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Class Notes

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## **Can Fallen Israel Be Recovered?**

### **Romans 11:11-32**

Romans 9-11: Paul is addressing the question of the Jewish nation, why is it that the overwhelming majority of Jews are rejecting Jesus as their Messiah?

Tracing out Paul's argument:

- It causes Paul tremendous sorrow and anguish (9:1-3)
- The Jews have tremendous spiritual advantages (9:4-5)
- It is not as though God's Word has failed! (9:6)
- Sovereign election: not all Israel are Israel (9:6-
  - God has chosen some, rejected the others
  - God's choice is sovereign, not based on works
  - Non-elect Jews are like Ishmael, Esau, and Pharaoh
  - God has mercy on the elect, hardens the rest
  - The only difference is God's sovereign will
  - God creates the reprobate to teach the elect his glories
- The elect are made up of both Jews and Gentiles (9:24-26)
- Israel stumbled over the stumbling stone (Christ) because they were trying to prove their own righteousness by the Law (9:27-33)
- Paul prays earnestly for the Jews, and seeks to evangelize them (10:1, 9-15)
- Two ways: the righteousness of the Law (self works) vs. the righteousness by faith (Christ's works) (10:5-8)
- Salvation is simple: believe that Jesus is Lord and confess him with your mouth, calling on his name (10:9-13)
- Evangelism to both Jews and Gentiles is essential (10:14-15)

- Sadly, most Jews who have heard have not believed; yet faith comes simply by hearing the Word of Christ (10:16-17)
- Excuses removed:
  - “They haven’t heard” ... Yes they have!
  - “They didn’t understand” ... That is no problem for God, because neither did the Gentiles who eventually believed
  - “They weren’t seeking Christ” ... neither were the Gentiles (10:18-20)
- Tragically: God has been patiently holding out his hands to the disobedient Jewish nation for centuries (10:21)
- God has not totally and finally rejected the Jewish nation (11:1-6)
  - Paul’s own conversion is proof...
  - God is doing what he has always done among the Jews, reserving a remnant who will believe in him
  - Like in Elijah’s day... a remnant chosen by grace, not works
- Summary: the elect are saved, the others are hardened (11:7-10)
  - This hardening is a spirit of stupor, blinded eyes, deaf ears
  - This hardening comes in part by their “table” (prosperity)

### Can Fallen Israel Be Recovered? The Image of the Olive Tree (11:11-24)

***Romans 11:11-24 Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. <sup>12</sup> But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!***

***<sup>13</sup>I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry <sup>14</sup> in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. <sup>15</sup> For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? <sup>16</sup> If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.***

***<sup>17</sup>If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, <sup>18</sup> do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. <sup>19</sup> You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." <sup>20</sup> Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be***

*arrogant, but be afraid. <sup>21</sup> For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. <sup>22</sup> Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. <sup>23</sup> And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. <sup>24</sup> After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!*

### The Main Question Posed... and Answered with Hope!

*<sup>11</sup> Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. <sup>12</sup> But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!*

Q: What is the main question Paul poses here about fallen Israel?

Q: What does Paul say is the purpose of Israel's "stumble" and "transgression" (rejection of Christ)?

Paul is citing the Song of Moses that he cited earlier in Romans 10:19:

*Deuteronomy 32:21 They made me jealous by what is no god and angered me with their worthless idols. I will make them envious by those who are not a people; I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding.*

Q: How does the success of the gospel among the Gentiles make Israel envious?

**[Pisidian Antioch] Acts 13:44-49** *On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. <sup>45</sup> When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying. <sup>46</sup> Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. <sup>47</sup> For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'" <sup>48</sup> When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. <sup>49</sup> The word of the Lord spread through the whole region.*

Q: What hopeful statement does Paul make in verse 12? What riches does Paul refer to? What is their "fullness?"

### Paul's Message to the Gentiles: Hope for Israel, Warning for Gentiles

***Romans 11:13-16 I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry <sup>14</sup> in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. <sup>15</sup> For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? <sup>16</sup> If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.***

Q: Why does Paul specifically address Gentiles (Roman Christians) here? Why is it important for them to have the right attitude toward Israel?

Q: Why would Paul want to arouse his own people to envy?

Q: What hopeful things does Paul say about the rejection of the Jews and their future acceptance?

Q: How would the universal salvation of the Jews (at the end of the world) be like "life from the dead"?

Q: In what sense is Paul arguing that the Jews are "holy"?

***Romans 11:17-21 If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, <sup>18</sup> do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. <sup>19</sup> You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." <sup>20</sup> Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. <sup>21</sup> For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.***

Q: Explain the image of the cultivate olive tree with a deep root system and various branches... natural and wild, stripped off and grafted in. What does all that refer to?

Q: How are Gentile Christians like wild olive shoots grafted into a cultivated olive tree? How do they derive nourishing sap from the root system?

Q: Why would it be very dangerous and arrogant for Gentile Christians to boast over the fallen branches (unbelieving Jews)?

Q: How does the image of the breaking off of cultivated olive branches so that wild branches could be grafted in give a picture of the actual history of the spread of the gospel among the Gentiles?

Q: What does "do not be arrogant but be afraid" mean? What healthy fear does Paul seek to stimulate among Gentile Christians?

***Romans 11:22-24 Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. <sup>23</sup> And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. <sup>24</sup> After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!***

Q: How is the “kindness and sternness” of God on display in all this?

Q: Why is it good to meditate on God as both the Father of the Prodigal Son and the consuming fire that descended on Sinai?

Q: What condition does Paul want Gentile Christians to meet going forward? Does this passage threaten the losing of salvation? How do we harmonize this with the security of the believer that Paul has taught so clearly in Romans 5:1-11 and Romans 8:28-39?

Q: What hope for the future does Paul give for individual unbelieving Jews here?

Q: Are some people easier to save than others? According to the logic of verse 24, who is easier to save – a “wild” Gentile or a “cultivated” Jew?

### **The Great Mystery of Israel’s Future Salvation**

***Romans 11:25-27 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. <sup>26</sup> And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. <sup>27</sup> And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."***

Q: What mystery does Paul reveal here?

Q: What does he mean by “the full number of Gentiles” coming in?

Q: What does “And so, all Israel will be saved” mean?

Q: How do the promises cited here support this mystery?

Q: What is “godlessness”? How does this describe unbelieving Jews?

Q: How amazing would this final revival be? Why is it likely only to happen at the end of the world?

## **God's Warning to Gentiles: Don't Be Arrogant**

### **Romans 11:16-24**

The Most Obnoxious Human Attitude... Pride

I. Paul's Goals: The Destruction of Gentile Boasting Over Israel and the Unity of the Church

A. Pride Rooted in Human Nature

1. Definition

- a. Self-centeredness: like an infant, totally focused on himself, like a toddler who wants every toy in the sandbox
- b. Self-exaltation over others
- c. Self-exaltation over God

2. God has made pride "heavenly enemy number one"

3. The ultimate goal of the gospel: salvation to the glory of God alone

***Romans 11:32 For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.***

B. Jewish Arrogance Over Gentiles Addressed Earlier

***Romans 2:17-24 Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God; <sup>23</sup> You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? <sup>24</sup> As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."***

C. Now Gentile Arrogance Over Jews Addressed

D. Perhaps Disunity in the Church of Rome

E. Biggest Concern: The Glory of God in the Salvation of Jew and Gentile

II. The Sordid History of Anti-Semitism in Christendom

A. The Most Graphic Form of "Boasting" Over the Fallen: Anti-Semitism

B. A Long and Disgraceful History of "Christian" Anti-Semitism

1. The Crusades

2. Medieval Europe: blaming Jews for the Black Death
3. The Inquisition
4. Martin Luther: late in his life wrote terrifyingly bitter words against Jews
5. Late 1800s: the pogroms in Russia and Poland
6. The Nazis

C. The Threat to Those Who Boast: Eternal Condemnation

***Romans 11:20-21 Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. <sup>21</sup> For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.***

III. Six Reasons for Gentile Humility Toward Unbelieving Jewish People

A. Israel's Lasting Consecration as God's Chosen People (vs. 16)

***Romans 11:16 If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.***

1. Basic concept of "firstfruits": everything belongs to God
2. "Holy" here means "sacred", "set apart for God's private use"
3. The part of the dough and the root: the patriarchs
  - a. Earlier in Romans: Gentile Christians clearly associated with Abraham

***Romans 4:16-17 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring-- not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. <sup>17</sup> As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations."***

- b. God isn't through with His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

***Romans 15:8-9 For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs <sup>9</sup> so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name."***

4. **THEREFORE... Gentiles should not boast over the fallen state of the Jewish nation, because the nation as a whole is still holy to the Lord, even if individual Jews are evicted through unbelief**

B. The "Olive Tree" Is Jewish in Heritage (vs. 17-20)

1. The Olive Tree is a living entity, with a development and a history; it grows year by year, developing branches, and on those branches the gardener expects to see fruit
2. Some fruitless branches have been stripped off, some wild branches have mysteriously been grafted in contrary to nature
3. But the tree REMAINS ALIVE... the tree was not chopped down, but it continues, it develops, it still draws moisture and nutrients from the soil
4. The tree represents GOD'S PEOPLE; the tree is not ISRAEL per se, for many physical descendants of Abraham have been cut out... in the tree means in right relationship with God, outside the tree means rejected by God...
5. But the tree is JEWISH by nature... it is a JEWISH tree; God worked salvation for the world through this one tribe descended from Abraham
6. Jesus made it very clear:

*John 4:22 salvation is from the Jews.*

7. **Therefore, Gentile Christians should not boast over fallen Jews because the tree of salvation is Jewish by nature... through the promises made to the Jewish patriarchs, and through the development in Moses, David, and the Prophets**

C. Gentiles Are Wild, by Nature Excluded, by Grace Included (vs. 17-20)

*vs. 17-20 If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, <sup>18</sup> do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. <sup>19</sup> You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." <sup>20</sup> Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid.*

***Romans 11:24 After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!***

Illus. Imagine going for a three-day hike through the deep woods and mountain ravines of West Virginia... the Blue Ridge mountains; and you stumble upon an apple tree in the midst of a wild clearing... it seems like no human being has been there for centuries, and you pick one of the insect affected apples, and inspect it... THIS UNTENDED TREE, left to grow in the woods is a WILD APPLE TREE; but suppose you drive to an orchard, park your car, buy a bag from the orchard employees, and go to a spot they direct you to go to and stand among neatly planted rows of apple trees, row upon row... these are CULTIVATED apple



trees, are their plump, perfect, insect free fruit testifies to the careful and intelligent handling by the owner of the orchard

Israel is a tended, cultivated tree... tended by the Promises of God, by the Commands of God through the Law of Moses, by the Warnings of God through the prophets, by the Leadership of God through holy men like Joshua and Samuel and David... and disciplined by the Judgments of God through various calamities to train Israel to hate sin and love God

1. God did not guide the Gentiles, but pretty much left them to develop as they thought best... basically to go to hell in whatever way seemed best to them
  - a. Gentiles developed their own gods and goddesses
  - b. Gentiles developed their own mystics and histories and sinful habits and shrines and priests and priestesses... but they were never confronted by God through the Law and the Prophets... they were never judged and restored by the loving heavenly Father... they were left to grow wild, and they grew wild

In Lystra, when the pagans there wanted to offer sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas, thinking they were gods:

***Acts 14:15-16 "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. <sup>16</sup> In the past, he let all nations go their own way.***

2. Gentiles are wild by nature
3. YET Contrary to nature were grafted into a Jewish olive tree
  - a. "contrary to nature" means the two don't naturally go together
  - b. The most natural thing in the world is for a pagan to keep being a pagan and to go to hell for his sins
  - c. But suddenly, through the miracle of grace through the gospel of Jesus Christ, Gentiles of all things, have become spiritual Jews
  - d. Abraham has become our father, Jesus, the King of the Jews has become our King and Savior, the Jewish Bible has become for us the very word of God, the promises made to Abraham have become the hope of our lives and the joy of our hearts
  - e. AND the Holy Spirit has been given to previously wild Gentiles to make them conform to the perfections of God's holy laws... to give up sexual immorality, idolatry, emptiness and wild revelry... God has actually written the Law of God on our hearts

- f. And this is “**contrary to nature**”... the second time this striking phrase has been used in Romans... the first was in Romans 1 where it spoke of (Gentile) sexual perversion, homosexuality, which was contrary to nature
- g. Here, what is contrary to nature is that Gentile sinners like us have been 1) CUT OUT of our Gentile heritage as wicked sinners and 2) grafted into a Jewish Olive tree!!!!

**4. Therefore, Gentiles MUST NOT BOAST over the fallen branches off the cultivated olive tree, because we were by nature EXCLUDED, on the outside and rejected... we should be very very very humble, because the only difference between us and them is the mere sovereign grace of Almighty God**

D. Israel Supports Gentile Christians, Not the Other Way Around (vs. 17-18)

*vs. 17-18 If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, <sup>18</sup> do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you.*

- 1. Gentiles derive all their spiritual life and vitality by being grafted into a Jewish olive tree
- 2. We derive “**nourishing sap**” from the Olive tree
  - a. Sap from the word of God
  - b. Sap from Christ, who was Jewish

*John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*

- 3. We are **supported**, held up off the ground—out of the muck and filth of wicked sinfulness and idolatry—by our miraculous grafting into this Jewish tree; the root that supports us is the promise made to the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
- 4. **Gentile Christians should not boast over the fallen branches, the rejected Jews, because we derive our moment by moment life and health spiritually from being included in this Jewish Olive tree**
  - a. Every day we turn to a Jewish book, the Bible, and suck life-giving sap from its pages, nourishing our faith on words written, for the most part, by Jewish prophets and Jewish apostles... our daily nourishment is JEWISH in nature

b. Every moment, we turn to Christ to save us and keep us and protect us and give us life and make us fruitful; he is the vine, we are the branches... and He is Jewish, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham

c. In this Jewish God we live and move and have our being! How can we boast over Jews who have rejected Christ??

#### E. Gentiles Will Get No More Special Treatment Than Jews Did (vs. 19-23)

1. Paul concedes that individual Jews were cut off from their own Olive Tree and are now lying on the ground, rejected by God

2. Paul goes deeper to ask WHY they were cut off?

*vs. 19-23 You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." <sup>20</sup> Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. <sup>21</sup> For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. <sup>22</sup> Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. <sup>23</sup> And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.*

3. Clear teaching: The Jews were cut off from their own olive tree because of unbelief... they refused to trust in Christ

4. The root of their unbelief was PRIDE... pride in the national heritage, pride in their lawkeeping, pride in their religious achievements, even pride in their national sufferings

5. Healthy Fear: DO NOT BE ARROGANT, BUT BE AFRAID!

6. Therefore, Gentile Christians should not boast over unbelieving Jews because God will not spare fake Christians any more than he spared fake Jews, and boasting people are not truly saved people

#### F. God Is Able to Graft Jews Back In, and Someday He Will

*vs. 23-24 And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. <sup>24</sup> After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!*

1. The whole issue in this passage is God's sovereign power, God's sovereign grace

2. If God can take us from our wild background that had NOTHING to do with this Jewish olive tree, how can we possibly imagine that He can't graft Jews back into their own Olive Tree?
3. Saul of Tarsus heard of Christ crucified and REJECTED HIM, rejected him through unbelief, and was like one of these Jewish branches, stripped from the people of God and lying rejected on the ground... then, in an instant, he was "grafted in" to Christ!
4. What is more, Romans 11 says that that is precisely what God WILL do at the end of the world... He will scoop up a whole generation's worth of rejected branches and graft them back into their own Olive Tree by faith in Christ
5. **Therefore, Gentile Christians should not boast over fallen Jews, because God is able any time to graft them in**

#### IV. Applications

- A. Search Your Heart and Your Life for Spiritual Pride
- B. Search Your Heart and Your Life for Anti-Semitism
- C. Ask God to Give You Paul's Stance Toward Lost Jews and Gentiles
  1. Deep sorrow over their lostness
  2. Deep yearning in prayer for their salvation
  3. Consistent and sacrificial willingness to lead Jews and Gentiles to Christ through the faithful and courageous preaching of the gospel
- D. Take God's Warnings to Heart

***Do not be arrogant but be afraid.***