



## Rejection of God's Word

### Romans 10:16-11:10

Having spoken on faith and the need to preach the Word of God to the nations earlier in chapter 10, people are wondering what about the Jews who had God's Word but did not believe. Paul first shows how the vast majority of Jews rejected the Word of God and then goes on to explain in 11:1-10 (which ideally is placed with the rest of chapter 11) how God has not rejected all the Israelites, but only some, that is the ones that rejected God's Word.

#### A) The Rejection of God's Word

##### ✦ Romans 10:16 - Many did not respond with belief

*"However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?." (Romans 10:16).*

If the gospel is preached, people will believe, right? Wrong. Many will not believe. Paul quotes Isaiah 53:1 to reinforce the idea that it is not the problem of the message but the problem of the hearer (also see John 12:38). Jesus would even face this problem. We should not allow the rejection of the message impact our commitment to proclaiming His Word.

##### ✦ Romans 10:17-18 - Many heard but did not respond

*"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; "THEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD." (Romans 10:17, 18).*

If they do not all believe, then we do not have to preach to everyone, right? No. Just as God has continually sent His revelation (cf. Psalm 19:4) out to the earth, so we are to consistently proclaim His Word.

"The universal revelation of God in nature, was a providential prediction of the universal proclamation of the gospel. If the former was not fortuitous, but founded in the nature of God, so must the latter be. The manifestation of God in nature, is, for all his creatures to whom it is made, a pledge of their participation in the clearer and higher revelations."<sup>1</sup>

The way the apostle interconnects faith and the hearing of God is important. The way to increase the faith of God's people is to increase the amount of God's Word. However, we must remember that sometimes people can hear the Word and yet not believe (see 10:16). When people desire and believe God's Word, their faith will grow.

##### ✦ Romans 10:19-21- Many knew but did not respond

*"But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? At the first Moses says, "I WILL MAKE YOU JEALOUS BY THAT WHICH IS NOT A NATION, BY A NATION WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING WILL I ANGER YOU." And Isaiah is very bold and says, "I WAS FOUND BY THOSE WHO SOUGHT ME NOT, I BECAME MANIFEST TO THOSE WHO DID NOT ASK FOR ME." But as for Israel He says, "ALL THE DAY LONG I HAVE STRETCHED OUT MY HANDS TO A DISOBEDIENT AND OBSTINATE PEOPLE." (Romans 10:19-21).*

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<sup>1</sup> Romans by Charles Hodge, p. 349  
Romans 10:16-11:10

Israel knew God's Word but rejected it. The usage of 'disobedient and obstinate' in 21 indicate they knew but rejected God's Word. They rejected it so much that God revealed His alternate plans far back during the time of Moses (c.f. Deut. 32:21). Isaiah the great prophet himself in Isaiah 65:1-2 revealed God's distaste for those who repeatedly rejected God's gracious Word.

**Reflection:** How is faith different from knowledge? How many in our church know God's Word but do not respond in belief? Is there an area in your life you have knowledge but not belief?

## B) God's Partial Rejection of Israel

Paul here again (see Ro 6-7) uses this teaching method - question followed by 'May it never be' (also see 11:11). He is very conscious of wrong conclusions including the one presented here.

### ✦ Romans 11:1-4 - God still saves Israelites

*"I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? "Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED THY PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN THINE ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE." But what is the divine response to him? "I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL." (Romans 11:1-4).*

Does this mean God has completely forgotten the Israelites? No!

He first gives himself, of the tribe of Benjamin, as a clear example. God is working with the Israelites to some degree because he chose to work through Paul, formerly Saul. Clearly God knew He would save a certain number of Israelites and make their salvation sure. The word foreknew was used earlier in Romans 8:29.

This is seen in the conversation after Elijah's wrestling with the Baal prophets. Elijah in his despair saw himself as the only prophet. Everyone seemed to have deserted the Lord. God quickly broke up this self despair with news that He knew who were His and they numbered 7000 (1 Ki 19:18). So we should not draw a quick conclusion that God has completely rejected the Israelites.

Israel as a nation was not completely rejected. God has preserved a faithful remnant. We should not be surprised to see the hardened hearts of many Jews.

### ✦ Romans 11:5-10 - God's judgment on unbelievers

*"In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; just as it is written, "GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY." And David says, "LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP, AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM. "LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT, AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER." (Romans 11:5-10).*

God sees to it that He saves some, the remnant. We should not conclude that God has completely rejected Israel (more on this on the rest of the chapter). Others He does not. What of them? God reserves judgment for their rejection of His Word. They knew His Word and yet rejected it and God did reject them (see Is 29:10; Ps 69:22-23).

**Summary:** Some people do not want to be helped. If they are content with their own standard, then they will not seek God's salvation. God will judge those who reject His truth. They are accountable.