

REMNANT OF GRACE

Small Group Study Guide | March 26, 2023

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Discuss: Is the faithfulness of God meaningful to you? Why or why not?

Key Text: *"I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, 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)*

A gifted sculptor fell deeply in love with the woman of his dreams. They got married and lived happily together until tragedy struck and the woman was diagnosed with an incurable disease. After her death, the sculptor created a magnificent sculpture and dedicated it to her memory. The townspeople chose to adorn a new plaza in the middle of town with the beautiful work of art. The sculptor instantly became popular and more of his work was added to the plaza. People traveled from afar to see his art. Eventually, the plaza became so crowded with his art that some of the old works had to be removed to make room for his newer projects. Someone asked him what the sculpture of the woman in the center of the plaza was intended for—it was the least popular of all his art. The artist agreed that it looked out of place. He ordered it removed. What was once the centerpiece of his passion had become unimportant and obsolete. Thus, it was replaced.

It is easy for us to forget or even reject what is most important in life and replace it with less important things. Paul explains in Romans 9-11 that this is what happened to Israel. God had chosen Israel to represent Him to the world (Romans 9). But Israel disobeyed God by rejecting Jesus as Messiah, so God set Israel aside temporarily to work through His Church (Romans 10). But in Romans 11, Paul assures Israel that God will be faithful to His promises to Israel. God's setting aside of Israel was only partial and temporary, not complete or permanent. Paul gives three different arguments to prove his point.

1. Paul – If God had completely given up on Israel, He would not have chosen Paul.

"I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin." (11:1)

Paul reminds his readers that he himself is a Jew (v.1). If God had given up on Israel completely and permanently, God would not have chosen Paul as His apostle.

Discuss: What words and phrases about Paul stand out to you in Philippians 3:4-10?

2. Remnant – There has always been (and always will be) a group of Jews who have believed God and remain faithful to Him.

“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.’” (11:2-5)

Paul reminds his readers of the event recorded in 1 Kings 19:1-18 involving the prophet Elijah. Through Elijah, God had miraculously and soundly defeated 400 prophets of the false god Baal. After the great victory, the wicked Queen Jezebel threatened Elijah, so Elijah fled into the wilderness. Elijah mistakenly thought he was the only person in Israel who was standing for God, but the Lord assured Elijah that there was a remnant of 7,000 other true Jews in the nation who did not bow down to false gods and who were standing courageously for God. God has always had a remnant—a small group of Jews—who believe and remain faithful to God.

Discuss: What words and phrases about the power of Christian fellowship stand out to you in Hebrews 10:23-25?

3. Grace – The Jews were chosen by God’s grace; thus, they don’t lose their special status because of imperfections.

“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.’” (11:6-10)

Paul argues that because God chose Israel based on His grace, not their works or performance, they do not lose their position with God simply because they did not meet all the requirements (v.6). God disciplines Israel for their disobedience (v.7-9), but His grace-based covenant with Israel can never be broken and he will never betray His faithfulness.

Discuss: What words and phrases about God’s faithfulness stand out to you in these verses: Psalm 119:90; Lamentations 3:22-23; 2 Timothy 2:13; Hebrews 10:23?

Discuss: What words and phrases about God’s loving discipline of His children in Hebrews 12:5-11 stand out to you?

For Further Study:

Free online commentary on the Book of Romans at www.enduringword.com

“How does God Discipline Us When We Sin?” article at www.gotquestions.org

Jews for Jesus at www.jewsforjesus.org