

“The Rest Were Hardened”  
Romans 11:7-10  
(Preached at Trinity, May 30, 2010)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapter's 9, 10, and 11** dealing with theme of the rejection of the Gospel by the Jews. This was Paul's great grief. Multitudes of Gentiles were flocking to the Gospel of Christ while most of the children of Israel refused to come.
2. God's promises remained secure, however. While most remained in unbelief and were now cast off from God's promises God still had a faithful remnant just as He has had in every generation.  
**Romans 11:5** – “Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant”
3. What could account for the difference in the two groups? The contrast was enormous.
  - A. Paul had seen this contrast over and over.  
Some were continuing steadfastly in the Apostles doctrine and in fellowship . . .  
Others were openly opposing everything that pertained to Christ.  
**Acts 14:1-2** – “And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. <sup>2</sup> But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.”
  - B. In **Verses 5-6** Paul gives the reason for why some of the Jews turned to Christ in faith.  
**Romans 11:5** – “Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.”
    1. It was due to election and grace.
    2. God had chosen the remnant of believing Jews before the world began.  
God has chosen to redeem a multitude of wretched sinners and transform them from rebels to those who would humbly bow before Christ as Lord.  
**2 Thessalonians 2:13** – “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.”
    3. This election is completely unmerited. Paul calls it the “election of grace.”  
There is absolutely nothing you can do to earn it. If you could earn it it would be a work. If it was a work then it would no longer be grace.  
**Romans 11:6** – “And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace.”
4. Now in **Verses 7-10** Paul gives the reason why, in spite of God's gracious offer of grace, so many continued in unbelief. This is true of both Jews and Gentiles.  
Paul is saying it is far more than some being elect being effectually drawn to Christ while the rest are left in a position of neutrality.

**Romans 11:7** – “the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded”

1. The word for “blinded” literally means to harden  
NAS **Romans 11:7** – “What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;”
2. **Romans 11:10** – “Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back away.”  
 The NAS and ESV read powerfully:  
NAS **Romans 11:10** – “Let their eyes be darkened to see not, And bend their backs forever.”
5. What this is referring to is judicial hardening. Paul began the Book of Romans with this subject.  
**Romans 1:21** – “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”  
 Then we find the reason why their foolish heart was darkened:  
**Romans 1:24** – “Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness”  
**Romans 1:26** – “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections”  
**Romans 1:28** – “And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind”
6. This is unthinkable in the minds of most people.
  - A. You will almost never hear this on Christian radio or television. It certainly doesn’t fit well with the modern church-growth movement.
  - B. This doesn’t harmonize at all with the view most people have of God. Most people think they have God on a string like a marionette. He moves at our command. When we want Him we pull Him out and then we put Him back in His box. We have a national day of prayer but prayer is not allowed in school. We have freedom of religion. Just don’t bring the Bible into practice.
7. This passage is a weighty passage. It presents God as He is. In these verses we find God in absolute control. He is not a God to be trifled with.
8. This morning I want to answer three questions with regard to this solemn topic
  1. What is meant by this hardening?
  2. Why does this hardening happen?
  3. What are the results of this hardening?
- I. What is meant by this hardening?
  - A. Paul is referring to three OT passages: Isaiah 29:10; Deut. 29:4; Psa. 69:22-23  
NAS **Romans 11:7-10** – “What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; <sup>8</sup> just as it is written, "GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY." <sup>9</sup> And David says, "LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP, AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM. <sup>10</sup> "LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT, AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER.”
  1. Paul is saying that all of Israel was seeking. What were they seeking? They were all seeking the righteousness of God – i.e. the righteousness demanded of God.

**Romans 10:2-3** – “For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. <sup>3</sup> For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”

2. The elect found it because they trusted in the righteousness of Christ.
  - a. They were justified by faith  
**Romans 10:10** – “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”
  - b. They found righteousness apart from their personal obedience to the Law  
**Romans 10:4** – “For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”

3. The rest were hardened
  - a. They continued seeking their own righteousness through the Law  
**Romans 9:32** – “Because *they sought it* not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;”
  - b. Why didn't they trust Christ?  
The text tells us it was because they were hardened

- B. This shows far more than any passive involvement by God
  1. On one hand, we might say that God has chosen the elect unto salvation and left the rest to perish under their sin.
  2. On the other hand, we find here that it goes much further than this. God is actually actively hardening their hearts.
  3. Paul taught this back in **Chapter 9**
    - a. God chose Jacob and set His love upon Him, but God did more than simply ignore Esau  
**Romans 9:13** – “As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”
    - b. After describing God's rejection of Pharaoh Paul wrote:  
**Romans 9:18** – “Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth.”  
In **Romans 9** the word is different – it means “to make stubborn or obstinate”

Here in **Romans 11** it means to harden as with a callous

- C. What does hardening mean?
  1. It means that with each day of rebellion against God the human heart becomes more and more calloused – it is hardened to God. The sinner becomes increasingly numb to God
  2. Because of this he becomes more and more stubborn towards God

## II. Why does this hardening happen?

- A. It is a form of God's judgment
  1. This is what we mean by “judicial hardening.” It is the just righteous condemnation of God

2. God commands obedience of all men. He commands that all men turn from their sins and follow Him.
  3. God demands that all men worship Him in thanksgiving. When we refuse He pulls back His hand of restraining grace.
    - a. The human heart is capable of all manner of sin
    - b. All we have to do is examine history – Look at the wicked cruelty we are capable of. Look at the crucifixion – the scourging.
    - c. God gives us over to our base nature  
**Romans 1:21** – “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”
  3. Jesus said even the small amount of understanding they have is removed  
**Matthew 13:12** – “ For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.”
- B. God’s judgments are just
1. When a man rebels against God and hardens himself towards God God hardens the man even further
  2. It is testimony to the present wrath of God upon sinners
- III. What are the results of this hardening? Looking at the text—Paul is quoting from the OT
- A. **Verse 9** – “Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them:”
1. Their table was simply the place where they ate their daily meals
  2. It implies that the simple, ordinary things of life become a snare. They fall in love with their physical appetites be it food, sex, slumber, material things. These things become the source of their pleasure and they become lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.
  3. In their quest for satisfying these physical appetites they have no room for God.
  4. This also carries the sense of being satisfied
    - a. He becomes proud – wise in his own mind  
 He is too smart for God.  
 He has great confidence in himself and his abilities
    - b. They become satisfied without God
- B. **Verse 10** – “Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see”
1. They become more and more blinded to the Gospel
  2. Matthew states that God removes even the truth they have
  3. God hides the Gospel from them
    - a. They are given over to the blinding influence of Satan  
**2 Cor. 4:3-4** – “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”
    - b. While Satan is the agent we must be clear that it is God that has hardened the hearts of men.

4. The 1689 Baptist Confession –  
 “As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as the righteous judge, for former sin doth blind and harden; from them he not only withholdeth his grace, whereby they might have been enlightened in their understanding, and wrought in their hearts; but sometimes also withdraweth the gifts which they had, and exposeth shame to such objects as their corruption makes occasion of sin; and withal, gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, whereby it comes to pass that they harden themselves, under those means which God useth for the softening of others.”
- C. For some it means being delivered over to the curse of works based religion
1. This was the curse given to the Jews and the curse of all who follow religion apart from Christ.
  2. Paul describes it in **Verse 10** – “Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back away.”  
NAS “And bend their backs forever.”
  3. Bending the back pictures carrying a heavy load. It is a load that can only be relieved by Christ.  
**Matthew 11:28-30** – “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.”
  4. The lost ultimately are not concerned about what the Scriptures teach They are more interested in human wisdom, and traditions - through these things they suppress the truth
  5. Rather than seeking the truth they desire to hear what they are comfortable with.  
**2 Timothy 4:3-4** – “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; <sup>4</sup> And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

#### Conclusion:

1. This is a very fearful topic. The hardened man will not seek Christ.
2. We must never forget the balance between God’s sovereignty and human responsibility.  
**Romans 11:7** – “but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded”
  - a. On the one hand the elect were not chosen because they were better nor the rest abandoned to their sin because they were worse.
  - b. On the other hand this hardening is a direct act of God in judgment.  
**Romans 11:9** – “Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them:”  
 “recompence” – refers to retribution – an act of judgment – of punishment
3. The person who continues in sin becomes more and more hardened.  
 Delay is deadly. There is no reason to delay. Turn today, turn now.  
 If you are not following Him fully turn today without delay.  
**1 Kings 18:21** – “And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD *be* God, follow him: but if Baal, *then* follow him. And the people answered him not a word.”