

“Will God Forsake His 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 have an **official launch date** for Capital Hills--now, one caveat: this could change, as it is a live construction site--but **we are planning to launch services October 5/6 weekend.**

Here’s why we do campuses: we are committed to doing **whatever it takes to reach all people.**

And, btw, we really mean all people. Our **Summit en Espanol campus**, which meets at Brier Creek on Sunday mornings, will be adding a **5:30 Sat service at Capital Hills**, as well. We said years ago we would be **committed to following the HS** wherever he led us, and this is where he’s **led us to next. So, exciting times. Amen?**

Romans 11, page 66 of your Romans journals.

Works consulted:

Romans for You, “Romans 11 Outline,” Tim Keller
“To Him Be the Glory Forever. Amen.,” Tony Merida
“Amazing Grace,” Joby Martin
“God’s Future for Israel,” Erwin Lutzer
“Look at the Kindness and Severity of God,” John Piper
“It’s Not Too Late,” Joby Martin
“Glory Thieves,” Matt Chandler
“Your Purpose and God’s Glory,” Tony Evans
“This Is Your Life,” Tony Evans

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’d 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 wild branch into an olive tree and sometimes **you’re just not sure how any of 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. Plus, 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. As I got older, 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.

- Sometimes we'd do this thing called a 'Singspiration'—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 skip these chapters. Some scholars even say that chapters 9–11 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 is asking when Paul gets into all 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? Clearly they've **fallen away from the love** of God. I mean, they rejected Jesus! So, 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 promised Abraham to bless his descendants with salvation and make them** a blessing to the nations. The promise reads as unconditional.

- **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 gives an important warning** that flows out of his answer. Then in the 9 verses of the chapter he bursts into an explosion of praise reflecting on that answer.

- (This weekend, we're going to look at the question and the warning and we'll pick up the explosion of praise all by itself next weekend 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?

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

Paul then offers 5 answers to prove that God has not reneged on his Gen 12 promises.

- **The first we'll call the "Paul argument (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 argument." (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.
 - **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 Jacobs and Isaacs whom he had an actual relationship with he did not cast off.
 - **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 argument" (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?**
 - **Elijah an OT prophet,** found himself on a mountaintop complaining to God that nobody was left in all of Israel who trusted 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 preserved a remnant who still belong to him."
 - This has **always been true.**
- **Not only was the early church birthed by Jews,** throughout history there has always been a small but thriving Jewish-Christian community. People like Mortimer Adler and philosopher Simone Weil. More modern people like **Jay Sekulow, Bob Dylan, Josh Groban, and Kathie Lee Gifford.**
- **If I could just throw this in:** Just when you think it's over--when you're standing on top of Mt Horeb thinking the chapter is closed--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.

¹ Romans 9:6–12

- Which leads me to...²

So, Paul says, “See, for these 3 reasons I say God hasn’t totally forsaken his people.”

But then, vs. 11, Paul hears in his head someone saying,

- “That’s it? That’s the fulfillment of all those promises? **All we should expect** is a small, Jewish-Christian community and the occasional Bob Dylan or Josh Groban?
- *I sure thought Israel as a whole* was going to respond to God; **that the Jewish people would be known as his people.** And it looks like God wasn’t able to pull that off.
- **And the Gentiles his consolation prize?** Were the Gentiles (define) like 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, when you talk to a Duke student and they tell you, “I really wanted to go to UNC but didn’t get in so I came to Duke?” Did God really want the Jews but couldn’t get them so he settled for the Gentiles?

So, in vs. 11 Paul gives his 4th answer, the “future argument.” (vv. 11–12)

- **He then explains that Israel’s response to the gospel is going to unfold 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) Israel’s (mostly) negative response to the gospel opened the door for Gentiles to hear and believe.**
 - Vs. 11, “By their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles...”
 - The fact that Israel missed it opened up a unique opportunity for Gentiles to believe.
 - **In the book of Acts, the gospel’s spread into new cities** follows a pretty predictable pattern:

- The Apostles first preach in the local Jewish synagogue.
- The Jewish reaction there 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 multiethnic movement** comprised primarily 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.)
- **That brings us to Stage 2 (vs. 11): Gentile believers make Israelites “jealous.”** “By their transgression, 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 biological 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.

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

- **Jump down to vs. 25**, “A partial hardening has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved...”
- After this Gentile wave is over, **there will come a time when all Israel will be saved.**
 - By saying, “all Israel,” this doesn’t mean that every single Jewish person alive becomes a Christian, just that there will come a time that there will be such a massive movement to the gospel you could think of it as a national conversion.³
 - **And this national conversion, Paul says, will in turn spawn a worldwide movement of the gospel.** See vs. 12? (This is such a great and encouraging verse)¹² **Now if their transgression brings riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fullness bring!**
 - 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 out one incidental thing we can learn from Paul in all this: *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.** IOW...
- **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**. If one of them walked away from God...
 - I know a man at NRC who prayed for his wayward daughter for 27 years and she just professed faith
 - **John Knox**, who saw a massive gospel awakening happen in Scotland in the 16th century, was known to pray, “God, give

³ F.F. Bruce, *Romans*, 209.

⁴ Revelation 7:4–8;

me Scotland or I die.” And people close to him say that he meant it.

- **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! That anguish is *divine*.
- Good news, Paul says: *They are loved because of the promises God gave to you.* (just like Israel). 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: **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 religious motions without their hearts really belonging to him.

- **Y’all, so many Christians today**, particularly here in the South, would be in this category.
 - **Culturally, they are Christians.** They think church is a good thing, and they are involved somewhere: Maybe this one. But they are not committed. They are not involved in any ministry; they don’t sacrificially give and they couldn’t tell you the last time they told someone about Jesus. **They come to church** about once every couple months, because they are just so busy. Plus, their extended family has a beach house and so they try and get down to it for the weekend whenever the weather is nice. It’s also a real hassle to get the kids out the door on a Sunday morning. (Miraculously, they are able to get ready for school EVERY morning, but nobody ever brings that up. Church is a good thing, especially for the kids, but they’re just not committed.)⁵
 - **Or they believe in Prozac Jesus** (who makes you feel calm, and gets you out of a jam), but you’ve never offered you life to him in full sacrifice and surrender
 - Ask any of these people **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.
- **Aren’t these like the branches that God removed from Israel?**
- I think I’m especially concerned **for children who grow up** in churches like this one.
 - You are raised in Christian families, and that means at some point you “get saved” because that’s what is expected of you, and you live up to expectations.
 - 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.**

⁵ Adapted from Dean Inserra, *The Unsaved Christian*

- **This was me growing up.** 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?
 - **What did he do with Israel?** He removed them!
 - **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. You can’t bifurcate Jesus. Jesus doesn’t have an a la carte option. He’s not a build-a-bear deity. He’s either Lord of all, or he’s not Lord at all.
- **Sometimes Christians will use a perverted version of the doctrine of eternal security** to assure themselves they belong to God.
 - 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**”
- **IF**
- 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.

Now, you say, **“Wait, wait, J.D., are you saying a person can start out saved and then lose it?”**

- **No.** (Hang with me, this can be confusing), **too many places** in the Bible teach you that once you are truly saved you’ll never 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.**

You see, **the evidence of saving faith** is not the intensity of emotion at the beginning but its endurance over time!

- **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 the faithful commitment that follows it.
- A **lavish ceremony without a faithful commitment** would be sham.
- **When it comes to God, a lot of Christians are all ceremony, no marriage.**
- Imagine on my wedding night after the ceremony, I said, "Wow, that was amazing. So glad I made that decision. OK, gotta run, I've got a date!" No change in lifestyle.

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.**

- It's a struggle: Your spiritual life is like trying to ride a bike uphill. If you're not actively pedaling you'll be going backwards.
- It's a fight: if you're not actively killing sin, it is killing you.

MY FEAR for many of you in this church is what **Paul's seems to be for these people to whom he is writing:** that you just take forgiveness for granted, assume it is your birthright, and do the very things that got Israel removed.

- **You prayed your prayer, and you've got "get out of hell free Jesus,"**
- Or you follow **Prozac-Jesus**, who comforts you and is your BFF in a jam.

The only Jesus there is Lord Jesus. Lord of all or not Lord at all. And his Lordship is **demonstrated not by the confession of your lips** but the obedience of your life.

- **Can I ask you to consider:** If we were **putting you on trial for being a Christian**, and the only admissible testimony was that of your friends at school, would there be enough evidence to convict you?
- If the only evidence we considered could come from **what your mom (or spouse) 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? Eyes closed (not so everyone can see!) STAND UP
- 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?*

