

ROMANS 11:11-16 "Israel's Loss Is The Gentiles' Gain"

The Jews have rejected their Messiah and Paul writes that God is not happy over their choice. Israel was seeking for a Messiah made in their own image and so as Paul says in Rom.1:7 "That which Israel is seeking for it has not obtained."

And because Israel, as a whole, had hardened their hearts towards God, God continues the process as part of His judgment on their unbelief. And so, last week we saw Paul's indictment on Israel as he quoted from Isaiah, which we see in Rom 11:8, "as it is written: "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day."

As we pick up in our text we see that Paul repeats what he stated so clearly at the beginning of this chapter, because He wanted to clarify that, though this judgment from God could give the impression that it was a total cutting off of all Jews, it was not as it related to individual Jews within the larger nation which was cut off as the representative for God.

Rom 11:11 "Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious."

In the sovereignty of God He used a tragic situation and turned it into a blessing. The rejection of one turned into the acceptance of the other. Paul essentially says, 'it is because of Israel's transgression, their sin and subsequent punishment, that the Gentiles, had opened up to them, a window of opportunity as God turned to them with the covenant blessings Israel rejected.'

In fact this is precisely the way Paul put it when writing to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 2:11-16 ¹¹ Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision " by the so-called "Circumcision," *which is performed in the flesh by human hands--* ¹² *remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.* ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, ¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh

the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

The Gentiles, as a group, were excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, which is another way of saying that the blessings and the covenants that God bestowed on Israel, including the promise of a Messiah to redeem them, was something the Gentile nations did not have the privilege of experiencing from God.

But the inference is clear from what Paul says that now they do share in the commonwealth of Israel, found in Christ alone by faith, as they share in the promise of eternal life and an eternal kingdom that Israel rejected. Unfortunately, Israel could not even live under the temporal kingdom to be ruled by God on earth as they abandoned God as King and chose a man to rule over them found in Saul.

Now, again, this is not to say that God's plan had not always included the Gentiles, and that as long as Israel remained faithful the Gentiles would be excluded. No, it meant simply that now was the acceptable time for the Gentiles to be issued into the Kingdom, en masse, if you will, because of Israel's rejection. This was one of the mysteries of God's word regarding salvation. Paul speaks to this in his letter written to a primarily Gentile church in Ephesus.

Eph 3:2-9 "Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³ that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. ⁴ In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. ⁶ This mystery is that ***through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body***, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. ⁷ I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. ⁸ Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things."

The Jews had the responsibility to bring the "light" to the Gentile nations, inviting the Gentiles to taste the mercy and kindness of God as He forgives sinners. Instead the Jews became even more indignant toward the Gentiles, hiding the truth of the one true God through their disobedience.

We see a picture of this attitude, many years before, in the life of a man by the name of Jonah. Jonah was a Jew and a prophet of God during the times of Amaziah the King of Judah around the years 780-770 B.C.

Israel was in a state of rebellion against God. In 2Kin.14:24 it says, "that [Amaziah] did evil in the sight of the Lord; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin."

In the midst of all this rebellion by Israel God sends Jonah on a mission to the Gentiles. You know the story. Jonah doesn't want to go to the Gentiles. He gets on a ship to Tarshish, which by the way most archaeologists don't know with certainty where it's located; but on the way to Tarshish a great storm comes up, Jonah is voluntarily thrown overboard and a great sea animal (big fish or whale) swallows him and then deposits him on the shore.

A lot of people think that Jonah was deposited on the shores of Ninevah by this sea creature. Not so.

Jonah 2:9 - 3:3 ⁹ But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from the LORD." ¹⁰ Then the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land. ^{NAU} **Jonah 3:1** Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, ² "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you." ³ So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three days' walk.

Ninevah is located on the Tigris River in what we know today as Iraq. In fact, if a great sea creature were to take Jonah to the door step of Ninevah it would have had to go 1500 miles down through the Red sea, around the tip of Arabia, another 1500 miles and then through the Persian Gulf, another 500 miles, and then finally up in the Tigris river, which of course turns to fresh water, another 600 miles or so.

God could certainly have accomplished that for Jonah, but instead He places Jonah on dry land where he has to make the rest of the trek on foot.

Ninevah would be about 150 miles north of today's city, Baghdad. Wherever, Jonah ended up by the sea creature he was only a three days journey from Ninevah. So apparently, the sea creature did get him pretty close.

Now, getting back to my point. And I had one. Jonah, a Jew, and a prophet of God did not want the pagan Gentiles to hear a word from the Lord. Why? Jonah tells us.

Jon 4:1-2 "But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. 2 He prayed to the LORD, "O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity."

Jonah, and by implication the Jews in general, did not want the Gentiles to taste and see that the Lord is good. And yet, it was God's plan to have the Gentiles be part of His Kingdom. Jonah didn't see the Ninevites as people, human beings in need of deliverance.

After Jonah delivered his message from God to the Ninevites and they repented and believed God, Jonah grew weary and angry. God had a plant grow up over Jonah to shade him. Jonah was happy about that. But then God caused a worm to eat the plant and Jonah became sad to the point where he just wanted to die.

Here was God's response. And it's this response which Paul understood to be the mystery of God concerning the Gentiles.

Jon 4:10-11 "But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. 11 But Ninevah has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?"

You and I as Christians must never lose sight of the fact that real people in this world are dying every day. Real people are lost in their sins and separated from God. And sometimes our attitudes are: 'I'm busy being religious in my own world, let them fend for themselves. I've got my salvation. Let them get theirs.'

No, God says, 'I desire to show compassion to those you and I might consider unlovely.' He says, 'go and show my love and compassion to a lost world.' The Jews chose to keep God to themselves. But when we do not surrender to the truth that God is meant to be shared and not hid, we end up with a warped view of God.

We begin placing on God our biases, our bigotry, our complacency. And, like the Jews, it can become very easy to sit at ease and think that God's plan for us on this earth is one of just hanging out with Him until we die. God says, 'I've saved a people for myself to tell others, including those, like the Ninevites who, according to our understanding, don't deserve to come to God.

This is why Paul traveled and proclaimed with a passion to the Gentiles that they too might have eternal life with Christ. But, he never forgot the Jews, because like the Gentiles God would call out His remnant from every corner of the world to form one people as Paul told the Gentiles in Ephesus.

Ephesians 3:6 ... the Gentiles are *fellow heirs* and *fellow members* of the body, and *fellow partakers* of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,

But it was through Israel's transgression that salvation has come to the Gentiles. But even that was meant to bring many Jews to the Lord. Paul says that this was done to make them jealous.

Now, that sounds like an odd sort of thing. How does jealousy bring someone to God? Or is it even designed by God to accomplish that? We know that jealousy in people is an attribute that can lead to anger, separation and frustration. But jealousy is a legitimate response to the unfaithfulness of people where even God demonstrates such an attribute.

Exo 34:14 "Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, *whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.*"

God has many names. Jehovah, The Almighty, King of Kings, Lord of lords and the list goes on and on. But Jealous? God's name is Jealous? You bet. In short it speaks of His demanding that all who follow Him are faithful to Him. He expects nothing less.

But there's a negative side of jealousy, which produces envy, strife, hatred and so on. And it would seem that Paul believes that this aspect of jealousy will cause some Jews to come to Christ.

After yet, in the past we see how the Jews were pushed to jealousy and in all of those cases they seemed to be pushed further away from God, not closer.

Act 5:12,16-18 "The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. 16 Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed. 17 Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. 18 They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail."

Jealousy didn't seem to drive them to the Lord. Or what about Act 17:5 "But the Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd."

Again, making the Jews jealous, concerning the truth of God's word as it relates to the Gentiles, didn't seem to soften their hearts. And yet Paul desires for them to be jealous of the way God was working with the Gentiles.

I believe there is a two-fold reason. Number one it was to be in fulfillment of God's word that they would be repelled by such jealousy.

Rom 10:19-21 "Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, "I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding." [Deut. 32:21] 20 And Isaiah boldly says, "I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me." [Isaiah 65:1] 21 But concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people." [Isaiah 65:2]

But in the jealousy a blessing could come. If Israel didn't give a hoot about what Paul was doing and preaching they would have gone their merry way and would have been indifferent about the truth.

The fact is this jealousy kept the flames alive and enabled Paul to get an audience from the Jews wherever he went. It may not have been a very receptive audience but at least it forced them to hear

God's truth and gospel. God says, 'I would have you hot or cold, but if you're lukewarm I will spew you out of my mouth.'

The Jews were hot with anger but cold to the truth. But they could never be accused of being lukewarm when it came to this Gospel that Paul brought them.

They either embraced it whole-heartedly, or rejected it with such venom that they wanted to kill Paul. Paul says, 'I hope, that in the Gentiles coming to Christ, the Jews will continue to give me an ear.' And that's why Paul continues this thought in verse 14 where he says "in the hope that I may somehow *arouse my own people to envy (jealousy) and save some of them.*"

He never expected that the "nation" of Israel would come to grips with the Messiah, but he knew God had a remnant within the nation as He had a remnant among all the Gentiles to whom He would reveal Himself.

But again, Paul saw how the Jews have been used by God to bring the Messiah into the world. Despite how they rebelled against God for hundreds of years God was still at work in the Jews.

And so Paul makes the point in Rom 11:12 "But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!"

This is why Paul never gives up on his countrymen, those individual Jews who made up the larger group, Israel. He basically says, 'look how their sinful condition is able to bless the Gentile nations as God leaves them for a time and seeks the lost of the Gentile world.

And for that reason Paul continues to be faithful to his ministry to the Gentiles so that God might now use the Gentiles to bring the truth to the world including the Jews. That's what Paul meant when he says in Rom.11:13-14.... "But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. In as much then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them."

Don't ever think that it's impossible for someone you know and love to come to Christ who seems to want nothing to do with Christ. Never give up. Always pray on their behalf that God might open their eyes and that He might even use you to give them the truth in love.

Paul was beat down, discouraged, heavy in heart on many occasions concerning Israel. But he always had the hope that some might hear who had ears to hear and see with eyes to see. Why? He said it earlier in this letter and we should never forget.

Rom 1:16 "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."

It's God's power that saves, not yours or mine. But He is pleased to demonstrate His power through His Spirit as His gospel is proclaimed by His people.

That's why the pressure needs to be taken off you and me when it comes to sharing the gospel. If we don't share because we think somehow that it depends on our eloquence, or on our vast knowledge concerning God's word, then we will be tempted to think that it depends on us as to the results of our sharing.

Paul was the first to admit that.

2Co 11:6 "I may not be a trained speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way."

Paul had vast knowledge but that wasn't the thrust of what he meant. His knowledge was in the truth that Jesus Christ came to die for sinners of which he claimed to be chief.

You and I have that knowledge as well. We know the Savior and we know what He's done for us, even if we may be limited in the knowledge of all of what the scriptures say concerning our Messiah.

If you know you're a sinner in need of a Savior, who must pay your debt through His shed blood on the cross, and who rose victoriously from the grave defeating sin and death, then you have all the knowledge you need to lead someone to the truth that Jesus alone is our Savior.

Of course we should always be learning more of our Savior and His truth. That's one reason you're here this morning. But let's never think that a vast knowledge is the thing responsible for giving power to God's gospel. The power to save lives comes from God as He is pleased to use imperfect vessels like you and me to send forth the truth.

In fact, there was another evangelist who felt he was incapable to bring the truth to his people but was encouraged to go forth in the power of God.

Exo 4:10-12 "Moses said to the LORD, "O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue." 11 The LORD said to him, "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD? 12 Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say."

Praise God He is our teacher. The only thing He wants from any of us is a teachable heart and a willingness to obey when He says, go!

Rom 11:15 "For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?"

This is somewhat a repetition of verse 12. You and I have been reconciled to God because God shifted His attention from Israel to the world at large thereby bringing reconciliation to all, both Jew and Gentile. But, if their rejection can be such a blessing to us imagine what their acceptance will be, not only for the world, but for themselves. Life from the dead. New life, resurrection life. Life with purpose and power to accomplish God's will.

Rom 11:16 "If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches."

This is an important verse and we won't be able to go much further than this this morning, but this verse shows us why God's chosen people, who come from both Israel and the Gentile world, share in a blessing that has as its root holiness.

This thought of Paul's is taken from the O.T. where Moses was told by God in Exo.15:18-21...."Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'When you enter the land where I bring you, then it shall be, that when you eat of the food of the land, you shall lift up an offering to the Lord.

Of the first of your dough (or coarse meal) you shall lift up a cake as an offering; as the offering of the threshing floor, so you shall lift it up. From the first of your dough you shall give to the Lord an offering throughout your generations."

What God is saying to Israel is that 'when you dedicate yourselves to Me, in accordance to My word, the first part of your blessing that I've given to you, will be set aside for Me, and then the whole of what you possess will be blessed by Me.'

Paul uses this analogy with Israel when he says that, "If the first piece of dough be holy, the lump is also." To understand who the lump is we must understand who the first piece of dough is. Because if this first piece of dough has been made holy or consecrated to the Lord then the lump will also be consecrated or made holy for God's use.

And next week we'll see who that is. It may surprise you. Let me end with an encouragement from God to you and me. You see, you and I have also been called to be consecrated to God for a holy purpose.

You and I are a special part of God's plan to bring this light of His gospel to a lost world. Instead of being like a Jonah who's only concerned about a comfort zone where we don't want to be responsible for the lost who may rock the boat, God wants us to see what a great privilege it is to serve the most High God who commands us to go into all the world.

The word consecrate in the Hebrew is *qadash* and it means to be set apart. Its Greek counterpart is *hagios*, which means sacred or holy.

You and I have been called out by God Himself and He has set us apart from the world to be sacred vessels for His use with a holy purpose. That purpose is to demonstrate to the world that we are a people called out by God and who have been called upon by God to take a holy message of hope to the world. In this hope we glory in His mercy and love.

Later in this same letter to the Romans Paul says this:

Rom 12:1-2 "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. 2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Worship is often relegated to something we do on a Sunday morning. Paul says our entire lives are to demonstrate worship. And that love for God in the form of worship will be seen and felt

by the world as we conform, by faith and obedience, to the will of God according to His word.

Seek Him with all your heart and ask Him how He may use you, a holy and consecrated child of God in Christ. A child of God set apart for a holy purpose, an eternal purpose.