

Israel's Failure is Not Final - Part 2

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Romans 11:11-24

Preached on: Sunday, July 1, 2012

By the grace of God he has asked me to minister the Word to you. I confess I do this like the apostle Paul in weakness and in much fear and trembling. I never feel equal to my calling to somehow display and magnify the glory of God. So I trust in the power of the Spirit to speak through this vessel to you.

It was John Piper that said, "Gladness and gravity should be woven together in the life and preaching of a pastor in such a way as to sober the careless soul and sweeten the burdens of the saints." And certainly that is my passion this morning.

Will you turn to Romans chapter 11? We have been examining this epistle verse by verse and now in the providence of God we come to the section in verses 11 through 24 and this is actually the second of what will be a three part series on the issue of Israel's failure and that it is not final. Let me read the text to you beginning in verse 11 of Romans 11.

I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them. For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too. But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either. Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree? ¹

¹ Romans 11:11-24.

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In his covenant with Abraham God promised to bless Israel in order to make them a blessing to the world. In Genesis 12:2 we read:

And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.²

Indeed, the Jewish people have been and continue to be a source of profound blessing to the world. If you study Isaiah chapter five, especially the first few verses, in verse two we read how that God planted the choicest vine in the vineyard of Israel. And, indeed, genetically, the Jewish people are the most noble strain of humanity. The world has been blessed by them from Albert Einstein to Leonard Bernstein, from Leonardo da Vinci to Steven Spielberg. And while Jews make up only about 0.25 percent of the world's population, they make up approximately 22 percent of all Nobel prize laureates world wide. More than 50 percent of the US National Academy of Sciences mathematics membership is Jewish. Jews have won more than 50 percent of all music related Academy Awards and Tony Awards. They have won 38 percent of all US National Medal of Science Awards. They make up 40 percent of the membership of the US National Academy of Sciences Computer and Information Sciences division. And I thought it was interesting to note as well that 40 percent of all world chess champions have been Jewish.

But by the power of God the greatest blessing to the world that has come from the Jewish people that would, indeed, bear out the promise that God has given that through them all the families of the earth would be blessed, the greatest blessing of all is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, that came from the loins of Abraham through the agency now of the Church which is the body of Christ we are all blessed. And one day as we look at Bible prophecy, after the Church has been removed, during the holocaust of the tribulation, judgments upon the earth, a regenerated, redeemed Israel will once again bless the earth as God originally intended them to do, to be his witnesses.

Isaiah prophesied of this, chapter 43 verse 10 where God says through the prophet:

“‘You are My witnesses,’ declares the LORD, ‘And My servant whom I have chosen, In order that you may know and believe Me.’”³

And in that season of divine vengeance, the day of Jacob's trouble, a time of unimaginable, unprecedented suffering upon the earth, so great that humankind will cry out to the mountains and the rocks according to Revelation 6:16:

² Genesis 12:2-3.

³ Isaiah 43:10.

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“Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.”⁴

During that time God will raise up and supernaturally protect 144,000 Jewish witnesses to preach the gospel, 12,000 from every tribe of the sons of Israel according to Revelation 7:4. Imagine, dear friends, a host of John the Baptists. Imagine an army of the apostle Paul’s boldly proclaiming the good news of the gospel of grace, standing defiantly against the antichrist and the world religious amalgam that will exist during that time, that the apocalypse describes as Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth, Revelation 17:5.

Jesus described this time in Matthew 24 verse 14. He says:

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.”⁵

Beloved, this divine intervention will be the greatest revival in the history of the world. Jews and Gentiles will come to Christ. Isaiah describes the national redemption of Israel in Isaiah 44 verse 23. There we read:

“Shout for joy, O heavens, for the LORD has done it! Shout joyfully, you lower parts of the earth; Break forth into a shout of joy, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it; For the LORD has redeemed Jacob And in Israel He shows forth His glory.”⁶

Then, according to Bible prophecy in the final hour of Satanic fury, the forces of the antichrist will surround the beleaguered Israel and then suddenly the Messiah will come in power and great glory as King of kings and Lord of lords. According to Colossians 3:4, when he is revealed we also will be revealed with him in glory. We will have a ring side seat to watch all that the Lord does. That is what Paul was telling us earlier in Romans 8:19 when he spoke of the revealing of the sons of God.

Dear friends, dear believer, think of this. What hope we have in Christ. Think of the joy, the excitement and even the clarity and the comfort we find in his Word. And when we come to Romans chapters nine, 10 and 11, the Lord supplies us with some very fascinating pieces of the puzzle of redemption, especially with respect to God’s plan for the salvation of the remnant of Israel.

As you may recall, chapter nine speaks of Israel’s election. Chapter 10 speaks of Israel’s defection. And now chapter 11 speaks of Israel’s salvation. Though Israel rejected her Messiah, God is not finished with his covenant people as many claim he is.

⁴ Revelation 6:16.

⁵ Matthew 24:14.

⁶ Isaiah 44:23.

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In Romans 11 Paul explains that because of the hardness of their heart he hardened their hearts judicially. But what is fascinating at the close of Romans 11 he commences with another passionate affirmation of Abraham's national descendants, the promise of a regenerated Israel based upon the unilateral, the unconditional, the irreversible promises of God to their fathers according to verse 28.

"...for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."⁷

But it is obvious that Paul is also dealing here with another very serious issue and that is the issue of Gentile arrogance and anti Judaism.

Now think about it. Because he has said that God has hardened their hearts because of their unbelief in verse seven and because according to verse eight he has given them a spirit of stupor, it would be easy for people to assume that indeed God has finally and forever abandoned those rascally Jews, that now the Gentile Church is the new spiritual nation, the new spiritual Israel comprised of all races and that Church includes some token allotment of a Jewish remnant. But I would argue that that is not at all what the Word of God teaches. I don't believe that is what Paul is saying here in Romans 11.

You will recall he made it clear in the first 10 verses that Israel's failure is not total and now in verses 11 through 24 he explains why Israel's failure is not final. He makes his case under the headings of three very fascinating themes. We began to look at the first one last week and that is the two fold purpose of Israel's failure. And, secondly, the rebuke of arrogant Gentiles concerning Israel's failure and finally the glorious prospect of reversing Israel's failure.

So let's take a look once again at where we left off last week by examining the first point, the two fold purpose of Israel's failure in verses 11 through 15.

He begins with a rhetorical question in verse 11.

"I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they?"⁸

Fall has the idea of falling to a point beyond salvage. And his answer is:

"May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous."⁹

⁷ Romans 11:29.

⁸ Romans 11:11.

⁹ Ibid.

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So here the Holy Spirit reveals to us the two fold purpose of Israel's failure which proves that their failure is not final. And what is that two fold purpose? The answer is simple. God is using Israel's failure to bring salvation to the Gentiles. And for that I, as a Gentile am exceedingly grateful. But also he uses the Gentiles to cause elect Jews to become envious, to arouse Israel to a place of yearning to be reconciled to God through Christ, to enjoy the blessings that they see being poured out upon the Church which has now become the temporary custodian of divine truth.

And, as I reminded you last week, we must ask ourselves a very important question and that is this. Are Jewish people provoked to envy when they look at my Christian life? Does my life attract others to Christ? And, beloved, I would submit to you that if you truly love Christ, his blessings upon your life will be obvious to everyone. And, likewise, if you don't love Christ, if you are not walking faithfully with him, the forfeiture of blessing and many times divine chastening and judgment will be obvious to everyone who looks at you. But if you truly love Christ then other people will see that blessing and in the providence of God he has planned that the Jewish people will look at that and yearn to know more about the gospel. And we see this happening all around the world. And it has happened even since the days of Pentecost.

What a powerful concept, to make them jealous. Earlier in Romans 10 verses 19 through 20 Paul reminded them that Moses prophesied about this very thing. He said:

"I WILL MAKE YOU JEALOUS BY THAT WHICH IS NOT A NATION, BY A NATION WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING WILL I ANGER YOU."¹⁰

Now on a different note this would have been the perfect place for Paul to repudiate national Judaism once and for all, to say that God has permanently abandoned them and that they have been permanently superseded by the Church, but he does not do that. In fact, he anticipates such a thought and he quickly retorts in verse two, "May it never be."

You see, friends, we must understand that God has set Israel aside to provoke them to jealousy so that they would return to him. This was his predetermined plan all along. Verse 12 reads:

"Now if their transgression be riches for the world..."¹¹

In other words, the abundant blessings made available to all people on earth through the Church.

"Now if their transgression be riches for the world and their failure be riches for the Gentiles..."¹²

¹⁰ Romans 10:19.

¹¹ Romans 11:12.

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That wild olive branch as we will see that has been engrafted into the vine of Abrahamic covenantal blessing with all of its millennial consequences. He says then:

“...how much more will their fulfillment be!”¹³

Referring to the restoration that he speaks about more in great detail in verses 25 and 26 when all Israel will be saved. This is absolutely astounding to me.

Now this is an argument from the lesser to the greater. If A how much great B? If God would use Israel’s rejection of Christ to result in all of this, just think how much more their repentant faith in Christ will produce.

Now if Israel had been permanently replaced by the Church, if the Church is now spiritual Israel, if God no longer has any covenantal regard for his people whom he foreknew as he says in verse two, if Israel’s ethnic national identity is now all absorbed in the universal Church, beloved, this verse would make absolutely no sense. This is the language of fulfillment, not the language of replacement. Historically we see that a small installment of Israel’s fulfillment began at Pentecost. In fact, most all of the people in the early Church were Jewish converts. And throughout the Church age there continues to be a small number of Jews that come to a saving knowledge of Christ. And, as I mentioned earlier, during the time of the tribulation, the ranks of Jewish redeemed will explode in growth, especially as they behold their Messiah in all of his glory, when the house of David will be redeemed by means of the Spirit of grace and of supplication, according to Zechariah 12:10, when the Spirit causes Israel to look and to mourn and weep over their crucified Messiah as Ezekiel describes in Ezekiel chapter 36 and 37 and chapter 39. And then their fulfillment will continue into the messianic kingdom, a universal kingdom on a renovated earth that will incorporate a spiritual unity of all saints while maintaining the ethnic diversity of Jews and Gentiles.

Wouldn’t it be awful if everybody was exactly the same? God doesn't do that in the physical order, nor does he with all of the plants nor does he do it with us. So that diversity will be maintained even during the kingdom.

Imagine that day when our precious Lord Jesus will reign from Jerusalem surrounded by Gentile nations and being served by a regenerate nation of Israel who have mocked him and spurned him all of these years when, according to Zechariah 14:

“Zechariah 14:9 And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be [the only] one...”¹⁴

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Zechariah 14:9.

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I love this. No other... and fill in the blank with the politicians. All right? With the king, the queens, the petty little dictators. No. He will be the only one.

“... and His name [the only] one.”¹⁵

So this is the fulfillment Israel has to look forward to. Peter spoke of this glorious fulfillment when he addressed the men of Israel in Acts three verse 19. There he said:

Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.¹⁶

What is that period of restoration? Biblically we see that it refers to the millennium. Jesus described it in his promise to believers in Matthew chapter 12. I am sorry, Matthew 19 verse 28 as the regeneration, in other words, the new age. It is described as well in Revelation 20. And there he says:

“Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”¹⁷

The regeneration, the *παλιγγενεσια* (pal-ing-ghen-es-ee'-ah) in the original language, the new age, the new genesis. Talk about fulfillment. This is what Israel has to look forward to and all of the redeemed. Together we will all reign with him. We will sit with Christ on his throne, Revelation 3:21. And together we will judge the world according to Paul's word in 1 Corinthians 6:2.

Zechariah prophesies in chapter eight verse 22:

‘So many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD.’ Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”’¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Acts 3:19-21.

¹⁷ Matthew 19:28.

¹⁸ Zechariah 8:22-23.

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Beloved, can you imagine all of the stories the redeemed Jews who survive the tribulation and enter into the kingdom will have to tell their children concerning the mercy of God and all that he has done? What a glorious fulfillment they have to look forward to, all because of God's grace. So, again, this is God's purpose in setting Israel aside. And this was Paul's consuming passion for his Jewish kinsmen. Look at verse 13 of Romans 11.

“But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry.”¹⁹

And he is referring there to his divine calling as an apostle to the Gentiles, for example in Acts 22:21 he speaks of that.

“I magnify my ministry, if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen.”²⁰

In other words, mine own flesh, literally, it could be translated.

“...and save some of them.”²¹

So, indeed, he longed to see Gentiles come to Christ, but he also knew that God would use regenerate Gentiles to provoke his unbelieving Jewish kinsmen to jealousy, because that was God's plan. And as a result they, too, would be saved. So for this reason Paul rejoiced in his calling to the Gentiles. Verse 15.

“For if their rejection be the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?”²²

Referring to Israel's great spiritual awakening at the end of human history. This parallels the concept of fulfillment in verse 12. This speaks of the regeneration of Israel and the whole world as Jesus described in Matthew 19:28 that we just examined.

“...the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne.”²³

That day that Paul described earlier in Romans 8:21 when:

“... the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”²⁴

¹⁹ Romans 11:13.

²⁰ Romans 11:13-14.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Romans 11:15.

²³ Matthew 19:28.

²⁴ Romans 8:21.

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And, of course, that day is the one for which we all long, right? That is what Paul tells us in verse 23 of that text in Romans eight.

“...even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.”²⁵

Oh, child of God, are these not exhilarating truths? Don't they just make you want to skip church and go watch the Titans? Doesn't it make you want to just go fishing or go shopping?

It is amazing to me how our flesh is drawn to things that are eternally insignificant rather than the things that have such glory. How quickly will we like Esau trade the blessings of our birthright for the temporary joy of a pot of stew? Oh, child of God, let these truths animate your hearts in worship and to praise. Stop wasting your life. Get real. This is the truth. This is what God is up to. Don't be distracted with all of the fleeting pleasures of this world. Get serious about your Christian life. Get excited about it.

So Paul demonstrates while Israel's failure is not final, first, because of the two fold purpose of their failure and also he goes on to explain these things, secondly, by looking at the arrogance of the Gentiles and he rebukes the arrogant Gentiles concerning Israel's failure.

Now, we must understand that this had to have been a concern in the Church, Gentile conceit, anti Judaism. It was a prevailing attitude then as it is today. And this is especially seen, I fear, in the theological anti Judaism as distinguished from the racial form of anti Judaism that we see in replacement theology. The hermeneutic that my brothers use who hold to that position is what I would call the hermeneutic of divestment. It concludes that contemporary Judaism has no present or future covenantal legitimacy in the eyes of God, especially as it relates to the national and territorial promises that he made to them in his covenant to Abraham. But, again, Paul warns against any kind of Gentile arrogance. Notice verse 16. He says:

“And if the first piece of dough be holy, the lump is also.”²⁶

Now this is a fascinating metaphor. Notice the words “of dough” are italicized in your Bible which indicates that they have been added and, I believe, accurately so by the translators to help make sense of the passage. So the phrase in the original is the first piece. And that translates a single Greek word *απαρχη* (ap-ar-khay') which literally means first fruit, the first portion of something which has been set aside and offered to God before the rest of the substance or objects can be used. So it is the idea of a first portion, a first offering.

²⁵ Romans 8:23.

²⁶ Romans 11:16.

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Now Paul is here reaching back to Numbers chapter 15 beginning in verse 17 where the Lord had Moses to, quote:

Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land to which I bring you and when you eat of the bread of the land, you shall present a contribution to the LORD. Of the first of your dough you shall present a loaf as a contribution; like a contribution from the threshing floor, so shall you present it. Some of the first of your dough you shall give to the LORD as a contribution throughout your generations.²⁷

So the first loaf resulting from a lump of dough was to be offered as a first fruits or a consecrated offering unto the Lord. And the symbolism indicated that the holiness of the first portion extended to the full lump of dough. That is exactly how Paul is using it here. The dough represents the Jewish believers, all of the descendants of the godly patriarchs right down to the remnant as being saved in verse five. All are holy. Are all set apart unto the Lord. Therefore, their salvation now extends to the salvation blessing of the full number of Israel, their fulfillment, verse 12. And, once again this proves that Israel's failure is not final. He explains this further in the next analogy in verse 16. He says:

“...and if the root be holy...”²⁸

Referring to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

“...the branches are too.”²⁹

Referring to their faithful descendants, the believing remnant of the people of Israel. So, again, if A, then B. That is his logic. If the patriarchs were set apart unto the Lord as a people of blessing through his unilateral, unconditional, covenantal promises, then obviously the branches of their descendants would remain under that same blessing of divine consecration. That is the point. Despite their obstinance and the abuse they endure at the hands of Gentile dominance. This is so exciting. Think about this. He is saying ultimately that on the basis of the character of God, on the basis of the covenant making and covenant keeping God who created that holy root, eventually those branches are going to bear fruit as well as God has ordained it.

Now next Paul explains his arguments by tapping into the familiarity that people would have had of grafting olive trees. I took some time and looked on the internet and it is amazing that you can click on YouTube and you can actually watch people do this. I would encourage you to look at that. Olive trees were crucial to the existence of the

²⁷ Numbers 15:18-21.

²⁸ Romans 11:16.

²⁹ Ibid.

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people in ancient days and still in many parts of the world it is a very important plant. Now olive trees can live for hundreds of years. They can get to about 16 feet high. They have a very large root system which is important for them to have in order to survive in an arid region. And so grafting was a very common practice, because sometimes as a tree would age some of the branches would no longer be productive. And so the farmer will surgically insert a branch or a shoot of a productive plant into the tissue of the unproductive plant and then after the union heals, they become a single living entity. So the new productive shoot taps in to the root that has already been established and it produces fruit.

But we see this illustrated spiritually in verse 17. There we read:

“But if some of the branches were broken off...”³⁰

Now who were the branches broken off? Well, it would be the unproductive branches of unfaithful, idolatrous Israel. And I want you to notice it says some, not all. There has always been a remnant.

“But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive...”³¹

In other words, the productive branches of believing Gentiles from all nations who believe in Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ,

“...if... you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them...”³²

In other words among the remnant of believing Jews.

“...and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree...”³³

So he is saying here that that is what has happened to you.

Now very important. Be careful here. It does not say that the Gentiles become Israel. It says they become partakers with them. They share with them the blessing of the rich root of Israel's covenants, of Israel's promises, of Israel's hope, salvation in Messiah. We understand this better through Paul's words in Ephesians chapter two beginning in verse 11 and following. There he addresses those who were formally, he says, Gentiles in the flesh who were called uncircumcision. And these were those who, according to verse 12, were:

³⁰ Romans 11:16.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

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“...separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”³⁴

So he is saying at one time Gentiles were excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, from the citizenship of Israel. They were not part of the nation state. They were not part of that theocracy. They were strangers to the covenants of promise. Or, in keeping with the metaphor that Paul uses in Romans 11:17, they had not yet been graciously engrafted into the root of Abraham as a wild uncultivated stock or, as Paul puts it here in Ephesians 2:11 they had not yet been brought near by the blood of Christ. He is saying the same thing.

Earlier in Ephesians two verses one and two, he made the comparison even more stark. This is such a disturbing, yet such an accurate description of who we were before God saved us. He says Gentiles were dead in their trespasses and sins in which they formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

In verse three he says they:

“...all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.”³⁵

My goodness. Dear friends, we have absolutely no reason to gloat. What a staggering picture of who we were before Christ. And what a frightening picture of those who have yet to come to Christ. Verse four:

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).³⁶

Again, according to Ephesians two verses 13 through 19 Gentiles have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Or in the language of verse 17 of Romans 11 the wild olive branches have been engrafted into the rich root of Abrahamic covenant blessing. And what a picture this is of God's mercy towards Gentiles and the plan that he has for his beloved enemy Israel. Because of grace we can now share the spiritual blessings of Israel.

The prophet Jeremiah gives us further insight into Paul's statement in verse 17 concerning the branches that were broken off. Again, these were the branches of stubborn, unbelieving, idolatrous Israelites.

³⁴ Ephesians 2:12-13.

³⁵ Ephesians 2:3.

³⁶ Ephesians 2:4-5.

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Jeremiah 11 verse 16 says:

“The LORD called your name, "A green olive tree, beautiful in fruit and form.”³⁷

Then he describes what he is going to do to them because of their unbelief. He says:

“...With the noise of a great tumult He has kindled fire on it, And its branches are worthless. And the LORD of hosts, who planted you, has pronounced evil against you because of the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have done to provoke Me by offering up sacrifices to Baal.”³⁸

And, likewise, in the New Testament we read where the Gentiles have been grafted in, that wild branch has been grafted in. We read this, for example in Matthew 21:43. There Jesus declared to the chief priests and Pharisees:

“Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it.”³⁹

And, of course, this will progress through the centuries and progress until the times of the fullness of the Gentiles as Romans 11:25 describes when that is finished. And then, eventually, that fruit will include this repentant and regenerated nation of Israel.

Now in light of all of this, what should be the attitude of Gentiles? Verse 18.

“...do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you.”⁴⁰

Beloved, we have no reason to feel superior. We are the ones who are grafted into the rich root of patriarchal blessing. We owe our spiritual existence to Israel. Romans 4:11 Paul says that Abraham is the father of all who believe. And Genesis 12:3, again, the Lord promised him:

“And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”⁴¹

So don't let's be too cocky here. Don't be proud without cause.

“... it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you.”⁴²

³⁷ Jeremiah 11:16.

³⁸ Jeremiah 11:16-17.

³⁹ Matthew 21:43.

⁴⁰ Romans 11:18.

⁴¹ Genesis 12:3.

⁴² Romans 11:18.

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Now, unfortunately, Paul's warning has fallen on deaf ears many times throughout the Church age. It is shameful when you look at the record of the Church down through the centuries, the record of contempt towards Jewish people. One scholar summarized it this way, quote: "The Holocaust was, of course, the bitter fruit of long centuries of Christian teaching about that Jewish people. From the time of the Gentile Church fathers and the legal establishment of a triumphant, ecclesiastical and philosophical control system with Constantine the Great. They are referring to the roots of Roman Catholicism, Christendom treated the Jewish people with contempt and taught contemptuously of them. The baptized Gentiles to come to that wrong headedness against which Paul had warned. They turned in jealousy and envy against he very root that bore them," end quote.

Every Gentile should be humbled, even more by Paul's words to the churches in Galatia. We read in Galatians three beginning in verse six:

Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS SHALL BE BLESSED IN YOU." So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.⁴³

He went on to add even more humbling truth beginning in verse 13:

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us — for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE" — in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.⁴⁴

Yet despite all of this there continues to exist within the Church an air of superiority. We can see it at times even towards Jewish converts who feel uncomfortable in Gentile Christian churches. Those Jewish converts that choose to maintain their cultural and ethnic identity and rightfully anticipate the literal fulfillment of all of the promises of the messianic kingdom.

Someone who opposes my hermeneutics and Premillennial position, which, by the way, is part of a very, very, very long line handed me a book a few years ago. It was a book entitled *The Millennium* written by a 20th century reformed brother, a reformed scholar,

⁴³ Galatians 3:6-9.

⁴⁴ Galatians 3:13-14.

Israel's Failure is Not Final - Part 2

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Romans 11:11-24

Preached on: Sunday, July 1, 2012

Lorraine Boettner, a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. And his hope was that my brother's scholarship would forever change my position and I quickly handed it back to him telling him that I had already read it and studied that in seminary in great detail along with many other books. And I also very kindly told him that my ... that I did not share our brother's position for many exegetical reasons, but even more importantly because of the anti Pauline Gentile superiority that was woven through his theology. Here is an example of what he wrote.

Quote, "With the establishment of the Christian Church Judaism should have made a smooth and willing transition into Christianity and should thereby have disappeared as the flower falls away before the developing fruit. Its continued existence as a bitter rival and enemy of the Christian Church after the time of Christ and particularly its rival after the judgment of God had fallen on it so heavily in the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersal of the people in AD 70 is sinful," end quote.

And, of course, the assumption here is that Israel's failure is final as an ethnic people, as a nation and that these perfidious Christ killers deserve the misery that has been handed down to them from the Gentiles down through the centuries. And implied in all of this is that sense of superiority that the Gentiles now have replaced them.

Boettner continues his harangue as follows. Quote, "The continuance of this bitterly anti Christian racial group has brought no good to themselves and there has been strife and antagonism in practically every nation where they have gone. They have not been a happy people. One only need think of the pogroms in Russia, the ghettos of eastern Europe, the many restrictions and persecutions that they have suffered in Italy, Spain, Poland and other countries and in our own day the campaign of extermination waged against them in Germany by Hitler. At the present time we see this problem in a particularly aggravated form in the Near East where the recently established nation of Israel has ruthlessly displaced an Arab population and seeks to expand further into surrounding regions. Some 900,000 Arabs in refugee camps around the borders of Israel being one of the chief continuing causes of bitterness."

I have got to pause here and say that is staggering revision of history only underscores his contempt for Jewish people.

He goes on to say, "Israel is not a self sustaining nation and her existence today has been heavily subsidized by American money and equipment, much of, undoubtedly, having been given for the purpose of influencing the Jewish vote in this country."

He goes on to say, "The mere fact that these people are Jews does not in itself give them any moral or legal right to Palestine than to the United States or any other part of the world," end quote.

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Arnold Fruchtenbaum, a Jewish Christian responded as you would expect him, saying, quote, “According to Boettner, the Jews are totally to blame for their history of persecution. The problem is not with the Gentiles’ attitude toward the Jews, but with the Jews’, quote, ‘failure to disappear.’ The solution is that the Jews should cease to be Jews and by so doing will make a great contribution to the world. It is the Jewish failure to assimilate that has produced tragic results both for the Jews and, quote, ‘for the world at large,’ as Boettner said.”

And he concludes by saying, “This is theological anti-Semitism with a vengeance,” end quote.

Well, to be sure, we must all guard our hearts against the prevailing anti Judaism in the Church today. And Paul anticipates this mindset of Gentile arrogance in verse 19. He says:

“You will say then, ‘Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.’”⁴⁵

And, of course, the emphasis here is on the pronoun I, that I big I, little me, that one single letter in our English language that is so easily used to firmly establish us on the throne of our own little fiefdom. We are all arrogant by nature, dear friends, so much so that we cannot spot a log in our own eye and yet we can see the speck in our brother’s eye a mile away. This is what John described as the boastful pride of life, a dominating predisposition that makes us the hero of all of our stories and the victim in all of our conflicts. And, as Gentiles, we are predisposed to attitudes of superiority over the Jews, the branches. They were broken off so that I might be grafted in.

Well, Paul replies in verse 20:

“Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith.”⁴⁶

This is so profound. He is saying, “Yes, the Jews were broken off because of their unbelief. They weren’t broken off because they were Jews. They weren’t broken off because they were inferior, but because of their unbelief. And, likewise, you Gentiles weren’t grafted in because you were superior as Gentiles. You were grafted in solely on the basis of faith, because of your belief. And we know that faith is the gift of a sovereign God. Philippians 1:29:

“For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Romans 11:19.

⁴⁶ Romans 11:20.

⁴⁷ Philippians 1:29.

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2 Peter 1:3.

“His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness.”⁴⁸

And I might add that it is not the act of faith that saves a man, even when that faith is focused on the correct object. But it is the object of faith, God the Father who has sent his Son and ministered the gospel through the Spirit who responds to the act of faith and thereby justifies the believer.

So this, beloved, excludes all boasting. So Paul says:

“Do not be conceited, but fear; for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you.”⁴⁹

Think about it. If God did not spare many of Israel whom he chose according to Deuteronomy 7:6 out of all the people on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession, those that he called, those that he blessed, if they could be broken off because of their unbelief, on what basis could we as Gentiles assume that we could fair better? That is the point.

And here is the conclusion of his argument in verse 22.

“Behold then the kindness and severity of God.”⁵⁰

Kindness speaks of merciful forbearance that leads sinners to repentance and severity comes from a Greek term that means to act harshly. It speaks of God’s inflexible moral purpose and it really comes from a root word that means to cut off which corresponds to the final Greek word in that sentence translated cut off. So Paul wants us to understand that God can hold both of these contrasting attitudes together simultaneously, his kindness as well as his severity.

Verse 22.

“Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell...”⁵¹

Referring to those who fall down to be completely ruined.

“...to those who fell severity, but to you, God’s kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.”⁵²

⁴⁸ 2 Peter 1:3.

⁴⁹ Romans 11:20-21.

⁵⁰ Romans 11:22.

⁵¹ Ibid.

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He is saying, “Gentiles, think of the kindness of God offered to you that saved you.” Well, at the same time think of the severity of his judgment when he cuts those off who refuse to believe. So he says:

“...but to you, God’s kindness, if you continue in His kindness.”⁵³

That is, if you persevere in the faith which will always validate the genuineness of your faith, like what Jesus said in John 8:31.

“If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine.”⁵⁴

So Paul says

“...but to you, God’s kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.”⁵⁵

In closing John MacArthur summarizes this so well. He says, quote, “Because of God’s blessing of ancient Israel as a nation many Jewish unbelievers shared in that blessing. In the same way, because of God’s blessing on the Church many unbelievers within the Church taste that blessing, but if they fall away, God’s patience will be exhausted and his offer grace withdrawn, that blessing by association will be of no value when unbelievers face the living God in judgment and are eternally cut off from him. Those who in unbelief refuse God’s kindness in the offer of salvation are destined to be cut off by his severity,” end quote.

May I challenge those of you who perhaps do not know Christ, maybe you think you do, but you want to ask yourself the question. Do I truly love Christ? Is he the center of gravity around which my life orbits? Is he the master that I long to please and to serve? Do you... do I abide in his Word and thereby prove, as Jesus said, that I am truly his disciple? If not, dear friend, you have no basis to believe that your faith will save you. If you are not persevering through God’s kindness through a life of loving obedience, you are going to be cut off, because you were never truly saved. So won’t you humble yourself in repentant faith today and believe in the Lord before it is too late?

And, dear Christian, those of us who know and love Christ, oh, once again, just look at Paul’s words. Would you contemplate this this week? Meditate upon it.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ John 8:31.

⁵⁵ Romans 11:22.

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“Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God’s kindness.”⁵⁶

And then, as a result of this we could all rejoice at even a deeper level over the grace that God has shown us and then let that grace manifest itself in a life of humility, especially towards God’s chosen people.

Let’s pray together.

Father, thank you for these truths. Help us to understand them. Give us grace to live consistently with them and be glorified in and through our lives we ask for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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⁵⁶ Ibid.