

The Gospel Announced: The Gospel is Full of Grace

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[0 : 00] Romans chapter 11 and there's some pens being given out and some sheets if you'd like to take notes and some sheets if you'd like to take notes and turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 11 which is on page 1137

Romans chapter 11 starting in verse 1 I ask then, did God reject his people?

By no means. I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people whom he foreknew.

Don't you know what the scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he appealed to God against Israel? Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars. I am the only one left and they are trying to kill me.

And what was God's answer to them? I have reserved for myself 7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal. So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.

[2 : 05] And if by grace, then it is no longer by works. If it were, grace would no longer be grace. What then? What Israel thought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did.

The others were hardened, as it is written. God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see, and ears so that they could not hear to this very day. And David says, may their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them.

May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever. Thanks, Kirsty.

Well, let's pray and ask for God's help as we look at this together. Father God, we ask that you would pour out your spirit to us.

We pray that our eyes will be opened and our ears unblocked spiritually so we may hear your truth, that it may penetrate our lives, that we may have understanding of our minds, but that it would travel to our hearts, shaping us and changing us, and causing us to see the wonder of your amazing grace, your saving plan for our lives and for this world.

[4 : 11] And we pray above all that it will encourage us and fill our lives with hope. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. I had a problem recently. You might be thinking, I've got lots of problems.

I do, but... A problem with a laptop. It wouldn't turn on properly, and when it did, things didn't work as they were meant to. So we went to the shop, brought it back to the people we'd got it from, pointed out to the customer service that we had bought it in this shop, that it was still under guarantee, and that they should fix it.

Went off and had a chat to his manager, came back, politely said, sorry sir, there's nothing we can do for you. But you made a promise. You promised.

And now you're telling us that you can do nothing for us. We left frustrated and angry. Felt let down and cheated.

[5 : 29] Disappointed. Now we can often feel that same disappointment with God. God has made a promise.

He's promised to save his people. He's given his guarantee. Look back at chapter 10, verse 13. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

This is a great statement on the back of God's promise to save his people. But it all seems like a waste of time.

Because we all have friends and we all have family who are still not Christians. And so it leaves us with this one question.

Can God save? Look at chapter 11, verse 1. After all these great promises of God coming to save, he asked this question in verse 1 of chapter 11.

[6 : 44] I asked then, did God reject his people? Has God gone back on his promise? Did God promise to do something he's just not able to do?

And so we begin to wonder, is God not able to save my friend? Is God not powerful enough to save my family?

You see, the problem is, God is the only one who can save people. But yet so often we seem to think he just can't do it.

And we feel let down. We feel cheated. And in our cries to God, we're disappointed. Well, in response to our disappointments, God wants us to see that his grace is more powerful than we thought and much greater than we could ever imagine.

Three things we're going to learn this morning. First, God's grace is more powerful than we thought. Look at verse 1 again.

[8 : 06] I asked then, did God reject his people? By no means. I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham from the tribe of Benjamin.

If you think God has gone back on his promise, look at me, says Paul. Look at my life. I grew up knowing all about God's promises of salvation.

I can even trace my family line all the way back to Abraham, the one through whom God made these great promises. But the point is, Paul actually ignored God's promise.

Have a look at 1 Timothy. Keep your finger in Romans 11 and go to 1 Timothy. It's on page 1191.

1,191. 1 Timothy. Chapter 1. Here's the man who grew up with the greatest privilege, having all the promises of God.

[9 : 24] And here's what we learn about him. Paul is telling us his story of faith, what he was like before he became a Christian. Let's read from chapter 1, verse 12.

I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me, that's Paul, faithful, appointing me to his service.

Even though I was once a blasphemer. In other words, he hated Jesus. And he was a persecutor.

He used to take Christians, round them up, and put them in prison. And he was a violent man. He was responsible for stoning people to death.

I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of the Lord Jesus was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

[10 : 34] He's telling us, I was a complete rebel. I turned away from God's promise. I turned away from his Christ. Verse 15.

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the worst.

He's saying, would you look at my life? If there is anybody that should not be a Christian, it's me. If there's somebody who God should not have shown grace to, it's me.

I had every opportunity that I could possibly have, but I turned my back on it all and I pushed it away. Verse 16. But for that very reason, I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

if God's grace can save me, the worst of sinners, then God's grace is powerful enough to save anyone who will believe.

[12 : 01] Go back to Romans 11. You see, you may have a friend who's grown up in the church. You may have a loved one, someone within your own family, perhaps a son or a daughter or a mother or a father.

They've been raised within a Christian home and all their life they have heard the promises of God's salvation and people have explained it to them, people have prayed for them, but today they show no interest and perhaps they do everything possible to distance themselves from God and you're wondering, can God save them?

Well, look what it says in Romans 11, verse 1. I ask then, did God reject his people? Verse 2. God did not reject his people whom he foreknew.

You see, God has made a promise, a promise to save his people and those God promises to save, he will save and nothing and no one is going to stop him.

There was a story in the Independent in the paper a while back about a father. His name was Richard Quarry who had rescued his adopted son called Ethan.

[13 : 37] Richard came home one day to discover that his son had been taken by his estranged wife and taken all the way to Zambia. Immediately, he made a promise to himself that he would do what it would take to get his son back.

And the story tells of a nine-month journey, having travelled two and a half thousand miles across country, crossing borders, paying off border guards, he did everything and he brought his son home safely.

Nothing was going to stop him getting his adopted son back. You see, God knows who his children are.

He knows who his children are from before the creation of the world and by his grace he will not stop until all his children are home safely in his arms.

He will break every barrier and he will remove every obstacle until his people are saved. God's grace is more powerful than we ever thought.

[14 : 56] The second big message is this, that God's grace is much greater than we imagined. Look at the second part of verse 2.

Don't you know what the scripture says in the passage about Elijah Elijah and how he appealed to God against Israel? This is the story of Elijah the prophet at the time of King Ahab.

It was the most darkest and bleakest period in the history of God's people. Ahab was described as the king who did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him.

Ahab. And the history was a terrible history. They had all gone in their evil ways but he was top of the pile. Ahab had led the people of God away.

He had set up all kinds of idols and involved in all kinds of different worship and with the help of his notorious wife Jezebel they murdered off any of God's prophets.

[16 : 01] And so we read this in verse 3 as Elijah cries out to God Lord they have killed your prophets torn down your altars and I am the only one left and they are trying to kill me.

As far as Elijah was concerned he was the only Christian left in the whole of the nation. Everybody else had turned away from God or had been killed when there was the opportunity to show themselves they weren't there.

And so angry and disappointed with God he's crying out in his frustration and in his disappointment what about your promises to save people God?

What about all those people who you said you would save? And here I am I'm the only one. And Elijah wants to give up he thinks it's all a waste of time.

verse 4 and what was God's answer to him? I have reserved for myself 7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal.

[17 : 16] You think that I failed? You think that I can't save people? Elijah I have done something much greater than you could ever imagine.

I have saved 7,000 that you know nothing about. You see we can feel like Elijah.

I'm the only Christian in my family. I'm the only Christian in my class or in my year at college. Maybe you go to work every day and you're the only Christian in your workplace and you're wondering has God broken his promises?

Is God able to save those around me? Well look at verse 5 grace. So too at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace and if by grace then it is no longer by works.

If it were grace if it were grace would no longer be grace. You might be the only Christian at present in your family.

[18 : 35] You might be the only Christian amongst your friends. but do not think that God has ever forgotten his promises. I will save those who I have chosen by my grace.

In fact the number that God saves may be greater than we ever imagined. In 1858 a missionary from Scotland by the name of John Patton travelled with his wife Mary to the South Sea Islands known today as the New Hebrides.

The islanders were cannibals ate their defeated enemies they practiced infanticide and widow sacrifice.

Two people had gone in the years before but they had only been there a few minutes when they were butchered and killed and only a few months after John arrived on the island his wife and newborn son had died.

The only Christian on the island and he was eventually driven off after four years of brutal treatment and no sign of any conversion nothing.

[20 : 02] Thirty years later having returned to the island he was able to record in his journal that 12,000 had come to faith.

A hundred and thirty three had been trained up and sent out to the other islands with the gospel. At times you might feel like you are the only Christian and that God has forgotten but God's grace is greater than we could ever imagine.

And the third big message is this that God's grace is more dangerous than we expected.

Look at verse seven what then what about all those who are not saved?

Why are they not saved? Well he gives the answer what Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain because they sought to get it by works but the elect did because it was by grace.

[21 : 18] In other words he's saying you cannot earn your salvation it's always going to be by God's grace. But the question is still there why are some still not saved?

Well look at the answer at the end of verse seven the others were hardened the point is simple but very sobering rejecting God's good grace leads to a hard heart and two examples are given for us here the first one comes in verse eight and the context here is all about God's gracious rescue God in his grace had rescued his people from slavery in Egypt that was their history he had provided for them he had kept them all through their wanderings in the desert he had brought them eventually to the promised land as he said he would but the people turned their back on God they walked away from him and so their hearts were hardened and we read in verse eight as it is written

God gave them a spirit of stupor eyes so they could not see ears so that they could not hear to this very day they had experienced God's grace but they rejected God's grace the second example comes in verse nine and ten and the context here is about God's gracious rule over his people because God in his grace had given them a king they had always got their own kind of king but God gave them a king after his own heart king David who was going to shepherd his people a king to care for them and to provide for them but they rejected this good king they turned against him they fought against him they wanted him dead their hearts in response were hardened and so David says in verse nine may their table become a snare and a trap a stumbling block and a retribution for them and may their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see and their backs be bent forever they had tasted

God's grace but they rejected God's grace can you see that grace is more dangerous than we expected if we reject grace if we continue to push it away and hold it at arm's length it will lead to a hard heart and it works both ways the more we reject God's grace the more we say no no no the more God hardens our heart because look at verse eight it was God who gave them a spirit of stupor it was God who gave them eyes so that they could not see but the more that God hardens our hearts the more we will in turn reject his grace yes God is involved yes we are involved but we are without excuse it's like having a heart disease and we need to take medication we need to take our cholesterol pills to make it right and if we take our pills then the arteries are going to be unblocked and our hearts are going to be healthy but if we don't take those pills then our hearts only get more disease and eventually our bodies become immune to the medication so that they no longer work and that's what it's like with

God's grace if we continue to push against it and reject it our hearts only that we become immune to it now the thing is we have all experienced God's good grace we learned this right at the very beginning of Romans if you want to flick back to Romans chapter 1 we have all experienced God's good grace Romans chapter 1 verse 20 we see God's grace in his creation around us Romans chapter 1 verse 20 for since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen being understood from what has been made so that men and women are without excuse the very fact that we can look out at creation tells us there is a

[26 : 37] God there God in his grace has made himself known not just in creation but also in our conscience chapter 2 verse 15 since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts their consciences also bearing witnesses and their thoughts now accusing now even defending them the very fact that we've got a conscience that we know this is right and this is wrong God in his grace has planted that conscience within each one of us so not only have we got creation not only have we got conscience but above all of this God has shown his grace supremely in giving to us his son the Lord Jesus Christ the one who came into the world who came to rescue us from the greatest slavery possible from slavery to sin rescuing us from death through his resurrection from the grave he has become the risen and eternal king who continues to pour his goodness out upon us each and every day a good and caring king who has promised to bring us to his eternal kingdom where there will be no more death or suffering or pain or evil ever again

God in his grace has given this to us through his son Jesus and if we keep rejecting his grace if we keep pushing it away it will lead to a slow progressive hardening of our hearts God God's grace is more dangerous than we first expected but let us be surprised by God you see at first we might be disappointed but as we've seen with God's grace it is more powerful than we thought and much greater than we imagined if he can save the worst of sinners like Paul then he can save people like you and me because if you are a Christian it is a miracle and God can do that miracle in someone else's life if he can save the 7000 that

Elijah knew nothing about then he can save your friends and your family God's grace is always surprising it works in people and it works in places we never thought possible he is a generous and a good God do not reject his grace and become hard hearted let's pray pray father we admit that we struggle at times we struggle with the fact that we are the only Christian in our college in our work perhaps even within our family and we cry out to

God and as we cry out we are reminded of your amazing grace and your power to save and so we ask father God that you would continue to do your work that you would give us a heart that keeps on praying that you would give us a mouth that keeps on talking and gently explaining the good news of Christ and praying father God that you will bring people into your kingdom we trust you to do this for we cannot and we pray that people would receive your grace and not reject it amen we're going to sing