

THE BOOK OF ROMANS
"Is God Finished with Israel?"
Romans 11:1-6

INTRODUCTION

1. God's attitude toward Israel never fettered His liberty to reject those who would not accept His terms of faith salvation (9:5-29).
2. Paul has shown Israel's opposition to faith salvation which brought about the situation of which the prophets had spoken earlier (9:30-10:21).
3. From the last verses of chapter 10, it might appear that God's long-suffering toward Israel was utterly exhausted and judgment was about to be fulfilled. This is not so. Why? 1. Because the Church has displaced Israel for the present (chaps. 9, 10). 2. The national position and blessing of Israel will yet be realized (chap. 11). Consider these truths:-

1. A QUESTION ASKED v. 1

a. Stated

Here it is in bold unvarnished language. Has God cast off His people (cf. Ps. 94:14)? Obviously the reference is to the Jewish nation.

b. Answered

In two ways the answer to the stated question is "no:" 1) The use of a particular negative word in the question expects a negative reply, and 2) the use of Paul's familiar phrase "God forbid" (6:3, 15). No doubt is left about God's position notwithstanding the teachings of all the covenant theologians!

2. AN ANSWER PROVIDED vv. 1a-5

a. Personally v. 1

Paul goes further than a mere rejection of the thought even though it is very emphatic. He brings forth his own case and makes three statements about himself:

1) I am an Israelite

This shows by unassailable proof that God has not cast Israel off. He, Paul, is saved and that proves that not all Jews rejected Christ and God did not cast off all Jews!

2) I am seed of Abraham

This shows the covenant connection. Not an extra biblical covenant, but a biblical one (Gen. 12:1-3; cf. Isa. 41:8).

3) I am tribe of Benjamin

By this Paul shows his tribe was not of

the rebels from the north, but the only one which stayed with Judah in the south (cf. Phil. 3:5). Paul's pedigree shows God's attitude towards the nation is not absolute rejection.

b. Historically v. 2-4

1) Stated v. 2a

Again here is a bold word. God did not cast (same verb as v. 1) His people whom He foreknew. Amos tells the story fully. Note his account of judgment on nations (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6). Then note his word about Israel (3:1, 2). What a magnificent word!

2) Illustrated vv. 2b-3

The case of Elijah is presented (literally "in Elijah" cf. Mark 12:26 "in bush"). The O.T. account (1 Kings 18, 19) is indeed thrilling. The verb "plead" is equivalent to "complain of." Four considerations were presented a) Israel had killed prophets (cf. 1 Kings 19:10). b) Israel had dug under or down the alters (1 Kings 19:10). i.e. neglected worship of God. c) Elijah left alone i.e. He was the only prophet left or true worshipper. d) Israel sought to kill Him (1 Kings 19:1,2).

3) Responded v. 4

God's answer to all of this "I have reserved for myself" (i.e. as my possession and service) 7000 men who are of such a character as not to have ever bowed the knee to Baal. The feminine article used with "Baal" suggests this heathen deity was androgynous (both sexes). This may be, but not proven historically. To worship Baal (sun-god) was greatest Israelite apostacy.

c. Presently v. 5

What a word--"even so then" or "thus therefore" in accordance with Paul and the Elijah instance, there is a permanent principle. While the nation lies fallen and faithless, there is a reserve from the unbelieving mass which has come to be and exists in accord with God's electing grace.

CONCLUSION Grace is the only way by which the remnant obtains salvation. The "if" (v. 6) takes up v. 5 and says, let us understand what this involves. Succinctly it is this: grace and works are two separate principles. To confuse them is to suggest that grace and works would fail to show themselves what they really are. They would "become" what in their essence they are not. They would give up their specific character. So be it.