

## Did God Cast Off His People?

In Romans ten Paul showed that Israel had refused to hear the gospel preached to them and that on the other hand, Gentiles had accepted the gospel. He asks, *"I say then, Did God cast off his people?"* to which his response was, *"God forbid"* (Rom. 11:1). Yet the fact was indisputable: Israel was lost. If Israel was lost, why were they so if God had not cast them off?

Paul answers. He was an Israelite yet he had not been cast off. Then he gave another example of some who were not cast off while others of their own people were. Elijah lamented, *"Lord, they have killed thy prophets, they have digged down thy altars, and I am left alone and they seek my life"* (Rom. 11:3). But it was not as it appeared to Elijah for God said, *"I have left for me 7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal"* (Rom. 11:4). Indeed, most in Elijah's day displeased God, but there was a remnant who had not and most in Paul's day rejected Christ, but there was a remnant who had not. Both the 7,000 and those of Israel in Paul's day who had believed in Jesus were spared. The sorry state of Israel was their own doing. It could have been otherwise.

So Paul said, *"Even so at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace"* (Rom. 11:5). But if it was *"by grace, it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace"* (Rom. 11:6). So Paul asks, *"What then? That for which Israel seeketh for, that he obtained not: but the election obtained it"* (Rom. 11:7). Why did the election obtain what Israel, as a whole, sought for but did not get? The election obtained it because they sought it in the proper way. They had heard the gospel, believed it and called upon the name of the Lord and been saved just as Joel had promised would happen. *"But the rest were hardened."* *"According as it is written, God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear"* (Rom. 11:7f). How could God give them a heart of stupor, unseeing eyes, unhearing ears and still not have cast them off? David wrote, *"Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompense unto them. Let their eyes be darkened that they may not see, and bow down their back always"* (Rom. 11:9f; Psa. 69:22f).

Israel wanted to justify herself. Justification by the works of the Law appealed to her vanity. This was her table! And she was so committed to justifying herself that she would not consider, see or hear otherwise. Did she hear? Yes, but she didn't hear. *"Go to this people and say, in hearing ye shall hear and not understand and in seeing ye shall see and shall not perceive"* (Isa. 6:9f). Did she hear? Certainly she heard: *"But I say, Did they not hear? Yea verily their sound went out into all the earth ..."* (Psa. 19:4).

They knew. But they were neither hearing nor listening! God did not cast off his people. Their rejection was their own doing. This is the lesson Paul emphasizes again and again in this midsection of Romans.

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