

Study 12 -The epistle of Paul to the Romans by Neville Clark TTG 2017

The Righteousness of God with Israel

Reading Romans Ch 11

The righteousness of God with Israel

Romans Ch 11, concludes, of course, the last major doctrinal section that the Apostle has in the book of Romans. Chapters 9, 10 and 11 are all concerning the righteousness of God with Israel. We made the point, you might recall a week or two ago when we commenced chapter 9, that this was the climax of the book, where the Apostle weaves together his entire argument for the salvation of Jew and Gentile. Well, of course, Ch 11 is the last chapter in that climactic section. When you come to Chapter 12, you are in the practical section of the book of Romans, which means that Ch 11 is the climax of the Apostle's entire doctrinal argument in this epistle, and we've got a lot to talk about in that context this evening.

The Structure

Here is the structure of Chapters 9, 10 and 11. We have already considered Chapters 9 and 10, so this evening we will finish the section in Chapter 11. But let's recap very briefly what the entire section is about. Chapter 9 is The Selection of Israel, Chapter 10, The rejection of Israel. Ch 11, The restoration of Israel, so here is the life-cycle of the nation as the Apostle has it in this section. Back in Ch 9, the problem was, of course, that the nation hadn't believed God's word and amongst their many sins, had rejected and killed the Messiah. Did that mean, therefore, that God's purpose with the nation of Israel was finished? No it did not, why? Well, God never expected to save every Jew anyway. His goal was to save them nationally, not necessarily individually, and the Apostle proved that by reference to their own pedigree. Not every son of Abraham was saved, or selected, or elected by God. Not every son of Isaac was selected by God. Well, did that mean that God was unjust, he selects one man over against another, and in the case of Jacob, even before Jacob and Esau were born. The answer is, no, no, no, it is not an issue of justice, it is an issue of God's mercy, and the critical thing to appreciate about the mercy of God, is that he works like a potter, and the Potter never rejects the clay until the clay becomes unworkable. But, of course, since salvation is now based

upon God's mercy, and not on man's nationality, Gentiles can be saved just as well as Jews. And the remarkable thing about that is when you come to the end of Chapter 9, that when the Truth was preached to the Gentiles, they responded immediately, they found the "righteousness of faith." Yet the Jews, with all their advantages, failed to do so, failed to find righteousness, because they looked for it in law, not in faith. That's the story of Chapter 9.

The Jews sought to establish their own righteousness

What in Chapter 10? The Jews were looking for righteousness in all the wrong places. And really, v3 makes the classic point, as far as the Jews were concerned as opposed to the Gentiles. The Jews sought to establish their own righteousness rather than submitting to God's righteousness. You might remember we made the point last week, that the contrast was made in V 3 between establishing one form of righteousness vs submitting to another form. And they rejected the Messiah, of course, "Who has believed our report?" V 16 of Chapter 10 says. Who indeed? Well, the Gentiles did, but the Jews didn't, that's who. Or in the words of Chapter 9v33 "They stumbled at the stumbling stone, rejecting the report of the Messiah to come. And as Paul weaves Scripture together in Chapter 10, it becomes obvious that it ought ought to have been obvious to the Jews, that they should have realised two things from their own Scripture. Firstly, that God always planned to call the Gentiles to the Truth.

The Jews ought to have realised that in Ch 10, because any amount of Scriptures say so. And Secondly, the Jew, even though God spent centuries working with them, centuries calling them, the Jew should have realised from his own Scripture, that the bulk of his nation would never respond. He ought to have realised both of those things, that God would send the truth to those Gentiles and the bulk of his nation would not respond. And in fact, Isaiah is "very bold," it says in Chapter 10v20 "very bold," to say that the nation that didn't seek God would find him, that's the Gentiles, and the other nation that fastidiously sought God, would never find him. That's the Jews. And you see, it is the very boldness of Isaiah in Chapter 10, that creates the opening question of Chapter 11v1. "I say then, has God cast away his people?" If that's the case with Israel, if it was prophesied and they merely fulfilled prophecy, they should have known all along that it could never be the legalistic dream they hoped for, in that case, has God cast away his people? And you can see it is a very natural question. If the Gentiles had been called and they accepted, whereas the Jews were called and they rejected the call, even though God pleaded with

them all day long, has God finally had enough? Does he finally called it quits with these children of Abraham? Well, when you finally come to Chapter 11, the answer is “No.” And for two reasons, two main reasons.

There would be a remnant

Firstly, Even though the nation as a whole would reject God, there would always be a remnant who would seek him, even amongst the Jews, and that’s, the first ten verses of Romans 11 are all about the fact that there would always be a Jewish remnant. And the second reason, What if there was no remnant? What is going to happen when the day’s come when the nation is going to be scattered to the four corners of the world, and they lose the Truth they lose their national identity and there is no remnant, and they become “not my people” amongst the four corners of the Roman Empire. Would God reject them then? And the answer is, no, no, even in that situation God would not reject them because he would always have a purpose with the nation of Israel. Why? Well as I will show you from v28 of this Chapter, for the fathers’ sakes. He would never ever give up on the nation for the fathers’ sakes, even in the absence of a remnant.

And, you see, that is how the chapter breaks up, if you just look at the bottom of the screen. Verses 1-10, the situation in Israel is not hopeless, there has always been a remnant, therefore Israel’s rejection is not total, God never rejected every Jew, even if he rejected the nation. Verses 11-24, and even when there was no faithful remnant, God would still have an ultimate plan with the nation because the natural branches would ultimately be grafted back into the tree, therefore Israel’s rejection was not final. It wasn’t total in the first ten verses, and it wasn’t final, verses 11-24. Verses 25-29, The certainty of Israel’s salvation, what does that mean? Simply this, that when God has concluded his work with the Gentiles, or in the language of Romans, “When the fullness of the Gentiles be come in,” then the redeemer would come from Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob. The time would come when God would bring those rotten branches out of isolation and graft them back into that tree.

God’s wisdom in saving Jew and Gentile

And then, finally, verses 30-36, God’s wisdom in saving Jew and Gentile, the abounding wisdom in this remarkable plan that the Apostle has described. Now let’s just talk about that for a moment. You think of the wisdom of God in

what the Apostle has described in these three chapters. The whole argument of the book of Romans began back in chapter 1-3 by describing the universal failure of mankind. Remember Ch 1? The Gentiles had failed to attain righteousness. Ch 2, so had the Jews, and so he says in Ch 3 and v9, all mankind be they Jew or Gentile were under the bondage of sin. There was a universal problem afflicting all mankind, of both great branches of humanity, and it was the problem of sin. Well by the end of Ch 11, the Apostle hasn't just explained the atonement, he has mapped out the entire process by which God would restore mankind, both Jew and Gentile. Each of them would become "my people," "not my people," "my people" again. Out with those branches, in with these branches and now bring those branches back, you see? For two thousand years, between Abraham to Christ, God laboured with the Jewish people. For two thousand years, between Christ and the kingdom age, God laboured with the Gentiles. And when Christ returns, you see, and we have these two enormous branches of humanity, confronting each other, having both gone through identical trials in life, each one there because of the other, because, you see, it says in Ch 11v32 that "God hath concluded all in unbelief." That is, Jew and Gentile. He has bound them both in unbelief that he might have mercy upon all. Across 4,000 years of history since Abraham, God's treated Jew and Gentile the same. And he brings them back together when his son comes, each of them having gone through identical trials, and they will both be assembled in front of that man when the day comes. And the Apostle, you know, he surveys everything he has written, almost, when he gets to the end of Chapter 11, and he stands back and he looks at the chapter and he looks at the plan that God has had with human kind over history, and he says, 'It's brilliant.' It is unbelievable, this is unquestionably the wisdom of God.

Israel's rejection is not total

Well then, Chapter 11v1-10, Israel's rejection is not total. What's happening in these first ten verses? Well, Israel's rejection is not total. Why not? Well, as we mentioned just a moment ago, because there has always been a remnant, that's why, and in the following verses, the Apostle is going to give four examples of how that remnant has existed over time. V 1, "I say then," he says, "hath God cast away his people? Answer? No. Why not? Reason No 1. "For I," says Paul, "am an Israelite of the Seed of Abraham of the tribe of Benjamin. There's the first reason. Let's call it a 'personal reason.' The Apostle himself is a Jew, and he hasn't been cast away, and he lists his credentials here. He says, 'I am an Israelite, I'm the seed of Abraham, I'm of the tribe of Benjamin. Each of those credentials, you see, calculated to appeal to the

natural Jew. He does much the same thing in 2 Cor 11v22, where he has to put up his credentials to defend himself against the 'super apostles,' the Judaisers of that chapter. In 2 Cor he says that he is a Hebrew, an Israelite, and the seed of Abraham. What is the point then, that the Apostle is making here? I am as Jewish as they come. I am as Jewish as they come, and God hasn't cast me away. In fact, you might like to note, he proves his point, if you like, negatively here, by saying, I am a Jew, and I'm not cast away, and I am very. And he proves it positively, if you were to go to Rom 1v1. In Rom 1v1, he introduces himself to the ecclesias and he says, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an Apostle, separated unto the gospel of God." Three credentials again, a servant, called and separated. So there's the first reason. God hasn't cast away his people, the personal reason, the Apostle himself has not been cast away by God, yet, he is a natural born Jew.

Here's the next reason, v2, just the first line or two of v2. "God has not cast away his people which he foreknew," now that is a reason. Why is that a reason? Because it is a quotation from Scripture, and I am going to tell you that v2a, let's call it, the first half of v2, is the second reason, the scriptural reason. 1 Sam 12v22 says, "Yahweh will not forsake his people for his great names's sake because it has pleased Yahweh to make you his people." Psa 94v14, "Yahweh will not cast off his people neither will he forsake his inheritance." That's what we are quoting here, you see, we've got the explicit statement of Scripture that God would not forsake his people. Therefore, the opening lines of v2 become the second reason. I'm going to call that, the scriptural reason. So v1 was the personal reason, v2 the scriptural reason, here's the third one. The last half of v2 through to the end of v4, the historical reason. "Wot you not, what the scripture saith of Elijah, how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying Lord they have killed thy prophets and dogged down thine altars and I am left alone, and they seek my life." And what saith the answer of God unto him? Elijah, "I have reserved unto myself 7,000 men who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal." So there's the historical reason. There's a remnant, so God didn't destroy the nation in Elijah's day because of the existence of 7,000 faithful people. That's the third reason, the historical reason.

Do you remember the story of Elijah? He was fleeing from the wrath of Jezebel. Went to Horeb to bring down the judgment of God upon the nation. Why? Well, because he said as he got to Horeb, he confronts God and he says, "I only am left." In fact, in 1 Kgs 19v9, he goes up to a cave, it says, THE

cave it ought to be in the text, THE cave, the very same cave where Moses hid in Ex 33v22. And as Moses was up the mountain, many, many years before Elijah, what was he up there for? Well, he'd gone up there because he begged God, begged God, to forgive the nation of Israel. God had said, you see, because of the incident of the golden calf, I'm going to destroy the nation, Moses, and begin again with you, stand aside and let me erupt fire upon them. Moses goes up the hill and says. "Forgive them." If you can't do it for their sake, God, he says, forgive them for my sake. And God says, All right, Moses, I will do that and I will send the angel you wanted. And Moses says to God, now tell me something, "Show me thy glory," he says. What is the character behind the commandment, what is the character that can wipe out an entire nation of people and begin again with one man? All right, Moses, you hide there in that cave and you watch, you'll see my hinder parts.

Well, Elijah goes up there to the very same cave, you see, and the record is very clear in v2 of this chapter of Romans, he didn't make intercession for Israel, he made intercession against Israel. Against. And God says to him when he is up on the hill, "Elijah, what doest thou here?" And that's the critical word, "What doest thou here?" because he was in the very same place that Moses was. Well what was he doing there? Well, it is obvious isn't it, he wants God to be consistent, doesn't he? 'You said you'd destroy them once because they didn't keep the Law and Moses interceded, well they've broken the Law again,' he says, 'destroy them now,' and perhaps the unspoken word, 'and begin again with me.' 'But destroy them now.' And the answer comes back, 'Well, what about the 7,000 Elijah? What about them? What are you really doing here?' "I only am left." 'All right, then get down from the mountain and go and anoint Elisha.' God would save the nation, you see, for that remnant. The historical reason.

And then the fourth reason, let's call it the contemporary reason, it's in v5. "Even so then, at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace. As there was a remnant in the past, so there is a remnant also in the present. In the opening years of the Christian Era it is extremely obvious. 3,000 were baptised in Acts 2v41. 5,000 were baptised in Acts 4v4. At the end of the third missionary journey in Acts 21v20 the Jerusalem arranging brethren say to the Apostle Paul, "Thou seest brother how many thousands of Jews there are which believe. And so there was a remnant even in the first century of Jews. So there are four reasons, personal, scriptural, historical, contemporary reasons why God hasn't relinquished his relationship

with his people. But look at v5, at the end of v5 he makes a point about reason, he says, not just that there is a remnant in the first century, but there is a remnant according to the election of grace. That is to say, they were called by God's grace. Now why would he say that? Why does he need to say that? Well, it is simple, the Jew, you see, would have looked at those 7,000 in the days of Elijah and said, that they were saved by works, because they hadn't bowed the knee to Baal. They kept the Law, that's how the Jew would have interpreted that. The problem with that interpretation of course is that is not how Elijah saw it. If they were keeping the law, he would have never petitioned for their destruction. He petitioned for it because he believed that he was the only one left, and that they weren't keeping the Law.

Now think about those 7,000. They were a remnant living amidst Jezebel's persecution. If you were outspoken on matters of religion in that day, you would lose your life because v3 says that she was "killing the prophets. She was killing the prophets." But here is what Elijah overlooked, those 7,000 may not have been too good at keeping the Law of Moses, they were under persecution, they couldn't be outspoken, they couldn't openly do things that you might otherwise have expected a faithful Jew to be doing, but they also didn't worship golden calves. They hadn't bowed the knee to Baal. They knew the difference between clean and unclean, and they kept themselves separate from the world, and that was the basis of God's selection. Their works were motivated by faith. They probably weren't, entirely, keeping the Law of Moses. For example, how likely would it have been that they would be going into Jerusalem every year for passover, living as they were, amongst the northern kingdom. Probably an impossibility. You've got Obadiah pushing prophets by 50s from cave to cave. It was a torrid time, but they knew the difference between clean and unclean, and they manifested that in their life, you see? And so therefore they were the election according to grace, as he says in v5, and if by grace, then it is no more of works. You are either saved by grace or you are saved by works. That is, you are saved by faith, or you are saved by law. "And if it is by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace or otherwise work is no more work." You see, grace and works are mutually exclusive, these are two mutually exclusive paths to salvation. One which ends in salvation and the other, of course, which ends in destruction. Simply law keeping as mere law will not save you.

'Well what do we infer from that,' says Paul. You see he gets to verse 7, What then, what is the meaning of that? What conclusion would you draw? "Israel has not attained that which he seeketh for, but the election hath attained it and

the rest were blinded.” Now what is that saying? Very simply this, most people in Israel look for salvation their own way, by doing the works of the Law and they never found salvation, so in that sense v7 is simply a restatement of Ch 9:31. He is merely repeating a point in different words which he has already established. The election in v7 are natural Jews who had found the Truth. The rest, in v7, are the remainder of natural Israel who sought salvation by law and never found the Truth. He adds another point, right at the end of the verse about those who never found truth. He says that they were blinded and if you look at your margin you will find that it says, they weren’t “blinded” they were “hardened,” they were hardened, and there is a difference you see, between being blinded and being hardened. If you are blind, in biblical terms, it means you are ignorant, you are ignorant. Well, that’s bad enough, but if you are hardened, you’ve gone beyond ignorance, you’ve become unteachable. So being hardened, you see, is one step worse than being blind, at least if you are blind there is hope, should you get educated. And this is how it works. Here’s how Israel was hardened, this is Isaiah 29v9-11, and the reason I am quoting you that is because the Apostle is making this point, in verse 7 about being hardened, and in verse 8 he is going to quote as proof Isaiah 29v10. So here is Isaiah 29v9-11 which is the Apostle’s quotation in v8 of Rom 11. “Stay yourself,” the prophet says, “and wonder, cry ye out and cry. They are drunken but not with wine, they stagger, but not with strong drink.”

So here is the nation of Israel, the southern kingdom of Judah, drunk, he says, but not with wine. Up in Ephraim, they were absolutely drunk with wine, you read about it in Isaiah 28, but in Isaiah 29 it is different. Down in Judah, they were completely inebriated but not with wine. “For Yahweh hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep. He has closed your eyes, the prophets and your rulers, the seers, hath he covered,” he says. “And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which been delivered to one that is learned, saying, read this, I pray thee, and he says, I cannot, for it is sealed.” Now what is that saying? Remember, here is the story of Isaiah 29. The nation was hardened through apathy and indifference. They became apathetic, then they became indifferent, then they became ignorant, then they became blind, then they became hardened. Israel, you see, had such an obsession, with their own model of attaining righteousness, that God gave them over to their own folly. So they stopped using their bibles for decisions in life. At some point they lost therefore their ability to reason scripturally at all, and they would go to people they respected, Isa 29, for a biblical answer, but those people no longer did the readings, those people no longer did any Bible study, and the answer would come back, ‘Well I can’t tell you. I don’t know

what the Bible means, but I don't think it applies today." You see? Not just blinded, but hardened. They were now determined against the divine message. And that's the quotation of v8. They were hardened, v7 according as it is written, "God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, ears that should not hear unto this day." In fact, that quotation in v8 is a combination of Isaiah 29v10 and Deut 29v4, two quotations stitched together. 'At some point,' he says, 'if you resist the word long enough, God gives you over to your own appetite. It's happened, you know, this very thing that we read about here in v8, it has happened in our own society. It happened to the Catholic Church. 2 Thess 2v11 tells us "Because they received not the love of the Truth, God gave them up to a strong delusion." In the same way, the Jews persisted in stubbornness, so God gave them up to a hard heart. And this blindness that you read about here, or this hardness of v7, would continue all the way through to v25 of Rom 11, "when the fullness of the Gentiles would come in." So for 2,000 years, therefore, from the 1st century, to the second coming of Christ, this hardness, or this blindness would afflict the Jewish nation like a scourge. That's how serious things have become.

Let their table be made a snare

But the consequences were even greater, look at v9-10, here is a quotation from Psa 69, "And David said," not only are they blind and hard, "but let their table be made a snare, and a trap and a stumbling block and a recompense unto them, let their eyes be darkened that they may not see, and bow down their back always." Now what does that mean? "Let their table be made a snare." Well, you might like to note in your margin, the table here is the altar, Mal 1v7, the altar is called 'the table of Yahweh.' So it is the altar, the altar of sacrifice, the brazen altar that we are talking about, as the table of Ch 11v9 of Romans. What's the point? The point is this, here's the very centrepiece of national worship, and that very centrepiece would become a snare to the nation. How, how would it? Well, you see, they believed in the ability of law to save, and so they were tricked into thinking that simply offering a sacrifice could erase all their sins no matter what their state of mind was. No matter what their other forms of conduct were. Now you think about that in our application, that would be like - well, we also have a table don't we? An altar in a manner of speaking, but this table, on a Sunday morning. How could this table become a snare. Well, it would be a bit like us attending on a Sunday morning at the memorial meeting and thinking that there is something magical about the bread and wine so that when we have the bread and wine we are forgiven, just by eating the bread, and just by eating the wine, as if those two commodities had some intrinsic value in themselves. The problem you see, is

that the emblems are just like the law, they are a tool, they are to assist self-examination, the emblems as mere emblems have no intrinsic value. And the moment that you think that you can partake of the altar of God on a Sunday morning and the altar of devils during the week, as if turning up on Sunday and drinking this magical potion of wine, and this magical substance called bread, and it erases all your sins, the moment you start to think like that, the table has become a snare, because you have made it into something it could never do, and it won't solve the problems you think it can solve, and it won't stop you bowing the knee to Baal. You might, of course, continue to be a member of the Christadelphian community, but you will no longer be a part of the remnant of Scripture. So, you see, we can fall into exactly the same trap as Israel did by thinking that law can save, or the various organs of the brotherhood of themselves can confer upon us some blessing and save us. To do that would be to make our table, a snare, because we would permit ourselves, then, certain liberties which that table could not overcome.

Well that raises the next question when you come to verse 11 of Rom 11, if Israel's rejection isn't total, that is, if there has been a remnant throughout history, is it final? All right, so God might save a remnant, but what about the rest of the nation? And more particularly, what happens when the day comes when there is no remnant left, when the nation is scattered to the four corners of the world and they lose the Truth altogether, and there IS no faithful Jew left in the world? Would God's purpose with the nation be finished then? The answer of course is 'No, even then his purpose would not be finished.' So v1-10, God's rejection is not total because there was always a remnant. V11-24, Israel's rejection is not final, because God would still have a purpose with them nationally. So look at v11. "I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? By no means but rather through their fall salvation has come to the Gentiles for to provoke them to jealousy. Now you will notice that there is a couple of occasions of the word 'fall' and they mean different things. "Have they stumbled that they should fall," that is to fall down. The word literally means 'to fall down,' and figuratively it means 'to perish.' "Have they stumbled to ultimate destruction," he says. "By no means, but rather through their mistake, through their offence, through their slip up, salvation is come to the Gentiles," he says. Now how did Israel 'trip,' how did they 'slip up?' Well they stumbled at the ritual of the Law. For one, in v9, the table became a snare. They stumbled at the sacrifice of Christ. In ch 9v32, "he became a stumbling stone to them." So they tripped over everything in their history. But though they tripped over, they wouldn't fall headlong. God would catch the nation before they perished in national destruction, that's the point. Rather than being

ultimate destruction for them it would do two things. Number 1, it would bring the Truth to the Gentiles, and Number 2, eventually, it would provoke the Jews into action. And so he says in v12, "If the fall of Israel be the riches of the Gentile world and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness," he says.

Now just bear in mind what you have read in v12 and come to v15, because it is amplified, v12 and v15 are parallel verses, and v13-14 are in parentheses between them. So v15, repeating, almost, the ideas of v12, "If the casting away of the Jews be the reconciling of the Gentile world, what shall the receiving of the Jews be, but life from the dead, for the Gentiles," you see that? And you read at the end of v12, about the "fullness of the Jews coming in," and you read at the end of v25 about the "fullness of the Gentiles coming in." So there is a whole story here, you see, between Jew and Gentile, and here's the story. In the beginning, the Jews had all the blessings you could wish for, the blessings of their election, and they despised those blessings and God demoted them. So the Jews went from here, national Israel went from here down to here like this, they were demoted in God's sight. The Gentile, meanwhile who all his life, up until the advent of Christ had spent his days in the gutter, desperately looking for an answer, lifts up his head and God says to him, 'Come to me,' and they respond immediately to that call and God elevates them, so the Jew goes from here to here, and the Gentile goes from here to here, like that. And that's the language you read, you see. The Jews would fall, they would diminish, they would be cast away, whereas the Gentiles, they would find salvation, they would find riches, they would find the reconciliation of the world. So Jew and Gentile change places like that. That is what he has just described there, and the day is going to come when Christ returns and the "fullness of the Gentiles has come in." God has harvested all he wants from the Gentile world, what then will become of the Jew? Well, he says, when Israel is received again v15, the Gentiles will get life from the dead, immortality, v15. So you see what has happened, you've got Jew and Gentile, Jew and Gentile, the Jews Area up here and the Gentiles are down here. The Jews despised the blessings they had so God demotes them and he speaks to the Gentiles who respond, and then Christ returns, and what does he do? Well he brings the Jews back up here, well if he has given that sort of mercy to the Jews, well what does he do to the Gentiles? He sends them up there into immortality, you see? And there's the fullness of the Gentiles, and that's the fullness of the Jews. That's the story he describes, between v 12, v15 and v25 of Romans Ch 11. Not very complicated, but a remarkable story.

Jew and Gentile shall be saved together

But now, read v15 again, look at this closely. “For if the casting away of the Jew be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of the Jew be, but life from the dead for the Gentile world. It is not hard to understand, but look what the Apostle is actually saying. Rom 11v15 is parallel in its own way to Rom 5v10. Rom 5v10 says, “If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more being reconciled we are saved by his life.” Can you see the relationship, therefore, between Rom 5v10 of Christ and Rom 11v15 of the Jews. We were reconciled to God by the death of his son in Rom 5, but the world was reconciled to God by the casting away of his nation in Rom 11. We are saved by Christ’s life. Well, “what shall the receiving of the Jews be but life from the dead.” In a manner of speaking we are saved by the life of the Jews. Why? Well, because when Christ comes he is going to restore national Israel and he is going to give immortality to the Gentiles. Unless Christ restores national Israel, you will not get immortality, they happen at the same time, they are the fullness of the Jews and the fullness of the Gentiles, you see? They happen at the same moment of time, or in the same epoch of time. But you can see what that is saying, you can see that the nation of Israel, in a manner of speaking, is a copy of Jesus Christ. Christ had to die that we might be saved, it is the same with Israel. “If Christ is not raised, we are yet in our sins,” and it is the same with Israel, if they are not brought back into favour, we have no prospect of eternal life. So that in that sense you see, Israel is nothing more than an unwilling, unbelieving national Messiah. You see that? An unwilling, unbelieving, national Messiah. Now you think about what God has done. He called the nation of Israel, apart from a remnant which we’ve spoken about, they did not respond as a nation, and so he sent his son into their midst, one of them from among their brethren, in their midst, and they killed him, and because of that God took that nation and he crucified them before the Gentiles and for the next 2,000 years they suffered in order to prove to the Gentiles that God has a purpose with the earth. They became, as I say, an unwilling, unbelieving National Messiah, and having spent 2,000 years in destruction they are going to be brought back on the third day, aren’t they? They are going to be brought back on the third day, that is, the third 1,000 years.

And in the midst of that, between v12-15, he’s got this little parenthetical interlude, you might say, v13-14, a little side comment, he says, ‘Now you Gentiles, I’m speaking to you, inasmuch as I am the Apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify my office, “if by any means I might provoke to emulation them which are my flesh and I might save some of them.” He says, Oh, Gentiles’ he says,

'Oh that I could teach my nation what I have taught you. I'm talking to you Gentiles because I am your Apostle, but I dearly wish that my people would respond like you have.' And now he explains in v16 why the nation of Israel must be saved. "For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy, and if the root be holy so are the branches," he says. Now what does that mean? Here is the RSV for the opening lines of v16, "If the dough offered as first fruits is holy, so is the whole lump." What does that mean, well it is this. When Israel brought in the grain harvest they offered the first fruits to God. Later on when that grain was ground into flour, the first cake they baked out of that flour was offered as a first fruits offering to God. So the point is, that God acceptance of the first fruits consecrated the whole harvest. And it is the same with the nation, God accepted the patriarchs, the fathers of the nation, thereby consecrating the entire nation. "If the root be holy," that is the patriarchs of Israel, "so are the branches," that is, their descendants. That's why God still has a purpose with the nation, look at v 28, "As concerning the gospel, the Jews are enemies for the Gentiles sake. But as touching the election, the Jews are beloved for the Fathers' sakes." So they've become enemies so that the gospel can come to us, but as far as God's selection of nationhood is concerned, He will never let them go; for the sake of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, you see? That's what he says. "If the root is holy," Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, "so are the branches." They are beloved for the fathers' sake. Therefore, God will have an eternal purpose with the nation of Israel, irrespective of the existence of any subsequent remnant.

The parable of the olive tree

Well, from v17 then, he talks about the olive tree. Now this is not a complicated section, so I don't need to go through every verse here, I've just got to tell you the basic story of the olive tree. I think you will be familiar with it, look at verse 17. "And if some of the branches be broken off and thou being a wild olive tree wert grafted in among them and with them partakest of the root and the fatness of the olive tree, boast not against the branches, but if thou boast, thou nearest not the root but the root thee." So there is an olive tree, and it is called Israel. The root is Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the trunk is Moses and the prophets and the branches are the rest of the nation. Some of those branches were broken off. Israel was hardened, of course, God removed them and the Gentiles were grafted in in their place. In that case, he says, the Gentiles ought not to think too highly of themselves. They gain, after all, all their nourishment from the stock of that tree, they are participants in the promises to Abraham. If the Gentiles brag about their position in the tree, that would be like saying that Abraham depends on us, when in fact, we depend

for salvation upon Abraham. It is not true. Beware he says to the Gentiles and you know, three times in this chapter he warns against Gentile pride. V18, "Boast not against the branches." V20, "Be not high minded but fear." V25, "Be not wise in your own conceits." It is a dangerous thing, isn't it? Very dangerous thing to have an attitude against Israel when, in fact, we are recipients of all Israel's benefits. Never forget v21. There was a day when God spared not the natural branches. There could be a day, end of v22, when thou also shall be cut off out of the olive tree. How much easier do you suppose it is for God to remove the wild branches if he has already removed the natural branches.

There's the story of the olive tree, as we said, the analogy is not a complicated analogy, but there's a twist, there's a twist, excuse the pun, but there's a twist to this good olive tree. In the process of grafting in wild branches, into good stock, was not the normal method of cultivating olives. You would never take wild branches and graft them in to an otherwise good stock. The usual practice was to take a good branch from a young olive tree, and graft it into the good stump. He speaks about that in v24, look carefully at what he says. "If thou," Gentiles, "were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into the good olive tree, how much more these which be the natural branches could be grafted back." You see what he is saying? The day you take a wild olive branch and you graft that into a good olive tree, you are doing something which is contrary to nature. This is how Bro John Carter puts it in his book on Romans. "An ungrafted tree will never produce really good fruit, however noble be the stock, or the stump, from which it is derived. The olive is grown from the shoot of a good tree and it is planted in well-prepared ground, carefully tended and treated. When the young tree is 7-10 years old, it is chopped out of the ground and it is grafted with a shoot from the best stock procurable. The wild olive plays no part whatsoever in the life of the ordinary olive tree." You see that, but we take a good olive and we graft it into good stock, and one regenerates the other and it produces more olives than it might naturally produce if you simply grew a tree from a root. The process which Paul had in view, however, is still in use in exceptional circumstances, and that's the point, "contrary to nature." Some times you would do this "contrary to nature," thing. It is customary to reinvigorate an olive tree which is ceasing to bear fruit, by grafting it with the shoot of the wild olive tree, so that the sap of the tree enobles this wild shoot and the tree now again begins to bear fruit. What if the stock of the olive tree had got old, what if even though you were grafting good branches into it, they still didn't bring the fruit, well you would give the thing a shock, and you would pull out all those dead branches and you would take a wild olive, and you

would graft it in, and the sap would go up and down like this, and it would defibrillate the stump of the tree, back into activity, “contrary to nature,” he says. That what happens. Do you understand what he is saying here? What he is simply saying here is, end of v11, that that wild branch would provoke the stock to jealousy. That wild branch would provoke jealousy, as it were in the stock, and it would push fruit out of that olive tree. That’s what he is doing, that’s what he did when he grafted the Gentiles in. It was “contrary to nature,” because it was an emergency. The olive tree of Israel was dying and so he does something that on rare occasions might reinvigorate that tree. And all of a sudden, that tree comes back to life.

But there is something going on here, you see. There is a progression happening in this chapter. Look at the v23. In verse 23 he says, “And they also, if they abide,” the Jews, “not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.” And you read v23 and you look again, and you say, ‘Well, look, there is a possibility, it is a possibility the Jews could be redrafted, because God is able to do it.’ Verse 24, in fact, he says at the end, “How much more shall these natural branches be grafted back into the olive tree.” It is much easier to graft natural branches back in than graft wild branches in, we’ve moved from the possibility of v23 to the probability of v24. And by the time you get to v26, he says, “And so all Israel shall be saved.” We’ve gone from a possibility to a probability, to a certainty, in v26, do you see that? It is a certainty. On the strength of that therefore, how could the Gentile ever be high minded? So what do you think it means, brothers and sisters, and young people for a Gentile to be “high-minded” about his position in the olive tree. What does it mean? Well it would mean that we would say something like, that we were special. There was something more special about us than there was about the Jews, that perhaps we would never do the kind of sins that the nation of Israel ever did. That we might, perhaps, play fast and loose with the Truth, thinking, somehow, that we were immune to the curse of God, even though the nation of Israel wasn’t, that they were more special in God’s sight than those people. Think again. Think again! What would make you ever think that based on the lessons of the olive tree? Never do it, never, never think yourself high minded and therefore allow yourself liberties which would destroy the nation of Israel, and pretend that those same liberties wouldn’t destroy you. Never do it.

But here’s the question, who knew this was ever going to occur? Who ever knew that those branches would be brought back into the olive tree? Who ever

knew that God would take such emergency and graft wild branches into the olive tree, look at v25. "I would not brethren that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in." "I don't want you to be ignorant," now this is quite serious what he says here. "I don't want you to be ignorant of this mystery," that is to say, 'I'm going to tell you something very important, listen closely. It is a mystery you've got to understand.' Now the word 'mystery' is the Greek 'misterion' and it just means 'a secret.' What is the difference between a mystery and a secret? Well a mystery, of course, is something that nobody understands, or nobody knows. A secret is different. A secret is something which a few people know. Most people don't know, otherwise it is not a secret, it's public. Most people don't know it, but a few people do. A mystery, no one knows it. The meaning of the word 'misterion' is the word 'secret,' he says "I don't want you to be ignorant of this secret." It is not a mystery it is a secret. Well what is the secret? The secret is this, that God has put Israel to one side while he focuses his plan on the Gentiles. But the fact that he uses this word 'mystery' or 'secret' here is highly significant because he uses exactly the same word in the context of the Gentiles. Here's Eph Ch 3, look at this. "When ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ," says Paul. So here's the mystery of Christ in Eph 3:4. "This mystery which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men as it is now revealed unto his holy Apostles and prophets by the spirit, that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel."

So there was a secret, a secret concerning the Gentiles, buried deep in the Old Testament, not made known in other ages to the sons of men." And that secret was that the Gentiles would one day share the hope of Israel. And it was a secret, you see, because very few Jews ever understood it. But you know what, that's not the only secret. So what are we saying here? Very deep in the Old Testament is a secret that very few Jews ever understood, and the secret was, that Gentiles would one day share the hope of Israel. But here in Rom 11v25 there is another secret. Buried deep in the New Testament, very few Gentiles ever understand it, and what is it? That all Israel shall be saved. You see, there are two secrets and the Jews never understood the Gentiles secret, and the Gentile Christian world today scarcely understands the Jewish secret. One secret was buried deep in the Old Testament, the second secret in v25 here, very deep in the New Testament, obscured from all but the remnant, you see? So "All Israel shall be saved, as it is written, there shall come out of Zion the deliverer who shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob, and this is my

covenant with them when I shall take away their sins,” he says, quoting Isa 59v20, Psa 14v7, Isa 27v9. And so serious is this, and so established is it, v29 he says, “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” The NIV says, “They are irrevocable.” God is not going to change his mind about the restoration of Israel. And in their day, as many Gentiles understand that secret, as the Jews, as the Jews did in the Old Testament about the Gentiles. But he says, do you want to see the power of that? V30, “And ye Gentiles, in time past have not believed God, ye have now obtained mercy through the Jewish unbelief.” That was the rise and the fall of Jew and Gentile we described earlier. “Even so, these Jews also now not believed that for your mercy,” or as it ought to be, “the mercy shown to you” “those Jews may also obtain mercy.” That is when you get eternal life, they get regathered and re-elevated as a nation, that’s what he is saying.

So in times past, as these Gentiles were disobedient but they obtained mercy when the Jews became disobedient. When Christ comes the Jews will receive mercy even though they are at present disobedient, and because of that abundant mercy will be shown to the Gentiles and they will get life from the dead. V32, “For God has concluded,” or “locked up all in unbelief,” that is Jew and Gentile, “that he might have mercy upon all.” You have to delete the word ‘them’ in v32, ‘God has concluded them all,’ because if you were to read “God has concluded them all,” you might think that he is only talking about the Jews, he is talking about both groups of people. Jew and Gentile have both been included in unbelief, that they might both receive God’s mercy. And having said that, where at the end of the chapter the Apostle stands back now and he looks in awe at the wisdom of God’s plan of salvation. In v33-34 he makes almost his final quotation. “Oh,” he says, “the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are God’s judgments and his ways past finding out. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor.” That quotation in v34 comes from Isa 40v15 which talks all about God’s wisdom in creating the earth at the beginning.

Let me just quote you Isa 40, let’s just read a little wider than v13 which is quoted here in v34. In v12, “Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in the scales and the hills in a balance,” and so God has weighed everything one over against the other in the world he created. So there is a high mountain here, counterbalanced by a deep ocean here. There is oxygen being consumed by animal kind here, and

produced by trees over here. This enormous balance in every strata of creation. "Who hath directed the spirit of Yahweh or been his counsellor," is our quotation. Who has taught him, with whom took he counsel and who instructed him and taught him in the path of judgment and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?" And it is Isa 40, note well, in v4 that it says, "Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill made low." What is the point? Well, you think about Isa 40 in the context of Rom 11. Once upon a time the Jew was elevated and the Gentile wasn't. The Jew had great privileges but he never acknowledged them and he became arrogant. And there was a Gentile in the gutter and he became nauseated by his own condition desperate for answers to the meaningful questions of life, and so there was a mountain and a valley. And God turned the scales and he elevated the Gentiles and he demoted the Jews. And the Gentile responded with a change of heart. And now for 2,000 years the Jew has been on the bottom, trampled under the heel of the Gentile, thrashed within an inch of his life, and desperate for the answers to the meaningful questions of life. But the Jew hasn't got there yet, has he? He's come back to the land of Israel, but the blessings that have come upon that nation over the last 60 years have only served to galvanise his own arrogance, until the day that Russia comes down, and hangs that nation out to dry like they've never known in history. I mean when Russia enters the land, brothers and sisters and young people, it will be the final solution that they could only have dreamed of, won't it. And the moment is going to come when every Jewish knuckles gone white and they are gasping their last breath of nationhood and then the deliverer comes. He destroys the Russians, he melts the heart of the Jewish people, like has never happened in 4,000 years since Abraham, and all of a sudden, the Jew is brought back to the forefront of the purpose of God, and the mountain and the valley are reversed, aren't they? And now Jew and Gentile look each other in the eye, both having traversed identical histories. Both having been "my people," both having been "not my people," so that when Christ returns, Jew and Gentile are at a common level, and the entire balance of the human creation is seen for what it is, and both Jew and Gentile experience the mercy of God together. There's the balance between them, that's why he quotes Isa 40, that's the wisdom of God. So how would you summarise then, Rom 9-11? Well, what is my summary? In all this, the Apostle says when he opens up Ch 9, I have one unceasing sorrow. My own people who were especially prepared for the Messiah have failed to accept him. So does that mean God's promises are frustrated? No, God never intended to save all natural Israel anyway, rather, spiritual Israel, including the Gentiles. Is God unrighteousness in that he saves some and rejects others. No, election is a matter of mercy, not a matter of righteousness. God's foreknowledge means that his selection is

sound, in any case, he does not reject people until they fail to respond to him. But Israel did fail to respond. Why? Because they sought their own righteousness and not God's. And even though righteousness by faith is clearly taught in the Old Jewish Testament. That's Ch 9. Well, perhaps Israel didn't understand, Ch 10. Nonsense, the Gentiles who had none of Israel's privileges had no problem understanding, Israel was just plain disobedient. Well then, Ch 11, has God's purpose with the nation of Israel finished? No, he says. Not all Israel was unfaithful, a remnant would always be saved, and as for the nation, their time will come, God will restore them when he saves the faithful Gentiles. This twofold salvation demonstrates the wisdom of God.

Transcription by Fay Berry 2017.