

Romans #23 - Vintage Faith The Past Remnant

- Well, love you. Glad, glad, glad to see you. We're in the book of Romans. If you've got a Bible go to Romans chapter 11. One of the greatest books written in the history. And the most significant books written in the history of the world is Romans. And we've been in it for a bit, and where we find ourselves as we go through this Epic book of the Bible in Romans chapter 11, the big idea is that God created the nation of Israel, the Jewish people, brought through them Jesus. Many people rejected Jesus, even the Jewish people, many of them rejected Jesus. And the question is, well, what happened? If God loved them and brought Jesus through them, how in the world did they come to the point where they rejected Jesus? And so that's kind of where we find ourselves in Romans chapter 11. To set it up, I'll tell you a bit of a story. I've been a pastor 25 years, a senior pastor. I'm 50 years of age, half my life. Early on when I was young a bunch of young people got saved and so I got invited to go speak at a conference. I'd never really been to a pastors conference, I didn't know what I was doing and quite frankly, I had no right to be there. I didn't know what I was talking about, but I went anyways 'cause there was a free flight. So I went to Florida and I got to teach at a group of Lutheran pastors. There are some Lutherans who love Jesus. These were the other guys. And so- And I didn't know this at the time. They were like, "Hey, come talk to the Lutheran pastors." And I was like, Martin Luther their founder, their forefather, he's a bit of a hero of mine. He was raised Catholic. I was raised Catholic. He got saved reading Romans. I got saved reading Romans. In addition, the guy's amazing. He jailbroke a nun out of a convent on Easter and then married her. And she was a certified brewer. So I thought these have got to be the funnest people you've ever met. Nope, these are the other guys. And so I showed up to the Lutheran Pastors Conference, and they wanted me to teach on how to get young people to come to church, because we had a lot of young people coming to church at the time. And so I get up and I'm like, "Oh, it's not about young people coming to church, it's about young people coming to Christ." So I get up and I go into Romans one. "Don't be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the power of God for salvation that everyone believes." You know what young people need? They need Jesus. They need to turn from sin, trust in him. They need you with courage and boldness to say that Jesus is God. He lived without sin. He died on cross in our place for our sins. He rose from the dead and unless you turn from sin, trust in him, you're going to hell, you all need Jesus. And I didn't get any response at all. It was just like you guys, are like, no response. I was like, Man, you're the Lutheran. I thought this would be like the hometown crowd. No, this is an away game. So like what the heck is going on here? So I was like, all of a sudden I could sense I'd lost the room. So I did something I'm totally not gonna do here. I said, "Do you have any questions?" Don't do that. And so one guy raised his hand he's pastor. He's like, "What if you don't believe that?" I was like, "Believe what, bro? He's like, "You know, that Jesus is God, not just a good man and that he rose from the dead. What if you don't believe that?" I said, "Bro, then you're going to hell." Okay. I mean, somebody needs to tell them, you know. I'll do it. So I look around and the whole room, all the pastors a lot of them, they're all looking kind of shocked. I was like, "How many of you don't believe that Jesus really is God who physically rose from the dead." And a bunch of them raised their hands. I said, "How'd you guys get to be pastors? You're not

even Christian." No, I've not always been liked, but I've always been clear. I was like, "I'm a brand new Christian. I'm a brand new... I didn't know you could be a pastor and not be a Christian." My point was that, why would you go to school and get a master's degree and get ordained and go into ministry? This is crazy. This is like life guards that don't believe in water. Like, what are we talking about? This is crazy. I literally asked him. I shouldn't have, but I did. I asked him, I said, "Do you guys preach in robes?" And he was like, "Yeah." I was like, "You guys better get some fire retardant ones, 'cause when you meet Jesus, you're just gonna go right up. It's just gonna be terrible for you." You're just like a bunch of wings, you know, ready to go. So I thought, you know what, now I know why I'm here. We're gonna do evangelism today. We're gonna reach pastors for Christ. I preached to the guys, I told them, "You all need Jesus." I made an invitation that they would give their lives to the Lord, zero response. I did not have a Billy Graham moment. And then afterward, they left, a bunch got up and left as I was talking, as will happen here in a bit. And then at the end, the host came up to me and they said, "Hey, nice try." They said, "Yeah, we don't need you to teach your other sessions." I said, "No I got three more sessions." They were like, "Actually you don't." So I got fired. And so I went to have lunch by myself, feeling a little rejected. And I thought these were the tolerant people. I just got kicked out by the tolerant people. So I'm sitting there having lunch and a couple of pastors that were in that group and in that room came up to me and they said, "Hey, you know what? We agree with you. We believe Jesus is God. The Bible is true and that he is the way the truth and the life. And that he rose from the dead and that you need Jesus." And they said, "But most of our denomination doesn't believe that." So what I experienced in that moment, and I didn't know this even was a thing. I experienced apostasy. A bunch of people said they were Christians, but they weren't. But I found within this larger group, there was a remnant. There was a couple of people who really did believe the Bible and love Jesus. And those guys actually became friends of mine. We stayed in touch for some year. We've fallen out of touch, but they really did love Jesus. And they said, our whole denomination has gone apostate. But it was confusing to me 'cause they would trace their heritage to Martin Luther. But they didn't believe what he believed. They carried his name, but they didn't have his convictions. And so they were sort of flying the flag but not caring for the legacy, which was very confusing for me. And what this is to give you a theological category for it, is apostasy. This is where someone was a believer or at least they said they were, and now they say they're not. They were on the team and then they changed teams. They got a reversible Jersey and they went to the other team. This is different than a non-Christian. A non-Christian is someone who are like, I don't believe the Bible and I don't love Jesus. Very clear, very simple. The confusing ones are the people, the churches, the denominations who say we do believe the Bible and love Jesus, but then they don't really believe the Bible or love Jesus. Very confusing, especially to non-Christians. And this is what we're dealing with in Romans chapter 11. There's a big group, much of which has gone apostate. And then there is a small group called a remnant within that big group. This language of apostasy and remnant really what it's talking about is almost a military concept in the ancient world. You would have a King and a kingdom and if you were a soldier, you would be deployed to go fight for your King and your kingdom. But what would happen is that some people would literally commit treason and they would turn against their King and their kingdom. That's apostasy. That's where you belong to Jesus, he's your King, you're to go serve his kingdom, you get out there and you join

the other team and you fight against the course of Christ. You literally become anti-Christ. When this happens in large numbers you get something called a cult. That's apostasy in large numbers. So if you ask a Mormon or a Jehovah's witness, "Are you a Christian?" They'll say, "Oh yeah, we're Christians." They're not, they're a cult. It's apostate. And if you're in one, I hate to break the news to you, you're in a cult. Okay. So leave, welcome to our church. So all that to say, this is something that is very confusing. How many of you have known a person who they say they were a Christian and then they say there were not a Christian, or they were raised in a Christian home or went to Christian school or made a profession of faith and then later on everything they believe is just sort of contrary to what God would have them to believe? How many of you have seen this with a church? A church was doing okay and then went left. And they always go left. Went real hard left. Got very woke and progressive and kind of lost its mind and lost its way and lost its anointing. And this can happen to entire denominations, where they literally go apostate. Now, that being said, the question is, why does this happen? Let me give you two primary reasons and then we'll jump into Romans 11. Popularity and sexuality. Popularity is, if you go out into the culture you're like, okay, people don't like my Jesus and they don't like what the Bible says, but I want them to like me. Therefore, I got to determine, am I going to have God like me, or them like me? And apostasy is when you decide their opinion of me is more important than his opinion of me. And in an age of social media this becomes all the more pronounced. In addition, the other reason that people go apostate is sexuality. They wanna do things that God says you can't do. Or they have friends or family members that wanna do things that God says you can't do. So usually it's about approval ratings and it's about gender, marriage, sex and sexuality that are the issues that cause apostasy. That being said, the Lord Jesus comes to the earth, preaches repentance of sin, there is a small remnant that do repent of sin and trust in him. There is a large number who go apostate. They fight against him though they say that they worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is what happens to the Jewish people. Paul raises this question in Romans chapter 11. Does God reject his people? Romans 11:1-2, "I asked then, has God rejected his people." And if you're one of God's people, this is a really big question. How many of you have had a relationship where you're like, I thought they love me and then they didn't love me. I thought I could trust them, I couldn't trust them. I thought they were for me, and then they were against me. God is my relationship with you that fragile? It goes on, "By no means!" There's good news. "For I myself am an Israelite." The author, the Apostle Paul says, I'm Jewish. "A descendant of Abraham," traces, his family tree all the way back to father Abraham. "A member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew." So it goes back to a guy named Abraham in the old Testament. Massive, massive, massive towering figure in all of human history. Three major world religions trace their history to Abraham, Jews, Muslims and Christians would all say, we're following the God of Abraham. We're following the God of Abraham. They're not following the same God, because the God of Abraham what's his name? Jesus Christ. Okay, it's Jesus Christ. Now ultimately what he's saying is that Abraham is the prototype for faith. And so let me tell you a bit about Abraham. He was a godless guy from a godless country and a godless family. Not a great guy, bad guy. He wasn't seeking God, God was seeking him way back in the book of Genesis. God just shows up, says, I choose you, I'm gonna save you. I'm gonna love you. I'm gonna forgive you. I'm gonna enter into a relationship with you. I'm gonna give you a

son, through your son I'm gonna bring the nation of Israel. Through the nation of Israel I'm gonna bring the son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ to save people from all nations. That's God's plan for Abraham. Abraham doesn't entirely believe God, God is very patient with his bringing forth of this son through his barren and elderly wife. So his wife comes up with a horrible plan. You need a girlfriend. You know this isn't gonna end well. Every wife sees this coming. And so what happens is he has two sons, one from his wife, one from another woman. And then the fight is over. Which one is the son of the promise? Which one is the one that God is going to bless? And today the Muslims would say that they trace their ancestry to Abraham and one woman. The Jews and the Christians would say that we trace our ancestry through Abraham and his first wife, Sarah. So all of the geopolitical conflict, my friends, and the reason we have to take our shoes off at the airport is because one guy slept with two Women. Moral of the story. Moral of the story, keep your pants on, gentlemen. You're jamming up our flights. Okay? So then what Abraham's got, he's got three kinds of descendants. He's got physical descendants. This would be those who are descendant from him. Some of them Jewish, some of them Muslim. Because the two women, he has spiritual descendants like me. I'm Irish, I'm not Jewish but I worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, his name is Jesus Christ. I'm a spiritual descendant. And then there are those who are both physical and spiritual descendants of Abraham. That's the Apostle Paul who writes this. He is physically Jewish and he worships Jesus Christ as his God. And he raises this question, he's asked, okay, so Abraham began the Jewish people, and from the Jewish people came much or most of God's work on the earth. So the old Testament is written in the language of Hebrew. That's the language of the Jewish people. Most of the people in the old Testament are Jewish. The authors of the book, they're Jewish. The prophets, the priests, the Kings, they're Jewish. The early disciples, they're Jewish. The early church meets in the synagogue, they're Jewish. Jesus comes, he's Jewish. What happens then is a lot of the Jewish people who say that they worshiped the God of Abraham, when he shows up and his name is Jesus, they hate him. They arrest him. They despise him. They murder him. They reject him. There's a small remnant that still loves him. But there is widespread national apostasy that rejects him becomes literally anti-Christ. And then in the early Christian Church in the first century, the majority of the first believers were Jewish, but then by the end of the first century, most are Gentiles. That's us. How many of you are physically Jewish and spiritually you worship Jesus? Okay. That's the apostle Paul. How many of you are like me? You're just a Gentile that belongs to Jesus? We were the O'Driscolls, we're from County Cork Southern Ireland. Now the question is, did God fail? Did these people who were waiting for Jesus and missed him, did God fail them? And what happened when the Gentiles got saved, this is where you get the rest of the New Testament. We had a lot of questions, 'cause the Jewish people have a lot of rules, the Gentiles don't. And we wanna know, do you need to be Jewish to love Jesus? So it's like, I can't eat pork and you need to get circumcised, immediately. Every guy who's got a grill is like, we gotta talk about this. Like, I was barbecuing pork ribs and I was not scheduling circumcision. So you know, we need to have a meeting. And so this is where you get a lot of the New Testament and a lot of the debates in the New Testament. That being said, did God reject his people? Did God turn his back on the Jewish people? Did God say, "I used to love you now I don't. I used to be for you, now I'm against you. I used to pursue you and now I'm pursuing someone else." That's the Question. And the question that some

would ask is, well, did they lose their salvation? If they were born into a Jewish family, if they were born into a believing family, if they were born going to sort of a religious school and religious services and religious meetings and memorizing scripture and praying and they did love Jesus, did they lose their salvation? How many of you know somebody like that? Like they were born into a Christian family. They went to Christian school or camp. They were in church. They made a profession of faith. They were in youth group. They went to Christian college, something like that, and now they've totally walked away from the faith? Did they lose their salvation? No, because you can't lose your salvation. If you don't earn your salvation, you can't unearn your salvation. If you didn't do anything to get it, you can't do anything to lose it. So the point is this, you can't lose your salvation because God can't lose a believer. Now ultimately, you can't lose your salvation, but you can fake it. That's what happened to a lot of people in the nation of Israel at the time of Jesus. That's what happens to a lot of people in church today. And that's also what happened in Jesus' own disciple group. He had 12 guys, one was Judas who went apostate. He would have been with God's people, but he was not one of God's people. Ultimately, it's not that he had a change of heart, but that he had an exposed heart. And for three years with Jesus, he opposed him, he plotted against him and he stole from him. He was not a believer, he was an unbeliever, but it's confusing because he was with the believers. This is where within a large group, there's a small group that is a remnant. And so Jesus talks about these as the sheep and the goats. If you look out at a large flock and all the animals are together, I'm having a hard time separating the sheep and the goats. Jesus knows who he is and who are not. Jesus uses another analogy called the wheat and the tares. Tares are weeds. If you've ever grown anything, you know in addition to what you wanna grow, there are things that you don't want to grow, those are weeds. As you look out at the church, you're like, well, I see believers and unbelievers, but they're all kind of together, I'm not sure which is which. Well, Jesus knows. Jesus knows who are his. This is the line that the apostle Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:19, "The Lord knows who are his." And what we get out of this is the difference between something called the visible church and the invisible church. That is, we look at the church and we see the people. God looks at people and sees their heart. The Bible says that man looks at the outward, God looks at the heart. So right now, you know, every week on planet earth there are a few billion people who say that they follow Jesus. Some of them are in church, some of them are in ministry, some of them are in leadership, some are in the pulpit, tragically, but they're really not in Christ. See, it's good to be baptized, but you need to believe in Jesus Christ. It's good to go to church, but you need to believe in Jesus Christ. It's good to be born into a Christian family, but you need to believe in Jesus Christ. It's good to go to a Christian school, but you need to believe in Jesus Christ. It's good to speak in tongues, but you need to believe in Jesus Christ. It's good to cry when the band plays the songs and sing along, but you need Jesus Christ. It's good to be married in the church by a pastor, but you need to believe in Jesus Christ. It's good to go to the church for counseling and help and care, but you need to believe in Jesus Christ. It's great to join a small group in the church, but you need to believe in Jesus Christ. It's great to find a place to serve in the church, but you need to believe in Jesus Christ. You see my point? So we look out and we say, well, these must be all of God's people. God looks and sees the heart, says, Well, some are and some aren't. Okay? Some are and some aren't. And so we need to be very careful in our judgments because you know, when we get to

heaven there's gonna be some people there, who are like, "What are you doing here?" They're like, "I know, I'm hungover. I'm surprised myself." "Like, where's Tony?" "I can't find him." "Oh, he was a deacon." "He's the devil." Okay, so you know, God's got this all sorted out. So you and I don't need to worry about it, but the one thing we do need to worry about is, do I believe in Jesus Christ? Because you know what, I'm not gonna give an account for them, but I will give them an account for me. And you're gonna give an account for you. So here's my question. You're in church, but are you in Christ? You're under Bible teaching, but do you believe Bible teaching? You're hearing about Jesus, but do you believe in Jesus? See, that's the big issue. That's the big issue. And within that, within the large group, there is much apostasy, but there's always a remnant. And so this is where the Apostle Paul is going next. What is a remnant? "Do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah." This is gonna go to the Old Testament. "How he appeals to God against Israel." Here he quotes, "Lord, they have killed your prophets." Let me just say this, Bible teachers tend to get pounded like nails, okay? I know a guy. "Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, I alone am left and they seek my life." He's having a bad day. But what is God's reply to him? "I've kept for myself 7,000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal. So too at the present time, there is a remnant." There's our word, Jesus calls this the little flock, it's within the big flock chosen by grace. But if it is by grace it is no longer in the basis of works, otherwise grace would no longer be grace." So he goes from Abraham to Elijah, another Old Testament case study. So the story of Elijah is one, you can find it in 1 Kings like chapters 18 and 19 if you wanna look it up later. The story of Elijah, he is a prophet, So the Holy Spirit empowers him to proclaim the word of God with full boldness authority and truth. That's what a prophet is and does. And so what happens is because they bring the word of God, there is a strong reaction to them, because there is resistance to the word of God. There's always resistance to the word of God. So Jesus says woe to you when everyone speaks well of you. If everyone likes you, God probably doesn't. Okay? If some people oppose you, it may be because you're saying what God said to say. So ultimately Elijah is preaching, but he's preaching in a very difficult season. There is a godless King named Ahab who's ruling, and he's got a horrible wife. Some of you may know her name. Her name is?

- [Congregation] Jezebel.

- Jezebel So Ahab is a successful political financial leader, his wife is more of a seductive spiritual force. And together they're like two barrels on a gun. There are some couples if you get in front of them, it's like two barrels on a gun. They are a problem. That is Ahab and Jezebel. Now, the reason that they're so powerful is because working through them, are demonic forces. So everything that God creates, Satan counterfeits. Their kingdom is the counterfeit of the kingdom of God. Ahab is a counterfeit of King Jesus and Jezebel is a counterfeit of the Holy Spirit. And they have counterfeit prophets who prophesied counterfeit and false storylines regarding God, and they seduce people into sexual sin. That's Jezebel. And so the reason why we know that Jezebel is not just a person, but a spirit working through a person is that that same spirit shows up many years later in the New Testament book of revelation. God rebukes the church, Jesus does, and says that you tolerate that woman, Jezebel. You're like, well, she lived thousands of years ago. No, no, but the spirit is the same and the spirit never dies and just

works through different people. And so what happens is, and one of my pastors Robert Morris has done a great talk on the Ahab and Jezebel spirit, but they work together. This is a man who has money and power and leadership, but he's a bit weak and a coward. And he's got a strong, overbearing, sexual, seductive, loud mouth Wife. shots fired. Men, if looks could kill I'd be with Jesus right now. Okay, we're doing this. And what she is doing, she is seducing people into sexual sin. The Jezebel spirit likes to come alongside of those men with an Ahab spirit and they work together. And so Elijah is up against two powerful demonic forces that are very successful, and they have created the worship of Baal. This is what Paul is telling us. Now, Baal worship was the most powerful demonic worship in the ancient world. Baal was more popular in that day than the God of the Bible. Y'all why? Because they got to do whatever they wanted to do. See, the God of the Bible says that we need to repent of our behavior, the demonic counterfeit of Baal says that we need to tolerate our behavior. That's why the biggest push in our culture right now is to tolerate all religions, genders, sexualities and behaviors. And again, Jesus in revelation says you tolerate that woman Jezebel. What destroys a church is tolerating the spirit of Jezebel, Ahab because it leads to Baal worship. So he's like, Mark, what's are you talking about? Strip clubs, pornography, sex trafficking, abortion, friends with benefits, transgenderism, critical theory and well, joke-folk, that's all Baal worship. Okay? It's all Baal worship. And so what happens is, Elijah is standing against this. Now, if you stand against this today, you're gonna get a little resistance. He already told us earlier in Romans one, that they suppress the truth. Today we do that through technology and social media, it's called throttling, which is probably gonna happen to me right about now. And so if you speak out against it, you're gonna encounter strong demonic forces. At work behind different religions, sexualities, agendas and movements are powerful counterfeit, demonic forces at work and Elijah is up against them. And they have caused mass in the days of Elijah, mass apostasy, huge numbers of God's people are like, I'm gonna recreate my gender. I'm gonna recreate marriage. I'm gonna recreate sex. I'm gonna be true to me. You need to tolerate me. You need to celebrate me. They all put rainbows on their camels and had parades. And they were very proud. It's nothing new. We've not evolved. We're just fools marching around the same cul-de-sac okay. We're going nowhere. And so ultimately, Elijah gets up and he says, you know what, I've had enough of this. Somebody needs to preach. So what he does, he calls a showdown. So this is like the old westerns where, it's like I'll meet you in the town square and you show up, you have the shootout. One of us is gonna go down and one of us is gonna walk away. So what he does, he says, okay, I'm calling a fight with the prophets of Baal. So there's the Elijah, the prophet of God, 850 counterfeit false prophets of Baal. And Elijah's like, you go first. So they take an altar, they put wood on it, they put a sacrifice on it. And he's like, "All right, you make your god send down fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice." And these guys go all day. They're doing their voodoo, their magic. They're singing, dancing, praying, claiming. Nothing happens. Nothing. So Elijah makes fun of them and has a bit of a potty mouth, which is how you know who the man of God is. It's how you know. And what he says is, he says, maybe your god is on the toilet, and he's busy today. To quote that great theologian Nacho Libre, "He's got the diarrheas." So he's making fun of them. Okay? So then Elijah is like, my turn. So he goes up and he's like, all right, my God is so powerful, take water and soak all of the wood, all of the sacrifice. They luge it in water. And then I will pray and my God will send fire from heaven. Boom, God sends fire from heaven. It melts

the rocks. God's like, this is what I do. So y'all weigh one, weigh zero, right? This is a first round knockout. Right? Well now, you would think that there would be an opportunity for Ahab the King and Jezebel his seductive demonic wife to repent and say, "Your God's the real God, our God's a false god, we worship your God." No, they do the same thing that Pharaoh did. They harden their heart. They're like, you know what, we don't like being embarrassed, we don't like losing. We're gonna double down. So they put a bounty in a death sentence on Elijah's head. Now Elijah is scared to death. Now he's running for his life. So he's hiding in a cave. The man of God is hiding in a cave. And he quotes, the Apostle Paul does here, he quotes him, "I only am left." So he's in the cave, he's got a little harp, throwing a pity party, he's like, "Lord, there's one of us for you. You're welcome Lord, it is just me." How many of you have felt that way? Right? How many of you felt like you're the only Christian left? Have you felt that way?

- [Congregant] Yup.

- Yup? This last year, did you feel like the whole world has lost its mind, everybody's gone apostate, Right? The churches are closed, it's over. Jesus if you wanna come back, I'm ready. It's just me. You're not gonna take a big jet. Just me. How many of you, literally there are times you just feel like, are there any believers left? Is there anybody that believes the Bible and loves Jesus, not just says that they do, but actually does? So he's got a little bit of a Rambo Complex. He's like, it's down to one of us. And so he's hiding in the cave and God shows up to him. This is the story that Paul quotes in Romans chapter 11 and God says, "Actually, I got 7,000 other guys." That's a couple. And they're like you, they believe the Bible and they love me and they haven't bowed their knee to Baal. And they've got wives, they got kids, sons, so actually it's kind of a thing, there's a couple of you. How many of you have felt in the last year like Elijah, like, okay, I'm the last believer, and then you come here and you realize, Oh, there is a remnant. There is a remnant. Okay, these are my people, right? How do you know these are your people? Two things. The men have Bibles and belts, that's all. You're like, those are my people. Because the other guys that don't have Bibles and don't have belts, they're doing different stuff right now. That's what they're doing. And so what happens is sometimes you can be very isolated and very discouraged. And this last year, most of us were just sitting alone in our cave. We came out, okay, is there a remnant? Then we find God's people. And the point is that God's people are everywhere. There may not be a lot of them, but when you get them together, there's enough of them. There's always a remnant. That in a church or in a denomination or in a city or in a nation, there is always a remnant that God has reserved and you may not see them, but God sees them and God can bring you together to mutually encourage one another and to partner together for ministry. And that's what he's doing. Out of this, comes something called a remnant theology. There's a bad version of a remnant theology and sometimes small ministries or churches that are sort of self-righteous about doing it God's way and then judging others and not having a heart for lost people, they'll talk about themselves as the remnant. Some of you may have grown up in a church like that. And it's like, well, we are the remnant. Okay, what does that mean? Well, you know, the reason that we're failing is we're doing it God's way. That church over there that's growing, it probably watered it down. They probably compromised. Probably a false gospel. Probably not even preaching the real gospel. And there's this suspicion

of anywhere that God is moving and working, and there's this self-righteousness that says, we're doing it God's way. That's not a healthy remnant theology. A healthy remnant theology is that God always preserves a remnant, he then brings them together so that they can reach more people for Jesus Christ. The goal is not just to be the remnant, but the remnant that comes together for the course of Jesus Christ. Let me give you a couple of stories. I'm gonna include more stories in this sermon than I usually do, just to kind of illustrate this. The first is, some years ago I went to Turkey. And so if you look in your Bible, there are letters in the New Testament written to churches, which are in modern day, present day Turkey. If you go to the maps in the back of your Bible, you're gonna see what is modern day Turkey. If you go to the first few chapters of revelation, Jesus has seven things to say to seven churches. They're all in the modern day nation of Turkey. So some years ago I went to see those locations mentioned in the New Testament with my family, been to Turkey a few times. And when you arrive there, it's a nation of about 80 million people. It is considered by many to be the least church nation on planet earth, the place that's in the New Testament. Now, within that, it's believed that there are less than half a percent born again, Bible believing, Jesus loving Christians. And so I got to preach at a church in the city that actually is mentioned in the New Testament. And some of those believers told me that they can trace their faith all the way back to the days of John the apostle who went and ministered in Turkey. They're like our family has been loving and serving Jesus for 2000 years. That's a remnant. I got up to teach and I told Grace and the kids, I said, sit in the back and pretend like you don't know me. So just, just like you guys. So because in the front row was all of the soldiers deployed by the government to hear my sermon. And if I said anything against it's law or the government, I was going to a Turkish prison. The odds of me saying something wrong were very high. Very high. Thankfully, I had a translator, a very great Godly woman and she kept me out of Turkish prison. So I just wanna publicly thank her, that I'm not in a Turkish prison. It was a church of a couple hundred people, which was one of the biggest churches in the whole country. And so after the service, I said, "Hey, where's the pastor, I'd love to meet the pastor." They were like, "he's not here today." I was like, "Why is he not here?" He said, "Cause you're here." I was like, yeah, this happens to me a lot. So I said, "Why is it not here?" They said, "No, because you're an American talking about Jesus and if he was here, they would arrest him and beat him." I Said, "Oh my gosh, has that happened before?" They said, "Over 100 times." He'll talk about Jesus, they'll come and arrest him. They'll beat him, hold him in prison indefinitely. Tell him not to talk about Jesus anymore. Let him out, he'll come to our church, tell us about Jesus. They come back and arrest him, haul him off to Turkish prison and beat him again. That church was a remnant. They love Jesus. They believe the Bible. And they're willing to take a beating because Jesus took a beating for them.

- [Man] Amen.

- That Jesus takes a beating for me, I'll take a beating for Jesus. If he loves me enough to take a beating, I love him enough to take a beating. That's a remnant. They were faithful. I'll give you another story of a remnant. Some years ago, I did ministry in another state and nearby there was a very liberal denominational church, very, very liberal. I mean, we're talking, you know, everybody is going to heaven, nobody's a sinner. Jesus died as our example, not our substitute.

Hell is just mythological. You pick your gender and have sex with whomever you want. I mean, their doctrinal statement was like watercolors. I mean, there's nothing there. And so I thought for sure, so I had a judgmental attitude in my heart. I thought, you know what? The pastor there, probably not even a Christian. Probably just some apostate guy. And then he called and he's like, "I wanna schedule a meeting." I was like, "Hmm, that's weird." But I love pastors, I'm gonna meet with him? I met with him. God totally convicted me of my attitude. He sat down and I said, "Well, why do you wanna meet?" And he's like, you know what? He's like, our churches are close to one another. He said, I love Jesus and I believe the Bible, but my whole denomination has gone apostate. I was like, Oh, so you're my brother. I was like, why do you work there? Mean, why are you there, 'cause the whole team is anti-Christ, but you're for Christ. And I had a judgmental attitude. And he said, Mark, I teach the Bible to my people and they love Jesus, they're dear people. They're a great flock and I'm their shepherd. He said, my Bishop keeps hammering me, keeps investigating me, keeps harassing me. He's trying to kick me out and get me fired or make me quit. And I know the guy he'll replace me with, he'll put in another pastor who's not even a Christian. He said, so I'm there 'cause I love those people. I thought, Oh my gosh, God forgive me of my judgmental attitude. Because within that denomination that had gone apostate, there was still a remnant. And he was a good man, he love Jesus for sure. Believe the Bible. He became a friend. We'll hung out together, pray together, try to support him. You know, I mean, he's a good man. I'll give you another example of the golden girls. I love these girls. So again, when I did ministry in another location there was this big church. Do you ever been in any of these big churches? They're big, beautiful churches, but they're kind of deferred maintenance. They're not being well utilized, and nobody's coming in or out. You're like, what is going on there? And I'm telling you later this year, you're gonna see a record number of churches dying close. And a lot of these mainline and liberal denominational buildings could be coming up for sale. Let's pray that they're filled with a remnant who loves Jesus, teaches the Bible and preaches the gospel. It could be a great turning. So this building is pretty much empty, nobody's in it. And I had lived in that part of town my whole life. And so I was like, what's going on there? So I took a guy on my staff and I was like, they don't answer the phone, there's no office hours. There's nobody there. I said, so go by on a Sunday and just park your car and just see what happens. So like five or six elderly women with walkers, You know, they're going to church. It's gonna be awhile, to use a walker. They're slowly shuffling into the church with their Bibles. Just five or six, they go on inside the door and they shut the door. So the guy said, he goes, knocks on the door, they open it. And they're like, "What are you doing here?" He's like, "Well, Pastor Mark wants to know what you are doing." They're like, "Well, come on in." So they sit him down, they tell him the story. Vibrant Church was their Bible believing, Jesus loving pastor and then the denomination went apostate and told the pastor you need to stop preaching repentance of sin, you need to start tolerating sin. And then you'd stop talking so much about Jesus and just you know, sort of give people motivational messages. They said, "I can't do that. I'm not gonna commit treason against my King." They said, "Well, if you don't change some things, we're gonna take your building." The church literally built and bought their building and the denomination came and seized it. Locked the people out of their building. So they came to church, the locks are changed. They're locked out of their church. This became a court case. It became actually pretty well known court case. Does the

denomination or does the local church own the building? The church lost, so they had to buy their building back. They paid for it twice. Imagine buying your house twice. That's what happened. Now, as they were meeting outside of the building for some years, just getting led to death with legal bills, the church started to die, understandably so. It's a horrible situation. Once they finally got the building back, the pastor died and the church died. But these girls were the remnant. They refused to give up. They decided we're gonna meet every week. If we're meeting that counts as an open church, and we're praying that God would send somebody to open the Bible, to preach Jesus and to fill the building. So they got together every week. The golden girls did, these five, six elderly women. And they would pray, read scripture and they would open the phone book and they would take turns praying out loud for all the people that lived in that part of the city. So I met with these girls, I was like, "You ladies are warriors. You're you're warriors with walkers. That's what you are." You're warriors, right? I mean, here they are. They are, we love Jesus and we're holding the building until somebody can fill it up by teaching the Bible. I love these girls, they were amazing. So I started meeting with them. They gave us the building. We raised millions of dollars, we renovated the building. We wrote up the whole story of the golden girls to honor them. We threw a big party to honor them. Right? They were a remnant. And then I'll never forget, one of the girls, she never married, never had kids. She wanted to marry and have kids, she never did. And I heard she was on her death bed, so I went to visit her. I loved her, she had a personality... She was incredible woman, an elderly woman. She was in bed, and I went to visit her and I just told her, I said, "You're one of my heroes." You're one of my heroes. I said, "You're an incredibly strong, resilient Godly woman." I said, "You wanted a husband, you didn't get a husband. You love Jesus. You want a kids, you didn't get kids. You love Jesus. You wanted your church to be full, but it was empty. But you went there and you love Jesus." And I just told her, thank you so much that you love Jesus. I said, how are you doing right now? She said, I'm doing great. I said, why is that? She said, Pastor Mark, I'm gonna see Jesus. I said, sweetheart, tell him I said, hi. And I prayed for a remnant. The point is, when you look at the denomination, make sure you remember to pray for the remnant. When you look at a church, make sure to pray for the remnant. When you look at a ministry, make sure to pray for the remnant. When you look at a nation, make sure to pray for the remnant. When you look at a family, Make sure to pray for the remnant. And what Paul is talking about here is within the Jewish nation, there was widespread apostasy, but there was still a remnant. There were still some people who loved and served Jesus and that was him. Let me say this as well, the existence or continued existence of the Jewish people is in large part a good reason for us to believe that there is a God. See, God has always preserved a remnant of Jewish people in the nation of Israel. God told him, here's the land you get, and he gave them the boundaries. And throughout their history for thousands of years, the Jewish people had been surrounded by enemies whose entire goal was to obliterate them from the face of the earth. Most of those nations were much bigger, wealthier and more powerful, and the Jewish people are still there. I mean, we have Nazi Germany where they're putting Jewish people in furnaces, and they stole that idea from Babylon. It's been going on for a long time. There's been a lot of Hitler's. The same demon that was at work in Adolf Hitler, was at work in King Nebuchadnezzar and has been at work trying to destroy the Jewish people in the middle East for a very long time. And I'm not saying that they're all believers, but I'm saying within there, there is a remnant saved by

grace that God preserves. And so then the question becomes, why does he preserve them? Why does God preserve a remnant? And this is where the apostle Paul ends, Romans 11:7-10. He talks about pruning for the next harvest. "What then, Israel, the Jewish people failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened." I want to see right there, there are three groups of people that he's talking about. Israel, those are Jewish people, the physical descendants of Abraham. The elect, those are believers in the God of Abraham, Jesus Christ, Jew and Gentile. And the rest, those are non-Christians, unbelievers. 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. And David says, let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block, and a retribution for them, let their eyes be darkened so that they can not see and bend their backs forever. What he's saying is this, that when a bunch of people are together and they all claim to belong to God, if some do belong to God and some don't belong to God, it becomes very confusing to those who don't know God. So if there's a pastor who says, I believe the Bible, and there's another pastor who says I don't, the non-Christian is thinking, well, do we need to believe the Bible or not? If a couple is sleeping together and they're not married and living together and they're not married and one pastor says, you know, that's fornication, and the other pastor says, no, that's love. It's very confusing to the non-Christian. If one pastor says, you need to turn from your sin, and the other says, no, you need to tolerate your sin. It's very confusing to the non-Christian. If one pastor says, Hey you need Jesus or you're going to hell, and the other says, Oh, that's metaphorical, there is no hell. It's very confusing to the non-Christian. So what sometimes God will do, God knows people's hearts and he knows their eternal destiny, he knows the outcome and where their life will end. So what he does sometimes in the middle, he will separate the sheep and the goats, the wheat and the tares, the believers and the unbelievers, and he will whittle it down, prune it down to a remnant, so that that remnant can be used for a harvest. Cause when those who claim to be Christian, I'm not saying those who are Christians, but when those who claim to be Christians don't agree on what we believe, then it becomes impossible to invite non-Christians to agree with us, okay? So I've got a neat book at realfaith.com. It's called "Christians Might Be Crazy". If you go there, I'll give it to you for free. But let me say that what is happening in America is absolutely prophetically anticipated in Romans chapter 11. Somebody like, what is Israel and the Jewish, what does it got to do with anything? This is exactly what we're experiencing right now in America. There are many people who say that they're Christians, there is widespread apostasy, but there is always a remnant. And if you love Jesus friends, you're part of that remnant. So you need to know why God preserved you and pruned us to be a remnant. So let me explain what happened in America is the same that happened in Israel. Generation after generation, after generation, people are born and they assume because they're born into this country and their parents go to church and they were baptized as a baby that they're a believer. So they're in church, but they're not in Christ. And about 500 years ago, the church and the state got blurred lines, it resulted in something called Christendom also called civil religion or cultural Christianity. And this is where you ask somebody, are you a Christian? And 40 to 70% of Americans will say, yes. Do you think that 40 to 70% of Americans have repented their sin, trusted Jesus Christ as their savior, are filled with the Holy Spirit and trying to do what the Bible says? Yes or no.?

- [Congregation] No.

- No. Hell no. Otherwise we wouldn't even need locks on our doors. The world would be a very different place. But 40 to 70% of Americans say that they're Christians. Why? Like, well, I was born in a Christian country, I was born into a Christian family, I was baptized as a baby, I go to church sometimes. I believe in God, which God? And so what this causes is historically America has used the church and some vague notion of God to create better citizens, not just Christians. It's not so much about people who are going to heaven, but people who make better Americans. And so they would have this concept. So the assumption was, if you're a good citizen, you need to be part of some religious group. You need to baptize your babies, need to have your wedding in the church. And when you die, we have a funeral in the church. We tried to make this all look very right in the sight of God. So then we had people who had no relationship with God, but would claim God and they would never clarify their definition of God. So the result would be, do you believe in God? Yeah. Which God? And just so you guys know, we believe in Jesus Christ as the only God. And we don't think it's okay just to use a vague title of God and pour whatever meaning you want into that. And that's what Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and Unitarians and different people do. They just take the name God and they pour their own meaning into it. Now, historically in America this was used to create moral order. The assumption is, if you believe in there a God and he's gonna judge you, you're gonna be a better citizen. So I quote George Washington on his farewell address. He says, "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in the exclusion of religious principle." What he's saying is, for there to be order we need people to believe in God. Now let me say this, there is a truth to that, because now less people believe in God and there is less order.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- You see rebellion, anarchy, you see lots of foolish behavior, short-term decision-making, people are self-destructing and the government they're voting for is literally pulling hell up on the earth. And the reason is, if you don't believe in God, you don't believe in law, you don't believe in order eventually you get total anarchy and chaos. Within this though, for us as Christians it's not just enough to have moral people, we want people who need Jesus. And so building on this idea, President elect, Dwight D. Eisenhower said, quote, "Our form of government has no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith, and I don't care what it is." Friends, we care what it is. We don't want you to believe in God, but Jesus Christ is the only God. We don't want you to just be a better person, we want you to be a born again person. We don't want an improved you, we want a new you. We don't want you doing your best, we want the Holy Spirit in you, making you like Jesus Christ. And so what happened in America is the same thing that happened in Israel. Everybody thinks they're a believer, but a lot of them aren't. And so okay, I hope you're wearing a hat because this is where your mind is gonna blow. Okay, so what we did in America we took the storyline of the Bible and we hijacked it. So America is the new Israel. The revolution is our Exodus. The declaration of independence, the bill of rights and the constitution are canon of sacred scripture. Abraham Lincoln is our Moses. Independence day is

our Easter. Our national enemies are our Satan. Benedict Arnold is our Judas. The founding fathers are our parcels. Taxes are our ties. Patriotic songs are hymnal. The pledge of allegiance is the sinner's prayer. And the president is the pastor. The senior pastor of the United States of America. And what this is, this is a counterfeit, because it is trying to make good people, not God's people. And there's a big difference. So what happens is a lot of people will say, I'm a Christian. Then there are sociologists who come along and they do a little additional data research. So one is Bradford Wilcox, he's at the University of Virginia. He's a leading data analysis on religious faith. And he asks questions like, are you a Christian? Yes. Do you believe the Bible? No. Okay, do you believe that Jesus is God? Well, no. Do you believe that you need to turn from sin and trust in him to have eternal life? No. Well, then you're not a Christian. So you can profess something that you don't possess or practice, can you do that? How many of you have a gym membership and never go to the gym? Do you have a gym? Oh yes, I have a gym membership. When's the last time you worked out? In the '80s, I dropped something and picked it up. Does that count? You can be a member of a church, but not practice. Okay? You could say anything you want. I can tell you right now, I'm a ballerina. Am I? No, there's no evidence. Okay? I can profess that, but I don't practice that. You're welcome. Okay? The point is you can say whatever you want and when it is advantageous. You will say you're a believer when you're not if it benefits you. So there's a guy who comes along, his name is John Dickerson. He does research and he publishes a book called "The Great Evangelical Recession". He says that only seven to 8.9% of Americans are Bible believing, Jesus loving, actual born again Christians. That means that there are more Texans than Christians. That means there are more left-handed people than Christians. And there are more cats than Christians in America. We have a crisis. So what that means simply is this, I don't believe in our day that there are less Christians, I believe we're getting down to the remnant. There's no reason to say I love Jesus, unless you really do, because the benefits are gone, right? How many of you are at ASU? And if you put, I love Jesus t-shirt on, and you walk around with a Bible, you realize quickly, there are no benefits. How many of you on social media, you're like, this week I'm just gonna post all the verses about forbidden sexual acts in the Bible and see what happens. There's no benefits. Once the benefits are gone, what it does is it prunes. And what Paul is talking about, happened in the nation of Israel was a pruning. What happened in the days of Elijah was a pruning to get to a remnant so that there's a pruning to get to a remnant, so there could be a harvest. I'll give you an analogy. If you've ever eaten an Apple that comes from a portion of the country where one of my dearest friends has a church. He's a great guy. We love his family. We're very, very close with them. And so when you're there in the spring, it's gorgeous. All of the hillside is just lit up with these trees that are in full bloom, just greenery. And then you see the bud for the Apple, and then you see the fruits start to ripen and it's glorious. And then there's a massive harvest, and they try to get every Apple they possibly can. Some years ago, we were there, and they had a big harvest party and my sons were out on an old school press, pressing the apples into fresh cider, it was awesome. And then after the harvest happens, what do you need to do with the trees? You got to prune them. If you wanna have another harvest, you got to prune. So then they prune. well, what was alive now looks dead. What was green is now brown. What was fruitful is now fruitless. It's very discouraging. It's sad. You wonder, is it over? Well, the next spring, boom, there's another harvest. This is how

God has worked throughout human history. You can't get a harvest without a pruning. And what God sometimes does, he prunes down to a remnant so then he can have another harvest. This is what God was doing in the days of Paul. This is what God is doing I believe right now in the United States of America. I believe we're in a season of incredible, perhaps unprecedented apostasy. I believe that on the gender issues, on the sexuality issues, on the marriage issues, on the repentance of sin, faith in Jesus, exclusivity of Christ, trustworthiness of the Bible, there is a massive, a massive apostasy. And I believe there was also a remnant. And I believe that God is pruning down to that remnant, so that when we speak to non-Christians, there is more clarity and there is less confusion so the more people can turn from sin and trust in Jesus Christ as the only God. So this is how God has always worked. In the days of Noah, there was widespread apostasy, but there was a remnant, Noah's family got on a boat. This is how God worked in the days of Joseph. There was widespread apostasy, but God took Joseph's family of around 70 and pulled them into Egypt, and they left 400 plus years later as a nation of a few million. This was the story of Daniel where the Babylonians they invaded Israel and they took them captive and there was widespread apostasy. Many of the Jewish people, when they were told, Hey, you need to worship the false demon god and bow down to the statue they did. But if you didn't, that was the remnant. You're not allowed to pray to your God. But if you did pray to their God, that was the remnant. That remnant was then sent back to Israel to reopen the country, to reawaken revival and to allow the worship of God that happened freely in the rebuilt a city of Jerusalem. That God works through the remnant. God doesn't need a lot of people, he just needs a few people who are wholehearted in their devotion to him. It's not about how many people are in the fight, it's about how much fight is in the people, okay? And as we're looking at parades and protests and we're looking at polls, as we're looking at majority's, the truth is I don't care, if you're on God's side ultimately his power shows up, his anointing comes through, and God does things that are supernatural, and he doesn't need a lot of people, he just needs a few people that are filled with his Spirit.

- [Congregation] Amen

- Okay. This is how God has always worked. In the days of Jesus much of the nation of Israel was apostate, he grabbed 12 as his remnant. In that there was also another one who was apostate named Judas. So there was a remnant, even within the remnant. After Jesus rises from death, much of the nation of Israel was apostate. There are 40 believers gathered in an upper room and they are the remnant. And then God sends the Holy Spirit and 3000 are saved on the day of Pentecost. It goes from a pruning to a remnant, to a revival. This is God's process. A pruning, a remnant, a revival. When pruning happens, believers tend to freak out. I don't, I get excited because I think we're moving toward a harvest. I'll close with this story. So I've been a senior pastor 25 years, and I pastored a large church at one time, saw 10,000 people baptized. If you don't know, don't Google me, just take my word for it. And not everything on the Internet is true, I don't know if you know that. And so we had some very difficult years, it felt like Elijah in the cave as a family. Lots of threats, lots of attacks, lots of complex variables. And it felt like our family was kind of living in a cave, and I was kind of feeling like Elijah. Lord, it's just me having my own little pity party. And then one day God spoke to me. I was in one room in the house,

Grace was in the other. God spoke audibly to both of us, which he's not done before. He said, "You're released, you need to resign immediately. A trap has been set." I didn't know what all that meant at the time. I was like, "Okay." We were invited back. We were cleared of a bunch of things that were set against us. I won't defend myself, but I was like, okay, all right, that's what we're doing. And I was not okay, just emotionally, mentally, spiritually I was not doing well, I was devastated. I'm totally honest, I'll be honest with you. I kind of felt like a dad who had a bad marriage and lost custody of the kids, but really love the kids. And so I got up on a Sunday morning. I didn't know it was Sunday. Usually I know when it's Sunday, I kind of work on that day. And I walked into the living room and there's Grace in the kids and they're sitting on the couch and they look kind of organized, like it was official. I was like, what are we doing? They're like, well, dad, do you know what day it is? I don't know what day it is. Like it's Sunday. I was like, Oh, okay. They said, and we can't go to church and we don't have a church. So we decided that that we're gonna be a church. That's a remnant. I went from pastoring thousands, maybe tens of thousands from one day to the next I'm pastoring six people. Let me tell ya, they're my favorite people. Okay, I really liked this church. This is a good church. One of our daughters said I'll lead in song, 'cause she's the only one who can sing. One of our son said, I'll lead us in prayer. Another said, I'll read scripture. One said, I'm serving communion. They each had assigned tasks. And our youngest son, who's back right now watching your kids, he said, I'll collect the offering. He did. And to defend him, he had a single mom that he was saving money for, to give money for her to buy presents for Christmas for her kids. Yeah. All the moms are like, I hope he marries my daughter. Okay, so they said, "Dad we decided I didn't know it was a congregational church. They voted, they're like, dad we decided you get to be the Bible teacher. I go, well, thank you. Was it a unanimous vote? Yes, dad, it was a unanimous. So I started praying and I just started weeping. I couldn't stop crying. And I taught the Bible to my family and I thought, okay, this is my remnant. This is my remnant. And then we started meeting every weekend. The kids started inviting their friends and family over. Next thing we know, I'm like, I'm not planting a church. God has called us to leave, and as soon as our oldest daughter graduates, we're leaving. So just to be clear, we're not planting a church. So yeah, we'll be the church as long as we're here. Next thing you know, the girls are cooking breakfast for everybody. Our play room is set up as a nursery for children's ministry. My living room is filled with chairs. There are a couple of speakers. Somebody comes in to lead worship and my kids are a remnant. We did this for maybe eight months until we moved to Arizona. The last week we had a full house and my kids ordered a bunch of bouncy houses for the children. I don't know if you've seen this before. We moved to Arizona, we didn't really know anybody and we didn't have a job or a church. We didn't know what we were gonna do. And we were attending church and I thought maybe I was retired from being a pastor, I was done. And maybe I'd just write books or speak for a living or you know, be a model, something. Why is that funny? That's kind of hurtful. Or ballerina. So we came home from church one weekend and I saw the kids on the couch again with Grace. And I was like, this looks familiar. I said, "Ah, what are we doing?" They're like, it's a family meeting. And I think it was my son who said, "Dad, we've decided that we're gonna plant a church." I was like, okay, you can be the teacher, and we're gonna, remember the church we did in our house? I said, yeah. They said, let's plant a church like that. And let's do it together as a family. I said, okay, this is my remnant. I've got six people in me. So

we started praying. The kids named the church to honor their grandfather who's passed away and was a pastor. He had a church called the Trinity Church. We started praying that God would give us a building. And then this building came available. This building is a remnant story. There was a church that was here, it was doing very well. And then the pastor died, the church died and it went into receivership for many years and was under maintained. But there was a small group of people, a remnant, who decided we're gonna hold that building for Jesus and wait for somebody to come and teach the Bible. And I just wanna honor those people publicly. And so when I approached them, I was like, Hey, can I have the building? They're like, sure. How many people you got? I was like, I got more than a handful. And I got me. Oh, look at that, we're growing. We're growing, We're up 15%, look at that. So they said, you know what? We believe that God is gonna do this. They gave us the building. They served as our bank. They gave us the building at an incredible discount. And I found this out, not too long ago, all the money that we pay for the mortgage goes into a fund that's funding church plants. Our money doesn't go to a mortgage, it goes to a bunch of remnant families that are planting churches like ours. That's amazing. It's amazing. And so our family started as a remnant, but what we're seeing right now is a harvest. God pruned down to a remnant, and now he's bringing a harvest. And so I just wanna say, I love you so much. It's really good to see you. Thank you for coming. I'm glad we're above seven. And I wanna publicly honor, my wife, Grace. She's the most incredible, resilient, Godly, devoted person I have ever met. it's really nice when it's a cute, happy, remnant. I'll just be honest with you. And I wanna publicly honor our children. They didn't rebel, they became a remnant. They didn't go apostate, they chose ministering. All five of them, they're all serving. They're all leading. My daughter runs Real Faith. It's incredible what God has done. And it's not because I'm great or we're great, it's because God's great. And I just wanna encourage you guys, that I believe what God is doing in our church is what I hope and pray he would be doing in our nation and in the nations. A little bit of pruning to get to the remnant so there can be a harvest. And our harvest, I believe has only begun. And I didn't say this at other services and I'll just close with this. Just kind of in my heart this week I'm praying for those churches that do love Jesus and there's remnants that are holding on to buildings, and after this last year, they're really struggling. And I'm wondering if God would allow us to come in and bless some remnants and to help them. Isn't it good what God does? And I'll just tell you this, God has great things for us. And I'm glad to be with you, and I'm excited to see what he has. Father God, thanks for an opportunity to teach. And God I confess physically today I'm feeling a lot of spiritual warfare, just physically. Just trying to get through this sermon. But emotionally and spiritually Lord, I feel very, very strong. And so Lord, I pray against the enemy, his servants, their works, and their facts. Anytime we're talking about the Ahab spirit, the Jezebel spirit, they all worship seduction, apostasy. The enemy just shows up in full force. And Lord Jesus, we thank you that you are the one true God. You are the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. You are the God of Elijah. You are the God who sent down fire from heaven. You are the God who sends down the Spirit from heaven. You are the God who came down from heaven. and Lord Jesus, the whole world needs you. I pray for everyone who had given me the honor of teaching today that they would believe in Jesus. That they wouldn't just be in church, but they would be in Christ. And that the spirit of God would be in them in Jesus' good name. Love you. Thank you.