

# WORKING THROUGH MY PROBLEMS

## Part Four, Lesson Four: REJECTION

Epistle Study:  
Romans 11:1-10



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## STUDENT LESSON

### INTRODUCTION: The Sting That Shapes Us

Rejection doesn't just hurt—it rewrites the story we tell ourselves about our worth. It whispers lies in the voice of past wounds: *"You're not enough."* *"They were right to leave."* *"God has given up on you too."*

But what if the deepest rejection you've ever experienced—whether from family, friends, church, or even yourself—is not the final word? What if God's economy of grace turns rejection into sacred selection?

In Romans 11:1-10, Paul confronts one of history's most profound theological rejections: Has God abandoned Israel, His chosen people? The answer Paul gives doesn't just address ancient Israel—it speaks directly to anyone who's ever felt discarded, overlooked, or cast aside.

Today, we're stepping into a passage that dismantles the lie of permanent rejection and establishes the unshakeable truth of God's faithfulness—even when we feel forgotten.

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### ILLUSTRATION: The Pottery Shelf

Imagine a master potter with two shelves in his studio. On one shelf sit vessels deemed "perfect" by human standards—symmetrical, flawless, gleaming. On the other shelf rest pots with cracks, uneven rims, unexpected colors.

Which shelf does the potter love more?

The question itself reveals our broken thinking. The potter doesn't measure love by perfection—he measures it by *purpose*. Every vessel, regardless of appearance, was formed by his hands, for his use, in his time.

Israel—like you, like me—sits on the "cracked pot" shelf. But God hasn't discarded them. He's *preserving* them. Their rejection by some doesn't nullify their election by the One.

Your rejection by others doesn't cancel your selection by God.

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## **SCRIPTURE FOUNDATION: Romans 11:1-10**

### **Romans 11:1-2a (NLT)**

*"I ask, then, has God rejected his own people, the nation of Israel? Of course not! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham and a member of the tribe of Benjamin. No, God has not rejected his own people, whom he chose from the very beginning."*

### **Romans 11:2b-4 (KJV)**

*"Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal."*

### **Romans 11:5-6 (NRSV)**

*"So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace would no longer be grace."*

### **Romans 11:7-10 (NLT)**

*"So this is the situation: Most of the people of Israel have not found the favor of God they are looking for so earnestly. A few have—the ones God has chosen—but the hearts of the rest were hardened. As the Scriptures say, 'God has put them into a deep sleep. To this day he has shut their eyes so they do not see, and closed their ears so they do not hear.' Likewise, David said, 'Let their bountiful table become a snare, a trap that makes them think all is well. Let their blessings cause them to stumble, and let them get what they deserve. Let their eyes go blind so they cannot see, and let their backs be bent forever.'"*

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## **EXEGESIS & EXPOSITION: Verse-by-Verse Breakdown**

### **Verse 1: "Has God rejected His people? Of course not!"**

#### **Greek Insight:**

The word *apōsato* (ἀπώσατο) means "to thrust away" or "reject completely." Paul uses the strongest possible negative—*mē genoito* (μὴ γένοιτο)—"May it never be!" or "Absolutely not!"

**Context:**

Paul is answering a question that haunted the early church: If Jesus is the Messiah and most of Israel rejected Him, does that mean God rejected Israel? Paul's answer is personal and theological. He himself is proof—an Israelite, from the tribe of Benjamin (the tribe that gave Israel its first king, Saul). If God rejected Israel, Paul wouldn't be standing as an apostle.

**Theological Truth:**

God's covenant faithfulness is not contingent on human faithfulness. His promises are irrevocable (Romans 11:29). Your failures don't disqualify you from His love.

**Application:**

When you feel rejected by God because of your past, remember: Paul—a former persecutor of the church—became God's chosen vessel. Your history doesn't disqualify your destiny.

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**Verse 2a: "God has not rejected His people, whom He foreknew."****Greek Insight:**

*Proegnō* (προέγνω) = "foreknew" or "chose in advance." This isn't passive awareness; it's active, intentional selection.

**Theological Truth:**

God's election precedes human response. Before you were born, before you succeeded or failed, God set His affection on you. Rejection by others doesn't nullify divine election.

**Application:**

You were chosen before you were wounded. Rejection doesn't rewrite your identity—it reveals who doesn't have eyes to see your value.

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**Verses 2b-4: Elijah's Loneliness and God's Remnant**

**Old Testament Reference:** 1 Kings 19:10-18

**Context:**

Elijah, after defeating 450 prophets of Baal, runs for his life from Jezebel. Exhausted, isolated, suicidal, he cries out: *"I am the only one left, and they're trying to kill me too!"*

God's response? *"I have 7,000 who haven't bowed to Baal."*

**Theological Truth:**

Isolation is often a lie. When you feel alone in your faithfulness, God has a remnant you haven't seen yet. Your rejection doesn't mean abandonment—it often means repositioning.

**Application:**

Rejection can make you feel like Elijah in the cave—alone, finished, forgotten. But God hasn't left you alone. He has people, places, and purposes you haven't discovered yet.

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**Verses 5-6: The Remnant Chosen by Grace****Greek Insight:**

*Leimma* (λείμμα) = "remnant," what remains after judgment or refining.

*Charis* (χάρις) = "grace," unearned favor.

**Theological Truth:**

Salvation and selection are never about performance. Grace eliminates works as the basis of acceptance. If it were about works, grace wouldn't be grace—it would be payment.

**Paul's Logic:**

- Remnant = chosen by grace
- Grace ≠ works
- Therefore, rejection ≠ judgment on worthiness

**Application:**

Stop trying to *earn* your way back from rejection. You can't work your way into acceptance with God or people. Grace is the foundation. Rest there.

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**Verse 7: "The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened."****Greek Insight:**

*Epōrōthēsan* (ἐπωρώθησαν) = "were hardened" (passive voice), suggesting both human choice and divine judgment.

**Context:**

Not all of Israel embraced the Messiah. Some received; some refused. Hardening is both consequence and condition—when we repeatedly resist grace, our capacity to receive it diminishes.

**Warning:**

Chronic rejection of God's voice leads to spiritual deafness. This isn't arbitrary punishment—it's the natural progression of a heart that insists on self-rule.

**Application:**

If you've been rejected and you're tempted to harden your heart toward God, others, or yourself—*stop*. Hardness feels like protection, but it's actually prison.

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## Verses 8-10: The Spiritual Stupor

### Old Testament References:

- Isaiah 29:10
- Deuteronomy 29:4
- Psalm 69:22-23

### Imagery:

- **Deep sleep** = spiritual insensitivity
- **Closed eyes/ears** = inability to perceive truth
- **Table becomes a snare** = blessings become blindness
- **Bent backs** = perpetual burden

### Theological Warning:

When we trust in our own adequacy (the "bountiful table"), we stop seeking God. Comfort can become a trap. Rejection, paradoxically, can be a mercy—it drives us back to dependence.

### Application:

Sometimes rejection is God's mercy, removing us from tables (relationships, positions, comforts) that were lulling us to sleep. What feels like loss might be liberation.

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## SYNOPSIS: The Theology of Rejection and Remnant

### 1. **God's Faithfulness Trumps Human Failure**

God has not, does not, and will not reject those He has chosen. His covenant love is irrevocable.

### 2. **Rejection Reveals the Remnant**

Not everyone will accept you, understand you, or celebrate you. That's not failure—it's refinement. You're part of a remnant chosen by grace.

### 3. **Grace Eliminates Performance Anxiety**

You cannot earn your way into acceptance. Grace is the basis, not works. Rest in unearned favor.

### 4. **Beware the Hardened Heart**

Repeated rejection—of God or by others—can lead to spiritual numbness. Stay soft. Stay teachable. Stay open.

### 5. **Comfort Can Blind; Rejection Can Clarify**

Sometimes God removes us from the "bountiful table" because we've stopped seeking Him. Rejection redirects us to dependency.

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# PRACTICAL LIFE-CHANGING APPLICATIONS

## 1. Reframe Your Rejection

Rejection is not the final word—it's often the *first word* of a new chapter. Ask God: "*What are You repositioning me for?*"

## 2. Stop Performing for Acceptance

If you're hustling to prove your worth after rejection, stop. Grace has already declared you chosen. Work from acceptance, not for it.

## 3. Find Your Remnant

You are not alone. God has a tribe for you—people who see you, celebrate you, and sharpen you. Ask Him to reveal them.

## 4. Guard Your Heart from Hardness

Rejection tempts us to build walls. But walls keep out pain *and* love. Stay soft. Forgive. Process. Heal.

## 5. Examine Your "Table"

What comforts have become snares? What blessings have made you spiritually lazy? Let rejection wake you up to deeper hunger for God.

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## THINGS TO CONSIDER

- **What rejection are you still rehearsing?** Write it down. Then write Romans 11:1 over it: "*God has not rejected me.*"
  - **Are you hardening your heart?** Check for signs: cynicism, defensiveness, inability to trust, spiritual numbness.
  - **Who is your remnant?** Name 2-3 people who reflect God's faithfulness to you. Thank them.
  - **What "table" might be a snare?** Is there a relationship, comfort, or success that's dulling your dependence on God?
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# STUDY QUESTIONS

## Question 1: Personal Reflection

Describe a time when you felt deeply rejected. How did it affect your view of yourself? Your view of God?

**Answer:**

*Student response.* Encourage honesty. Rejection often distorts our identity and our theology. Naming it is the first step toward healing.

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## Question 2: Theological Understanding

How does Paul's Jewish identity (v. 1) serve as proof that God hasn't rejected Israel? What does this teach us about God's covenant faithfulness?

**Answer:**

Paul himself is a living example of God's faithfulness. Despite Israel's widespread rejection of Jesus, God preserved a remnant—including Paul. This proves God's promises are irrevocable. Our faithfulness fluctuates; His doesn't.

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## Question 3: Word Study

What is the significance of the word "foreknew" (v. 2) in understanding God's election? How does this challenge the idea that we earn God's love?

**Answer:**

"Foreknew" (Greek: *proegnō*) means God chose us in advance, before any action on our part. Election is not based on performance or merit—it's based on His sovereign grace. This dismantles the lie that we must earn acceptance.

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## Question 4: Application

Read 1 Kings 19:10-18 (Elijah's story). How does God's response to Elijah's loneliness speak to your experience of isolation after rejection?

**Answer:**

Elijah felt utterly alone, but God revealed 7,000 faithful remnant. Similarly, when we're rejected, we often feel isolated—but God has people and purposes we haven't yet discovered. Rejection doesn't equal abandonment.

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## Question 5: Grace vs. Works

Paul says if salvation is by grace, it's "no longer on the basis of works" (v. 6). How does this apply to recovering from rejection? What does it look like to stop performing for acceptance?

### Answer:

We often respond to rejection by over-performing—trying to prove our worth. But grace says we're already chosen. Recovering means resting in unearned favor, not hustling for validation. Freedom comes when we work *from* acceptance, not *for* it.

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## Question 6: Warning and Wisdom

What does it mean for someone's heart to be "hardened" (v. 7)? What are the dangers of letting rejection harden you?

### Answer:

Hardening is the result of repeated resistance to grace. It leads to spiritual insensitivity, cynicism, and inability to receive love. Rejection tempts us to build walls—but walls keep out both pain and healing. Staying soft requires courage and trust.

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## Question 7: The Snare of Comfort

Verses 9-10 describe blessings becoming a "snare." How can comfort or success blind us spiritually? Can you identify any "tables" in your life that might be dulling your hunger for God?

### Answer:

When life is comfortable, we stop seeking God desperately. Blessings can breed self-sufficiency. Rejection, paradoxically, can be mercy—removing us from complacency and driving us back to dependency. Examine your life: Where are you spiritually lazy because things are "good enough"?

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## Question 8: Moving Forward

What is one specific step you can take this week to stop believing the lie of rejection and start living in the truth of divine election?

### Answer:

*Student response.* Examples: Speak Romans 11:1-2 aloud daily. Journal God's faithfulness. Reach out to a trusted friend. Forgive someone who rejected you. Identify and repent of self-rejection.

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# PROPHETIC CHALLENGE

Hear the word of the Lord:

*"You are not the sum of who left you. You are the sum of who CHOSE you before the foundation of the world. I have not rejected you. I have refined you. What feels like isolation is actually preparation. What looks like ending is actually editing.*

*Stop rehearsing rejection. Start believing election.*

*I am removing you from tables where you were tolerated so I can seat you at tables where you are celebrated. I am closing doors that were lulling you to sleep so I can open doors that will wake you to purpose.*

*You are My remnant. Chosen by grace. Called for such a time as this.*

*Do not harden your heart. Stay soft. Stay open. Stay faithful.*

*I am not done with you. I am just getting started."*

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## CALL TO REPENTANCE & DISCIPLESHIP

If rejection has caused you to:

- **Doubt God's love** → Repent of unbelief. Declare: *"God has not rejected me."*
- **Perform for acceptance** → Repent of works-based identity. Rest in grace.
- **Harden your heart** → Repent of self-protection. Ask God to make you tender again.
- **Settle for comfort** → Repent of spiritual complacency. Hunger for more.

### **Discipleship Step:**

This week, write out Romans 11:1-2 on a notecard. Read it every morning. Let it rewrite the narrative rejection tried to author.

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## CLOSING PRAYER

*Father,*

*We come broken by rejection, haunted by the voices of those who walked away. But today, we hear a new voice—the voice of the Potter who has never discarded us.*

*Forgive us for believing the lie that we are too broken, too flawed, too much, or not enough. Forgive us for hardening our hearts to protect ourselves from pain.*

*We receive Your truth: We are chosen. Foreknown. Elected by grace, not by performance.*

*Remove us from tables that are snares. Seat us with our remnant. Keep our hearts soft, our ears open, our eyes clear.*

*We are not rejected. We are redirected.*

*In the name of Jesus, the Rejected Stone who became the Cornerstone,*

*Amen.*

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## SIGNATURE BLESSING

You are loved.

You are chosen.

You are not forgotten.

**Love U More Than U Know.**