

Subject: *God's Plan for Israel – Part 2*

Scripture: *Romans 11:11-24*

This morning we are honoring our graduating students. We acknowledge the value of learning. In our Scripture we see that Paul understood the value of learning and assumed the church at Rome would follow his thoughts about God's plan for Israel. In this passage we see the importance of history, as Paul refers to the history of Israel. We see the importance of biology and agriculture, as Paul refers to the olive tree and the breaking off and grafting of branches. We see the importance of logic, as Paul uses the argument of lesser to greater ("much more"), which he has used before in this letter. We see the importance of theology, as Paul refers to the goodness and severity of God (vs. 22). Underlying this whole chapter is the importance of God's faithfulness. He is faithful to His covenant and promises to Israel.

In the Bible we see God's selection of Israel (Gen. 12). God chose to bless a special people so that they might in turn be a blessing to the world. The Jews gave witness to the whole world of the true and living God. Best of all, Jesus was born into this world as a Jew.

We see God's protection of Israel (in Egypt, in Canaan, in Babylon and Persia). Down through the centuries the Jews have been hated, persecuted, and killed. From the days of Haman in the Book of Esther until the Holocaust and even now, God has always protected a remnant of Israel.

We see God's rejection of Israel. Christ was sent to the Jews first, but they rejected Him and the gospel, and God in turn rejected them, but His rejection of Israel is not complete or final. In Romans 11 Paul shows their rejection is partial, not total (Rom. 11:1-10). Their rejection is passing, not final. Their rejection is purposeful, not surprising to God. God has a plan for Israel and nothing will defeat it. So underlying Romans 11 are the glorious facts of God's sovereignty and His faithfulness to His people.

To understand these verses we need to understand some terms that Paul uses:

In verse 11 ("their fall") and in verse 12 ("the diminishing of them" = their failure) – both refer to the fall and failure of Israel to believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

John 1:11 *He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*

1. A reminder about *spiritual privilege* (vs. 11-15)

A. Gentile salvation

Israel's rejection caused salvation to be offered and received by the Gentiles. Israel's rejection has led to the spiritual riches of Gentiles.

B. Israelite jealousy

The salvation of Gentiles provoked the Jews to jealousy (a desire to emulate or participate in the blessings) It caused Jews to reconsider the gospel and believe in Christ. Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles, and he wanted to make the most of his ministry.

C. World blessing

If the spiritual failure of the Jews has brought blessing to the Gentiles, how much more would it mean to the world if they would believe in Christ! If the casting away of them has led the reconciling of the world, and the receiving of them (salvation; acceptance) will be like a

resurrection from the dead. Paul uses the argument of “much more” as he did in Romans 5 (where sin abounded, grace did “much more” abound).

2. A warning about *spiritual pride* (vs. 16-18)

The human heart is wretched and full of pride. We must not think that we deserve God’s grace. Gentiles were saved not because they deserved it, but because of God’s grace.

3. A lesson about *spiritual position* (vs. 19-24)

The olive tree represents all the covenant blessings of God with Israel (the covenant of salvation).

A. The Jews (natural branches) were broken off because of *unbelief*

B. The Gentiles (wild branches) were grafted in because of *faith*

Just as the natural branches were broken off because of unbelief, saved Gentiles should consider the “goodness and severity of God” (vs. 22). We must continue in His goodness by faith. Trusting God is not a one-time decision, but a lifelong commitment.

C. The Jews (natural branches) can be grafted in again because of *faith*

This refers to the future time of Israel’s salvation. Israel will repent of their sin and unbelief and receive their Messiah. At that time God will restore them to the place of blessing which was theirs from the beginning.

God is not through with His people. He has a plan and it will be fulfilled in His good time. In the meantime we as Gentiles are blessed to participate in God’s new covenant and be grafted into the olive tree of blessing.

The blessings of God come through faith and no other way. We are in the tree of salvation and blessing by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. This is true faith, living faith, humble faith, repentant faith, obedient faith, and enduring faith.

Hebrews 11:6 *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

I want to remind you of that phrase “the goodness and severity of God.” God is good, forgiving, and kind, but He is also severe, holy, and righteous. Don’t take His goodness for granted. Paul said in Romans 2:4, the goodness of God leads to repentance.

Romans 2:4 *Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*