



## The Promised Remnant

Romans 11:1-10

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This morning we will take up Romans, chapter 11. Chapter 11 is the last doctrinal chapter in the book of Romans. In Romans, as in all of Paul's letters, the content is divided roughly in two parts. In the first part of Paul's letters, he deals with subjects doctrinal and theological, and then in the second part of his letter he deals with the practical application of the theology he has taught us. Chapter 11 is the last chapter of the theology portion of Romans.

It is also the third chapter of three dealing with the question of why the Jews have rejected their Messiah, Jesus Christ, chapters 9, 10, and 11. So as we come to the text, let us come with our eyes open, our ears open, and our hearts ready to receive the truth of the Word of God. For the Word of God is entirely without error, the Word of God is entirely sufficient, and the Word of God is entirely authoritative. Romans, chapter 11, beginning at verse 1:

*“I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? ‘Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.’ But what is God's reply to him? ‘I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.’ So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, as it is written, ‘God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.’ And David says, ‘Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever.’”*

Thus far the reading of God's Holy Word. Let's pray for his blessing upon it. O Lord our God, we pray that you would open up your Word to us. We want your Word to be more than ink on a page to us. We want it to be life. We want it to be our hope. Lord, we ask that by the power of your Holy Spirit you would reveal yourself to us in your Word, you would reveal the Lord Jesus Christ and all that he has done and all our hope that is found in him. This we ask in Christ's precious name, amen.

We come this morning to Romans, chapter 11, and as we have said, it is the last theological chapter in the book of Romans, and it is the last of the three chapters that deal extensively with the question of the Jews and their rejection of Jesus Christ, their Messiah. It is important for us to understand Paul's answer to the question of why this has happened.

Why have the Jews rejected Jesus? It's important for us not just theologically, although I think it is important for us to know theologically. It is important for us not just historically so we can have a historical understanding of why this is so, but it is also very practical for us today. It gives us insight into our own lives and the lives of others around us.

So, this morning, I would like us to see two things from Paul's treatment once again of this question in chapter 11. First, Paul tells us emphatically that *God has not rejected his people*. Secondly, Paul tells us that *God alone is the source of salvation*. The reason Paul can say God has not rejected his people is because God alone is the source of salvation.

## **God Has Not Rejected His People**

Let us begin, then, by looking at this question of the Jews and the Lord. Paul has been dealing with this question for some time now. It is an important question that is not easily ignored. After all, God is the God of Israel. God reveals himself in the Scriptures as the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, and the promises of God came to Israel. That's the story of the Old Testament: God's promises coming to Israel. After all, Jesus was the Messiah promised to Israel. Jesus himself was a descendant of Abraham and a descendant of David.

At the same time, there has always been a global aspect to the promises of God. Abraham, after all, was called to be a blessing to all of the nations, and Isaiah wrote that the nations would be brought to the Lord by the Messiah. The problem is if the promises to Israel are not found to be true, how then can we trust any of God's promises?

Paul has been giving us answers to this question. In chapter 9, he talked about the sovereignty of God. He said God's Word had not failed to Israel, because it is not a result of physical descent that makes the difference between people; it is rather the purpose and the election of God that differentiates between people. God has chosen to place his love on some and to pass others by.

In chapter 10, Paul reminded us about man's responsibility. He told us that people must have faith. They must believe the gospel, and they must embrace it by faith, giving up all attempts to save themselves and earn salvation. Those who are disobedient to the Word of God and refuse to believe will not receive God's promises, Paul told us.

Now, these two answers might seem to be contradictory, but really, they are just different emphases of the same point of salvation Paul is trying to make: no one is condemned by God's bare choice alone. Someone is condemned because of his sin and because of his rejection of the gospel. At the same time, however, the only way of salvation is through the sovereign mercy and grace of God. We cannot save ourselves. We do not seek after God. We do not love God in ourselves, so God must make the first move of mercy. He must come to us in his sovereign mercy and grace in the gospel.

Now Paul is going to begin to move beyond these arguments to something more. He doesn't forget these arguments he has laid down. After all, chapter 11 is based on chapter 9 and chapter 10, but he is going to go further at this point. He is now going to take up the matter of the future of Israel. He is taking up the relationship between Jews and Gentiles with respect to the gospel and salvation.

In order to do that, he must move us past our disappointment. He has to assure us that God has not totally and finally rejected Israel. That is what some in Paul's day thought. They thought God had completely left Israel behind. You can see why this would be the case. All you need to do is study the book of Acts. In the book of Acts, as the gospel goes forward, who are the ones who are responding? In the main, it is the Gentiles.

Every place Paul goes, there may be a few Jews who respond, but inevitably, the pattern is Paul goes to the synagogue, gets kicked out or threatened out of the synagogue, goes into the rest of the cities, and then many Gentiles believe. We might think, for example, of Jesus' statement in the Gospels that the church should shake the dust off from its feet with the Jews and move on to the Gentiles, that God has moved past the Jews, but Paul says no, that's not the case.

There is also a very practical aspect to this. It helps us as Christians, and frankly, as mostly Gentile Christians, to see how we are to view the Jews as God's people, and then also it helps us to deal with our own disappointment in the circumstances of the church and the world around us. Paul starts this chapter with a question in verse 1. It is a familiar rhetorical device of Paul's. We've seen it before. He starts with a question that expects a negative answer.

You don't really get an option as to how to answer Paul here. It's phrased in such a way that he doesn't even wait for you to say no; he supplies the no. We've seen this before. Right? It's like when Mom asks the kids a question. "You're really not going to go out without cleaning your room, are you?" It's the voice, the look. Woe betide the child who says, "Yes, of course I am." No. You know the only answer you can give is "No."

That's where Paul has us. He says, "I ask, then, has God rejected his people?" He wants to get our attention with this question. That's why he asks it that way. The question is a stark one. He says, "Has God rejected his people?" This flows from the end of chapter 10. You may remember, in verse 21, Paul has described the persistent, consistent rejection of God and his gospel by Israel. Verse 21 says, "But of Israel he says, 'All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.'"

The question that comes to our mind is... *Has their rejection of God caused God to reject them, to finally cast them off, to push them aside?* That's what we might expect God to do. "If they don't want me, well, then I don't want them. I'll push them aside." This is what you do with something when you don't want anything more to do with it. The verb here means to push it aside literally, to have nothing to do with it.

Just to give you an image of this, I'll harken back to the joy of my vacation. We spent a week on a cruise, and one of the things you are compelled to do on a cruise is to eat. They keep bringing you all sorts of food in front of you. There are all sorts of food. It's all included. You get what you want. It's the sort of thing that you say to your waiter, "I'm not sure if for dinner I want the fish or the steak. Bring me both. I can't decide between the chocolate cake and the cheesecake. Bring two desserts." You just get to bring whatever you want brought. One of my children was very adventuresome, and he tried every odd thing you could try on the menu, because, as he said to me, "Dad, I can do it. It's already all included. It doesn't matter if I don't like it." Because if you go out to an expensive meal... If you're like me and you pay \$30 or \$40 for a meal, and you get your meal and start to eat it and you don't like it, you eat it anyway. One of my sayings is, "*We don't waste food.*" We certainly don't waste \$40 food. So even if we don't like it, we eat it.

But on a cruise, if you take a bite of something and you don't like it, you push it to the middle of the table, you reject it, and you say, "Bring me something else." That's the visual image I want you to get here. Paul is saying, "Has God pushed Israel to the side? He prefers the Gentiles to the Jews now? He wants nothing more to do with them? They're out of sight, out of mind; God doesn't care anymore?"

When you put a question like that, you know what Paul is going to say. "Certainly not! By no means!" Or with the King James, "God forbid!" We've seen this before, eight times before exactly. What Paul is saying here is, "I don't even want to entertain the possibility. Don't even talk to me about this. There is no chance this is what is going on here." So, we have to start there. Paul is not giving an inch. He flatly rejects the possibility that God has rejected his people, and now he's going to tell us why.

In an unusual manner, Paul starts with himself. He says, "For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin." You should be used to by now seeing the word *for* in the book of Romans. Paul has used it over and over again in laying out his logically consistent argument. He uses the word *for* to let you know the next link in the chain of his argument is coming. "This is the reason."

So we know what Paul is saying here about himself has to do with answering the question... *Has God rejected Israel?* Now why is it that God hasn't rejected Israel? He says, "Well, look at me. I myself am a Jew. How could God have totally and finally rejected his people? You're looking at one of his people. I'm not a Gentile. I'm not even a convert to Judaism. I am the real deal," Paul says.

He describes himself in a triple manner in order to make sure we understand. He says he is a descendant of Abraham. That is the very definition of a Jew. You can't be a true Jew unless you are descended from Abraham. That's what the Pharisees thought, and that's what they were counting on. They came from Abraham. But Paul goes further. He says, "I am an Israelite." Why does Paul say that? If he already says he's descended from Abraham, why does he then also call himself an Israelite?

You may recall in chapter 9 that Abraham had two sons, and one of Abraham's sons, Isaac, also had two sons. One of the sons received the promise; one did not. In that line, it was Jacob who received the promise. The evidence we have that Jacob received the promise given to Abraham was that God came to him and changed his name. Do you remember what God changed his name to? It was *Israel*.

What Paul is telling us is "Not only am I descended from Abraham, not only do I have those promises; they were made sure in my forefather Israel, Jacob. I come from not only Abraham but the proper line from Abraham." Then he completes his triple designation. He says he is of the tribe of Benjamin. Again, why does he use this terminology? He does it because the tribe of Benjamin was especially noteworthy. He's telling you about all of his entire Jewish lineage.

It's as if someone came up to you and said, "Tell me, who are your people? Who's your dad? Who's your granddad? Tell me really where you come from." Paul is distilling it down. Benjamin was the only son of Jacob who was born in the Promised Land. He had that distinction. It was actually within the territory of Benjamin that the city of Jerusalem lay.

Then, of course, Benjamin was the only tribe to stand with Judah when the other 10 tribes of Israel broke off and set up a competing altar and eventually were carried off into exile for their idolatry. All of the other tribes besides Judah and Benjamin were carried off into idolatry. They were made captives. The only tribes that returned from a later exile were Judah and Benjamin. So what Paul is doing here is telling you just how much of a Jew he was. If God were to cast off the Jews, then he would have had to have cast off Paul.

Additionally, let's think for just a moment about Paul personally. If God were to reject all of the Jews for their rejection of the gospel (remember Romans 10:21), then Paul would be a prime example of who should have been rejected for his rejection of the gospel. Who was Paul? Who was Saul of Tarsus? He fought against the gospel. He killed Christians. He tried to destroy the church. Who better for God to reject as an example of unbelieving Israel than Paul?

Yet what does Jesus do? He meets Paul at the road to Damascus. He powerfully pulls Paul out of his unbelief. And then what does he do? He makes Paul a preacher, and not just a preacher to the Jews but even to the Gentiles also. What a remarkable work of God. Paul himself is evidence that God has not cast off the Jews. But Paul doesn't stop there. He doesn't want you to think he somehow is the exception to the rule. Paul then moves on to history, but not just *any* history...*inspired* history.

Once again, Paul makes an emphatic statement that he will back up from the Bible. He says in verse 2, "God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew." We have seen this word *foreknew* before. We came across it in Romans 8:29 as a part of the golden chain of salvation. "Those whom God foreknew he predestined, and those he called, and those he justified, and those he glorified." There was no break in that chain at all.

You may remember that we said this word means more than to simply know something in advance. God does not foreknow his people because he has great insight into their future actions. No. It means God has set his love upon his people. He has foreordained them, and that is why he foreknew them. We saw that this word is the same word that's used in 1 Peter 1:20 to speak about our Lord Jesus Christ. It says Jesus was foreknown before the foundation of the world.

That doesn't mean God knew it would somehow work out some way that Jesus would be the Redeemer. No. It means God had foreordained, planned and purposed, for Jesus to be the Redeemer of his people. This word *foreknew* has within it the strong meaning of to foreordain. Let me give you one more illustration from the Scripture. In Amos 3:2, God tells Israel, "You alone of all the nations have I known."

Does that mean God didn't know what a Greek was or that God didn't know what Persians were because he only knew about Israel? Of course not! What that phrase in Amos means is that of all of the nations of the earth, only Israel has God set his love upon. He has singled them out by his purpose and choice. This is what this means.

Why is this so important? Am I trying to fight the battle of Calvinism versus Arminianism here from the pulpit? No. It's because God is telling us through Paul that he has chosen for himself a people. He has a purpose for that people, and his purpose will not be defeated. He will not set it aside. That's why God has not rejected his people Israel, because he has chosen them.

There is a little bit of a debate here, because what Paul does is he takes this quotation in verse 2... It's a quotation from Psalm 94:14 that God has not rejected his people. Paul adds the phrase "whom he foreknew." Some people get concerned about that. They say, "What is Paul doing? If you're going to quote the Bible, you have to quote the Bible. You don't add words to the Bible, do you?" No. You and I don't add words to the Bible, but if you're Paul and you're writing the Bible, you can add words to the Bible, because you're writing the Bible under inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit uses Paul to add clarity to this verse from Psalm 94. It's not just that God doesn't reject his people; he doesn't reject them because he has foreknown them. What Paul means here is with reference to all of the nation of Israel. He doesn't just mean God doesn't reject his elect because he has chosen them. There's almost no reason to even say that. If I've chosen you, I haven't rejected you, so how could I reject you if I've chosen you? What Paul means is out of the nation of Israel, he has not set the nation aside completely, but he still has a purpose for Israel. We're going to look at that more in the next few weeks.

Paul tells us that God has a special plan for Israel. Israel is the place where Christ comes from. Jesus is the Messiah of Israel. God is not done with Israel. Paul is not saying that all Jews are elect and that all will be saved. He has actually already told us quite the opposite in chapters 9 and 10, but he *is* saying there is a future for the Jews in spite of current appearances, and he then backs this up with the story of Elijah. You may remember the story. Elijah goes onto Mount Carmel and battles all of the prophets and priests of Baal. You remember that the contest is one of fire.

The prophets of Baal cut themselves and yell and scream, and the text tells us they become faint. They can't go on anymore. Then Elijah says, "Okay. It's my turn. Bring out the wood. Pour water on the wood. Pour water again on the wood. Pour water *again* on the wood. I don't even need any fire. God is going to send fire from heaven." It says the Lord sends fire from heaven such that it not only consumes the wood; it consumes the altar. It is obvious who is victorious.

But then you may recall that Elijah is not treated to a hero's welcome. The wicked queen Jezebel seeks his life, and Elijah has to flee his victory. He flees to the mountainside. He comes and he pleads against Israel, Paul tells us. He says to God, in effect, "God, what are you doing here? Your people should know you're God. Look at what just happened, and they still won't follow you. They've torn down your altars. They've killed your prophets. Why don't you do something about it, God?"

The underlying statement here is, "God, you need to punish them now. They're all bad. The only one who's following you is me. I'm all by myself." Elijah has a great combination of anger and a pity party going on. Do you remember how God responds? Paul tells us right here. "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." What God does is he lets Elijah see behind the curtain of providence. He shows Elijah that Elijah doesn't know all that he thinks he knows.

Elijah is convinced that everything is lost, because all he can see are the circumstances around him, but God shows Elijah that God's plans are greater than what Elijah can see. So he answers in this way. Once again, Paul takes what

we might call a little bit of liberty with the Old Testament text. He adds two words to 1 Kings 19. "I have kept..." Paul adds, "...*for myself* seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

The original Old Testament quotation says, "I have kept seven thousand men." What Paul wants us to see is this is not just a random series of events. It's not just that it so happens Elijah is now one plus seven thousand. It's not that seven thousand men randomly have been preserved. No. God has purposed and planned reserving this remnant. The reason the seven thousand exist is because God has determined it and carried it out.

Do you see the importance of that? The remnant exists because God has determined and acted that it *will* exist. It's not happenstance. It's not luck. It's the work of God. We need to understand this with respect to the Jews. God has a purpose for the Jews. The reason he hasn't rejected them is for his own good purpose. It's not chance or happenstance.

Now what does this mean for us today? Well, we can take briefly several applications. First, it tells us about the faithfulness of God. In spite of all the sin, all the unbelief, and the rejection of God by his people, God does not cast them off. Is that encouraging to you? I hope it is, because if you're anything like me, you realize what a sinner you are, that you sin each and every day, that you leave things undone that God has commanded, that you disobey God's law, that you do things you don't want to do, like Paul says in Romans 7.

The good you *would* do you do not do, and the evil you would *not* do you do, and it weighs down on your soul. You think to yourself, "How long is God going to put up with me? I keep recommitting my life to Jesus. I keep re-promising that I'm going to do better. I keep retelling myself there's going to be a new day, and then I fall back into sin." The good news of the gospel is that the gospel depends not on *your* faithfulness but the faithfulness of God. In spite of all of the sin of Israel, all her unbelief, God does not reject her.

Secondly, it tells us that, as Christians, we must not have an attitude of hostility toward the Jews. Historically, this has seen too much light in the broader church. In the church, there have been Christians who have treated the Jews with great hostility. It even comes close to home for us. In just the last brief period of time, you may have heard there was a shooting in a synagogue outside San Diego, California. The challenge to us is that the shooter was a member of a Presbyterian church, of a good family in a Presbyterian church. His father was an elder.

Now, when I say "Presbyterian church," I don't give you the out to say, "Oh yeah, *that* Presbyterian church, Pastor. The ones who don't believe the Bible, the ones who are against the biblical view of marriage and sexuality. Oh, the ones who don't think Jesus was God. We know all about *that* Presbyterian church, Pastor." No. It was a Presbyterian church much like *our* church, a church where the gospel is preached, where the Westminster Confession of Faith is followed, where the gospel goes forward in the work of missions, where the pastor believes Romans 11, yet still someone had enough hate in them to think they could kill Jews just because they were Jews.

Does that mean that church is at fault, that somehow that pastor has encouraged hatred or that somehow the church is to blame? No, I'm not saying that, but what I *am* saying is we must not just assume that people will do the right thing, and we must even more not trust that people will get their cues from society and our culture about how to treat other people. We must bring the Bible to bear. The Bible tells us that act of violence is heinous and

sinful. It doesn't matter what society thinks. It doesn't matter what our politicians think. The Bible tells us God has not rejected the Jews and they are not to be objects of our hatred. We must love them and seek them with the gospel. We must weep over them as Paul wept.

Finally, we can't give in to the temptation of viewing our circumstances around us and then being discouraged or depressed about God's work. So, a piece of practical advice. If you are discouraged by the world around you and think the church is failing and we are bound to lose, get off social media. Elijah thought no one was left but him. When you're on Twitter, you may think there's nobody but you and your buddy.

I saw a very interesting stat this week. Do you know that 10 percent of users on Twitter produce 80 percent of its content? It is the loudest, most obnoxious, most hostile, squeakiest voices that are heard over and over and over again, and if you're not careful, you will look up with Elijah and say, "Lord, no one is left but me. Look at my feed. Everybody hates Jesus. Everybody hates God. There's no hope for America. There's no hope for the church."

### **God Alone is the Source of Salvation**

Pull back the curtain of providence. See that God is in control. God has not rejected his people. Paul is clear about that, but there's more. He shows that the reason God has not rejected his people is because God alone is the source of salvation. It doesn't depend on them at all but only on the Lord. Paul illustrated that God had a remnant even in the dark days of Elijah when Elijah thought all was lost.

Paul reminds us this same principle, the principle of the remnant, was also true in *his* day. This is what he says in verse 5: "So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace." Paul is speaking specifically here about a remnant of Israel, that God has not rejected Israel, that God still has a purpose for them. We'll see more about that in the next few weeks. But the principle is broader than that. There is *always* a remnant. No matter how bad things appear, God always has his people.

Think about all of the difficulties the church has gone through in history. When the ancient areas of the church were overrun with heresy and Islam, God kept a remnant, a remnant in Ireland and in Europe, keeping God's Word pure and secure. Then when the church in Europe had become corrupt and had closed its Bible in favor of its own way, God kept a remnant through Tyndale, Luther, and the Reformers.

Now, when the church is under attack from heresy in the West...those who deny that Jesus is God, those who deny that the Bible is true, those who deny justification by faith...God still has a remnant today. When the church is under attack from the forces of culture and government in China, in India, in Pakistan, God still has a remnant.

How can we be so sure that this is the case? Or perhaps, better yet, how can we be so sure this will *always* be the case? There will always be a remnant because it doesn't depend on having good circumstances. It doesn't depend on the faithfulness of God's people. It depends on God. The text is actually stronger than our translation makes it. Look at the end of verse 5. "...there is a remnant, chosen by grace." Our translation leaves untranslated a preposition. Other translations supply it.

We might perhaps more fully say this: "There is a remnant *because of* God's election by grace" or "*according to* God's choice by grace." You see, it is God's choice of grace that makes sure there will be a remnant. In fact, Paul puts it so simply and matter-of-factly in verse 6. "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace." That's pretty simple. Right? We can understand that, I think. If you change grace, it's no longer grace. That's how it works.

What Paul is telling us here is the difference between the unbelieving mass of people and the believing remnant of God is not the goodness of the remnant. We're sorely tempted in church to view it that way, because, let's be honest, we're here in church this morning. We're here in church this morning even on a holiday weekend. If anybody is the remnant, it's us. Right?

So what we think is if somehow the unbelieving people out there just got their acts together and were a little bit better, they could be right alongside us, they could join us, they could be like us, and then maybe things would really start to happen. What sneaks in there is the tendency of us to think we are differentiated by who *we* are rather than what Jesus has done.

This way of thinking fundamentally misunderstands grace, because if you understand grace this way, it isn't grace anymore; it's works. It's wages. If we suggest that God loves us because we loved him first, we don't understand grace. If we think Jesus' work needs something from us to finish it off, we don't understand grace. Jesus did not die to make it possible for people to save themselves. Jesus died to save sinners. He fulfills the promise of God.

So what happens when people reject grace? What happens when they cannot resist bringing their own works and merits in before God? Paul tells us. He says a rejection of grace leads to hardening. Look at verse 7. "What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened..." That is the source of the failure of the bulk of Israel. Most of Israel, including those who thought themselves closest to God (for example, the Pharisees), sought their own righteousness.

Paul just told us this in chapter 10. Do you remember? In chapter 10, verse 3, it says Israel sought to obtain its own righteousness. Not a righteousness which is by faith, but its own righteousness. What Paul is now telling us is what Israel sought, their own righteousness, they did not obtain. Now, that doesn't surprise us, because it's impossible for them to obtain that. It's futile to even try to obtain that kind of righteousness.

By seeking their own righteousness, they became hardened. They became hardened in their sin and their rebellion, hardened in their rejection of God. The Lord prophesied that this would come about. He hasn't hidden it from us. Paul quotes several passages for us here from the Old Testament: Isaiah 29, Deuteronomy 29. We see it also in Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 12 and Jeremiah 5.

Over and over again, the prophets say, "If you harden yourselves, you will be blind. You will be deaf. God will send a spirit of slumber, of stupor, of blindness and deafness upon you." Over and over again, God says the same thing. "If you reject my grace, if you seek your own righteousness, you will not see the foolishness of doing that. You will think you are fine when you are not."

Paul quotes Psalm 69 in verse 9 to show this. "And David says, 'Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them...'" What he is saying here is the image is of a person sitting down at a wonderful meal, and they think everything is fine and all is good, but what they don't realize is they've set a trap for themselves. They've set a snare of destruction, because they think they are right with God when they are not. They think grace is foolishness.

Of course, the great illustration of this in the Bible are the Pharisees. They thought they were right with God. They thought God owed them because of their obedience, yet they were blind and deaf...so blind and deaf they put to death Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the hope of Israel. How could you be any more foolish than that? How could you be any more blind than that?

Here's the frightening part. How did they get to be so blind? Was it because of their immorality? No. Was it because they ignored the Bible? No. They were students of the Bible. The way they got there was by trusting in their own works and by not running to the grace of God. That's how they came to that level of blindness.

So, again, what does that mean for us today? How does Paul's 2000-year-old argument for the future of Israel affect you and me? First, we have to let grace be grace. We have to constantly resist all temptation to add to the finished work of Christ. Secondly, you need to be careful that you do not reject the Word of God. You never know where the end of that will lead to.

Be very careful not to say to yourself, "I'm a Christian, but I could never believe in a God who supposedly created the world in six days. I could never believe in a God who would work some sort of miracle mumbo-jumbo. I could never believe in a God who says that Jesus is the only way someone can be saved." The minute you start down that road, you don't know where the path will take you. It leads to destruction and eventually a complete rejection of the grace of God.

Finally, you can receive assurance, an assurance that comes from knowing that your salvation does not depend on you. Let me put it very plainly and frankly: You cannot screw up your salvation. It doesn't depend on you. Who does it depend on? On God. On Jesus Christ. It's *his* work that saves, not yours. It's *he* who matters, not you. It's *he* whom God has blessed, and that blessing comes to you through Jesus. What assurance and comfort that is, that we don't have to have it all together all the time, that Jesus covers our multitude of sins.

In conclusion, God is teaching us about his plan for the people of Israel in history. That *is* important, and it *will* affect the way we view people who are Jews, but God is also teaching us about ourselves and the hope we have in Jesus. Brothers and sisters, let grace be grace. Let Jesus be enough.