



This Week in the Word

Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Ps 119:89.



Call of the Gentiles **Study Scripture: Romans 11:11-24**

Lesson 12, May 18, 2019

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

The Study Text focuses on the choice by God of Israel, its existence because of this choice and its history 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.

God has made His choice and therefore Satan because of his incredible jealousy and his hatred of mankind has stepped in to attempt to thwart the purposes of God. Anti-Semitism is undoubtedly satanic in origin and Satan has succeeded over the ages to boil up 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 asked 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”.

Israel, according to the Apostle, has failed because of their spiritual pride and self-thought self sufficiency. They were chosen by God, given the Covenant through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, given a unique calling, the Law and Testimonies which showed God’s unique character, given responsibilities, and great opportunities. They saw the Shekinah Glory;

God heard their prayers, showed them mercy, was incredibly patient and faithful to them, and from them the Messiah and Saviour of the world came.

Pride caused the spiritual downfall of the nation. Pride is a very dangerous thing. Note that spiritual pride expresses itself over and over again in three ways.

First, spiritual pride makes a person or nation devalue other people because they think of themselves as being exceptionally highly and specially favored. So people with spiritual pride become susceptible to prejudice and think of other people, other races and nations as being inadequate and permanently cut off from God.

Second, they like to praise themselves and become exuberant and enthusiastic in lauding their accomplishments. They sneer at the religious efforts at law keeping and worship practices of others which they feel when compared to theirs are really nothing.

Third, people with spiritual pride think that because God cares for them He must see something in them that is like Him. They like to think sooner rather than later that they are equal with God and can even judge God and what He does.

Many people fall into this trap. The history of Israel is a lesson for us and we should be very careful not to do what they did. One writer warns believers:

“That is a history lesson for us. We are not the high point. Our experience of knowing God is not the greatest one. The music we love, the prayers we pray, and the joy we experience in Christian fellowship are not the first or the highest or the best thing that God has ever done. There is a greater day to come, and there is a deep root in the past. We will be taught by this, I hope, to see ourselves as ordinary people needing the mercy of God and not deserving any particular applause. We have a role to play in our generation, and we hope to pass on to the next generation humble faith in the God of history”.

Israel fell into that trap of spiritual pride and displayed a particular kind of alternative thinking because they attached the name of God to the foolishness that they were doing.

They like every proud person and people esteemed themselves so highly that they devalued others as they rested in the fact that they were beloved by God and were His favourite and ignored their responsibility to lead others to Jehovah. They like all proud persons became foolish and over enthusiastic at their accomplishments, which were in fact 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 ended with the sad, solemn words of God: “But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hand unto a disobedient and gainsaying people”.

The Apostle addressed the situation of the Jews and the nation of Israel in his letter to the Roman church which included persons of both groups, Jews and Gentiles. The questions the Apostle Paul posed and answered has bothered believers from his day to the present.

The Spread of the Gospel

The problem for us today is that many do not take the entire Bible with the same gravity 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.

So what has emerged from the earliest times in Christian history is a view called the “displacement theory”, otherwise called “fulfillment theology”, or “Supersessionism” which states that the emerging Gentile church has “displaced” Israel as the people of God. The promises and the favored and prominent position once held by the nation of Israel are now held exclusively by the Church. They constantly repeat that the New Covenant has replaced or superseded the Mosaic Covenant, so that none or very little of its provisions, including the Seventh Day Sabbath apply. But of course they fail to mention that the New Covenant was made or promised to the nation Israel and not to Gentiles until God was ready to “graft them” into the original “olive tree”.

By not being Christians the Jews are dissenting from God’s purposes. The Apostle Paul confronts this view in the study text.

In more recent times two popes have made statements to affirm the still validity of Judaism. 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. Pope Francis in 2013 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”.

Today, fewer than one percent of Christians come from a background of Judaism. But that was not the case in Paul’s day. Initially, the majority of Christian believers were of that background. The church in Rome had a mix of Jews and Gentiles. There were apparently significant numbers of both, with evidence suggesting that those of Gentile background were in the majority (Romans 1:5, 6, 13; 11:13; 15:11).

This put Paul in a unique position to address the church in Rome, a congregation he had never visited. His educational background was that of a learned Jewish rabbi. He had earned this distinction from having studied under Gamaliel, the prominent Jewish teachers of the day (Acts 22:3; 5:34). This gave Paul great credibility with any informed Jew.

Yet Paul had devoted much of his efforts to evangelizing Gentiles (Romans 15:15, 16; Galatians 2:8, 9; Ephesians 3:8). He even defended their legitimacy as believers before the gathering of “apostles and elders” known as the Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15:1–4). These actions resulted in Paul’s having great standing among believers of Gentile

background. Both groups in the church in Rome would therefore listen to Paul and it was important that they did so as he continued to address the issue of relationship between Christians of different backgrounds.

In Romans 9:1, Paul began to work through a heartbreaking reality: great numbers of his own Jewish people had rejected the Jesus as the Jewish Messiah. Paul's missionary travels had resulted in not just disinterest, but ferocious rejection (Acts 14:19; 17:5; 18:6). Why?

Paul turned to Scripture to find the explanation. From Romans 9:1 to 11:10 he quotes from the Old Testament 25 times. Those Texts reveal, among other things, Israel's long history as a "disobedient and gainsaying people" (Romans 10:21; quoting Isaiah 65:2). Romans 11:7–10 summarizes 9:1–11:6 by concluding that the proclamation of the gospel had resulted in two camps among the people of Israel: those who accept the gospel are "the election," while those who do not are "the rest ... blinded." The significance of all this is the subject of today's study.

Today's Lesson Text features an analogy involving olive trees. In the Mediterranean world of Paul's day, olive trees were found all over: from Jerusalem to Antioch to Corinth to Rome. The produce of these trees had several uses. Olives themselves were food. Olive oil had value for cooking and as fuel for lamps. It had ceremonial and medicinal value.

The matter of pride in the Roman church also caught the Apostle's attention. Pride, one of the so-called 'seven deadly sins' is a character trait arguably found to a greater or lesser degree in all humans. Interestingly, while some people might find some virtue in pride, the overwhelming verdict is that pride is a negative, sinful trait that the Bible emphatically labels a sin. Since pride tend to elevate its practitioners, one of its consequence is division and separation. Such a situation would be anathema to what the body of Christ represents and posed a serious threat to those in it's exercise.

Let us read our text with an eye to see God's grace unfold on Jews and Gentiles.

THE TEXT

Verse 11. ... I say then... introduces implications of Romans 11:7–10 regarding Israel's deception. In so doing, Paul acknowledges that the widespread unbelief of his fellow Jews is indeed a "stumble". But he does not see this trespass as unrecoverable.

This stumbling is anticipated in 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.

The Spread of the Gospel

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 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, (Matt. 22:1-10; Luke 14:16-24). Of course their ‘fall’ was not unexpected neither was the response of the Gentiles in faith.

Israel had stumbled, but by the divine appointment it was so ordered that the Gospel should be preached to the Gentiles upon the Jews’ rejection.

The parable in Matthew 22:8 - 9 and the words from Luke 14:21 highlight the importance of hearing and obedience to the Word of God. The Word of God went out first to the Jews, as it should, they being God’s chosen people, then to the Gentiles, as God directed (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. Note however that God appointed Israel to be a light to the Gentiles and so it is clear that if Israel had done their work properly there would be a lot less pain during the course of history for both Jews and Gentiles.

God used the stumbling of the Jews to call the Gentiles, with the call to the Gentiles and the response of the Gentiles leading to a provoking of them to jealousy, a jealousy that would work to restore them 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. God has not rejected the Israelites because they have, on the whole, rejected Him. The proof of this is that Paul himself was a member of the believing remnant, a Christian Jew.

...for to provoke them to jealousy... is our 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? Are we behaving in such a way as to make the Jews see in us the nature of God are we illustrating or showing the nature of Satan?

We should never forget at this stage however that God has always allowed Gentiles to join the congregation of Israel and as a matter of fact has placed Gentiles in a place of honor in the nation. We remember whether the example of Ruth the Moabitess who was determined to accompany her mother-in-law Naomi out of the pagan land of Moab back to Israel where the people of God lived. We remember well the often remembered entreaty: "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee. For whither thou goest, I will go. And whither thou lodgest, will I lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God shall be my God".

Then we also remember the story of Rahab who saved the spies who had come to search out the land of Israel. She was saved and she and her family lived with the people of Israel.

Then we remember the case of Naaman, the Syrian who was afflicted by leprosy and looking for a cure and was finally directed by a little Israelite girl to go down to a Prophet in Israel that was able to cleanse him. So he gathered together his great entourage and army and went to the prophet Elisha and knocked on his door. Elisha did not even bother to do anything but send him to go to the Jordan river and dip himself in the river seven times. He didn't really like it but eventually was persuaded to obey the prophet. When he obeyed and was skewered he asked Elisha's permission to take two mule loads of Israel's soil back home with him so that he could have someplace to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings to Jehovah who was now the only God that he would worship. His heart was now changed.

Then we read the story of Esther who was married to a pagan king and she acted in such a way that her nation that the evil Haman had planned to destroy was saved.

God's plan and program therefore is a marvelous model of His intention and His work of salvation.

Verse 12. The fall of the Jews allowed the word to reach the entire world of 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.

Paul here anticipated the national repentance of Israel that he articulated later (v. 26). God promised to bless the world through Israel (Gen. 12:1-3). How much more blessing will come to the world when Israel turns back to God than is coming to the world now while she is in rebellion against God!

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".

The Spread of the Gospel

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 honorable, even that work which the world looks upon with scorn.

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.

Verse 14. Part of Paul's purpose, even in discharging his office among the Gentiles with so much labor 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.

...save some of them.. this was Paul's evangelistic calling. He knew some would respond to gospel preaching (I Cor. 1:21), while others would not (I Cor. 9:22).

Here Paul applied what he had said earlier to his own ministry. By evangelizing Gentiles, Paul was causing more Jews to become jealous of God's blessings on Gentile converts. He was thereby playing a part in bringing some Jews to faith.

Note that the Gentiles are not saved merely for their own sake, but for the sake of God's election of Israel. However strange it may sound, the way to salvation of Israel is by the mission to the Gentiles.

Verse 15. The rejection of the Old Testament chosen Israel was part of God's plan for the redemption of all humanity (kosmos). Jewish self-righteous, racial arrogance and legalism clearly accentuated the need for faith (9:30-33). Faith in YHWH and His Messiah is the key to right standing, not human religious performance. Of course we keep in mind that the rejection of Israel was for the purpose of redeeming the whole of humanity. There is no place for human pride, neither Jewish nor Gentile. This apparently is a message that the Roman church needed to hear!

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.

... life from the dead... this is their restoration, 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 of 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. ...the firstfruit be holy... this expression goes 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, they 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. One writer notes:

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”.

... and if the root be holy... Paul has in mind here a family tree, the tree of the nation of Israel. In a sense, Israel is continually blessed and made holy by the covenant God made

with its great patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exodus 2:24; Leviticus 26:42). If the essential root of the tree (the patriarchs) is considered holy, this holiness extends to any branches attached to the tree.

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 cultivated olive tree was a symbol of the nation of Israel in the Old Testament (Jer. 11:16-17; Hos. 14:4-6). The wild olive tree represents the Gentile world. The rich root of the cultivated tree, Israel, probably corresponds to the Abrahamic Covenant from which all God's blessings and the very life of the nation sprang. We might add to the illustration by saying that the roots derive their nourishment from God Himself.

Paul said that God grafted Gentiles in among the Jews. They became partakers with the Jews of the blessings that come through the roots. Paul did not say that the Gentiles became part of Israel, only that they partake with Israel of the blessings of the root. This is a very important point. The olive tree is not the church, the "new Israel," in which God has united Jewish and Gentile believers in one body (Eph. 3:6). The wild olive branches retain their own identity as wild branches (Gentiles) even though they benefit from blessings that come through Israel (e.g., the Messiah, the Scriptures, etc.).

Verse 18. ...Boast not against the branches... here a caution is given; do not be proud. 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 blessing, 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.

Verses 19-20. 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.

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. They were broken off because of unbelief, because of their contempt of the Messiah, they were rejected of God. 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.

It is true that one of the reasons Gentiles have become partakers of the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant is that many of the Jews have not believed. Of course, it was always God's purpose to bless Gentiles (Gen. 12:1-3). However the Gentile believer who may feel superior to the unbelieving Jew needs to remember something. The only reason he is where he is (partaking of blessing from the Abrahamic Covenant) is because he has simply believed God. He is not there because he has done some meritorious work that would be a ground for boasting (5:2).

... 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 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 similarly, He should deal with them in like manner .

The Spread of the Gospel

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.

...neither will He spare you... as Israel apostatized and went away from YHWH in prideful unbelief and was cut off, so will the Gentile believers be cut off if they leave faith in Christ through prideful self-righteousness. Initial faith must be followed by lifestyle faith (Matt. 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-12; Luke 8:4-10). Pride must be continually resisted. We are what we are by the grace of God and we are brothers with all who also trust Christ.

Verse 22. ... them which fell... are the unbelieving Jews, and "thee" are the believing Gentiles. The positions are reversible. Gentiles can become objects of God's sternness, and Jews can become the object of His kindness. This depends on their responses to God. Their response determines whether God will spare them (v. 21) or cut them off (v. 22).

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. This verse follows the grammatical and theological pattern of v. 22. If the Jews repent and believe they will be included. If the Gentiles cease to believe, they will be rejected (v. 20). Initial faith in Christ and continual faith in Him are crucial for both.

Belief is what resulted in God grafting in believing Gentiles (v. 17), and belief could result in Him grafting in believing Jews in the future. In the illustration the whole trunk of the cultivated olive tree represents Israel and the natural branches are Jews.

Verse 24. Here is another of Paul's "much more" comparisons (5:9, 19, 15, 17; cf. Luke 11:13). If God did the difficult thing, namely, grafting wild branches (believing Gentiles) onto the trunk (Israel), it should not be hard to believe that He will do the easier thing. The easier thing is restoring the pruned branches of the cultivated tree (unbelieving Jews who will come to faith in Christ) to their former position (as members of Israel).

"The restoration of converted Jews to the Patriarchal communion must from the nature of the case be more natural than the conversion of the heathen".

CONCLUSION

The book of Romans is consistent in always presenting faith, not works, as the way to be justified in God's reckoning. Paul insists this is nothing new. In the history of Israel, the Jewish remnant is saved, and always, by grace not works (Romans 11:5, 6). Grace is always prior to salvation, and salvation cannot be earned. Salvation begins with God's response of grace to our situation and our response of faith in return.

Paul maintains a certain pecking order in all of this: God's salvation through faith comes first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles (Romans 1:16). The punishment of God for unbelief

also comes first to Jews, then to Gentiles (2:9). This is validated by history, by God's choice of Israel to be His holy nation and vehicle for bringing salvation to the world. Jews first, then Gentiles—both in terms of privilege as well as accountability.

One is that it's easy to become prideful, to focus on self rather than God and His plan. As Paul opposed that, so must we.

“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.

Remember however that the blessing to Israel and the blessing to Gentiles exists because there is a great God who overflows in mercy. One has not only determined to bless Abraham, Isaac, and their seed, but also Gentiles.

So we should feel great. One writer explains why:

“That's the way Gentiles ought to feel. God has included us. We partake of the root of the fatness of their, Israel's olive tree. And we ought to be so happy and so joyous over it that we go out, I'm Israel as they cease the blessing of God upon the children of God, Israel is provoked to jealousy. And by means of salvation to the Gentiles is brought back to the Father's house. And the damper on the Father's joy is removed when the elder son comes home. That's the way it's going to be in the future”.

So let us remain grateful to God for the wonderful way in which He has worked out the great events of human history. We must always thank Him and be grateful to Him. We must pray to Him to deliver us from pride and arrogance.

We must live in such a way and do the work of God that we will provoke the people of Israel to jealousy so that they return to God.

That is one of, if not the greatest of our great tasks.

Do not forget that they the Jews were the ones that took you to Jehovah. They were the instrumentality that God used to Give you all you have. So thank and bless them for what they have done for you, even though sometimes their behavior might not be perfect.