

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Sermon Title: The Impossible (At Least In Human Understanding), Romans 11

Date Preached: June 24, 2018

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INTRODUCTION: As we have been going through this series of messages we understand that Paul wrote this letter to Christians—who were being persecuted in Rome. He was writing to Jews who had come to faith in Christ. And, he was writing to Gentiles who'd come to faith in Christ. Now these Jewish believers had grown up in families where they had learned the scriptures—what we call the Old Testament today—many of them had the scriptures memorized. And, then they had come to the realization that Jesus is the Messiah and they trusted in Jesus. And, then you have this renegade group—the Gentiles. Who really had no type of spiritual upbringing, if anything it was some type of pagan belief and then all of the sudden here they were trusting repenting of sin and trusting Jesus as Savior and Lord and these Jews and these Gentiles were worshiping together it happened in Rome, it happened in Act, it started happening all over the known world where people believed that Jesus was the Messiah.

First: IF YOU THINK YOU ARE THE LAST PERSON STANDING, YOU'RE NOT!

SCRIPTURE: Romans Chapter 11: 1-6 *“¹ 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.”*

EXPLANATION: When Paul asked the question at the beginning of the chapter “I asked then did God reject his people?” What Paul is referring to as Romans chapter 10 talks about was the sun and the state of the Israelites who have rejected God.

And, he talked about how Isaiah prophesied that the people did not seek God. So the natural conclusion would be God has rejected his people. He gives the illustration here of Elijah.

We've studied about what the Bible says about Elijah during our midweek Bible study. He was such an incredible prophet of God. He raised the dead, he spoke for God, and at times he knew the future. But, he was only a man and in a moment of self-pity, he thought he was the last person standing for God.

ILLUSTRATION: In what must have been an incredible visual, Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to a duel. Either the Baals were god or God was God. The false prophets built an altar and called on Baal to bring fire out of heaven to consume the altar. They did it all day. Elijah taunted them. He said to the prophets of Baal "Louder...maybe he deep in thought, busy, traveling or even sleeping." And so those false prophets yelled louder and worked themselves into a frenzy.

When they had given up hearing from Baal, Elijah set up an altar and had water poured over it three times...and then he called fire out of heaven to consume the sacrifice.

EXPLANATION: After being such a hero and taking a stand for God, Elijah became afraid and went into hiding. We wonder about this – how did such a man of God – a man who knew the mind of God, a man who at times knew the future and even raised people from the dead – caused rain to cease for three and a half years and caused it to rain later. God fed him through ravens, prophesied that Ahab's sons would all be destroyed, prophesied that Queen Jezebel would be eaten by dogs. He parted of the Jordan River, a man who just stood in front of hundreds of prophets of Baal and mocked them and called fire out of heaven two other times. I consider...how this man could be afraid of anything. But he was afraid of Queen Jezebel which sounds quite silly with all that he accomplished.

But in I Kings 19 we read where Elijah thought he was the only person left standing for God but God reminded them, there were 7,000 who had not bowed to Baal.

SCRIPTURE: Romans 11: 7-10 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,* ⁸ *as it is written:*

“God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that could not see and ears that could not hear, to this very day.”

⁹ *And David says: “May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them.*

¹⁰ *May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever.”*

EXPLANATION: Here, Paul quotes Isaiah who spoke about the “deep sleep” of the Israelites, and he also quote Deuteronomy in reference to how God took away their ability to see and hear the things of God.

EXPLATINATION: And in verse 9 where Paul quotes King David of old, here’s why he did that: David prayed against God’s enemies and here Paul adjusts the application to say that even God’s chosen people had become the enemy of God due to their rebellion.

The point of this passage is the remnant, the “elect” as Paul also calls them.

APPLICATION: If you feel you are the last person standing for God, or you feel you are the last person standing for what God loves and values, you are not. There are others around who are just as sincere. God always provides a remnant of people to preserve his ways.

APPLICATION: If you think you are the last person standing, you are not. Look around, find the remnant and fellowship with them.

Second: IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE FALLEN BEYOND RECOVERY YOU HAVE NOT!

SCRIPTURE: Romans 11:11-12 *“¹¹ Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. ¹² But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!”*

EXPLANATION: The transgressions of the Israelites were quite profound. It is interesting how sometimes my midweek Bible study intersects with the Sunday sermon even though I don’t plan it that way. This will happen at times because the

Bible is a book of interrelated stories all pointing in the direction of the Messiah, Jesus.

During this past week I taught about the Israelites had completely desecrated everything sacred. Of all the Israelite kids, most of them were terrible. The people followed their leader committee atrocity after atrocity. They tore down the sacred places of God and built altars to false Gods, they sacrificed children. It was awful. They had forsaken absolutely everything God had ever done for them. They left slavery in Egypt only to find themselves enslaved by sin generations later. And as the scripture tells us they were overcome by enemies and were no more. And Paul asks the question: *Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all!*

ILLUSTRATION: I heard one person put it his way: God called a group of people to spread his message of salvation all over the world, but they kept it to themselves and because God does not want to contain his message of salvation he opened it up so that the Gentiles could be his ambassadors.

While there are many Jews who have come to faith in Jesus most have not. But one day the scripture tell us they will believe. Their eyes and ears will be opened and the last half of verse 12 will be lived out: *how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!*

APPLICATION: If the Israelites had not fallen so far away that they could not be restored.

APPLICATION: This week I learned that our telecast is watched by people living in a maximum security facility. I have a word for all those watching. You can never fall so far that you cannot recover.

ILLUSTRATION: I made someone mad one day when I said in a sermon that if Adolf Hitler repented of his and believed in Jesus before he died, that he would be in heaven today...that's a tough pill for many and I can see why. But I'll add to the list Mussolini, Chauchezcu, Idi Amin, Saddam Hussein, and Osama bin Laden. We have no evidence that any of them repented, but if they did they would have as much of heaven as anyone else. Why? Because no one can fall so far that they cannot be restored by an all-powerful God. The Bible tells us where as by one man

sin entered into the world and death by sin we are all sinners and all of are as guilty before God as that list of men.

Third: IF YOU THINK YOU CANNOT BE INCLUDED GOD’S FAMILY, YOU CAN!

SCRIPTURE: Romans 11:13-21 “¹³ I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry ¹⁴ in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. ¹⁵ For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? ¹⁶ If the part of the dough offered as first fruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.

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.”

ILLUSTRATION: Have you ever seen a graft of a plant? A lot of you have probably seen it before. If you go to a nursery you’ll see plants and at the bottom of that plant there’s a little knot. And, it’s been determined through people who are smart, that the root of a particular plant is strong and that the stem and the branches of a particular plant would be stronger if it was grafted into that root. So the original stem comes off of that root and there’s a graft they’re cut in certain ways and the stem from another plant is inserted into that graft and then in time it grows together. Is the graft part of the tree? Yes! Is the graft a hundred percent of the entire tree or plant? Yes! Is that stem that’s growing up part of that root structure? Yes! And, Paul uses this illustration that Gentiles have been grafted in. I love his word “Don’t be arrogant about it be grateful”

EXPLANATION: And, this was written a long time before organ transplants but with organ transplants today organs from deceased people can continue to live in other people. So that person who has received the kidney transplants the heart

transplant, the lung transplant, the skin vein, whatever transplant. Whose kidney is it? If I had a kidney transplant and that kidney is inside of me is that my kidney? Is it functioning? Yes, it's my kidney. It's the same as being grafted in because of the graft new life can happen. Because of the transplant life can continue on.

When the branches of Israel were dead, the roots were not and God grafted in the Gentiles anyone who believes!!!

SCRIPTURE: Romans 11:22-24 “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!”

CONCLUSION: If you think you cannot be included into God's family, you can! And, the way you are grafted in is by faith. That is it it's by faith. Well praise the Lord the root wasn't dead. Praise the Lord that God grafted us in him.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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