

Transformed!

How God Renews the Lives of His People

Get Personal

Part 13: *Be Afraid*

A Note from Pastor Keith...

[Jesus said,] “Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.”

John 13:17 (NIV)

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

James 1:22 (NIV)

God wants us to be doers of the Word, people who listen and learn and then *take action*. Gathering Bible knowledge is easy. But Jesus teaches us that it's not *knowing*, but *doing* that leads to blessing. And James adds that anything less is self-deception. So whenever I read the Bible, I look not just for new information and insights, but for the imperatives, the specific things God tells me to do. Today's passage has one standout imperative: “Be afraid.” So I decided to make that our title. It's not exactly what we come to church for, but it may be exactly what we need.

What does God do when His people turn against Him, His purpose, and His plan?

1. God *may* choose a tiny remnant and continue to use them—though if He does, it is pure grace!

¹I ask then: **Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself**, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. ²God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what the 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”? ⁴And what was God's answer to him? “I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” ⁵So too, **at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.** ⁶And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

Romans 11:1-6 (all references are NIV, emphasis added)

2. More often, God gives us over to our decision and its full consequences.

⁷What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. **The others were hardened**, ⁸as it is written: “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day.” ⁹And David says: “May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. ¹⁰May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever.”

Romans 11:7-10

Let's learn from Israel's experience.

1. Our choices impact others, so be a blessing!

¹¹Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. ¹²But if their transgression means riches for the world,

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What opportunities is God giving you to be part of the remnant, to love and serve Him and others?

Let's think about consequences. In what ways has your decision or the decision of those close to you to turn away from God impacted your life and family?

and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring! ¹³I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry ¹⁴in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. ¹⁵For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

Romans 11:11-15

2. God cuts off fruitless branches, so be humble and fearful!

¹⁶If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches. ¹⁷If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, ¹⁸**do not boast** over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. ¹⁹You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." ²⁰Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. **Do not be arrogant, but be afraid.** ²¹For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. ²²Consider there-fore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. **Otherwise, you also will be cut off.** ²³And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. ²⁴After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!

Romans 11:16-24

3. Ethnic Israel has a future in God's program, but God has made no such promises to us (U.S.)!

²⁵I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: **Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.** ²⁶**And so all Israel will be saved,** as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob." ²⁷And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins." ²⁸As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, **they are loved on account of the patriarchs,** ²⁹**for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.** ³⁰Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, ³¹so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. ³²For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

Romans 11:25-32

A Hymn of Praise

³³Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable his judgments,
and his paths beyond tracing out!
³⁴"Who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been his counselor?"
³⁵"Who has ever given to God,
that God should repay him?"
³⁶For from him and through him and to him are all things.
To him be the glory forever! Amen.

Romans 11:33-36

Get Personal!

What can you do to become more supernaturally attractive, more effective in drawing others to Christ?

How would deeper humility and fear show up in your life? In the most practical and specific terms possible, what would they look like?

How can we do as individuals and as a church to extend our role in God's kingdom program?