

## Those Who Are Left Behind

In chapter 10, we learned about how the gospel of Jesus Christ was preached to the Gentiles because of the Israelites' rejection and disobedience to Jesus. However, God is waiting all day long with **His hand outstretched for their salvation in spite of Israel's disobedience.**

Today we come to the continuation of the story about how God is connecting the history of salvation even in the midst of Israel's rejection of the gospel of Jesus. Look at **verse 1. "I asked then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from tribe of Benjamin."** The apostle Paul reiterates that God is not giving up and is working for the salvation of the Israelites. He says, " God did not withdraw from Israel. He did not abandon them. Look! I, Paul, was saved even though I am a genuine Jew. On the contrary, I was the one who supported the crucifixion of Jesus and persecuted Christians afterwards, but now I believe in Jesus Christ like this. **Therefore, I am confident that Israel will be saved.**"

**Verse 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: Verse 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."**

This verse quotes 1 Kings 19. The book of Kings records the deeds of many kings after the division of the kingdom into southern Judah and northern Israel, including the prosperity of King Saul, King David, and King Solomon. One of the features of the writing is 'King Whosoever did evil in the sight of God. And who is righteous in the eyes of God.' Strangely enough, most of the kings produced by Israel were idolaters and did evil to their people. The only kings that God praised were King Hezekiah in 2 Kings 18 and King Josiah in chapter 22.

About 800 years before Jesus was born, the worst king in the book of Kings was King Ahab of Northern Israel. His wife was the infamous Isabel. Isabel, a Gentile, made people worship Baal, an agricultural idol, and killed many of God's prophets. **In these hard times, the prophet Elijah was fighting the idol Baal, but he felt all alone and was terrified. At this time, God comforted Elijah in this way.**

Look at **verse 4. "And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who did not bow the knee to Baal. He tells him, "I have left for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal."** **God left 7,000 faithful people like Elijah** who loved God even in hard times. How encouraged Elijah must have been when he realized this. See **verse 5. "So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace." v. 6 "And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace."** The

apostle Paul, citing an event that happened about 800 years ago, says that God has left behind those who love Him by grace, just as He still does today. [The Israelites rejected Jesus and crucified Him, but many Jews who believed in Him were raised up in the midst of them.](#)

Jesus' public life also has this content. John 12:37-43 records that while there were those who did not believe in Jesus even though he performed many miracles. But, many of the Pharisees believed in Jesus. However, they could not publicly say that they believed in Jesus for fear of being expelled from the synagogue.

The time of Romans is 2,000 years from now, but God's "history like the 7,000 who were left behind" has continued from face to face until the present day. [For the Japanese, the history of hidden Christians is like that:](#) on June 30, 2018, the "Churches of Nagasaki and Related Christian Heritage" were registered as a World Heritage of UNESCO. They kept their faith alive with only their congregation under severe oppression under the 250-year ban on Christianity during the Edo period and without any missionaries. I am so moved to think that through their efforts, the gospel was preached to us as well.

[God has given us the grace to leave behind believers who love Jesus and preach the gospel to the whole world, even in the difficult circumstances of each era and time.](#) So is our experience close to home. Even in the midst of the Covid - 19 disaster, we did not leave our church and continued our life of faith. The form of MJCF, our church has changed, we have remained and continued. God has given us amazing blessings.

Now, please look at [verse 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."](#) Here, "what the people sought so earnestly" is the salvation that comes from believing in Jesus. [But in fact, Israel rejected Jesus and did not obtain salvation. But the Gentiles were chosen and saved by believing in Jesus.](#)

How could this happen? Look [at verse 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."](#) Verse 8 quotes Deuteronomy 29:4. This verse expresses the spiritual condition of the Israelites who, despite the covenant they made with God during the time of Moses, and the miracles they experienced manna in their daily life. And also, they were led by God with the pillar of cloud, and the pillar of fire. But they were not to trust God and were unbelieving. Their hearts became dull and they could not understand the meaning of God's Word. [Even if they saw God's miracles, they could not see what they were, and they could not hear God's voice of guidance.](#) How about us? If you can understand the Word well today like this; [Yes, I can understand what Yoko is saying, then you can see, you can hear, and your heart is open. This is a great blessing.](#)

Next, Apostle Paul is using the King David as an example; look at [verses 9 and 10. "And David says: "May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution](#)

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

This is taken from Psalm 69:22. This is the psalm that David sang during the difficult time when he was fleeing the rebellion of his son Absalom. King David is also suffering because of his son who was blinded by inability to discern the truth. In every generation, there are people who live blindly without discerning the truth. Jesus also said this in his public life. **John 9:39: "Jesus said, ' For judgment I have come into the world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind."** In John 9, you have a scene where the religious leaders are questioning how a man who was blind from birth could come to see after Jesus healed him. These are the words of Jesus in the midst of this. **In every generation there are those who reject the truth, but we are thankful that in every generation there are 7,000 people whom God has left behind.** I pray that we all will be among the 7,000 people God has left behind in this sinful world. When we look at the Bible, we realize that this grace is not based on our deeds, but on God's complete sovereignty.

Look at **verse 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."** The condition of the Jews would seem to indicate that they have fallen away from God's salvation, but the Apostle Paul clearly states, "That is not so." Because of the rejection of Jesus by God's people Israel, it became a wonderful blessing to the Gentiles that their gospel was preached to the Gentiles and the Gentiles were saved. And as a result, the Israelites would have envied the salvation of the Gentiles and they would believe in Jesus someday. I mentioned last time that many young people in Israel who long for the Western culture and believed in Jesus more than before. This envy often occurs in our daily lives, too. When they see a Christian healed of a disease, healed of a mental illness, become rich, or become influential in society after believing in Jesus. And they around us who do not believe in Jesus may ask, "How did that happen to that person?"

But in reality, are Christians in developed Western countries living lives that cause envy toward the people of Israel and other nations? They must be disappointed when they see Christians living morally disordered, unloving, cold, self-centered lives.

As a clear example, I have heard the testimony of a Christian from North Korea. He grew up in an underground church in North Korea and when he came to South Korea yearning for Christianity, unfortunately he met unkind Christians and churches. At that time, he thought to himself. "I came to South Korea because I longed to live in an economically and faithfully affluent country, but it's not the same."

**Now that we know God's plan to cause them to envy and believe in Him, we must be held accountable as believers for our deeds and lives.** If those around me realize that we have not only material blessings, but also **"love, hope, and faith"** in us that are incomparably more

important, then unbelievers will want those things more too.

Look at verse 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 ! " It is truly amazing to think that these words were written 2000 years ago. The Jews actually committed the sin of crucifying Jesus, the Son of God. And they failed to believe in Jesus. But as a result of their sin and failure, the Gentiles like us were blessed abundantly. And Apostle Paul is talking about how much the whole world will be blessed when the Israelites believe in Jesus and receive the grace of salvation.

I imagine that when the Apostle Paul was saying these words to the Christians in Rome 2,000 years ago, how many years did he expect the Jews to believe? He might have thought that after 100 or 200 years the Jews would believe in Jesus Christ. But you all have known, the evangelization of Israel is not yet complete now. However, the Word given by the Holy Spirit to the Apostle Paul 2000 years ago describes the completion of the great Kingdom of God. This word is about to be fulfilled in God's time. In fact, recently many missionaries are praying and risking their lives to evangelize Israel. The war between the Gaza Strip and Israel shows how serious the situation in Palestine is. However, the Bible holds us responsible for the mission of the people of Israel and even the people of neighboring Muslim countries, and I believe that when the words of verse 12 are fulfilled in the world, this world will see the coming of the Kingdom of God in perfect peace. We believe in that day when Jesus Christ returns, all the people of the world will praise Him and worship Him. Isaiah 19:23-25 "In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The Lord Almighty will bless them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance."

Eventually that day will come when both Israel and the Muslim nations will praise Jesus Christ as Lord. At that time, as the apostle Peter says, 'a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.' (II Peter 3:13) And Philippians 2:10-11, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven or on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

What do you think of today's message? Did your hearts, eyes, and ears see and hear the message from God? Are we among the 7,000 people God has left behind? Especially in Japan, Christians are in the minority. In many cases, we are the only Christian in our family. I know you are living a lonely life of faith, but please remain in faith. Let's continue to believe in God. Exodus 20:6, "Showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments." When we keep the faith, we will be blessed for a thousand generations of

our descendants. I look at each of you as if you were 100 people. And more than this, God has a special love for the Christians of Japan.

That day is coming when the whole world will worship Jesus Christ together!

Let us be left and be the 7,000 people of faith!

Let's pray together. Beloved Heavenly Father! Please bless us as in today's message, so that more and more people will envy us who believe in Jesus and come to your church. And I pray that the day will come soon when all the people of Israel and other unbelieving nations will be saved and the whole world praise and worship Jesus Christ. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.