

I. Introduction

- A. I recently ran across this slogan (thanks to friends on Facebook)— “*I Stand with Israel*”
1. Quick research on “*Stand with Israel*” show a variety of motivations behind slogan
 - a. Some were purely **political**; Israel is an ally in a part of the world where we have few
 - b. Some were **humanitarian**; much devastation in Israel due to the constant conflict
 2. Much support seems driven, not by politics, but by one particular theological viewpoint.
 - a. Many believe that God’s plan for the end the world involves the Jew’s land and nation
 - b. The specific details can differ widely, but the basic theory plays out like this—
 - 1) Things get worse until Antichrist will rise to oppose God (“*in the world*,” **1 Jn 4:3**)
 - 2) Persecution will get so bad that Christ will come secretly to “*rapture*” His church
 - 3) Jewish people will be converted of Christ and become evangelists of the church
 - 4) Persecution increases until Antichrist is defeated by Christ’s return Armageddon
 - 5) Christ then begins millennial reign after which is final resurrection and judgment
 - c. My own personal end-time scenario is less complicated—Jesus returns and we win!
 - d. Key for beginning of prophesies is 1948—*return of the Jews to their homeland*
 - 1) When Israeli state began, clock started ticking on “*this generation*” (**Mt 24:34**)
 - 2) That was 69 years ago, almost 2 generations past time the supposedly clock reset
 - e. If God’s plan for the end-time goes through Palestine, we must stand with Israel!
- B. But didn’t God promise Abraham that He was giving them the land forever? (**Gen 13:15**)
1. That promise becomes the fundamental fulcrum of all God’s dealings with Israel in OT
 - a. That covenant included the land, when would go to Abraham descendants “*forever*”
 - b. So after the holocaust, Jews returned to the land that was promised to them forever
 - c. Sometimes that word “*forever*.” I don’t think it means what you think it means
 - 1) Instructions for the grain offer have it lasting in Israel “forever” (**Lev 6:22** ESV)
 - 2) Someone told me of clergy claim right to the 10% of tithe (**Num 18:19** ESV)
 2. The same word “*forever*” that is used for land promise is used for the rest of the Law
 - a. They were both to last forever— until they were fulfilled forever (**Gal 3:16-17, 19**)
 - b. Law was added to the promises to Abraham—both Law and promise fulfilled in Christ
 - c. Paul here ties the Law and the Promise together and says both were complete in Christ

- C. So why bring all this up today? I thought we were studying Romans and *Unashamed*?
1. Paul says things in **Rom 11** that make it sound like Jews still have a place in God plans
 - a. The text used to suggest all the Jews are going to “get saved” us here (**Rom 11:25**)
 - b. Paul suggests that God gifts and his call to the patriarchs cannot be revoked (**11:27-28**)
 - c. Other things here make it sound that God still has a place for the Jews in His plans
 2. Well, because the Jews do still have a place in God’s plans— just not in real estate!
 - a. In **Rom 11**, Paul isn’t talking about land or nation of Israel but the Jews (**Rom 10:1**)
 - 1) You can have a heart for God and not “*stand with Israel*,” that is the Israeli state
 - 2) Don’t know if you have heart for God or His word and not care for Jewish people
 - 3) Then, Jesus was a Palestinian in occupied country— *need solidarity there too!*
 - b. In **Rom 11**, Paul is still wrestling with question, “*Did God break promise to Jews?*”
 3. Remember, Paul is writing to a church that is divided into Jewish and Gentile factions
 - a. Keeps says Jews & Gentiles are alike (**Rom 1:16, 3:9, 3:22-23, 3:29, 9:24, 10:12**)
 - b. *Why the broken record? Why does Paul keep with the “No Jew and Gentile” routine?*
 - c. I guess because the church needs to keep hearing! And maybe we need to hear it too?
 - d. Are there things about equality in Christ in our cultural setting we keep forgetting?
 - 1) Paul has taken 11 chapter (by the time we’re done today) to pound one basic point
 - a) The Jews and their background in the Law and traditions. Means nothing.
 - b) The Roman position and status in the culture. None of that means anything
 - 2) Grace means all the same; Grace means no one has an inside track to God’s favor.
 - 3) Why do you think you have inside track? *Think carefully before you deny it!*
 4. Let’s quickly hit the highlight reel of a long and difficult chapter (*more in small group*)

II. The Kindness and Sternness of God: Three Questions

A. First Question: “*Did God Reject the Jews?*” (**Rom 11:1-10**)

1. Paul uses himself as exhibit A— “*Hey, I’m a Jew; God didn’t reject me.*” (**Rom 11:1**)
 - a. He expands on that with the story of Elijah— who thought he was the only one left
 - b. God told his mopey prophet that there were 7000 who hadn’t bowed knee to Baal
 - c. This is referred to as “*remnant theology.*” God always has a faithful remnant (**11:5-6**)
2. God is working among Jews (and Gentiles) today just as He did in the Old Testament
 - a. God didn’t reject them; they were hardened and rejected God and His grace (**11:7**)
 - b. God has not rejected the Jews; there is a faithful remnant—Paul is himself exhibit A

B. Second Question: “Did the Jews Fall Beyond Recovery?” (Rom 11:11-16)

1. **Question:** “Have Jews who missed the boat missed the boat forever?” (Rom 11:1a)
 - a. He said God didn’t reject the Jews because he had preserved a righteousness remnant
 - b. Now he asks, “Have those Jews not part of the remnant simply missed out forever?”
 - c. Like the question, answer is clear (11b-12). Jewish rejection meant Gentiles inclusion.
 - 1) In Acts, Paul goes first to the Jews, is rejected, then is received by the Gentiles
 - 2) So the rejection of the Jews led to the explosion of the gospel among the Gentiles
2. But how does this answer go with that question? Remember Paul’s audience here
 - a. He is writing to “*first to Jews, then to Gentiles*” mixed and mixed-up church at Rome
 - 1) He’s wants them to know this mixed-church thing is a God-thing and a good thing
 - 2) So if the Jews were slow to catch on, God used slowness to bring Gentiles along
 - b. Now they can TOGETHER become what God wanted the church to for the world
3. That’s what every church must seek to be—every tribe, language, people and nation
 - a. That is the picture of the worship around the throne room of heaven (Rev 5:9-10)
 - b. That describes the church that Jesus bought; what Paul wants for this church in Rome
 - c. What God wants of us—no black/white, rich/poor, old/young, Democrats/Republicans
4. Some knot heads at Rome were evidently not following Paul— *so there’s 3rd question*

C. Third Question: “Does This All Make the Gentiles Superior?” (Rom 11:17-24)

1. Paul introduces this question with his metaphor of grafted olive branches (11:17-18)
 - a. **Illustration:** Jews are the cultivated olive tree whose brances have been pruned away
 - b. Gentiles are wild olive tree branches that have now been grafted into the tree
2. **Question:** Doesn’t that mean that we (Gentiles) are the ones who are important? (11:19)
 - a. Paul says we should take this pruning process as serious personal warning (11:20-21)
 - b. Fundamental truth Paul is preaching is there is no difference between Jews & Gentiles
 - 1) Jews rejected faith and were rejected; Gentiles had faith and were accepted
 - 2) But if the process is ever reversed, that rejection and acceptance will be as well
3. So Paul transitions from argument to invitation, from answers to pleading (11:22-23)
 - a. God is still in the pruning and grafting business—don’t take your salvation for granted
 - 1) God hasn’t turned into a teddy bear who winks at sin and lowers his standards
 - 2) The fact that God saves us means there’s still something for us to be saved from!
 - b. The grace of God means that salvation is possible—not that salvation is easy!

III. Conclusion

- A. OK, so why all the hymns this morning on grace? We haven't talked about grace.
1. We've talked about Jews, remnant theology and olive trees— not much about grace.
 - a. We sang old hymns about grace (Amazing Grace, Wonderful Grace of Jesus)
 - b. **Factoid:** Few (as in none) of our contemporary PPT songs use the word “grace”
 - c. **Media Shout:** Is leading presentation software programs designed for worship
 - 1) They recently did a list of the Top-Ten worship songs on several themes
 - 2) Their top-Ten worship songs on “Grace” were all old hymns (*no contemporary*)
 - 3) I'm sure there are contemporary songs on grace; why don't we know any of them?
 2. **Real Question:** Why did we sing “grace” hymns and sermon wasn't about “grace”
 - a. I suggested “*O the Depth and the Riches*” as the invitation song—it's from **Rom 11**
 - b. Hymn is on grace. Roger thought that's where I was going; chose other grace songs
 - c. So we ended a little off-subject by the time we got to our hymn, which is perfect!
- B. Because that is exactly how Paul ends up at the end of Romans 11—off-subject!
1. In the overall context of the argument of **Romans 11**, Paul is basically out-of-context.
 - a. He mentions sternness and kindness of God, that leads him to think about God
 - b. He is reminded about God's glory and unsearchable wisdom— and he must praise!
 - c. The thought of God leads him seamlessly goes from argument to warning to worship
 2. This is doxology—a word of glory. This is a word spoken to God and about God
 - a. This is Paul reminding himself that God forever remains God— and Paul is not.
 - 1) We can't know God fully! We can't tell God anything or give God anything!
 - 2) All we can do is fall before God and give Him worship and glory and praise
 - b. God is forever God—and we are not. What is nodded the very essence of worship
 - c. And you know what? I need to hear those words occasionally— and so do you!
 3. When you get down to it, that is the essence of worship, is it not? (**Rom 11:33-36**)
- C. God is God. Consider the kindness and sternness of God this morning.
1. Sternness to those who persist in their sin; kindness to those who believe
 - a. Jesus died to offer you the choice between those two—otherwise there is no choice
 - b. Believe in Christ. Repent of your sins. Meet him at the cross in baptism.
 2. Oh. The depth and the riches of God's saving grace—that's what is offered today