

## **In step with Jesus 181**

**December 7, 2025**

**Ket Text: “Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, ‘My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.’” (Isaiah 46:9- 10)**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Last week we learned that outward performance of the works of the law did not bring salvation to the Jews, neither will it bring salvation to us. Of the Jews, Jesus, quoting Prophet Isaiah, said, “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me;” (Mathew 15:8). God is after our hearts, not our performance. He knows that the human heart is helplessly evil and that the heart is deceitful above all things (Jeremiah 17:11). Although we try to do good things, only the grace of God can keep our motives pure and selfless. The good news is that the grace we need to be pure in heart is available to all of us. God’s purpose is to save everyone, including the Jews who rejected his offer of grace while trying to establish their own righteousness.

Today we will start reading Romans chapter 11 as Paul continues his exposition of God’s purpose for the salvation of Israel and the entire world. The main point is that nothing can prevent God's plan to save Israel and the world. He is accomplishing His purposes despite Israel’s failures and rejection of Him. Let us read verses 1 to 16 of Romans chapter 11 and see what we can learn about the immutability of God’s purposes.

### **ROMANS 11: 1-16**

I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? 3 “Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.” 4 But what is God's reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” 5 So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. 6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise, grace would no longer be grace. 7 What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, 8 as it is written, “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.” 9 And David says, “Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; 10 let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever.” 11 So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means!

Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. 12 Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

13 Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry 14 in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous and thus save some of them. 15 For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? 16 If the dough offered as first fruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

## **REFLECTIONS**

From the first chapter of the book of Romans, and even through his life and mission, as we read in the book of Acts, Paul's love for Israel remains evident. While he was risking his life to preach to the Gentiles, his heart was yearning for the salvation of his people, Israel. Misunderstood and persecuted by his people, Paul dedicated the entire book of Romans to explaining the foundation of his ministry, which is God's plan of salvation for the entire world, and the special position of Israel in that plan. Romans chapter 11 presents the climax of Paul's argument about the immutability of God's plan and purpose for and through Israel.

In today's reading, Paul made it clear that God has not rejected Israel, but he continues to point out Israel's failure and the consequence of that failure. By disobeying and rejecting God's way, Israel had received the spirit of blindness. Their eyes could not see, their ears could not hear, thus, they walked in darkness and stumbled upon everything. Even their table, which represents blessings and provisions, became a snare and an obstacle to them. In their blindness and deafness, they became perpetual slaves to their enemies and controlled by Satan. The worst of all is that they were ignorant of their true condition.

The condition of Israel appeared hopeless, but Paul reassures us that God did not and will not leave Israel in that condition. God had made an everlasting covenant with Israel, but Israel did not understand that the purpose of that covenant was not to make them fat and self-conceited but to save the entire world through them. But God's purpose must stand, despite Israel's disobedience. Therefore, He pruned out the unfruitful branches of Israel, as it were, and grafted the Gentiles. Paul's argument is that God did not cut off the unfruitful branches to destroy Israel, but to provoke Israel to jealousy so that they would return to Him for restoration. Israel's failure worked for the salvation of the Gentiles, and their restoration would work much more deliverance to the world. What a marvelous God! We can trust that He, who did not abandon Israel will never abandon us. He will fulfil all His promises to us, but we can avoid shame and embarrassment by staying close and faithful to Him.