

## **The Footsteps of Faith Series**

### **Lesson # 18 “Righteousness by faith does not contradict the promise God made to Israel” Part III**

#### **“Israel’s rejection is not final”**

Romans 11:1-36

**Scripture:** Romans 1:16-17

*“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”*

#### **Introduction:**

When I was about four years old we got our first television. I remember asking mom and dad what it was and how it worked as they were hooking it up. We lived in a trailer house and mom and dad had got this spring loaded device which pushed against the floor and the ceiling and the little 10” television to set right in it.

I thought it a real waste of time when the only thing on was soap-operas. As a matter of fact I couldn’t stand to even watch a whole episode.

But then Gilligan’s Island came on. How many of you watched Gilligan’s Island in the past? Well if your not familiar it is a story about a group of people who took a vacation cruise and during a big storm they ended up shipwrecked on a desert island somewhere.

We watched every episode in which the central focus was simply how they would get rescued. But every attempt seemed to fail. They fashioned great ideas and simple ones and tried to keep each other hopeful and encouraged that someday they could return to civilization.

Interestingly enough they were called cast-a ways. That is that they were forgotten by society, abandoned and left for dead.

#### **Transitional Statement:**

Church God never, ever, cast His people a way and forgets about them. Even when the storms of life blow us off track and we find ourselves removed from the presence of God, all hope is not lost, for our God stands at the door continually calling us back to Himself. His mercy never leaves any of His creation without hope.

## Lesson:

### I. God has not abandoned His people?

Romans 11:1-6

*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. 2 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? 3 "Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE." 4 But what is the divine response to him? " I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL." 5 In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice. 6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.*

A. The question at hand here is whether God has rejected His people.

1. "Reject" means to cast off or cast away or abandon
2. To which the answer is concretely established here at the beginning.
  - a. "May it never be!"
3. "Reject" is a middle voice Greek verb which means that this is action done to oneself.
  - a. So God would not do this to Himself is the idea.

B. Let's look at an explanation of the answer "May it never be!"

1. First, Paul says take me for example.
  - a. Take the fact that I am also an Israelite, descended from Abraham and from the tribe of Benjamin.
  - b. I became very zealous for Judaism to the point that I rejected God's eternal plan and in fact sought to destroy it. But God in His tender kindness did not forget me, but reached out to me on the road to Damascus
  - c. And now is using me toward His will in His way.
2. Secondly, the idea of God's foreknowledge is brought up. (2-4)
  - a. God knew who Israel was when he chose them. He knew their strengths and their weaknesses.
  - b. His plan was not to use them until He was done and then throw them away like a piece of trash.
  - c. But God's foreknowledge of their rejection also included a plan of restoration, which we will see in the coming verses.

3. Thirdly, is the fact that God keeps a remnant unto Himself.
  - a. That is God will not fully cast His people away.
  - b. Elijah had thought that God had totally destroyed His people except for him. After the Mount Carmel showdown Elijah thinks he is the only one left, but God reminded him that a small number (7,000) were still faithful.
  - c. Jesus points to the continual fact that it is a small number that seem to rise to God's expectations.

Matthew 7:13-14

*13 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. 14 "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it."*

- d. Also noted here is the idea that the remnant is a matter of God's gracious choice.

-Specifically pointing out the idea that being in the remnant is not a matter of works (efforts), but a matter of God's choosing.

## **II. Israel's attempt at righteousness by their own efforts failed.**

Romans 11:7-10

*7 What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; 8 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."*

*9 And David says,*

*"LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP,  
AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM.*

*10 "LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT,  
AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER."*

- A. Israel by its own efforts did not find the righteousness of God.
  1. It's not that they did try hard
  2. It's not that they didn't care
  3. But their focus was on their efforts and abilities not on God's.
- B. But the chosen by God (elect) did find righteousness

- C. And the rest (including Israel) God hardened according to His plan in the promotion of His will.
- D. So this brings up a serious question: How does God chose His people?
1. Today are you a part of God's chosen people? How?
  2. Did God just prefer us over the other people?  
-No partiality with God Romans 2:11
  3. Was it because we were simply obedient to His word?  
  
-Now church, let me throw out a serious issue here. Is obedience all it takes to be found favorable in the eyes of God?
  4. Isn't it true that God looks at the heart as well as the actions in making his determinations? Acts 15:8
  5. Work verses choice
    - a. I used to be a mechanic at a power plant. You know work is work, I didn't love it I just had to. The work I did there although feeding my family had no real lasting effect.
    - b. On the other hand my grandmother made this afghan for me. She thought about what colors I would like and she found pleasure with every stitch. This work is done by choice and out of love.

\*This is where Israel fell short in their understanding of righteousness.  
\*And some people today follow suit.

### **III. Here is a key point: Israel's failure doesn't have to be final**

Romans 11:11-15

*11 I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. 12 Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! 13 But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, 14 if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them. 15 For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?*

- A. Has Israel stumbled to the point that they can't get back up? NO !
- B. Through their rejection, salvation came to the Gentiles, but God has not abandoned Israel
  1. But is now using that relationship with the Gentiles to lure Israel back to Himself.

C. Then in verse 14 Paul points to the desire for Israel to be saved.

D. But, Paul turns specifically to the Gentiles and says:

1. Hey listen! If Israel's rejection has brought this much good....can you imagine how God can work through them if they accept His will?
2. Which is the ultimate desire of God.

E. You see the invitation stands open to Israel and other people who wishes to return to God.

#### **IV. Then God turns to the Gentiles and says don't become arrogant or conceited thinking you are the only ones that God loves.**

Romans 11:16-24

*16 If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too. 17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, 18 do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. 19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." 20 Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; 21 for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either. 22 Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. 23 And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. 24 For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?*

A. The warning here is for the Gentiles not to become arrogant or conceited about their salvation.

1. Is this ever a problem in our world today?
  - a. Are Christians ever guilty of looking down their noses at the lost?
  - b. Proud to have what others don't?
  - c. Are Christians today tempted to think more highly of themselves than they should?
2. You know the bible seems to warn against this lack of humility time and time again.
  - b. Proverbs 16:18 "Pride goes before destruction..."
  - a. Perhaps arrogance is one of Satan's most prize tools.

- b. James 4:10 *“Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.”*

B. Here the first example reminding the Gentiles not to be arrogant concerning their salvation is:

1. *“If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also;”*
  - a. *“first piece of dough”* is the word first-fruit in the Greek probably related to Numbers 15:20 referring to the first of the ground meal from which a cake is made and offered to the Lord.
2. Here we see the idea that the cake can't say, after being baked, I really didn't need the grain?
3. You see the Gentiles, are the lump, and they need not forget that holiness came down to them from the grain, that is (Israel). And in turn, with humility and gratitude of heart they should be willing to reach out to help fallen Israel.
4. Both the Jews and the Gentiles are together a part of God's plan

C. Now the second example reminding the Gentiles not to be arrogant is:

1. The example of a tree and its branches
  - a. When I was little my dad planted an orchard. He really liked fruit trees.
  - b. I learned a lot from him about taking care of trees.
  - c. One thing about fruit trees is that the unhealthy limbs must be pruned, so any disease won't spread.

-When you prune an unhealthy limb off a tree:

-You can put tar or some sealing agent over the open wound.

- Or you can take the limb from another tree and graft it into the place of the old limb.

2. This example here calls us to think about a spiritual tree
  - a. In which God is the Master Gardener.
  - b. And for this spiritual tree to be healthy tree God has to do some pruning.

- c. When the unbelieving Israel branch became unhealthy, God pruned her and grafted the branches of the faithful Gentiles in her place.
- d. So the Gentiles branches taken from a wild scrub tree, find themselves on this wonderful tree of God, standing tall among the other branches looking down to the pruned branches on the ground and apparently are becoming arrogant or at least are in danger of it.
- e. So God tells the Gentiles three important things:
  - 1) You are what you are only because the root is supplying you needs, i.e. you are nothing on your own.
  - 2) Then, God says if your thinking becomes unhealthy I will prune you also.
  - 3) \*Israel can be grafted in again!

\*Her rejection is not final !

\*She is not abandoned to some island as a cast-away

## **V. The Israel of God includes both Jews and Gentiles**

Romans 11:25-32

*25 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery — so that you will not be wise in your own estimation — that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; 26 and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written,*

*"THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION,  
HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB."*

*27 "THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM,  
WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS."*

*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; 29 for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. 30 For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, 31 so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. 32 For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.*

- A. Not be wise in your own estimation
- B. Partial hardening happened to Israel to allow the fullness of the Gentiles to come in
- C. From the standpoint of the gospel
  - 1. These unbelieving Jews are enemies....they stand opposed to God

- D. But the vantage point of God's elect, will forever love and appreciate the role that Israel played in bringing the gospel down to them.
- C. *"for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."* Verse 29
1. God has assigned to Israel gifts and a calling. And God has not changed that....weather they accept it or not is their choice.
  2. But God hasn't abandoned them.
- E. You see God uses His mercy to create desire in all people (both Jew and Gentile) so that they both might be lead to his throne of grace.

**Conclusion:**

**Is a conclusion satisfactory for all times and all places:**

**Consider the sovereignty of God !**

Romans 11:33-36

*33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! 34 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? 35 Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? 36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.*