

Hath God cast away His people

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[0 : 00] Let us turn to Romans chapter 11. Romans chapter 11. We take the first 10 verses. I say then, hath God cast away his people? God forbid, for I also am an Israelite of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

God hath not cast away his people, which he foreknew. Watch ye not what the scripture saith of Elijah, how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars, and I am left alone, and they seek my life.

But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.

Even so then, at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace.

But if it be of works, then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.

[1 : 31] According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear unto this day.

He's quoting there from the prophet Isaiah, and then he goes on to quote from the book of Psalms. And David saith, Psalm 69, let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompense unto them.

Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back always. These are the verses that I would like us to consider together this evening.

Now, in his argument, Paul has asserted that the Jews foolishly believed that they could place God in their credit by their own meritorious works.

But Paul has shattered this illusion, and he has done so by exposing the sinfulness of the human heart, and by showing that Jews, along with Gentiles, are dependent upon God's grace for salvation.

[2 : 55] This is Paul's argument, that it's not through a strict observance of the Mosaic law that we can have peace with God.

Paul's argument is that it is by trust in Christ, by trust in God's method of salvation, and Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.

In rejecting Christ as their Messiah, and as the Savior, the Jews were really guilty of rejecting God. For it was God who had sent this Messiah in the person of his own Son to them. Now, we read together tonight something of the trial of Jesus.

And at that trial of Jesus, you will recall how the Jews called for his crucifixion. Away with this man! Give us Barabbas! Crucify Jesus!

[4 : 06] And you remember when Pontius Pilate protested, he did so by a hand-washing ceremony. And after having washed his hands in a basin, he said to these Jews, I am innocent of the blood of this just person, see ye to it.

What did the Jewish people do? They answered like this, and it's terrifying. His blood be on us and on our children.

When you pause to think of that, that is terrifying. And now you understand why the Jews have been persecuted down through the years.

And now you understand why the Jews have gone through so much of hell in this world. His blood be on us and on our children.

It was a fearful and a terrifying invective that the Jews had brought upon themselves. They might well wonder now if any Jew could ever be saved after that.

[5 : 27] They might well wonder could any Jew ever be saved after what they had done to the Lord of glory. And as if to offset such a thought, Paul answers like this, Hath God cast away his people?

Has God really cast away these ancient people? God forbid! Now the apostle states in these verses that God's purpose of grace cannot be thwarted.

And he goes on to state that judicial blindness and hardness of heart is really the result of sin. Let's think of these two things. God's purpose of grace cannot be thwarted.

You see, it's impossible for God's promises made under the old covenant to come to nothing. And what were the promises that God made in the old covenant?

Well, the promises made had to do with a people whom he had chosen to be his people. A covenant is a binding obligation.

[6 : 51] And God had placed himself under a binding obligation to Abraham to be his God and to be a God to his seed who should come after him.

Through that covenant promise made to Abraham, God's promise was really a promise of salvation to Abraham and to his seed.

And these promises of salvation and blessing to the seed of Abraham were ratified in Isaac, in Jacob, in Joseph and so on.

But as you and I study the children of Israel, we find them often enough defecting from God.

And not only defecting from God in ones and twos, but on a grand and national scale. But this is what we find that in the midst of the defecting from God, there is always a remnant who believe and who are the real seed of Abraham.

[8 : 01] Now as an illustration of this, Paul takes us back in history to that occasion in the experience of the prophet Elijah.

Ahab was then the king who was on the throne of Israel, the ten tribes of the north. He was the king of Israel. He had at his side his queen Jezebel.

And Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal, the priest king of Tyre and Sidon. Now one of the conditions under which Ahab married Jezebel was this.

That this woman Jezebel, who was now to be the queen of Israel, was to be allowed to have her own worship in the capital city of the north Samaria.

She was to be allowed to worship the god Baal whom she had grown up to worship. And that was the condition under which she and Ahab were married.

[9 : 13] So when Jezebel came to her new home in Samaria, she worshipped her native god Baal.

But her influence was such that she impressed that Baal worship not only upon her own family, but upon the royal house of Israel.

And in stamping that upon the royal house of Israel, she impressed that religion on the whole nation of Israel. It was the fashionable religion.

It was the in thing. You no longer worshipped in this strange god whom you couldn't see. You no longer worshipped in the old god of Moses and the old god of Abraham.

The old god of David. No, he was outdated. There was this new god. Baal. And there was this new religion.

[10 : 16] And it was the fashionable thing to do for everyone to worship the god Baal. Elijah, you remember, was sent by God to recall the Israelites to their true identity as the people of God.

And what Elijah did was he summoned his nation to meet him on Mount Carmel. And by this test of fire, and of course Baal was supposed to be identified with fire.

By this test of fire, who would be the true god? Was it to be the god, the great Jehovah God, or was it to be Baal? There was the test.

It was simple enough. Elijah said to these prophets of Baal, You put your sacrifice on the altar, ask your god now to come and consume it.

I'll put the sacrifice on the altar to Jehovah. I'll soak it in water. Saturate it. I'll call on my god. And the god that answers by fire.

[11 : 26] And your god Baal, he's supposed to be in control of fire. Could anything be simpler for him to do? Let the god who answers by fire be the real god.

Well, you know the outcome. But that didn't bring an end to Baal worship in Israel.

Jezebos' zeal and fanaticism for this Baal worship was increased. And she persecuted the prophets of Jehovah mercilessly.

Until Elijah went and said to God, Lord, they have killed thy prophets and digged down thine altars. All the altars that were erected in these northern parts to the glory and to the worship of your name. They've smashed them. They've even dug down to the very foundations of them and destroyed them. And I am left alone and they seek my life.

[12 : 45] Do you know how in that mood of despair and despondency the prophet prayed for death? It is enough now, O Lord.

Take away my life. For I am no better than my fathers. Ah, but God had other things for that great prophet to do. And God gave him this assurance.

Elijah, you are only seeing through human eyes. You are not able to see the whole situation properly as I can see it. God says to Elijah, do you know Elijah?

I have reserved for me 7,000 who haven't bowed the knee to Baal. 7,000 of every mouth which hath not kissed him.

You see, in periods of darkness, God has his elect people. And in that period of darkness, way back in the days of Elijah, it was a terrifyingly dark period of history for Israel.

[13 : 59] Yet God, in the midst of the darkness, had reserved this group of people. The remnant according to the election of grace.

And this is Paul's argument with the Jews. Although you have defected from God, and although you have done this to the Lord of glory by crucifying him, God has a purpose of grace, and that purpose of grace can't be thwarted, no matter what you've done, or what you might try to do.

And indeed, he quotes himself as an instance. Have God cast away his people? God forbid, for I also am an Israelite. Look at me, he says, I am an Israelite.

If you can boast of your Jewishness, so much more can I, says the Apostle Paul, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

And there could be no man more Jewish than a man who was from the tribe of Benjamin. No, God hasn't cast away his people because I'm one of them.

[15 : 24] I'm one of the remnant according to the election of grace. And of course there were others.

That wonderful band of apostles. There was Joseph of Arimathea, the man who craved the body of Jesus to take it down from the cross and to bury it in his tomb.

There was Nicodemus, the man who came to Jesus by night to ask the way of salvation. Now all these people like Paul and Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus and the apostles, they hadn't obtained grace through works.

It wasn't because they had done something to deserve it that they had merited God's favor and God's grace. No, what Paul is insisting upon here in this passage, and that's this, that salvation is a gratuitous gift from God.

It's free. It's a gift. God gives it freely. And it has to be gratefully received.

[16 : 54] In one of the Psalms, the writer says, The Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance.

And that assurance is here confirmed by Paul. It doesn't mean, as Paul has already argued, that all the descendants of Abraham are the promised seed.

Paul's argument is this, that Abraham's true children are those who believe in Abraham's God.

And it is to them that God promises salvation and blessing. They and they alone are God's covenant people.

But numbered among them, there are Jewish people. Just as there are Gentile people of the seed of Abraham, so there are Jewish people of the seed of Abraham.

[17 : 58] And it is about that group of people that Paul is concerned, that remnant among the Jewish people, that remnant according to the election of grace.

God is gathering in his people. As Jesus said on one occasion, they shall sit down with Abraham in his kingdom. They will come from the north, from the south, from the east, from the west.

All kingdoms, all nationalities. They will sit down with Abraham. And among them there will be Jewish people. The remnant according to the election of grace.

Oh, we will see, as Paul tells us, that God is going to do something very wonderful with the Jews.

Yet, and isn't it a strange thing that all the time history is going by and all the time that we are reading our newspapers from day to day, isn't it a strange thing that somewhere in the background there's this strange nation of people, the Jews?

Always in the background, behind the headlines, we find these strange people, the Jews. And as Paul tells us later on, God is going to do something very wonderful which is going to affect the whole universe through these Jewish people.

[19 : 40] At the moment, he says, God hasn't cast away his ancient people. No matter how dark the times may be, whether it be a dark period like that of Elijah, down to this present time, says the Apostle, there is a remnant.

And we can say, not only down to the times of the Apostle Paul, but down to this time, today, tonight, there is a remnant among the Jewish people according to the election of grace. It's not by works that they have obtained salvation. It's through grace, the grace of God, and that purpose of grace cannot be thwarted. But let us go on to notice the cause of judicial blindness and hardness.

What is the cause of the judicial blindness and hardness among Jewish people? It's their sin. Just as that is the cause of judicial blindness with us, it's our sin.

You see, the question that will be asked is, why didn't the nation Israel as a whole enjoy the covenant blessing of Abraham?

[21 : 06] Why should that covenant blessing of Abraham have been granted to God's elect people among the Gentiles? Why should it have been granted to them?

After all, they didn't work for anything. And these Jewish people could say this by a meticulous observance to the ceremonial law.

We've tried everything. We've done everything. Why is God passing us by? Why is God abandoning us as a people, as a race?

Why is God not being procured by human effort?

We don't have the ability, whether we be a Jew or whether we be a Gentile, we don't have the ability to place God in our debt.

[22 : 09] We are always in God's debt. We are in debt to God for all the blessings and the benefits that we enjoy.

We are in debt to God's grace. We are in debt to God. We are in debt. and that you have the food that you eat the clothes that you put on the comfort that you are surrounded with you all that to God whether you like to think of that or not you ought to God you are in his debt but more particularly if we have experienced the riches of God's grace in Christ if we know Christ as our Savior and our Lord then what a debt we owe to God salvation through Christ the Redeemer is not something that we can obtain from God by a process of negotiation it's not possible for any one of us whether we be Jew or Gentile to go to God and negotiate with God and say you've got to give me salvation because I do this and I do that and I do the other thing you can't negotiate with God on terms like that this salvation is a free gift and God says there take it and the question is are you going to take it or are you going to persist and say no

I'm not going to take it like that I'll negotiate with God for it I'll work out a way whereby I can work for it God says you will do nothing of the kind you take it or you reject it it's a free gift and when we accept God's free gift of salvation through Christ that is to say when we come to Christ and take Christ as our Savior our own Savior that's when we can really sing Psalm 40 he brought me up also out of an horrible pit out of the miry clay he set my feet upon a rock and established my goings he has put a new song in my mouth even praise unto our God you see although we work out our salvation with fear and trembling Paul the

Apostle never allows us to forget that behind the working out of our salvation with fear and trembling it is God which work within us both to will and to do of his good pleasure well what has happened to the people of Israel as a whole the people to whom pertain the adoption and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law and the service of God and the promises well says Paul those out with the electing purpose of God have been blinded in the vision that Isaiah had in the days of King Uzziah do you remember what Isaiah was commanded to do and it was a very strange thing God said to that great prophet and he's called the evangelical prophet of the Old Testament and this is what his task was

Go said God Tell this people Hear ye indeed but understand not And see ye indeed but perceive not Make the heart of this people fat and make their ears heavy and shut their eyes Lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and be healed In the same prophecy the prophet says for the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep And have closed your eyes And that spiritual blindness says Paul the Apostle is with the Jews until the

present hour And indeed that spiritual blindness is still with the Jews as a whole to this moment [26 : 53] Now we ask this question Why did God give the Jewish people this spirit of stupor?

For that's what blindness means It means stupor It was as if they had been overcome by a drug and they were in some stupor Why did God give them this spirit of stupor, this spirit of blindness?

This hardness of heart? Well he did so because they refused to conform to God's discipline God did this because these Jewish people rejected his proposed offer of mercy His proposed way of mercy What then?

Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for But the election hath obtained it and the rest were blinded According as it is written God hath given them the spirit of slumber Eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear unto this day And then he goes on to quote The Apostle goes on to quote from the book of psalms Psalm 69 that we read together And David saith let their table be made a snare and a trap and a stumbling block and a recompense unto them Let their eyes be darkened that they may not see and bow down their back always Psalm 69 is in character the same as psalm 22 it's messianic In these two psalms the psalmist is referring to the sufferings of Christ As we read together Christ has become the song of the drunkards And in the process of his sufferings Christ has had to bear reproach, shame, dishonour for his people

And what was he offered on that cross? Well as the psalmist tells us in prophetic fashion He was offered vinegar, gold To quench the raging thirst That his fevered body Longed for when it was disintegrating in death Now in psalm 69 it goes on to say For those who persisted in their enmity towards Christ The Messiah Let their table become a snare before them And that which should have been for their welfare Let it become a trap Let their eyes be darkened that they may not see Now when Paul underlines that their table is to become a snare, a trap and a stumbling block That combination serves to enforce The awfulness of God's judgment upon our Lord's enemies

[30 : 09] You see instead of the table being a place of ease and bounty Because that's what a table is for isn't it? When you come to a table it's there for you to sit down at And the table is full of bounty it's there for you to eat from But says the psalmist Let that table become like a snare A trap Just as when you put food out there to catch an animal It's there, it's bait And the animal as it comes to that kind of table It sits down, it's going to enjoy itself And suddenly it's trapped Now what the apostle is saying is this We Jewish people, he is saying We were highly privileged

Because God set before us a table of bounty He showed us the way to himself Which was by faith in his method of salvation, his method of grace But says Paul We foolishly spurned his way And that was evidenced by us in our rejection Of the Messiah, the Saviour, Jesus Christ And instead of that table Of bounty and privilege which had been spread before us Being a blessing to us It now has become a curse Because we became obdurate and blind Our spiritual sight was darkened And we became the slaves To our own sinful folly Our sin mastered us Our backs were bowed down Just like slaves

And sin made us slaves In other words, he is saying It's our sinfulness that is the cause Of our judicial blindness And our hardness It's not God who has done it to us He's only made us like this Because we refused To conform to his mercy And to his way of salvation Now what of us Of you and me in this?

Well we have been privileged, haven't we? A privileged people indeed And I'm talking to you in this congregation And to you who are free church people And always have been And there are those of course from other backgrounds Religious backgrounds And you too You've come from a very privileged background as well As far as the gospel is concerned And the gospel table has been spread And you and I have sat down At that gospel table Time after time Year after year And the invitation has been given to us At the gospel table to accept The salvation that God offers to us in Christ But oh what have we done with that offer?

You see if we reject the offer Then we are going to be abandoned by God ultimately God will leave us to our own devices And that thought of God abandoning And God leaving us to our own devices It's terrifying And it's appalling One of the proverbs says He that being often reprov'd Hardeneth his neck Shall suddenly be destroyed And that without remedy But let us listen to the writer to the Hebrews He says this Flee he says Flee for refuge To lay hold upon the hope set before us And that hope Is Jesus Christ the Saviour Well I must draw to a close In this part of Paul's argument [34 : 40] The apostle has shown us That the rejection of Israel Is a partial rejection God has his people Among the Jews Just as he has his people among the Gentiles He has his remnant According to the election of grace Among these Jewish people And the apostle goes on to show us

That those of Israel Not chosen by grace Have been blinded And hardened through sin I was reading the excellent outline of Romans That's given by the joint authors Steele and Thomas And in their outline of Romans They say this And this is worth listening to

It must be remembered That God In hardening certain individuals Is dealing with fallen creatures Not with innocent people The hardening They say Is a judicial punishment That is punishment Resulting from a judgment of God Inflicted as the result of sin They go on to say God abandoned sinners to their own corrupt nature When God hardens an individual He is not And this is the important point He is not forcing a good person Who wants to do right To do evil But is punishing a sinner By giving him up to his sin That's what happened to Pharaoh It says God hardened Pharaoh

It was just that God left Pharaoh And said Pharaoh If you refuse Very well I hand you over to your sin And your sin will take care of you And the same with King Ahab That awful king of Israel God said to him Ahab You've despised me I've borne with you for long I've given you opportunities to turn to me And you've refused Very well Ahab I'll leave you now To your own devices That's an awful thing isn't it?

Are you a converted person here tonight? Wasn't it good for you when you came to Christ?

Because if you hadn't come to Christ What would God have said to you in the end?

Very well then I hand you over to your sin Am I speaking to someone here who is not converted tonight? You be careful You be very careful how you're dealing with God Don't you play around with him Don't you fool about with God Because God may very well say to you Very well I'll hand you over To your own deserts I'll abandon you completely All let us see to it that we turn from the evil of sin to the Saviour To the Saviour who invites us to come Who says to us tonight as he has said all along Come unto me I will give you rest May we come

[39 : 03] Let us pray O Lord we thank thee that thy purpose of grace Is something that is real And that it cannot be thwarted And we bless thee O Lord for the overtures of thy grace made to us in the Gospel And that thou art inviting us to be reconciled to thee through thy known dear Son Forbid O Lord that we should become hardened in sin to such an extent that we become yielded up completely to sin That sin masters us in such a way that we are unable to break from it O Lord save us from the awful consequences of hardening Be with us now Take us to our homes in safety And blot out all our sins for Jesus' sake Amen