

1 Kings 19:1-18**Elijah Flees to Horeb**

19 Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. **2** So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, “May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them.”

3 Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, **4** while he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. “I have had enough, LORD,” he said. “Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.” **5** Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep.

All at once an angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat.” **6** He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

7 The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, “Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.” **8** So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he travelled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. **9** There he went into a cave and spent the night.

The LORD Appears to Elijah

And the word of the LORD came to him: “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

10 He replied, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

11 The LORD said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.”

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. **12** After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle

whisper. ¹³ When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Then a voice said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

¹⁴ He replied, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

¹⁵ The LORD said to him, “Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. ¹⁶ Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. ¹⁷ Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. ¹⁸ Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him.”

Romans 11:1-10

The Remnant of Israel

11 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. ² God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what Scripture says in the passage about Elijah—how he appealed to God against Israel: ³ “Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me”? ⁴ And what was God's answer to him? “I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” ⁵ So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. ⁶ And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

⁷ What then? What the people of Israel sought so earnestly they did not obtain. The elect among them did, but the others were hardened, ⁸ as it is written: “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that could not see and ears that could not hear, to this very day.”

⁹ And David says:

“May their table become a snare and a trap,
 a stumbling block and a retribution for them.
¹⁰ May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see,
 and their backs be bent forever.”

Sermon: There is a Remnant

Please turn your Bible to **Romans chapter 11** – we’re looking at **verses 1 to 10** – and we’re going to look at **1 Kings 19** as well. There is an outline if you would like to take down some notes!

Let me **pray** first...

Recap/Intro (Romans 11:1)

[Slide-Recap]

In the last few weeks as we’ve been looking at **chapters 9 and 10** of the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Romans, **we’ve seen how Paul has great sorrow and unceasing anguish in his heart for his fellow Israelites** – because – they have mostly not believed in Jesus and have rejected Jesus.

This unbelief of the Israelites – Paul said – is because – on the one hand – **God chooses whom He will save through faith in Jesus** – and yet on the other hand – Paul said – **the Israelites are responsible for their refusal to believe in Jesus**.

[Slide-Intro]

As we hit chapter 11 – Paul asks the **obvious question** – in verse 1

Did God reject His people (Israel)?

Behind Paul's question is the fact that **Israel are God's people**.

God made promises to people like **Abraham, Isaac, Jacob** and King **David** – and **many others** throughout Israel's history.

So, **has God now totally abandoned them?**

Paul immediately answers – still in verse 1 – **By no means!**

The rest of chapter 11 explains why - **Paul can say No! God has not rejected His people!**

In this chapter the **Apostle Paul** makes the clear statement that ***God has not totally rejected Israel – because Israel's unbelief is not total.***

God has not totally rejected Israel (Romans 11:1-10)

Being a logical person – **Paul lays down evidence** - to support his statement:

The evidence supporting this statement (vv1-6)

[Slide-Evidence 1 – Paul]

1. **1st piece of evidence** – that God has not totally rejected His people is - **Paul himself** (v1) –

Paul himself is an **Israelite** (Jew) – a **descendant of Abraham** – and from the **tribe of Benjamin**.

And **God didn't reject** Paul!

Even though – **Paul** – before he became a Christian and an Apostle – had **totally missed Jesus – rejected Jesus – didn't believe Jesus was the Messiah and Son of**

God – and Paul was so convinced that Jesus was a fraud and blasphemer – that Paul persecuted Christians and rounded them up – and imprisoned them!

Despite all that – God did not reject Paul.

Instead - Jesus confronted Paul – and God chose Paul - and Paul's heart was opened to who Jesus really was (Acts 9) – and Paul became an Apostle – who would bring the Good News of Jesus to the **Gentiles** (non-Jews)

That's a remarkable change – isn't it?

(pause)

Application: For us – it means – no-one is too bad – that God can't grab them - and change them - and use them in a mighty way (as God did with Paul) – but at the same time – **that person must not resist the change!**

(pause)

[Slide-Evidence 2-God foreknew]

2. 2nd piece of evidence – that God has not totally rejected His people is – **v2** – because - God foreknew – or predetermined – to bring the Israelites to faith in Jesus.

Paul's point is that those God foreknew - can't fail to believe.

But - **it's not ALL of the Israelites who believe** – which is Paul's next point...

[Slide-Evidence 3-Remnant]

3. 3rd piece of evidence – that God has not totally rejected His people is - **in vv3-6** - **There's always a remnant of faithful people that God has chosen.**

And Paul uses the **example of the prophet Elijah** – whom we read about in our Old Testament reading from **1 Kings 19** [\[Please turn there now\]](#)

The Elijah story is a **great story**.

Elijah – with God's help – in the previous chapter 18 - **has just defeated 450 false prophets** who were worshipping the false god Baal – and Elijah defeated them right in front of King Ahab – who was also worshipping that false god.

And King **Ahab** tells his wife Queen **Jezebel** what Elijah has done

And Queen **Jezebel** makes a **vow** – to **kill Elijah within 24 hours** (19:2)

What does Elijah do?

Does he remember how God helped him defeat those 450 prophets?

Does he pray?

No! He legs it! As far away as possible (v3)

He **sits under a bush** – and even prays that he might die (v4)

“nobody loves, everybody hates me – I think I’ll go and eat worms!”

But **God doesn't** give Elijah what he wants (which is - to die – and escape his duty)

No!

God sends an **angel** – twice (vv5, 7) – to give him **food and drink**

God strengthens Elijah (v8) for a **40-day journey to Mount Horeb** – the very mountain where God gave Moses the **10 commandments**.

And we're meant to see how important **Elijah's job is - as the prophet of God** telling the people of Israel to obey those commandments!

I just **love the way God deals with Elijah** though.

At the end of v9 and at the end of v13

God says “*What are you doing here, Elijah?*”

God even lets Elijah have his whinge – twice! In vv10, 14.

Elijah’s whinge is:

I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too

After Elijah has had his say.

God deals with Elijah – and **comes to him**.

He **sends a wind** to the mountain – but God is not in the wind (v11)

Then God **sends an earthquake** – but God is not in the earthquake (v12)

Then God **sends fire** – but God’s not in the fire, either! (v13)

No! God is in a **gentle whisper** (v13) – “*what are you doing here, Elijah?*”

Illustration: When I’m teaching scripture at school.

And the kids are talking and not listening

*Sometimes – I **talk louder** – then **they talk louder** – so I talk even louder – it doesn’t work that well!*

*Sometimes – I **tell them to be quiet** – and that doesn’t work too well either.*

*Strangely enough – if I **talk softly** – like **God’s whisper** – they have to stop and **listen carefully!***

That's what God is doing with Elijah

In amongst all the chaos – **God whispers to Elijah** – and He **wants Elijah to listen carefully**!

Application:

For us – can we see how we **might be like Elijah?**

God helps us through a difficult situation. Then the next difficult problem turns up – and **we think God won't help this time** – **we run away** – or we **get depressed** – or we **give up** – or we **want to die!**

Can we also see how **God deals gently and patiently with Elijah?**

Are we listening for God's gentle whisper into our lives?

God's gentle whisper says to me: *"It's going to be alright, Paul! My Word says – have I not commanded you to be strong and courageous, Paul? Don't be afraid Paul, do not be discouraged Paul, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go!"*

Then in vv15-18 – **God gives Elijah some important instructions** [anoint Hazael king of Aram; anoint Jehu King of Israel and anoint his successor Elisha] **Elijah is to continue with his job as prophet** – **telling people to stop worshipping the false god Baal.**

But it's **v18 that's important here** – God tells Elijah – that **Elijah has got his sums all wrong** – he's not the only one left who has not rejected God – God has

RESERVED (chosen/elected) 7000 other people in Israel – who haven't worshipped the false god, Baal.

Back to Paul then – and Romans 11:3-4 – and **Paul is quoting what Elijah said to God and what God said to Elijah.**

Paul's point is – **God has always worked with a remnant of His people whom He has chosen to be faithful.**

Paul's saying – **there was a remnant of believers in Elijah's day**

And v5 – there's also a remnant of believing Israelites in Paul's day – Paul's one of them – as are - **the Jews in the Church of Rome** - whom Paul is writing to!

And notice a key point – vv5-6 – *this remnant is chosen by God's grace* – God's undeserved favour on those people in the remnant – and it **has nothing to do with the people earning or working - so that they are chosen.**

Application: And it works the same for us today. **We are chosen by God's grace** - to be followers of Jesus by having faith in His death and resurrection.

We can't work for our forgiveness. Jesus died for that!

We can't work for a place in heaven and eternal life. Jesus rose from the dead for that!

If we work for it – **we're making it about us – instead of about God's grace in sending Jesus!** That's Paul's point here!

(pause)

Now – by definition – a **remnant** is a minority of the people – not a majority.

Which brings us to Paul's next argument – in vv7-10

That is –the majority (many) of the Jews have been hardened!

Many have been hardened! (vv7-10)

Paul describes a **process** in verse 7

[Slide-Hardening]

Israel sought the righteousness of God ever so earnestly, but when confronted with the choice of getting God's righteousness by "works" or as a "gift" (of grace), the majority sought it by works; while the "elect" (the chosen ones) accepted it as a gift. And so, then - Paul says - the majority were hardened!

Application: You see for some people – the **idea of not being able to work for - or earn - our salvation** - is a **difficult pill to swallow**. There's a tendency for people to "try harder" or "work harder" – or to be "gooder" and **that will somehow make them right with God.**

This can mean some people won't accept the free gift of forgiveness and eternal life – from Jesus – because they can't do it themselves!

Most other religions have the concept that paradise awaits those who work to be accepted by their god/gods but there's no assurance that people have done enough work to get to paradise!

*Whereas Christianity says – we can never please God perfectly – we need **a perfect one** to do that for us – and that's Jesus. Believing in Jesus – doesn't diminish our efforts to please God and live an obedient life. The difference is – for a Christian,*

good works are done out of heartfelt gratitude towards Jesus and are done in response to being saved by Jesus and done in response to having assurance that we are saved for Heaven. Whereas in other religions, good works are done so that the person might be saved – but there's no assurance/guarantee!

Back to Paul's point – those **people of Israel** who did not **accept the gift of God's grace in sending Jesus** – which were the majority of the people of Israel – were **"hardened"**.

And Paul goes on to say that this **"hardening"** was even foretold in the Old Testament (vv8-10) –

In v8 – **Paul quotes Moses** (Deuteronomy 29:4) and **Isaiah** (Isaiah 29:10).

Moses told the Israelites that although they witnessed God's wonders – **God has not given them** '*a mind that understands or eyes that see or ears that hear*'.

Isaiah tells the Israelites **God has given them** '*a spirit of stupor*' – which means they have **no spiritual understanding**.

As we said a few weeks ago: **God hardens those He wants to harden** and **all those he hardens - want to be hardened!**

Then in vv9-10 - **Paul also quotes King David** - from **Psalms 69:22-23**.

This psalm is about **a righteous person experiencing persecution** [*that person experiencing persecution - could be David being persecuted or Jesus being persecuted*]. In this psalm **the persecuted one** prays for God's judgment and retribution on the persecutors.

Paul's using the Psalm to say **those Israelites who rejected Jesus are persecutors of Jesus** – and they **deserve punishment**.

And the prayer against the persecutors - is that their **table** – **which is a symbol of security, well-being and community enjoyed in their home** – will somehow be turned into the opposite -into ***a snare, a stumbling block and retribution for them!***

The prayer also prays – for ***their eyes to be darkened so they cannot see*** – and prays that their ***'backs be bent forever'*** – which gives the idea of the persecutors being **weighed down with heavy burdens** in their lives!

It's a **sad picture** of what happens to anyone who resists the message of Jesus.
They resist Jesus - so God hands them over to their resistance and confirms it!

Application for us

Now we've been **mainly talking about Israel this morning**.

In Elijah's day and in Paul's day – there was a **remnant of faithful believers and a majority of unbelievers whom God hardened**.

What can we take home today – as Christians living in a mostly non-Christian country?

Here's **3 things**...

[Slide-App1]

1. 1st - God remains faithful to His people, regardless of external circumstances.

As **Christians in Australia**, who are in the **minority**, we know from today's

passages - that **God is faithful and will not abandon us** - even when as Christians **we are marginalized; put under pressure or even persecuted.**

[Slide-App2]

2. 2nd - **God always preserves a faithful group – a remnant - even when it appears that faith is waning or under threat.**

As Christians in a faithful remnant; we can find strength and solidarity in knowing that we are not alone (like Elijah thought) – and we can have confidence in knowing that God continues to work through a faithful few to accomplish His purposes.

[Slide-App3]

3. 3rd - **Don't give up!**

Elijah felt like giving up!

Sometimes I feel like giving up!

Perhaps some of you do too?

Is it God's idea for us to give up?

To use one of Paul's expressions – **By no means!**

It's Satan's idea for us to give up.

God dusted Elijah down – and stood up on a great mountain and empowered him – and sent him back to continue the work God had for him!

God has His work for us to do here at Toukley!

[Slide-Gal 6:9]

So, let's adopt this mantra from the **Apostle Paul** from **Galatians 6:9**:

⁹ Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Let's pray

Father God, thank you that you remain faithful to your people and you will not abandon us.

Thank you that you always keep your promises.

Thank you that you always preserve a faithful remnant – and that you continue to accomplish your purposes through your faithful people.

Help us not to give up when we face struggles – help us to not become weary in doing good, knowing at the proper time, we will a harvest, if we do not give up!

Father, we ask through your Spirit and your Word proclaimed, that there would be a revival in our nation. We pray this in Jesus' precious name. Amen!