

Romans 11:1-10

Town North Presbyterian Church – Rev. David J. Rogers

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Long ago the people of Israel were under attack by the King of Syria.

At one point the King of Syria wanted to kill the prophet Elisha. So he sent horses and chariots and a great army at night to surround the city where Elisha lived.

Elisha's servant rose early in the morning and went outside to do his chores. To his SHOCK he saw the chariots and horses – and vast army – surrounding the city.

Needless to say, the servant was terrified! Things looked VERY BAD.

So he ran into the house in a panic and woke up his master saying:

“What shall we do?!”

The prophet Elisha said to his servant:

“Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”

Then Elisha prayed.

But Elisha prayed something you wouldn't expect.

He DIDN'T pray that the Lord would PROTECT him and his servant from this army.

Instead, he prayed this for his servant:

“O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see.”

And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man and he saw, and behold, the mountains were FULL of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

One thing we learn from that story is that things are NOT always the way they appear.

Sometimes things LOOK BAD – but GOD shows us they are NOT as BAD as they appear. The OPTICS may be bad. But God tells us things are not as BAD as they appear to be.

We see that in our text today.

The “optics” were very BAD for the people of Israel in Paul’s day.

When I say “optics” – I am referring to the way things LOOK. “Optics” refers to our PERCEPTION of things.

So the “OPTICS” looked VERY bad for Israel – the physical descendants of Abraham.

It looked as though God had REJECTED His people.

We see that in the question Paul asks in **verse 1**.

“I ask, then, has God rejected his people?”

It wasn’t a strange question considering the situation in Paul’s day. The Jews – the physical descendants of Abraham – were God’s chosen people. God had promised them a Messiah who would save His people from their sins. And Jesus Christ had come into the world claiming to be the Son of God – and made it clear He was the Messiah.

Yet the nation of Israel REJECTED Him.

As a matter of fact, it was the descendants of Abraham who convicted Jesus – beat Him – and handed Him over to the Romans to be KILLED. It was the descendants of Abraham who REJECTED God’s Messiah – and put Him to DEATH.

God had sent the prophets again and again to the descendants of Abraham – and they continually REJECTED them. And now God sent His very own Son and they REJECTED Him!

So it was a logical question to ask:

“Has God REJECTED His people?”

But notice God tells us things were NOT as they appeared.

IN SPITE of the “OPTICS” God tells us He has NOT rejected His people.

Look again at Paul’s answer to the question in **verses 1-2**.

*“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. ² God has not rejected his people **whom he foreknew.**”*

Notice Paul says God HAS NOT rejected His people.

But notice Paul QUALIFIES that statement.

Paul says God has NOT rejected His people “... *whom he FOREKNEW.*”

To “FOREKNOW” means God KNEW them – and CHOSE to save them ahead of time.

In other words, God has NOT REJECTED those physical descendants of Abraham whom He CHOSE to SAVE by GRACE.

God HAS REJECTED many physical descendants of Abraham.

But God HAS NOT REJECTED them all.

So even though the “OPTICS” were BAD for the Jews.

God tells us the OPTICS are NOT what we may think.

He has NOT REJECTED His people.

And that is the main point for us to consider in our text today.

With God – things are NOT always the way they appear.

“Optics” can deceive us. So we must TRUST God’s WORD rather than the “optics.”

Sometimes the “optics” can look VERY BAD – but God tells us they are NOT as BAD as they appear.

And sometimes the “optics” can look VERY GOOD – but God tells us they are NOT as GOOD as they appear.

So we must trust God’s WORD IN SPITE of the OPTICS!

And this is very helpful for us as followers of Christ – because there are times when the OPTICS are BAD! In other words, there are times when things LOOK BAD.

There are times when things look BAD for Christ’s church.

That is especially true in an election year. With the Presidential election only a few weeks away – politicians like to PLAY on our FEARS for their own political gain.

What will happen to the church? What restrictions and persecutions will the church face if candidate X is elected?

When the “OPTICS” are BAD – we get ANXIETY and FEAR.

That is why we must beware of the OPTICS – and listen to God.

And we see TWO instances of deceptive “optics” here in these verses:

In the FIRST, “optics” are BAD – but God tells us they are NOT as BAD as they appear.

In the SECOND, “optics” are GOOD – but God tells us they are NOT as GOOD as they appear.

MP1: Optics are BAD – but NOT as BAD as they appear (1, 10:21, 4-6)

FIRST, we see a situation where the “optics” are BAD but God tells us they are NOT as BAD as they appear.

In these verses we are told of “OPTICS” which were BAD – but God gave HOPE saying they were NOT as BAD as they appeared.

We see this in Paul’s question in **verse 1** – and in the example of Elijah in **verses 3-4**.

Notice again Paul’s question in **verse 1**:

“I ask, then, has God rejected his people?”

Consider again why Paul raised that question.

WHY would Paul raise that question?

He did it because it is the question someone may ask after reading the verses immediately before it.

Remember at the end of chapter 10 Paul was addressing the question of WHY the descendants of Abraham DID NOT BELIEVE in their heart that Jesus was LORD – and CONFESS with their mouths that God raised him from the dead.

Paul asked:

“Had they NOT HEARD the message of Jesus Christ?”

No. They had SURELY HEARD!

“Did they not UNDERSTAND?”

No. They SURELY UNDERSTOOD!

Then WHAT was the problem?

WHY did they NOT believe in the Messiah Jesus?

In the last verse of **chapter 10** Paul quoted God’s word through the

prophet **Isaiah (chapter 65)** describing what the problem was:

“All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.”

God sent His very own Son – Jesus Christ – to SAVE His people from their sins.

And what did they do?

They REJECTED Him and MURDERED Him.

And we see this throughout the Old Testament. All of the prophets testify to it. The people of Israel REJECTED the prophets God sent to them. They were a stubborn and disobedient people.

They were a stubborn and disobedient people who REJECTED God’s prophets. And they were a stubborn and disobedient people who REJECTED the greater prophet – Jesus!

God’s servant Stephen said it like this when he preached to the Jews in Jerusalem about their REJECTION of Jesus (**Acts 7**):

“You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. ⁵² Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, ⁵³ you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.”

The descendants of Abraham now finally DESERVED to be REJECTED by GOD!

As a whole they DESERVED God’s REJECTION!

The “OPTICS” were surely BAD!

And notice Paul says the prophet Elijah faced a similar “OPTICS” in his day.

Look again at **verse 3**.

“Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.”

Notice Elijah says the same thing about the descendants of Abraham in HIS DAY.

The “optics” looked just as BAD in Elijah’s day as they did in Paul’s day. And it caused Elijah to ask essentially the same question which is asked here:

“ALL your people have REJECTED you. I am the ONLY one left – and they are trying to KILL ME too! Will you REJECT your people?”

Notice the “OPTICS” in Elijah’s day were SURELY BAD!

It looked like the WHOLE NATION had REJECTED the LORD. It looked like EVERY SINGLE ONE of God’s people had REJECTED HIM. The OPTICS were TERRIBLE!

But notice God’s reply in **verses 4-5**.

“But what is God’s reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” ⁵ So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.”

That is an AMAZING statement.

It tells us something PROFOUND about GRACE and the people of Israel.

It tells us that GOD HIMSELF chose to KEEP some – and SAVE THEM – COMPLETELY by GRACE!

There were **NO DESCENDANTS** of ABRAHAM who DESERVED God’s blessing and favor – INCLUDING Abraham Himself! There was NOT a SINGLE ONE who should have received God’s BLESSING. Instead, ALL deserved His CURSE.

So did they all perish?

By NO MEANS!

Then what happened?

God tells us:

“I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.”

Notice those words.

GOD KEPT SOME for HIMSELF.

GOD chose to keep a certain number of them from perishing.

And notice Paul says the SAME thing is true in the day of Christ – as in Elijah’s day.

Look at **verse 5**.

*“So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by **GRACE**.”*

Notice God says the BAD OPTICS were NOT as BAD as they appeared – because of His **GRACE**! GRACE went CONTRARY to the OPTICS!

Paul says there are SOME JEWS whom God SPARED from the whole lot. And the only reason He spared Him was because of His **GRACE**. In other words, **HE** caused those who were spared to REPENT and BELIEVE on Christ to be saved.

It was NOT because of their GOODNESS – or THEIR “FAITHFUL HEARTS” that they were spared. God says it was ONLY BECAUSE He SPARED them by GRACE.

It was NOTHING IN THEM. It was COMPLETELY because of HIS GRACE!

And notice Paul reminds us that is what the word GRACE means.

It means it has NOTHING TO DO with the person’s GOODNESS, or HUMILITY, or WISDOM or GOOD DEEDS. It is COMPLETELY because of what

GOD has done.

Look again at **verse 6**.

“But if it is by GRACE, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise GRACE would no longer be GRACE.”

In other words, if you include ANYTHING of a person’s MERIT in it – then it is NO LONGER GRACE. If you add ANYTHING the man has done the word GRACE loses all meaning!

Paul says it is ONLY GOD who CHOSE to SAVE SOME JEWS by GRACE that ANY of them are SAVED.

Otherwise the word GRACE would be STRIPPED of all meaning.

The word would no longer mean what the word means!

You would need to choose a different word to use – because GRACE means it is ALL GOD’S DOING – NOT ANY of MAN’S DOING!

Notice this is precisely where **God’s GRACE runs opposite to the OPTICS.**

From the LOOKS of things – God SHOULD have REJECTED ALL the Jews.

As Paul quoted earlier in this letter:

“NONE is righteous, no, not one...

ALL have turned aside...

NO ONE does good...

NOT EVEN one.”

We see GRACE all over these verses. It’s clear that God’s message to us through the Apostle Paul is GRACE! God has given us GRACE through His Son Jesus Christ.

It was GRACE for the Jews – just as much as it was GRACE for the

Gentiles!

Many of the Jews began to wrongly think that they DESERVED God's LOVE and ACCEPTANCE because they were children of Abraham. God had a SPECIAL LOVE for them SIMPLY BECAUSE they were Abraham's descendants.

It was surely TRUE that Abraham's descendants received a special place with God. But that special place was given by GRACE. It was NEVER because of their FAMILY birth line. It was NEVER because they had the LAW and the COVENANTS.

God tells them it was by GRACE that they were saved.

App: Have you noticed how Paul takes EVERY opportunity POSSIBLE to talk about GRACE?

Why do you think that is?

It's because that is the very nature of the GOSPEL Christ commissioned Him to preach!

The GOSPEL is the GOOD NEWS of God's **GRACE!**

It is the announcement of GOOD NEWS that GOD CHOSE to save some by GRACE!

And we know Paul experienced it in a very DRAMATIC WAY in his own life, don't we?

In the book of Acts we read the story of Paul's conversion and it was an amazing picture of God's GRACE!

Here was Paul...one of those STIFF-NECKED people Stephen was preaching to in Jerusalem that day. Paul was as STIFF-NECKED and RESISTANT as ANY of the Jews who were there listening that day.

Paul heard that message from Stephen that day – and he was FURIOUS!!

Paul believed the Jews were RIGHT to MURDER Jesus.

When Paul heard Stephen say he was STIFF-NECKED and had an uncircumcised heart and ears – He was FURIOUS!

Paul joined right in with KILING Stephen for those words!

From that time Paul was just like all the other Jews – breathing out THREATS and MURDER against the followers of Jesus. Paul was AGAINST Jesus Christ JUST LIKE the large majority of other Jews.

But what happened to Paul?

GRACE happened!

God SHOULD have REJECTED Paul. God should have pronounced JUDGMENT on Paul as God did with many other of the Jews – by HARDENING Paul's heart.

God COULD have HARDENED Paul's heart even more – as judgment for His STIFF-NECKED resistance against Jesus and Stephen.

(As we will see in a few minutes – that IS the RIGHTFUL judgment God should give for a HARD HEART and WILLFUL – STIFF-NECKED – RESISTANCE to God the Holy Spirit.

But instead, GOD did something DIFFERENT with Paul.

God CHOSE to SAVE Paul by GRACE!

Jesus Christ came to Paul and blinded him on the road to Damascus. By GRACE – God sent His Son to STOP Paul and RESCUE him. God made it very EVIDENT to Paul that he was saved by GRACE.

And so, Jesus appointed Paul to be an APOSTLE of God's GRACE!

GRACE was the over-arching TONE of His preaching – and His whole ministry – because Jesus Christ SHOWED Him very VIVIDLY how salvation is by GRACE.

That is not only true of PAUL's conversion – but YOURS as well!

Do you know that if you are a believer in Jesus Christ – it is because of God's GRACE?

It is completely God's GRACE that brought about your salvation.

If it were NOT for God's GRACE – you would be STIFF-NECKED and RESISTANT to Jesus Christ – and being His disciple – just as many of the Jews in Paul's day.

But if you are a follower of Jesus Christ – who trusts Christ alone – and sincerely seeks to obey Him in all of life – it is all because God has CHOSEN to show GRACE to you!

You were CHOSEN by GRACE.

This is precisely WHY we are HUMBLE and THANKFUL people as followers of Christ.

We are HUMBLE when we look at ANY PERSON in the world who is STIFF-NECKED and REBELLIOUS. We are HUMBLE because we know WE are in the SAME CONDITION if not for God's intervening GRACE. We recognize that God is telling us ALL human beings are on a "*level playing field*" with God. We are ALL STIFF-NECKED and REBELLIOUS by nature – just like any of the Jews to whom Stephen spoke.

That HUMILITY should give us COMPASSION for lost people.

It also means we are THANKFUL people as followers of Christ.

We are THANKFUL people – because God has chosen to show GRACE to us!

As followers of Christ we are people who know we should be truly THANKFUL and JOYFUL for what God has done for us.

Hopefully that is why you are here in worship today.

You are HERE because you are THANKFUL to God for His GRACE! You LOVE Him – and want nothing more than to be REMINDED of the GRACE He has given you in Jesus Christ. Throughout the week you are pulled away and distracted by many other things in this world. You are pulled away by your own sin – and simply your old habits and tendencies from your sinful nature.

So you come to this Lord's Day as a day to remember again the GRACE of GOD!

God has done what is OPPOSITE to the OPTICS in your life.

You look at your life many times throughout the week and the **OPTICS SHOW** that you have FAILED the God that you love – so you don't deserve His LOVE.

The **OPTICS SHOW** that you are prone to LEAVE the God that you love – so you don't deserve His LOVE.

You need to hear GOD tell you again of His GRACE.

You need to hear GOD tell you of GRACE that is OPPOSITE to the OPTICS in your life.

Isn't that what we all desperately NEED?

You **NEED GRACE.** You NEED a God who gives GRACE.

You need it because deep down you KNOW you are NOT what you ought to be. You are not even what you WANT to be! You are not the parent you WANT to be. You are not the husband or wife that you WANT to be.

And most people in the world around you give you what you DESERVE.

The WORLD doesn't treat you with GRACE.

If you ANNOY another person – or say FOOLISH WORDS to another person – they give you what you DESERVE. They SHUN you – or REJECT you – because you are annoying. People at work may REJECT you because you

have done wrong. People in the church – or in your own family – may even REJECT you because you have done wrong.

In the world we live consistently with the “OPTICS.”

Bad people are REJECTED.

Mean people are HATED.

Annoying people are SHUNNED.

But GOD tells us here that He does the OPPOSITE by GRACE!

BY GRACE...GOD actually BRINGS IN BAD people – and MEAN people – and ANNOYING people – **by GRACE!**

God doesn't work according to the OPTICS.

But God's GRACE runs OPPOSITE to the OPTICS.

And that is REALLY GOOD NEWS for us.

It is GOOD NEWS for you – when you KNOW you are NOT what you ought to be.

It is GOOD NEWS when you see ALL the ways you FAIL and SIN – and it is like a constant “cloud” hanging over you making you discouraged and depressed.

It is GOOD NEWS – because God tells you He has chosen to show GRACE to you!

But that is NOT the ONLY WAY that these words HELP us as Christ's people.

These words give us great HELP and HOPE that Christ's church in this world NO MATTER HOW BAD the “optics” are!

There are times when (as I mentioned earlier) things LOOK very bad for Christ's church in this world. There are times when Christ's church is in DECLINE – like it is in the United States right now. The “OPTICS” may show that Christ's church will DIE OUT.

And there are times when a COMMUNIST or a MUSLIM government seeks to literally KILL Christ's church. And at times when the "OPTICS" show they have SUCCEDED!

But God tells us here there will always be a REMNANT chosen by GRACE.

Since GOD is in charge – He can ALWAYS keep a REMNANT chosen by GRACE – and NO government – and NO power – can ever stop Him!

No matter HOW BAD the "OPTICS" may be – GOD will keep a REMNANT chosen by GRACE. God will ALWAYS have His church in this world until Christ returns.

As Jesus Himself told us (**Matthew 16**):

"...I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

So FIRST, we see a situation where the "optics" are BAD but God tells us they are NOT as BAD as they appear. God's GRACE works CONTRARY to the OPTICS.

MP2: Optics are GOOD – but NOT as GOOD as they appear (7-10)

SECOND, we see a situation where the "optics" are GOOD but God tells us they are NOT as GOOD as they appear.

We see this in **verses 7-10.**

Notice especially what Paul says in **verse 7:**

"What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened..."

Paul is only repeating here what he has already said back in chapter 9.

The nation of Israel "...*failed to obtain what it was seeking.*"

WHAT was it seeking?

They were seeking "...a *LAW that would lead to righteousness.*"

Paul said they DID NOT SUBMIT to God's righteousness – through Jesus Christ.

But they sought to "...*establish their own.*"

In other words, the "OPTICS" looked GOOD for the descendants of Abraham.

They HAD God's PROMISES of the covenant – through Abraham.

They HAD God's LAW and COVENANT – given through Moses.

They were very RELIGIOUS in many ways.

But when Christ came and God said:

"This is my Son. Listen to Him."

They REFUSED to LISTEN to Him. It was SHOWN that they were NOT true CHILDREN of Abraham – because they DID NOT live by FAITH like Abraham.

They DID NOT truly TRUST God – and His promises in the Messiah.

Instead, they were merely RELIGIOUS.

And notice what God did as a RESULT of His JUSTICE – again in **verses 7-10.**

"What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, 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 cannot see,
and bend their backs forever.”*

Notice Paul says: “*The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened...*”

(Paul is referring to the “ELECT” – or CHOSEN – physical descendants of Abraham.)

What did the “elect” from the descendants of Abraham obtain?

They OBTAINED the righteousness that was given in Jesus Christ.

And notice also what Paul says happened to the REST of the descendants of Abraham.

“...but the rest were hardened...”

Then Paul gives two quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures. One from both **Isaiah (chapter 29)** and **Deuteronomy (chapter 29)** and one from **Psalm 69.**

And the THEME in both of these quotes is that God HARDENS EVEN MORE those who are already HARDENED. In other words, many of the descendants of Abraham who had HARD HEARTS toward God – and SINNED by stubbornly resisting His will – God HARDENED even more.

And notice the way that God describes that He did that.

God gave them a “spirit of stupor.”

What does it mean to be in a “stupor”?

It means to be nearly UNCONSCIOUS.

When I was at the bowling alley growing up they used the word to refer to a drunk person. They would say: “*He’s in a drunken stupor.*”

In the Old Testament they translated it as a “DEEP SLEEP.” The person is not even CONSCIOUS to what’s going on around him.

Notice we are told that GOD put them in this state!

WHY did God put them in this state?

It was because they already PUT THEMSELVES in that condition before GOD!

These were the descendants of Abraham who went through all the ceremonies and “holy days” and “sabbaths” in Israel – but were not really paying attention at all. When it came to the things of God – they were NOT paying attention – and NOT really INTERESTED. They DID NOT really have much interest in KNOWING and LOVING the one true God.

And notice God’s JUDGMENT on such a person was to make that person EVEN MORE UNCONSCIOUS and LIFELESS toward GOD and His Messiah.

And God is telling us that is one of the ways His judgment works.

For those who are HARD HEARTED – He only INCREASES their HARDNESS.

To those who REFUSE to SEE – He makes more BLIND so they cannot see at all.

For those who REFUSE to LISTEN – He makes more DEAF so they cannot hear at all.

Notice God says:

*“God gave them a spirit of stupor,
eyes that would not see
and ears that would not hear...”*

And God said:

“...let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see...”

App: So here is the point:

Just because the OPTICS looked GOOD – DID NOT mean things were as GOOD as they appeared.

Things LOOKED GOOD for the descendants of Abraham. They had all the OUTWARD and VISIBLE blessings of the COVENANT.

They had God's COVENANT PROMISES from Abraham. They had the GOD'S LAW and the BOOK of the Covenant from Moses at Sinai. They had God's special PRESENCE in the Tabernacle, and the Temple in Jerusalem.

But they WERE NOT LISTENING.

So all these GOOD THINGS were NOT as GOOD as they appeared.

There is the WARNING here for all of us in God's CHURCH:

Be careful how you HEAR.

Jesus said it like this (**Luke 8**):

"Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away."

This is especially true for you as a young person or a teenager.

When you are young your parents make you listen to God's Word at home. They READ God's Word to you – so that you HEAR God's Word.

And they bring you here on Sunday mornings – and make you go to Sunday School and worship to HEAR God's Word.

And many of you have the **Roctober Youth Retreat** coming up NEXT weekend.

In all these places you must be VERY CAREFUL to pay attention and LISTEN. You must **LISTEN carefully to what GOD is telling you.**

You must LISTEN carefully to HEAR WHO God is – and WHAT He has

done through His Son Jesus – and WHAT He requires of you.

God tells you very scary words here.

God tells you that if you REFUSE to LISTEN – and DON'T PAY ATTENTION – He will TAKE AWAY your ability to LISTEN to His Word! You may never be able to HEAR His word again.

PLEASE don't misunderstand me.

God is NOT SAYING He will make you physically DEAF – so that you can't hear.

God is telling you that He will make you your ability to truly HEAR and BELIEVE what He is telling you.

This is true with ADULTS as well as children and teenagers.

These words are a warning to everyone who hears God's Word.

God's FAIR and JUST JUDGMENT for not wanting to HEAR or SEE – is to make us even MORE DEAF and BLIND.

As many of you know, this is exactly what God did to Pharaoh in Egypt.

Pharaoh had a HARD heart toward God – and REFUSED to let God's people go.

So what did God do?

God HARDENED Pharaoh's heart MORE and MORE – so that he NEVER WOULD soften. It is a VERY SCARY thing to fall into the hands of God's JUSTICE.

Be careful how you HEAR.

God's JUSTICE is a scary thing for us as sinful people.

So SECOND, we see a situation where the "optics" are GOOD but God tells us they are NOT as GOOD as they appear.

We ALL have this DANGEROUS tendency to NOT LISTEN to God.

That is precisely WHY we need God's GRACE!

We NEED a God who SAVES STUBBORN and NON-LISTENING people by GRACE!

And that is what God did!

God DID NOT send His Son to save COMPLIANT and OBEDIENT people. No, God sent His Son to SAVE STUBBORN and DISOBEDIENT people – by GRACE.

PAUL was a HARD-HEARTED man against Jesus Christ.

But GOD CHOSE to SAVE Paul by GRACE.

Conclusion: [TRANSITION TO LORD'S SUPPER...]

And God chose to do it using VERY BAD "OPTICS."

The "optics" of the CROSS were VERY BAD.

Jesus Christ suffered a SHAMEFUL and PAINFUL death on a CROSS. He was hung on a tree – which (to the descendants of Abraham) was the sign of a man CURSED by God.

But God tells us those "optics" were NOT as they appeared.

To the world – the "OPTICS" of the CROSS were SHAME and CURSE and FAILURE.

People in the world said (**Luke 23**):

"If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!"

(**Matthew 27**)

"He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³ He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'"

The “optics” of the CROSS were SHAME, CURSE and FAILURE.

But GOD tells us the CROSS was the place of Christ’s TRIUMPH.

In **Colossians 2** God tells us:

*“Having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, **triumphing over them by the cross.**”*

Even though the OPTICS of the CROSS were BAD – GOD tells us they were NOT as BAD as they appear.

The CROSS was NOT Christ’s failure. It was His TRIUMPH over our SINS!

And that’s what you remember when you come to this table of the Lord Jesus today.

You remember that this table God’s declaration of GRACE to you!

GOD has NOT treated you as your sins deserve. Instead, He has shown GRACE to you.

Let’s pray...