

SERMON STUDY SUMMARY

Romans Part 23 – Our Faithful God

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INTRODUCTION

Paul, like us, wrestles with many questions of life and questions of God. In Romans 9-11 Paul teaches us using the example of Israel and their relationship with God – and of God, His sovereignty, and His ways.

1. God is for you, has a tender heart toward you, (Rom 8:31), has a purpose for your life, and has your best interests at heart. Take heart in knowing that God can work out your circumstances for your ultimate good and His ultimate glory. Trust Him in humble dependence.
2. God is Sovereign. He has the right to do what He pleases, and his passion is to bring all people back into relationship with Himself, through His grace received by faith (Rom 9). He chose the Jewish people, and later, Christ followers, to reveal His reality and truth to the world – that God is God and He is in control.
3. God is fair and patient, extending grace and giving everyone the opportunity to be a friend of God (Rom 10:12, 2 Peter 3:9).
4. God is faithful (Romans 11). God chose Israel to reveal His reality to the world. When they failed, God remained faithful. Temporarily shelving Israel (Rom 11:25), God chose to reveal Himself through the church until it is Israel's time again.

Paul asks two questions in Romans 11.

1. Did God reject the Jewish people? Paul says NO. He himself was a Jew used by God to point people to God, and there were many more Jews following Jesus (Rom 11:1-6) – Paul was not alone. God only rejects those Jews trusting in their own works rather than grace for their salvation, allowing them to be hardened in their pride (Rom 11:7-10).
2. Did the Jews stumble so as to fall beyond recovery (Rom 11:11)? Again, Paul says NO. God is not through with Israel yet. The false teaching of Replacement Theology says the church is a spiritual Israel, replacing Israel and claiming her blessings. Rather, God remains faithful to His promises to Israel (Psalm 89:30-33) and to the church.

When God empowered the church to introduce people to the good news of Jesus, it allowed the Gentiles to have a relationship with Jesus, and, perhaps, provoke envy among the Jews and lead them to Jesus (Rom 11:11-15). Is your Christian life so attractive that those far from God would want what you have (Matthew 5:13-16)? Is your missional lifestyle attracting unbelievers or turning them away?

In using the illustration of the firstfruits and the olive tree, Paul tells us that as Abraham (the firstfruits) was holy so would we be who put our faith in God. As we're grafted into the olive tree, a symbol of Israel (Jeremiah 11:16a), we will draw sustenance from the root, who is Christ. The Christian's heritage is through the Jews, and because of this we must not become arrogant toward the Jews or complacent to our missional purpose, lest the church, like Israel, lose its witness and impact (Rom 11:20-25). Since God is faithful and will keep his promises to Israel even in their failures, He will also be faithful to you, even in your failures. Trust in His promises. He will never let you down. God is unfathomable and amazing (Rom 11:33-36). He has revealed Himself in part, but we can know in that revelation that He is loving and trustworthy.

Is there someone in your life who is far from God whom He has put on your heart (Rom 9:1)? Don't give up on them. Keep serving them and praying for them.

SERMON STUDY GUIDE

IN – PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. What is your most burning question that you would like to ask Jesus?
2. What is the importance of the Jewish heritage to the Christian faith?

UP – PURSUE GOD

Read *Romans 11:1-7, 25-32*

3. What reasons does Paul give that indicates God has not wholly cast away Israel? What are God's purposes for Israel?

Read *Romans 11:17-24*

4. Who are the "branches" that have been broken off from the root and why were they broken off? Who are the "wild olive shoots" and how were they grafted in? What should the attitude of the wild shoots be toward the natural branches?

OUT – PURSUE MISSION

5. Why is there sometimes a disconnect between the Christian message and the Christian life? How can you as a Christ-follower guard against being self-absorbed and complacent? What steps can you take towards living a more mission-focused life?

Read *Romans 11:33-36*

6. What is one truth or characteristic of God that you hold tightly to? What should be our response as we reflect on and explore the mysteries of God? Turn that truth or characteristic of God into a time of group worship and praise.

For Personal Reflection / Prayer:

Pastor Henry challenged us to consider those in our life who we feel are far from God and unlikely to come to faith in Christ, and to continue praying for them. Who might this be in your life? How can you pray for them? What encouragement can you draw from Romans 11?

THE WORD (NIV)

Romans 11:1-7

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,

Romans 11:17-24

¹⁷ If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, ¹⁸ do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. ¹⁹ You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." ²⁰ Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble. ²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.

²² Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. ²³ And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. ²⁴ After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!

Romans 11:25-32

Romans 11:33-36

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