to Judah when the kingdom divided. In fact, the first king of Israel came from Benjamin, Saul, which was also Paul's Jewish name. So Paul Jewish ancestry was pure. It was beyond dispute, as was his patriotism, which was very strong and he could've mentioned that, could've mentioned his former zeal as a Jew and his persecution of the church. He does that in other biographical sections of the New Testament. He doesn't mention that here, but Luther did when he was discussing this passage and he did so in order to show that if God had rejected

His people, He certainly would have rejected Paul, but he did not. He saved him, and as long as there was one believing Jew, it was proof that God had not abandoned His people, which He promised not to do. Paul is personal proof of that.

In verse 2, he gives the reason for God's saving action or the theological evidence. The Jewish people are God's chosen people. "God has not rejected His people whom he foreknew." Foreknew is the same word that was used in chapter 8 in verse 29, whom He foreknew, He also predestined, and you may remember our studies on that passage and that particular word. It means foreloved, not foresaw. God is not said to have foreseen or foreknown something in them or something about them. He is said to have foreknown them, foreloved them. That's the meaning. The word to know is a Hebrew idiom that's used of intimate personal knowledge.

We find it at the very beginning of the Bible in chapter 4 of Genesis, verse 1, "Adam knew his wife, Eve, and she conceived and bore a son." He had personal relations with her, intimate relations with her, and that's the idea of the word know or foreknew. It means to forelove. It means that He chose and He loved and He chose them before time. And we have that statement in scripture. One of the best known texts on that very subject is Amos 3 in verse 2 where God says, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." He obviously doesn't mean that Israel is the only nation on the earth that he had knowledge of. He knew all the nations. He created them. He set their boundaries. He determines their destinies. He knows every nation. What He means is you only have I chosen. Israel was God's chosen people, his unique nation.

Paul has already explained in chapter 9 that God has elected individuals within the nation Israel, but here, He speaks more broadly of the nation as a whole being chosen for salvation. That meaning fits the context. His people in verse 1 are the same as those whom He foreknew in verse 2. That's the subject of the chapter. The nation Israel, not the elect within the nation, but the nation Israel and its condition and its relationship to God, has it been rejected? That's the question and Paul's answer is no, it hasn't. It has not been rejected. Rejection is inconsistent with election. God does not

choose people or nations from all eternity and not fulfill his choice and His will and what He has ordained.

Not all Israelites are being saved in the present time, but God's purpose for the nation is salvation and He will accomplish that. Jewish unbelief is not permanent. In the future, Paul states in verse 26, "All Israel will be saved; just as it is written, 'The deliverer will come from Zion. He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. This is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.'" Today the majority of the Jewish people are in unbelief, but God's purpose for the nation still stands. The gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable, Paul will say in verse 29, and in the future there will be national salvation. There will be a great awakening among the Jewish people.

Paul's own salvation is the proof that God has not rejected His people, that His plan still stands, but Paul was not the only Jew that had been saved. In his day, there were multitudes that had been saved. The first century church began as a Jewish church. We read of that in the book of Acts in chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost, Peter preached a magnificent sermon and the response was amazing. Three thousand people were saved. And Luke goes on to state that God was adding to their numbers daily. It was not the majority of the Jewish people, but it was a large minority, and that has always been God's pattern. There has always been a remnant of believers throughout history. That remnant is the proof that God has not forsaken His people, and Paul proves that from scripture. He's given personal proof. He's given theological proof. And now, he gives his third evidence, the Biblical evidence, which is the story of Elijah. It was one of the bleakest times in Israel's history, a time of general apostasy. It was during the reign of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel when Baal worship was rampant in the land.

Paul refers to that period recorded in 1 Kings 18 and 19 when Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to a contest on Mount Carmel to see who was god, Yahweh or Baal. Elijah was generous in his challenge. Baal was the storm god, the god of lightning. So Elijah proposes that the true God reveal Himself by sending fire from heaven, which should've been an easy task for Baal, but Baal failed to answer the call of his prophets, while the Lord responded to Elijah's prayer immediately with fire that not only consume the

sacrifice, but the altar itself. The people responded to that. They believe. They confess that the Lord was God and Elijah slaughtered 450 prophets of Baal. It was a great victory.

When Jezebel hear the news though, she was upset. She threatened to kill Elijah. That terrified the prophet. He lost confidence in God and he ran for his life. He fled south on a 40-day journey all the way down to the desert and to Mount Sinai. When God questioned him and asked Elijah what he was doing there, Elijah answered by describing the widespread unbelief in the land. "I have been very zealous for the Lord, but the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword." Then he said, "I alone am left and they are seeking my life."

Now, Elijah should have known better. He just witnessed a great revival. The people had responded in faith to the miracle on Mount Carmel and helped him slaughter the prophets of Baal. And what did he have to fear from Jezebel or anyone? The God who had just demonstrated His power, the God who sent fire from heaven could certainly protect him from the queen and her armies.

It was John Knox who had been threatened by the Queen of Scotland, Mary, who said, "A man with God is always in the majority." That's true. We are absolutely safe with the Lord wherever and whenever we are with Him, and He's always with us. We are safe with Him, not only because He is able to defend us and to make us triumph, but because He is always faithful, always faithful to His people. He always honors His word. Elijah knew that. That's why Elijah was so bold on Mount Carmel, why he took on all those prophets, and all of the people for that matter, why he could stand alone because he knew he stood with God, and therefore, he was in the majority, but now he was suffering a period of weakness. He was doing what we all do. Arriving at a pessimistic judgment based on appearances, not God's revelation.

So as we take our mind off the things of God, as we look away from the word of God that we fall into that kind of condition and become pessimistic. That's why the author of Hebrews tells us that we are to run the race, we are to live out the life of faith with our eyes fixed on Jesus, the

author and perfecter of faith. Always have Him in mind. We have so many circumstances around us that can be discouraging, that seem threatening and are threatening, and as we look at those circumstances and focus on that, then, of course, our faith does fail, but it's as we look at the Lord, as we think upon Him, who He is, trust in Him, remember His promises that we grow strong in our faith and we continue on. And when we don't, then, of course, we grow weak.

Fortunately, the Lord knows our condition. He knows that we are just dust. He understood Elijah's weakness and dealt with him gently. We encouraged him with a revelation of himself, and then, He corrected his perception of things. He was not alone. I have kept for myself 7,000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Was a large remnant of faithful people who existed because God had kept them for Himself. It wasn't that they happened to be what was left over after the general apostasy, that they just happened to be there, it wasn't that they had kept themselves because it was their nature to be faithful or they just had it within them to believe, whereas the others didn't, as though there are, some people are just more apt to believe than other people. Wasn't that at all. God had done it.

Paul lays some stress on that. "I have kept for myself." The Hebrew text is "I have left" or "I have spared," but Paul says, "I have kept," and he adds, "for myself," and it's a way for strengthening the statement of the Lord to show that this was His sovereign work. He did this. Otherwise, they would've fallen away also and we might even add, were not for the Lord's grace and His keeping of Elijah, he too would've fall away and perhaps become a prophet of Baal. Now, it's all of God. He has done this and He did it in a difficult time, even in a time of widespread spiritual darkness, the Lord had kept a remnant. It was His doing, which showed that He had not rejected His people. In Hosea 11, in verse 8, He said to apostate Israel, "How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel?" He can't. He can't give them up and He won't give them up, and the remnant is the proof that He is true to His word. It's the same today. And in verse 5, Paul gives what Stott calls the contemporary evidence that God has not rejected His people. There were 7,000 faithful in Elijah's day. "In the same way then,"

Paul writes in verse 5, "there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice."

In Acts 21, in verse 20, when Paul was in Jerusalem James told him that there were many thousands among the Jews who had believed. And in every generation, there is a remnant of believing Jews. God has kept them for Himself just as He did in Elijah's day. They are saved by grace. Paul says that. It is a remnant according to God's gracious choice. That's election. And election, God's sovereign grace, His free grace is the only reason there is a remnant. God's continuing commitment to Israel is not due to any merit that Israel might have. The Jews do not differ from the gentiles in their need for grace. Paul makes that plain verse 6 and he brings out the very nature of grace with what Calvin called a comparison of opposites. "If it is of grace," Paul says, "it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace."

Salvation has nothing to do with us and everything to do with God, and we will never understand grace until we understand that fact. It is not on the basis of works. Human merit and divine grace are mutually exclusive. Salvation is because of God's sovereign choice, His election. How could it be otherwise? We must always read the scriptures in context, in the context of the book of Romans if we're in the book of Romans, and then, in the context of the Bible as a whole. And if you remember from earlier statements that Paul made, he has indicated very clearly our natural inability to respond to the Lord.

In chapter 3, in verse 11, "There is none who understands. There is none who seeks for God." And that's not simply Paul's statement; he's quoting the Psalms when he says that. This is the testimony of the work of God. There is no one who seeks because no one understand in and of ourselves by our own nature. So if we are to be found, God must first seek us. If we are dead spiritually as Paul says we are in Ephesians 2 in verse 1 then, "We must be made alive before we can seek." And those who are made alive will seek and will believe.

God unconditionally elects some from eternity past. He irresistibly draws them to Himself in time and they believe. Salvation is God's work,

from election to glorification, from eternity past to eternity future. That is grace. It's nothing short of that. Not even faith can be attributed to ourselves. Nothing can be attributed to ourselves. We can boast in nothing. We cannot boast in the fact that we moved our wills toward God, that we did at least respond, that there was some movement within our souls. We cannot boast about anything. Cannot attribute anything to ourselves, and Paul does not attribute anything to ourselves here or elsewhere. And in Ephesians 2 in verse 8, for example, he states that faith is a gift of God.

Paul states that in this verse, states the nature of grace first to give clarity about grace, but also, and I think primarily, to give us understanding about the basis of God's dealing with Israel and the reason that He continues to have a purpose for His people even though they have rejected Him, even though they have crucified His son. It has nothing to do with Israel. It has everything to do with God. That's why He is faithful to that people.

In Deuteronomy 7:7 and 8, Moses explained that when he explained to the people why they were God's people. The Book of Deuteronomy is a collection of the final sermon that Moses gave to the nation. They're about to go into the land and he's not going to be entering with them, and so, he gives them some sermons to direct them in their thinking and to give them understanding of themselves and of God. And all through that book, you have indications of God's sovereign grace in His dealing with Israel and nowhere more clearly than in Deuteronomy 7:7 and 8 where Moses says, "The Lord did not set his love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the people, for you were fewest of all people." And if we go back to the beginning, we see that they were the fewest because they were one. It was Abraham and Abraham was an idolater when god called him.

So it was not because they were more in number. They were fewest of all people, but he says, "Because the Lord loved you and kept the oath, which He swore to your fathers." God chose them because He loved them, and He loved them not because of anything in them; He loved them because He loved them. That's how Moses leaves it. God is the source of his love. His election of Israel is rooted in His eternal counsel and He gave an oath, He gave a promise to make them into a nation with a glorious future. Isaiah

called Israel Am Olam, an everlasting people. They are a people with a future because God has made promises and He has given an oath, and He is a God of His word. He cannot fail. He cannot lie.

Samuel said in 1 Samuel 12:22 that God would not abandon them on account of His great name. His character, His nature, His reputation depended upon Him being faithful, and He would be faithful even if they were not. That's what makes Israel's future certain, not Israel. Not Israel's faithfulness, but God's faithfulness. He keeps His promises. Israel's history came out of God's unconditional election and its destiny is governed by His unfailing word. And so, in the future, all Israel will be saved, and we can be glad of it because if God had cast off His people, if they did not have a future, we might wonder if we do, if God will keep the promises that He has made to us. He will. He must. It is His nature to do so. The English Puritan, Stephen Charnock wrote, "If God could change His purpose, He would change His nature." He cannot change His nature, so He cannot change His purpose. He is immutable. He is unchanging. And so, His love and His purpose are as unchanging as His nature is, which means that His promises are reliable, and He has made many and great promises to us; the promise of eternal life, not temporary life, eternal life; promises of heaven and the resurrection and the kingdom to come; promises of eternal security.

Hebrews 13:5, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you." John 10:28, "No one will snatch them out of my hand." Christians are eternally secure because of who God is, and He has guaranteed Israel a future. The remnant of believing Jews, what Paul calls in Galatians 6:16, "The Israel of God is proof of that." In the last verses of our passage, Paul shows the implications of what he has said and how they apply. He introduces them with a question in verse 7; what then? What Israel is seeking it has not obtained. It was seeking righteousness by the works of the law. Paul explained that in chapter 10. The Jewish people have sought to establish their own righteousness by legal obedience, but they failed to obtain it because as Paul has made clear from the beginning of the book, from chapter 1 on, "The righteousness of God is a gift received by faith alone." The elect received it. The rest, Paul says, were hardened.

Israel's rejection of Christ in the Gospel resulted in God response of judicial hardening. So there's a great divide within Israel, as there is a great divide within the world between those who believe in Christ and are saved and those who reject Him and are lost. Salvation is due to grace, while rejection is due to justice. God causes His elect to believe, but He doesn't cause the nonelect to disbelieve. He doesn't prevent people from seeking Christ. Election does not shut people out. Election includes people. And God leaves others in their sin. It's not unjust of Him to do that. No one deserves God's grace.

All deserve justice and in leaving people in their sin, he deals with them justly. He passes by them and hardens them in their own belief, but God is not arbitrary in His dealings with men. He is merciful with the elect. He is just with the nonelect. But in both electing people and hardening people, God is absolutely sovereign and Paul proves that in verses 8 through 10 where he indicates what hardening means. He quotes a combination of Old Testament passages; Deuteronomy 29:4, Isaiah 29:10, and Psalms 69:22 and 23. "Just as it is written, 'God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes to see not and ears to hear not, down to this very day.' And David says, 'Let their table become a snare and a trap, and a stumbling block and a retribution to them. Let their eyes be darkened to see not, and bend their backs forever.'"

That is the result of rejecting the truth. It is hardness of heart. It is a dullness and an insensitivity to the truth. This is the judicial consequence of unbelief in which blessings become curses. Let their table become a snare, become a trap," that which should nourish them and be a blessing, turn that against them, he's saying, and that's what the word of God has become to those who have disbelieved. It has become a trap, a snare.

Israel was blessed above all of the nations. Paul listed some of the nation's privileges in chapter 9, verses 4 and 5, but it rejected the truth, and as a result, it has become hardened. Dr. Johnson wrote in his notes on this sermon, "Just as the smallest particle of light falling on unexposed film products a chemical change that can never be undone, so the rejection of Christ leaves its ineffaceable mark on the spirit of men." Men do not merely neglect the Gospel when it is heard. There is always a response. If there is

rejection, the man is a worse man after having heard the message. "Whoever falls on this stone shall be broken," Jesus said.

So the blessings of God's word and the gospel of grace and salvation can become a curse when heard with indifference. It's a solemn thing to pick up the Bible and read it. It's a solemn thing to sit under the ministry of the word of God. It calls for a response and there'll always be a response. Indifference is a response, but the response that should be there is always a response of faith, and when it's not there, hardening occurs. That happened to Israel who had the great privilege of witnessing the light of Jesus Christ as he ministered among them. They heard His words. No one taught as He taught. They saw His miracles that verified His claims to being the Son of God and a Savior of the world, and they rejected Him. But that's not simply a problem for the Jew; that is a problem for all men who fail to respond in faith to the word of God, and that has happened often. We've seen that in our own history, in this very land.

In the early part of 19th century, there was lots of Gospel preaching in America, and western New York State became a place where a lot of revival preachers passed through. As a result, it became known as the burnt over district. It became hardened. Spiritual fads and cults originated from that area. The most significant was the Mormons. Joseph Smith came out of what one writer called the revival singed soil of western New York. It's dangerous to become revival singed. It's always dangerous to hear the word of God without responding. The heart becomes burnt over, hard like a callous until it's impossible to respond. Now, that's the warning that Israel gives to us. The rest were hardened, but the remnant gives us great encouragement. It is a demonstration of God's grace at work within His ancient people still, the proof that He has not forsaken them and a reminder of His faithfulness to us who believe. He has not cast off Israel and He will not cast off His church. We are secure in Christ, not because of us, not because of who we are and what we might've done, but because of the Lord who has made us His people and pledged Himself to our security. That should cause us to live with joy and peace and confidence with the kind of confidence that one would have as one learns of the security that we are given in Jesus Christ.

Some people would say that's presumptuous and that's dangerous to feel that one's secure in Christ and can never be plucked out of God's hand, but that's what the scriptures teach. And how can we be the kind of people we're commanded to be – joyful people, people who do not worry, who are not anxious because of the things of life – if we don't have that security, if we don't have the knowledge of God's certain unfailing love towards us? It's not presumptuous; it's necessary if we're to progress in the faith and if we're to be the kind of people we are to be. It's what God says that we are. He says we are secure in Him, and so, we should live in that way. We should live with joy and peace and confidence, not with uncertainty, not with fear. Jesus said, "And the one who comes to Me, I will certainly not cast out."

So we should have confidence and boldness in our relationship with the Lord, as we should have in this world, as we live in the midst of it and all of the turmoil and all of the difficulty. The remnant is a reminder that God is at work in the world. It is through the remnant that God works. He does not care about numbers. He likes small things because in weakness He demonstrates His power and He has always done that. He has always worked in that way.

Out of Jacob's evil sons, there was one good one, Joseph, and through that one, God saved the family. When the 12 spies went into the land, 10 were faithless, and 2 were faithful; Joshua and Caleb. A remnant. When 32,000 were ready to follow Gideon into war with the Midianites, God rejected the majority for 300 who defeated a nation. We want numbers, but God winnows and sifts the weak to get rid of the chaff, and then, with the small things, He does big things.

When David was a fugitive fleeing from Saul, the whole nation was against him; the king, his army, and the whole of the people. All David had was the off scouring, the debtors and the distressed, but David became king. And who was it who followed Christ? Was it the Pharisees, and the priests, and the princes? No, they rejected him. It was the despised. It was the poor. It was the rejected. Some fishermen and tax collectors, and some women from Galilee. Do not despise the day of small things. That is how God works. It is how He is working today just as He did in Elijah's day. Elijah

became very discouraged because he thought that he was all alone, not knowing that God had kept for himself 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

It's easy to feel like Elijah did in our day. We can understand that quite easily. We live in what seems to be a vast secular sea, a godless society, awash in promiscuity and materialism, a modern-day Sodom and Gomorrah. We feel small and alien, and we are, but we are not alone. God always has His remnant. They are in all places. There's a remnant in your office. You may not know it, but God's doing a work there. A remnant in the school where you go in your neighborhood. God is presently at work doing a greater work than we realize, doing things that we're not aware of, just as He was in Elijah's day and he is nourishing and building His church. He promises to do that. He will not fail. He is doing that presently. So we should never despair. We should never look around ourselves at the circumstances, at the unbelief, at the apostasy and become discouraged. We should be confident. We should be courageous. We should encourage one another and we should be lights in the midst of this generation, as Elijah was to be.

God's hand is firmly fixed on the affairs of this world and He is moving history to its appointed end. And one of the greatest proofs of that is the Jewish people. Pharaoh tried to drown them, Haman tried to hang them, Hitler tried to burn them, but the Jew has survived in what may seem like an illogical survival, but it is completely logical. It is logical because God is faithful to His word and He always operates in faith with His word. He promised Israel a future. The stars will fall from the sky before they cease to be. And the future of the nation will be saved, and the world will be blessed. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. He cannot. He cannot change His purpose any more than He can change His nature. God's nature is merciful and His purpose is saving, and that gives hope, not only to the Jew, but to the gentile as well. God sent His son into the world to save sinners. He died in our place. He bore the penalty for his elect. The elect believe. And God promises that everyone who believes, whosoever believes will be saved.

Have you believed in Jesus Christ as your savior? If not, look to Him. Trust in Him. Don't neglect the Gospel. It is a dangerous thing to treat it with indifference. Do not harden your heart. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. May God help you to do that. May God, by His grace, bring you to saving faith in Jesus Christ. May He give all of us the joy and the confidence of our salvation, that we might go forth with courage and be lights in the midst of this generation. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for the truth of this text and what Paul will unfold in this great chapter 11 of the book of Romans. We look at Israel. We look at the Jewish people and we see unbelief generally and it does not look like a hopeful prospect, and yet, you are saving people out of that ancient nation of Yours. You have all through history and that's the indication that You have not forsaken Your people. You've not abandoned them. You've not cast them off. And the day will come when all Israel will be saved. And that is not only a great truth because it's a glorious day and it will mean blessing to the whole world, but it is a great truth because it assures us that You will never cast us off. You are faithful to Your promises regardless of how unfaithful we may be, and we rejoice in that. That's grace. Father, bless us that we would be increasingly faithful to you and live lives that are pleasing to you, and helpful to one another, and make us a blessing to the world around us. And we pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.