

I knew exactly who I wanted to ask out on a date. Her name was Amanda and if she said yes it would have been perfect. Of course she never had the opportunity to say yes or no because I never asked. The thought that she might say no was crushing. If you've ever asked someone out on a date and received the heart stopping, "no" you understand rejection. How you respond to rejection says a lot about you. Certainly you wouldn't fly off the handle yelling at the person or run away and never speak to them again. But wishing them well even though they just crushed your heart isn't easy either.

How we respond to rejection varies with the situation. We want to take it well but we find ourselves taking rejection hard. We might list all the excuses the other person has for rejecting us. We put on a happy face so others don't realize the hurt we're feeling. We could list all the things we should've done differently, or the ways we could've solved the issue so as to not get rejected. Everything is done just so we don't feel so bad about the rejection.

The Jews were God's chosen people. Yet they rejected him. God wasn't asking much; just that they believe in him and trust him. Seems simple, but still they rejected. In the second lesson Paul reveals why and also how God reacted to their rejection. This lesson will certainly show us a thing or two about our God and why we don't want to reject him in the first place. God shows...

Grace in the face of rejection

No excuses just grace

Not works just grace

If you've flown in the last couple of weeks you know about the increased security in US airports. Some of the precautions have been in place for years. So it would be inexcusable for someone to come to the airport with their carry-on luggage stuffed with liquid containers over three ounces or approach the checkpoint refusing to take off their shoes. No excuse would cut it. Somewhere along the last nine years they must of heard something about airport security procedures.

Paul outlined in the first part of Romans chapter ten the Israelites rejection of God. Then Paul asks a logical but surprising question, **"But I ask: Did they not hear?"** These are the people God chose as his special nation yet somehow might they have missed hearing about the almighty God who chose them. Could some have rejected because of ignorance of God? It's a foolish thought; they've heard. But Paul asks another question figuring someone might ask, **"Again, did Israel not understand?"** When God spoke to Israel was there the possibility they didn't understand him. Could they have mistaken God's care and love for God not caring or loving them? Again a foolish thought. They understood.

Ever try and argue your way out of a late payment? The pile of mail was too big in my wife's office and your bill got lost. I meant to pay it but things got hectic at work. The post office delivered it too late. Each pathetic excuse is really meant to shift the blame; to our spouse's messiness, our busy work schedule, or someone else completely. Still the company expects payment. What about accountability to God? God, if the inappropriate websites weren't available on the internet I wouldn't look. God, the casinos are right on my home from work, if they weren't built there I wouldn't be tempted. God, if the teacher didn't make the tests so hard I wouldn't have to cheat. These excuses aren't acceptable to God. You sinned against him and then tried to cover it up with a flimsy excuse. You're rejecting God, twice.

In the face of your sinful rejection, God reacts with grace. Grace you can be sure has come to you today. **"Their voice has gone out into all the earth."** God in his grace has made sure that the good news is out, we've heard it. But did we understand it? Paul quotes Isaiah to answer, **"I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me."** You never once went looking for God before the Holy Spirit came to your heart. Sinners never do. God always comes looking for them. That's how come you're here today, that's how you may not understand every word of the Bible but you know what it says about you; saved sinner in Christ Jesus. There's no doubt about that because God revealed it when you weren't even asking. That's God's grace.

The people of Israel, God's people, hadn't even asked the questions and still they had excuses. The truth was they had no excuses, just a sinful nature that separated them from God. God showed them grace anyway because he loved them in Jesus. But it wasn't enough for their old Adam who didn't like being under God's thumb. Each one of our sinful natures wants its freedom. We reject God at times hoping to find freedom from him. Then to make it up we do good works. Israel tried adding their own works to the grace God poured out on them. It didn't work out so well and amounted to rejection of God. If we try to add works to God's grace we won't get anywhere either. It's rejection of God because with God it's not works just grace.

In this "me-centered" society we protect ourselves by becoming a bunch of individuals. It's easier when friends hurt us to simply cut them off from us. Then we can make them do something to prove themselves before they can be our friend again. What if God did that with his people? Paul asks that question, **"Did God reject his people?"** **By no means! God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew."** God doesn't answer rejection with rejection.

Look around you. Who are the people you know dirty little secrets about? You might know someone who did some terrible things when they were young and rejected God. You might know someone who looks like an active member working hard for church living a good life but they are anything but. In this church full of sinners don't forget to include yourself because fingers could be pointing at you too. And you want to make it up to God so you can be considered part of the remnant Paul talks about. But your works won't help. Even if they're better than most they aren't enough for God. You don't have Paul's lineage, or Elijah's claim to be the only believer left. More often than you care to admit you're trying to throw Jesus off the cliff like the people of Nazareth rather than believe in him. On your own you aren't good enough with enough works to satisfy God.

"So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace." There is a remnant but not based on volunteer hours at church, faithfulness to job or school, or family tree. We're members of the remnant today because of God's grace. Even though we're the rotten sinners he loves us and wants to save us. We know for sure because he sent Jesus for us and our sins. God's grace means it's free to us with no expectation of payment and no strings attached. God's grace excludes all works. **"And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace."** The free gift of Jesus dying on the cross is too valuable to be purchased. Either you're saved by God's grace or you're not saved at all.

In God's grace he gives our works a role to play, in how we live each day in response to God's grace. Responding to his wonderful love we respond in love to others. We build each other up with positive talk. We offer our possessions and time to serve others. We give up our pleasures and satisfaction to benefit others. This isn't paying God back. It's a loving response to God's grace and Christ's love for us.

When the pretty girl says yes or the cute guy finally asks you out responding positively is no problem. It's when the girl rejects you or the guy never calls. Then how you react says a lot about you. When God's people rejected him how he reacted says a lot about him. In the face of rejection God responded with grace. When we sin against him by trying to offer excuses for our sins he responds with grace. When we try and work our own way into heaven he responds with grace. We thank God today that he responds to us with grace in Christ.