

# ROMANS 11

## COMMENTARY

**1 I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in *the passage about Elijah*, how he pleads with God against Israel? 3 “Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE” [1 Kings 19:10, 14]. 4 But what is the divine response to him? “I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL” [1 Kings 19:18]. 5 In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to *God’s gracious choice*.**

**11:1** The issues especially elucidated in Romans ch. 11 are well known to all people in Messianic congregations, as they involve not just the Apostle Paul wrestling with the issue of the widescale First Century Jewish rejection of Yeshua—but also what is to occur in salvation history regarding the Jewish people, their Messiah, and the culmination of the Messianic Age. The material of Romans ch. 11 is very much rooted within a First Century setting, but they are quite relevant for our condition today, much of what we see happening in the modern State of Israel and worldwide Jewish community, yet most imperative for our broad Messianic faith community. Much of what Paul wrote in ch. 11 was more specifically to non-Jewish, Greek and Roman Believers, who may have thought that their reception of Israel’s Messiah, and the common Jewish rejection of Him, would validate them entertaining any thoughts of spiritual and/or ethnic superiority—and that in being grafted-in (vs. 16-17) that they alone were now the only members of Israel’s Kingdom or polity (cf. Galatians 6:16; Ephesians 2:11-13). As should be obvious from the tone of ch. 11, the redeemed from the nations are not at all to entertain any attitudes of being superior to Jews who do not know their Messiah, and they are instead to be compelled to various forms of action to see that this dilemma is remedied.

Elsewhere, particularly in the Jerusalem Council deliberations (Acts 15:14), it was recognized how God was calling people from the nations at large into His people—something widely and properly identified as being rooted in the sentiment of Zechariah 2:11: “Many nations will join themselves to the LORD in that day and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me.” The inclusion of the redeemed from the nations into an enlarged Kingdom realm of Israel (Acts 15:15-18; Amos 9:11-12), does not all of a sudden mean that Israel proper—the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—are not God’s people, valued and loved by Him (cf. Exodus 19:4-7).

Paul asks a question that many of the non-Jewish Romans may have thought at one time or another, “So I ask, has God abandoned his people?”, to which he answers, “Certainly not!” (a, Kingdom New Testament). This is a thought that is spoken in numerous contexts throughout the Tanach (Leviticus 26:11; Deuteronomy 31:6; 1 Samuel 12:22; Psalm 37:28; 94:14), as God will be faithful and loyal to the people whom He chose to bear witness of Him in the world. The thought of 2 Maccabees 6:16 is especially poignant to consider for Paul’s reasoning here: “he never withdraws his mercy from

us. Though he disciplines us with calamities, he does not forsake his own people.” Even with times of trial and rebuke, God’s promises and steadfastness to Israel proper remain consistent.

The Lord has always seen fit that there has been a faithful remnant to Him, within Israel proper, throughout history. While the significant example of Elijah will be immediately considered (vs. 2-5), more immediately to be considered is Paul’s own self. The Apostle Paul’s own Jewish experience proves that God’s deciding that there will always be a remnant of Israel proper faithful to Him, should serve as a sure testament that God has not rejected the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Paul’s Jewish pedigree—“For I too am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin” (b, TLV)—something explained later in Philippians 3:5-6 with, “circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the [assembly]; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless,” prove to demonstrate that he is one who knows not only who his people are and what their history is, but what his own personal background is.<sup>1</sup> *Paul had a sense of knowing who he was as a person from a long history*, something noted by James D.G. Dunn to be how he “shows that he is as firmly located within Judaism as anyone can be; he is no first- or even tenth-generation proselyte.”<sup>2</sup> Paul’s unique ministry (vs. 13-14) serves to prove the point that he was not taking his background and skills for granted; he used them to serve the Lord in the capacity to declare the good news of Israel’s Messiah to all.

It is also true that the Apostle Paul had an over-zealousness for the traditions of Judaism and his heritage, to the point of seeking to obliterate the First Century *ekklēsia* (Galatians 1:13-14). Yeshua the Messiah Himself dramatically intervened on the Damascus Road, with Paul not just turning in repentance but also in service to Him (Acts 9:1-18). James R. Edwards makes the fair observation, “The Damascus road experience was, of course, a demonstration of grace to Paul personally. But it was more than that. Paul saw it also as an example of grace to his people, believing that his conversion was but foreshadowing of the conversion of all Israel.”<sup>3</sup> C.E.B Cranfield goes on to make the further, important points, especially given the ministry vocation of Paul:

“Were God intending only to save a mere handful of Israel, had He really cast off the people of Israel as a whole, would He have chosen an Israelite to be the apostle to the Gentiles and the chief bearer of the gospel message? In his person the missionary vocation of Israel is at last being fulfilled and Israel is actively associated with the work of the risen Christ. This is a more cogent evidence of God’s not having cast off His people than is the simple fact that one particular Jew has come to believe.”<sup>4</sup>

**11:2a** Paul is assertive: “God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew” (NIV). The issue of God rejecting or casting aside His people, was certainly asked in the Tanach: “Have not You Yourself, O God, rejected us? And will You not go forth with our armies, O God?” (Psalm 60:10). Even with this question asked by the Israelites, God Himself assured them that they would not be cast aside: “For the LORD will not abandon His people on account of His great name, because the LORD has been pleased to make you a people for Himself” (1 Samuel 12:22). As Psalm 94:14 astutely puts it, “For the LORD will not abandon His people, nor will He forsake His inheritance.” Paul much earlier did acknowledge how human faithlessness or failure, would not at all nullify God’s faithfulness or reliability (3:3). However, the situation of the First Century Jewish rejection of Yeshua, and God’s continuing election of Israel proper, is to be viewed in terms of His chastisement: “You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities” (Amos 3:2).

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<sup>1</sup> Also to be considered should be: Acts 22:3; 23:6; 26:5; 2 Corinthians 11:22; Galatians 2:15.

<sup>2</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 38b:635.

<sup>3</sup> Edwards, 261.

<sup>4</sup> Cranfield, *Romans* 9-16, 544.

The main issue in view, as previously detailed in ch. 9, is that in spite of a widescale First Century Jewish rejection of Yeshua, God's selection of Israel proper as His own remains valid and true. While language of foreknowledge (verb *proginōskō*, προγινώσκω) can push some readers in the direction of God supposedly choosing some individuals for salvation and other individuals for damnation, what is being described here is the corporate election of Israel. Douglas J. Moo, who does support a Reformed, predestinarian soteriology, is correct for how here, "the context demands that Paul here be speaking of God's election of the people as a whole...In this verse...Paul reflects the common OT and Jewish corporate sense of election, according to which God's choosing of the nation Israel guarantees blessings and benefits...to the people as a whole but does not guarantee salvation for every single Israelite."<sup>5</sup> Ben Witherington III, as one who supports an Arminian soteriology, is more to the point of what is being actually communicated in v. 2a,

"God has certainly not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Foreknowledge here is predicated of a whole group of people, ethnic Israel, many of whom are not, in Paul's view, currently saved. Foreknowledge does not mean foreordination to salvation, clearly enough, unless one *assumes* that in v. 26 Paul is predicting the salvation of every Jew who ever existed."<sup>6</sup>

**11:2b-4** That the Lord has not rejected Israel proper is substantiated by Paul, as he poignantly asks, "Or don't you know what the Scripture says in the Elijah section—how he pleads with God against Israel?" (2b, HCSB). As Paul will proceed to explain, it is not as though only one or two Jews, like either he or his immediate associates, are those who compose God's remnant from Israel. Referenced in vs. 3-4 are the Israelites faithful to God during the reign of King Ahab of the Northern Kingdom, with the scene in view being how the Prophet Elijah had just fled from Queen Jezebel after his encounter with the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel. V. 3 likely includes an abbreviated reference from 1 Kings 19:10, 14:

"He said, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away'... I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."

The Prophet Elijah thought that he was the only one in his time who was truly loyal to the God of Israel, and that the powers at be were out to eliminate him. The Lord assures him—in spite of this situation being distressful—that not all hope is lost. 1 Kings 19:18 is noted by Paul in v. 4, where Elijah was reassured, "Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him." There is some discussion among examiners that the number 7,000 would have been representative in Second Temple Judaism, perhaps per Yeshua's word to forgive one's offender up to seventy times seven (cf. Matthew 18:22), of a self-multiplying group of people and hence of God's never-ending mercy toward those seeking repentance and restoration with Him. With this in mind, it is not unimportant that there were myriads of First Century Jews in the vicinity of Jerusalem who had confessed faith in Yeshua (Acts 21:20). Even with the greater whole of either Ancient Israel in the time of the Elijah, or the First Century Jewish people in the time of Paul, not demonstrating the faithfulness that they should have—it is not as though only a miniscule number of Paul's brethren constituted the remnant of redeemed. Moo makes some further, appropriate observations, on Paul's selection of the Prophet Elijah to make his point:

"It is possible that Paul...finds a parallel between Elijah and himself: each is a key salvation-historical figure, is confronted with the apparent downfall of...Israel, but finds new hope in God's

<sup>5</sup> Moo, pp 674, 675.

<sup>6</sup> Witherington, pp 264-265.

preservation of a remnant of true believers. For God's preservation of a remnant is not only evidence of his present faithfulness to Israel; it is also a pledge of hope for the future of the people."<sup>7</sup>

**11:5** Just as during the time of Elijah, so at the present time of Romans' composition, there was a faithful remnant to God within Israel proper. Paul details, "So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace" (RSV). Even with widespread apostasy and/or rejection of God's Messiah, there would be a remnant who would acknowledge Him. Grant R. Osborne thoroughly explains how the idea of a faithful remnant within Israel proper is rooted within the Tanach, as punishment or calamity would come to Israel, but with God allowing for a remnant of His own to be spared:

"Amos, who foretold the doom of Israel, with only a remnant spared (Amos 5:3), called 'the remnant of Joseph' (Amos 5:15), alluding to Genesis 45:7 and saying that only those who seek the Lord will be delivered (Amos 5:4-6, 14-15). There will also be an eschatological remnant who will inherit the Davidic kingdom (Amos 9:11-12). The remnant theology comes into full fruition in Isaiah, again in a faithful remnant. The latter is the result only of the mercy of Yahweh (Is 37:42; 46:3), who will purge and purify them so that they will be holy (Is 4:2-3) and redeemed (Is 11:11). He will open a highway for them (Is 11:16) and will be their crown (Is 28:5). The whole concept is bound up with faithfulness to Yahweh (Is 7:3, 9; 10:20-23). This theme is particularly fitting for Paul in response to the situation of Israel in his *present day*."<sup>8</sup>

There are, for certain, different approaches taken to Paul's claim that *leimma kat' eklogēn charitos gegonen* (λείμμα κατ' ἐκλογὴν χάριτος γέγονεν), "a remnant according to election of grace has come into being" (LITV). Both the Calvinist and Arminian theological traditions would agree that this emphasizes a choosing entirely by the grace and mercy of God. Debate ensues over whether this is specific individuals predestined for salvation, or if this is a more general declaration of God's intention to provide a remnant among His own so it does not seem as though He has totally thrust away His chosen of Israel. Cranfield, as a Reformed interpreter, fairly acknowledges, "the very fact that it is a remnant according to the election of *grace*, and therefore not a remnant standing by its own deserving, makes its existence full of promise for the rest of the nation, a pledge of God's continuing interest in those λοιποὶ [*loipoi*, v. 7] who have indeed been hardened by a divine hardening such as is spoken of in Scripture."<sup>9</sup> The significance that there would, or even could, be a "remnant" ("a remaining group," Common English Bible) of Israel proper faithful to God, is highlighted via declarations such as the following from Ezekiel 16:1-5:

"Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations and say, "Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem, 'Your origin and your birth are from the land of the Canaanite, your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. As for your birth, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water for cleansing; you were not rubbed with salt or even wrapped in cloths. No eye looked with pity on you to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you. Rather you were thrown out into the open field, for you were abhorred on the day you were born.'""

If God's own can be insulted in such a way by Him, as though they were worthless from the time they were born—as a rebuke of their sins and rebellion against Him—**that even a remnant of them would be allowed** significantly highlights God's mercy and beneficence toward them.

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<sup>7</sup> Moo, 677.

<sup>8</sup> Osborne, 286.

<sup>9</sup> Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, 543.

## 6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

**11:6** Far too frequently, one will encounter a Christian teacher or Bible reader quote Romans 11:6, “And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace” (NIV), as though redemption in the period of the Tanach or Old Testament could be acquired via human action, and that the period of the Apostolic Scripture or New Testament offers redemption solely by God’s grace. The claim that is sometimes made, “Grace is no longer on the basis of works,” seems *most out of place* for people who are truly familiar with the overall Biblical narrative, reading the Scriptures holistically—because it seems to originate from the assumption that “grace” was something that people had to *actually earn* in the pre-resurrection era.

Most well-spoken theologians do recognize that God’s lovingkindness, grace, mercy, and favor toward His people have been freely available in any generation since the creation of humanity. It is highly useful to consider the emphasis of Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, in their book *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, who rightly state “that nowhere in the Old Testament is it suggested that anyone was saved by keeping the Law.”<sup>10</sup> (At most, Tanach verses that might be interpreted this way [e.g., Deuteronomy 6:25] present a hypothetical scenario that is humanly impossible, requiring God’s grace and mercy for deliverance.)

To review, the Apostle Paul’s remark about grace (*charis*, χάρις) has obviously been made within a much larger series of statements. Previously in Romans 10:21, Paul has expressed much of his internal pain over the reality that many of his Jewish brethren have rejected Yeshua the Messiah—although they are still quite rightly considered to be “Israel”—and that this is a fact witnessed in Tanach Scripture (cf. Isaiah 65:2).<sup>11</sup> Yet while many of the non-Jewish Romans could take Jewish rejection of Yeshua and the good news as a sign that only they are now “Israel” as a consequence of this, the Apostle is quite clear that this is not at all a correct conclusion.<sup>12</sup> Referencing key Tanach passages, Paul substantiates how in past history there has always been a righteous remnant among His chosen, who have remained faithful to Him:

“I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in *the passage about Elijah*, how he pleads with God against Israel? ‘Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE [1 Kings 19:10, 14].’ But what is the divine response to him? ‘I HAVE KEPT FOR MYSELF SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL [1 Kings 19:18].’ In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to *God’s* gracious choice” (vs. 1-5).

If in the period of Ancient Israel’s history, there can be those who commit utterly heinous acts against God’s Prophets, and yet there is still a remnant of those who are loyal to Him—then surely it would be **most inappropriate** for the non-Jewish Roman Believers to assume a position of “Israel” exclusively for themselves. Paul instructs, “So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace” (v. 5, RSV). Paul himself is a part of the First Century remnant of Jewish Believers in Yeshua, the

<sup>10</sup> Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 169.

<sup>11</sup> “I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in the way which is not good, following their own thoughts” (Isaiah 65:2).

<sup>12</sup> It is important to recognize that in referring to the Jewish people as “Israel” in Romans 11:1, the Apostle Paul is not saying that non-Jewish Believers are not a part of Israel via their faith in Yeshua (cf. Galatians 6:16; Ephesians 2:11-12). Quite the contrary, Paul emphasizes to the non-Jewish Roman Believers here that Jewish non-Believers cannot be reckoned by them as *not* being Israel even if they do not (presently) know the Messiah. Such a job of being “broken off” (11:19) from the olive tree and consequently ultimately not “Israel” rests with God and not any mortal. Extreme respect and honor is to be afforded to the Jewish people as “Israel,” regardless of their current salvation status before the Lord.

ones who are to serve in making the richness of Israel's olive tree made known to the nations at large (vs. 18-19). Those from the nations who come to faith in Israel's Messiah are not to be arrogant or boastful against those of the natural Jewish branches, lest they themselves ever be broken off out of arrogance (vs. 17-21), *precisely because* of the kindness of God allowing any human being among His chosen (v. 22).

If inclusion among God's people is to be reckoned on the basis of His grace, then how are readers to view v. 6: "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace"? If inclusion among the redeemed is to be reckoned because of God's grace toward people, then is it at least possible that v. 6 depicts that it could at one time have been by works? Some have taken v. 6 to mean that at one point in history, the pre-resurrection era, God's grace could have been earned by doing various works. But is this really a responsible reading of the clause *ouketi ex ergōn* (οὐκέτι ἐξ ἔργων), "no more of works" (KJV/YLT)<sup>13</sup>? The adverb *ouketi* (οὐκέτι), obviously dependent on context, can mean "no more, no longer, no further" (LS).<sup>14</sup>

Within Paul's argument, of Romans 11:6, is certainly intended a dismissal of *any* human actions as somehow being able to merit or earn God's eternal favor (cf. Ephesians 2:8-9); God's grace originates entirely from His goodness and everlasting love as Creator. The conclusion of various Romans commentators, some of whom believe that Torah obedience is something that was only part of the pre-resurrection era, is quite notably that the adverb *ouketi* **does not** serve in terms of temporality—as though there were once a time when people could actually work to earn God's favor—but instead has a logical force to it.<sup>15</sup> If those in the time of the Prophet Elijah were reckoned as being God's remnant by His grace, than anyone arguing that any kind of works—either "works" defined Biblically or "works" specified one's religious leaders or sect—will surely never work in terms of earning His favor:

C.E.B. Cranfield: "The variant οὐκ [*ouk*] is no doubt to be rejected as a stylistic improvement. The use of οὐκέτι with a logical rather than a temporal force is found several times in Paul's letters."<sup>16</sup>

Douglas J. Moo: "οὐκέτι in both occurrences in this verse has a logical ('it is therefore not the case that') rather than a temporal meaning..."<sup>17</sup>

James D.G. Dunn: "οὐκέτι provides a logical rather than temporal connection, as in 7:20, 14:15, and Gal 3:18...The point is polemical...which Paul clearly recalls in summary fashion....The context here confirms the earlier observation that the 'works' referred to are a way of understanding election which Paul firmly rejects (election of grace, not from works)."<sup>18</sup>

Grant R. Osborne: "the *no longer* is logical, not temporal. It does not mean that in the [Old Testament] salvation came by works...The message is that human achievement can never make a person right with God because the law of sin and death is in control, and every individual is unable to be good enough."<sup>19</sup>

Among modern versions, the TNIV reflects the logical usage of *ouketi* in rendering Romans 11:6 with, "And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace."

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<sup>13</sup> Ger. "so nicht mehr aus Werken" (1993 Elberfelder Bibel).

<sup>14</sup> LS, 576.

<sup>15</sup> BDAG, 736 defines *ouketi* (οὐκέτι) with "marker of inference in a logical process, not."

<sup>16</sup> Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, 547 fn#4.

Cf. Romans 7:17.

<sup>17</sup> Moo, 678 fn#42.

<sup>18</sup> Dunn, 38b:639.

<sup>19</sup> Osborne, 287.

The argument Paul includes in this section of his letter to the Romans by no means suggests that there was once a time when God's grace could be earned by human action; it is to substantiate the fact that His chosen *have always* been reckoned as such by His grace or unmerited favor.

It is very difficult to convince a Messianic Believer who studies the Torah and the Tanach on a consistent basis to prove that the grace of God is somehow *not* an "Old Testament" concept. Why did the Lord deliver Ancient Israel from its slavery in Egypt? Was it because of the Israelites' deeds/works, or because of His grace? Why did the Lord not utterly wipe out Ancient Israel in the desert when the people disobeyed Him? Was it because of their deeds/works, or because of His grace? Why does God continue to preserve the Jewish people today, in spite of the fact that a great many of them have rejected Yeshua as the Messiah? Is it because of their works, or because of His grace? ***It is all because of His unbelievable grace!*** Most significant, the fact that Planet Earth—up until this point in time *and after many millennia of rebellion against God* and heinous sins of idolatry, sexual immorality, genocide, and world wars—does not spin off of its axis and cause humankind to all freeze away from the sun or burn up in the sun or break up into pieces, is clearly because our Gracious God very much wants all to come to a saving knowledge of Him through His Son Yeshua (Jesus)!

Quite sadly, many of today's Christians who read Romans 11:6 and see the statement, "And if by grace, then it is no longer by works" (NIV), are of the false assumption that Judaism, both of the First Century and up until the Twenty-First Century, is a complete religion of human works where one must observe the Torah to be saved—in stark contrast to the religion of Christianity where one is saved through faith in Jesus. It might be true that Orthodox Judaism today does emphasize a person's deeds/works much more than a great deal of Christianity. But that does not automatically mean that there is no grace or mercy witnessed within Jewish teaching and theology (or for that matter that Orthodox Judaism is the only branch of Judaism that should be considered for such theology). To assert that grace is not a concept that is evidenced in the Tanach would be to negate the Psalmist's words:

"For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand *outside*. I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the LORD God is a sun and shield; **the LORD gives grace and glory** [*chein v'kavod yittein ADONAI, יְהוָה יִתֵּן וְיַכְבֹּד יִתֵּן*]<sup>20</sup>; no good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly. O LORD of hosts, how blessed is the man who trusts in You!" (Psalm 84:10-12).

Some may take issue with the Psalmist's words here, saying that the Lord only gives grace to those "whose walk is blameless" (NIV),<sup>21</sup> implying that what is said is that one must observe God's commandments in order to receive grace. This is an inaccurate view. The text is clear that while grace, *chein* (יָחַן), is found in the Lord, "no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless" (NIV), those who are presumably His people and who are living properly. Those who are obedient to the Heavenly Father, having lives which are *tamim* (תָּמִים),<sup>22</sup> are naturally going to experience His grace and glory in a far more tangible sense than those who live in disobedience and obstinance against Him.

The Lord can, ultimately, *only* demonstrate the fullness of His grace upon those who have been spiritually regenerated, and have gone before Him for permanent forgiveness and restitution for their sins via Messiah Yeshua. Proverbs 3:34 says, "Though He scoffs at the scoffers, yet He gives grace to the

<sup>20</sup> Grk. LXX *charin kai doxan dōsei* (χαρίν καὶ δόξαν δώσει); "will give grace and glory" (LXE).

<sup>21</sup> Heb. *I'holkim b'tamim* (יְהוֹלְכִים בְּתָמִים); "from those who live without blame" (NJPS).

<sup>22</sup> HALOT, 2:1749 offers a variety of applications for *tamim*, including: "complete, unscathed, intact," "without fault, free of blemish: of animals for sacrifice," "perfect," "impeccable," and "honest, devout."

Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, eds., *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003), pp 1232-1233 adds, "When used in a moral sense, this word is linked with truth, virtue, uprightness, and righteousness...The term is used of one's relationship with another person...and of one's relationship with God."

afflicted.” This verse is quoted by James the Just, “But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, ‘GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE’” (James 4:6).

Does God’s grace nullify the value and importance of God’s Law? Judaism’s widescale view, contrary to the view of much of modern Christianity, is that the Torah or the Law of Moses is actually a gift of grace by God to His people. The Torah is believed to have been given by the Lord as a part of His beneficence toward Israel, because the Torah will preserve Israel and keep His people upright. As the Mishnah tractate *Pirkei Avot* communicates,

“Great is the Torah because it gives life to those who perform it in this world and in the next as it says, ‘For they are life to them that find them, and healing to all their flesh.’ [Prov. 4:22] And it says, ‘It shall be health to your navel and marrow to your bones.’ [Prov. 3:8] And it says, ‘It is a tree of life to all who hold fast to it and all its supporters are happy.’ [Prov. 3:18] And it also says, ‘They are a chaplet of grace [לְוַיַּת צֵהִין, לְוַיַּת צֵהִין]; a crown of glory shall it give you.’ [Prov. 4:9] And it says, ‘By me your days will be multiplied and the years of your life increased.’ [Prov. 9:11] And it says, ‘Length of days is in her right hand; riches and honor are in her left hand.’ [Prov. 3:16] And it says, ‘For length of days and years of life and peace shall be added to you.’ [Prov. 3:2]” (m.*Avot* 6:7).<sup>23</sup>

The ultimate manifestation of the Father’s grace is undoubtedly found in the sacrificial work of the Messiah Yeshua (Christ Jesus). Yet, the general favor of the Lord has surely been displayed throughout history toward those who recognize Him as Creator. The grace of God has been demonstrated toward His children who strive to obey Him, *even in their own* strength—certainly via material blessings of bounty and prosperity—as He steadily woos those who are attracted to Him into His full salvation and redemption. The Wesleyan theological tradition in which I was raised has tended to call this “prevenient grace,” whereby those who are unredeemed still nevertheless experience God’s favor because they are human beings made in His image whom He loves. “Saving grace” and “sanctifying grace,” in the Wesleyan theological schema, regard how God’s grace made manifest in the good news redeems people from sin, and then enables them to accomplish good works by the power of Christ within them.<sup>24</sup> Sanctifying grace made manifest in a spiritually regenerated Believer manifests in good works; but such good works do not bring about salvation, yet are to be the clear result of it.

For someone such as myself, at least, Judaism tends to rightly recognize the presence of God’s prevenient grace. It has yet to recognize God’s saving grace in Yeshua. And, all Messiah followers—evangelical Christians *and even* some Messianics—need to grab a greater hold onto the significance of sanctifying grace.<sup>25</sup> While in Romans 11:6 Paul expresses how grace can never result from human works, good works of obedience to God’s Law are to surely manifest themselves in the lives of those who have experienced such grace!

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<sup>23</sup> Leonard Kravitz and Kerry M. Olitzky, eds. and trans., *Pirke Avot: A Modern Commentary on Jewish Ethics* (New York: UAHC Press, 1993), pp 102-103.

<sup>24</sup> This is more fully elaborated upon in the relevant sections of Kenneth J. Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003).

<sup>25</sup> Consult the various discussions appearing in the *Messianic Torah Helper* by Messianic Apologetics.