

THE CURRENT STATUS OF GOD'S WORK WITH MANKIND | ROMANS 11:11-15

- Verse 11 –
 - **I say then...** - The pronoun **they** is reference to unbelieving Israel, not the elect remnant. This totally disqualifies an idea that says that God is not dealing with the Jewish nation but only the Jewish remnant. **God forbid** that the nation itself should have **stumbled that they should fall**.
 - **through their fall** - The word **fall** here is παράπτωμα [paraptoma], most often translated *trespass*. It does not contradict with the earlier statement in the verse, where **fall** is πίπτω [pipto], a literal or spiritual fall.
 - **salvation is come** - This is incidental to the argument of the security of Israel, but Paul shows the blessing that God has given, and the current state of affairs. Rather than judgment or separation/hopelessness, God allowed for a time in which **salvation is come unto the Gentiles**.
 - **for to provoke them** - This is the ultimate "it's not about me" wake up call for the church. The church age is not directly for the salvation of the church, but rather **to provoke them** [unsaved Israel] **to jealousy**.
- Verse 12 –
 - Here we have what could be the theme verse of the book of Acts.
 - By the **fall of them...and the diminishing of them** the **Gentiles** have experienced salvation. However, the **fullness** of Israel, which is yet to come, will be so much more (as will be explained in v. 15).
 - The word for fall is the same **fall** which is *sin* or *trespass* in v 11.
- Verse 13 –
 - Strangely, the Gentiles of the church tend to diminish the office which Paul magnified.
 - They want to make all apostolic offices the same, either by making Israel and the Church to be the same thing or making the Church replace Israel.
 - In reality, Israel has one role, the Church has another role, and both are blessed roles. And, it seems, both get jealous of the other!
- Verse 14 - The magnification of Paul's office can **provoke to emulation** the Jews in the flesh, toward salvation.
- Verse 15 –
 - Paul comes back to his first thought: **the casting away** of Israel.
 - He concludes that God has done a gracious **reconciling of the world** because of this casting away, but also that the current *away* condition of Israel is temporary, and the future **receiving of them** will be **life from the dead**.
 - This is probably a prophetic clue, for when Israel is received, the Messiah will return and the resurrection will take place.

THE SPIRITUAL STATUS OF ISRAEL AND THE GENTILES | ROMANS 11:16-24

- Verse 16 - Using two illustrations (the **firstfruits** and the **root**), Paul gives example of the holy purpose of the entire nation. In spite of the current condition (v. 8), the holy purpose remains.
- Verse 17 –
 - It is important to understand what this verse says and what it does not say.
 - **some of the branches** is a reference to the portion of Israel that is in the temporary blindness (v. 8).
 - **be broken off** is a reference to the temporary blindness. Note that it cannot be a reference to a permanent loss of the Abrahamic blessings, because they can be grafted in again (v. 23).
 - **wild olive tree** is a reference to the gentiles (v. 13). Once grafted in, these branches will **partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree**.
 - The big question: what exactly is **the olive tree**?
 - Is it the Abrahamic covenant? Since this is a covenant of land, there is no indication that the gentiles can claim the land of Israel.

- Is it the Mosaic covenant? This is the *old covenant*, under which even the Jewish nation is currently not obligated. Living under the Law will not bring you into the Abrahamic covenant nor the promised blessings of the Law (Heb. 8).
 - Is it the Davidic covenant? This covenant is the promise of a Messiah who will destroy the empires of the world, and has not yet been fulfilled.
 - Is it the New Covenant? The description of the New Covenant shows that it is yet future in its fulfillment.
 - Is it salvation by grace through faith? It cannot be, because verse 21 would imply a loss of salvation.
 - The tree/root, then, must be equated to the plan and purpose of God in the world. Where they were once **aliens from the commonwealth of Israel...having no hope**, now God **hath broken down the middle wall of partition** and Gentiles are part of God's plan and purpose for this age. Therefore, Paul magnifies his office (v. 13).
 - Any other definition of the tree, outside of the plan and purpose of God, hits theological issues when carried to its end.
 - Note: many interpreters see the tree as the "collective people of God." This causes theological error in that there becomes no distinction between Israel and the church.
- Verse 18 –
 - An attitude of arrogance against blinded Israel or smug self-righteousness in comparison with Israel is unbiblical. The only reason the gentile church exists is the gracious plan and purpose of God, which will not supplant the plan and purpose as taught in the Hebrew Scriptures, but is only temporary or parenthetical.
 - Note: from v. 18-22 Paul uses the second person singular rather than the plural. It is assumed that he writes to a non-existent but individual gentile who is symbolically representative of the Gentiles as a whole. This use of the imaginary representative is almost essential since God is not dealing with nations in the age of Grace.
- Verse 19 –
 - This is Paul's example of the boasting that could take place among the gentiles. It is an attitude that puts "me" at the center of God's plan.
 - How is this boasting done in the modern church?
 - By hate-filled comments about Jewish unbelief (while the same are overflowing with love toward the neighboring Muslims in their unbelief).
 - By replacement theology of all stripes (the church replaces Israel / Jesus replaces Israel / amillennialism, postmillennialism, etc.)
- Verse 20 - In Greek there is an easily seen contrast. The Israelites were **broken off** because of ἀπιστία [apistia] and the saved gentiles **standest by faith** πίστει [pistei].
- Verse 21 - The **natural branches** were the Jewish generation that should have believed, and thus participated in God's plan for Israel. Because they failed to believe, God **spared not** this generation nor their offspring, but placed them into a temporary blindness. The purpose and plan of God today is to individuals (neither Jew nor Gentile), and this generation should **be not highminded, but fear** (v. 20) lest God bring the times of the gentiles to a close.
- Verse 22 –
 - This verse introduces an intriguing thought: Could it be that God extends the age of grace as long as the nations **continue in his goodness**, but when they cease to do so, **thou also shalt be cut off?** (See note on v. 25 concerning the **fulness of the Gentiles**).
 - Note again that a "fall from grace" scenario can be made from this verse if not properly interpreted.
- Verse 23 - The day will certainly come when Israel is no longer in **unbelief**, and in that day will be restored, collectively, to the covenant relationship with God.
- Verse 24 - Paul goes back to his illustration to show the ease at which God could graft the nation back into His plan and purpose.