

“Will God Forsake His Chosen People?” // Romans 11:1–27 // Romans #22

[\[Capital Hills Update Video\]](#)

The Capital Hills Campus is just one more way God continues to show his hand of grace on us as a church. I’m excited to tell you that we officially have a launch date for Capital Hills—now, as all things go with construction, this is tentative and could change at any moment--but **we are planning on launching services on October 5/6 weekend**. Again, it is a **live construction site, which means anything can happen**, but Oct. 5/6 is when we plan on being in there, which we’re excited about.

And I’ll say one more thing about that campus: we open campuses in an effort to do **whatever it takes to reach all people**. And we really mean all people. Which is why our **Summit en Espanol campus**, which meets at Brier Creek on Sunday mornings, will also be adding a **Saturday 5:30p service at Capital Hills**, as well. We’re **committed to following the HS** in creating a movement of DMD in the Triangle and around the world, and this is what he’s **led us to next. Exciting times**.

Romans 11, page 66 of your Romans journals.

I feel like I’ve said this a lot in this series, but this chapter is really difficult. I told you at the beginning of this series that for years I’ve been nervous about preaching through Romans and, quite frankly, have **avoided** doing it. This **chapter was one of the reasons** why.

It’s got **all this confusing stuff in it** about who the true Israel is and how God is grafting Gentiles in their place like a branch into an olive

tree and sometimes **you’re just not quite sure what point he is making** or how it applies to you.

The pastors that do preach through Romans--which I’ve found is not that many--often skip chapters 9–11, and the ones that preach 9–11 often skip chapter 11!

- **Just one example:** I heard a guy talking about his church—he said that they were working their way through Romans like we are and when they got to chapter 11, the pastor stood up and said, *“Listen, I’m just not sure what’s going on in Romans 11 and I’m having a hard time seeing how it is relevant or edifying for us. I don’t know exactly what to say about it, and our VBS and student camp weeks are coming up, so let’s spend the morning praying about those, and we’ll pick up with Romans 12 next time.”*
- **That’s one way to deal with it.** I remember in the church I grew up in, every once in a while the pastor would stand up on a Sunday and call for a testimony service. Eventually I figured out that meant, “I didn’t have time to prepare a message this week, so let’s just see what’s on your minds.” Pretty ingenious if you ask me.
 - Or every once in a while he’d call a ‘Singspiration’—that’s what we called it at my church, where people from the congregation would shout out a number from the hymnal and the pianist would play it and we’d sing it. And that would be what we did for the message time.
 - **So, if I start bombing this morning, we might just do that. Branden, you ready?**

Listen, I can sympathize with those pastors who skipped it. Some scholars even say that these chapters function **like a historical footnote** that Paul inserts only for the Jews, but mostly irrelevant for the rest of us. They say the **gospel logic of Romans jumps** from the end of Romans 8 to the beginning of Romans 12, and you can **skip 9–11** without losing the progression.

But I disagree. Like I said when we started chapter 9, Paul recognizes the question that the thinking person raises when Paul talks about the promises of Romans 8 (i.e. ‘**nothing can separate us** from the love of God; **all those God foreknew** he predestined, and those he predestined...)

The thinking person asks,

- “Well, then **what about the Jews? Weren’t they also God’s chosen** people? And clearly they’ve fallen away from the love of God. They rejected Jesus! How was **this not a failure** on God’s part?
- “**And** (this is where it gets important for us), **if God failed with them**, how can we be sure he won’t fail with us also?
 - I mean, the **promises in the OT read like** they are unconditional--In Genesis 12, God promises to give Israel an eternal kingdom that can never be taken away and to make them a blessing to the nations. **And then, after making that promise, God seals it in Genesis 15 with this covenant ceremony** where he makes Abraham **cut three animals in two** and places them on either side of a ditch so their blood forms a river. Sounds gross to us, but it was a **common ceremony** at the time. They were saying, “*If I fail to keep up my end of the bargain, may my blood flow like this.*” But then God went through by himself.)
- So, the question is: **if God reneged on these unconditional promises to Israel**, how do we know he won’t he do the same with us?”

Chapter 11 is Paul still wrestling with this question. In the first 16 verses he **answers the question**, and **then for the next 11 verses he issues an important warning** that comes from his answer to that question, and finally he bursts into an explosion of praise reflecting on that answer.

- (We’re going to look at the question and the warning today and we’ll pick up the explosion of praise next week because it’s pretty awesome.)

I. The Question (vv. 1–16):

Has God failed in keeping his promise to make Israel a blessing to the nations?

Like I just said, in Gen 12 God promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation, and that nation would not only be blessed by God with salvation but they would also bless the nations of the world by bringing them back to God. And **these promises seem to be unconditional.**

But now, by rejecting Jesus as the Messiah, Israel seems to have fallen away from God.

11 I ask, then, has God rejected his people? Absolutely not!

In the next 10 verses, **Paul brings up 4 answers** to show that God has not reneged on his Gen 12 promises.

- **The first we’ll call the “Paul answer (vs. 1).”** Paul says, “I am a Jew. *In fact, all of us Apostles* are Jews. And not only saved us, he is using us mightily.”
- **The second we’ll call the “election answer.” (vs. 2).** Paul says, it’s like I explained in chapter 9--Since the beginning, we see that not every son of Abraham truly belonged to God.¹
 - **And in Romans 9 he uses two examples:** Abraham had two sons--Isaac and Ishmael. Isaac was the son of promise, Ishmael was not.
 - **Then Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau.** Jacob embraced the promise, and Esau rejected it.

¹ Romans 9:6–12

- These represent, Paul says, two kinds of Israelites in Israel: Those who know God and those who don't.
- The **true Israelites that God foreknew, Paul says**, are not those who inherit the biological DNA of Abraham, but those who embrace his faith.
- So, Paul concludes here in vs. 2, (² **God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew.**)
- **The ones God foreknew, and who showed that by embracing the promises** of God personally (for themselves), with a circumcised heart, they still belong to God.
- **Third, he gives the "Elijah answer" (vv. 2–4).** Again, vs 2: Or don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah... 4 **What was God's answer to him? I have left seven thousand for myself who have not bowed down to Baal.**
 - **When Elijah was a prophet**, he found himself on a mountaintop complaining to God that nobody was left in Israel who believed God besides him.
 - God responded with what you see here: ***I have left seven thousand for myself who have not bowed down to Baal.***
 - **In the same way, Paul says, God today has preserved a remnant of his people.** Sure, he says, you may look at the Jewish nation as a whole and say, "They've rejected God, but look closer and you'll see God has always preserved a remnant who still belong to him."
 - **After all, the early church was birthed by Jews** and throughout history there has always been a small but thriving Jewish-Christian community. People in the past like Mortimer Adler and Simone Weil. Today, Messianic Jews that include people like **Bob Dylan, Jay Sekulow, Josh Groban, and Kathie Lee Gifford.**
 - **If I could just throw this in:** A lot of times when you think something is over, you find out that God has been doing something you didn't know about—raising up help from another place.
- **Think about it:** If you would have been around in the 1st century, who would have thought within a couple hundred years the **Roman Empire--the pagan, brutal, sexually lascivious Roman Empire--would become** the seat of Christianity?
- And if you had lived in the 4th century, would you ever have thought **that the center of Christianity would shift to the English speaking world**--who were at the time a bunch of barbarians and savage tribesmen?
- **And could you ever predicted that when European Christianity was going liberal** and secular, that a little upstart country called the United States, which at the time of Paul didn't even exist yet on a continent they didn't even know about, would become the most massive missions-sending country in history?
- Today, the church is growing fastest in some of the China, Latin America, and Africa—in countries that we thought were completely closed to the gospel, some of the most dangerous parts of the world. Who could have predicted that?
- You see, **just when you think things are over**, you find out God's been doing something you didn't know about.
 - It's like a friend of mine says: If you're not dead, God's not done.
 - Which leads me to...
- **Fourth, and finally in this section, Paul uses the "grace answer" (vv. 5–6).** (("In the same way, then, there is also at the present time a remnant **chosen by grace**. 6 Now if by grace, then it is not by works; otherwise grace ceases to be grace."))
- **This remnant, he says in vs. 5, is chosen by grace**, which means it is not about the Jews' worthiness but God's faithfulness. **IOW, *what guarantees that God will accomplish his purposes*** is not that there will always be a good, decent set of people out there who will believe, but the unrelenting, irresistible grace of God that **has promised to do this and he will fulfill his word..²**

² Following the terminology given by Tim Keller in his *Romans 8–16 for You*, 86.

In vs. 11, Paul says, “Do these 4 things that mean, though, that **God is basically done with Israel as a whole, and that now all we should expect** is a small, Jewish-Christian community and the occasional Bob Dylan or Josh Groban?”

Furthermore, is the Gentile-center of the church just like (**btw: ‘Gentile’ is just a word that just means ‘non-Jews’**). Are they a “plan B,” a consolation prize? Were the Gentiles God’s “safety school”-- That school you apply to that you know you can get into if you don’t get into the one you want to go to? Like, God really wanted to go to UNC but since they rejected him he went to Duke?” (The Gentiles were Duke?)

Paul says: ¹¹I ask, then, have they stumbled so as to fall (permanently)? **Absolutely not!**

- **Paul prophesies that Israel’s response to the gospel will progress in 3 major stages.** (This is pretty cool, because it shows you what to expect from ethnic Jews in the future.)
- **Stage 1 (v. 11–12) Israel’s (mostly) negative response to the gospel opened the door for Gentiles to hear and believe.**
 - **In the book of Acts**, the gospel’s spread into new cities follows a pretty predictable pattern:
 - First, the Apostles preach in the local Jewish synagogue.
 - The Jewish reaction is mixed, with a few believing but most rejecting.
 - This rejection drives the Apostles out of the synagogue to preach in the public areas of the city--the streets and marketplaces--where they find a lot of Gentiles willing to believe.
 - And, **within 100 years, Christianity becomes a thriving movement** among Gentiles.
 - (Imagine if in every town the whole synagogue had been converted. The Apostles may have grown complacent and

never gotten out into the city, and Christianity could easily have remained a Jewish thing.)

- So, Paul says:
 - in vs. 12, “...their transgression brings riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles,”
 - And, vs. 25, “(We see) A partial hardening has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.”
- **That brings us to Stage 2 (vs. 11): Gentile believers make Israelites “jealous.”** “...salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel jealous.” (v 11). This is not a bad, sinful jealousy. Think of it like this: Imagine my teenage kids left my house—and so we begin to take in homeless and foster children. And on Christmas morning my real kids are cold and lonely and they look through the windows of our house see all these other children sitting around the Christmas tree with all these presents. And my kids say, “I could have had that. I miss that relationship and all the blessings it brings.”
- **That’s what is happening now with the Jews.** There is a sense in which many Jews resent the closeness Gentiles feel toward their God--the God of the Old Testament. The God of their forefathers.
- Which eventually will lead to **Stage 3: At some point in the future, Israel as a nation will come back to God, leading to a worldwide gospel movement (vs. 12, 26).**
 - **Gentile love of the gospel** will eventually cause Israel as a nation to turn back to God. **See where Paul says in vs. 26, “And in this way all Israel will be saved...”?** By saying, “all Israel,” this doesn’t mean that every single Jewish person alive will become a Christian, only that there will be such a massive movement to the gospel you could think of it as a national conversion.³
 - **This national conversion, Paul says, will spawn a worldwide movement of the gospel.** See vs. 12? (This is such a great and encouraging verse) ¹²Now if their transgression brings riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fullness bring!

³ F.F. Bruce, *Romans*, 209.

- Paul is like, “Listen: God had promised that Israel will be a blessing to the nations. And they have been. Even their rejection of Christ gave the Gentiles an opportunity to know the gospel.
- **“So, if their rejection of God blessed the Gentiles, imagine what their embrace of him will cause!”**
- IOW, “if even their disobedience brought blessing, how much more their obedience!”
- Paul doesn’t go into a lot of detail about how this massive Jewish return to Christ will lead to a worldwide movement. **Revelation says that in the latter days** (what some Christians call ‘the Tribulation’) **God saves 144,000 Jewish people** and **appoints them as his worldwide witnesses**, who in turn lead a substantial part of the world population to the gospel.⁴ Many scholars say **that points to this national return of Israel.**

- **Whatever it looks like, this will happen**, Paul says, because God will indeed fulfill his promises to the Jews just like he said them. So, even though Israel on the whole has rejected God, **“they are (still) loved because of the (promises to the) patriarchs,²⁹ since God’s gracious gifts and calling are irrevocable.”** (vv. 28–29)

So, to sum this up: Has God failed to keep his promise to make Israel a blessing to the nations? Not at all. Many Jewish people have been saved, and even their rejection has led to Gentile salvation. But the best is yet to come.

Before we move on, I just want to point something out to you that we can learn from Paul: Never, ever give up on the people in your lives.

Even after facing **rejection after rejection** from the Jewish people, Paul never gives up hope that his Israelite friends can be saved. Here was a passage we skipped over in chapter 9:

- **Romans 9:1–3^{9:1}** I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit— (unusual for

Paul—he hedges 3 ways. I’m not exaggerating. Paul’s usual speaking motif is, “Of course I’m telling the truth, I’m an Apostle. You shut up.” But here, he goes to great lengths to let you know he’s not exaggerating or being poetic)² **that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.** ³ **For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.**

- **Who do you feel like that about?** Is there any one, or any group, you feel like that about?
 - I certainly feel that way about my **kids**
 - **John Knox**, who saw a massive gospel awakening happen in Scotland in the 16th century, was known to pray, “God, give me Scotland or I die.” And he meant it.
 - **Spurgeon**: “If my hearers (in London) are not converted through my preaching, I feel like *I have lost my life...*”
 - **I know missionaries today** who feel like that about their people; some of you will develop that burden for your friends.
- **Friend**, who is your one? Who’s your many? **Don’t give up on them.** God put them on your heart for a reason!
- Good news, Paul says: They are loved because of the promises God gave to you. Here’s another of those promises: **“Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. Those who go forth with weeping will doubtless come again bringing the harvest with them.”** (Ps. **126:4–5**)

That’s “the answer.” Now...

II. The Warning: We whom God grafted in should never get haughty or grow complacent in our salvation (vv. 17–22)

Paul reasons: ¹⁷ **Now if some of the branches were broken off, and you, though a wild olive branch, were grafted in among them and have come to share in the rich root of the cultivated olive tree,** ¹⁸ **do not boast that you are better than those branches...(explain imagery:**

⁴ Revelation 7:4–8;

PIC) ²⁰ they were broken off because of unbelief, but you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but beware, ²¹ because if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.

- **IOW, if we see that God was willing to cut off branches from his own original tree because of their unbelief, why would we (who have been grafted somewhat unnaturally into this Jewish tree) ever think we can get away with the very things that got them removed?**
- **And what was it that got them removed? *Compromise. Taking their salvation for granted: Giving lip-service to God and going through the religious motions without their hearts really belonging to him.***
- **Y'all, so many Christians today, particularly here in the South, possess Jesus-as-simply-a-fire-escape from hell.**
 - You ask them if they are saved, and they say “yes,” and they will tell you about a time where they prayed a prayer and got baptized, but they just don't live their lives as if Jesus was Lord.
 - That's **especially true for children who grow up** in churches like this one. You are raised in Christian families, and at some point you “get saved” because that's what is expected of you. And you avoid most major sins: like I used to say, “The only drug problem I ever had was getting drug to church 3x a week.” **But in your heart of hearts you know he is not Lord.**
 - You're like the Israelites whose branches got removed. Paul says, “**WAKE UP! If this is what God did to to the sons of daughters of Abraham,** it's what he will do it to you!”
 - **Are you really so foolish and arrogant that you can treat the things of God casually,** or with such disdain, and God will let you get away with it?
 - **I even had one girl tell me once, “I have accepted Jesus as Savior, but not yet as Lord.”** Friend, that category does not exist. He's either Lord of all, or he's not Lord at all.
- **Sometimes Christians will use the doctrine of eternal security to assure themselves of salvation even when they are not living with Jesus as Lord.**

- The **doctrine of “eternal security”** says, “once saved, always saved.” That is: Once you are truly saved, you can never lose it.
- **Illus. Basketball player... Question: Is that what eternal security means?**
- **Look at what Paul says here, vs. 20:** He says that you will be kept **if** you avoid the unbelief that overcame Israel and “stand firm by faith”
- This is similar to what the writer of Hebrews says: “**Take care, brothers lest there be in any of you an evil unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God... For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.**” (**Hebrews 3:12–14**) IOW, only if you maintain your confession of faith and surrender to the end will you be saved.
- **Jesus told a story about a farmer who went out to scatter some SEEDS. Are these saved people who lose their salvation? No unsaved people who for a while...**
 - This **was my basketball partner**
 - I **see these people all the time at church.** They make a decision, and for a while become super-Christians.
 - I see them **sometimes at youth camp...** are they saved and fall away? No, they are like the seeds that spring up quickly; unsaved people who look for a brief time like they are saved people.
 - You see, **the evidence of saving faith** is not the intensity of emotion at the beginning but its endurance over time!
 - **Think of it like a marriage:** You don't judge the sincerity of a marriage vow by the lavishness of the wedding ceremony, but by faithful commitment over a lifetime. **A lot of Christians with God are all ceremony,** no commitment. And just like it would be in a marriage, that's a sham.
 - (Imagine on my wedding night I said, “Ok, I'm going home...”)

Now, you say, “Wait, wait, J.D., are you saying a person can start out saved and then lose it?” (As in, God legitimately saves you but then he revokes it because you are not a good enough Christian?)

- **No.** (Hang with me, this can be confusing), **too many places** in the Bible teach you that once you are truly saved you can’t lose it.
- In **John 10**, Jesus says that once he saves you, he’ll never lose you.
- Remember what Paul said in Romans 8: *All those that God foreknew he predestined... And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.* (Romans 8:29–30). **That means once God puts you ON THAT TRAIN you’re never getting off.**

So, you have two seemingly contradictory truths: *On the one hand, you have the Bible saying that once God saves you, you’ll always be saved; on the other, only if you endure to the end will you be saved.*

- You have to put the 2 together.
- **Here’s what that looks like:** *One of the essential marks of truly saving faith is that it endures to the end.*
- **If your faith endures to the end**, that is evidence you had the salvation you could never lose. If it doesn’t, that means you never had it to begin with.

The real doctrine of eternal security reads like this: “Once saved, always saved”. But also: *“once saved, forever following.”*

- *Having a faith that endures to the end is evidence that you possess the salvation you could never lose. Not enduring to the end is evidence you never had it to begin with.*
- *Saving faith is staying faith.*

So, be cautious—As the writer of Hebrews says, “Beware, lest sins you let go unchecked in you and grow up and choke out your faith!” **Beware tolerating compromise.** Being casual and complacent in spiritual growth.”

- Because see, I know this: **Those who are not actively seeking to grow in their walk with Christ are going backwards.** There is no neutral ground.
- Your spiritual life is like trying to ride a bike uphill. If you’re not actively pedaling you’ll be going backwards.

MY FEAR for many of you in this church is what Paul’s seems to be in Romans 11: *Some of you prayed a prayer, or you got baptized, and now you think, “Great, I’m in! I’m grafted to the tree. I’m in forever.”*

Some of you have **eternal-security-Jesus**. Some of you have **only Prozac-Jesus**, who comforts you and is your BFF in a jam. The only Jesus there is Lord Jesus, and his Lordship is **demonstrated not by the confession of your lips** but the obedience of your life.

- If we were **putting you on trial for being a Christian**, and the only admissible testimony was that of your friends at school, is there enough evidence to convict you?
- If the only evidence we consider is **what your mom observes of you** at home...
- Listen: **If your best friends at school, or on the golf course, don’t know that you are a Christian**, you probably aren’t.
- If your **mom can’t give convincing testimony that you are born again**, it’s probably because you aren’t.

Friend, if God removed those branches from Israel who didn’t really walk with God and submit to his Lordship, won’t he also remove you?

MUSIC

²² **Therefore, consider God’s kindness and severity: severity toward those who have fallen but God’s kindness toward you—if you remain in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.**

Invitation:

- Have you been playing games with God? Feeling like you are ok because you prayed a prayer and gotten baptized but Jesus is not really your Lord? (like last week)
- Never been baptized?

Campus Pastors at Missional Blessing: *How about this: Is there someone God is telling you not to give up on? To renew your prayers for them like Paul renewed his for the Jews?*

