

Parson to Person

ROMANS 11 PART 4

“I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, ‘LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life’? But what does the divine response say to him? ‘I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.’ Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.

What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. Just as it is written: ‘God has given them a spirit of stupor eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day.’ And David says: ‘Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a recompense to them. Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their back always.’

I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!

For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them. For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

You will say then, ‘Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.’ Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.’ Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! ‘For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?’ ‘Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?’ For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen” (Romans 11:1–36 NKJV).

Israel was from the beginning chosen by God to be a peculiar people. They were elected for His pleasure. He chose them in order to make Himself known to them, then through them, for the benefit of the whole world. This unique blessing is communicated throughout the Old and New Testaments.

Beginning in Genesis we read of God’s word to Abraham saying, *“I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”* (Genesis 12:2–3 NKJV).

Shortly after this initial interchange God told Abraham, *“Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.’ And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be”* (Genesis 15:5 NKJV). These

promises show us that the nation would be blessed and be a blessing to the whole world. (Note that Abraham was the “father” of the nation of Israel through his son Isaac, grandson Jacob, and great grandsons—who became fathers to the tribes of the nation.)

Moses wrote to Israel, of Israel, saying, *“For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth”* (Deuteronomy 14:2 NKJV). One of the Psalmists wrote, *“For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His special treasure”* (Psalm 135:4 NKJV). These two passages alone prove that God has chosen Israel. Moreover, His covenant with them includes the fact that what He did in calling them will include a fulfillment of all the things He intended in His purposes with them. (See Isaiah 46:9-10, Hebrews 6:13-18)

When Paul wrote to the Romans saying, *“For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches”* (Romans 11:16 NKJV), he was teaching that God had set apart the “firstfruit” and “root” (Abraham and the patriarchs) making them “holy” and therefore showing that the whole of the nation (the “lump” and “branches”—all the descendants) were “holy” too! This was his way of showing the Romans that God has a special relationship with Israel and has set them apart for Himself—for His own purposes.

Paul’s use of the word “holy” was not used to suggest that Israel was “righteous” or “obedient.” He was simply showing that God had elected to set them apart for His own purposes (similar to “holy” vessels used for worship in the Tabernacle or Temple). However, inasmuch as the Jews were specially privileged and set apart as “holy,” many were rebellious and unbelieving. Therefore, the rebellious forfeited their position and blessing—being cut off from the promises they would have otherwise enjoyed. For this reason, Jesus later warned that, *“...many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”* (Matthew 8:11–12 NKJV).

The Jews who rejected Jesus (and do) through their rebellion and unbelief will forfeit the Kingdom and blessings promised the nation. However, Paul gave hope to the Gentiles who appreciate the blessings and privileges, saying that they can be grafted into the promises forfeited by the unbelieving Jews: *“some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them”* (vs. 17).

This glorious blessing must be appreciated and embraced. Moreover, it must be received in humility and thankfulness—even for the Jewish nation—*“for salvation is of the Jews”* (John 4:22).

A warning followed the offer being made to the Gentiles—pointing out the temptation to reject the Jews (think Replacement Theology and/or Antisemitism) and think more highly of one’s self than any Gentile should. For this reason, Paul wrote, *“do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.”*

Distressingly, many believers have concluded that God has rejected Israel and replaced the Jews with the Gentile Church. This is both untrue and certainly not what Paul was teaching! Moreover, Gentiles who (like Israel) reject the blessings promised the people of faith—through unbelief—will themselves be cut off and forfeit the blessings afforded them in the Lord Jesus!

Therefore, my friends, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be blessed in receiving all God has promised those who love Him. Then and only then will the words of Peter belong to you. *“You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy”* (1 Peter 2:9–10 NKJV).

Happy New Year, my Friends!

I love you all,

Pastor Paul