

Has God Cancelled His Promises to Israel? Part 4

Scripture: Romans 11:11-15

Code: 45-85

Tonight we're going to be looking at Romans chapter 11 and I want you to open your Bible to this wonderful wonderful portion of Scripture. And tonight our text begins in verse 11 of Romans 11 and really goes all the way down through verse 26. We'll go as far as we can in the providence of the Lord in looking at this marvelous marvelous passage.

Just to sort of get our thinking moving along the lines of what Paul is saying here, modern Israel is situated in a place of constant danger. And all you have to do is go there to realize that. They have enemies on three borders...the southern border, the eastern border and the northern border are basically hostile as far as they're concerned. They may be peaceful at the present time but throughout history these Arab nations that have surrounded the land of Israel had posed for them some severe problems in terms of security. And that's one reason why at all times their borders are guarded. At all times their borders are patrolled by jet aircraft. And it fascinated me that the jet aircraft, those fast jets that fly about 500 feet above the Dead Sea going north to south and east to west can't fly more than three and a half minutes in any direction without being out of the land of Israel. It's very small. And it's surrounded by historically hostile neighbors.

This threat is ever present. And basically the threat that Israel has from its Arab neighbors goes way way back in history to Abraham. Because Abraham also fathered the Arab nations and when God brought into the land of Canaan, during the life of Abraham, a great food shortage, a great famine, it presented a very tragic situation. Abraham who was promised by God that he would have a great nation out of his loins, Abraham who was promised by God that his needs would be met, that he would give to Abraham the fulfillment of His promise, entered into this time of food shortage and I believe rather than trusting God decided to escape to Egypt and to go into Egypt to find the food that was unavailable in the land of Canaan. Even though God had said to him, "Unto thy seed will I give this land." He abandoned that land and went into Egypt. And when he got into Egypt because I believe he was in a back-slidden condition spiritually and had stepped out of the plan and purpose and will of God, he then had to lie, at least he thought he had to lie, which compounded his sin. You remember? He lied about the fact that his wife Sarah was his sister. He was afraid to tell the truth because he thought Pharaoh was attracted to her. And so now he's not only in a wrong place but he's in a wrong position, having lied about his own wife.

It's a good thing to keep in mind that when you step out of the place of God's will, you compound your problems. And that's exactly what happened to Abraham.

Well, when Pharaoh found that out, found out that Abraham was indeed the husband of Sarah, he was upset at Abraham doing that and threw Abraham out of Egypt. Abraham had gone there to be able to provide for his family ostensibly, and now he was thrown out of Egypt. When he left Egypt he did not leave alone. He had triply compounded his problem because while he was in Egypt he had taken on a servant by the name of Hagar who was an Egyptian, an Egyptian woman. So when he went back into the land of Canaan he took this handmaid Hagar, and you all know the story from there.

When he was again given the promise of God of a seed, he disbelieved that God could produce that seed through his wife Sarah who was barren and who was in her nineties. And so he went under the advice of Sarah in unto Hagar this Egyptian maid that he had picked up while disobedient to God and living in the land of Egypt. And out of the loins of Abraham, born through Hagar came a child by the name of Ishmael. And you read about that in Genesis chapter 16. But Ishmael was not the child of promise. Ishmael was not the covenant child. Ishmael was not to be the son through whom God would bring out His Jewish people and His Messiah and His plan of redemption. And Sarah speaks in Genesis 21 and verse 10 and says, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son, for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." By Genesis 21 Isaac has been born of Abraham and Sarah. But now a conflict has been set up because Abraham was disobedient and left Canaan, because Abraham was disobedient and lied to Pharaoh, because he was thrown out of the land, took with him an Egyptian handmaid, got that Egyptian handmaid pregnant trying to help God to produce His promise and produced Ishmael and then when God gave him Isaac there was a conflict because Ishmael was actually Abraham's older son, he set up a conflict that still goes on to this very day. For Ishmael produced much of the Arab people.

Now the promise of Genesis 16:20 and the promise of Genesis 17 is that out of the loins of Ishmael would come a great people, but not the covenant people...a great people but not the covenant people. But both Genesis 16 and 17 indicate to us that Ishmael was not the covenant people but would become the persecutor of the covenant people...the persecutor of the covenant people.

Now Paul picks up this story and if you'll notice Galatians 3 and 4 for just a moment, in Galatians 3:16 Paul writes, "Now to Abraham and his seed...singular...were the promises made. He saith not and to seeds as to many, but as of one and to thy seed which is Christ." Now Abraham really initially had two seeds but only one of them would be the line through whom the ultimate one seed, Christ, would come.

In chapter 4 he further discusses this in verse 23. "But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh, but he of the free woman...that is Sarah...was...implied...born by promise." In other words, the child of the bondwoman was an act of the flesh, not fulfilling the promise of God. Verse 28, "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was are the children of promise." Verse 29, "But as then he that was born

after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now." The children of Ishmael still persecute the children of Isaac. "Nevertheless, what saith the Scripture, Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman."

And so, Paul picks up that same thing only he's using it there for a spiritual analogy we'll not get into. But the point I want to make is this, it was due to the sin of Abraham initially in going into the land of Egypt and bringing out an Egyptian handmaid that the Arab people were born who claim a right to Abrahamic inheritance to this day and are still after the Jews, not all of the Arabs, of course, feeling the same strength of animosity toward them, but they still desire or at least many of them, the elimination of the Jewish people that they may possess what they believe to be rightfully their own land.

It is also very interesting that later on in the patriarchal line there were two sons born by the name of Jacob and Esau. Jacob was the son of promise, Esau was not. Out of Esau's loins came the Edomites. Again a people that we know today as an Arab people. And it fascinates me that in Genesis 36:3 it says, when it lists Esau's wives, it lists a Bashemath, the daughter of Ishmael. So the line of Ishmael, not the children of promise but from the loins of Abraham, and the line of Esau, not the children of promise but also from the loins of Abraham, united to produce these people. And so they become the antagonists of the people of promise, the people of God, the nation Israel. And Ishmael's children and Esau's children join together to persecute the seed of Isaac. And that has been true century after century after century. And it's still going on. They live in an imminent threat of Arab invasion and it doesn't matter what kind of treaties exist or what kind of promises are made. As they told me many times when I was over there, those mean nothing. If they decide that it's a holy war for the taking of what they believe is theirs, all treaties are null and void and so we live in the constant awareness that there might be an attack against us.

In Psalm 83 we read this, "Keep not Thou silence, O God, hold not Thy peace and be not still, O God, for lo, Thine enemies make a tumult and they that hate Thee have lifted up the head, they have taken crafty counsel against Thy people and consulted against Thy hidden ones, they have said, Come and let us cut them off...that means kill them...from being a nation that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance." In other words, the psalmist says there are people around us who want to wipe us out. They have consulted together with one consent, they are confederate against Thee. Who are they? Edom, the Ishmaelites, Moab, the Hagarenes, Gebal, Ammon and Amalek, the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre, Assyria also is joined with them and they have helped the children of Lot. And he lists all these varying people that surround the nation Israel that we know as Arab people today.

Now having said that let me hurry to say that not all Arabs are equally the persecutors of Israel but there have been many throughout history. And there are many now still surrounding the nation Israel

who would like to see the elimination of that nation. And what amazes me is that even though in many ways the Arab world occupies the oil riches presently that they do and have many riches in some places, though others are poor, they still long to have the country of Israel. Many of Ishmael's descendants would obliterate Israel if they could immediately.

And so, all throughout history they have lived with this incessant conflict with their neighbors. And you can add to that the fact that the Nazis wanted to eliminate Israel, the Communists, the Russians today want to eliminate Israel. And we ask ourselves the question: will any of them ever succeed at doing that? Will any of these nations ever be able to pull off the elimination of the nation Israel? Well Jeremiah 31:37 says, "If heaven above can be measured and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all they have done, saith the Lord." In other words, they have no more hope of doing that than they do of measuring the infinite heaven...or pursuing into the foundations of the earth. It is not possible. And Deuteronomy 14:2 says, "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto Himself above all the nations that are on the earth." In other words, God has established a very unique place for the nation Israel. "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun," says the thirty-third chapter of Deuteronomy verse 26, "who rides upon the heaven in thy help and in his excellency in the sky, the eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee and shall say, Destroy them." Listen to this, "Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of grain and wine, also his heaven shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help and who is the sword of thy excellency! And thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

And the promise of God to this people at the end of the Pentateuch was that they would be a preserved people, saved from extinction which is the goal of many of their enemies. So in spite of Israel's sin, in spite of Israel's disobedience, in spite of their unbelief and rejection of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, there is still a future for that nation and that people. And their enemies will not prevail against them.

The present time, as we've been learning, however, is a time when God is chastening the nation for their unbelief. It is not that He is putting them out of existence, it is that He is chastening them. And that's Paul's message in this chapter. Though Israel is in unbelief and though Israel is going through a time of chastening, they will not be utterly destroyed. They are set aside for the time in terms of the nation of blessing. They are no longer that special recipient of God's blessing. They are no longer that special channel through which he blesses the world. They have been set aside as the nation of privilege and blessing. We saw that, didn't we, in chapter 9 and 10. They have been set aside because of God's sovereignty and because of their sin. But we're learning in chapter 11 that their setting aside is three fold. It is partial, only some of them set aside. It is passing, that is it's only for a period of time. And it is purposeful as we'll see in the final part of this eleventh chapter.

And Paul intends this whole section to answer people who say...well if what you say is so true, if the gospel that you preach is true, how come the Jews rejected it? They're the people of God. And if they have rejected it, then God must have cancelled all His plans. They're saying, "Well, if we believe what you say, then we've got to believe that God cancelled His whole plan for Israel." And what Paul is saying is not so, you can believe this gospel is true and I'll prove to you that God planned the setting aside of Israel by His sovereignty because of their unbelief. But that is not a permanent setting aside, that is not a total setting aside, and that is not a setting aside in a final act of judgment. And that's what Paul is dealing with in Romans 9, 10 and 11.

So he has said already, "Yes they've been set aside." But in chapter 11 he says, "It is only partial, it is only passing and it is for a very important purpose."

Now, let's look at the second of these three thoughts. We've done the partial aspect, now we're looking the passing aspect, verses 11 and following. The setting aside of Israel is only a passing thing. In other words, it is a temporary thing...it is a temporary thing. And I want you to see some very important points. The setting aside of Israel is only temporary as seen in the fact that it has a definite purpose, premonition and promise...a definite purpose, premonition and promise.

First of all, the purpose. Notice verse 11, "I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid." Now stop at that point for a moment. This is the very same formula that he used in chapter 11 verse 1. Has God cast away His people? God forbid. And now he says, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid. He introduced point one that it was only a partial setting aside by this same answer to a rhetorical question. He introduces part two in the same way. God has not allowed them to stumble that they should totally fall. He has not set them aside that they should be totally and forever set aside. And that's a wonderful testimony to God's grace because if you see the end of chapter 10, in the end of chapter 10 he talks about the fact that they were a disobedient and a contrary people. And that's sort of judgment language. And then if you go to chapter 11, notice verse 8, God has given them the spirit of slumber, God has given them eyes that can't see and ears that can't hear...hear, and their table is a snare, and a trap and stumbling block and their eyes are to be darkened that they may not see. And they are to go around poking and groping in the blackness with bent backs because they can't find the truth. That's judgment talk.

They are a disobedient people, a contrary people, a blind people, a deaf people. Their own table becomes for them a snare and a trap, that is the things religiously that they think they're feasting on are going to consume them in reality. And yet with all that judgment talk in verses 8 to 10, he comes right back in verse 11 and says, "Have they stumbled that they should finally and ultimately fall?" And the answer is no. It's no.

Is it a permanent falling? Is not a permanent falling. Did the mass of Jews stumble? That verb is interesting, ptaio, it's an interesting verb. It just means a stumbling. Did they stumble in order that they might fall? That verb means fall in a situation where you could never get back up again. It's one thing to stumble, it's something else to hit with such a crash that you're totally debilitated and can never get up again. Did they fall in order that they would never be able to come back? Is their stumbling complete and irreversible? Is it a permanent falling from which no recovery is ever possible? Is national Israel dead? Are they never to receive the promises? And the answer is God forbid...God forbid.

Now the stumbling to which he speaks obviously refers to their rejection of the saving gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And many have thought that when Israel rejected Jesus Christ they stumbled and they stumbled into a permanent fall from which they will never recover and God has nothing more planned for Israel as a nation itself. But Paul's answer is "God forbid," it's as if he says, "Horrors no." Such a suggestion is totally rejected with vehemence, far from it.

Now notice verse 11, "But rather...is implied...but on the other hand, through their fall salvation is come to the Gentiles...watch this...to provoke them to jealousy." It's a marvelous statement...a marvelous statement. Will you look at the little term "but rather?" That indicates a far different purpose than the purpose of stumbling to fall permanently. Not that at all. But rather something very different from that. They did not stumble in order to fall permanently but rather to fulfill a marvelous purpose. And this is, I think, so exciting. The fall of Israel was very purposeful. It had a definite purpose. That's the point we want you to see.

Look at the first element in that three-fold purpose. "But rather through their fall salvation is come unto the...what?...Gentiles." The first element in the purpose for Israel's fall is Gentile salvation. In other words, in the fall of Israel there is even a gracious purpose, a far-reaching aim, the salvation of non-Jews. When Israel fell away, the gospel was taken to the Gentiles, it was taken to the world. And so in their falling the world was incredibly enriched with the gospel. In fact, in Matthew chapter 8 we read this in verse 11 and 12, "I say unto you that many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of heaven." In other words, it's going to be populated by Gentiles. "But the sons of the Kingdom...that is Jews...shall be cast into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The very people for whom the kingdom was intended and to whom it was offered are going to be shut out of it and people are going to be gathered from the east and the west and brought into the Kingdom. So the falling away leads to the introduction of Gentiles to salvation.

Now Matthew 21:43, and if you've been with us in our studies of Matthew, this will be very familiar to you, in Matthew 21:43 Jesus says this, "Therefore I say unto you, The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of it." Or literally, to a people, many nations,

bringing forth the fruits of it. Because you refuse it, it will open up to the Gentiles. Chapter 22 gives us another parable. You'll remember there's a king who made a feast for his son, it is God calling people to His Son's celebration. He calls them to the fact that Messiah has come, it's a feast in honor of Messiah. He sends out His servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding, verse 3, that's Jews, who were already the called ones to come and greet the Son, the Savior, the Messiah and enter the Kingdom. But they would not come. He sent forth other servants to tell them everything is ready, come. They made light of it. They went their ways. One to his far and another to his business. Some of them just mocked and laughed. Some of them just were indifferent, I've got to take care of my farm, I've got to take care of my business. And verse 6, "Others literally killed the servants." Some were extremely hostile when the gospel came and when the Messiah offered Himself to Israel.

And then there's a judgment given. And then it says in verse 8, "The wedding is ready. The ones who were already bidden, that is Israel, weren't worthy, so go into the highways and as many as you find, bid those to the marriage. So they went into the highways and gathered together all as many as they found, good and bad, and the wedding was furnished with guests." The salvation of Gentiles came about on a wide scale because of the fall of Israel and the reaching out of the gospel to the Gentiles. Now it wasn't that saving Gentiles was an afterthought. God desired to reach them through Israel, but when Israel rejected that calling, God moved right out to reach the Gentiles.

In Acts chapter 13 verse 46, "Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you." And he's talking to the Jews. The Word of God first needed to be spoken to you. "But seeing you put it from you and judged yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, Lo we turn to the Gentiles," Acts 13:46. And where you have the obstinate unbelief of the Jew, you have the gospel opened up to the Gentile. In the sixteenth chapter in Corinth, pardon me, the eighteenth chapter in Corinth, verse 6, "And when the Jews opposed and blasphemed, Paul shook his raiment and said to them, Your blood be on your own heads, I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles...from now on I will go to the Gentiles." And we find at the very end of the book of Acts, chapter 28 and verse 23, Paul witnesses to the Jews again. "And when they had appointed him a day, there came to him many into his lodging to whom he expounded and testified the Kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets from morning till evening. And some believed the things which were spoken and some believed not. And when they agreed not among themselves they departed. After Paul had spoken one word, well spoke the Holy Spirit by Isaiah the prophet unto our fathers," and then the part about being deaf and being blind and so forth, the heart being fat and all of that. Then verse 28, "Be it known therefore unto you that salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles."

So you have it illustrated in those several places in the book of Acts and even in a couple of occasions in Matthew where the blindness, the deafness, the obstinacy of Israel works to the salvation of the Gentiles. And you remember that when Paul went on his missionary journey and he

went into a new city, where did he go first? To the synagogue. And when he found that they would not respond, he turned to the Gentiles. And so this then is what Paul wants us to understand, that the setting aside of Israel has a very definite purpose. It is that God may then take the gospel immediately rather than mediately to the Gentiles that they may hear and see and believe. God could not reach the world through the Jews so He did so by setting them aside. We then are redeemed as a direct result of the blindness of Israel.

God down to verse 25 in this eleventh chapter. It says, "I would not, brethren, that you would be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits," I don't want you Gentiles to be conceited. "Blindness in part is happened to Israel," why? "Until the fullness of the Gentiles come in." In other words, this temporary partial blindness on Israel is to allow the gathering in of the full redeemed group from among the Gentiles. It's a very important truth.

So, back to Romans chapter 11 verse 11. Has God allowed them to stumble that they should forever fall? No. But rather through their fall...now notice the second word fall, it's a completely different word than the first word fall. The first word is from the verb pipto, this is a word paraptoma and is better translated trespass. And it talks about their sin. Through their sin of rejecting Christ salvation is come to the Gentiles, or to the nations. What a wonderful thing. So God even overruled the Jewish unbelief. Now that's the first element of the definite purpose.

The second one is this, the first thing was Gentile salvation, the second one is Jewish jealousy. Look at verse 11 again. Salvation is come to the Gentiles, this is marvelous, "To provoke them...that is the Jews...to jealousy." Now you have to understand this or you'll never understand the heart of the Apostle Paul. This is a very critical passage in understanding Paul. He says when the Jews stumbled their...the purpose in God allowing them to stumble was not to destroy them forever, but to bring about Gentile salvation which would in turn provoke them to jealousy that they too might be saved. So the purpose of God then was to save them ultimately through their stumbling, not to destroy them. Do you see that?

A very important thing. To provoke them to jealousy. It is an infinitive with a preposition which means it indicates purpose. The purpose of Israel's stumbling was that the Gentiles would be saved and the Jews in seeing the blessedness of being saved among the Gentiles would be drawn by jealousy or envy, a desire to emulate, a desire to imitate, a desire to possess what the Gentiles possess in being blessed by God and therefore would come to salvation. So the word "jealousy" here is used in a positive sense. It has to do with admiration, or emulation, or a striving after. In other words, Israel would see the Gentile church. Israel would be drawn when they see how blessed it is and what it is to know Christ and how they have been so enriched and privileged as those who are redeemed. And then Israel in individual Jewish cases would look at itself and say, "Look what we missed, look what we have lost, look what we have forfeited." And by seeing the glory of God given to the Gentile church, be drawn to Jesus Christ.

And I daresay that there are many people in this church, Jewish believers, who were drawn to Christ by the testimony of a Gentile. Many...many. Some have been drawn to Christ by the testimony of another Jewish believer, but many by Gentile conversion...by what God has done in the life of a Gentile. So Israel in seeing the privilege of the Gentiles will desire that privilege for themselves.

So what...what a paradox. I mean, it's a marvelous paradox. It is the most humbling thing you can imagine because to be honest with you, folks, we despise and we hate anti-Semitism. But as Gentiles have been guilty of hating Jews through the years, Jews for many centuries have been guilty of looking down on Gentiles. There's little question about that historically. And I'm not so much speaking of every Jew feeling that way, of course. But there have been many who have looked down on Gentiles. And the Jewish people were guilty of that. And God has humbled them in a most remarkable way. God allows them to stumble and then they have to endure the conversion of Gentiles which they must become jealous of to come back to their Savior. A very humbling thing that Jews become jealous of Gentiles and very much contrary to their mindset historically.

So the Lord has humbled His people Israel for a positive reason, by allowing their stumbling, not that they should forever be destroyed, but that Gentiles should be redeemed who become the testimony to the Jews and whose faith the Jews desire to emulate. So by blinding Jewish eyes and hardening Jewish hearts, and deafening their ears, God opens the fount of salvation to all of us. And we can say this, dear friends, we shouldn't be proud either, we shouldn't be proud either because it is by God's grace and by God's sovereign setting aside of His chosen people Israel that we have even been brought the gospel. And the lives of us who are redeemed Gentiles should be powerful, joyful, peaceful, hopeful testimonies of what God can do in a life that should be attractive to Jews who have rejected the Savior. And how we live before the Jews and how we act and how we speak and how we manifest the love of Jesus Christ in the transformed life is, I believe, the single greatest testimony we have to Israel. I'm so thrilled when I see Jews come to Christ because they're attracted by the reality of Christ in the life of His church.

And what is so sad, and I tell you this, it's so sad is when you go over to the nation Israel and you take a tour or a trip and everybody who gets on the bus every day, you have a Jewish guide, and you have Jewish people all around you all the time, these Israeli people, marvelous people, gracious people, lovely people, bright and just very capable people, we just enjoyed them thoroughly. But the thing that's in the back of your mind is, you're so anxious to win them to Christ and the ones who are the guides and who get all the Christian groups, they've heard it over and over and over and over, they can sing all the songs, in fact they lead you in all the songs that we sing about Christ. I mean, they'll start singing it on the bus and everybody sings with them. They know all the doctrine, all the theology, the whole thing. But as one of them, when I spoke with him one evening, said to me, "Look, I know what all of you believe, what I can't handle is the way most of you live." And he went on to tell me horror stories about the so-called Christian leaders who come up there and don't sleep with their

own wife, you understand? Or come over there and want under the table favors, or want free jewelry, or want this or want that or want the other thing and are nothing more than charlatans. And, you see, they file this because these people call themselves Christians, too, whether they are or not. And it is that tremendous disparity between the true and the false that confuses them as to the validity of Christianity. As one of them said to me, "I came in this..." we were having a marvelous Sunday morning meeting in the upper room and we were singing songs and speaking out of the Word of God and the presence of the Spirit was there in great power and we just were overwhelmed, and some people were just teary-eyed, there we were in the city of Jerusalem, it was marvelous, and we went out of there so refreshed in our spirit. And one of the guides took me aside and he says, "You know, I was in that room with a certain so-called American healer and people were smashing over and smacking their heads on the concrete floor and going into all kinds of hysteria." And he said, "Are you like that? Is that what your group does?" And I said, "That's not what you saw." He said, "Well, I didn't know whether you do that somewhere else." I said, "No, we don't knock people down and crack their heads on the concrete, we're not in to that kind of theology."

And then he went on to describe...it sort of opened the flood gate and to tell me about some of the experiences he's had with quote/unquote Christian leaders. The impact of undermining all that we believe in the hearts of Jewish people is they cancel it out, see. And we have been redeemed with a great burden on our backs and that is to give clear-cut testimony to Israel that they may be provoked to jealousy. Well in many case, that's the last thing they're provoked to since they wouldn't want what they see some Christians have. But we should so live to be attractive.

Now go back to chapter 10 verse 19. And this picks up the same idea. And here he's quoting out of Deuteronomy 32, way back then, "Did not Israel know, Moses said, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people and by a foolish people I will anger you." In other words, way back in the Pentateuch in Deuteronomy 32, God had already told them that some day He would provoke them to jealousy with a Gentile people. So the setting aside of Israel had a very definite purpose, it was to bring about Gentile salvation which would bring about a testimony to provoke those who did not know the Savior in Israel to be drawn to Him. So Israel's apostasy doesn't make God forget them, but rather it leads ultimately to their salvation. I mean, it's a marvelous plan. That's why in verse 33 of chapter 11 Paul says, "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out." I mean, what an incredible thing God is doing...has done to humble Israel, by making Israel jealous of what the Gentiles have when it was Israel's pride that the Gentiles should be jealous of what they had. But in their disobedience and sin in rejection of Christ, they forfeited the place of privilege and are now left with having to be jealous of what the Gentiles have in having Christ.

And then there's a third element...there's a third element in this great and definite purpose. First was Gentile salvation and then Jewish jealousy and thirdly is world blessing...world blessing. Notice verse 12, "Now if the fall...or better, the trespass, we're back to the paraptoma, the sin of rejecting

Christ...by the Jews is the riches of the world and the diminishing or the lessening of them or the lost they endured is the riches of the nations, how much more their fullness?" This is a terrific point. The fall he's talking about, the paraptoma, the trespass is a rejection of Christ and it did result in the riches of the world. What are the riches of the world? The same as the riches of the Gentiles. And the sin is the same as the diminishing or the loss.

So they're really...he's really saying the same thing. If the sin is the riches of the world, if the sin is the riches of the nations...just take that thought. It is through their sin that we have all been enriched, right? And the whole world has been enriched by the present of the redeemed church. If their sin and their loss, their trespass has brought about the riches, that is salvation, if their rejection has brought privilege and blessing to the world...look at the end of verse 12, "How much more their fullness." Now think about that. Listen. Because here he introduces their restoration. Negatively if their sin accomplished that, can you imagine what their righteousness will accomplish? That's his argument. If they accomplish so much in a negative way, it's hard to even conceive of what will happen in a positive way. If a negative can produce such results, what can a positive produce?

Paul loves this argument. He loves this style of argument. He used it back in chapter 5 verse 10, do you remember what he said there? He said this, and this is a great statement. "If when we were enemies...that's unredeemed, unsaved people...we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled we will be saved by His life." What does he mean? If we could be redeemed by His death, just imagine how we are maintained by His life. Do you see the argument? I mean, if a dead Savior can redeem us, a living one can certainly keep us. How much more? He loves that style of argument and that's what he's saying here. How much more? How much more? If the unbelief of Israel brought us salvation, how much more will the faith of Israel bring? And what is the "how much more?" Well it's the Kingdom, isn't it? Because when Israel finally believes, what's going to happen? They'll look on Him whom they've pierced and the Lord will give them their Kingdom. That's the promise of the prophets. The "how much more" is what's going to happen when Israel finally believes. And you can read about the "how much more" all through the Scripture. The Kingdom coming is a time of the glory of the renewed heaven and earth. It is the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the redeemed nation of Israel will reign and bring people from all around the world to see Christ. Satan will be bound. Justice will rule. There will be one law and one King. There will be universal peace. There will be universal joy, world-wide righteousness, worship, wisdom will dominate all dealings and prosperity will reign everywhere. The tremendous description of the Kingdom from beginning to end really of prophetic literature. That's the "much more." If in their unbelief the world was brought salvation, what will happen when they finally believe? The world will receive the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And all of that, by the way, begins in Revelation 7. The first thing that begins to happen is the Lord sets apart 144,000 Jews, 12 thousand out of each tribe, and that happens during the Tribulation. And they go out to evangelize the world. Then it's the redeemed coterie of Jews who are redeemed after

the Rapture. If they were redeemed before the Rapture, they would have gone in it, right? And so they're redeemed and they become missionaries, all over the world. And before they're done with their work, Revelation 7 says there is an innumerable number of redeemed people out of every tongue, and tribe, and people, and nation, all crying out to praise the Lamb who has saved them. The fruit of their work is going to be world-wide salvation. And ultimately the whole nation Israel is saved and the millennial kingdom comes in response to that.

So Paul says, "Look, they did not stumble that they should permanently be destroyed, they stumbled for three reasons...Gentile salvation which provokes Jewish jealousy and literally brings world blessing." Why? Because it brings the Messianic Kingdom...it brings the Messianic Kingdom, and that's what the "much more" is...the "much more" in their fullness, when they fully come to faith.

Now based on that Paul gives his personal testimony to the Gentile church at Rome. Notice in verse 13, "I speak to you, Gentiles, he says, in as much I am the Apostle to the Gentiles and I magnify my office." Here's a nice...a very interesting transition, it gives you a really deep insight into Paul's heart. He says, "I speak to you Gentiles," predominantly the Roman church was Gentile, of course, so he particularly addresses them. They make up the majority of the congregation. And he says, "Look, I am the Apostle of the Gentiles, that's my calling." He doesn't deny that. In fact, that's affirmed in the book of Acts repeatedly, Acts 18:6, Acts 22:21, Acts 26:17 and 18 and in many many many of his epistles, at the very beginning he affirms his apostleship. Read Romans 15:15 and 16. So he says, "I know I am the Apostle of the Gentiles," and then he says, verse 13, "I magnify my office," doxozo, I glorify my office. Like a doxology. I honor my office, I esteem my office. It is a high holy glorious privilege to bring the gospel to the Gentiles.

And the reason he says that, I think, is because the way he's talking about Israel, chapter 9, chapter 10, chapter 11, these Gentiles are going to think he's really the Apostle to the Jews. They're trying to say, "Well why is he so wrapped up with Israel?" And you remember what he said in chapter 9 when he started the whole section? "I have heaviness of heart, great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart, I could wish I were accursed from Christ for my brother and my kinsmen according to the flesh." He says the burden on my heart is Israel, doesn't he? And in chapter 10 he begins that chapter by saying, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved." He was consumed with the salvation of Israel.

And somebody might say, "Well look, you're supposed to be the Apostle of the Gentiles, you don't seem to have a whole lot of commitment. And now you're talking about how wonderful it is that Israel is fallen so that we could be saved and we really owe them a lot because it was in the sense in their sin that we were brought to God." So in order not to be accused of being pro-Jewish and anti-Gentile and sort of getting his calling mixed up, he says, "I'm telling you, Gentiles, I know I am the Apostle to the Gentiles and I magnify that office. I don't look down on that at all. I am sent to the Gentiles and I accept that calling and I magnify that." Do you want to know why? I love this, verse 14, "If by any

means I may provoke to jealousy them who are my flesh and might save some of them." That's a tremendous insight. He says, "You know why I'm happy to be the Apostle of the Gentiles? Because as long as I'm the Apostle to the Gentiles I might be able to provoke some Jews to getting saved."

You see, that's the bottom line with him. That's the bottom line with him. He has a heart for his people. Can you blame him? There is flesh. And he says, "I really want to save some of them. I don't mind you getting saved in the process, but I really would like to save some of them." I understand that. He says, "I'm following the plan of God. I magnify my office. But...oh, oh, my desire is that I should see some Gentiles come to the Savior that in them coming to the Savior they might provoke some Jews to jealousy." That's his personal commitment.

So, what he's really saying is "I'm committed to the plan of God the way it was laid out, that Gentile salvation is to provoke Jewish jealousy which leads to world blessing in the coming of the millennial Kingdom." And he recites that same last idea in verse 15, "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what will the receiving of them be? But life from the dead." And again it's that "much more" kind of argument, isn't it? If the casting away of them, that's the negative, can have such great results, what will the reception of them, that's the positive, be? And then he tells you what it will be. Life from the dead. And he's not talking about personal resurrection. He's not talking about the resurrection from the dead which would be the Pauline term. Life from the dead refers to the rebirth, if you will, of the nation and the rebirth of the world in the glory of the Kingdom. I think that's the proper way to interpret it. When Israel is received, he's not speaking about individual resurrection from the dead, but life from the dead, a unique phrase used here, which I believe refers to national resurrection of the nation Israel to the place of blessing and world resurrection, as it were, in the recreated new heaven and earth of the millennial Kingdom, right? That's the life from the dead. The nation and the world when the Kingdom comes will be delivered from its spiritually dead state and there will be new life. It is not, as I said, the phrase "resurrection from the dead" which is Paul's concept that he refers to when he refers to individual resurrection, but the resurrection of the nation into Kingdom glory. It's that which Romans 8 describes as the glorious liberation of the children of God, the manifestation of the sons of God, when we enter into the glorious Kingdom and are made manifest to the world as the true children of the living God.

So, Paul then says very simply, did Israel stumble that they should fall permanently? No, no, no, a horrifying thought. They stumbled for this very definite purpose, that they might bring about Gentile salvation, that they might bring about Jewish jealousy and therefore the Kingdom which is world blessing. And then he says in verses 13, 14 and 15, "That's what I'm committed to. I magnify my office as Apostle to the Gentiles in order to provoke Jewish jealousy, to bring the resurrection of the world into its promised place of blessing." Tremendous insight into his ministry. So it has a definite purpose.

It also has a definite premonition...a definite premonition, or warning. Notice this warning in verse 16, "For if the fruit first be holy, the lump is also holy and if the root be holy so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off and thou being a wild olive tree were grafted it among them and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree, boast not against the branches. But if you boast, you bear not the root but the root you."

Now what's he saying? He's warning Gentiles against what? Pride...against saying, "Hey, the Jews got broken off, set aside and we've been grafted in, we're superior." He says don't do that. Don't boast that way. In fact, he says, verse 21, "If God spared not the natural branches, Israel, you better be careful lest He not spare you either because they have a greater claim than you do."

Now this warning is just marvelous. The only thing is we don't have time tonight to deal with it. But we will next time. And that's two weeks from tonight. And then we'll look at the premonition and the final purpose in this great passage.

Let me close by saying this. Listen very carefully. God's plan is always on schedule. And there will always be people who come along and say, "Well, you know, if we believe that, boy, that really messes up the plan of God." Not at all...not at all. And those who would come along and say, "Well, you know, Paul, you're preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, you're overturning all of Jewish tradition, you're overturning all of Jewish theology, you're bringing this new message and the Jews haven't even believed it. And if that's the case that this message is true, then God has to cancel all His promise to unbelieving Israel." And Paul says, "Not on your life...not on your life." Chapter 9 he says, "Look, God planned for this." Chapter 10 he says, "It's because of their unbelief." And chapter 11 says, "Everything's on schedule because their unbelief and their setting aside is only partial and it's only passing and it's only for a very important purpose. And when God works that out everything will fulfill itself right on schedule."

I don't know how you respond to that but I see the intricacy of this and I have to say with Paul, "O the depths of the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God that everything that happens in human history, that everything that happens in redemptive history is working out the infinitely wise plan of God." And the burden on our back is this as Gentiles, it is in the setting aside of Israel that we have been brought to know the Savior, that we have been brought to redemption. It is because, do you realize it is because the channel which God originally cut to reach the world, Israel, was willfully blocked by sin that He cut a new channel and that the church even exists? So you and I are an act of God's grace because of the necessity of chastening Israel. We cannot think we are better than they, nor can they think they're better than we are. In fact, God has humbled them by making them jealous of what we possess. And then God humbles us by saying, "You better not be proud because if He didn't spare the natural branches, if you fall into sin, He won't spare you either."

And you want to know the truth, folks? As in the past, and I'm giving away something from...for two weeks away, as in the past, God had to cut off Israel because of unbelief, you can be positive that in the future He's going to do the same thing to the church. The church's days as we know it, the organized church, their days are numbered and the time is coming when He will literally destroy the church. Not until He has removed the redeemed that are in it and then the apostate remaining church will be devastated in an act of judgment, just as much as Israel was for its apostasy.

So the warning that's given will indeed come true. When the church was born in Jerusalem, it was as pure as the driven snow. But today it is apostate, is it not? There is a remnant within it, but much of it is apostate and the price the apostate church will pay is described in the seventeenth chapter of Revelation. So the truth is, that branch broken off, we grafted in will be broken off and the original nation Israel grafted back in in the glories of the millennial Kingdom. And we as well will rejoice to be blessed with Israel in that day. We have a lot to look forward to yet even in this chapter. Let's bow our heads in prayer.

Thank You, Lord, for being our teacher through Your Word. And we know that the bottom line issue in all of this is the relationship with Jesus Christ. We've talked history tonight but the issue is personal. The reason Israel as a nation was cut off is because that nation was made up of individuals who rejected the Savior. The reason the church some day will be cut off from the place of privilege and blessing as the witness of God to the world is because there will be individuals in it who have rejected the Savior. And the issue comes down always to personal faith in Jesus Christ.

And we thank You, Lord God, for the grace that has called apart a redeemed people out of the Gentiles. We thank You that many of us are part of that people. And, O Lord, how we thank You that that has provoked many Jews to jealousy and they seeing the blessedness of knowing the true Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, have been attracted to Him through the testimony of Gentiles and they, too, have been redeemed by faith. We thank You that in any generation, even in that generation in Israel which was cursed for rejecting the Savior, there was a faithful believing remnant. And in the church today which grows more and more apostate all the time, there is a faithful believing remnant. And we thank You that even in the midst of judgment these people will be Yours. In the words of Malachi, "In the day when You make up Your jewels for their names have been written in Your book of remembrance."

And we thank You, Lord, that any person, Jew or Gentile, in any time can come to Christ, for in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, bond or free, male nor female, but all are one in Him. And we ask, O God, that no one would leave this place tonight who has not embraced the Lord Jesus Christ, be he Jew or Gentile. And, Lord, may we live lives that provoke others to jealousy in a positive way. May our lives be the kind of lives that people would desire to copy and emulate. May they want what we possess. May they want our joy and our peace and our hope and our confidence and our security and our trust, our happiness. May they want even the wisdom and knowledge we have from the

Word, the blessedness, the privilege that comes from Your good and gracious hand. May it be attractive and may our very lives be like magnets, drawing people to ourselves and then to the Savior who has made our lives what they are. May our witnessing be a way of life, not just in word but in deed and truth. And we thank You for such a privilege in Christ's name. Amen.

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