

The Future of Israel (Part 1)

by Richard Ganz

The sermon explores the future of Israel, affirming God's unbreakable promises and the inclusion of Gentiles in His redemptive plan.

Duration: 58:52

Scripture: Deuteronomy 32:21, Isaiah 65:2, Matthew 6:33, Romans 9:6, Romans 10:21, Romans 11:32, Hebrews 4:12

Topics: "Future Of Israel"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker is asked how his God can be great when there is so much evil, sin, despair, and violence in the world. The speaker responds by saying that the person is looking in the wrong place and should shift their focus to God and Christ. He emphasizes that God came to deal with evil and sin, and that looking to man will only reveal depravity. The sermon also discusses the future of Israel and the argument over it, with the speaker concluding that God deserves all glory and that His Word can never fail.

Transcript

Please turn with me and your Bibles to Romans chapter 11, where we will be reading this 11th chapter up to verse 32 to fill in some of the spaces that we've had in our studies in the Revelation and in Isaiah, the last several chapters of his book, as we've been studying through both books. This is not an aside. This is integral to our understanding, especially as it relates to the question of Israel.

So, hearing that, I want you to follow with me and I want you to really give careful attention as we study the word. It's in two parts, this week and next, from Romans 11. I ask then, did God reject his people? May it never be.

I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people whom he foreknew. Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, which we read this morning, how he appealed to God against Israel? Lord, they have killed your prophets, torn down your altars.

I'm the only one left and they're trying to kill me. What was God's answer to him? I have reserved for myself 7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal. So too, at the present time, there is a remnant chosen by grace.

And if by grace, then it's no longer by works. If it were, grace would no longer be grace. What then? What Israel sought so earnestly, it did not obtain.

But the elected, the others were hardened, as it is written, God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see, ears so they could not hear, to this very day. And David says, may their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see and their backs bent forever.

Again, I ask, did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? May it never be, God forbid, rather because of their transgression. Salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring? I'm talking to you, Gentiles, and as much as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them.

For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy. If the root is holy, so are the branches. If some of the branches have been broken off and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches.

If you do, consider this. You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.

Granted, but they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.

Consider, therefore, the kindness and sternness of God, sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

After all, if you were cut off out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited. Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and so all Israel will be saved, as it is written. The deliverer will come from Zion.

He will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins. As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account.

But as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable, just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all. And this is that great doxology.

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out. Who has known the mind of the Lord? Who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever and ever.

Amen. God, may this message bring a taste, a touch, a sense of such glory as we cannot even imagine. As you reveal your plan in working, in bringing in the fullness of your people, that we may see this, understand this, and rejoice in it, for we pray in Jesus' name and for his glory forever and ever.

Amen. The question we're dealing with is very simple. It's a question everyone deals with in the church, at least, and in the world as well, even though it's in a different way.

What is the future of Israel? Think about it. A nation that is surrounded on every side by enemies, not just enemies, but enemies who have made it stated that it's their plan. They want to destroy, wipe out Israel, and one promising that this will be accomplished with a nuclear blast as soon as they have the complete weaponry, and they're not playing games.

They're serious. So the question, of course, even from a geopolitical standpoint, is does Israel have a future? During the last few weeks, our studies in the Revelation, in the morning, and in Isaiah in the evening, have been matching very closely, not with geopolitics, but with the nature of the issue. Does Israel have a future? We've been looking and focusing on Israel.

We've been focusing in our studies on the fullness of the people of God, on the ingathering of the nations, and on a temple that is a living temple, not made with stones, but made with the hand of God. And as well, on one other point, the future of the nation of Israel will never just be, understand this, it will never be resolved geopolitically. No geopolitical analysis, no mediator sent over there, no matter which party sends this mediator, will ever resolve this issue.

It is far beyond anything, because this is not just international, it is an issue to be resolved from heaven. Ultimately, this can only be understood then by understanding what the word of God has to say about it, and that's why I'm taking the time for us to understand, not what are the differing political analyses of this issue, but what the analysis of God's holy, inerrant word is about this. In the Revelation, we have been seeing who we are.

We've been seeing who God is. We have been seeing that we are the temple of God, that we are holy, that we are set apart for God, that we are to offer spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, 1 Peter 2.5. But we are not only the temple of God, we also bring, according to Revelation 11, that we studied last time, we bring God's witness of life and death. And we saw this by examining the two witnesses, which are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of all the earth, Revelation 11.3 and 4. The olive tree is Israel.

In Jeremiah 11.16 says of Israel, I, the Lord, once called you a thriving olive tree, beautiful to see and full of good fruit. At the same time, we know that, as Paul tells us, they are not all Israel that are called Israel. Romans 9.6. And so, the two olive trees represent those in the Old Covenant who are part of the Israel of God.

That is, those in the Old Covenant who were the true people of God, those into which the New Covenant, believing Gentiles as branches of a wild olive tree, are grafted in, Romans 11.17 and 18. The meaning of the two lampstands corroborate that kind of an interpretation of the two olive trees. When you look at Revelation 1.12-20, we see that in there, I'm not reading it, but we see that the two lampstands symbolize the New Covenant church.

That is the true body of believing Gentiles and Jews together in Christ. These two olive trees and these two lampstands are rolled together into two witnesses, and thus we have the two witnesses symbolizing the fullness of the corporate Israel of God, which in Christ is composed of believing Jews and Gentiles in the Old Covenant and the believing Jews and Gentiles in the New Covenant. This is who we are in Christ, those who are witnesses, who bear witness of God and bear witness through His Word to the nations and who have the Word of God coming forth from us.

In this context, Isaiah, in what we were studying, warns against religious hypocrisy and idolatry. And you know what that is? That is what was Israel's greatest snare in their entire history. They were not the witness that God had called them and commanded them to be.

They worshiped God in whatever way they wanted to worship. They never even really thought about worshiping God as God had commanded Him, and God hated that. And despite the warnings, despite the judgments against them, they rebelled against God, and they rebelled against all that God called them to be.

What's the result of this? In Isaiah 66, which we're studying, we see God saying these words, that He will repay His enemies for what they deserve, for all that they deserve, in verse 6. You know who He's talking about, all His enemies? He's talking about Israel, repaying Israel, which is unthinkable when you think about it. The nation of Israel was God's chosen people, and yet, because of their idolatry, because of their religious hypocrisy, God calls them His enemies and brings judgment upon them. This is catastrophic.

It appears to be something very simple. It appears to be the end of the people of God. But wait.

Immediately, a solution to such a seemingly impossible problem arises. In Isaiah 66, verse 7, a son is born and it says, This is a reference to the New Covenant Church, whose labor is undergone by Christ alone. You see, the judgment upon Israel is not in vain, because even as such judgment brings about the end of the Old Covenant, through God's Son, a new covenant takes its place.

And in this new covenant, the Gentiles will become members of the Israel of God. This is the amazing plan of God. But is this the end of the story? Is this the end of the Jewish people? That's the issue.

Everyone talks about it today. In one way or another, everyone has something to say about this. Is it the end? Is this the time of the end of the Jewish people? Judged originally, cast aside by God, only perhaps to be included as some tiny little remnant, and that's it? Is that what it's supposed to be? And there are many who say, Yes, this is where it ends, and thus Israel is to be despised.

There are many others who would say, No, not at all. Israel is going to, not many, but there are some who say this, and much of it comes from the evangelical world who say, Israel eventually is going to rule the world. But the real question is, what does the Bible say? According to the Bible, this is not where it ends, neither in destruction, nor does it end in world domination or dominion.

Paul says in Romans 11.26, So all Israel shall be saved. Easy statement, right? No, it's not. Believe me, this is not an easy statement.

What is meant by this statement? How does this come about in the face of Israel being judged and cut off by God and considered as enemies? How does God see Israel? How should we view Israel? It's these questions, questions that are totally intertwined with our study of the Revelation and our study of Isaiah, that I would like us to turn our attention to in these next two weeks. The statement that's found in Romans

11.26, So shall all Israel be saved, provokes one of the most emotionally charged responses of any statement in the Bible. People are divided on all sides as to what they think this statement should mean.

I say should mean because they come in with presuppositions. I think this is what it should mean. But what we wish to do, and what we should always wish to do, is put aside our preconceived ideas and attempt to understand what a statement means through the study of the Word of God.

That is how we should do it. First, notice that this statement does not appear by itself. It comes at the end of an argument which Paul began back in Romans 9. So it's 9, 10, and 11.

Three chapters lead up to that statement. You see, the whole matter hangs together through a clear understanding of these three chapters with a special consideration of the 11th chapter in particular. Because of this approach, there is no way to understand this statement, 26 verses into Romans 11, at the end of this incredibly long argument, without first understanding the beginning parts of the argument and the entirety of chapter 11.

The argument of this issue in Romans 11, 25, and 26 begins in Romans 9. Paul begins by declaring his great desire to see the nation of Israel come to faith in Jesus Christ. So much so, if it were possible, he is saying, I will give up my salvation in order to see Israel saved. Paul would do this because in nationality, in ethnicity, they are his brothers.

He loves them. But even more than that, they have had all the benefits. And he goes on and he describes this in verses 3 and 4. All the benefits of being called God's people, and it's from them that Jesus Christ came.

Despite this tremendous assortment of benefits and blessings, however, Israel, just as they did in the days of Isaiah, are rejecting the Messiah. Does this mean that somehow God was or is not powerful enough to save them? No. Paul asserts in verses 6 and 7 of chapter 9 a very timeless truth, that it is not as though God's word has failed.

For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel, nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, it is through Isaac that your children shall be reckoned. In other words, a distinction was made even so that not all of Abraham's direct descendants were considered to be true Israelites, because not all were true Israelites.

And Paul goes on to say in verse 8 that the true children are children of the promise. So it should not be surprising to the Jews that not all who are of the nation of Israel are part of the Israel of God. In saying this, Paul follows Jesus' line of thought in John 8, 39 and 42, where Jesus, speaking to the people of Israel, said to them, if you were Abraham's children and God were your father, you would what? What would show that you're Abraham's true children? You would love me, indicating he's making it very clear.

They didn't. And Paul further explains, it's not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as his children, his descendants. So then, you see, there is clearly more to who are the children of God than just nationality.

Using, as a further example, the example of Jacob and Esau, Paul makes it clear that within the physical line of Israel, there are actually two lines, true children of God and those who are not true children of God. And these two lines can never be intermixed. This understanding has great importance upon how we are to understand Romans 11.

At the very least, it shows us that the promises of God to Israel are abrogated, done away with, to all who, according to the word of God, are not true Israelites. That is, to everyone who does not believe and does not trust in Jesus. The true recipients of the promises, those are the true Israelites.

Those who trust in Jesus Christ. There is not a single hint in Romans 9 that this principle of the two lines within the nation of Israel was temporary. You see, instead, the indications are that it was, in fact, in operation for as long as there had been children of Israel.

I could say it goes back to the sons of Adam, but I don't want to. I'd be starting much too long of a study. Now, we're anticipating the objection that somehow God does not have the right to choose some and not others, that God must save everyone, which is, by the way, the most serious argument that's happening in the Christian church today.

Paul goes on to explain that God, to the contrary of that kind of thinking, is not obligated to save anyone, even if they belong to the nation of Israel, even if they're families of priests, that just as the potter has a right over the clay, so too does God have the right to choose whom he pleases. He chooses. He has the right.

He chooses whom he pleases, whether they are Jew or Gentile. He has the right to do it. Israel was given the promises, was given the message of God, but they pursued a law of righteousness by works and not by faith, and thus, what happened? They stumbled over Christ.

Paul continues in Romans 10, saying that although Israel has a zeal for God, that zeal will not save them because it is a zeal that is not in accordance with knowledge, chapter 10, verse 2. You know, people need knowledge. People need to hear intelligently presented gospel appeals in order to call upon God's name and be saved. Israel had this knowledge, had this knowledge given to them by the prophets of God, but instead of receiving the knowledge, instead of responding to it themselves, let alone presenting it to others, Israel rejected this knowledge so that God, in Isaiah chapter 65, verse 2, says, I spread out my hands all day long to a rebellious people who walk in a way which is not good.

They follow their own thoughts of people who continually provoke me to my face. Now Paul picks up and quotes this passage in Romans 10, 21. He uses that passage in Romans 10.

It's connected to Revelation 10 and 11, and says that humanly speaking, because of this, the gospel and salvation was extended to the nations, the very people whom Israel hated, as God declares in Deuteronomy 32, 21. They have made me jealous with what is not God. They have provoked me to anger with their idols, so I will make them jealous with those who are not a people.

And Isaiah 65, 1 says, I permitted myself to be found by those who did not seek me. Now comes the question of Romans 11. Does Israel's repudiation of Christ, does Israel's rejection of the Savior, does Israel's turning away from the gospel mean that the promises of God are totally finished, abrogated to those of the house of Israel, because Israel nationally, that is as a nation, rejected the Messiah? That's the question, and the answer of Romans 11 is no.

And as we will see, members of Israel can even still come to faith in Christ, but it's at this point that the focus of Paul deepens and really sharpens, because just as throughout Israel's history there were Gentiles who came to faith and became fellow heirs of God in the Old Covenant, so too now, now that the gospel has gone out to the Gentiles, God has kept a remnant of Israel for himself. Who is it? All those who come

to him by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. But there's more.

There's much more. Paul's entire focus in this 11th chapter of Romans is designed to demonstrate that God has not abrogated, has not canceled his promises to the nation of Israel. God's word never fails.

His promises still stand, and this includes his promises to Israel. This is what Paul is fiercely determined to demonstrate to his readers and is the issue to which I want us to now give our attention. I want you to follow me very carefully with this.

In verse 1 of Romans 11, the question is directly and forcefully presented, did God cast off his people? Boom, there's the question. Is God's rejection of Israel such that no Israelite you see may ever come to saving faith? That's really what is the question if he cast them off. The answer of the apostle in verse 1 is an answer that Paul uses repeatedly throughout Romans and he uses it with the greatest force that he can muster to demonstrate his intensity in this.

In Romans 3, verses 4, 6, and 31, in chapter 6, verses 2 and 15, in chapter 7, verses 7 and 13, and chapter 9, verse 14, the term *meganoito*, may it never be, is used. Paul's argument in Romans 11.1 is that such an idea as the full and final rejection of Israel according to the flesh, and believe me, there are many in the church who say that that's the situation, is answered by the most emphatic, negative, available in the Greek language. And this is why some translations actually go so far as to translate *meganoito* not only as may it never be, but may God forbid.

They're taking a liberty based upon the intensity of Paul's exclamation at that point. Through Paul, God is saying as forcefully as he can that he is not irreversibly through with Israel. In fact, over and over again in the Old Testament, the Lord mentions Israel's defiance and rebellion and says that in spite of that defiance, he has not irrevocably cast them off.

For example, in 1 Samuel 12.22, the Lord will not abandon his people on account of his great name. This is after mentioning their great sin. In Psalm 89.31, my covenant I will not break.

David's seed shall last forever. In Psalm 94.14, for the Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance. So what then is the situation regarding Israel? They are rejected but not cast off.

Now how does this become possible? To be rejected but not cast off. Paul says of himself, and for the purpose of bolstering his argument, this is his argument. I am an Israelite.

There's the start of his argument. I'm an Israelite. How could he have cast all Israel off? How much more proof do we need that God has not cast away the nation of Israel? I'm here telling you that this is the case.

Paul is saying there is no question about it. The people of Israel have not been cast away. Paul is saying my salvation testifies to that.

Take a look and see. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. That's verse 2. God has maintained a remnant of Israel for himself.

The only issue remaining is this. Does Paul's salvation in and of itself mean that a national restoration of Israel is the obvious conclusion of his argument? Of course not. Such a conclusion at this point would be going far beyond what the text of this verse is demanding of us.

All we can say so far is that God has not completely cut off Israel. Even now, Paul, myself, and every other Jew who believes in Christ is a testimony to that. Paul is saying that God's ancient people, those whom verse 2 says that God foreknew or knew from eternity, are not cast off.

And he uses the word *prognosco*, which comes from *gnosco*, which is knowledge, but it's put together like this, and what the word ultimately means in this kind of sense is a love. It's not just head facts. It's not just a knowledge up in your head.

And he's talking about a love from eternity. That's the pre-foreknowledge. I loved them forever.

Even though Israel has rejected Christ, even still, even at the present time, there remains a remnant. Paul continues his argument. His argument that God has preserved the remnant of Israel for himself by reminding us in verse 2 of Elijah.

It's an appropriate argument because bloody prophet-killing times existed in Paul's day, and they existed in Elijah's day. Paul refers to the time when Elijah entered a cave in Mount Horeb, and he was crying out to God about the evil atrocity of the slaughter of all of the prophets. And this slaughter was so terrible that all Elijah could ultimately cry to God is this, I'm the only one who's left! And at that point, God assures Elijah that 7,000 faithful believers were left, that there remained yet a remnant.

Paul tells us that just as it was then, so too it is now, saying in verse 5, in the same way, there is also a remnant present now. There is a remnant of Israel faithful to God, even in the present time. Verse 5 states that regardless of the future hope of Israel, a remnant exists now, and it's a remnant, Paul says in verse 6, that has been chosen, not based on works, but chosen by grace.

What does that mean? This means that God has not, even at the present time of national disobedience, I was talking with a person that I met the other day, we were talking about Israel, and he was saying to me, well, it's the holiest nation in the world. I said, no, you're somewhat wrong. Actually, it's the most secular nation in the world.

And it is. And I said, it's remarkable that it is because its book, the Bible, is its history book. We have all kinds of histories in every nation.

Their history book is the Bible, and yet it is probably the most secular nation in the world at this time. So even at this time of what is a national disobedience, they are not completely rejected and cast off. There remains a remnant faithful to him.

God has not completely rejected him. There are still those of Israel whom God saves. However, the rest of Israel, those whom God did not choose, those who rejected God, God hardened.

You can read that in verses 7 through 10. And so then, you see, although not every single person belonging to Israel is rejected, presently the nation of Israel as a whole, because of its persistent rebellion, is rejected. This is how we have God, in Isaiah chapter 66, calling the nation of Israel his enemies, repaying his enemies for all and with all that they deserve, in verse 6. And Israel, in Isaiah chapter 64, verse 11, cries out, our holy and beautiful house where our fathers praised you has been burned by fire and our precious things have become a ruin.

But seeing this and knowing this does not mean that the rejection of Israel as a nation by God is permanent and final, does it? Will there ever be a remnant of Israel and never be a national restoration of

Israel? This is a question that moves us toward that 26th verse. And Paul addresses it, beginning in verse 11 of Romans 11. We will see that God's rejection of Israel is not only not total, but it's not final either.

In verse 11, Paul asks again, as he did in verse 1, did Israel stumble so as to fall? Now here though, you see, Paul is talking about the nation of Israel as a whole, rather than individual Israelites. The real question that is implied by this is, was Israel's sin beyond any hope of restoration? Paul's answer, as in verse 1, is immediate and it's to the point. *Me genoito*, may God forbid, may it never be.

And Paul continues, rather because of Israel's sin, because of their rejection of Christ, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their sin means the riches of the world and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness, will their completion bring? Now clearly, there is yet to be a restoration, a completion of Israel. A restoration, that he says, brings even greater riches than what was brought to the Gentiles through Israel's repudiation of Christ.

Are you following that? This incredible blessing to the Gentiles through Israel's rejection brings to Israel something that's greater than what was brought to them. Now there are many who see the predicament of Israel in rejecting Jesus Christ as Messiah, the opportunity for God to completely write Israel off. After all, it makes sense to them.

They're doing it, so why shouldn't God? At the conference, by the way, I attended a conference and it was a Reformed conference on this. Not the one I spoke at two years ago, but another one. And a well-known Reformed seminary professor mentioned in his presentation, God is completely finished with Israel.

He substantiated that by a quick look here at Romans 11. But his main argument was that, and this is the argument that sealed the issue for him, was from Matthew 21, 19, which says, seeing a fig tree by the road, Jesus went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, may you never bear fruit again.

Immediately, the tree withered. Now proponents who support what this seminary professor was saying, and saying very strongly, see the cursing of the fig tree as a biblical substantiation of God's ages-long desire, as they would see it, to annihilate Israel forever. I don't know, it almost sounds like they make God to be a kind of larger-than-life Ahmadinejad.

Now, to me, this is absolutely preposterous. Paul is outraged at that kind of consideration, and he uses the strongest possible language he can express to make his point clear. *Me genoito*.

Even in the illustration of the fig tree that was used by this seminary professor, I found it odd, really odd, that he never mentioned Jesus' words about the fig tree later on in Matthew 24, verse 32, where Jesus said, wait a minute now, folks, learn the lesson from the fig tree. As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, in other words, it's withered. It's not bearing fruit, but as soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near.

In other words, the final word, even regarding the fig tree, was not a full, not a final curse, but the anticipation of the day when its withered branches would burst open, filled with beautiful leaves. This is how Paul sees it. Everything in Paul's teaching here in Romans is building not toward a complete, total, hardening, and consequent destruction of Israel, but toward the amazing display of the grace of God in dealing with Israel, even at the very time that the preponderance of the nation is decidedly and defiantly rejecting Jesus Christ.

And even at the time when Jesus is, as far as many are concerned, finished with any concern towards the nation of Israel, Paul is not making light of, he is not minimizing Israel's desperate condition. Nationally, they've rejected Christ, but he cannot even imagine a perspective assuming that because of this, Israel is both now and forever doomed. He can't even think that way.

Rather, Paul is acknowledging the enormity of the sin of Israel with a question. Did they sin so greatly that it leaves them beyond all recovery? That's the way he puts the question. It's a simple question.

I'm just saying right now. That's his question. His answer is, I know you should know it by now, may God forbid, the answer of yes to that question, Israel did sin so greatly that it left them beyond recovery, is an answer that many are suggesting, but to Paul, schooled in the scriptures, it's unthinkable.

This then leaves an obvious question. What is the reason that Israel has been hardened and cast away? Paul's answer is immediate in verse 11. Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious.

This is really quite an astonishing answer. If you stop and read it a few times and think about it, this is really astonishing. Israel's sin, Israel's repudiation, Israel's rejection of Jesus is so that salvation can come to the Gentiles and stimulate Israel to jealousy.

By the way, this is exactly what God says in Deuteronomy 32.21. It would be an understandable statement if Paul had just said. Now, that statement, all you have to do is say, Israel's sin has come about to bring salvation to the Gentiles. I can take that.

That's understandable. But this is not what Paul, corroborated by the Old Testament, there are other passages as well, says. He says that salvation has come to the Gentiles because of Israel's sin for an even greater end.

It is for the purpose of making Israel jealous so that their jealousy will lead, as verse 12 says, to their salvation. It's for the purpose of bringing Israel as a nation to saving faith in Jesus Christ. Now, it is hard for me as a Jew to figure out just what the prod toward jealousy is for a nation that has been hating Christ.

To see Christ go to the Gentiles. I mean, I don't get that really. But both Paul in Romans and Moses in Deuteronomy are abundantly clear that this works.

That this is a good prod to use. Both of them point it out. Maybe at the very least, it's this.

The Jews always despised the Gentiles. Look, I know I'm saying this to a congregation of Gentiles. Don't stone me for saying what I'm about to say.

But growing up, that's what we learned. And I'm just at the tail end of that through 2,000 years of Jews who have felt the need to protect themselves against Gentile aggression. And one of the ways is a defensive response is a kind of hatred of the goyim.

Even the term goyim, which is just a simple Hebrew term, means nations. We didn't use it that way. I never knew it meant nations.

I thought it meant dirty, filthy Gentiles. That's the way I understood it growing up. So maybe just repeating that last thought again, the idea that the Jews had always despised the Gentiles.

Now they'd have to look at a people they hated who religiously were stupid and ignorant and worshiping idols who now seem to have all the blessings that had once been theirs. That had been the prerogative of Israel. Paul, you see, is quite possibly suggesting that seeing such an obvious outpouring of God's blessing on these goyim would undoubtedly provoke Israel to want those blessings for themselves.

Perhaps as well, Paul is hoping to see the Gentiles look to Israel with gratitude for them being more than just a branch. Israel's not the branch. But as Paul calls Israel in verse 16 of this chapter, the root.

Israel is not the branch or a branch. Israel is the root. The root of the olive tree that is the people of God.

And this is unbearable for a world that has been trained to view the Jews as Christ killers. I wondered many times, I've wondered what would it be like if in the Gentile world they really embraced the Jewish reality of the scriptures and of faith. That Christianity, as Edith Schaefer so beautifully pointed out in a book that has impacted my entire family.

Christianity is Jewish. What if more than one family sitting on a mountain in Switzerland were to say, you know, that this is the roots, this is the reality of it. This faith is Jewish.

There is nothing disgusting about it. This is Judaism. Christianity is the fullness, the completion through the Messiah.

But it never happened that way. Actually, it never happened to me that way and for Nancy that way until we stumbled into Liberee in the Netherlands. And that's where we heard it.

That's where we understood. That's where, I mean, and that message in one way or another saved both my wife and myself. It's hard.

It's hard that the Jew for the Gentile in relationship to God is to be viewed as the root. Not an ingrafted branch. But friends, you see, that's the way it is with God.

As he says in Romans 11, 33 through 36. Remember, this doxology is the consummation, the high point, the finalization of his argument of three chapters. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God.

How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways are beyond finding out for who has known the mind of the Lord, who has been the Lord's counselor, who has given to him that the Lord should repay him. For from of him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever and ever.

Amen. This is the place where the argument over Israel comes to an end. That point.

To God be the glory forever. Amen. This is where I just want to stop our discussion of the future of Israel for today.

But I want us to remember first where we are so that we come back to it fresh. We have seen that Israel was cut off due to idolatry, due to rebellion, but we've also seen that Israel was not irreversibly cut off. That there is obviously still, even now, a remnant today.

And we see that God is using the Gentiles. That's you folks. Using the Gentiles to prod Israel, Israel, to jealousy.

Next time we're going to see the conclusion to Paul's argument. And what in the context, in this context, Paul's statement in Romans 11.26, so all Israel shall be saved, means. But for now, I just want to take a few minutes to look briefly at a few lessons for us from what we've learned this morning.

First of all, the potter and the clay. This is the issue of Romans 9.12 and following. What is it? The issue of the potter and the clay is the issue of election.

Just as the potter has the right over the clay, so too does God have the right over us. Over those whom he wishes to choose as he pleases. Whether they are Jew, whether they are Gentile.

And we, his people are chosen based not upon our works, not upon what we've done, but we are chosen by grace. Secondly, we deal with it in chapter 10. True zeal, true knowledge.

That's the issue of Romans 10.2 and following. We must remember that zeal without knowledge is fanaticism. But we also have to remember that knowledge without zeal is dead orthodoxy.

And we have to possess both in balance. We have to stir our hearts up with the great truth we've been given when we focus on the love of Christ, when we focus on his work for us, when we focus on his sacrifice, when we focus on his plan of redemption, when we focus even on Romans 11 and his plan for the Jewish people and the world at the same time. We are awed by this.

We receive a knowledge that enables us to go to people and speak to them about what God is doing and how God is in this world today. The other day, I'm walking, you know about my Muslim friends. I meet one of them, we're talking, here's the opening salvo.

Before I, I put out my hand, say hello. He doesn't take my hand. He says, how's your God today? Then it's his question.

I'm not saying I gave the best answer. I didn't have long to come up with an answer. I had about a fraction of a second.

I said, my God is great because he's great and he's always great. That's how he is. And he looked at me and he said, how can he be great? Look out there.

Take a look. Look at the evil. Look at the sin.

Look at the despair. Look at the violence. And you say that your God is great.

And I said, you know, I see the problem right there. You're looking at the wrong place. Shift your eyes up.

You're looking down. Look to God. Look to Christ and you'll see how great he is.

When you look out there and what you see, you're looking to man. And what do you see? You see evil. You see depravity.

You see sin. That's what he came to deal with. Sin, filth, depravity.

And we need the knowledge with the zeal so that we can reach people with the truth of the gospel and see them saved. Third, God's word never fails. That's the issue of Romans 9, verses 6 and following.

Has God's word failed? That's what my friend is saying to me. He's saying, look outside. It's failed.

Look what you see. And I'm saying, you know, you're looking at the wrong place. It hasn't failed.

Because why? Because God's word can never fail. All who are meant to be saved, all your friends shall be saved. If we even look at the issue of Romans 9 through 11.

All shall be saved who are meant to be saved. The potter will deal perfectly with the clay pots, and that is us. God's word can't fail.

It can't fail because God's word is perfect. The Bible says about itself, the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword. And it's piercing between the joint and the marrow, the heart and the soul, deep into the deepest part of our being, and it doesn't come out with failure.

There's no case of a heart transplant that God wants to do, coming back with the patient dead. He changes our hearts. He gives us a new heart, and it's a perfect, perfect surgery without an incision, and we come out of that surgery new men and new women, not hoping that the rejection of our hearts would take place.

It can't when it comes from God. We have a perfect heart in the midst of a broken, dying body. And not only that, in Proverbs and in Psalm 12, I believe it is, it says, the word of God is flawless.

There's not any flaw in it. It is perfection itself. Friends, just let that word pierce your heart and pierce your life, convicting you, convincing you, and challenging you and bringing you to salvation by grace, through faith.

You don't have to work your way into salvation. You don't have to do the righteous deeds to be saved. You can't because you can't.

The word of God never fails because the word of God cannot fail. We may fail, but if we're living with a trust in God and in His word to direct us, He will never fail us. We may face terrible circumstances, we all do, but as long as we live by this truth, He will be with us, and He'll be with us through it all.

I want to wrap things up by asking you this, whether you realize that the real issue is not, the real issue, or maybe I'd put it better, the ultimate issue for you is not, what is God going to do with Israel? Because you see, God will do exactly as He pleases. The real question for you is this, what is God going to do with me? The real issue is not, is Israel irrevocably cast off? That's far removed from you. The real issue for you is whether God has irrevocably cast you off.

The real urgency is not, how many of Israel will be saved? For you, the real issue is this, are you saved? That's the issue. That's the issue for your life. That's the issue for your children.

That's the issue for your family. That's the issue for your marriage. That's the issue and answer for our country, for our civilization.

For the terrible geopolitics that have no solution, humanly speaking, in the Middle East or any other place. It's the answer for the rampant sin that runs through our hearts. It's the redemption in Jesus Christ from a life of sin-filled lawlessness and Christ denying blasphemy and idolatry.

No, you might say, please don't say that. That's not about me. That can't be me.

But you see, of course it can. Because if you did not know Christ, then you know what? You are somewhere now on that continuum of blasphemy, idolatry, lawlessness, despair and hopelessness, and a sin-drenched life giving in to the lawlessness. And you'll never, ever get free of such lawlessness until you repent of your sin and turn your heart over to Jesus Christ.

Because only then will you be saved from judgment. Only then will you be saved from hell and be made part of something that is great. This church.

I don't mean this particular, I mean Christ's church. But this church is an example of it. And it's a great, beautiful church.

But you're made part of Christ's body, His church, His bride, His flawless bride without any stain. You're part of that when you come to know Him. Your life is changed.

Your family is changed because everything is changed. He says, I'm making everything to be new. The church of Christ.

You're part of it in Christ. The church of God. You're part of it in Him.

You receive then the unfailing promises and the full benefits of being sons and daughters of Christ. The one who swears and promises by His own name. I will never leave you.

I will never forsake you because I'm with you now and until the end of the age. Amen. Father, just pray that you would grant us life.

I pray that anyone coming here needing Jesus will leave here with Jesus. That their goal, the resolution of the end result of their being here will not be simply a better understanding of what is going to happen to Israel in the future, but seeing the plan of God that the end result will be a better understanding of what is happening to me in the future. And I pray that each one of us here will be able to say, as for me in my house, I know I serve the Lord.

That we will be servants of the Most High God, bond slaves of Christ, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, now and forever. Amen.

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