

10:14 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?

10:15 How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!" (Isa. 52:7)

10:16 However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?" (Isa. 53:1)

10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

In Romans 10 Paul emphasizes that hearing the gospel is a critical step in salvation. In order to have faith in Christ, people must first hear about Him. In this section Paul is going to establish that Israel heard the gospel, though not all believed it.

In 10:16 Paul says, "they did not all heed the good news." "To heed" means "to obey." Israel's problem was *not* that they innocently misunderstood or were never exposed to the gospel; rather, it was that they willfully rejected what they heard. This supports Paul's previous comments that not all of Israel are descendants of the promise (9:6).

In Romans 10:16 Paul quotes Isaiah 53:1. Isaiah 52 and 53 is a messianic passage about God's Servant, the Messiah.

Isaiah 52 says:

13 Behold, My servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted.
14 As many were astonished at you—his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the sons of men—
15 Thus He will sprinkle many nations, Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him; for what had not been told them they will see, and what they had not heard they will understand.

In Isaiah 52:13, God says His Servant will prosper; that is, He will be successful in all He resolves to do. Consequently, God will exalt Him.

Many will be astonished by what they see (Isa. 52:14), for the Servant of God who cleanses the nations (sprinkles many nations—Isa. 52:15; Num. 8:7; Ezek. 36:25; Titus 3:5; Heb. 9:13–14; 10:22; 1 Pet. 1:2) will endure unbelievable abuse (His appearance was so marred beyond that of any man—Isa. 52:14; 53:5, 7) in order to deliver them. The kings of the Gentile world will be speechless (their mouths will be shut), for they had never been told of the Servant of the Lord, and could not imagine anyone who would be willing to endure such abuse or fall so low for them.

But what about Israel who *had* been told of Him? How would they respond to the Servant of the Lord? Isaiah is stunned at their response. He asks, "Who has believed what they heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?" (Isa. 53:1). The nations understood and were astonished, but Isaiah is wondering who among Israel has believed his message? The arm of the Lord (a euphemism for the power of God) was revealed in His Servant, but to whom was it revealed? Israel didn't see it!

Both the prophet in the past and the apostle in the present bring good news of good things (Ro. 10:16; Isa. 52:7), but who among the Jews believes them? What was predicted by Isaiah had come to pass.

10:18 But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; "THEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD."

Paul's readers would no doubt agree that salvation comes from hearing the gospel (10:11, 14), but someone may wonder if the Jews really had a chance to hear it (10:18). Paul writes decisively, "Indeed they have!"

Romans 10:18 is a quote from Psalm 19:1–6 which talks about God's revelation in nature. Just as the voices of creation which proclaim the glory of the Creator have "gone out into all the earth and their words to the ends of the world" (cf. Ro. 1:20 ff.), so have the voices of those who proclaim the glory of God's salvation through Christ.

Thus the question, "have they not heard?" is an indictment upon the nation. The gospel had been proclaimed far and wide. The Jews have heard it and are accountable for it.

10:19 Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, "I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding" (Deut. 32:21b).

The specific use of "Israel" makes it clear that the nation is the subject of the paragraph.

The words, "again I ask" in verse 19 mark out a second point in the argument that Paul began in verse 18, but it is difficult to know exactly what Paul is asking. At first glance we would think he is repeating the question in verse 18 and asking if Israel understood the gospel, but the answer he gives doesn't fit. Rather, it appears that he is asking if the Jews understood the calling of the Gentiles to salvation and Israel's rejection of the gospel.

Moses had predicted a time when the Gentiles (a nation that has no understanding) would make Israel jealous over the blessings that they receive from God. Through Moses, Israel understood that the gospel would go to the Gentiles.

Furthermore, Isaiah anticipated Israel's rejection of the gospel (10:20–21).

10:20 And Isaiah boldly says, "I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me" (Isa. 65:1).

In Isaiah 65:1, Isaiah was speaking to the people of Israel. In spite of Israel rejecting God, He made Himself known to them. By analogy, the same thing happened to godless Gentiles. Paul had made a similar analogy earlier from the Book of Hosea: ". . . I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion, and I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they will say, 'You are my God!'" (Hos. 1:10; 2:23; see notes on Ro. 9:25–26).

10:21 But concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."

In verse 20 Paul applied Isaiah 65:1 to the Gentiles. Isaiah 65:2 is now applied to Israel. Though Israel does not seek God, God continually stretches out His hand toward them. He continually offers grace. In love, He is awaiting their return, but they are unresponsive.

In sum, the gospel had been preached to Israel. Israel understood through Moses and the prophets that the Gentiles would be saved and the nation as a whole would reject Christ. So they are without excuse. They have rejected God's Anointed; nevertheless, all day long He holds out His hands to them.

Israel, the Elect, and the Hardened — 11:1–10

The theme of Chapter 11 (the concluding chapter in Paul's discussion about Israel) is summed up in the second verse: "God has not rejected His people."

Paul answers this question in three ways. There is a present election (vv. 1–10), a future reception (vv. 11–24), and lastly, a final salvation for Israel (vv. 25–32)—all which show that God has not rejected His people.

1. There is a Present Election (11:1–10)

11:1(a) I ask then: Did God reject his people? . . .

In verse 1 "His people" must refer to the nation of Israel as a whole, not just the remnant of believers within it, for the following reasons:

1. The previous context is clear that Paul has the nation in mind.
2. In 10:21 (the preceding verse), God speaks of the same people; he calls them "Israel" and describes them as "a disobedient and contrary people." This can only refer to the nation.
3. It would be foolish to even ask if God rejected those whom He had elected for salvation; Paul must have the nation in mind.

Paul had said that Israel was fully accountable for her rejection of Messiah, for the gospel had gone out to all the earth (10:18). Chapter 10 then ended with God's dismal words, "All day long I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people." The question is now asked if God has rejected His people; this is a natural question considering that the Jews refused to acknowledge Jesus as the culmination of salvation history and sole mediator of God's righteousness.

The apostle directly counters any thought that God has rejected his people: "May it never be" (Rom. 11:1b). The unbelief of some cannot "nullify the faithfulness of God" (Rom. 3:3). This affirms that God's purpose for Israel still stands.

In this section, therefore, and especially in vv. 7–10, Paul gathers together the threads of his teaching about Israel to this point. Despite the refusal of most Jews to recognize in

Christ the culmination of salvation history (9:2–3; 9:30–10:21) . . . God continues, in faithfulness to His word (9:4–5, 6a), to treat Israel as a whole as His people, manifesting His continuing concern for them in the preservation of a remnant of true believers (Moo, 672).

In other words, the fact that God has always preserved a remnant shows that God is continuing to faithfully keep the promises He has made to Israel. Thus, Moo concludes that “despite her disobedience, Israel remains ‘the people of God’—in what sense, Paul will explain in the rest of the chapter” (Moo, 672, 673).

11:1(b) . . . May it never be! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin.

“May it never be” is one of the strongest negations possible in Greek. God has NOT, in any stretch of the imagination, rejected Israel! He is faithful; He will keep His promises both to Israel and to us. This counters any notion that the nation of Israel has been discarded by God and replaced by the church. Paul’s first evidence that Israel has not been rejected is his own salvation; Paul was “an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.” Paul had been saved; he inherited the promises given to the nation.

**11:2 God did not reject His people, whom He foreknew. Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah—how he appealed to God against Israel:
11:3 "Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me"?
11:4 And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal."**

Romans 11:2 gives the second reason behind Paul’s assertion that God would not abandon His people; He would not reject those whom He “foreknew.” God’s foreknowledge of Israel indicates His choice of them. In Amos 3:2 God says to Israel, “You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth.”

Although some argue that Paul is saying that God has not rejected those individuals among the nation who were chosen for salvation, the context demands that Paul is speaking of God’s election of the people as a whole, for it is the national entity whose status is called into question by what Paul has said (9:30–10:21), and the nation is the subject of Paul’s question in verse 1. Furthermore, verse 28 seems to reassert the point that Paul is making here, and clearly refers to the election of the nation (Moo, 674). Romans 11:28: “From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers.”

Thus we discover that the meaning of “foreknowledge” is determined by the context. Here, Paul uses it in the OT sense of God choosing a nation and promising it blessings and benefits, but this foreknowledge does not guarantee the salvation of every individual with it. By contrast, Romans 8:29 also speaks of foreknowledge; however, all in that passage who are foreknown are saved.

The third reason Paul gives to show that God has not rejected His people is from the story of Elijah found in I Kings 19:1–18. Jezebel slaughtered the prophets of God and was seeking to take

Elijah's life. Elijah felt as if everyone in the nation had given themselves over to false gods and he alone was left. However, God assured him that there was a remnant that had not yielded to Jezebel's pressure to succumb to idolatry.

What is important to see is that God has said, "I have reserved for Myself" a remnant (11:4). This OT story demonstrates that God took the initiative; He exerted His power; and throughout history, He has preserved a remnant within the nation in spite of the nation's hostility toward Him as a whole. In the context, "the remnant has its origin, not in the quality of those saved, but in the saving action of God" (TDNT, IV, 203).

11:5 So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.

The remnant in Elijah's experience is parallel to the condition of Israel as Paul wrote. Though most of Israel had rejected Christ, this should not be interpreted as God's rejection of the nation, for God has preserved a remnant according to grace.

In other words, the connection that Paul sees between the remnant in the days of Elijah and his day is not "some will always believe"; it is the consistency of God's grace throughout history. Although Israel remains significant to God, it is not due to its own merit but to God's grace. The remnant is "chosen by grace."

11:6 And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

In verse 6 Paul wants to underline what he means by "chosen by grace" (11:5).

If Israel could ever earn her salvation apart from God, then grace would not be needed. Grace and works are opposites as far as a means of salvation. Grace, by definition, is unmerited favor. If it were possible for humans to secure their blessings from God by their own efforts, then grace would cease to be grace.

It is crucial to understand that what is being contrasted is human activity and divine activity; Paul is contrasting my doings and God's doing. If we are saved by God's activity (grace), we are not saved by our own.

A very close parallel text is Romans 9:11–12 where God's election of Jacob over Esau is described: "Though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—she was told, 'The older will serve the younger.'"

In Romans 9 the contrast is also between grace and works, and the reason for calling Jacob *before* they were born or had done anything good or evil is *so that* God's purpose according to election might stand. Election would not be grace if it were based on what Jacob did. Grace would no longer be grace.

The main point is this: Paul is sure that God has not rejected his people, for He is confident in the consistency of sovereign grace. No rejection of theirs can stop God from saving a remnant or a nation when He chooses to do so.

11:7 What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened,

Verse 7 is the beginning of the last section of the paragraph. There are three entities mentioned: (1) Israel as a collective whole, (2) the elect (the believers), and (3) those who were hardened (the unbelieving).

In verse 5 Paul had said, "So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace." In other words, God has seen to it that out of the people of Israel as a whole, some have believed on Jesus as the Messiah and have been justified. Furthermore, we read that the remnant was chosen by grace alone, not due to anything the remnant had done. These truths would immediately leave a question in people's minds; what about the rest of Israel? What about those who are *not* the remnant? Paul's answer is straightforward, but difficult for the ears of moderns to hear: "the rest were hardened."

Israel as a corporate entity earnestly sought a righteousness from the law, but it did not obtain it (Ro. 9:31).

Within Israel were two groups of people. There were those who sought to merit salvation, but could not gain it (cf. 9:30–31; 10:3); they rejected God's righteousness and were hardened. However, a remnant (the elect) did find salvation because they depended upon divine grace.

In verses 8–10 Paul uses three Old Testament texts to explain and support what he means by "others were hardened" (Isaiah 29:10; Deuteronomy 29:4; Psalm 69:22–23).

11:8 as it is written: "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day."

Romans 11:8 explains how the unbelieving among Israel had their hearts hardened. The verse comes from a number of OT passages (Isa. 6:9–10, Deut. 29:4; and Isa. 29:10; cf. Matt. 13:14) that correspond to the condition in the apostolic age ("to this very day"). A spirit of stupor, eyes that cannot see, and ears that cannot hear are all punitive inflictions from God upon the nation of Israel for their rejection of the Son of God.

In verse 8 "hardening" means that God gave them a spirit of stupor; that is, a spirit of numbness and insensitivity. The result was that they were spiritually blind and deaf. They saw spiritual truth as foolishness.

11:9 And David says: "May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them.

11:10 May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever."

Verses 9–10 are quoted from Psalm 69:22–23. This OT passage speaks of Messiah's lamentation over His dejection and is a judgment upon those who reject Him. The overall meaning is clear; the blessings of salvation shall become a curse upon those who reject Christ. Specifically, their meals (which are considered joyous occasions) shall become a snare and their youthful vigor

shall diminish—their eyes will become dim and their backs bent over. In the Psalms, David is speaking of his enemies. What a tragedy that the judgments were later applied to Israel in an apostate condition.

In verse 9 “hardening” is due to the gifts of God becoming a stumbling block and a trap. People fall in love with these things. The pleasure that they get in things replaces the pleasure they should have in God. And so their physical appetites—for food or sex or aesthetic pleasure—deaden their spiritual appetites and they lose all desire for God.

Therefore, hardening is spiritual numbness, blindness, deafness, and the turning from God's good gifts to other pleasures.

The non-elect (the hardened) are not passed over because they are worse than the elect, and the elect are not chosen because they are better. Otherwise grace would not be grace. Rather, one reason people are hardened is because God is free to have mercy upon whom He has mercy, and He is free to withhold mercy from whomever He desires. So “hardening” is due to the sovereign will of God. But hardening is also a matter of punitive justice. In verse 9 David says, “May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them.” The word “retribution” means that the hardening is a punishment for the wrong they have done. The point is that they deserved the trap and the stumbling. They were responsible, yet God is sovereign.