

The Salvation of the Elect

SERMON

By

Everett C. DeVelde

August 23, 2014

TEXT: Romans 11:11-36

PROP: Because God has many elect yet to be saved, his church must concern herself diligently to preach and teach the word of God to the world.

Romans 11 (ESV)

The Remnant of Israel

11 I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. ² God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? ³ “Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.” ⁴ But what is God’s reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” ⁵ So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. ⁶ But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

⁷ What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, ⁸ as it is written,

“God gave them a spirit of stupor,
eyes that would not see
and ears that would not hear,
down to this very day.”

⁹ And David says,

“Let their table become a snare and a trap,
a stumbling block and a retribution for them;

¹⁰ let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see,
and bend their backs forever.”

Gentiles Grafted In

¹¹ So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. ¹² Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

¹³ Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry ¹⁴ in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. ¹⁵ For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? ¹⁶ If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

¹⁷ But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, ¹⁸ do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. ¹⁹ Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." ²⁰ That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. ²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. ²² Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. ²³ And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. ²⁴ For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.

The Mystery of Israel's Salvation

²⁵ Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶ And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written,

"The Deliverer will come from Zion,
he will banish ungodliness from Jacob";

²⁷ "and this will be my covenant with them
when I take away their sins."

²⁸ As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. ²⁹ For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰ For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, ³¹ so they too have now been

disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy.
³² For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

³⁴ “For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor?”

³⁵ “Or who has given a gift to him
that he might be repaid?”

³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever.
Amen.

We must see in this text that God has his elect people represented by a great olive tree, and that he will surely bring them to repentance and save them. He tells us that the fullness of the Gentiles will come in and that all Israel will be saved. Since God Almighty Yahweh of Hosts makes this promise how can it not come to pass? Since the infinite all-powerful God does this who can stay his hand? Will the kingdom of God not triumph? Is not the kingdom of God equal to all that it has to perform? Here we have on the highest authority that **the fullness of the Gentiles will come in and all Israel will be saved.**

Because this is so the church of Christ has a great work to do and we need to consider the nature of this work. How will it come about that the fullness of the Gentiles will come in and that all Israel will be saved? How will it come about that Christ shall have dominion from sea to sea? All of this will come about through the preaching of the gospel of peace accompanied by the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. Indeed as Paul writes in the preceding chapter of Romans,

Romans 10:14-17 (ESV) – 14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? **15** And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” **16** But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” **17** So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

We do not have in view here a struggling little church trying to interest a few families in the things of the Lord. We rather have in view the mission of the church of

Jesus Christ to the world. The mandate of Christ to his church concerns all mankind wherever they are to be found. It concerns everyone no matter what sort of government they live under. No matter what their tribe or tongue they are to hear the word of God. It is as we read in Matthew 28

Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV) – 18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

So we see that it is not enough that we labor to establish Nashua Orthodox Presbyterian Church here in little Pulaski Township. Our mandate is to make disciples of all the nations. It is difficult indeed to find the Lord’s people in this small area in western Pennsylvania and to gather them together in a Bible teaching and preaching church. How much more difficult is it to minister the word of God to the whole world. Furthermore, there are many enemies to overcome whose business it is to destroy the church of Christ. Daunting isn’t it! Who is equal to this task? Indeed without the work of the Holy Spirit it would be utterly impossible.

We come now to our text in Romans 11 where Paul is dealing with the rejection of the nation of Israel. He begins the chapter by saying,

Romans 11:1-7 (ESV) – 1 I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. **2** God has not rejected his people whom he **foreknew**. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? **3** “Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.” **4** But what is God’s reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” **5** So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. **6** But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. **7** What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. **The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened,**

Paul is clearly speaking here of national Israel. These are the people that God foreknew! That is to say that God chose Israel out of all the nations of the earth to receive saving grace. God foreknew them. He set his love upon them not because they were greater than all the other nations or because they deserved to be loved of God. The sovereign Yahweh God simply loved them and no others. For God to foreknow anything is to render it certain to happen and for God to foreknow his people is to

render certain their salvation. This sublime love of God issued in the death of his own beloved Son for the sins of those whom he foreknew. Paul writes,

Romans 8:28-30 (ESV) – 28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. **29** For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. **30** And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

The foreknowledge of God is powerful and it brings about certain results. It is not that God simply knows what will happen in the future but he powerfully brings it to pass. Therefore for Israel and for us to be foreknown by God is to say that God powerfully brings our personal salvation to pass. It is unthinkable that God would finally reject the nation of Israel as his elect people. So Paul likens the nation of Israel to an olive tree.

1. Part of national Israel has been blinded to the truth of the word of God.

Romans 11:11-15 (ESV) – 11 So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. **12** Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean! **13** Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry **14** in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. **15** For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?

Some of the branches have been removed which represents the partial blindness of Israel. The nation of Israel is juxtaposed with the Gentile nations. It is Israel as opposed to Gentiles. The fall of the blinded Jews is said to be riches for the world and for Gentiles. The elect remnant of Israel who remain faithful to God, who believe unto salvation in the Messiah Jesus Christ, remain in the olive tree. Praise God that room has been made for God's elect from the Gentile nations of the earth. What riches indeed! O the treasure of the grace of God! How we should praise God! How we should love him and serve him!

2. Gentile branches have been grafted in with the remnant of Israel.

Romans 11:16-24 (ESV) – **16** If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches. **17** But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, **18** do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. **19** Then you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” **20** That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. **21** For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. **22** Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God’s kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. **23** And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. **24** For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.

We see now an olive tree that has Jewish branches and Gentile branches. The elect remnant of Israel and God’s elect Gentiles together make up the tree. When this love of God sinks into our dull minds we will be moved to humility and fear. When we consider the matchless grace of God in seeking us out and converting us how we should love him and serve him. We are no better than those of Israel whom God blinded to the truth. Why should God foreknow any of us unto salvation? The elect Jews are said here to be the natural branches of an olive tree cultivated by the sovereign love of God. They were the original branches. The Savior himself came from this tree. We Gentiles are much less in that we are wild branches yet God is good to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. If the Jews have cause to worship and serve the True and Living God how much more we who are not the natural branches.

3. When all the Gentile elect have been saved the blindness of Israel will be removed and there will be a wide spread conversion of the Jews.

Romans 11:25-27 (ESV) – **25** Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. **26** And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”; **27** “and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”

The olive tree at this point contains both elect Jewish branches as the remnant of Israel and elect Gentile branches. **So the olive tree is the visible church.** It is Zion and Jerusalem the visible body of God’s elect. The preaching of the gospel and the

disciplining of the nations is in progress and the Jews who are reprobated by God are blind to it. Remember what Paul wrote earlier in the chapter,

Romans 11:7-8 (ESV) – 7 What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, **8** as it is written, “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.”

Then comes a point in time when the blindness of Israel is removed. At this point the full number of Gentiles is saved and God will turn away ungodliness from Jacob and take away their sins. Many believe that this refers to a widespread conversion of the Jews which is followed by the second coming of Christ. This was certainly the view of the framers of the Westminster Standards who answered the *Larger Catechism* question 191 concerning the Lord's Prayer:

What do we pray for in the second petition?

In the second petition, (which is, *Thy kingdom come*), acknowledging ourselves and all mankind to be by nature under the dominion of sin and Satan, we pray, that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, the gospel propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, the fullness of the Gentiles brought in; the church furnished with all gospel-officers and ordinances, purged from corruption, countenanced and maintained by the civil magistrate: and the ordinances of Christ may be purely dispensed, and made effectual to the converting of those that are yet in their sins, and the confirming, comforting, and building up of those that are already converted: that Christ would rule in our hearts here, and hasten the time of his second coming, and our reigning with him for ever: and that he would be pleased so to exercise the kingdom of his power in all the world, as may best conduce to these ends.

What a rich blessing it will be to the whole world and to the church of Christ in particular for the kingdom of God to come. Everyone will benefit from it. The Jews will be called and the fullness of the Gentiles brought in. The church will be purged from corruption. Tyrants and hostile governments and idolaters will no longer persecute the church. Governing authorities will reward good works and punish evil as they countenance the church and maintain it. The elect who are yet in their sins will be converted. Christ will be pleased to exercise the kingdom of his power in all the world to bring all this to pass. When all this has been accomplished Christ will return to *"..present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish."* (Ephesians 5:27, ESV) Such has been the prevailing opinion of the divines who framed the Westminster standards.

However, when we look about us today we see a world that is very different from this. Governing authorities reward evil and punish good. The visible church is greatly persecuted and the blood of the martyrs runs deep. Many so called churches are synagogues of Satan and others are corrupt and weak and ineffective. The so called evangelical church markets Christ in their vast expensive media oriented ministries. And when we see a debacle such as the election process to political office we face growing despair that the country will survive as a free nation. We ask, how can millions of Americans vote for candidates who support the yearly murder of millions of children not only here but in many other countries as well? How can we vote for one who supports the view that everyone has the right to sin? This is what homosexual behavior amounts to. Speaking out against such sin we fear will become a punishable hate crime. So things look dark indeed and we fear that things will be darker still.

In the darkest days of 1940, Winston Churchill saw history as directed by the hand of God and believed that the world would not go under. Yet later, after the Second World War, in 1953 as he faced the post-war world - the "Iron Curtain", the hydrogen bomb, the four hundred million shut within China - all seemed to make the old belief in providence impossible. He said, "I am bewildered by the world, the confusion is terrible." Two years later as his great Parliamentary career came to its end, he spoke with pathos of his fears for those who should live in the future "if God wearied of mankind". "What ought we to do if God wearied of mankind?"

The truth of Churchill's words, "It is bad for a nation when it is without faith", have been widely evidenced. The loss of national purpose, the loss of will to advance, the indiscipline and futility of permissiveness, all these were to Churchill the symptoms of an age in which the dominating mood is one of cynicism and pessimism. To the modern mind, history is not under any control. It appears that this same mind set has affected many of us in today's world. We see the church failing to maintain the truths committed to her and she no longer appears to be a world-transforming power. Gone is the enthusiasm for the conversion of the world that was once so common among Christians. Missionary endeavor has clearly declined as Machen so powerfully demonstrated as the Presbyterian church in 1936 retreated from Puritan Christianity.

We need to return to the great covenant promises delivered to us through the pen of the apostle Paul. The fullness of the Gentiles will come in and all Israel will be saved. Is this to mean to us that the preaching of the gospel will continue to be largely futile with feeble and ineffective results? God forbid! We are dealing here with the unsearchable YAHWEH God. Who can withstand the Holy Spirit of God as he accompanies the word of God? Shall not the church of Christ grow. Is God not able to keep his promises? Paul writes,

Romans 11:28-36 (ESV) – 28 As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. **29** For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. **30** For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, **31** so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. **32** For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all. **33** Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! **34** “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” **35** “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” **36** For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

The calling of God’s elect, both Jew and Gentile, is irrevocable. The elect shall be saved. Praise YAHWEH! God has many elect yet to be saved and we must concern ourselves diligently with the preaching and teaching of the word of God to the world. Not that we can or should as individuals do what is clearly impossible, but we need to support the work of faithful churches such as the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. We need to pray for and financially support the Christian Education, Home Missions, and Foreign Missions works of our church. We need to pray for and support the work of our presbytery as we train and prepare young men for the gospel ministry. We need to pray for and support the work of our scholars who maintain the word of God and translate it into all the languages of the world.

Our only hope for seeing the kingdom of Satan destroyed and the kingdom of Christ come in all its glory is the faithful preaching of the Word of God accompanied by the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, let us pray urgently and diligently “Thy kingdom come.”