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**Not Total but Partial
(Part 1)
Romans 11:1-6**

Introduction:

An elderly Christian man was in much **distress** as he lay **dying** in the hospital. “Oh Pastor,” he said, “for years I have **relied** upon the **promises of God**, but now in the hour of death I can’t **remember** a single one to **comfort** me.” Knowing that **Satan** was disturbing him, the pastor said, “My brother, do you think that **GOD** will **forget** any of His promises?” A smile came over the man’s face as he exclaimed joyfully, “No, no! He won’t! Praise the Lord, now I can **fall asleep** in Jesus and **trust** Him to **remember** them all and bring me safely to heaven.” **Peace** flooded his soul, and a short time later he passed away and was ushered immediately into the presence of the Lord.

Whatever your **need** may be **today**, God **remembers** the promises in His Word and is always **faithful** to keep them—whether it is the **promise** of His **presence**, His **protection**, His **provision**, His **power**, or something else. In the case of **Israel**, as we will see this morning, His promise was to never abandon or forsake His people. This is what we will be looking at today.

In our study of **Romans 9-11**, thus far we have seen in **chapter 9** that Paul’s primary focus was on the **sovereignty of God** in salvation and in **chapter 10** his primary focus was on the **responsibility of man**. Although both are true, it is impossible to perfectly reconcile them

rationally. Now as we come to **chapter 11** these two **biblical truths** are **interrelated**, especially toward the end of the chapter.

The **overall theme** of this chapter is **Israel's future restoration**. And this chapter can be **divided** into **three major sections**: **First**, Israel's rejection of Christ is not **total** but **partial** in **vv. 1-10**; **Second**, Israel's rejection of Christ is not **final** but **temporary** in **vv. 11-32**. Both of these sections are introduced with the phrase "**I say then.**" And **third**, Paul's concluding **doxology** to God's glory and praise in **vv. 33-36**. This morning we will begin looking at the **first section**. Turn in your Bible to **Romans 11**.

In **Romans 11:1-6** we see **three parts** of Paul's argument to show that **Israel's rejection of Christ is not total but partial**.

The **first part** is this:

I. The obvious Question about God's Response to Israel

A. Look at **v. 1: I say then**, God has **not** rejected **His people**, has He? (Stop there)

1. When Paul says, "**I say then**" or **therefore** (oun) he is reaching back and giving a summarizing conclusion to all he has said in **9:30-10:21**. In those verses we saw that Israel **pursued** righteousness by works of the Law instead of by faith, sought to **establish** their own righteousness, and as **disobedient** and **obstinate** people **rejected** Jesus as the Christ and **refused** to believe the gospel message that was proclaimed, even though God with outstretched hands has continually **invited** them to **believe** and be **saved**.
2. Now as we come to **chapter 11**, Paul **anticipates** the **obvious question** that one might ask, "Since Israel has **rejected** God,

has God **rejected** them?” Look again at Paul’s question, “God has **not rejected** His people, **has He?**”

3. This rhetorical question is **constructed** in such a way as to **demand** a negative answer “**No.**” And Paul will **show** that God has **not rejected His people** throughout the entire chapter.
4. Now by “**His people**” (laon autou) Paul is referring to the **corporate nation** of Israel as a **whole**. Here he is saying that God has not **rejected** them.
5. The word “**rejected**” (aposato) is a very strong word and means to “**cast away completely, cut off permanently, spurn, repel, and repudiate.**”
6. In essence Paul is asking, “Is God **through** with the **Jews?** This brings us to the **second part** of Paul’s argument, which is this:

II. The emphatic Answer concerning God’s Rejection of Israel

- A. Paul declares **succinctly** and **emphatically** in v. 1: **May it never be!**
 1. As we have seen **earlier** in this letter, this phrase (me genoito) is the **strongest** negative expression in the Greek language and is used **ten times** in Romans (3:4, 6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11). This expression indicates utter shock, disgust, and a recoiling abhorrence.
 2. It has been variously translated in many different ways: “**Never!**” “**No way!**” “**Not at all!**” “**Certainly not!**” “**By no means!**” “**God forbid!**” “**Perish the thought!**” “**Not on your life!**” and “**Not in a thousand years.**”
 3. What Paul is saying is that it is **absolutely absurd** and **inconceivable** to think that God has completely and

permanently **rejected** His own people Israel. Despite their **stubborn disobedience** to God and **deserved condemnation**, God **remembers** and is **faithful** to His unconditional covenant promises to Israel.

4. Listen to such **promises** that God would never **reject** His people:

- Samuel said in **1 Samuel 12:22**: For the LORD will not **abandon** His people on account of His great name, because the LORD has been pleased to make you a people for Himself.
- Even though God's people was continually disobedient and rebelled against Him, **Nehemiah 9:31** says, "Nevertheless, in Your great compassion You did not **make an end** of them or **forsake** them, for You are a gracious and compassionate God."
- Speaking for God about rebellious Israel, the **psalmist** declared in **Psalms 89:30-37**, "If his sons **forsake** My law and do not walk in My judgments, if they **violate** My statutes and do not keep My commandments, then I will **punish** their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes. But I will **not break off** My lovingkindness from him, nor **deal falsely** in My **faithfulness**. My **covenant** I will **not violate**, nor will I **alter** the utterance of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David. His descendants shall **endure forever** and his throne as the sun before Me. It shall be established

forever like the moon, and the witness in the sky is faithful.”

- Another **psalmist** proclaimed in **Psalm 94:14**: For the LORD will not **abandon** His people, nor will He **forsake** His inheritance.”
 - God through Jeremiah said to His disobedient people in **Jeremiah 46:28**, “O Jacob My servant, do not fear,” declares the LORD, “for I am with you. For I will make a full end of all the nations where I have driven you, yet I will not make a **full end** of you; but I will **correct** you properly and by no means leave you unpunished.”
5. Paul has emphatically declared that it is **impossible** for the **faithful God** to **reject** His people, to whom He has given His **unconditional** covenant promises. He is not an **Indian-giver—giving** something when things are **good** and then **taking it back** when things are **bad**.
 6. But having declared his answer, Paul then starts right into the **third part** of his argument, which is this:

III. The convincing Proofs that God Never rejected Israel

- A. Paul gives a series of **four proofs**. The **first proof** that God never rejected Israel is: **Paul Himself as a Believing Jew**. Look at the end of **v. 1** where Paul says: For **I too** am an **Israelite**, a **descendant** of **Abraham**, of the tribe of **Benjamin**.
1. Now by saying “**Israelite**,” “**descendant of Abraham**,” and “**tribe of Benjamin**” Paul is merely **emphasizing** that he is truly an **ethnic Jew**. As we probably all know, before Paul was dramatically **saved** on the road to **Damascus**, he was **Saul of**

Tarsus—the most fanatical **Christ-rejecting** and **Christian-hating Jew** in Israel.

2. Saul was a leader who vehemently **persecuted** the church. Speaking about the stoning of **Stephen**, **Acts 7:58** says, “When they had driven him out of the city, they began **stoning** him; and the witnesses **laid aside** their **robes** at the feet of a young man named **Saul**.”
3. In **Acts 8:3** we read, “But **Saul** began **ravaging** the church, entering house after house, and **dragging** off men and women, he would put them in prison.” And **9:1-2** states, “Now Saul, still breathing **threats** and **murder** against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at **Damascus**, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.”
4. There was no more **antagonistic** person to Jesus Christ and His church than **Saul of Tarsus**. That is why **three days** after the risen and glorified Christ struck him down **blind** on the road to **Damascus** and **saved** him, when God told **Ananias** to go to him in **Acts 9-14**, scared to death he answered, “Lord, I have **heard** from many about this man, how much **harm** he did to Your saints at Jerusalem; and here he has **authority** from the chief priests to **bind** all who call on Your name.”
5. But the Lord Jesus said in **vv. 15-16**, “**Go**, for he is a **chosen instrument** of Mine, to **bear** My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him **how much** he must **suffer** for My name’s sake.”

6. Therefore, the **first** convincing **proof** that God has not **rejected** His people is **himself** as a Jew. And not just any Jew, the most **Christ-hating** Jew there was.
7. He is **Exhibit A**. But isn't it **amazing** that the **testimony** of Paul shows that no matter how **spiritually blind, hardened,** and **rebellious** a person may be, with Jesus Christ there is **hope** for anyone!
8. Absolutely **no one** is beyond the **mercy** and **grace** of God. As we saw back in **5:20**, "...where **sin** increased, **grace** abounded all the more." What an **encouragement!**

B. The **second proof** that God never rejected Israel is: **God's Faithfulness to His Chosen people**. Look at the first part of **v. 2**: God has not rejected **His people** whom He **foreknew**. (Stop there)

1. As we already saw in **8:29**, the word "**foreknew**" (proegno) does not mean merely **knowing information** about someone beforehand, but predetermining an intimate, love relationship with them. Notice that it is "**His people** whom He **foreknew**" not certain **facts** about them.
2. This is a term of **divine choice** or **election** whereby **before** the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4), God **knew intimately** in that He chose, appointed, determined, or ordained to **set** His **covenant love** and **affection** on the **people themselves**.
3. Now the phrase "**His people** whom He **foreknew**" applies to God's **general election** of Israel as a **nation**—the **corporate** body of God's **chosen** people, as we saw in **v. 1**. The **majority**

of which as a “**disobedient** and **obstinate** people” (10:21) had **rejected** Christ and His gospel.

4. Paul is not referring here to God’s **specific election** to salvation of **individual** Israelites. As we saw in **9:6b**, God’s **general election** of Israel as a nation does not **guarantee** the salvation of every individual Jew within the nation.
5. Therefore, **Israel** is the **only nation** God has ever “**foreknown**” or **chosen** from **eternity past** to be “**His people**” and to enter into an **intimate love relationship** with Him that will never be destroyed. We see this in numerous places in Scripture.
6. **For example**, speaking about **Abraham**, the father of the nation of Israel, God said in **Genesis 18:19**, “For I have **chosen him**, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him.”
7. To the **corporate nation** Moses declared in **Deuteronomy 7:6-8**: For you are a **holy people** to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has **chosen** you to be a **people** for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. The LORD did not **set His love** on you nor **choose** you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD **loved you** and **kept the oath** which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”

8. And then through His prophet **Amos**, the LORD proclaimed to Israel in **Amos 3:2**, “**You only** have I **chosen** among all the families of the earth...”
 9. Here we see that it is **God’s faithfulness** to what He has “**foreknown**” concerning His **chosen people** that **guarantees** God will never **reject** all Israel.
 10. **John MacArthur** said it well, “Because God **foreknew** and **predetermined** before the foundation of the earth to set His special love upon Israel **forever**, He can never **totally reject** them. To do so would **invalidate** His divine promises, **nullify** His divine faithfulness, **discredit** His divine integrity, and **compromise** His divine love.” (pg. 100)
- C. The **third proof** that God never rejected Israel is: **The believing Remnant of the Past**. Look at **vv. 2b-3**: Or **do you not know** what the Scripture says in the passage about **Elijah**, how he **pleads** with God **against** Israel? “Lord, **THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE.**”
1. Here Paul **quotes** compressed excerpts from **1 Kings 19:10** and **14**. When he says, “**do you not know** what the Scripture says in the passage about **Elijah**” he is actually **rebuking** those who have come to the **conclusion** that God has **rejected** Israel because they should have **known** better.
 2. Now to understand the **context** of this passage, the **Northern Kingdom** of Israel in **Elijah’s** day was a time of flagrant apostasy and gross idolatry. This was during the **reign** of wicked **King Ahab** and his wicked queen **Jezebel**, who saw to it that

- the **prophets** of the LORD were slain, His **altars** demolished, and the worship of **Baal** was carried out throughout the land.
3. Paul is **highlighting** one event in Elijah's life right after he had **killed** the prophets of Baal at the showdown on **Mount Carmel** and **ran** from the furious queen **Jezebel**. At that time he **fled** to **Beersheba**, then into the desert, and finally to **Mount Horeb (Sinai)**.
 4. It was there that Elijah "...**pleads** with God **against** Israel." Normally the prophet Elijah was **fearless**, but when not controlled by the Spirit of God he became **fearful** and **despondent**, and in **self-pity** he **laments** at the end of **v. 3**, "...**I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE.**"
 5. Paul goes on to say in **v. 4**, "But what is the **divine response** to him?" And then he quotes **1 Kings 19:18**: "I HAVE KEPT for Myself **SEVEN THOUSAND** MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL."
 6. The one Greek word translated "**divine response**" (chrematismos) here carries the idea of a **divine oracle** or **revelation**. Here we see that through His **direct Word**, God does not **deny** Elijah's charge that Israel had **broken** their covenant relationship with God, nor that they had **killed** His prophets and **torn down** His altars.
 7. What God focuses on to **correct** is Elijah's **misunderstanding** that he was the **only believer** in the one true God left in Israel. But God **assures** him that there are "...**SEVEN THOUSAND** MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL."

8. Notice again **how** did this had come about? God says, ““I HAVE **KEPT** for Myself...” The word “**kept**” (katelipon) means to **reserve** or **preserve**.
 9. This emphasizes **divine action**. Here we see that it was **God Himself** and **no one else** who saw to it that a **believing remnant** of 7,000 men was **preserved** for Himself. And this took place in Elijah’s day when the **majority** of Israel was apostate, which is similar to Paul’s situation.
 10. Paul is driving home the **point** that this **believing remnant** of the **past** was not **preserved** because they did not **bow** the knee to Baal, they did not **bow** the knee to Baal because they were **preserved** by God.
 11. One of the **greatest proofs** that God has not totally rejected Israel is that throughout Old Testament history, He has always **preserved a believing remnant** for His own purposes (Gen. 45:7-8a; Num. 14:26-30; 26:65; 2 Chron. 11:14-17; 15:8-9; 34:9, 21; 2 Kgs. 19:4; 25:12; Ezra 9:8, 15; Hag. 1:12-14; Neh. 1:2; Isa. 1:9; 6:9-13; 37:31-32; 46:3-4; Jer. 40:11-12, 15; 42:2; Amos 5:3, 15; Ezek. 11:13-21).
- D. The **fourth proof** that God never rejected Israel is: **The believing Remnant in the Present**. Paul says in **v. 5**: In the **same way** then, there has also come to be at the **present time** a **remnant** according to God’s **gracious choice**.
1. Just as God **preserved** for Himself a **believing remnant** of Jews in Elijah’s day of spiritual apostasy, He has done the **same thing** in Paul’s day of spiritual apostasy. As we already saw in **9:27**, the word “**remnant**” (leimma) here means a small amount

or minority, and it refers to what is left over, a small portion of the whole.

2. Although “**at the present time**” Paul is writing this letter, the **majority** of Israel had **rejected** Jesus Christ. However, Paul makes it clear that God had **preserved** for Himself a **remnant of Jewish Christians** throughout the Roman Empire and beyond.
3. And the very same thing is true **today** and will always be true until **Christ returns** in glory and judgment! God will always have a **remnant of Jewish Christians**, also called **Messianic Jews**, and this **remnant** will **explode** in number at the **end time**, as we will see later in this chapter.
4. Now **how** God has **preserved** for Himself a remnant is “...**according to** God’s **gracious choice**.” The word “**choice**” (eklogen) here refers to God **sovereign election, picking out, and selection** of individuals to salvation.
5. Notice that Paul says God’s **choice** of the remnant of Israel is totally the result of His “**gracious choice**.” God’s **choosing** a remnant from Israel in Paul’s day had **absolutely nothing** to do with their ethnic descent, their good works, or anything else.
6. God’s **choice** has always been and will ever be by His **grace alone**. **Ephesians 2:8-9** says, “For **by grace** you have been **saved** through **faith**; and that not of yourselves, it is the **gift** of God; not as a result of **works**, so that no one may boast.”
7. In **2 Timothy 1:9** we read, “Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our **works**, but according to His

own purpose and **grace** which was **granted** us in Christ Jesus **from all eternity.**”

8. Therefore, God never **rejected** Israel because He has also **preserved** the **believing remnant** in the **present**. **Everett F. Harrison** is correct when he says, “The **sparing** of the remnant is inseparably related to the **choice** of the remnant. The very fact of God’s **choice** excludes the possibility of His **desertion** of His own.” (Expositors pg. 117)
- E. Now having just mentioned **grace** at the end of **v. 5**, Paul cannot pass up the opportunity to draw a **stark contrast** between **grace** and **works**. Look at **v. 6**: But **if** (or better “**since**”) **it** (e.g. God’s choice or election) is **by grace**, it is **no longer** on the basis of **works**, otherwise **grace** is no longer **grace**.
 1. **William Newell** rightly states, “Here is perhaps the most direct and absolute **contrast** in Scripture of **two principles**: for **grace** is God acting sovereignly according to Himself; **works** is man seeking to present to God a human ground for blessing. The **two principles** are **utterly opposed**.” (pg. 412)
 2. Since God’s choice or election is based on **grace**, it cannot at the same time include any human **works** whatsoever, for **grace** and **works** are mutually exclusive and diametrically opposed.
 3. Therefore, for Paul to say “it is **no longer** on the **basis** of **works**” does not mean that God’s choice was **once by works** but now it has **ceased** to be. What this means is that once we have come to **see** that God’s salvation is by **grace** there is no longer any place for **works**.

4. Salvation is by **grace alone** through **faith alone** in **Christ alone**. If **human works** of any kind are added to **grace** then Paul says by definition “**grace** is no longer **grace**.”
5. Just as **one drop** of **arsenic** to a glass of water makes it not **pure** water but **fatal**, any kind of **works** makes grace no longer grace and **spiritually fatal**.
6. The one completely **cancel out** the other. Salvation is a **free gift** of God’s grace and no **payment** at all can be made or it **ceases** to be **free**.
7. **Douglas Moo** accurately said, “For **grace** demands that God be perfectly **free** to bestow his favor on whomever he chooses. But if God’s **election** were based on what human beings **do**, his **freedom** would be **violated** and he would no longer be acting in **grace**.” (pg. 678)

Conclusion:

In closing, Paul has convincingly **proven** that God has never **rejected** Israel because of himself as a believing Jew; God’s faithfulness to His chosen people; the believing remnant of the past; and the believing remnant of the present. Therefore, Israel’s rejection is not **total** but **partial**. God is not **through** with Israel! What He has **promised** her, He is **faithful** to bring about by His **grace** in His time and in His way.

And the Lord will do the **same** for us as well. We are not to claim promises that God hasn’t made or doesn’t apply to us. But our God is always **faithful** and we can **trust Him fully** to not only **remember** the promises He has given us in His Word, but also to **keep** them. Do you **trust** Him this morning?