

The Remnant  
Romans 11

John 3:1-21

2 Corinthians 4

Responsive Psalm 63

This morning we are going to be starting out in chapter 11 where Paul continues talking about Israel and the salvation of his people. But before we dive into all that this morning we do need to go back a bit in chapter 10 to build context to what Paul is saying here this morning. Originally I thought we would go back and just look at the last few verses but it can be difficult sometimes when determining where to start when looking to build context because points being made are built upon previous points being made so it can be hard sometimes to determine where is a good jump in point. In this particular instance, since its been a few weeks since we have been here and to sort of get our heads back into what Paul is saying I want to just go back and read chapter 10, for again he is setting up and building upon where he is going in chapter 11, and to understand chapter 11, we need to know and understand what he is saying in chapter 10, in fact honestly even chapter 9 but I am not going to make us all read through both of those chapters this morning. The big takes from chapter 9 that builds into chapter 10, is God's sovereignty in salvation, and that he has set aside for himself a people, an Israel of faith, if you will. Verse 6 of chapter 9 he points this out, by saying, "It is not as though the word of God has taken no effect, ( as he looks at Israel, his countrymen by birth, he sees their rejection of Christ, the one in whom the prophets foretold, and he laments in their blindness and lack of faith, but he says, it isn't as though the prophets, and promises have not been fulfilled, or taken effect,) For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham, but in Isaac your seed shall be called, ( the child of promise through whom the Savior of Promise will come )

And he doubles down in verse 8, That is, these who are the children of the flesh, that is physical Israel, offspring of Abraham, these are not the children of God but the children of the promise are counted as the seed." God has his people, and that people include both Jews and Gentiles, both slave and free, both rich and poor, in Christ there is no partiality we who are his are his by one faith, covered by the blood of the one lamb, the promised seed of Abraham, Jesus Christ. Paul goes on to make the point that this has always been by God's sovereign design, he did not one day change his mind and just turn his back on Israel, no, he gave them every advantage and it is they who worshiped the shadows instead of the substance, focusing upon ritual, and outward cleanliness, an appearance of godliness, but as Jesus himself called their religious leaders, white washed tombs, beautiful and clean to look at, but inside full of dead mens bones, rot and decay. And as we all know, God doesn't look at the outside, he looks at the heart, he judges not on appearance, and ability to keep some arbitrary laws and traditions, but rather upon whether or not we believe on the one whom he sent to take our sins upon himself so that we maybe reconciled to God.

And God has designed it this way from the beginning, for if his work of salvation was by any other means, there would be no salvation and freedom from the slavery of Satan's grasp upon humanity. The sin and rebellion in our heart, which is the natural intrinsic nature of mankind is what condemns us, and if it were not for God who sent his son to pay that price, all would perish, and would rightly be cast into eternal darkness in the lake of fire.

Look at what Paul says in chapter 3, verse 10, quoting the old testament, "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands, there is none who seek after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one." This is the state of humanity, a people ripe for judgment due to our rebellion, and Israel does not escape that judgment merely by being offspring of Abraham for God judges by the heart, not the physical outward nature of man. But look what Paul says in chapter 5 verse 6, "For when we were still without strength, when there was no hope, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man would one die, yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die, but God demonstrates his love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Though humanity is lost, though we were lost, blinded by the darkness of a deceitful and sinful heart, Christ died for his people, whom he calls out of every nation, tongue, tribe and creed, to be a new people, a new nation of faithful believers who rest upon him, and what he has done. So again going back to chapter 9, verse 6, when looking at Israel, and her rejection of the one whom God has sent, of whom they were told was coming through the covenants, the giving of the law, and the prophets....Paul says, though they reject and do not believe, it isn't as though God has failed, for not all who are called Israel, are of Israel.

God has a chosen, his people, and the physical offspring of Abraham, and the chosen nation of Israel that he established coming out of Egypt was a foreshadowing of this true Israel of faith, a gathering and nation of believers from all corners of the world, by the preaching and hearing of the gospel. Now lets look at chapter 10 starting in verse 1. (read chapter 10) The method and mode that God has chosen to add to his spiritual nation is through the preaching and teaching of his word, as Paul writes, "How then shall they call upon whom they have not believed? And how will they believe in him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? Paul here is no speaking of the formal title, or role of what we think of today as a preacher, but it is a more generalized term for anyone who shares the gospel, and who shares the gospel? Well that question is answered in verse 9 here of chapter 10, "That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead you shall be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Confession of the saving power of Christ should be on the lips of every single person who has been saved, for it is the hope that springs up within God's children.

The gospel message that we preach, isn't done out of a sense of duty or responsibility, but for the believer it flows out of a tender heart who wants to share God's mercy with the lost and dying world. In other words, just as sin and rebellion once were an intrinsic part of who we were, as believers the gospel message is now an intrinsic part of who we are in Christ. Our lives have been transformed into a living testimony of God's grace and mercy so that we may be messengers of that grace so others may come to know and believe. This is God's design and purpose, that the very ones who rejected and denied him, become his messengers of mercy. Paul stands as an example, a pharisee who was seeking after the Christ followers, having them beaten, imprisoned and even killed all the while thinking he was doing God's work until God confronted him and he was shown the truth. By this time Paul would have had quite a reputation built up, and I am sure struck fear in many believers, hearing that he was coming to their town...but God by his sovereign grace and mercy made Paul a messenger of his gospel of hope. The very one who sought to destroy, is now being sent to build up. Such it is with each of us, of course not to the same level but the reality is the same, we to were lost, believing a lie, slaves to sin and Satan, and God through the holy spirit opened our eyes and ears so that we may hear the gospel and see Jesus. Now we have become his messengers of hope, who through the gospel preached are working to build the spiritual nation of Israel, a people of faith, the offspring of Abraham, and heirs of the promise.

Getting into chapter 11 here, up until this point Paul has painted a pretty bleak picture for his people, that his Israelite's in whom as we see at the beginning of chapter 10, and of chapter 9 weighs heavy on his heart, for he desires that they would come to know Christ as he has. Paul's missionary journeys are defined by his outreach to the Gentiles, Paul is known as the messenger to the Gentiles, but as is recorded in the book of Acts which lays and details some of those journeys, in each stop, in each city he first entered the synagogues. And each and every one, would cast him out, some even violently, having him imprisoned, beaten, or in some cases attempted to put to death, suffering the same fate by the hands of his own people that he himself sought to inflict upon God's people. Paul, feeling the rejection, and abject hatred by his own people, would turn to the gentiles. We know that this was a burden upon Paul, I am sure people whom he had loved disowned him and turned him away, having once been a powerful and influential pharisee, has now become the very thing they sought to destroy.

It can be that way within our own circles as well, especially for those who come to faith later in life, you may find that those to whom you are the closest, are the people whom you gather together with to praise and worship God. Being rejected by family, being rejected by friends, we can find comfort even with strangers in whom the holy spirit has done a work. We to, can at times feel like Paul, who as we read here in chapter 11 seems to find solace in the words of God given to Elijah, that though you may feel rejection, and though you may feel isolated at times, God has his people and he is still adding and gathering them into his family. Let us go ahead and read the first 10 verses of chapter 11 here, as we see Paul's sort of conclusion to what he has been saying about Israel's rejection of Jesus, and the gospel message, of whom he is now a minister finding himself like Elijah among his own people.

(read 11:1-10) God told Elijah, though there are many who reject him, many who are blind and unable to see, who have turned their worship to an Idol and false God and it may seem that he is the only one left, but God still has a remnant who believe. In many ways I don't doubt that Paul felt like Elijah, undergoing to the constant rejection, and often times persecution from his own people, but it is not as if God had turned his back on Israel, no, there is yet a large portion of Jews who have come to know Christ. This is an important followup to what he previously had written in chapter 9 and 10, for if he left it as he had said it would appear that God had turned his back on his chosen people, and if God was willing to toss aside Israel, then what would keep him from doing the same with the Gentiles, or any other who had come or will come to faith. The reality is, it is God who is faithful, and though Israel rejected the Messiah that was sent, the one whom scriptures foretold, he is still pleased to save a remnant.

Without his mighty work, all would reject and none would believe, but as Paul wrote, quoting Exodus 33, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." If it was not for God's mercy and compassion no Jew, or Gentile for that matter would believe.

Though Israel rejected him, he did not turn his back on them, instead just as he promised Elijah, to which Paul I believe is comforted by, he has a remnant who have not gone astray. Paul uses himself as proof of this reality, he himself an Israelite, an offspring of Abraham of the tribe of Benjamin. would be a great risk that the gentile believers would look upon Israel and believe that God had turned his back on her, committing the same error the Jews did when dealing with the Gentiles. Seeing them as lesser, cast offs, a dirty Godless people. It seems now that God has turned his favor upon the Gentiles and rejected the Israelites, so it could become a point of pride and arrogance for the Gentile believer. But again, if God had truly rejected Israel, there is nothing stopping him from doing to same to the gentiles. So as Paul is arguing, this is not the case as he says in verse 2. "God has not cast away his people whom he foreknew."

That is why there is so much comfort in the electing saving grace of God, As Paul wrote in chapter 8, which is a point he is building on here, verse 28, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.” We who believe have been called, according to his purpose...he is not going to turn his back upon the ones whom he has called, he has done so for a purpose, and he will complete the work which he has started. Verse 29” For whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” God will not turn his back on his people that he has chosen, as he told Jeremiah, before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.” Likewise even David understood this, writing in Psalm 139 “Your eyes saw my unformed body, all my days were written in your book and ordained for me before one of them came to be.”

The salvation of God is infinite and complete, all those whom he calls will come to him, and all who come to him have been called, he shall not, nor can he turn his back on his people. For a god who goes back on his word is not a God worthy of worship. But we have the entirety of scripture pointing to a faithful God who works throughout time and history to fulfill his purpose and his plan in the lives of his people, drawing them ever nearer, and ever closer to him. No matter how dark it may become, no matter if it seems that the entire world has rejected and turned against God and you may feel you stand alone, remember that God has his people, and there will always be a remnant, verse 3 Paul quoting Elijah of the bleak state of Israel at the time, and he equates it to his own time, saying “Lord, they have killed your prophets, and torn down your alters, and I alone am left, and they seek my life! But what does the divine response say to him? I have reserved for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

And the same can be said even about now, as Jim was saying last week, it seems the trajectory of this world is fastly spinning into greater and greater darkness, even that which goes by the name of Christianity today can often times be exposed as a false delusion. Israel had the word of God, they worshiped God, but they rejected his messenger and the one who was to bring about salvation for Gods people, They to were given over to a delusion, a belief that was empty and void without salvation, look what Paul writes in verse 7, “What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks, but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. Just as it is written, God has given the a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear to this very day. And David says, Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a recompense to them, let their eyes be darkened so that they do not see and bow down their back always.”

So it is today as well, even in our own churches, there is a belief in God, like Israel, but not a belief to saving faith. Tradition, and false teaching have become a stumbling block to belief, Sadly when rough times come, many will turn away, leaving only a remnant left who stand firm and strong upon the word of God, in faith, proving out in the end that they are God's people. Throughout scripture as we see with Paul's quote of Elijah, which he attributes to his own time, which we can likewise attribute to our own time God has, and always will have his people until that great and glorious day of his return. Look at what he says in verse 5, “Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer by grace; otherwise work is no longer work.

This salvation of God is purely predicated upon his mercy, upon his grace that he shows upon his people. You can not, and never will be able to be good enough to become a child of God, it is all completely and solely upon him. God did not turn his back on Israel, nor on the promises to them, it is they who have turned against him, and if it wasn't for his electing grace as Paul says here, then none would believe. So to it is with the entire world, we have all turned and rejected God, in our natural state we are slaves to our sinful flesh and desires, it isn't until by the ministry of the holy spirit, through the preaching of the gospel that God changes the hearts and minds of individuals to come to believe. Paul has hammered this point home over and over again in his letter to the Romans, and again he is doing it here. Verse 7, "What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks for it seeks God through works, through the keeping of the law, and resting upon their own ability to be righteous, but the elect, the chosen of God, who are both Jew and Gentile, slave and free, men, women and children, have obtained it, and the rest were blinded by their sin." So that begs the question, how does one obtain this gift of salvation, As Paul laid out in chapter 10, by the hearing of the word, by believing in your heart, and confessing with your mouth in the lord Jesus, the one in whom God has raised up to be the holy, and just sacrifice for your sin. Repent, and believe upon him, and you shall be saved.

And this belief is not a mere understanding, or idea, but it is a life changing event when it takes place, you become a new creation in Christ, one who now seeks to please him and turn and repent from sin, not to gain any merit, but purely and only out of love toward him we share the gospel, and we care and love those who are near and around us. Jesus told Nicodemus, unless you are born again you shall not see the kingdom of heaven. Salvation is a new birth, creating a new creature, one who is willing and able to do the things that are pleasing to God. And unless that new birth has happened by the grace and mercy of God no one can not truly believe. So, the gospel message continues to go out, turn from your sin, and rebellion, repent and believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ, the one whom God sent, to pay the penalty of sin upon the cross, so that you may live in him and through him resting upon his glorious work of salvation until that day in which he returns.