

The Remnant

Romans 11:1-10 on October 29, 2023

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Please read Romans 11:1-10 before going further in this transcript.

Today we're going to consider this idea of "The Remnant." Although we don't use this particular word, "remnant," very often, we do use the word "remain" or "remaining." So The Remnant is what's remaining from a larger portion of something. This could refer to the remnants of last night's supper (unless you have teenagers!), or the remnants of your child's favorite blankey, or the teddy bear which they refuse to part with – whatever's left of it is "the remnant." But from a biblical perspective, The Remnant means something different; it's "a portion of people whom God has reserved, those whom He has chosen by grace." We read about part of this remnant back in Romans 9:27-28, "Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved. 28 For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality."¹ The sentence being carried out by the Lord in verse 28, was against the Israelites who had sinfully rebelled against their God.² The Lord was carrying out his sentence through the Assyrians, who conquered the Israelites and took them into captivity. Of the many who were taken into captivity, only a remnant would be saved, only a portion, and only... by God's grace. In today's passage, Paul goes into further detail about The Remnant. The Remnant not only reminds us of God's sovereign right to call and to choose³, but it also reminds us of God's FAITHFULNESS. And that's what we're going to focus on today: How the remnant reveals God's faithfulness.

The remnant reveals God's faithfulness through history:

I. In Paul's day. Paul begins Romans 11 with the phrase, "I ask then," which connects back to the immediately preceding verse in Romans 10:21, "...All day long I [*The LORD*] have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people." Romans 11:1 then continues, "I ask then [*in light of Israel's disobedience and obstinance*]: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin." Paul is basically saying, "even though my Israelite heritage is one of disobedience and obstinance, God did NOT reject the Israelite people, after all, I'm an Israelite myself." And those of us who know Paul's origin story, know that he himself had also once been a disobedient and obstinate Jew. He himself had been

¹ "Isaiah speaks words of both warning and promise to Israel. Many Israelites had been unfaithful to God's covenant, leaving only a 'remnant' to be saved. But God commits himself to preserve this remnant in faithfulness to his promises to Israel." *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2310 footnote on Romans 9:24-29.

² See Isaiah 10:20-23 and its surrounding context.

³ We talked about God's Sovereignty in a two-part sermon in the fall of 2023: <https://efcbemidji.org/sermon/gods-sovereignty-part-1-gods-sovereign-right-to-call-and-to-choose/> and then <https://efcbemidji.org/sermon/gods-sovereignty-part-2-exploring-the-doctrine-of-election/>

pursuing the law as a way to attain righteousness on his own.^{4 5} Even though this was Paul's background, God didn't reject him along with all of the rest of the Israelites, but rather He chose Paul by his grace. Paul found salvation through faith in Christ. So even though, in Paul's day, there weren't as many Jews who came to faith in Jesus Christ as one might expect, there were definitely some; there was a remnant of which Paul himself was a part. Now this remnant of which he was a part, actually consisted of thousands of Jews in Paul's day. We know this, because right around the time that Paul likely mailed his letter to the church in Rome, he traveled back to Jerusalem.⁶ And when he arrived in Jerusalem, Acts 21:19-20 tells us that "Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. 20 When they heard this, they praised God. Then they said to Paul: "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law." The faith of these Jews living in the 1st century not only proves that God didn't totally reject the Israelites, but it also reveals God's faithfulness through reserving a remnant in Paul's day.^{7 8} If there hadn't been a remnant in Paul's day, then there wouldn't have been anyone to carry the gospel out from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. And, there wouldn't have been anyone to live out the gospel message in the New Testament letters, nor anyone to write it down for us. Rather than rejecting the Israelite people, God has faithfully reserved a remnant of them throughout human history!

Romans 11:2 goes on, "God did not reject his people, whom he *foreknew*...."⁹ God's divine foreknowledge is an absolutely fascinating topic, and it really needs its own entire sermon, or sermon series, to do it justice. But we'll only address it briefly here today. The Greek word for "foreknew," has a dual range of meaning, so it includes both foreknowing INFORMATION as well as foreknowing RELATIONSHIP. In other words,

⁴ In Philippians 3:4-6, Paul declares "...If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless." Also see 2 Corinthians 11:22.

⁵ "Had God cast away His people, then above all He would have cast away the Apostle Paul, who had opposed Him with all his might" (Luther, Romans, 139, cited by Robert H. Mounce, Romans, vol. 27, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995).)

⁶ See Acts 20:3-4, when Paul stayed in Corinth for 3 months and likely mailed the letter to Rome while he was still this far west.

⁷ Elijah's story was likely a personal encouragement to Paul, given that on the one hand, he knew that there just weren't that many Jews who were following Christ in his day, but on the other hand, God had reserved not just him, but a number of other Jews as well. In fact, some of those Jewish Christians were the very ones reading his letter to the church in Rome.

⁸ God's plans for His people will not be thwarted no matter how many times we go astray; He will intercede by electing a remnant. Elijah's story illustrates "that the majority of Israel was apostate," which is parallel to Paul's day, when "most of Israel had refused to acknowledge Jesus as the resurrected Lord," which is "comparable to Israel's devotion to Baal instead of Yahweh." Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans, 2nd Ed.*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2018, p. 567.

⁹ New Testament scholars Moo and Naselli both mention the comma in Romans 11:2, noting how they feel it helps clarify that "God corporately foreknew his people Israel as a collective whole," not just some of them. Andrew David Naselli, *Romans*, Crossway, Wheaton, IL, 2022, p. 135 footnote #23.

God foreknows the data, sort of like the ultimate Google, but He also relationally foreknows the remnant, those He chose in advance by His grace.^{10 11 12 13}

This dual range of meaning regarding all that God foreknows, sheds light on God's faithfulness from two different perspectives: Some would suggest that we should apply God's foreknowledge more informationally in verse 2, meaning that God foreknew, since eternity past, who would choose Him and who would reject Him. So, God wasn't at all surprised when the Israelite people rejected Him, because He saw it coming. He foreknew it, so He already had a plan in place that would easily allow His master redemptive plan to keep moving forward. Rather than rejecting His people, He faithfully planned ahead to reserve a remnant of them by His gracious choosing. Others would suggest we should approach God's foreknowledge more relationally in verse 2, meaning that God had already chosen a remnant in advance, by electing them unto salvation. We talked about God's sovereign right to call and to choose, back in Romans 9. Rather than rejecting His people, God initiated a relationship with some of them in eternity past, faithfully reserving them to be part of His remnant. So there's no way that God would reject His people; He remained faithful to the remnant He'd chosen in advance. So one way or another, God foreknew Paul and the other believing Jews of his day, and He included them in a remnant chosen by His grace. I appreciate how Professor D.A. Carson puts it, "We do not know how an eternal God operates in time. We scarcely know what time is; it is not at all clear what eternity is... still less how [God] relates to our time. The question is critical in debates over foreordination and predestination."¹⁴ So regardless of how God's foreknowledge specifically came to bear on the 1st century believers, it reveals His faithfulness in reserving a remnant.

The remnant also reveals God's faithfulness...

II. In Elijah's day. Romans 11:2-4 goes on, "...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

¹⁰ "Foreknew" = προγινώσκω "① to know beforehand or in advance, have foreknowledge (of) τί something ...in advance 2 Pt 3:17. Of God...—Closely connected is the idea of choice that suggests foreknowledge ② choose beforehand τινά someone Ro 8:29... 11:2... 1 Pt 1:20.—Know from time past... Ac 26:5. (William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 866.)

¹¹ Romans 8:29 uses the same Greek word "foreknew," > "Although προγινώσκω means "to know in advance," Paul's use of the word here carries the Old Testament nuance of personal and intimate knowledge (Amos 3:2, "You only have I chosen [ἐγνων in the LXX] of all the families of the earth"). BAGD has "to choose beforehand" as the meaning for προγινώσκω in Rom 8:29 (p. 703). (Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, vol. 27, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995).)

¹² This means that God obviously knew us before we had any knowledge of Him. Some potential ramifications would include God knowing in eternity past who would eventually place their faith in Him, as well as God knowing us "in the sense of choosing us by his grace, before the foundation of the world." *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1903 footnote on Romans 8:29. This later ramification of choosing is foundational to the doctrine of election, which continues to be debated among Bible scholars. Also read the foreknowledge notes in the *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2307 footnote on Romans 8:29.

¹³ Not only is God's foreknowledge entirely comprehensive in its scope, but it's mind-blowing in its ramifications. Article 1 of our church's 10-point Statement of Faith defines God as having "limitless knowledge."

¹⁴ *Still Sovereign*, Ed. By Thomas R. Schreiner & Bruce A. Ware, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2000, p. 271.

seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” The Israelites had a long history of killing the prophets whom God had sent to them. Verses 2-4 refer back to a particular occasion during the life of the prophet Elijah. Paul is quoting here from the Old Testament book of 1 Kings,¹⁵ and many of Paul’s original readers would have known the context for Elijah’s words:

- The evil King Ahab and his wife Jezebel had led the Israelites into idolatrous Baal worship.
- Elijah faced down the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, and the God of Israel revealed Himself by sending fire to burn up the sacrifice.
- But then Elijah had to run for his life because Jezebel wanted him dead.
- And as he’s hiding in a cave, God’s presence passes by him, (*not in the wind, not in the earthquake, and not in the fire, but in a gentle whisper, “a still small voice.”*)¹⁶

This is the context in which Elijah says the words in Romans 11:3, “Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me.” But it turns out that Elijah was wrong about being the only one left, because God had faithfully preserved a remnant of 7,000 Israelites who had not bowed their knee to Baal.¹⁷ Rather than being disobedient like the other Israelites, they had obeyed their God. And rather than God completely rejecting the Israelites for their sinful worship of other gods, He had been faithful in Elijah’s day to reserve a remnant *for Himself*.

In fact, let’s think about God’s words here in the middle of verse 4: “I have reserved *for myself*.” God is glorified in the remnant; He reserves them for Himself; for His own glory, for His own purposes, for His own pleasure.¹⁸ God’s remnant is His own precious possession, so there’s no way that He would ever reject them. And those of us who have placed our faith in Him, should find great comfort and assurance in this truth: we also have been chosen by His grace, to be part of His remnant. We’ve been reserved for God Himself! So even as today’s verses are primarily focused on God’s faithfulness to the Israelites, these truths are equally applicable to us Gentiles who are also a part of His remnant.¹⁹

Let’s consider one other truth from Romans 11:4, God says, “...I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” Now we might conclude from verse 4 that the reason God chose these 7,000 Israelites was because *they were faithful to Him*, because they placed no other god, before the one true God, Yahweh. And certainly God does honor our faithfulness to Him. However, the

¹⁵ Specifically 1 Kings 19:10,14, and 18.

¹⁶ “Sulking in a cave forty days’ and nights’ journey away from danger and consumed with self-pity, Elijah learned that he was not a minority of one.” (Robert H. Mounce, Romans, vol. 27, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 215.)

¹⁷ “Baal (meaning ‘lord’) was the Canaanite storm-god who also had fertility functions (hence his importance to an agrarian society like ancient Israel’s).” *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 436 footnote on Judges 2:11.

¹⁸ Consider 1 Samuel 12:22 “the LORD was pleased to make you His own” and Psalm 94:14 says, “He will never forsake His inheritance.” God’s inheritance is His people.

¹⁹ Ephesians 1:14 and 1 Peter 2:9 clarify that believing Jews and Gentiles alike are God’s special possession.

immediately following verses clarify that God's choice of this remnant had nothing to do with human works. Romans 11:5 makes it clear that a remnant is chosen by grace, and verse 6 makes this even more clear, "And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace." So, if God had reserved these 7,000 Israelites in His remnant, based on their works, based on them not bowing to Baal, then they would have earned their place in God's remnant. God would have owed it to them, as a payment for their obedience, and grace would no longer be grace. That's why verse 7 then goes on to explain that this is why the people of Israel didn't obtain the righteousness which they so earnestly sought. Dear friends, we can't work hard enough, or earnestly enough, to obtain a right standing with God. It is entirely a gift of His grace.

Verse 7 says that those whom God choose, the elect among the Israelites, were made right with God, but the others were hardened.^{20 21} Verses 8-10 then go on to describe how God further hardened their already hardened hearts. We've talked about this in previous sermons, how in our human rebellion we have a tendency to reject God and to harden ourselves against Him. And God has given the human race over to our own sinful desires; He has allowed sin to run its course.²² But let's keep in mind, that even in the midst of our human rebellion, God has faithfully continued to reserve a remnant, and He's provided us with a Savior.²³

The remnant also reveals God's faithfulness...

III. In spite of ongoing human hardheartedness. Romans 11:8 goes on to clarify that this hardening in verse 7 was caused by God Himself. "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."²⁴ Now we need to keep in mind where we began today in Romans 10:21, which established the context of Israel's disobedience. Disobedience draws us away from God, and ongoing disobedience, over a long period of time, hardens us against God.²⁵

²⁰ The Israelites tried so hard to be righteous on their own, but their efforts fell short. What didn't fall short was God's faithful choosing of a remnant, who were elected to salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. Elect means chosen. Those whom God chose, obtained righteousness, while those who chose to go their own way, did not.

²¹ This group of the elect is another way to refer to the remnant, and they are a demonstration of God's ongoing faithfulness in always preserving at least a small portion of the Jews, no matter how hardened the others became.

²² "as with the hardening of Pharaoh... God gives people up to their own stubbornness." John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans*, Rev. Ed., IVP, Downers Grove, IL, 1994, p. 292.

²³ As we talked about [back in Romans 10](#), Israel's failure to be saved wasn't because they failed to hear the gospel, it was because they failed to believe it.

²⁴ Consider Isaiah 6:8-10.

²⁵ This often happens slowly, but progressively becomes more and more severe, until we finally come to our senses and realize just how far we've wandered. The key is to keep short accounts with God, to repent of our disobedience early and often. "Disobedience never leaves a person in the same condition. Obedience draws the believer into an increasingly intimate relationship with the Lord, but disobedience separates and hardens. The tragic aspect of hardening is that disobedient people are increasingly unable to grasp the serious nature of their spiritual apostasy." (Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, vol. 27, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 216.)

So in verses 8-10, God is further hardening already hardened hearts.^{26 27 28 29} The phrase at the end of verse 8, “To this very day,” links Israel’s spiritual stupor and rebellion in Elijah’s day, to their continuing stupor and rebellion in Paul’s day. This hardening has been going on for a long time!

Now, I have to confess that passages like Romans 11:8-10 do seem a bit harsh to me, even though I understand that God is simply further hardening already hardened hearts.^{30 31} As I was thinking this over this week, I couldn’t help but wonder if passages like these are a sort of prophetic technique, which force the people to do some soul searching. It almost feels like a teaching device to provoke people to come to their senses.^{32 33} As I was thinking about this, a particular passage from the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah came to mind. Jeremiah 18:1-12 says, “This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: “Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will give you my message.” So I went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. Then the word of the LORD came to me. He said, “Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?” declares the LORD. “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel. If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey

²⁶ Romans 11:11 makes it clear that the preceding verses 1-10 were about Israel’s overarching TRANSGRESSION.

²⁷ Much like we learned back in Romans 9:18, that God “hardens whom He wants to harden,” Romans 11:8 clarifies once again that God plays an active role in this hardening, this “spiritual insensitivity, comes from God.” Douglas J. Moo, *Encountering the Book of Romans, 2nd Ed.*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2014, p. 152.

²⁸ “When God elects us to be saved, he gives us a gift that we do not deserve and never could deserve. When he hardens, he confirms the sentence that people deserve and have already chosen for themselves.” Douglas J. Moo, *Encountering the Book of Romans, 2nd Ed.*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2014, p. 152.

²⁹ Later on, Romans 11:25 will clarify that this hardening is only for a limited time.

³⁰ Romans 11:9-10 are citing Psalm 69:22-23. What David once prayed against his enemies, Paul now applies to those who are hardened against God. The picture here is potent. The Israelites were sitting at their table expecting a nourishing meal, but it becomes a trap and a stumbling block for them. They sat at their own religious table rather than the table of Christ. The Jews thought that they had the law all figured out, but their eyes were darkened to the light of Christ, who’d come as the culmination of the law. As long as they stayed on their rebellious course, their backs would remain bent under the heavy load of trying to carry the law on their own strength.

³¹ “That Psalm 69 is quoted is significant, since this psalm is often used or alluded to in the New Testament in relationship to the life, ministry, and death of Jesus Christ... The New Testament writers believed this psalm was fulfilled in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, who was unjustly rejected and suffered, even though he was filled with zeal for the house of God. We know from Romans 15:3 that Paul also related the psalm to Jesus. The curse pronounced on the psalmist’s enemies, therefore, was applied to unbelieving Jews of Paul’s day who rejected Jesus as their Lord and oppressed the church.” Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans, 2nd Ed.*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2018, p. 573.

³² Consider “the power of indignation.” In 2 Corinthians 7:8-13, Paul writes, “Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while—9 yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. 10 Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. 11 See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.”

³³ Let’s keep in mind that God not only foreknew their hardness, but He also foreknew how to get their attention – make them jealous of the Gentiles. This was His loving strategy for shaking them from their lethargy, as well as bringing in the Gentiles whom He would also elect to faith.

me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it. “Now therefore say to the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem, ‘This is what the LORD says: Look! I am preparing a disaster for you and devising a plan against you. So turn from your evil ways, each one of you, and reform your ways and your actions.’ But they will reply, ‘It’s no use. We will continue with our own plans; we will all follow the stubbornness of our evil hearts.’ ”

In light of all the challenging things that we’re learning in Romans, it’s important for us to keep in mind, the heart of God. He keeps holding out His hands to us. He is faithful to His people, even though we’re all just a bunch of marred and stubborn pots, which He could just as easily throw away. Instead though, in His faithfulness, He reserves a remnant: A remnant that is chosen by grace. A remnant that is for His own glory. A remnant in which all of us who trust in Christ will find ourselves a part, whether we’re an Israelite or a Gentile.³⁴ *So let’s praise the Lord for His faithfulness, in reserving a remnant all throughout human history!*^{35 36}

Today’s verses highlighting God’s grace are exceedingly appropriate for us to consider on a Reformation Sunday. People with last names like Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli all played an important role in God’s remnant some 500 years ago. Although none of these men were perfect, and none of them had perfect theology, they did serve God’s gospel purposes by calling us back to the gospel of grace.³⁷ We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

³⁴ As we’ve been learning more about the gospel, throughout our study of Romans, it’s been abundantly clear that the gospel has broad applications for both Jews and Gentiles. And as much as today’s passage is focused on certain Israelites whom God reserved for His remnant, this reserving does not in any way exclude the many Gentiles that He has also chosen to be part of His remnant. God’s faithfulness to the Israelites reminds us that He has also been faithful to us Gentiles. He has included us in His plan. He has kept us in mind all throughout history. He has designed the gospel to be “A Gospel for All Peoples.” Together, we believing Jews and Gentiles, make up the remnant of those who have been chosen by God’s grace.

³⁵ God has a faithful track record of reserving a remnant for His purposes. God preserved a remnant in the time of Noah, and throughout Israel’s various military struggles, and in the time of their exile in Assyria and then Babylon, and on and on throughout human history, even up into today. See *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, pp. 643-644 footnote on 1 Kings 19:18.

³⁶ “Of course, the most blessed remnant is that of the true Church, the body of Christ, chosen out of the millions who have lived and died over the centuries. Jesus made it clear that this remnant would be small when compared to the number of people on the earth throughout history. “Many” will find the way to eternal destruction, but “few” will find the way to eternal life (Matthew 7:13-14). We who believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior can, with great peace, rest in the fact that we belong to the “remnant.”” (<https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-remnant.html>)

³⁷ Thomas R. Schreiner offers this bold defense of unconditional election, “Those who deny unconditional election introduce, albeit subtly, the notion that human works play a role in obtaining justification and open the door for human boasting.... For Paul, the purity of grace is bound up with the conviction that God elects apart from any work on the part of human beings. Luther... defended... unconditional election so vigorously because... denial... compromised the Pauline gospel that justification is by grace alone through faith alone. ...The Reformation was propelled by scholars who believed in and preached passionately the doctrine of grace; it would probably not have occurred if Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli were semi-Pelagian.” Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans, 2nd Ed.*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2018, p. 569. However, some of us might question whether denying unconditional election, particularly individual election, would amount to compromising the gospel. Although there are satisfying explanations for how God’s election can be completely just, questions still remain for how we reconcile it with human choice and responsibility. There are some other options regarding election that are worth our prayerful consideration. Part of the ongoing dialogue around this topic of election has to do with the nuances between the election of individual people, versus the election of a particular group, or even a people group, like the Jews or Gentiles for example.

The fact is, God continues to save Israelites by His grace, even in our modern day. In the words of Romans 10:21, *God is still holding out His hands to them.*³⁸ In the footnotes of this transcript, there's a story called, "The Man on the Bus." It was written by Allen Benson's late wife, Linda Benson.³⁹ This story illustrates just how true it is that God is faithful to reserve a remnant for Himself, even to this very day, even in our present time.⁴⁰ Just as He reserved a remnant in Elijah's day, and in Paul's day, He's also reserving a remnant in our day. God has not and will not completely and finally reject Israel - God's master redemptive plan has set aside plenty of room for Jews who will place their faith in Jesus Christ. So as we continue to pray for a peaceful end to the war in Israel, let's also continue to pray for the peace of Jesus Christ to enter the hearts and minds of the Israelite people. Let's pray for the salvation of every single Israelite whom God will choose by His grace, and for every single Gentile as well. ***Because God will continue to be faithful to His remnant!***

³⁸ See *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2312 footnote on Romans 10:20.

³⁹ THE MAN ON THE BUS by Linda Benson: As had been our custom for many years, we decided to take the bus from Renton to Seattle to enjoy the Christmas decorations. On this day, as we dropped down into Renton proper, Allen pulled out his little Gideon New Testament and turned to the Psalms and began reading. "Please read it to me," I said, so he quietly began. The bus was rather empty at this hour on a Saturday morning, but at a stop in Renton a man boarded the bus and moved down the aisle toward us. He was casually dressed, a man probably in his mid-40's, not conspicuous in any way. As he neared us he stopped, looked at the book in Allen's hands, and asked, "Is that a Gideon New Testament?" "Yes, it is," replied Allen, and with that the man sat down one row behind us and across the aisle. Allen continued reading to me. "Excuse me, but I wonder if you could tell me where I might be able to get a hold of a New Testament like that?" the man suddenly asked. "Certainly," replied Allen. "As a matter of fact, won't you please accept this one, and Merry Christmas? If you're interested, you'll find the Christmas story in the beginning of the first book, which is Matthew." And with that Allen reached behind him, and the man leaned over to accept the little book. The bus continued on its way. Unable to continue our reading, we sat quietly, watching the passing scene. I stole a glance behind me, and the man was reading the little book! I wondered what he might be thinking about it. I began to pray he would understand what he was reading. Suddenly, loudly, and with a sob we heard this gentleman exclaim, "He came! He came! Messiah came and I missed it!" (And I knew then that this man was Jewish, because he used the Hebrew word for 'Messiah.')

As we swiveled around in our seats to look at the man, we were amazed to see his face – a face marked with a mixture of anguish and joy; his cheeks wet with tears. As he became aware of us looking at him, he looked up and repeated once more, directly to us, "Messiah came, and I missed it." And then he went on, "My rabbis have lied to me. Messiah has already come!" We instinctively moved across the aisle and were now sitting right in front of him. He continued, "For years I have been a student of the prophets, especially Isaiah and Jeremiah, and now I see that what they prophesied about Messiah coming has actually happened." While we two utterly amazed Gentiles listened, he went on to tell us how he had been awaiting Messiah's coming all his life. He had searched the Scriptures and studied them for clues, asked questions, and was always told that the event was yet to come. Allen expressed that we, too, believed in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and also in Jesus of the New Testament, whom we accepted as God's promised Messiah. We briefly outlined the next steps of a person who comes to Christ, that is in seeking the fellowship of other believers and continuing in the study of the Bible. We mentioned that he was not alone in being a Jewish person who found his Messiah – a "completed Jew" as some describe themselves. The tears were gone now, and a beaming man held the little book to his heart and thanked Allen for giving it to him. And then, as suddenly as our encounter had begun, it ended as he looked out the window and said, "Oh, here is my stop coming up. I must leave. Good-bye, and thank you again." With that he rose, smiled, turned around, and walked to the exit. The bus stopped and he got off. We never got his name; he didn't learn ours. And we sat there in amazed silence at what had transpired. "Did that really happen?" we asked each other with wonder. "We didn't imagine this, did we?" More than once we looked at each other again and asked the same question: "Did that really happen?" And then we would laugh like two children hardly able to contain the excitement of the moment. We had personally been granted the greatest gift that Christmas could hold – a Jewish man discovering his Messiah just like the shepherds in the fields near Bethlehem that first Christmas. (Excerpted from a talk given to the Gideons of the State of Indiana in September 1998)

⁴⁰ "As in the time of Elijah, there is hope in the midst of widespread apostasy: God is preserving for himself faithful Jews who, like Paul, have responded in faith to the Good News." *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2312 footnote on Romans 11:5.