

## 98. The Book of Romans 11:13-24

*Paul's Epistle to the Romans*  
A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier

(8-6-25)

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In our studies of the Book of Romans, we have entered into the fourth major section of the book of Romans: **IV. Restoration (of Israel)—Chapter 9-11**

So, Paul set out in Romans 9-11 to focus his attention on Israel as a way to prove God's promises to them hadn't failed and neither will His promises to His Church fail.

### **Romans 11:11 (NKJV)**

**<sup>11</sup> I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation *has come* to the Gentiles.**

Paul is saying that God knew Israel would 'fall.'

Or in other words, He knew the nation would fail to live up to the covenant He made with them by not receiving their Messiah when He came—but he quickly adds that this stumbling or falling was not final or forever.

And that even though the nation failed in the covenant God made with them and God turned to the Church to make a covenant with during the Church Age—the covenant He made with Israel through Abraham was not rendered null and void but was only put on 'hold' or set aside for a time (Pentecost to the Rapture—the Church Age). And that God's covenant with Israel still stands because, as Paul said a few verses earlier—it was a covenant made with them through His grace and not based on their works.

That God chose to make a covenant with the Christian Church to use us as His covenant people didn't negate the covenant He made with Israel. In fact, was used by God in part to make Israel jealous so that they would return to Him that He might use them during the Tribulation Period as His covenant people once again!

### **Romans 11:12 (NKJV)**

**<sup>12</sup> Now if their fall *is* riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness [i.e., 'their impact on the world when they are restored to God!]**

As a result of Israel's rejection of the gospel, the nation was set aside, and the gospel went out to the Gentiles.

One author—

*"In this sense the fall of the Jews has meant riches for the world, and Israel's loss has been the Gentiles' gain. But if that is true, how much more will Israel's restoration result in rich blessing for all the world!"*

When Israel turns to the Lord after the Church is Raptured—many believe that she will be used by God to save as much if not more than came to Jesus during the entire Church Age!

One author used the prophet Jonah to illustrate this—

*“When Jonah was cast out of the boat during the storm, this resulted in deliverance or salvation for a boatload of Gentiles. But when Jonah was restored and preached to Nineveh, it resulted in salvation for a city full of Gentiles.*

*So, too, Israel’s temporary rejection of God has resulted in the gospel going out to a handful of Gentiles, comparatively speaking. But when Israel is restored, vast hordes of Gentiles will be ushered into the kingdom of God!”*

After Jesus returns to the earth, ends the Tribulation Period by judging the followers of the Antichrist and establishes the Millennial Kingdom (a promise God gave to the Jewish people)—all believing Gentiles will be blessed to be a part of it.

**Romans 11:12-14 (NKJV)**

<sup>12</sup> Now if their fall *is* riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! <sup>13</sup> For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, <sup>14</sup> if by any means I may provoke to jealousy *those who are* my flesh and save some of them.

Here Paul isn’t speaking to the Gentile Christians in Rome—but to the Gentiles in general as those that God sent Paul to reach with the gospel. However, even though Paul knew that the Gentiles were his ‘*target ministry*’ (those God had sent him to primarily preach the gospel to)—he never lost his passion to reach the Jews with the gospel either.

McGee—

*“In other words, Paul says, in effect, “I am an apostle to the Gentiles, and I rejoice in that. But as I preach to the Gentiles, I hope it will move many of my own people to turn to Christ also.”*

**Romans 11:15 (NKJV)**

<sup>15</sup> For if their being cast away *is* the reconciling of the world, what *will* their acceptance *be* but life from the dead?

The phrase “**life from the dead**” has led to several interpretations as to what Paul is actually referring to—I’ll share with you the 3 main ones.

**1. A figurative expression.**

One commentator said concerning this,

*“The most common and natural interpretation is that which considers the later clause [‘life from the dead’] as merely a figurative expression of a joyful and desirable event.”*

While it’s true that the future restoration of the nation of Israel back to God will certainly be a joyful and desirable event—It seems that Paul had more in mind when he used the phrase “**life from the dead**” in the context of Israel’s future restoration and its impact on the world.

**2. The final resurrection.**

A large number of commentators, both ancient and modern, have thought of the phrase “**life from the dead**” as referring to the final resurrection, on the grounds that only the resurrection of the dead can be the climactic event of world history.

Jim Boice—

*“The resurrection and the final judgment to follow it are the climax of world history, of course. But it is questionable whether “life from the dead” can mean this. Leon Morris notes that “life from the dead” nowhere else refers to the resurrection, and the closest equivalent phrase (“alive from the dead,” Rom. 6:13, Greek text) refers not to the resurrection, but to the spiritual life of Christians through their mystical union with Jesus Christ...”*

### 3. **The spiritual regeneration of Israel.**

The third interpretation (the one I hold to) sees **“life from the dead”** as referring to the spiritual regeneration of the Jewish people, which will certainly be necessary if they are to believe on Jesus as their Messiah and be saved by him.

Now Paul goes on to illustrate this by giving the ‘parable’ of the **‘good olive tree and the grafting in of branches from a wild olive tree.’**

When we think of an illustration we think of something that will help us better understand a truth. However, when Paul uses the olive tree illustration—it has caused a lot of confusion among Christians and has created a great deal of controversy.

Part of the problem is that people often read parables in the Bible and try to squeeze out of them every ‘drop’ of truth they can. While it is noble to want to extract every ounce of truth from a passage—when it comes to parables it will lead to problems.

When Jesus taught using parables, He often would preface them by saying, *“The Kingdom of heaven is like...”*—not exactly like but similar to.

A parable is designed to communicate one basic truth or principle, and by pressing it to the ‘nth’ degree it will begin to break down and cause you to misinterpret what is being said—and therefore will lead you to some wrong conclusions and faulty applications.

Another reason that this illustration or parable has caused so much confusion is because people have tried to apply it to individual’s salvation and not to national service.

Donald Grey Barnhouse—

*“The paragraphs that we now study have been one of the greatest fields for controversy in all of Biblical interpretation. I have before me at least a half dozen different interpretations of the parable of the olive tree which is about to be set forth by Paul in the course of his discussion. I believe that much of the difficulty can be circumvented if we will understand one basic principle—this passage is not talking about individuals but is talking about Israel nationally, and the Gentiles collectively...”*

*We must see that the root is Abraham, the tree is the patriarchs, and the branches are the people of Israel. Whether individuals were good or evil, they still were the transmitters of the promises and covenant which God had given to Abraham.”*

#### **Romans 11:16 (NKJV)**

**<sup>16</sup> For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.**

Paul in looking to the future, pauses for a minute to look briefly at Israel’s past to remember their spiritual heritage and as such he used two illustrations to prove his argument that God was not finished with the Jews.

**The firstfruit and lump of dough**—is a reference to what God said in Numbers 15:17–21.

The reference here is that the first part of the dough that was to be offered up to God—was to be a symbol that the entire lump belonged to Him (was holy).

The same idea was involved in the Feast of Firstfruits, when the priest offered the firstfruits of the harvest to the Lord as a token that the entire harvest was His (Lev. 23:9–14).

The basic idea is that when God accepts the first part—He sanctifies the whole.

One author said,

*“Applying this to the history of Israel, we understand Paul’s argument. God accepted the founder of the nation, Abraham, and in so doing set apart his descendants as well. God also accepted the other patriarchs, Isaac and Jacob, in spite of their sins or failings. This means that God must accept the “rest of the lump”—the nation of Israel.”*

Then Paul uses a second illustration to prove his point—

**Romans 11:16 (NKJV)**

<sup>16</sup> For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; **and if the root is holy, so are the branches.**

MacDonald—

*“The root points back to Abraham, with whom the line of privilege began. The **fatness** of an olive tree refers to its productivity—that is, to its rich crop of olives and oil derived from them. Here the **fatness** signifies the privileges that flowed from union with the olive tree.”*

When Paul said that the **roots of the tree** support the tree (verse 18)—he was referring to the covenant promises God made with Abraham. From Abraham came the patriarchs, Isaac, and Jacob (the trunk of the tree) and from Jacob came the 12 tribes, from which came all their descendants (the branches).

**Romans 11:17 (NKJV)**

<sup>17</sup> **And if some of the [natural] branches were broken off [unbelieving Jews], and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree,**

MacDonald—

*“The branches that were broken off picture the unbelieving portion of the twelve tribes of Israel. Because of their rejection of the Messiah, they were removed from their place of privilege as God’s chosen people. But only some of the branches were removed. A remnant of the nation, including Paul himself, had received the Lord.*

*The wild olive tree refers to the Gentiles, viewed as one people. They were grafted into the olive tree.*

*With them the Gentiles partook of the root and fatness of the olive tree. The Gentiles share the position of favor that had originally been given to Israel and is still held by the believing remnant of Israel.*

*Believing Gentiles are blessed by God because they are spiritual descendants of faithful Abraham. We are blessed because we have been grafted into the covenant that God made with Abraham and now graciously offers to all who believe in Abraham’s God.”*

**Romans 11:18 (NKJV)**

<sup>18</sup> **do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.**

To reinforce his warning Paul declared, **“You do not support the root, but the root supports you.”**

The root of the tree is the source of life and nourishment to all the branches—which is why God called Abraham (‘the root’), *“the father of all who believe”* (4:11-12, 16-17).

In other words, Gentile believers are linked to Abraham and in a very real sense owe their salvation to him, not vice versa—*“so don’t boast!”*

I just watched a two-hour teaching on the history of anti-Semitism throughout the Church Age which started with Augustine and the Roman Catholic Church and then through Luther and Calvin was carried into the Protestant Reformation and continues today in those churches that embrace reformed and replacement theology.

They look down on the Jews and boast about how God has chosen them and rejected Israel. (Elaborate)

**Romans 11:19–21 (NKJV)**

<sup>19</sup> You will say then, “Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.” <sup>20</sup> Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. <sup>21</sup> For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either.

Remember, this is not talking about God choosing *individual* people for salvation, but of God choosing a *nation* by making a covenant with Abraham and his descendants (the nation of Israel) to be a special instrument to use as a light to the Gentiles.

Here’s the main problem when people apply what Paul is saying to the salvation of individual people.

They interpret the ‘*roots*’ as a reference to Israel; the ‘*tree trunk*’ as a reference to ‘*salvation*’ and the ‘*branches*’ as speaking of individual people.

As such, they interpret the branches being broken off as a reference to people losing their salvation instead of the nation of Israel being set aside for a time from being God’s chosen instrument to carry the light of God’s truth to the world.

When Paul says in verse 21—**“For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either”**, he is saying that if the Church isn’t faithful in representing God by being a light to this fallen world—He will remove us and replace the Church with Israel once again to be His light to the world.

**Revelation 2:4–5 (NKJV)**

<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. <sup>5</sup> Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.

**Romans 11:22–24 (NKJV)**

<sup>22</sup> Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in *His* goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. <sup>23</sup> And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. <sup>24</sup> For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who *are* natural *branches*, be grafted into their own olive tree?

One commentator—

*“Many of the Jewish people did not believe. Paul pictured them as branches broken off the tree. But he saw an amazing thing taking place: other branches were grafted into the tree to share in the life of the tree. These branches were the Gentiles. In Romans 11:24, Paul described this “grafting in” as “contrary to nature.” Usually a cultivated branch is grafted into a wild tree and shares its life without producing its poor fruit. But in this case, it was the “wild branch” (the Gentiles) that was grafted into the good tree! “Salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22).”*

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