

Romans

#22: God Is Faithful

Romans 11

Dr. Matt Cassidy ---- February 22, 2026

Good morning, Grace! Turn in your Bibles or in your Romans notebooks to Romans 11, the most difficult passage in the Book of Romans and maybe in the New Testament, and maybe in the entire Bible. Wow!

Have you ever heard anyone say, “Man, I just heard a great sermon out of Romans 11”? No, you have never heard that. But after today you still won’t hear that. So, I’m just managing expectations here.

Here’s what I’ve found that will be essential to help you understand or enjoy Romans 9 through 11. There are two truths that must be enjoyed, in order to appreciate the meaning of chapters 9 through 11. Now Romans chapters 9 through 11 are answering the question, “What is God doing with Israel? How is He living with Israel—ethnic Israel—all the promises?”

There are two things you have to grasp. One, God is love. God cannot love you any more than He does. He cannot not love. It’s essential. He defines love. He can’t love you any more than He does; He cannot love you and creation any less. And we’re to enjoy that; not analyze it.

Let me show you how this plays itself out in the Book of Romans. The first section of Romans is chapters 1 through 8. It’s the doctrinal section, typically the doctrine of salvation. In the climax of that, the question that it’s answering is: How can God Almighty, who is perfectly righteous and holy, provide salvation to a hopeless, sin-filled mankind?

Romans 8:38-39

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And as Paul rolls that out, he's overwhelmed. And so, that section ends with his mind exploding, but his heart erupting in a love song. The first section is about God's love. And it ends with this. Listen to the repetition, the all-inclusiveness. Listen to the nagging that's taking place in this love song. This is Romans 8:38: **"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."**

It's settled, right? I've been thinking about that love song for weeks now. It helped me remember one of my favorite love songs called "What Are You Doing for the Rest of Your Life?" Listen to the nagging, all-inclusive repetition of love. I love this song.

What are you doing the rest of your life?
North and south and east and west of your life
I have only request of your life
That you spend it all with me.

That's the first verse. Here's the last verse:

Through all of my life
Summer, winter, spring and fall of my life
All I ever will recall of my life
Is all of my life with you.

Do you see how this is a love song? I'm trying to show you that He can't love you any more than He does. He can't be anything but love. Just be settled with that.

The second truth that you need to grasp is that God is sovereign. He has a plan and He has the power to work out His plan. And know this: you cannot understand that plan. It's beyond the grasp of our lack of intellect. We can't be asking questions like, "Why?"



Here's a meme that changed my life just a few years ago. It's a parrot playing chess. And I thought, *That's it. That's what I've been doing all these years of wrestling with God. I've been a parrot playing chess.*

Romans 11:33-36

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how unfathomable His ways! ³⁴ "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor?" ³⁵ "Or who has given a gift to Him that He might be repaid?" ³⁶ For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen.

The theology that we've been studying in Romans, and theology in principle, is to lead us to worship. It's not about anything but praise and glory to God. In chapters 1 through 8 that theology led us to that love song. The second section is chapters 9 through 11, this part that is

difficult to grasp. But look how it ends. Look at verse 33—it’s a love song. If we do right by chapters 9 through 11, we end here: **“Oh, the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how unfathomable His ways! ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor?’ ‘Or who has given a gift to Him that He might be repaid?’ For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever.”** And everybody said, **“Amen.”**

You can’t know. It’s unsearchable. It’s unfathomable. Drop the rock in the well. You cannot ever hear it hit. That’s what “unfathomable” means.

And it says He’s not looking for help. He’s not looking for advice. Did you know there’s no suggestion box in the temple of God? It’s only for worship, not for input.

And so, as we look at our passage today, we’re doing it so we can enjoy and celebrate God’s love and God’s perfect plan. As a matter of fact, this is the most loving and powerful plan that gives God the most glory.

In chapter 9 it’s glory to God in how He elected Israel in their past.

In chapter 10 it’s glory to God in how God is working right now with Israel and their rejection of the Messiah.

And now, today, in Romans 11 it’s about glory to God in how God is sovereignly working out His plan for Israel in their future.

I don’t understand this plan. What I do understand is that God is loving and He’s powerful, and this is the most loving, powerful plan where He gets the most glory. I know that.

Israel’s Rejection Is Not Total

All right, so here’s the theme: What is God going to do with Israel? What about His chosen people? And so, Paul answers that question with this: Israel’s rejection is not total.

Romans 11:1

**I ask, then, has God rejected His people? By no means!
For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a
member of the tribe of Benjamin.**

Verse 1: **“I ask, then, has God rejected His people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.”**

Is God leaving Israel behind? **“By no means!”** Some translations that I like say, **“May it never be!”** It can’t happen.

Exhibit A, Paul says, *I’m standing right here. I mean, I’m the most Jewish Jew you’ve ever met, and I’m chosen.* So, it’s not a total hardening of Israel.

Exhibit B, he says, *Look, this is part of the way God’s been working throughout history. There’s more going on than you and I have been told.*

Romans 11:2-4

God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? ³ “Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have demolished Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.” ⁴ But what is God’s reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.”

So, he gives this story in verse 2: **“God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? ‘Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have demolished Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.’”** But look how God answers. **“But what is God’s reply to him? ‘I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal”** or kissed that idol.

Why does God answer the question that way? What’s the meaning of that answer? Elijah is saying, *Listen, God, do You know what’s happening? I don’t know if You understand, and I don’t like Your plan.*

Romans 11:33-34

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how unfathomable His ways! ³⁴ “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor?”

And so, God is saying, *You know what? There’s seven thousand. Oh, I haven’t checked in with you. I didn’t ask your permission.* Here’s what he said in verse 34: **“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how unfathomable His ways! ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor?’”**

Elijah, you can’t know this. You’re just a parrot playing chess. So, just rest and know that this is the most loving, powerful plan to show my glory.

Romans 11:5-6

So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. ⁶ But if it is by grace it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

Verses 5 and 6 are summarizing how the plan is played out. Verse 5 says, **“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.”**

He’s saying there’s this remnant. There’s not a total hardening. There are still some people. And it’s by grace. And those Jews who are following Jesus Christ are chosen twice. They were chosen into the nation of Israel, and now they are chosen in the context of following Jesus.

Israel's Hardening Is Not Final

Romans 11:7-8

What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, ⁸ as it is written, “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.”

So, the questions continue. If Israel is not totally put away, then another good question is about what's happening to Israel right now. So, he tells us in verses 7 and 8: **“What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened.”** I'll come back to that. **“As it is written, ‘God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that could not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.’”**

So, what is happening today? Paul says, *Listen, it goes back to Matthew 12*. It's the day the universe changed for the nation of Israel. Jesus has come to be the Messiah, and He's showing Himself to be the Messiah as He's casting out demons. And it says in chapter 12, **“And all the people were astonished, and they asked, ‘Is this the Son of David?’”**

And then religious leaders step in and say, **“No, no, listen ...only Beelzebub, the prince of all demons, could do what Jesus is doing.”** *That's who Jesus is.*

And with that, Israel turned its back on its Messiah.

In chapter 13 of Matthew, you'll see that from that point forward Jesus is going to teach in parables. Parables are like teaching through riddles. And even the disciples think, *Hey, what's with the riddles?* I mean, I don't even understand some of these things.

And Jesus quotes this passage from Moses in Deuteronomy in chapter 9. He says that God gave them over to a spirit of stupor with eyes that could not see and ears that could not hear. It says there's a hardening going on here. That particular word “hardening” that's being used in Greek is like a self-inflicted hardening. It's calluses from overuse. One quote says, “This hardening binds people in the sin that they are freely choosing.”

If you can harken back to last semester when we were in Romans 1, there was that phrase “**God gave them over to ...**” That’s what this hardening is all about.

And because of this hardening towards God’s grace, Moses said, Jesus said, and Paul is saying, *You quit listening, so you went deaf. You chose this.*

So, that’s what is taking place in this very era. And I don’t understand it. I’m not going to try. But I do understand this: that this is the single most loving and powerful display of God’s plan to bring Him glory.

Israel’s Rejection Is Not Final

Well, the first truth is that it’s not a total hardening. And the second truth is that it’s not a final hardening. Is God done with Israel completely? The answer is that Israel’s rejection is not final.

Romans 11:11

So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.

Let’s look at verse 11: “**So I ask, did they [Israel] stumble in order that they might fall?**” (In other words, fall permanently. Are they down? Are they over?) He says again, for the second time, “**By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.**”

So, Paul is putting the remnant over here. Now he’s talking about Israel and all the non-Israelites—they’ll be called Gentiles from this point. And the question is: Is the Church replacing Israel? And he says, “**May it never be!**” *There’s no way.* “**By no means!**”

As a matter of fact, he says, in fact, that Israel’s rejection of Messiah and their becoming tone-deaf is actually allowing more Gentiles to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ in this era. And in reaching all these Gentiles, we, the Gentile converts, are actually going to be the means by which Jews become followers of Christ. We’re going to be serving Jews by ... how? By making them jealous, it says. What?

Let me modify a parable. There once was a godly father, and he had this proud and arrogant son. And the son said, "I don't need this. I'm out of here. I'm smarter than you and I'm better than you and I'm leaving." And so, that birth son leaves.

And the father says, "I've got extra rooms in the house." So, he goes and finds some nasty kid living in a field with fleas and like a wild animal, almost. "Let's take this guy to the dentist." And he brings him in and adopts him into his house.

And now that natural-born son is looking over the hill and saying, "Is he riding my bike?" On a cold winter night, he's looking in the window, saying, "That's my bed. That's my blanket. What have I done?"

So, that's what it looks like figuratively. What Paul is saying here is that our salvation is Jewish. And we make the Jewish nation jealous. And they say, "Why are you so happy?"

"Well, I've received forgiveness from Jesus Christ."

"Wait a minute, that was promised to us."

"Yeah, I know, but you didn't want it, so I took it. Thanks."

"You have the Holy Spirit living within you, sealed? He won't even leave?"

"Yeah."

"Wait, that was promised to us."

"I know, but you didn't want it. So, I got it instead."

"And the new covenant that was promised to us in Jeremiah?"

"Yeah, I know. But you said no, so I said yes. I know ... I just kind of got this because it was yours and you didn't want it."

One of the bigger points that Paul is making here is that Paul is assuming that God still has great plans for Israel and its revival. And the means of the revival is that the Gentiles are going to bring them to that place where they wish they had what they were promised in the first place.

Here are a couple of great quotes showing that our Gentile salvation is actually a means, not an end.

The Gentiles are not saved merely for their own sake, but for the sake of God's election of Israel.
---James Daane

“The Gentiles are not saved merely for their own sake, but for the sake of God's election of Israel.”

However strange it may sound, the way to salvation of Israel is by the mission to the Gentiles.
---Johannes Munck

Here's another great quote: “However strange it may sound, the way to salvation of Israel is by the mission to the Gentiles.”

Romans 11:12, 15

Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

¹⁵ For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?

Just listen to all the hope. Listen and look at these next couple of verses. Listen for all the hope that Paul has for future Israel. What's God going to do with Israel? Look at this. “**Now if their [Israel's] trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!**”

Verse 15—similar idea: “**For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?**”

Two simple facts here. One, there is a future for Israel. And if you think it's great now with all these people outside of Israel, the Gentiles, coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus

Christ, he says, *How much more will it be when all of Israel comes to that understanding?* When they have their revival with ours, when the Gentiles' time is up and it's time to get back to the Jews, it's going to be awesome!

Listen, don't get me wrong. I don't understand what's happening, okay? Don't confuse my confidence here. What I do understand is that this is the most loving and powerful way to display God's power and glory to all of creation; that Israel is going to be put on pause—not all of them, and not forever—so that more Gentiles can enjoy salvation.

Romans 11:16b-21, 23-24

...and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

¹⁷ But some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, ¹⁸ do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not your who support the root, but the root that supports you. ¹⁹ Then you will say, 'Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.' ²⁰ That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. ²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you.

²³ And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. ²⁴ For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.

This is how we live now. The next section is all about the world we're living in right now. Verse 16 through whenever I get through reading: It starts like this in verse 16: **“If the root is holy, so are the branches.”** The root is the promises to Abraham and his seed. It's Israel. **“If the root is holy, then so are the branches.”**

“But if some of the branches”—some of Israel—“were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of

the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. Then you will say, ‘Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.’ That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. And even they [Israel], if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree.”

So, it will be easy to graft Israel back in. You, on the other hand ... what is he talking about? First of all, the cultivated olive tree is an illustration for Israel itself. Jeremiah mentions that, Hosea mentions that. It’s the idea of a cultivated olive tree. I keep saying “cultivated” because that’s what makes them special. “Cult” means “rule.” A religious cult has crazy rules—too many, right? But it’s not a bad thing. A cultivated tree means that it is cared for, it is nurtured, it is watered by hand, it is pruned back. There it is—it is within the boundaries of what it was meant to be. That’s a cultivated olive tree.

But two times it mentions most of the rest of us—a wild olive tree. Or, as some translations say, **“an olive tree from the field.”** It’s one word that is a combination of two words. That one word is “olive tree,” and the other one is “field.” It’s this olive tree that’s just out there, kind of going crazy, fighting for every drop of water; but also, it’s scrappy, it’s wild, and its olives are bitter. And he’s talking about us that way, culturally. Once you leave Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and get to the uttermost parts of the earth, other cultures, us...

If you could just picture that all the world were Irish, right? Oh, man, I don’t know about you guys, but I’m Irish, and when the kids were young and it was St. Patrick’s Day you had to hide the kids in the basement. They’re just going to do whatever they want. That’s the nature of everyone outside of Israel who have no rules to follow. And now we get cut off from the previous destiny in antinomianism, and then we get grafted into the Abrahamic promises and all that Abraham brings to us.

Paul is not saying that we’re replacing Israel. No! Instead, it’s saying that Israel is staying and we’re just enjoying what belongs to them. As Jesus said in John 4, **“Salvation comes from the Jews.”**

Everything we enjoy in salvation is foreign to us, unless, of course, you're Jewish. It's contrary to our nature. Name something—how about the Bible? You know the Bible is Jewish, right? Moses started writing it, and he's Jewish. The Messiah is promised, and He's Jewish. Jesus is Jewish too. We're enjoying Him, but He was sent to the Jews. And the filling of the Holy Spirit is a Jewish promise. We pray, and we know how to pray, because the Bible teaches us to pray, and the Bible is a Jewish book. And the Bible teaches us to pray, "Our Father ..." We know how to pray and to whom. We get to serve as priests. We weren't born in the tribe of Judah. We're going to reign with Him, because we're grafted in.

Romans 11:18, 20

Do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you ... ²⁰ So do not become proud, but fear.

Everything we enjoy in salvation has the brand of the Star of David on it. It's not ours. We're wild tribes that are grafted into this holy root, and we drink from its sap. Is it any wonder that verse 18 shows up? There's not a single command in Romans chapters 9 through 11, which are about what God will do with Israel. It's all about speaking truth and being amazed by that. That's the point of Romans 9 through 11—being amazed with God. There is one command, and it's found in verse 18. In light of all the sap that we've enjoyed from Abraham and that root, he says in verse 18, "**Do not be arrogant toward the branches.**" Do not be arrogant towards Israel. "**If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you.**" Later on in verse 20: "**So do not become proud, but fear.**"

There is no such thing as an anti-Semitic Christian. It can't happen. We know better. It's not ours to enjoy. We've just been grafted in.

A couple of years ago I was taking a class on medieval History, and there was an entire lecture on the persecution of the Jews. It was a very hard lecture to get through, just finding out the ways and the reasons they were killed. Other people groups blamed them for their debt; they blamed the Jews for drought. And then they blamed the Jews for the Black Plague. There were these marauding groups of men, small platoons of men, and they would go from town to town, and they would kill the Jews, because they brought the Black Plague upon them.

In 1349, one German town met that platoon outside the city limits and said, “Not our Jews. No. They’re God’s people, and we’ll protect them.” And I remember when she said that in the lecture, I wept. I thought, *Somebody understands Romans 11:18*. We’re the ones who hide the Jews from the Nazis. Remember? They’re God’s chosen people. We’re just enjoying that sap.

I don’t understand this plan. I’m just saying that it’s the most loving and powerful display of God’s glory to all of creation.

Israel’s Restoration Is Assured

Romans 11:25, 28

Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

²⁸ As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.

The last part here is Israel’s restoration is assured. It’s not total. Their time out is not total, and it’s not final. This is how it all ends, verse 25: **“Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery”**—remember that word---**“brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.”**

Let’s look at verse 28: **“As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.”**

Two things here: first, **“I don’t want you to be ignorant in regard to this mystery ...”** Mystery in the New Testament is almost exclusively referring to the Church and the Church Age. It’s a mystery because it’s never mentioned in the Old Testament, so they didn’t know it was going to happen. In the Old Testament there are prophecies about Jesus the Messiah’s death, and there are prophecies about the Messiah’s reign and rule like a king. They look like they’re together. The mystery that is not revealed in the Old Testament, that we’re experiencing, is a

two-thousand-year gap between the cross and the crown. And in that two-thousand-year gap so far, there's this mystery of making the most of the age of the Gentiles. Until the fullness of the Gentiles is completed, there's this partial hardening of the Jews. And even when we look, it appears to us—he just admits it: for the gospel's sake, it looks like they're an enemy. But what does Paul say? But for the elect, the way God looks at it, what does he call them? Beloved. *They are my beloved for the sake of their forefathers.*

The Lord God Almighty is saying, *Hey, I made promises. These are my natural-born children. These are mine, my beloved. I made promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They were unilateral, they were unconditional. Oh, I have big plans for Israel. I don't expect you to understand them.* We are parrots playing chess.

Ethnic Israel has a future, because God will accomplish salvation for Israel according to His new-covenant promise. This awaits the fullness of the Gentiles, when Israel's hardening will be removed and when Gentile provocation will have taken its course. Israel will be saved in such a way that God's mercy will be evident to all.

---J. Lanier Burns

Here's a great quote to let you know how God is dealing with Israel and how it all ends. It says, "Ethnic Israel has a future, because God will accomplish salvation for Israel according to His new-covenant promise. This awaits the fullness of the Gentiles"—that's an era—"when Israel's hardening will be removed and when Gentile provocation"—making them jealous—"will have taken its course. Israel will be saved in such a way that God's mercy will be evident to all." How much more ... how much more?

Here's the point. Friends, we are living in an ocean, we are floating in an ocean of prophecies fulfilled. And we're just a bunch of ragtag mutts that were living out in a field. And we were fortunately able to be grafted in. I don't understand it. It's unfathomable. It's unsearchable. He didn't ask my advice. He's not seeking counsel. And that gives me great peace.

In light of that revelation being rolled out by the pen of Paul, is it any wonder that Paul ends this section on the loving, sovereign plan of God with a breaking forth of worship? His

theology becomes poetry. He's gotten his head a little bit into heaven, and his heart explodes. And this is what he says—this is praise for God and His wise plan.

Romans 11:33-36

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how unfathomable His ways!

³⁴ “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor?”

³⁵ “Or who has given a gift to Him that He might be repaid?”

³⁶ For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen.

Verse 33—look how it starts—it says, **“Oh, the depth...”** See that word “oh”? In Hebrew, here's what it actually means: *ohhhh* **“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how unfathomable His ways! ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor?’”** Oh, here's one: **“ ‘Or who has given a gift to Him that He might be repaid?’ For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever and ever.”** And everybody said, **“Amen.”** Amen is right!

Let me give you three quick applications, as though this weren't enough. Here are summaries of these things being true.

Israel and the Nature of God

One is Israel, the nation of God. God Almighty swore by His own name and made unilateral promises to Abraham, and He's going to fulfill those, literally. Israel is an enigma. You cannot explain her existence.

Frederick the Great was one of the monarchs during the Enlightenment. The ideas associated with the Enlightenment are that we don't need God and we don't need His revelation

anymore. We're too smart for that right now. And Frederick the Great was one of those kings, and he called up his chaplain and said, "Prove to me that the Bible is the Word of God."

And the chaplain answered with one word: "Israel." Explain her. Because everyone who has put her in crosshairs—it's a place where empires go to die. Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, Rome ... you can visit those places. Bring a shovel—you'll have to dig up their ruins.

Meanwhile Israel has a country, thanks to the last people (the Nazis and Adolf) who tried to extinguish them all. Now they have a country, and their capital is in Jerusalem, the one that David founded. You can't explain it. Israel is in the heart of God Almighty.

The Purpose of History

Second, I just want to talk about the purpose of history and just reading the news. There are a lot of different views on the purpose of history and whether it's going somewhere. Henry Ford said, "It's just one dumb thing after another." (He didn't really say "dumb"—he said something else.) Shakespeare said, "It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." That's a nihilistic view.

And then there's this view, that says that God is working out His plan and we don't have to understand it. But we can enjoy it and appreciate it, because it's above our pay grade. We can just worship.

And so, next time you read that another carrier fleet has arrived in the Middle East trying to thwart Iran from dropping a nuclear bomb on Israel, it's okay. It's just fine. No need to worry.

You and Me ...

And finally, let me just say this for you and me. Here's how this applies to us. God loves you. He cannot love you any more than He does. It's not within His nature to do so. And that is our own little mystery, isn't it? How and why did that happen? It's unfathomable.

And the second part of Him being loving and sovereign is that you can't know all that's happening in your life. You can't ask why too many times. As I've gotten older, I've been more confused about what God is doing. Maybe I'm being exposed to more evil, and especially what I

would consider purposeless suffering in people's lives. And what I have enjoyed about getting older is the amount of time it takes me to find this chair that I can sit in and just rest in knowing that what's happening is the most loving and powerful way to display God's glory to all of creation. I'm just getting to that place sooner and resting with a deeper sense of certainty about the nature of God.

I believe that's the point of this passage and its application in our lives.

Just to let you know, Elijah, look, there's seven thousand (and I'm just mentioning it right now) who have not bowed the knee to Baal. It's all good.

It's all good because God is all good. He can't be anything but good. Right? Amen.

Here's how I thought we'd end. Let's all stand up and sing, pray, and shout this song back to God, and to that guy at the end of the aisle who's having a hard time believing all this. Okay, here's what we're going to do. That first "Oh"—I told you what it is in the Greek and the Hebrew, right? Okay, so we're going to say, "Ohhhh ..." Okay? Ready, here we go. **"Ohhhh ... the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how unfathomable His ways! 'For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor?' 'Or who has given a gift to Him that He might be repaid?' For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever."** And everybody said, **"Amen!"**