

Lesson 26: God's Plan for Israel Involves a Current Remnant

Romans 11:1-10

Invitation and Objection

¹ I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He?

Short answer

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.

Long answer (A Remnant is Preserved.)

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.

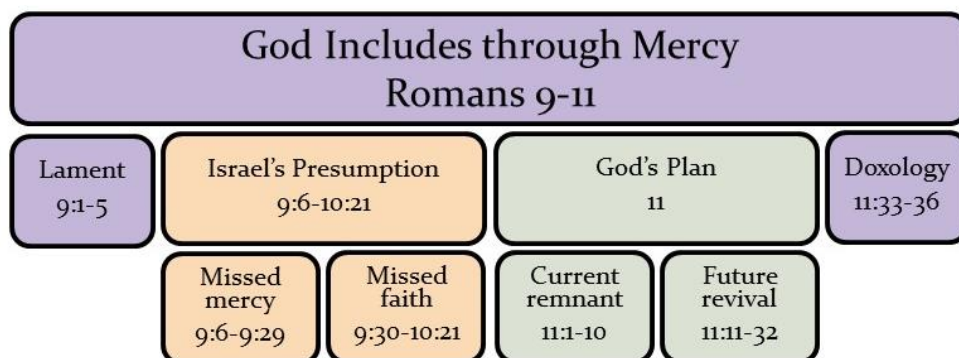
⁷ What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; ⁸ just as it is written, "GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY." ⁹ And David says, "LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND 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."

NASB

Introduction

Is God done with Israel? They have stumbled over the stumbling stone of Jesus Christ. Paul began Romans chapter 9 with a lament over the lostness of his countrymen. And we finished with Israel disobedient and obstinate at the end of chapter 10. Is God done? Has he washed his hands and moved on?

No. God is faithful in his promises to Israel. In chapter 9 Paul showed us that Israel has misunderstood mercy. Presuming upon God that they deserved a special, central place as his people, they misunderstood both that God chose them by mercy and that God is free to include others by that same mercy. Then in chapter 10 Paul taught us that Israel also misunderstood faith. They presumed upon God that their pursuit of biblical righteousness earned them a special place. And so, they misunderstood how Gentiles could be accepted by faith in Jesus and that they too could be assured a place only by faith in Jesus. They misunderstood mercy and misunderstood faith.



Is God done? No. Paul now directs us in Romans 11 to this truth: God has a plan for Israel that includes a present remnant and a future revival. We begin with the present remnant.

Paul's approach here will again sound familiar. He has returned to his rhetorical pattern of invitation, objection, short answer and long answer. Let's read the whole passage, Romans 11:1-10.

[Romans 11:1-10]

Invitation and Objection (1a)

We start with the invitation and objection.

In 6:1 the invitation was a complete sentence, "What shall we say then?" Here it is just the phrase "I say then," followed by the objection, "God has not rejected his people, has He?"

We respond, "We don't know. You tell us Paul. Has God rejected his people?"

Short answer (1b-2a)

The short answer is Paul's classic, "May it never be!" And in this case, we get a little more to go with it. Paul points out that he himself is proof that God has not rejected Israel. "For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew."

Notice also this use of the word foreknew. In 8:29 Paul used the word foreknow as applied to an individual who God would call and justify and glorify. Here the context is corporate. God foreknew his people Israel. He is not surprised by the stubborn resistance to his will. God foreknew all the troubles he would have with this people. He knew that some would never believe. But he knew ahead of time something else as well. He knew there would always be a remnant of Israelites, like Paul, walking in grace.

Next, in the long answer, Paul makes three points.

- (1) The idea of a remnant within Israel as an Old Testament reality.
- (2) The present remnant in Israel as a testimony to God's gracious choice.
- (3) The present rejection of grace as a testimony to Israel's hardness of heart.

Long answer (2b-10)

1. The idea of a remnant within Israel is an Old Testament reality. (2b-4)

This is in 11:2b-4. Let's read those verses.

[Read Romans 11:2b-4]

Paul starts this longer as he has before with the phrase "Do you not know..." And then he typically refers to something known, like baptism or slavery or marriage, and from that which is known he supports his answer. Here he chooses the story of Elijah to support his case.

Elijah came on the scene after the northern kingdom of Israel had separated from the southern kingdom. The biblical record does not consider one of the 20 kings in the north as good. The fundamental reason is that at the inception of the northern kingdom the new king established two altars to Yahweh with images of bulls. He erected one on the southern border and the other near the northern border of the kingdom. In doing this he made worship more convenient by giving Israelites two closer places of worship. He made worship more acceptable by providing idols which conformed to Canaanite society. And he made worship more politically expedient by detaching it from Jerusalem.

None of the northern kings did anything about these idolatrous places of worship. As may be expected, the kingdom spiraled downward as the Israelites gave only lip service in a modified worship of Yahweh until Ahab and Jezebel came on the scene, dethroning God altogether and establishing Baal as the national god. God responded by raising up Elijah to oppose Baal. God gave spectacular proof by first bringing fire down from heaven to oppose Baal's prophets and then bringing rain to water the drought, stricken land. To Elijah's surprise, no revival followed this miraculous test of power. The king and queen did not convert, and the people did not rise up. All Elijah got was a message from Jezebel saying, "I am coming for you."

Despondent and maybe afraid, Elijah left Israel walking all the way down through the southern kingdom out into the desert, a fitting metaphor for the spiritual state of Israel; one man alone in the wasteland. But after caring for his needs, God gave Elijah a more accurate perspective. The state of

Israel was bleak. Nevertheless, God had kept for himself a small but significant remnant of 7000 Israelites who had not bowed down to Baal.

God gave Paul this same spiritual insight. As bleak as it looked for Israel. God had kept for himself a faithful remnant. A significant remnant. Remember that 3000 had come to faith at Peter's first evangelistic sermon in Jerusalem. From among these Jews the gospel was going out to the world and the word of Christ was being recorded as the New Testament witness. This was from Jews. There was a significant remnant.

The idea of the remnant clarifies for us a major point of chapter 9. Paul said in 9:6, "But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel." Paul does not then go on to say that Israel is made up of Jew and Gentile. He is not expanding the concept of Israel. He is reducing the concept of Israel. He goes on to say that of Abraham's two sons only Isaac is chosen. And of Isaac's two sons only Jacob is chosen. True Israel is limited according to God's choice. We could then go on and ask, "What about Jacob's 12 sons? Are they not all Israel?" Yes and no. They are ethnically Israel. But Paul's point is that true Israel is made up of those in Israel who truly believe, even if it is only a remnant. That is where Paul concludes in 9:27, "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved." This is what Paul meant when he said, "Not all are Israel who are descended from Israel." The remnant is Israel.

Is God faithful in his promises to Israel? Yes. He is faithful in all of them. The promises made about the land and fruitfulness and the government of Israel may bless the whole, every person. However, the eternal, spiritual promises made specifically to Israel apply to spiritual Israel which is made up of the remnant of ethnic Israelites who have trusted in God. It is Abraham and Sarah. It is Moses and Miriam. It is Naomi and Samuel and Hannah and David. It is Isaiah and Habakkuk and Daniel and Malachi. It is Mary and Joseph, Peter and Paul, Mark and Silas, Priscilla and Aquila. And thousands more believing Israelites, young and old, rich and poor, male and female who make up the remnant of true and faithful Israel.

The spiritual promises continue to be applied to the remnant of ethnic Israel made up of those who have believed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Having established the idea of a remnant from the Old Testament, Paul goes on to say that the present remnant in Israel is a testimony to God's gracious choice.

2. The present remnant in Israel is a testimony to God's gracious choice. (5-6)

How do we explain the remnant? Are they smarter, more spiritual, more righteous? What makes these worthier than the majority of Israelites. Nothing. God chose. That's why, 11:5-6.

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.

Chapter 9 and chapter 10 gave us the two sides of the doorway into God's kingdom, into God's house. If you imagine yourself standing on the threshold with God on one side of the door and you on the other, whose will moves you to step across? Chapter 9 emphasizes God's gracious choice. It is God who shows mercy and God who calls. Chapter 10 then emphasizes the human side, the act of faith. You are responsible to believe and step through.

Here in chapter 11, Paul again emphasizes God's side. It is God who chooses. So, we can ask again whose will is primary in bringing you into the household of God? Yours or God's? Faith or gracious choice? I indicated in an earlier lesson that I understand God's will to be primary. I believe that people see and respond to God's gift of grace because God opens the eyes of the heart to see. Faith is a gift of spiritual sight that comes by God's gracious choice. That's how I understand the relationship of grace and faith, though I recognize you may resolve the question differently.

When I talk about God's side, I talk about his sovereign freedom to make a loving and gracious choice. Justice demands condemnation. The cross provides a way of mercy. God is glorified either way he chooses, whether he chooses just wrath or merciful grace.

When I talk about the human side of the equation, I talk about the responsibility of each person to respond to God in faith. Everyone is responsible. Time and again I read in the Bible a call to faith, which I never see qualified by a discussion of predestination. Our job is to proclaim the gospel and call all men and women to believe in the gospel and receive Jesus as Lord and Savior. The Bible proclaims love and forgiveness to all who would come. We follow the Bible's lead, proclaiming grace and forgiveness to all, and we trust God to do the internal spiritual work that brings about salvation.

Paul does not get into all of that here. He does not tell us how to understand the complementary truths of chapter 9 and 10, of gracious choice and the requirement of faith. I've given you a little bit of my thinking, and I'll you to work it out for yourself.

I have a twofold concern. (1) I am concerned that we do not say less than what Paul says. For example, he has stated quite clearly that the remnant is "according to God's gracious choice." And on the negative side he states, "the rest were hardened." I do not want to come up with a solution that makes those statements nonsensical or undercuts the point that Paul draws from these truths. God chooses by grace, and God hardens others. We cannot and should not try to change that. (2) But I am also concerned that we do not say more than what Paul says. For example, Paul never says that we should not proclaim the gospel to all men because some are not chosen. It is never said. Such a thought is foreign to the way the Bible presents the call to faith, though sadly not foreign to some Christians. It may seem logical based on what Paul says here. And that is a warning for us that we need to recognize when our logic takes us outside the bounds of biblical truth, and we especially need to recognize that when that logic begins to actually contradict biblical truth. How does the remnant come to be? By God's gracious choice.

That statement then leads to a great sentence clarifying for us the nature of grace. Verse 6, "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace." If we need more confirmation to Paul's definition of grace and works given at the end of chapter 3 and beginning of chapter 4, here we have it. This is one of the nice things about being involved in a longer conversation with Paul. He is applying his gospel argument in chapters 1-4 to the case of Israel here in 9-11. Because of that, we get restatement of the same idea in different ways. This is one of those restatements. Clarifying again our answer to the first question of covenant "How am I made acceptable to be in relationship with God?", we have this truth that grace plus works is not grace at all. The idea that grace gives me the spiritual strength to do the works I need to do to be accepted is an idea of works, not of grace. The idea that 90% is God's grace and 10% is my effort, is not grace at all. For grace to be grace, as a means of obtaining righteousness, it must not require any sinful human work to play a part. The best you can do would always mess it up. We need perfection and that perfection only comes if you are dressed 100% in the righteous robe of Christ. 99% grace and 1% works is less than holy. Grace is on the basis of grace. Works are on the basis of works. Your 1% will not be found acceptable. "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace."

That's a thought I hope is hammered into our brains by the time we finish studying Paul's teaching to the Romans. What makes you acceptable? 100% grace. Otherwise, it's not grace.

And there are wonderful implications that follow. You do not have to maintain your position with God by your goodness. You stand by grace, not by your 1%. Because you were chosen by grace, you are acceptable. You are safe. You are loved. There is no room for boasting. There is all kinds of room for gratitude. The woman who fell before Jesus, kissing his feet and washing them with her tears and her hair. She knew grace. And she loved much in return. The Pharisee who thought himself good did not value the love received and so returned little love from his own heart. Who loved more, the

younger brother who came back empty and was accepted or the older brother who felt he deserved all the father's stuff?

You are chosen by grace. In spite of your sin, you are loved. Hallelujah!

And still, still, attendant to the glorious truth of God's grace is the disturbing truth that God has not chosen all. In fact, Paul says God has hardened the rest.

This is one of those truths we may be tempted to explain away, but to do so is to diminish the hard reality of human sinfulness and the righteousness of God's justice.

3. The present rejection of grace is a testimony to hardness of heart. (7-10)

Let's read 11:7-10. [Read Romans 11:7-10]

I want to explain away this text. And I do not want to explain away this text. Recognizing my own sinfulness and my own limited knowledge and my own faulty logic, I must assume that spiritual reality is somewhat beyond my comprehension, both of my head and of my heart. There are things I must not be getting. And that's okay. I do know that I am not more compassionate than God. And I am not more just than God. And my love comes nowhere near God's. It is okay to be disturbed emotionally and cognitively by some of the revelation of Scripture. I should expect there would be truths that I cannot wholly see, that I can't wrap my mind and my heart around. And I do not need to resolve it all. I do not have to be emotionally okay with everything I read. I am quite sure that when I meet my Lord in heaven and he has taken off this sinful flesh, I will see these things with very different eyes. I don't see it now. But I know I will see it differently then.

I do not want to explain away the hard passages of Scripture. God hardens some hearts. At the same time, I do not want to make these passages of Scripture more difficult than they actually are. One idea I have already indicated is that God's choice is decisive. That's a hard truth. And I am going to come back to that. There is another idea that does not come out here in Paul but does help add biblical context to his words. So that we do not take this idea farther than Paul intends, I want to focus on this other theme of Scripture to help us understand the hardening of the human heart.

(1) Light hardens the human heart.

The idea which we see elsewhere in Scripture is that light itself hardens the human heart. God does not need to enter into the human heart to make it hard. All he has got to do is shine light on it.

We saw back in 1:18-32 that when God employs a passive wrath, by simply withdrawing from us, the result is darkness in thought and desire. Without God our passions become degrading and our thoughts depraved. We can imagine, left to ourselves, separated from God in the darkness of this world, our hearts and minds become a gooey mush. In the moral and spiritual realm, they are neither hard nor soft but undefined, malleable, confused, blah.

We find hearts like this all over organized religion with no clear vision of who God truly is, no clear vision of the depth of sin or the height of love. So much of traditional religion has lost sight of God, having left the rock, it wallows in the swampy sands of empty ritual, false tolerance, misguided spirituality and secular morality. This religious morass produces hearts of gooey mush. Is there any solid spot in there? I mean any true conviction whether wicked or righteous but at least something that is hard?

How do you make such a heart hard? You shine light on it. Let's consider the hardening of Israel.

In Deuteronomy 29:3-4 there is similar text to the one Paul uses in Romans 11:8. Paul says, "**God gave** them a spirit of stupor and eyes to see not..." whereas Moses says in Deuteronomy 29, "**the Lord has not given** you a heart to know, nor eyes to see." Did you catch there is a slight difference? Moses emphasizes the hardness of the Israelites. They are already hard. And God has not given them a heart to know. Paul emphasizes the hardening done by God. God gave them eyes to see not. We talked about this tension seen in Moses and Paul back in 9:18 regarding Pharaoh. Paul used Pharaoh as an example that God has the right to harden who so ever he desires to harden. Going back to the

story in Exodus we observed the text sometimes says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart and sometimes says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. We also made the point from the potter analogy that God is not dealing with a good or neutral substance that he then hardens. When talking about the human heart, we are starting with clay that is already sinful. It's already resistant to God.

So, we have these two truths. God hardens hearts which harden themselves against him. And no human heart is neutral. All human hearts are wicked. Truth does good to a good heart. Truth applied to a sinful human heart often has a negative effect. This is what it means to say that light hardens the human heart.

You ever wonder how a dentist can repair your tooth by squeezing liquid enamel onto it. You know I've had enough practice with super glue to think of all kinds of ways that could go wrong. How do you squeeze a liquid into a wet mouth to produce the super hard enamel of a tooth that will not come off? They do it with a photopolymer. It's a substance in gooey form that hardens when you shine a certain kind of light onto it. That's the human heart. Light hardens the human heart. Our spiritual center is a photopolymer that hardens against the light of God's truth.

A person's heart floats in the grey twilight of human society as gooey mush satisfied with not knowing too much about God, too much about right and wrong, or too much about self. A heart may not be content. It may desire more. But the heart does not desire too much truth or too much of a higher authority.

We might think that in dispelling the darkness, light would bring the heart to life. That is not what we see. The light of Christ shining on a human heart has the reverse effect. The heart hardens against the light. When you are in a deep sleep and you are in that warm darkness your first response to a bright light is to shut it off. The light brings pain and discomfort. So, you pull the cover up over you. You need to restore the darkness. That is the spiritual state of people.

John starts his gospel, proclaiming, "There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world did not know him. He came to his own, and those who were his own did not receive him (1:9-11)." Later John said, "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil (3:19)." Later he tells the story of a blind man. Jesus put mud on his eyes and the man saw. But the Pharisees, so upset that Jesus made mud on the Sabbath, could not see the healing of a blind man. The light shone full on their face and they who claimed to have eyes, turned away and tried to snuff it out. Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains (John 9:41)." The light reveals the true nature of the human heart. If we reject the revelation that comes by that light, as our stubborn hearts do, then we cannot see, we cannot be forgiven, and our sin remains.

Because of our human fallenness which resists God, the result of more light is not salvation. The result of more light is a hardening of the heart that reveals the true state of our soul. God commission Isaiah with these words, "Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim, lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed." The text sounds like God wants Isaiah to confuse the people to prevent them from coming back to God. That's what it sounds like. And yet, as you move through the book of Isaiah, you see the irony of the original commission. Isaiah uncovers the sin of Judah. He contrasts the religious hypocrisy and wicked oppression of the society with the holiness and compassion of God. Isaiah does not confuse the truth with his message. Isaiah shines a light on Judah, calling them back to the word of God. But the light Isaiah shines results in confused anger. It only succeeds in making the just wrath of God appear completely justified. God should judge these people.

At one point Isaiah cries out, "To the law and to the testimony! (8:20), calling them to God's word. But he says of them that they "have no dawn." In the desolation of their own making, Isaiah says, "they are enraged and curse their king and their God as they face upward [towards him]. Then they look to the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they are driven away

into darkness (8:20-22).” Isaiah’s voice was a light shining in the dark that did not soften but hardened hearts against the light. As Paul said back in chapter 7, “I would not have come to know sin except through the law” and “through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.” The light of truth reveals stubborn human sinfulness. But the human heart does not want to see itself in the truth of God’s light and so reacts against the light to mock it, dismiss it or extinguish it.

The words of Isaiah I just quoted come from chapter 8. In chapter 9 Isaiah announced a greater light that would come in the word, shining out from Galilee, “A child will be born to us, a son will be given to us (9:6).” But as Jesus later predicted in his own teaching. Those who killed the lesser lights of the prophets would also kill the true light that gives light to the whole world. Because the world of men does not want the light of God.

As Paul speaks of hardening the hearts of Israel, we should keep this biblical theme in mind. God does not harden the hearts of men by hiding the truth from them. Ironically, the light of truth has that effect, unless God intervenes inside the heart, so that the light may be received.

Verses 9-10 are a quote from Psalm 69.

⁹ And David says, “Let their table become a snare and a trap and a stumbling block and retribution to them. ¹⁰ “Let their eyes be darkened to see not and bend their backs forever.”

That is Psalm 69:22-23. We should go back one verse to better understand the harshness of David’s words. He speaks of men who betrayed him and then mocked him in his pain. Psalms 69:21 says, “They gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” It is not just about David. This is a messianic prophecy. In quoting this Paul is certainly aware of the context. The Jews of his day did exactly what John said. “The light came to that which was his own [to Israel] and his own [Israel] rejected him.” They rejected Jesus, crucified him, and gave him vinegar to drink while hanging on the cross. Paul’s words speak justice against those who would crucify the Prince of Peace. “Let their table become a snare and a trap, and a stumbling block.” It is both a statement of just wrath and also a recognition of the blindness of Israel. God has shown his light full in their face. By doing so, by giving them the light of the gospel, God has hardened their hard hearts. And God has not chosen to intervene. Israel is allowed to stumble in the dark, all but a remnant.

God hardens human hearts through the painful, harsh light of truth that unveils our false assumptions about ourselves, our religion and our people. This happened to Israel. And it continues to happen with modern Jews but also with modern people from all kinds of backgrounds. So many are happy to live in the semi-darkness of a world view that refuses to take a stand about Jesus. People can talk about God the Father all day long, but when we hold up Jesus as the true light, and when we claim that there is no other way to the Father but through Jesus, and when we insist that grace must be free without religious ritual or works, when we share this gospel of Jesus, so often, seemingly open hearts close up hard because of the light that has shone upon them.

Conclusion

I have not resolved the problem of God’s choice. If God’s will is primary, then he must choose to open the eyes of some hearts and to not open the eyes of others. That problem remains with Paul’s teaching here. It is not a problem of justice. All deserve wrath. It is a problem of mercy. Why to some and not to others?

So, the passage raises questions that it does not answer. But it also very suggestive on other points. You could take away a number of truths. And here are three things that I’ll suggest you think about as we close.

(1) True Israel lives on in the remnant of Jewish believers who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. So, there is no place at all in Christianity for anti-Semitism. It is such a terrible irony of history that the Christian Church has in many times and many places promoted prejudice against Jews. We are one body made up of all languages, nations and tribes, certainly including our Jewish brothers and sisters who have placed their faith in Christ.

(2) I think we need to put the nation state of Israel into right perspective. While God does have a future plan for Israel as a people, which we will discuss next time, the special bond between Christians and Jews is fundamentally with the Jewish remnant of believers, not the nation state of Israel. When Paul speaks in Ephesians 2:15 of Jews and Gentiles being brought together as one new man, he is speaking of the body of Christ made up of believing Gentiles and believing Jews.

This implies to me that we need to evaluate the nation of Israel critically as we would other secular nations. We should probably highly value in the Middle East Israel's democratic government, rule of law, right of self-defense. At the same time, we should not uncritically rubber stamp all of Israel's policies just because they bear the name Israel. Again, the special bond of spiritual family is with fellow believers in Jesus, not with a nation state but with the true remnant Israel.

(3) We must continue to share the gospel of Jesus with Jewish people. Extreme modern concepts of tolerance might claim that disagreeing with the Jewish faith is anti-Semitic. It is not. And anyway, we do not believe we are disagreeing. Jesus fulfills Torah. There is a remnant of Jews waiting to hear and believe. As the culture of tolerance continues to grow in the West, we cannot relinquish the truth that Jesus Christ is the very word of God, the very image of God. Jesus Christ is God. Whenever we discover non-essential ideas and practices that make the gospel abhorrent or irrelevant, we should work to remove those ideas and practices. But Jesus Christ is the essential. A rejection of the Son is a rejection of the Father. Without Jesus, without the cross, and without grace there is no hope and no salvation for anyone, Jew, Muslim, Hindu, Atheist, Christian. We must not tolerate the darkness. We must not accept the thoughts and systems that bind humanity down in the hardness of their own hearts. We must shine the light of Christ, even though we know that the light hardens and that the gospel is the smell of death to some. We must continue to announce the good news of Jesus Christ because the gospel is also the fragrance of life to those whose hearts and minds are open to the love, forgiveness and acceptance found only in Jesus Christ.

Reflection Questions

1. What stands out to you as important, confusing, interesting or strange in Romans 11:1-10?
2. In 11:5-6 Paul connects God's choice of a remnant with the idea of grace and works. Do you like to think of yourself as having been chosen by God or do you prefer the idea that by faith you chose God? Do you have a way that helps you personally explain the relationship between God's choice and your faith?
3. Does the idea that light hardens the human heart make sense to you? What personal example can you think of that agrees with the idea that the light of truth hardens a sinful heart? How have you seen this in your life or the life of someone else?
4. Consider the first idea suggested in the conclusion that the true inheritor of the spiritual promises to Israel is the spiritual remnant that has believed in Jesus Christ. Are you aware of any anti-Jewish sentiment now or in the past in your family or church or society? How ought a Christian view a Jewish person?
5. Consider the second idea suggested in the conclusion that the current nation state of Israel should not be given a special pass because it is Israel. Is Israel discussed in your family, church or social circles? Do you think it is right to consider Israel critically, with positives and negatives, as you would consider any other nation or do you see Israel as holding a specially status by which they should be judged differently? Or both?
6. Considering the third idea suggested in the conclusion, in a culture of tolerance have you heard that it is wrong to impose Christian ideas of truth on non-Christians? What are your thoughts and feelings about that? How do you feel about sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with people who would find the gospel offensive?