



ROMANS Part 97

Chapter 11:1-5

A remnant according to grace.



I am saying, then, Does not God thrust away His people? May it not be coming to that! For I also am an Israelite, out of Abraham's seed, Benjamin's tribe. 2 God does not thrust away His people whom He foreknew. Or have you not perceived in Elijah what the scripture is saying, as he is pleading with God against Israel? 3 Lord, Thy prophets they kill, Thine altars they dig down, and I was left alone, and they are seeking my soul. 4 But what is that which apprises saying to him? I left for Myself seven thousand men who do not bow the knee to the image of Baal. 5 Thus, then, in the current

era also, there has come to be a remnant according to the choice of grace.

Paul's final remark at the end of chapter 10, quoting God, was, "The whole day I spread out My hands to a stubborn and contradicting people!" *The whole day.* That's a long time. By my reckoning, it's twenty-four hours. God must be tired by this time. His hands must be cramped and ready to break off. Well? These hands have been spread out in this incom-

modious manner for the entire day, *every day*—since the call of Abraham. This has been approximately 1,950 years. I think the Guinness world record for hand stretching (toward a stubborn subject) is twelve hours six minutes and fourteen seconds, held by a Russian man from Novosibirsk who, in 2006, pleaded for his wife to give up the Vodka habit. He would not take "nyet" for an answer until she finally threw a bottle of the stuff directly at him, knocking him out. "Otherwise," the man said later, rubbing a noticeable raised spot on his forehead, "I could have gone on for another nine or ten minutes, spreading out my hands.

But when I found out that God has been spreading out His hands toward Israel for 1,950 years—give or take a century—I became very discouraged about my own efforts and joined my wife in her despicable habit."

With the calling of the nations and Paul's gospel to non-Israelites, the first thing one would be tempted to think is that God is at last finished with Israel and can now finally drop the pleading and do something more relaxing with His hands like, say, needlepoint with telephone cables. But no. God has a little "problem" in that

He can't give up on Israel because of that irritating little thing called "the remnant" that keeps believing in Him.

I speak facetiously, of course. God loves the remnant. He raised and keeps the remnant of Israel as an earnest of the eventual inheritance of everything, namely, "all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26). Besides us, the remnant of Israel is God's only joy on a sea of Jewish and Gentile disbelief. What is the remnant? It is a small group of faithful Israelites. Even while God's hands are spread every day toward the stubborn majority, His heart throbs toward the few of Abraham's descendants who do faithfully cling to His promises, recognize His designated Messiah, and who rely on Him for everything. I am talking about folks like Elijah, Isaiah, Daniel, David, Jeremiah, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah, and some guy in Paramus, New Jersey named Larry, who no one has ever heard of.

NEVER A HOLY HUMPH

Now that God has reached out to the nations and given them an expectation unrelated to the mediatorial intervention of Israelites, the word on the street, then and now, has been, "Surely God has thrust away His people." No one would blame God for doing so. People who think that God has given up on Israel, however,



are people who give up, themselves, on everything from jobs to spouses to kids to diets, to exercise programs. People make the mistake all the time of looking in the mirror and thinking they're seeing a reflection of the Deity. These deluded souls make and break promises for a living, and so they figure that God must do the same thing. People are tired and weak all the time, and so they figure that God needs three cups of coffee in the morning before He can even see straight, just like them.

They think that God sighs like them, grunts like them, caffeinates Himself like them, and picks up His toys and goes home in the face of disappointments—like them.

God has never reneged on one promise, nor has He ever gathered any toy in a holy humph to abandon a responsibility. Why would God give up on Israel when the whole Israel enterprise, from beginning to end, is a show anyway? He has purposely made this people stubborn—except for the remnant, of course—so that He can stun the world when He un-stubborns them. (This chapter of Romans tells that whole story.) It's going to be so easy for God to give the nation of Israel a new heart. The difficult part is keeping them stubborn. So infamous an obstinacy as Israel's is hard to come by, even harder to maintain. God extending His hands to Israel is, in fact, a pose (a feint) that will eventually grab the hearts of these people when they finally see the archival film of what God has been doing with His hands these many years, on their behalf. You and I, on the other hand, have the backstage pass, allowing us the realization that God actually works hard behind the scenes to keep Israel as blind as deep-sea Mexican tetras. Giving Israel a new heart, then, will not be some great feat that will have God grunting, sweating, or otherwise re-creating the universe. Giving Israel a new heart will be as easy for Him as letting go of a giant barbell. In the meantime, God dandles the remnant of Israel on His knee with one hand, and with the other hand calls total losers from among the nations to a heavenly, grace-based destiny—how fun is *that?*

"IMPOSSIBLE"

The very idea that God *could* cast away the people called by Him to greatness elicits from Paul a common expletive of the day: "May it not be coming to that!" The modern-day equivalent is, "Are you f***ing kidding me?" It's not as though Paul hopes against a possibility (although one does get that idea with Paul's use of "may"), but rather that the apostle would loathe the very thought of the "possibility," which itself is impossible, thus the quotation marks.

"For I also am an Israelite, out of Abraham's seed, Benjamin's tribe" (Romans 11:1).

Someone once tried to tell me that this statement is Paul using himself as proof of the remnant. In other words, Paul was faithful, and so he must be a part of the remnant of the context because the remnant is faithful. This person told me that "Paul is using himself as an example that God

has not given up on His covenant people.” It is as though Paul is saying, “See? There *is* a believing remnant in Israel, for I also am an Israelite, even though I chucked the whole thing.” This is absurd. The motive of the person telling me this was his conviction that there is no Israelite remnant today. He believes that no one can legitimately believe in the Circumcision gospel today because Paul’s is the only active modern gospel and thus the only gospel that can be believed by anyone. Allow me to tell you why all of this is wrong.

If Paul is an example of the remnant, then Israel is in big trouble. Why? Because Paul himself forsook His covenant relationship with God and jumped onto a new gospel of total grace. The whole purpose of God announcing the presence of a remnant in this chapter is to assure Paul’s readers that He has not forsaken His promises to the covenant people. Remember, this chapter of Romans is all about Israel and her specific calling. It is not about the gospel of the Uncircumcision. The promises God made to Israel, through Abraham, have nothing to do with Paul’s evangel. Paul’s evangel is a separate revelation.

If Paul is an example of the remnant, then there is no assurance whatsoever that Israel will eventually come into her covenantal promises. Why? Because Paul himself jumped the ship of covenantal promises. He actually disqualified himself when he went out killing Christians. So no, Paul is not an example of the remnant. Paul being an example of the remnant and then being held out as an example of the remnant by God—to prove His faithfulness to His promises to Israel—would be like a man picking an early sample of an orange crop and saying, “Here is proof that the rest of the apple crop will come in.”

The big question, stated at the outset of this chapter is: “Does not God thrust away His people?” This is the question to which Paul gives a giant, “Are you f***ing kidding me?” Why is Paul so passionate? Why did he use an expletive? Why couldn’t he have just jumped ahead to, “God does not thrust away His

people”? Paul’s passion rises to the fore. The reason for it is clearly stated here: “I also am an Israelite, out of Abraham’s seed, Benjamin’s tribe.” Paul has a vested interest in the fate of these people because he’s one of the people. These are his literal relatives. Even though most of them hate him, he loves *them*.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Paul may very well have in mind here his literal brothers and sisters. Perhaps his mother and father. No doubt Paul talked to his parents and his brothers and sisters about his evangel. Chances are, they rejected it. Why do I think that they rejected it? Because most people rejected it, especially his fellow Jews who had strained their whole lives carrying the baggage of the Mosaic covenant. They had a hard time letting go of that baggage.



“If the Circumcision gospel was finished, where did that leave Paul’s dad?”

Greeks never did carry such a load, so they came easily to Paul’s message without throwing rocks at him. “There is no law” is an easy message for a guy or gal of the nations who never struggled under law in the first place.

Maybe Paul’s mom received the new evangel, but his dad said, “I’m not giving up on Abraham.” Let’s say that happened. Paul would have been okay with it, I think. The Circumcision was a legitimate evangel. What would have angered Paul would have been the insistence that, because of the coming of the new evangel, the Circumcision evangel was over. Finished. Kaput. Where would that have left his dad? If his dad had not accepted the new evangel, and if the Circumcision evangel was over,





then Paul's dad was without a home, without a landing place. But he did have a home: the Circumcision evangel.

Paul was smarter than everyone of his day because no one knew more about both evangels than him. His parents raised him in the Circumcision evangel and he received the evangel of the Uncircumcision from Jesus Christ Himself. So if Paul says that God is not finished with Israel, then God is not finished with Israel. If Paul says that there is a believing remnant, then there is a believing remnant. If the believing remnant referred to by Paul are people who believe in the *new* gospel (the gospel of the Uncircumcision), then the premise and purpose of this chapter is destroyed. The premise, remember, is that in spite of the coming of the new evangel, God is not finished with the covenant people and *their* evangel.

**“The remnant is proof
that the rest of Israel will
someday come into her
ancient expectation.”**

Remember, there are two evangels in the so-called New Testament (Galatians 2:7-8). In Paul's mind, the only thing that might prove that God has given up on His promises would be the complete absence of a remnant. If there were no one on Earth to believe the promises God made to Israel, then one could make the case that God was finished with Israel and His promises to Abraham.

Paul sets forth the remnant as proof that the rest of the nation will someday come into her ancient expectation. It's an earnest of the inheritance. Without a remnant, God leaves Himself without a testimony on the Earth, and thus without proof. If the remnant is an Uncircumcision remnant, it proves nothing concerning the Circumcision.

For proof that Paul's purpose in this chapter is to assure the reader that Israel will yet come into her own gospel, I refer you to two of the last verses of this chapter, verses 26 and 27—

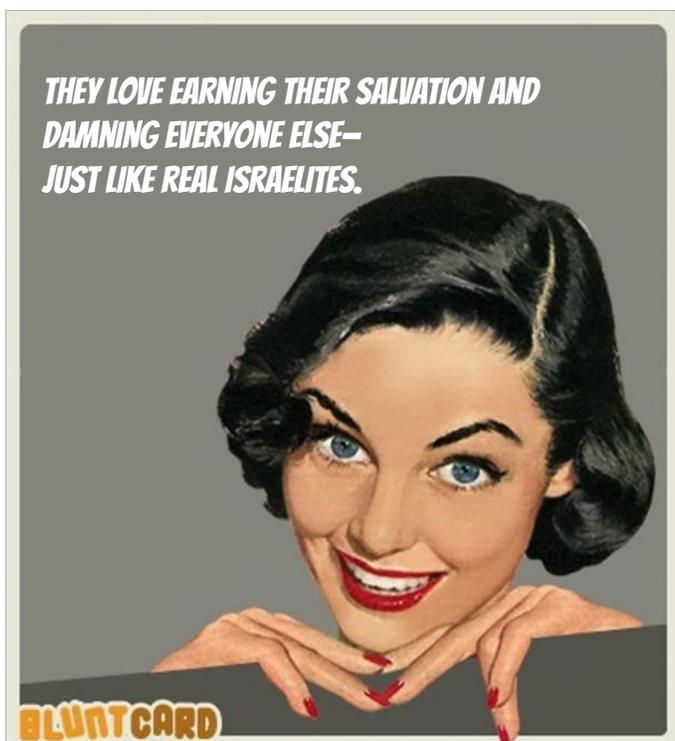
And thus all Israel shall be saved, *according as it is written*, Arriving out of Zion shall be the Rescuer. He will be turning away irreverence from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them Whenever I should be eliminating their sins.

There you have it. The salvation of the context is Israel's "according-as-it-is-written" salvation, which is the Circumcision evangel; the gospel of the Uncircumcision had not been written before. Paul could not talk about his specific evangel and use the phrase "according as it is written" concerning it. Besides, Paul borrows from Isaiah 59:21 here, using the phrase, "and this is My covenant with them." What can this be besides the gospel of the Circumcision? The Uncircumcision gospel was never presented by either God or Paul as a literal covenant.

ISRAEL GOSPEL STILL UP FOR GRABS

Some insist today that Paul's gospel is the only gospel in town. These people insist that, because Israel's message is on the back-burner, that therefore no one can legitimately believe in Israel's message. I have heard it said that anyone who believes today is automatically in the body of Christ. I reject this viewpoint, and so does Paul. I know people who love Israel truth and care nothing for Paul. Paul only confuses them. These people love the law. They love talking about Israel. They want to participate in Israelite feasts. They read Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They love James. They love Jude. The mention of the law of Moses makes them giddy as children. These people nearly hate Paul. At *best*, Paul confuses them. They love earning their salvation and damning everyone else—just like real Israelites.

Are we to say that these believers are members of the body of Christ? How can they be when they reject every basic tenet of Paul's teaching? If they're not members of the body of Christ, then what are they? I say that they are members (embracers) of the Circumcision evangel. You



may say, “But they aren’t Israelites.” I answer: One does not have to be a literal Israelite to embrace that message. Consider people like Cornelius (Acts, chapter 10) and the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts, chapter 8). Though not literal Israelites, these men attached themselves to the Israel message and will be rewarded for it. If it was true *then*, why isn’t it true today? Who can prove to me that there is no Israel remnant today? I insist to you that, *unless* there is an Israel remnant today, then a case can be made for God having thrust away His people. May it not be coming to that!

The evangel of the Circumcision may not be the active evangel today, but this does not keep it from being an evangel that can still be embraced and waited upon. Israel is a nation in waiting. (Read the book of Hebrews.) Those who embrace that message must wait. We of the body of Christ, however, do not wait. We thrive now upon what God is doing with us, the nations, at present, while Israel— *as a nation*—is on hold.

Surely Paul spoke individually and privately with his family and friends, attempting to talk them into jumping the Israel ship and embracing his message. This letter to the Romans is emphatically *not* a private letter to friends and family. This is Paul, under inspiration of the holy spirit, testifying for the eons of the truth of God’s faithfulness to His covenant promises made to His covenant people.

Privately, Paul wants his friends and family to jump ship, yes. But publicly (here in Romans), he wants his pet nation to enter into the promises of the fathers.

We confuse Paul’s private and public testimonies at our own peril. Don’t do it. —MZ (*To be continued.*)

POETRY CORNER

Anyway - i have a beautiful/miserable life - as my blood family decided to betray me - and steal my inheritance.

(This has been my reality for 4 years now).....and before that - plenty of suffering.

Like yr other listeners!

I feel like Jesus must have felt - Alot!

Anyway - it would be great to meet you someday - people out here appreciate your dedication - (cuz i’m not gonna study the bible all day) - so, i let you do it!

Very helpful and enlightening!

All the best to you.

And Thank You.....I think you’re a decent person.

Blessings in the Name of Jesus Christ.

Forever -

JM

