

## Romans 11:1-10 (ESV)

### The Remnant of Israel

**11** I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham,<sup>[a]</sup> a member of the tribe of Benjamin. **2** God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? **3** “Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.” **4** But what is God’s reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” **5** So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. **6** But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

**7** What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, **8** as it is written,

“God gave them a spirit of stupor,  
eyes that would not see  
and ears that would not hear,  
down to this very day.”

**9** And David says,

“Let their table become a snare and a trap,  
a stumbling block and a retribution for them;  
**10** let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see,  
and bend their backs forever.”

## Romans 11:1-10 (HCSB)

### Israel's Rejection Not Total

**11** I ask, then, has God rejected His people? Absolutely not! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. <sup>2</sup> God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah—how he pleads with God against Israel?

<sup>3</sup> Lord, they have killed Your prophets  
and torn down Your altars.  
I am the only one left,  
and they are trying to take my life!<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>4</sup> But what was God's reply to him? I have left 7,000 men for Myself who have not bowed down to Baal.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>5</sup> In the same way, then, there is also at the present time a remnant chosen by grace. <sup>6</sup> Now if by grace, then it is not by works; otherwise grace ceases to be grace.<sup>[c]</sup>

<sup>7</sup> What then? Israel did not find what it was looking for, but the elect did find it. The rest were hardened, <sup>8</sup> as it is written:

God gave them a spirit of insensitivity,<sup>[d]</sup>  
eyes that cannot see  
and ears that cannot hear,  
to this day.<sup>[e]</sup>

<sup>9</sup> And David says:

Let their feasting<sup>[f]</sup> become a snare and a trap,  
a pitfall and a retribution to them.  
<sup>10</sup> Let their eyes be darkened so they cannot see,  
and their backs be bent continually.<sup>[g]</sup>

## English Standard Version Bible - *Study Bible*<sup>1</sup>

### *Romans 11:1-10*

**11:1** The majority of Israel failed to believe. Does this mean that God has **rejected his people**? Paul presents himself as an example of the remnant that has been preserved, a remnant that indicates that God is not finished with Israel and that he will fulfill the promises made to his people.

**11:2** God **foreknew**. See note on [8:29](#).

**11:3-5** Elijah in his despair thought Israel would be extinguished. But God assured Elijah that he had preserved a **remnant**, which gave Elijah hope that God would fulfill his saving promises in the future. In Paul's day, as in Elijah's day ([v. 4](#)) and today, a remnant of Jews believe in Christ because of God's electing grace (cf. [9:27-29](#)).

**11:6** Election and **grace** are inseparable, for both show that salvation is God's work alone, and that it has nothing to do with **works**. On grace, see also [4:4-5](#); [Acts 15:11](#); [Eph. 2:8-9](#).

**11:7-10** The composite citation from [Isa. 29:10](#) and [Deut. 29:4](#) clarifies that God has **hardened** Israel so that they would not see or hear. Paul then prays for judgment ([Ps. 69:22-23](#)) over the Jews of his day who have rejected Christ.

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1. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Romans 11".

## Holman Christian Standard Bible - Study Bible<sup>2</sup>

### Romans 11:1-10

**11:1-4** Paul continued explaining that the unbelief of Israel is no argument against the gospel. Israel's blindness is not total, and God is still working with the nation. In the days of Samuel, the nation rejected God as their king and chose a human king. Yet God continued to work with His people: "The LORD will not abandon His people, because of His great name and because He has determined to make you His own people" ([1Sam 12:22](#)). In Paul's time, they had rejected Jesus as King Messiah and their leaders said, "We have no king but Caesar" ([Jn 19:15](#)), but God was not finished with them. Paul himself was evidence that God was saving some Jews. God's election of the nation (**whom he foreknew**, [v. 2](#); cp. [8:29](#)) is immutable. Even in times of national apostasy, God saves a remnant.

#### proginosko

|                            |                             |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Greek Pronunciation</b> | [prah gih NOH skoh]         |
| <b>HCSB Translation</b>    | foreknow                    |
| <b>Uses in Romans</b>      | 2                           |
| <b>Uses in the NT</b>      | 5                           |
| <b>Focus passage</b>       | <a href="#">Romans 11:2</a> |

The Greek verb *proginosko* comes from the preposition *pro* (meaning *before*) and the verb *ginosko* (meaning *to know*); the compound term thus means *to know beforehand*. The related noun *prognosis* means *foreknowledge* and is the basis for the English medical term *prognosis*. On two occasions in the NT, *proginosko* is used for knowledge obtained in advance by human beings ([Ac 26:5](#); [2Pe 3:17](#)). However, when God is the one *foreknowing*, the emphasis is not on prior knowledge but on prior choice. The other three uses of this verb and both uses of the noun indicate that God *foreknows* people, not events. These terms refer to God's choice of His people and of Christ for a redemptive purpose. Since God chose Israel—not the other way around—He did not reject her ([Rm 11:2](#)). God chose Christ "*before* the foundation of the world" for the purpose of redemption ([1Pe 1:20](#); see [Ac 2:23](#)), and in keeping with this purpose He also chose those whom He would conform "to the image of His Son" ([Rm 8:29](#); see [1Pe 1:2](#)).

**11:5-6** **Grace** is by definition unmerited favor. Grace would cease **to be grace** if works played a role in election.

**11:7-10** The Jewish nation missed salvation because they sought for it by works. The elect portion was given mercy, but the majority was hardened in unbelief; OT citations are given to show that God has judged His people.

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2. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., HCSB Study Bible, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Romans 11".

## NLT Life Application Study Bible<sup>3</sup>

### *Romans 11:1-10*

**11:1ff** In this chapter Paul points out that not *all* Jews have rejected God's message of salvation. There are still a faithful few ([11:5](#)). Paul himself, after all, was a Jew, and so were Jesus' disciples and nearly all of the early Christian missionaries.

**11:2** Elijah was a great reforming prophet who challenged the northern kingdom of Israel to repent. See his Profile in [1 Kings 17](#), p. 545 for more information.

**11:2** God chose the Jews ("his own people") to be the people through whom the rest of the world could find salvation. But this did not mean the entire Jewish nation would be saved; only those who were faithful to God were considered true Jews ([11:5](#)). We are saved through faith in Christ, not because we are part of a nation, religion, or family. On whom or on what are you depending for salvation?

**11:6** Do you think it's easier for God to love you when you're good? Do you secretly suspect that God chose you because you deserved it? Do you think some people's behavior is so bad that God couldn't possibly save them? If you ever think this way, you don't entirely understand that salvation is by grace, a free gift. It cannot be earned, in whole or in part; it can only be accepted with thankfulness and praise.

**11:7** "The hearts of the rest were hardened" was God's punishment for their sin. It was a confirmation of their own stubbornness. In judging them, God removed their ability to see and hear and to turn from sin; thus, they would experience the consequences of their rebellion. Resisting God is like saying to him, "Leave me alone!" But because God is always and everywhere present, his answer to that prayer might be to agree and make that person less sensitive, more hardened to him. The very possibility of that happening ought to keep us asking God specifically for ears that really hear and eyes that really see—openness and responsiveness to him.

**11:8-10** These verses describe the punishment for unresponsive hearts predicted by the prophet Isaiah ([Isaiah 6:9-13](#)). If people refuse to hear God's Good News, they eventually will be unable to understand it. Paul saw this happening in the Jewish congregations he visited on his missionary journeys. ([Verse 8](#) is based on [Deuteronomy 29:4](#) and [Isaiah 29:10](#). [Verses 9](#) and [10](#) are from [Psalm 69:22, 23](#).)

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3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 1914.

# Life Application Concise New Testament Commentary<sup>4</sup>

## Romans 11:1-10

### God's Mercy on Israel / [11:1-24](#)

In this section Paul points out that not all Jews have rejected God's message of salvation. He draws upon the experience of Elijah to show that there had always been a faithful remnant among the people. In Paul's day, there was still a remnant living by faith, under the law ([11:5](#)). After all, Paul was a Jew; so were Jesus' disciples and nearly all of the early Christian missionaries. Part of God's sovereign choice involves bringing a remnant of his people back to himself. This truth forbids any hint of anti-Semitism—God's plan still includes the Jews.

**11:1** The Jewish nation had heard words of rejection before. In the depths of their sinfulness when King Manasseh ruled the northern kingdom of Israel, God said he would forsake his people because of their sin ([2 Kings 21:14-15](#)). Indeed, Jeremiah had warned the people that God had abandoned them ([Jeremiah 7:29](#)). With this question Paul expresses a deep concern—has God finally grown tired of Israel's constant disobedience and **rejected** them forever?

Paul responds, **Of course not!** One proof of this is Paul's experience. Paul had received salvation, and he was **a Jew, a descendant of Abraham and a member of the tribe of Benjamin**. Paul is a full-blooded Jew (who had even gone so far as to persecute Christians before he became a believer). Surely if God was going to reject someone, Paul would have been a good choice. But God, in his sovereignty, called Paul and rearranged his entire life.

**11:2-3** God did not reject his people in the days of Moses, nor in the days of the prophets. And he is not rejecting them now. Regardless of Israel's unfaithfulness, God always keeps his promises. God **chose** Israel to be the people through whom all other nations of the world could know him. He made this promise to Abraham, their ancestor ([Genesis 12:1-3](#)). Israel didn't have to do anything to be chosen. God had given them this privilege because he wanted to, not because they deserved special treatment ([Deuteronomy 9:4-6](#)). God knew beforehand that Israel would be unfaithful; if God's faithfulness to Israel was going to be dependent on their faithfulness, God would never have chosen them in the first place. God will remain faithful to his promises to Israel, despite Israel's failure.

Paul then reminded his readers of a time when all Israel had deserted God, but God had preserved some for himself. After Elijah's stunning demonstration of God's power over Baal's prophets at Mount Carmel (and the killing of all of Baal's prophets), **Elijah** fled for his life from the wrath of Israel's evil Queen Jezebel who threatened to have him killed. He ran for many miles and then stopped to rest. In his terror and exhaustion, he cried out to God, **"Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars. I alone am left, and now they are trying to kill me, too."** "They" actually refers to the evil leadership in the northern kingdom of Israel, but Elijah was holding the entire nation responsible for the actions of many. He had concluded that he was the only person left in Israel who believed in God.

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4. Barton B. Bruce et al., *Life Application New Testament Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2001), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 618-619.

**11:4** God shared some very important information with Elijah, replying that Elijah was **not the only one left**—God had **seven thousand** believers who had not turned to idol worship. That was not a large number, but it was a faithful “remnant.” Notice that God reserved these faithful followers for himself—the remnant existed because of his sovereign choice.

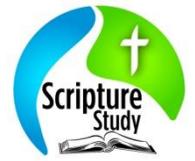
**11:5-6** Just as God had preserved a few of his people when almost the entire nation had turned to idolatry, so **today**, God has **a few** who **are being saved as a result of God’s kindness in choosing them**. The Jewish believers in this faithful few are proof that God has not rejected his people ([2 Kings 19:4, 19](#)). These few, **saved by God’s kindness** realize that they were not saved by **good works**. Jews who believe in Christ are not denying their faith or their heritage; instead, they are discovering what these were truly meant to be. If God’s grace in choosing us depended on our works or obedience to the law, it would not be **free and undeserved**. “God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it” ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#)).

**11:7-10** This verse provides an excellent summary of [Romans 9–11](#). The nation had **earnestly sought the favor of God** by doing works of the law (see [10:2-3](#)). But God did not accept them. Instead, he accepted the **few** who had been **chosen**. Israel’s failure was foreseen by God and, in fact, brought about by him (see [9:22-23, 33](#)). Their being **made unresponsive** was confirmation of their inability to understand and their insensitivity to God’s word and God’s call. When God judged them, he removed their ability to see, hear, and repent; thus they would experience the consequences of their rebellion. But this is not the same as rejection; rather, it confirms their response to God. Paul illustrates this from two passages in Scripture (as follows).

Quoting from [Deuteronomy 29:4](#) and [Isaiah 29:10](#), their unresponsiveness was like a **deep sleep**. When people repeatedly refuse to listen to God’s Good News, they eventually will be unable to hear and understand it. Israel’s present misinterpretation of their Scriptures and refusal to accept Christ as their Messiah is a continuation of their tendency to misunderstand God’s plans and purposes for them. Paul saw this happening in the Jewish congregations he visited on his missionary journeys.

Next, Paul quoted from [Psalm 69:22-23](#) (a psalm thought to be prophetic about the suffering of the Messiah). These words of David were originally a curse directed at Israel’s enemies. Paul turns the curse around and points it at the Jews! These blessings should have drawn Israel to God and thus led them to Christ; instead, they became **a snare, a trap**. Israel’s blessings had led to pride that led them away from God. Thus, not only did they miss the Messiah when he came, but they also persecuted and killed him.

# Study and Discussion Questions



## The Remnant of Israel - [Romans 11:1-10](#)

Topics: [Christianity](#), [God](#), [Hardheartedness](#), [Lost](#), [Rejection](#), [Stubbornness](#)

### *Open It*

1. How would you turn down an invitation to an event that your boss wanted you to attend?
2. \*What might a person do to get another person to love him or her?
3. When in your experience has a large project been saved by the efforts of a few people?

### *Explore It*

4. What was Paul's background? ([11:1](#))
5. How did Paul answer those who believed that God had rejected the Jews? ([11:1-6](#))
6. \*How did God answer Elijah's call to destroy Israel? ([11:2-4](#))
7. \*What has God chosen by grace? ([11:5](#))
8. What caused God's remnant of people to survive? ([11:5](#))
9. How did Paul describe the people in Israel who please God? ([11:5-6](#))
10. Who are the elect? ([11:7](#))
11. What had Israel done to try to obtain righteousness in God's sight? ([11:7-9](#))
12. \*What prevented Israel from responding to God as the elect had responded? ([11:7-9](#))
13. What results from God's decision to harden people's hearts? ([11:9-10](#))

### *Get It*

14. What commitment has God shown to the Jews?
15. \*What characteristics separated the remnant of Israel from the rest of Israel?
16. What causes God's people to turn away from Him?
17. What causes people reared in Christian families and church activities to turn away from God?
18. \*In what ways do you see a remnant at work in your community?
19. By what means other than grace do people try to please God?
20. How is it possible to seek intently for God by doing good deeds, and yet miss Him?
21. What hardens a person's heart against God?
22. What can God do to change the hearts of people who have turned away from Him?

### *Apply It*

23. What can you do this week to avoid the influences in your life that could harden your heart against God?
24. \*What can you do this week to encourage a Christian who feels outnumbered or overwhelmed?