

*The Election of*  
**Grace**

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*“I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not!  
For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe  
of Benjamin” (Rom. 11:1, NKJV).*



Matt. 28:19, 20;  
Rom. 10:12; 11:17, 18

## Introduction

# Forgetting the Main Mission

There was a rich man living in a remote village. He had several children, each with very different characters. This man was a caring person. He taught all of his children how to work, and he helped each one to develop good character traits.

One of his sons, Joe, was especially talented. Joe became the man's favorite son. One day the rich man planned a business trip. He told Joe that he was electing him to be responsible for helping his brothers do well while he was gone.

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### Roles may change, but the plan of salvation never does.

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Unfortunately, however, Joe did not do what his father expected him to do. Instead, he separated himself from his siblings. Rather than helping his brothers, he did things that would make himself look good when their father returned. In fact, when one of his brothers would do something wrong, rather than help that brother, Joe said he would tell their father what a bad person he had been.

When their father returned from his trip, all of his children welcomed him home. However, when he learned that Joe did not do what he had asked him to do, he became sad and told Joe that he would now have to spend more time with his brothers than with Joe.

While all parables, such as this one, break down at some point, this one teaches us that our heavenly Father loves all of us, even though in the past He had chosen one nation in particular to teach the other nations about His love. However, this nation that God named Israel became so caught up with being His favorite "son" that they segregated themselves from the rest of the world. They became so proud of their chosen status that they forgot *why* God had chosen them—to share the good news of righteousness by faith.

When Jesus came to earth, He helped them and us to understand that "there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek" (Rom. 10:12), that all are sinners and in need of God's grace as given to the world through Jesus Christ. This grace comes to all, not by nationality, or birth, or works, but by faith in Jesus, who died as the Substitute for sinners everywhere. Yes, roles may change, but the plan of salvation never does.

This week we will learn what it means to be chosen or elected by Christ, who does not differentiate between people, especially when it comes to salvation. Today, He also urges us to take the gospel to all nations (Matt. 28:19, 20), not just to a select few.

# God's Second Chances ... and Third ... and Fourth ... and ...

Romans 10; 11

## **Paul's Compassion (Rom. 10:1–8)**

The salvation of Israel—God's chosen people—is both a hidden agenda item and the main goal of Paul's ministry among the Gentiles in Rome. At the beginning of chapter 8, he expresses his desire for the salvation of the Jewish leaders. They had knowledge and legalistic discipline, but these did not lead them to humility and complete dependence on God.

### **God never withdraws His hand of mercy and grace.**

However, also in Romans, Paul is bringing the gospel to the Gentiles. He hoped that doing so would cause the Jews to envy them and thus be prodded to accept God's mercy. The Jewish leaders were, instead, drawn to keeping every detail of the law, because boosting their ego was more fulfilling. In so doing, they rejected the simple experience of having faith in Jesus and protected their pride by not admitting that they were incapable of saving themselves.

## **Evangelism: More Than a Calling (Rom. 10:14–21)**

When people accept Jesus' gift of salvation, a natural consequence is to want to help others find grace and hope in Him too. Verse 14 asks thought provoking questions to compel Christians to share the gospel. In a devotional book on Romans, George R. Knight shares a new perspective on verse 14 in a quote from well-known Christian speaker, John Stott: "The essence of Paul's argument is seen if we put his six verbs in the opposite order: Christ sends heralds; heralds preach; people hear; hearers believe; believers call; and those who call are saved."\* Even today, we are inspired by the truth of this message: How will people around us hear if we don't share with them?

But those who hear about Jesus must believe in Him and continue to have faith in His ability to save them from their sins. Israel had heard, but they did not believe. In verse 19, Paul asks a redundant question, "Did Israel not know?" Of course they knew! However, their knowledge of God had become their god. They worshiped this knowledge and lived a form of godliness that was unacceptable in His sight.

## **God's Unfailing Love (Rom. 11:1–12)**

The Jewish religious leaders and followers rejected Jesus as the Messiah. However, God never rejected them. Paul emphasized this point when he wrote, "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" (Rom. 11:1, 2, RSV). God

never withdraws His hand of mercy and grace. It is we who do the rejecting.

God could see that the Jews were trying to live their role as His chosen people. They upheld their customs and ceremonial practices religiously. It was never an issue of whether or not they were trying to be godly—they were simply taking the wrong route. The correct route is seen in John 14:6, “Jesus said . . . , ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me’ ”(NKJV).

### **Salvation for Gentiles (Rom. 11:13–26)**

Paul continues this by describing a tree that has natural branches, broken branches, and grafted branches. When the Jews rejected God’s plan of salvation, their lack of faith in Jesus caused them to break away from God’s tree. Their absence made room for the wild shoots of the Gentiles to become part of the family of God as they accepted the gospel. The tree illustration reminds us that the Jewish faith is still at the root of Christianity.

Although the Israelites had broken away from God, He had not burned them up or thrown them away. Rather, “As far as the fallen branches, unless they are obstinate in their unbelief, they will be grafted in again. Such a restoration is by no means beyond the power of God” (verse 23, Phillips).

### **God’s Mercy to all Humankind (Rom. 11:29–36)**

Chapter 11 concludes with a tone of celebration, worship, and adoration for God’s unending grace and unconditional love. Paul states that God is still pleading with the Jews to accept His mercy, humble themselves, and be saved by faith. Love and acceptance, as is the case of all sinners, is not what they deserve. Jews had prevented the spread of the gospel, had persecuted the missionaries, and were responsible for crucifying Christ. Still, God wanted them to be saved—if only they would believe and give up their self-glorifying habits and have faith in Jesus as their Savior.

We can be thankful that disobedience is never the end, but rather the exact thing Jesus came to deliver us from. He is the only one who can be perfectly obedient to God’s law. His ways are far beyond us. Anything we can give God does not come anywhere close to paying for all He has done for us. The Jews were proud of their ability to keep the laws in great detail. However, they did not realize how terribly they were failing. All glory goes to God. Only by His grace can we be saved.

### **REACT**

1. What kind of relationship do you think Paul had with the Jewish leaders among whom he used to live and whose legalistic practices he used to follow?

2. How does the way God offers grace to stubborn, prideful, fanatical people make you feel? Have you ever felt like rejecting someone with these self-absorbed attitudes and tendencies?

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\* George R. Knight, *Walking With Paul Through the Book of Romans* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 2002), p. 256.

## Testimony *Election Results*

John 15:4;  
Rom. 11:4–6;  
2 Pet. 1:3–11

“If we comply with the conditions the Lord has made, we shall secure our election to salvation. Perfect obedience to His commandments is the evidence that we love God, and are not hardened in sin.

“Christ has a church in every age. There are in the church those who are not made any better by their connection with it. They themselves break the terms of their election. Obedience to the commandments of God gives us a right to the privileges of His church.”<sup>1</sup>

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### “No one need be lost.”

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In John 15:4 “are the most precious jewels of truth for every individual soul of us. Here is the only election in the Bible, and you can prove yourself elected of Christ by being faithful; you can prove yourself the chosen of Christ by abiding in the vine.”<sup>2</sup>

“God elects those who have been working on the plan of addition [2 Pet. 1:5–8]. The explanation is given in the first chapter of Second Peter. For every human being, Christ has paid the election price. No one need be lost. All have been redeemed. To those who receive Christ as a personal Saviour will be given power to become the sons and daughters of God. An eternal life insurance policy has been provided for all.

“Whom God elects, Christ redeems. The Saviour has paid the redemption price for every soul. We are not our own; for we are bought with a price. From the Redeemer, who from the foundation of the world has chosen us, we receive the insurance that entitles us to eternal life. . . .

“ . . . This is not an insurance policy the value of which some one else will receive after your death; it is a policy that assures you a life measuring with the life of God—even eternal life.”<sup>3</sup>

### **REACT**

1. How do the following texts help us to define “perfect obedience”? Exod. 20:1–17; Isa. 58:5–9; Mic. 6:8; Matt. 22:34–40; 25:31–46.

2. God has elected everyone in the sense that He sent His Son to the world not to condemn the world, but so that the world could be saved through Him (John 3:16, 17). How do people, perhaps even you, break this election?

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1. Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1079.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 944.

Rom. 10:16–21

## Evidence

# Lessons From the Israelites

In today's text, we find Paul quoting the words of the prophet Isaiah to contrast the difference between the nation of Israel's ultimate rejection of righteousness by faith and the "unexpected faith" of the Gentiles. So that we do not make the same mistake as Israel did, it is important for us to know the condition of the Israelites when Isaiah was serving as God's prophet. Isaiah emphasized the unwillingness of Israel to hear God. He stressed the nation's disobedience and rebelliousness.

### "The Israelites fixed their hopes upon worldly greatness."

But let us go back to before Isaiah's time to when the Israelites escaped from Egypt and wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. Then we find numerous other times when they lost faith in God and His promise of salvation. From the onset of their journey, they grumbled and complained about what they perceived to be the quality, or lack thereof, of God's care for them. Note how they grumbled about their God-given diet in Numbers 11:4–34 and their lack of water in Exodus 15:22–24 and Numbers 20:1–13. Then there was the time when the Israelites convinced Aaron to build a molten calf while Moses was meeting with God on their behalf (Exod. 32:1–6). When they first left Egypt, their hearts must have been filled with joy and faith. But how quickly they forgot.

We read that all this and more caused the Israelites to eventually lose "sight of their high privileges as God's representatives. They forgot God and failed to fulfill their holy mission. The blessings they received brought no blessing to the world. All their advantages they appropriated for their own glorification. They shut themselves away from the world in order to escape temptation."<sup>1</sup>

"The Israelites fixed their hopes upon worldly greatness. From the time of their entrance to the land of Canaan, they departed from the commandments of God, and followed the ways of the heathen. It was in vain that God sent them warning by His prophets. In vain they suffered the chastisement of heathen oppression. Every reformation was followed by deeper apostasy."<sup>2</sup>

From the Israelites, we can learn that no matter how much we claim to be God's elect, if we do not nourish our faith, we lose our standing with Him. The Israelites failed because they consistently strayed from God, seeking the "food" and "water" of other gods they deemed more attractive.

1. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 14.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 28.

## How-to Sustaining Our Selection

Rom. 10:9; 11:17–24

Paul shows us that salvation is based on God's grace and justification by faith, and that all people are elected to receive salvation if they accept Christ's sacrifice for them. When unbelieving Jews rejected Christ, His kingdom was given to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:17–24). (This doesn't mean that salvation for individual Jews has been totally closed.) Paul depicted this situation by comparing it to a branch being broken from an olive tree and another wild branch being grafted to the tree in place of the one it had lost. Anyone today who accepts Christ through faith is part of that graft and, therefore, part of the tree. So how should we live up to the salvation that Christ has given to us?

### "The 'antis' continue to tear apart Christ's church."

*Recognize that there is no salvation apart from the tree.* Paul continually teaches us that we cannot have hope, peace, and salvation unless we maintain a faith relationship with God through Christ. There is nothing we can do to earn salvation. It can be achieved only through God's grace when we accept Christ's sacrifice for us.

*Avoid pride.* We must be careful about spiritual pride (Prov. 16:18). "Paul's warning about not feeling superior to others is just as meaningful today as it was 2,000 years ago. . . . Some may not be anti-Jew, but they may be anti-Black, anti-White, anti-Hispanic, anti-Asian, or anti-everyone else who doesn't believe like them or appreciate the same music as they do. The 'antis' continue to tear apart Christ's church. The only solution for those with superior thoughts of themselves is to meet Jesus at the cross."\*

*Maintain a relationship with Jesus.* Our salvation is maintained as long as we have a strong relationship with our Savior. Part of this maintenance includes doing God's will. Read Matthew 7:21. Jesus said, " 'Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven' " (NRSV). We also need to pray, study God's Word and meditate on it, and be of service to others.

### REACT

1. What lessons can we learn from Israel's failure to accept Christ?
2. What does the Bible say about the nature of God's will? Galatians 1:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–7; 5:1–22; 1 Peter 2:15; 2 Peter 3:9. What else do you think is included in God's will? Support your answers with Bible texts.

\*George R. Knight, *Walking With Paul Through the Book of Romans*, p. 272.

Rom. 10:9–21

## Opinion

*Leaving the Comfort Zone*

By making themselves so separate from the world, the Israelites were unaware that they had built a barrier between themselves and the Gentiles, therefore failing to declare the message to others. As Christians, we, too, are often trapped by barriers we have created. When we find comfort in a particular church family, we tend to neglect healthy fellowship with other citizens in our neighborhoods and towns. This prevents us from sharing the gospel with others.

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**We have tremendous opportunities to witness for God.**

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God does not reject people based on customs or ethnicity. He does not favor one nation over another. Rather, He grants salvation to all (John 3:16, 17). We must leave our comfort zone and share the gospel in one way or another with everyone we meet.

The gospel cannot be separated from the words *mission* and *service*. “Christ’s followers have been redeemed for service. Our Lord teaches that the true object of life is ministry. Christ Himself was a worker, and to all His followers He gives the law of service—service to God and to their fellow men. . . . The law of service becomes the connecting link which binds us to God and to our fellow men.

“He gives ‘to every man his work.’ Each has his place in the eternal plan of heaven. Each is to work in co-operation with Christ for the salvation of souls. Not more surely is the place prepared for us in the heavenly mansions than is the special place designated on earth where we are to work for God.”\*

Through mission and service, we have tremendous opportunities to witness for God. Because the Israelites as a nation refused God, He opened the doors for everyone to be His witnesses. Christians today must always keep their eyes on the overall plan offered by God—salvation for every man, woman, and child. When we shut ourselves off from the world both at large and right around us, God may also reject us and use others to declare His truth, even nature itself (see Psalm 19:1–4).

**REACT**

Why do we as Christians often lose our focus to the point of feeling too comfortable with our religion? What can we do to shatter the barrier and reach out to others?

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\**Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 326, 327.

# Exploration Election Time

Romans 10; 11

## CONCLUDE

Many countries, states, provinces, and cities hold costly elections to determine who will govern their part of the world. The outcome of these elections can be disastrous or beneficial, depending on who is elected and the voter's point of view. But there is one election process we can be sure of—God's election of His people. Their qualifications for election include their faithfulness, which is also proof of their election. God has paid all the bills for this election through the death of His Son, Jesus Christ. As long as we abide in Him, our election is guaranteed.

## CONSIDER

- Reading all of John 15:1–17 and researching the cultivation of grapes. Compare this cultivation to the election of God's people and their growth process as Christians.
- Studying the history of the Christian church to see when God had a people who obeyed His commandments.
- Creating an equation that depicts the addition process found in 2 Peter 1:3–10. What would the equation look like if you were to subtract?
- Listing ways you can use your talents to be of service to your community. Then find pictures that depict the items on your list. Make a collage out of these pictures. Based on this week's lesson, what title would you give your collage?
- Networking with three or four people who share some of the same talents you have. Together, make and implement a plan that uses these talents for the good of your community.
- Composing a song whose lyrics consist of at least three of your favorite Bible texts dealing with faith. As you write and perform your song, remember that it is faith in God that makes us His elect.

## CONNECT

George R. Knight, *Walking With Paul Through the Book of Romans*, pp. 261, 273.