

# “Pride and Prejudice”

...and a little jealousy  
Romans 11, Part 1

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## Romans 11

*I* I ask, then, has God rejected his own people, the nation of Israel? Of course not! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham and a member of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 No, God has not rejected his own people, whom he chose from the very beginning. Do you realize what the Scriptures say about this? Elijah the prophet complained to God about the people of Israel and said, 3 “LORD, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too.” 4 And do you remember God’s reply? He said, “No, I have 7,000 others who have never bowed down to Baal!” 5 It is the same today, for a few of the people of Israel have remained faithful because of God’s grace — his undeserved kindness in choosing them. 6 And since it is through God’s kindness, then it is not by their good works. For in that case, God’s grace would not be what it really is — free and undeserved. 7 So this is the situation: Most of the people of Israel have not found the favor of God they are looking for so earnestly. A few have — the ones God has chosen — but the hearts of the rest were hardened. 8 As the Scriptures say, “God has put them into a deep sleep. To this day he has shut their eyes so they do not see, and closed their ears so they do not hear.” 9 Likewise, David said, “Let their bountiful table become a snare, a trap that makes them think all is well. Let their blessings cause them to stumble, and let them get what they deserve. 10 Let their eyes go blind so they cannot see, and let their backs be bent forever.” 11 Did God’s people stumble and fall beyond recovery? Of course not! They were disobedient, so God made salvation available to the Gentiles. But he wanted his own people to become jealous and claim it for themselves. 12 Now if the Gentiles were enriched because the people of Israel turned down God’s offer of salvation, think how much greater a blessing the world will share when they finally accept it. 13 I am saying all this especially for you Gentiles. God has appointed me as the apostle to the Gentiles. I stress this, 14 for I want somehow to make the people of Israel jealous of what you Gentiles have, so I might save some of them. 15 For since their rejection meant that God offered salvation to the rest of the world, their acceptance will be even more wonderful. It will be life for those who were dead! 16 And since Abraham and the other patriarchs were holy, their descendants will also be holy — just as the entire batch of dough is holy because the portion given as an offering is holy. For if the roots of the tree are holy, the branches will be, too. 17 But some of these branches from Abraham’s tree — some of the people of Israel — have been broken off. And you Gentiles, who were branches from a wild olive tree, have been grafted in. So now you also receive the blessing God has promised Abraham and his children, sharing in the rich nourishment from the root of God’s special olive tree. 18 But you must not brag about being grafted in to replace the branches that were broken off. You are just a branch, not the root. 19 “Well,” you may say, “those branches were broken off to make room for me.” 20 Yes, but remember — those branches were broken off because they didn’t believe in Christ, and you are there because you do believe. So don’t think highly of yourself, but fear what could happen. 21 For if God did not spare the original branches, he won’t spare you either. 22 Notice how God is both kind and severe. He is severe toward those who disobeyed, but kind to you if you continue to trust in his kindness. But if you stop trusting, you also will be cut off. 23 And if the people of Israel turn from their unbelief, they will be grafted in again, for God has the power to graft them back into the tree. 24 You, by nature, were a branch cut from a wild olive tree. So if God was willing to do something contrary to nature by grafting you into his cultivated tree, he will be far more eager to graft the original branches back into the tree where they belong. 25 I want you to understand this mystery, dear brothers and sisters, so that you will not feel proud about yourselves. Some of the people of Israel have hard hearts, but this will last only until the full number of Gentiles comes to Christ. 26 And so all Israel will be saved. As the Scriptures say, “The one who rescues will come from Jerusalem, and he will turn Israel away from ungodliness. 27 And this is my covenant with them, that I will take away their sins.” 28 Many of the people of Israel are now enemies of the Good News, and this benefits you Gentiles. Yet they are still the people he loves because he chose their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 29 For God’s gifts and his call can never be withdrawn. 30 Once, you Gentiles were rebels against God, but when the people of Israel rebelled against him, God was merciful to you instead. 31 Now they are the rebels, and God’s mercy has come to you so that they, too, will share in God’s mercy. 32 For God has imprisoned everyone in disobedience so he could have mercy on everyone. 33 Oh, how great are God’s riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways! 34 For who can know the LORD’s thoughts? Who knows enough to give him advice? 35 And who has given him so much that he needs to pay it back? 36 For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory. All glory to him forever! Amen.



**11:1 *I ask, then, has God rejected his own people, the nation of Israel? Of course not! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham and a member of the tribe of Benjamin.***

After all that Paul has previously declared, ...all the “water under the bridge,” Paul seems to instinctively anticipate the next questions: “*well, is God done with the Jewish nation then?*” And further, *is God done with me?* Thousands who have followed Paul have asked those same questions and of course, extrapolated the answers. For Paul, the answer was a resounding “no.” And as if to say “it’s a good thing,” Paul throws in a reminder here that *he himself is a Jew*, and he himself had personally lived a very wicked life, going so far as to persecute and even participate in the martyrdom of believers.

As for Israel, many folks today attempt to propagate a doctrine that says God has dumped Israel and now all the promises that were once Jewish, are now a gift to “the church.” This is known of as “replacement theology.” But this chapter, as if Paul saw it all coming, puts such ideas to rest. Indeed, a lot of mistakes had been made by the Jewish nation, but Paul was saying “Hey, I am *example A*, and God is not done with *me!*” Obviously all of our past clownish ways do not put us out in the cold. And they don’t for Israel either. We are famously unreliable when it comes to our promises and commitments, however God is not. Hebrews 6:18 says it is “impossible for God to lie.” We call our broken promises a lot of things, but it seems lying isn’t one of them. God sees it differently however...

So God is not done with Israel, and if we are still in the land of the breathing, *he is not done with us!* But Paul points out that the **individual**, “the **church**,” and **Israel too**, do indeed share one common trait in the end. In the end, God will be dealing with merely a remnant. Just a small piece of the whole will be left in the end. A few will be left standing it seems. This is an overt principle and prophecy of scripture in its totality.

**11:2-3 *No, God has not rejected his own people, whom he chose from the very beginning. Do you realize what the Scriptures say about this? Elijah the prophet complained to God about the people of Israel and said, “LORD, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too.”***

Paul begins to build his case. God, with the ability of foreknowledge, knew it all before any of it played out. In other words, He saw it coming. He sees everything coming! What’s amazing about such a truth, is that He has even bothered to stay in the game! It seems like we wouldn’t be worth the trouble. But on the other hand, it certainly explains the level of His love for us! If He had ‘thrown in the towel’ it would have meant a revocation of His promises to Abraham, Moses, David, and all of the others. And God never backs out of His words. Elijah was lost in himself and how his situation affected him and him alone. But God was having nothing to do with that attitude, and jerked Elijah back to reality that he was *not* alone, and he wasn’t the center of the universe.

**11:4-5 *And do you remember God’s reply? He said, “No, I have 7,000 others who have never bowed down to Baal!” It is the same today, for a few of the people of Israel have remained faithful because of God’s grace — his undeserved kindness in choosing them.***

When Elijah thought that he was the “last man standing,” God pointed out that He (God) was still in control. That Elijah was not His only servant, but in truth, He had a group of believers, *albeit small*, that still worshipped and followed Him. A “remnant?” One might see such as a discouraging element, but again God was not surprised! He knew that He would eventually be left with only a few, just as I, in light of prophecy know the same for us as believers. But the point here is that *there is a few left*. The game was and is not over!

Apostasy and an abandonment of the faith is nothing new. Throughout history there had been repeated periods of defection. But through it all, there was and is always a few left. Mathew 16:18 assures us that the “gates of hell (and any pandemic) will not prevail” against the church. But fact that there is a remnant left is evidence of God’s faithfulness **not ours**. Like Elijah, many of us want to take the high road in believing that we are strong and can’t be moved, but when we are tested we cave. This comes from the issues we discussed last week in chapter 10, in the fact that we are trying to stand upon our personal works, religious practices, and ultimately *ourselves*, instead of on Christ carrying us. Our faith tends to be in us and our actions, not in God. We are trying a lot of that these days aren’t we? We tend to take the “Peter position”...the “oh no Lord, I would die first” but when the pressure is on, we fold.

**11:6 And since it is through God’s kindness, then it is not by their good works. For in that case, God’s grace would not be what it really is — free and undeserved.**

Paul is reminding us yet again in verse 6 that such a position, *even as a remnant* participant in Christ, is not attained through our own efforts! I am amazed at how people can bristle at any insinuation that they might be standing in the camp of the perceived self-sufficient...the prideful realm! Of course their anger and indignation only vindicate such a suggestion, as they practice a case of William Shakespeare’s Hamlet in they “doth protest too much, me thinks.” By the way, isn’t it my God ordained job to view the condition of the flock and make such suggestions?

Paul has driven home the fact that grace and works are mutually exclusive. You cannot have both, and you cannot have one without excluding the other absolutely. The faithful remnant still stands for the same reason that they made it through all of the other apostasies and subsequent judgments in one’s lifetime journey. Not because they were so shiny and pure, but because of God’s grace. But His grace is given for *His* glory, not theirs! Thus, the remnant stands today because they are greatly blessed, not because they are greatly deserving! Amen!

And despite what we might like to believe, God is not accepting mankind into the fold with broad sweeping brushstrokes. There is no such thing as corporate salvation! Being a Jew doesn’t give you an “in”, any more than going to church, being baptized, confirmed, or taking communion.

**11:7 So this is the situation: Most of the people of Israel have not found the favor of God they are looking for so earnestly. A few have — the ones God has chosen — but the hearts of the rest were hardened.**

What *was* Israel seeking? Righteous standing before God yes, but they wanted to achieve that position though their own works and efforts.

Romans 10:21 tells us that God tried many, many times to wake up the chosen, just as certainly as He has with the *church* today. And yet for the most part, both have still rejected Him! Not rejected His **stuff**...all of the blessings He offers to those who surrender their lives, they have just simply rejected HIM. His control, oversight, and plan. It is a “narrow way” and “narrow gate,” and let’s face it, *few shall find it. Just a remnant*. Please note that that verse...Matthew 7:14, makes it clear that we do indeed have a personal participation...not **control**, but rather a “*free-will*,” in that journey...for “few will *find* it.”

The word “blinded” or “hardened” in verse 7 can naturally carry an adverse connotation of which God can easily be played up as the bad guy. But we must understand that this is not God unilaterally cutting anyone off. The word means “calloused, and insensitive” This was a result of their **own** repeated rejections of God’s

overtures. It's the fault only of those who had hardened themselves against their Creator. God merely confirms our decision.

**11:8-9** *As the Scriptures say, "God has put them into a deep sleep. To this day he has shut their eyes so they do not see, and closed their ears so they do not hear." Likewise, David said, "Let their bountiful table become a snare, a trap that makes them think all is well. Let their blessings cause them to stumble, and let them get what they deserve.*

"Free will" is a reality and is still ours, and God will confirm our decisions in the exercise of such. If we decide to put Him first, to serve Him and be a disciple, He has promised to confirm that choice...to do His part. That would be the *miraculous part* of the mix by the way. *OR*, you could reject God's control and His direction, go it alone...*all* alone...and then you therefore live with your choice *and* its consequences.

Speak to the average Jew today, and tell them of Christ and His fulfillment of prophecies and they *will not hear*. *But then again*, the average member of the American church...receiver of the promises of Abraham by God's grace...is doing the same. So we are not exactly *shining* here. The problem is that truth be told few of us believe we really need saving! We have things under control and we know what we are doing. So we "snack" on God's principles and pick and choose of what the pastor is teaching. After all, we have a "bountiful table" so things are fine. We have a nice place to live, a good job and money in the bank, so "we got this." God says such is not blessing but a "snare"...a "trap" that makes them think they are in good standing with God. We think our "blessings" are proof that He is pleased with us, but scripture herein is telling us that those very "blessings" will be our undoing. And then, in a very blunt fashion...an approach that makes many of us bristle, the passage says "*they get what they deserve...*" Ouch.

**11:10-11** *"Let their eyes go blind so they cannot see, and let their backs be bent forever." Did God's people stumble and fall beyond recovery? Of course not! They were disobedient, so God made salvation available to the Gentiles. But he wanted his own people to become jealous and claim it for themselves.*

Then...to pour some gas on the fire, the passage says "*Let their eyes go blind so they cannot see, and let their backs be bent forever.*" For some of us, we want to now pull aside David and God Himself and council them on their teaching approach. After all, we were kinda insulted by these words, so you all need to tone it down some there...

Admittedly the Jewish nation wasn't where they were supposed to be. Ok...they're *not* where they're supposed to be. And yes, *many of us are also not where we are supposed to be*. Their "eyes are darkened...they can't see clearly the truth...they are caught...*bent over* by the "weight of the world." Oh how many of us need to hear these words! But instead we fume over what we see as the pointed finger at us. But understand please...that to let you go and not confront you is to "*turn you over to Satan for the destruction of your flesh.*" (1 Corinthians 5:5)

Hearts harden quickly when men and women trust in their place of special privilege without the fellowship with the God who gives it. It matters little whether that "special" anointing is from one's Jewish blood or by having gone to church all your life...baptized, confirmed, *sanctified and homogenized!* A hard heart is an easy commodity to come by, and the most difficult thing to reach.

But does such a state of being mean it's over? The person is finished? Out of reach? God, through the apostle Paul, states clearly and emphatically *for the record*, that it's not over. You can still come home. But make no

mistake, God is going to get some “bang” out of your *glory* or out of your *rebellion*. We’re all going to be an example of *something*: *God’s grace or God’s judgment!* It’s our choice just as it is for the Jew today. We can keep the blinders on and ignore the truth, or we can face the music.

**11:12-15 Now if the Gentiles were enriched because the people of Israel turned down God’s offer of salvation, think how much greater a blessing the world will share when they finally accept it. I am saying all this especially for you Gentiles. God has appointed me as the apostle to the Gentiles. I stress this, for I want somehow to make the people of Israel jealous of what you Gentiles have, so I might save some of them. For since their rejection meant that God offered salvation to the rest of the world, their acceptance will be even more wonderful. It will be life for those who were dead!**

Even though the Jewish nation has rejected Christ on the wholesale level, it seems that God was able to use even their rejection. For because they said no, His grace was then therefore poured out upon the Gentile nation. I wonder how many of us have been chosen, called, and deployed in the grand work of Christ, simply because someone else said no? If that applied grace then provokes another to jealousy and they turn to their rejected Savior because of such, then there is a double blessing. What Satan “*meant for evil, God meant for good...*” (Gen 50:20) This was an issue that was near and dear to Paul’s heart! For the kingdom life blessings as well as the very eternity of his brothers and sisters were on the line! I know exactly how he felt! For I will do the same thing if it means someone will come home to Jesus and stop trying to make it own their own.

We Gentiles received the Jewish “table scraps” and have capitalized enormously, finding and perpetuating the gospel throughout the world. Like the loaves and the fishes, those morsels have gone a long way! And the eventual Jewish response...yes, merely a remnant now, will be like the “resurrection of the dead.”

**11:16 And since Abraham and the other patriarchs were holy, their descendants will also be holy — just as the entire batch of dough is holy because the portion given as an offering is holy. For if the roots of the tree are holy, the branches will be, too.**

Paul speaks concerning being connected to the “firstfruit” and/or the “root,” and our relationship to the “whole.” Abraham was the “firstfruit” in this case, so the analogy follows: those who followed in his blood line, the Jewish nation as a whole, would also be “set apart,” *special* before God, on the *external* level. Abraham was “set apart” so likewise were the Jewish Nation. Not born again, not a “longer leash” of sin, just chosen as a people, *a nation*, to receive His mercy and grace and to be a representative of such.