



Lesson 12 August 20th, 2016

God Prunes and Grafts

Study Scripture – Romans 11:11-24

Background Scripture – Romans 11

Key Verse:

Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

Romans 11:22

INTRODUCTION

The Lesson Study focuses on Israel and its existence and future. Some consider Israel to be the strangest nation that has ever existed and which for over forty centuries have faced what one writer correctly labels

“anti-Semitism, that dark, unexplainable, yet consistently recurring pattern of hatred against the Jews.

The root of anti-Semitism is undoubtedly the resentment that other nations feel against the Jews’ claim to be God’s chosen people, and it finds expression in various ways, some violent, others merely mockery”.

The Apostle Paul now asks two hard questions about Israel which was being asked in his day and which is being asked today.

These questions must be closely examined by the modern day believer for history has shown that the church (the Gentile believers brought to faith in Christ by the work of the Apostles and early missionaries) and Israel are often as one writer stated:

“like two relatives who can’t get along with each other. Through the centuries, disagreement and outright persecution and unhappy situations have prevailed”.

That of course is putting it mildly. The Christian church behaviour to Jew as well as to other people have been extremely atrocious and quite abominable. There is such a thing as the Christian Hall of Shame, which has been put together by several writers and which lists exhaustively the unpleasant aspects of Church history, involving most unChrist-like displays even within and among the Christian community.

Israel, according to the Apostle, has failed because of their spiritual pride and self-thought self sufficiency. They had been chosen by God, given the Covenant through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had been given therefore a unique calling, given information in the form of the Law and Testimonies which uniquely showed God’s unique character, given responsibilities, and great

opportunities. They had seen the Shekinah Glory, God had heard their prayers, shown them mercy, had been incredibly patient and faithful to them, and from them the Messiah and Saviour of the world had come.

But pride had ruined them. They like every proud person and people had esteemed themselves so highly that they had devalued others, resting in the fact that they were beloved by God and had been His favourite, and ignoring their responsibility to help others to Jehovah.

They had become like all proud persons, foolish, and over enthusiastic at their accomplishments, regarding them as magnificent when they really were not, but really hollow and ordinary.

They came to regard themselves as being so intimate with God that they could do whatever they wanted. They were after all, sons of God.

Chapter 10 therefore had ended with the sad solemn word of God:

“But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hand unto a disobedient and gainsaying people”

The Apostle now had to deal with the situation of the Jews and the nation of Israel in his letter to this Roman church which included persons of both groups, Jews and Gentiles. The questions the Apostle Paul poses and answers has bothered believers from his day to the present day.

The problem for us today is that many do not take the entire Bible with the same amount of seriousness for each and every part. Some openly and some unconsciously treat the first section of Scripture, the Old Testament, though it is much larger than the second section which we call the New Testament, as subordinate.

They treat the Old Testament Scriptures on which the Apostles based their teachings and from which Jesus quoted as being somehow inferior. They believe the New Testament is the antithesis to the Old Testament, since the latter had been “fulfilled”, and we are now under the New Covenant; the “Old Mosaic Covenant” has been fulfilled and swept away.

This of course has brought an unbridgeable division or gap in Scripture. The commandments have been swept away except for those chosen to be retained by the new Gentile believers. There is therefore no real continuous Biblical theology and thus many will find any possibility of theological understanding between Christians and Jews quite impossible.

So what has emerged from the earliest times in Christian history has been called the “**displacement theory**”, otherwise called “**fulfillment theology**”, or “**Supersessionism**”. This Christian view which is found in the earliest days of the emerging church, a view that the Apostle Paul now confronts, states that the emerging Gentile church has “displaced” Israel as the people of God. The promises and the favoured and prominent position once held by the



nation of Israel are now held exclusively by the Church. The New Covenant has replaced or superseded the Mosaic Covenant, so that none or very little of its provisions, including of course Seventh Day Sabbath keeping apply. By not being Christians the Jews are dissenting from God’s purposes.

Lest we think this is a small matter this doctrine of found in almost all Protestant as well as Roman Catholic faiths. We are reminded by one writer in a well known Encyclopedia:

“Supersessionism reached its culmination in Islam and the doctrine of the Tahrif, which “sees itself as the final successor to and the completion of the Abrahamic faith tradition of ethical and prophetic monotheism.

Supersessionism formed a core tenet of the Church for the majority of its existence, and it remains a common assumption among Christians and Muslims....

Many Early Christian commentators taught that the Old Covenant was fulfilled and replaced (superceded) by the New Covenant in Christ, for instance

- **Justin Martyr (about 100 to 165)**
- **Hippolytus of Rome (martyred 13 August 235) ...**
- **Tertullian (c. 160- c.e-200.**
- **Augustine (354-430)”.**

Supersessionism is not the name of any official Roman Catholic doctrine and the word appears in no Church documents, but official Catholic teaching has reflected varying supercessionist thought throughout its history, especially prior to the mid-twentieth century... ...The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) marked a shift in official Catholic teaching about Judaism, a shift which may be described as a move from “hard” to “soft” supersessionism”.

It is important to note that this change has led to much disagreement in that faith community When in 1997 John Paul 11 affirmed the Jews covenantal status saying that the Jews were the people of God of the Old Covenant which has never been abrogated by God, this caused a storm. After his death the Anti-Defamation league stated that

“more change for the better took place in his 27-year Papacy than in the nearly 2,000 years before.”

It is noted that Pope Francis in 2013 in his statement said:

“God’s grace, which is the grace of Jesus Christ according to our faith, is available to all. Therefore, the Church believes that Judaism, (as) the faithful response of the Jewish people to God’s irrevocable covenant, is salvific for them, because God is faithful to his promises” rejects outright “displacement theology”.

But let us remember that though the Vatican has softened they still believe that the Church is the “new people of God” and the New Covenant fulfills the Old Covenant though that covenant might be irrevocable. They can therefore still distance themselves from “chosen people” claims by Israel and call on Israel to end “occupation” of Palestine lands.



When it comes to the Protestant circles, we see there are various views on the Displacement theory found in circles teaching Covenant theology, New Covenant theology and Dispensationalism, and as to be expected in the smaller and Charismatic congregations in its varying structures. There are different views in different denominations however. Some assert Israel had been replaced by their respective church, while others reject that belief system, though writings by Martin Luther and John Calvin appear to assert a Replacement of Israel position.

Even great preachers and expositors such as Charles Spurgeon had trouble with respect to whether or not Israel had a future. There are many now living with similar difficulties.

One must therefore listen carefully to what others state, and be careful not to go against the clear Apostolic teaching in this regard, which rejects ‘Displacement’ or ‘Supercessionist’ beliefs in any of its forms.

There is to be no denigration of Israelites, and definitely no boasting against them, as the Apostle emphatically states. Christians must beware of anti-Semitic views, blaming Jews for everything going wrong in the world, of dominating the economies of the world to the detriment of others, and other such unproven and false accusations. The Apostle will now clearly lay out God’s position with respect to Jews and to Israel, showing the good and the bad of that nation, and pointing to what He will do with them and with Gentiles at the end of the age.

Satan hates the people called by God and from which Messiah came. He hates the promises of God to them. He also hates the promises that God will also bless Gentiles. He hates you and seeks to destroy you. So let us avoid taking up any of his positions.

But be warned that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). But the merciful God always has and preserves the remnant of grace, and even though they might stumble and fall, He picks them up.

We can be sure that God will shake up, cut out the unwanted dross, prune what is not wanted, and then place the individual He has called into His proper place.

But let us seek to avoid losing much that He has for us, wandering in the wilderness and being tortured, thirsting and never being satisfied, and then stand before Jesus Christ and feel guilty and ashamed for the wasted years.

Israel stands as an example for us. So avoid their mistakes. Note you cannot fool God. He sees and knows everything. But instead of crying at every sorrowful experience and at every misadventure we should always thank and praise Him for being kind, generous, and forgiving with His elect who so often prove to be weak and faithless.



THE TEXT

Verse 11

This is the divine purpose in the call of Israel and the call of the Gentiles. God continues to execute His will, and in this particular case, it extends to saving and redeeming the Gentiles. Israel stumbled, and many of the nation fell (verse 22) but their stumbling and their fall was not total, for their stumbling and their fall happened for a beneficial purpose. They did not fall in the sense of total, no recovery. Falling is significant in some of the implications that follow it, as a fall of a specific final nature would indicate if possible a removal from God’s purpose and plan. To give a better sense, Lucifer fell, Adam stumbled.

Note that the Apostle is speaking of the nation, national behaviour and national promises to Israel. Any individual Jew no matter what age they lived in, could and have come to faith in Christ. The nation can be said to have fell but that does not mean that all the individuals in that nation could never come to Christ.

The rejection of the nation of Jews made room for the reception of the Gentiles. The Jews leaving the feast provided the Gentiles with an opportunity for the outcast, the Gentiles to see what God has prepared for His people, and now they had a chance to be part of that people.

God, being God knew what would happen. What the all-knowing and wise God has done is use this as an opportunity for Gentiles to turn towards salvation and a lesson to the Jews about Grace, Righteousness and Justice.

In any case in this case Israel had stumbled, but by the divine appointment it was so ordered that the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles upon the Jews’ refusal of it.

The parable in Matthew 22:8 and 9 and the words from Luke 14:21 highlight the important of hearing and obedience to the Word of God. The Word of God went out first to the Jews, as it should being God’s people, then to the Gentiles, as it was always meant to be (Acts 13:46). The Book of Acts tells us that everywhere Paul went he began his ministry by first going to the Jews.

God’s will cannot be denied. He will have a congregation in the world, and it will be a wedding furnished with guests and if one will not come, another will. The Jews had the right of refusal, and so the offer was made to the Gentiles. God’s infinite wisdom brings light out of darkness, and good out of evil (that being the stumbling of the Jews).

The promise had been made to Abraham thus:

“In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed”. That promise was now being fulfilled.

God used the stumbling of the Jews to call the Gentiles, provoking them to jealousy, a jealousy that would work to restore them back to their God, and so it would seem then His intention is to restore them when they embrace the Gospel.



Blindness had only happened “*in part*” to the Jews, for there was a remnant among them according to the election of grace, which should be saved; a chosen number, which obtained life and righteousness by Christ. However small their number, these Jews shall be brought back in, but still they will be a number that should always continue in the sad condition their unbelief had brought them into.

It is a constant reminder to the Gentiles to stay fast, for if it happened to God’s chosen, it could happen to them as well.

Now let us consider what we as believers are doing. Is your behaviour and that in the Christian community provoking Jews to jealousy? When it comes to speaking are we communicating the Gospel of Jesus Christ to them or are we afraid of even speaking to them about Jesus?

When we do not even preach Christ as the only way to salvation, and preach the Jesus who condemns men because of their sin in not responding to Him, what are we doing? Are we preaching and speaking about the kind of Messiah that would provoke the Jews to jealousy so that they would return to their God? Are we trying to make the Christian way of life attractive to God’s ancient people or are we treating them as one writer states:

“with hatred, prejudice, persecution, malice, and all uncharitableness”

Maybe we are interested more in preaching about how to gain wealth, health and prosperity, and in erecting great buildings. But we should remember God’s intention. Way back in Deuteronomy 32:20-21 God had warned the nation of Israel about what He would do and He expects those He called to carry out His command reported in the following verses:

“I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end will be: for they are a very forward generation, children in whom there is no faith.

They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation”.

The Apostle refers to this verse with God declaring His “***I will***” twice, and God is doing that today. But it humbles us when He refers to us as a “***foolish nation***” and “***those which are not a people***”. We should thus better appreciate the great goodness of God to us Gentiles as He fulfills the promises He made thousands of years ago to Abraham.

Verse 12

From the fall of the Jews, it allowed the word to reach the Gentiles in God’s appointed time. The Gospel clearly represents the greatest riches available in the place where it is preached. To be even clearer, the riches of the Gentiles were the multitude of converts among them. True believers are God’s jewels.



Note that the Scripture is not saying that the rejection of Jesus the Messiah was the “cause” for Gentiles to be saved. Since the Jews rejected the gospel this only gave more opportunity for the gospel to go to the Gentiles, and many but not all Gentiles took advantage of the offer of salvation coming from God.

The fall of the Jews, represents a lessening of them. But in what manner was that so? It ties into the Scriptures using the word “diminishing” where the number of the true believers in Christ among them were very few; the generality of them did not receive Him but stumbled at Him, and fell through unbelief. The few that did believe, the remnant, were the means of carrying and spreading the Gospel, which is **“the unsearchable riches of Christ”**, into the Gentile world.

As signs of persecution began being raised against the church at Jerusalem, the ministers of the Gospel were scattered abroad, and went everywhere preaching the word; and afterwards the Jews behaving in a very indecent manner towards the Apostles of Christ, the Apostles turned in a manner wholly to the Gentiles. So by means of a few, a diminutive company, of which the Apostle Paul was one, the Gospel, that treasure hid in a field, was put into earthen vessels, and carried into the Heathen world, and by it they were enriched. This handful of men that went out of Judea, were the means of converting vast numbers, large multitudes of souls among the Gentiles, and enriching them with the gifts and graces of the Spirit, and of directing them to Christ,

If these small number of Jews, Paul argues, who embraced Christ, were of much advantage to the Gentiles, then, how much more their fullness? That is to say, when converts to Christ among the Jews is done, which it surely will, it would number in the order of the sand of the sea; a nation of them shall be born again at once, and all Israel shall be saved. If the salvation of so many millions of Gentiles all over the world came about at Israel’s fall, then there would be a much bigger result to come for there must be a great outpouring of salvation when Israel returns to the Lord.

This will bring great glory to the Gentile church by putting fresh life and vigour into them, and inspiring them with more zeal for Christ, and for His honour and glory.

Verse 13

It was commonly accepted that Paul served as an Apostle to the Gentiles. Here, he delivers a word of caution for them, which extends through all time to all others. Paul says, “you hear what riches of salvation are come to you by the fall of the Jews, but take heed lest you do anything to forfeit it”.

This message he gives to the Gentiles, as the appointed Apostle for the service of their faith, to plant and water churches in the Gentile nations. This was the purport of his extraordinary mission, and likewise the intention of his ordination. Paul sets a good example for Jew or Gentile, as he looks to us to do good to those that are under our charge, as he believed the Gentiles were under his charge and he had to do good for them. We should have great and special care behind everything in which we act.



It was an instance of God’s great love to the poor Gentiles that He appointed Paul, who in gifts and graces excelled all the Apostles, to be the Apostle of the Gentiles. The Gentile world was a wider province, and the work to be done in it required a very able, skilful, zealous, courageous workman; such a one was Paul.

God calls those to special work whom He either sees or makes fit for it. Hence the words, “*I magnify my office*”. There were those that vilified it and him because of his role to the Gentiles. It was because he was the Apostle to the Gentiles that the Jews were so outraged against him, and yet he thought never the worse of it, though it set him up as the focus of all the Jewish rage and malice. It is a sign of true love to Jesus Christ to reckon that service and work for Him is truly honourable even that work which the world looks upon with scorn, and as mean and contemptible.

The office of the ministry is an office to be “*magnified*”. Ministers are ambassadors for Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God, and for their work’s sake are to be esteemed highly in love. Paul says, “My office”, which is his ministry, his service, is not one that he extols over others in dominion or lordship, but his office is one of duty and work of an Apostle, which he does with great love. He works with a purpose in mind, that the Jews would one day see what the Gentiles see.

Also, there are two things he exhorts the Gentiles to observe with reference to the rejected Jews. These are, they are to have respect for the Jews, notwithstanding, and also to desire their conversion.

Verse 14

Part of Paul’s purpose, even in discharging his office among the Gentiles with so much labour, assiduity, and indefatigable effort, was, that if possible he might stir up the Jews to emulate and imitate the Gentiles in seeking after Christ; for ‘these’ he means when he says, “***them which are my flesh***”.

The Jews were Paul’s brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh, for it was common with the eastern nations to call such persons their flesh. It carries with it the reason why he was so solicitous for their welfare, because of the relation they had to him, and the natural affection he bore towards them. His hope through all this was that by preaching the Gospel that blessings would reverberate between Jew and Gentile as they would come to seek the Lord God Almighty, leading to that great gathering of the people to Shiloh.

Paul also understands that not all, but some of the seed of Israel, a remnant according to the election of grace referred to they that should be saved, and which did obtain righteousness and life, while the rest were blinded.



Even though the message goes out to all, and has the power to save all, when the ministers of the Gospel work, they must realize that the author or efficient cause of salvation is God only, that the Father has chosen it, the Son has effected it, and the Spirit applies it. Instrumentally, the word preached by them is the means of regeneration, faith, and conversion, with which salvation is connected. The word they show unto men is powerful and life changing. Minister must focus on showing the way of salvation, and encourage souls to believe in Christ, in who alone is salvation. Now the Apostle argues from his office and his personal conversion, to show some among the Jews the purpose of God to save those of Israel, and to prove that their rejection was not total.

Verse 15

God’s displeasure towards the Jews made way for His favour towards the Gentiles. As God and Christ are one, reconciling the world is what they both did. We see that due to the lack of belief in the Jews, they were openly disavowed and disowned, though they had been His choice. Now He may show that in dispensing His favours He would now no longer act in such a way of peculiarity and restriction, but that in every nation He that feared God and wrought righteousness should be accepted of Him.

The Gentiles received the present advantage through the rejection of the gospel when it was made to the Jews. But the Jews would receive far greater than anticipated at their future recovery, an event which would prove that their rejection is not final. The taking away of the Gospel from them, gave the occasion of reconciling the world, the Gentiles.

By “receiving” is meant the conversion of the Jews in the latter day, when they will be received by Christ, on whom they will look with an eye of faith, and mourn in an evangelical manner for their sins against Him, and when they will be also openly received into the house and family of God, into the visible church of Christ.

This is their restoration, **“life from the dead”**, which concerns not only the quickening of the Jews themselves, though their conversion will bring that, but the conversion of everyone in the remnant, a resurrection from the death of sin to a life of grace. This is so represented in Ezekiel 37:1-28. This will be a massive resurrection. There is a great future for Israel.

This is not a small number for the Apostle refers to a numerous, cannot be numbered saved persons., The reviving the work of God among the Gentile churches, who having lain long in a dead, lifeless, lukewarm, and indifferent frame of spirit, will be aroused and quickened, at this wonderful work of grace upon the Jews.

Verse 16

When one initially looks at the argument Paul begins to make, it is most commonly thought, by **“the first fruit”** and **“root”** we are to understand this to refer to Christ, who is sometimes called, **“the first fruits of them that slept”**, (1 Corinthians 15:20), and the **“root of Jesse and**



David”, (Isaiah 11:10). This could also mean to refer to Him, that since He is holy, has all the holiness of His people in Him, and is sanctification unto them, they shall be holy likewise; have it imparted to them in this life, and perfected in them in another: but this does not seem to agree with the Apostle’s argument.

Some believe by ‘them’ the reference is intended to be the first converts among the Jews under the Gospel dispensation, it being usual with the Apostle to call those persons, that were first converted in any place, the first fruits of it. These were they who received the first fruits of the Spirit in Judea, and who first among the Jews hoped and believed in Christ; these were but few in number, as the “first fruit” is but small in comparison of “the lump”, but yet were pledges and presages of a larger number of souls among that people, to be converted in the latter day.

Some however link the expression used by the Apostle far back into the history of Israel and point to the fact that Numbers 15 in giving instructions to Israel states they when they came into the land should take the first fruits of the bread of the land, dedicate it, and offer it to the Lord. The consecration of the small amount extended to all they produced from the land. The idea is then that the first fruit is holy and all else is holy. This immediately connects to the statement:

“If the root be holy, so are the branches”.

The connection to ancient Israel is clear for immediately the discussion is then led into speaking of the **“olive tree”** which in the Old Testament is always a reference to Israel. Hosea 14 and Jeremiah 11:16. This writer thus gives his interpretation of the passage:

The olive tree was the characteristic illustration of the nation Israel. So when he says, “For if the first fruits be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches”

he’s speaking of the fact that Israel began with a definite call of God, a first fruit and with a root, and later on he will make it plain that he’s referring to the fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Verse 28 is concerning the gospel. “As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the Fathers’ sakes”.

God made promises to Abraham which he has not forgotten. Abraham and the Abrahamic promises are the root of the divine program. They are also the first fruits and the call of Abraham, and the call of the patriarchs extends the consecration of God to the whole of the people of God whether believing or not, in the sense that as a nation they have become the people of God”.

Now the Apostle’s argument is this, if the lump is also holy, and if the root be holy, so are the branches; that is, that whereas those persons who were converted among the Jews, however few in number, and despicable in appearance they might be, yet were truly sanctified by the Spirit of God: and as they were, so should the whole body of that people be in the last days.



Verse 17

Paul continues to stress some important aspects to the Jews stumbling and the Gentiles rising and their relation to one another, and concerning the privilege which the Gentiles had by being taken into the Body of Christ. They were grafted in as a branch of a wild olive into a good olive, which is contrary to the way and custom of the husbandman, who grafts the good olive into the bad; but those that God grafts into the Body of Christ He finds wild and barren, and good for nothing. Men graft to mend the tree; but God grafts to mend the branch.

The people of God is an olive-tree, flourishing and fruitful as an olive, the fruit useful for the honour both of God and man. The Jews were cut out but not altogether for God saved a remnant. The Gentiles were grafted in among them. God made provision for this in the Abrahamic covenant, the Davidic covenant, and in the New Covenant.

Those that are out of the Church are as wild olive-trees, not only useless, but what they do produce is sour and unsavoury. The Gentiles occupied this state. Conversion is the grafting in of wild branches into the good olive.

We must be cut off from the old stock, and brought into union with a new root. Those that are grafted into the good olive-tree partake of the root and fatness of the olive. It is applicable to a saving union with Christ; all that are by a lively faith grafted into Christ partake of Him as the branches of the root receive from His fullness. But it is here spoken of a visible church-membership, from which some of the Jews were as branches broken off, and so the Gentiles were grafted in, or continued in the room of those that were broken off.

The Gentiles, being grafted into the congregation of God, which we can call the Church, partake of the same privileges that the Jews did. The olive-tree is shown openly in the visible church; the root of this tree was Abraham. Christ only is the ultimate root, but He worked through Abraham as the root of administration, He being the first with whom the covenant was so solemnly made.

The blessings of Abraham now can fall over the believing Gentiles. It consists of the same fatness of the olive-tree, the same substance, special protection, lively oracles, means of salvation, a standing ministry, instituted ordinances; and among the rest, the visible church-membership of their infant seed, which was part of the fatness of the olive-tree that the Jews had, and cannot be imagined to be denied to the Gentiles.

Verse 18

A caution is given. Do not abuse these privileges. Do not be proud. Do not therefore trample upon the Jews as a reprobate people, nor insult over those that are broken off, much less over those that do continue. Grace is given, not to make us proud, but to make us thankful. The law of faith excludes all boasting either of ourselves or against others.



Gentiles are grafted in, but the Gentiles are still but a branch supported by the root. The Gentiles are an engrafted branch, not free born, but by an act of grace enfranchised and naturalized. Abraham, the root of the Jewish church, is not beholden to them, but they are greatly obliged to him, as the trustee of the covenant and the father of many nations.

The Jews received no advantages from the Gentiles, but on the contrary the Gentiles from the Jews, to whom were committed the oracles of God, and by whom they were faithfully kept and transmitted to the Gentiles. The Gospel itself came out first from among them; the first preachers of it were Jews, who carried it into the Gentile world, where it was received and greatly succeeded to the conversion of many, who by this means were brought into a Gospel church state, and so enjoyed all the privileges they did.

Christ Himself, according to the flesh, came of them, was sent unto them, was the minister of them, lived and died among them, and wrought out the great salvation for His people; hence "salvation" itself is said to be "of the Jews," (John 4:22) so that the root and foundation of all their enjoyments were from the Jews, and not those of the Jews from them; hence there was no room, nor reason, for boasting against them, and vaunting it over them.

Verse 19

Paul continues to warn the Gentiles against certain thoughts. The Gentiles did not merit more from God than the Jews, nor did they stand higher in favour. They were brought in because of the love and justice that God shows to all men. The branches were not broken off because the Gentiles by nature were better than they.

Verse 20

The unbelieving Jews were broken off and rejected, and the Gentiles that believed in Christ were grafted in among the Jews that professed His name. Paul tacitly denies that it was for their sakes. The Jews, because of their own account were broken off. Their own incredulity, because of unbelief they were broken off; because of their unbelief and contempt of the Messiah, they were rejected of God, and died in their sins. This was similar to mistakes made in their past, for it was because of these very same sins and rebellion that excluded their forefathers from the land of Canaan. Now these same attitudes did shut them out of the Gospel church state, and the kingdom of heaven this time,. The issue was again their lack of faith, their unbelief.

Paul continues to counsel the Gentiles and the Jews, saying that they stand by faith; which is not coming from a man's inner self, but instead it was the gift of God. It was not by their (The Gentiles) merits, but by the grace of God that they were in the situation they were; they were blessed with faith in Christ, and having made a profession of it were admitted to Gospel ordinances, and into a Gospel church; and being helped up to this time, to hold the profession of their faith in a becoming manner they stood their ground, and continued in their church relation; and therefore ought not to give way to a vain boasting spirit, but to be humble,



modest, and dependent; wherefore he gives them this proper pertinent, and wholesome advice, **“Be not high-minded, but fear”**.

The Apostle would not have them be elated with their gifts, privileges, and enjoyments, and look over others, or down upon them with contempt and disdain. They were to consider that all they had and enjoyed were owing to the goodness of God, and not to anything they had done themselves. Thus, they should fear the Lord and His goodness. Not a fear of hell and damnation, or a distrust of the grace of God is here meant, but a fear of offending Him, and not from a dread of punishment, but from a sense of His grace and goodness.

Verse 21

God did not spare the natural branches, that is, executed His righteous judgments, inflicted due punishment upon the Jews, and stripped them of those privileges they enjoyed in a church state in the sense they were the sons of God, His firstborn. They were chosen by Him as a special and peculiar people, to very great favors and privileges; they were Christ's own, He came of them according to the flesh, and was particularly sent unto them, and ministered among them.

Wherefore, if God did not spare His people, though He had for a long time done it, but finally stirred up all His wrath against them, because they disbelieved His Son, rejected and despised the Messiah, and salvation by Him, this should awaken the fear, care and caution of the Gentiles, lest if they behave not well, He should deal in like manner with them.

Paul writes this for instruction and admonition of Gentiles, that whatever was done to the Jews in former or latter times can also befall them.

Verse 22

God measured and applied righteousness and judgment, and dealt with the Jews according to their sins. Severity is a word that sounds harshly. Nowhere else in Scripture is this term ascribed to God, but it is here applied to the laying aside of the nation of Israel, of the Jews.

God is most severe towards those that have been in profession nearest to Him, if they rebel against him (Amos 3:2). Patience and privileges abused turn to the greatest wrath. Of all judgments, spiritual judgments are the sorest. He speaks to the Gentile churches in general, though perhaps tacitly reflecting on some particular person, who might have expressed some such pride and triumph in the Jews' rejection.

Consider then, by what means thou stand. *By faith*, which is a depending grace, and fetches its strength from heaven. We do not stand in any strength of thy own, of which we might be confident: we have no more than the free grace of God granted to us, and His grace is His own, which He gives or withholds at His will and pleasure. That which ruined the Jews was unbelief,



and by faith Gentiles stand. Therefore, the position of a Gentile is still a “precarious one” if they come from under God’s care and direction.

Gentiles should continue in a dependence upon and compliance with the free grace of God, for the rejection of the grace of God ruined the Jews. If Gentiles are careful to keep faithful in their interests in the divine favor, by being continually careful to please God and fearful of offending Him, the Gentiles shall be fine. The sum of our duty, the condition of our happiness, is to keep ourselves in the love of God.

Verse 23

The conversion of the Jews seems to be an inevitable goal of God. It is said to be their fullness in Verse 12, that is, the addition of them to the church, the filling up again of that place which became vacant by their rejection. This would be the enriching of the world (that is, the church in the world) with a great deal of light and strength and beauty. It is called the receiving of them. The conversion of a soul is the receiving of that soul, so is the conversion of a nation. They shall be received into favor, into the body of Christ, into the love of Christ, whose arms are stretched out for receiving all those that will come to Him. And this will be as *life from the dead*—so strange and surprising, and yet withal so welcome and acceptable. The conversion of the Jews will bring great joy to the church. It is called the *grafting of them in again* (v. 23), into the congregation of God, from which they had been broken off. That which is grafted in receives sap and virtue from the root; so does a soul that is truly grafted into the church receive life, and strength, and grace from Christ the quickening root.

Verse 24

Those that are out of the church are as wild olive-trees, not only useless, but what they do produce is sour and unsavoury. These are the Gentiles.

The Jews shall be grafted back into the congregation and the people of God of which they had formerly been the most eminent and conspicuous members, to retrieve those privileges of visible church-membership which they had so long enjoyed, but have now sinned away and forfeited by their unbelief. It is called the *saving of all Israel*. True conversion may well be called salvation; it is salvation begun. The adding of them to the church is the saving of them: *tous somzomenous*, in the present tense, *are saved*. When conversion-work goes on, salvation-work goes on.

CONCLUSION

We have our blessing, because the Almighty God, the Great Jehovah, the Father, and the Holy Spirit has overflowed in mercy. He had willed to not only save and bless Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but He also willed to save and bless us Gentiles.



Unit III – Life on God’s Terms

We should therefore be thankful and have hearts full of gratitude that God has included us to partake of the root of the fatness of Israel’s olive tree.

We should endeavour to live lives of such thankfulness that the Jews will look at us with awe and will be provoked to jealousy, and then turn back to the Father’s house.

Remember the Father is happy when the younger son comes home, and He is also happy when the elder son comes home, and the elder brother himself is joyful.

We do not support blind support for modern day Israel, and necessarily agree that all they do is right. We must not support favouritism when moral issues are involved and if actions are taken which damage other Christian children of God, no matter who does that. But as one writer states:

“We must not only repudiate anti-Semitism, we must overcome any sense of national, ethnic, generational, or ecclesiastical arrogance”.

We know well the story of Israel, their past, their failures, their successes, their failings, their return to God, and their perseverance in bearing the heat and pressures of the day. They have always been under the gun so to speak; Satan has always aimed all his weapons at them.

But God has kept them, and will provide them with a marvellous future. We Gentiles with them will enjoy the New Jerusalem and the New Heaven and the New Earth.

Let us therefore do what is right for all those God has willed to be in His family.

