

ROMANS 11:1-24

GRATEFUL FOR OUR ELDER BROTHERS

“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. 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? ‘Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.’ But what is God’s reply to him? ‘I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.’ So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

“What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, 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.’

And David says,

‘Let their table become a snare and a trap,
a stumbling block and a retribution for them;
let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see,
and bend their backs forever.’

“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. 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!

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

“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, 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. Then you will say, ‘Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.’ That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So, do not become proud, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. 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. 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. 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.”¹

Christians, twice-born individuals who love the Risen Son of God, cannot be anti-Semites. This is undoubtedly a bold statement, but it must be stated. Again, I emphasise, Christians cannot be anti-Semites; and if one professing to love the Saviour harbours such vile, wicked sentiments, that individual must immediately jettison these ungodly attitudes. No church of the Lord Jesus Christ can permit such sinful attitudes to fester within the assembly. I iterate that one who is born from above and into the Family of God cannot be anti-Semitic. I make this assertion in the full knowledge that our world is more openly opposed to Israel and to the Jewish people today than at any time during the years of my life. Acceptance of and approval of anti-Semitism is increasingly popular in contemporary western society.

Whenever one professing to know Christ Jesus as Saviour speaks disparagingly of God’s Chosen People, the Jewish people, such an individual at best displays woeful ignorance of the Word of God and of the will of God. The most generous statement that could be made of such a person is that he or she is untaught and still in the grip of attitudes best described as worldly; at worst, such an individual is guilty of denying the Son of God. If God chose the Jewish nation to be “entrusted with the oracles of God” [see **ROMANS 3:2**], it would be sufficient cause for anyone to show respect for the Jewish people.

More persuasive still for any follower of the Saviour is the knowledge that “from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever” [**ROMANS 9:5**]. Beyond this, the Apostle asserts, “Has God rejected his people? By no means” [**ROMANS 11:1a**]! Knowing of God’s love for the Jewish people, knowing His deliberate choice to deliver His Word through Israel and knowing that Christ was born within the Jewish milieu, any individual who would honour Jesus as Master and Saviour cannot be an anti-Semite.

I was disgusted and horrified as I saw on newscasts images of individuals parading in a Virginia city this past August. Many within that group were seen chanting anti-Jewish slogans during the march. The slogans were as repulsive and reprehensible as those that had been chanted by participants of the Women’s March in Washington the previous spring. Hatred of Jews was something that one might have heard whispered in an earlier era, but few individuals were so brazen as to be openly anti-Semitic. What is especially repugnant with such anti-Semitic slogans is that whether chanted by people purporting to be alt-right or whether shouted by Antifa rioters or Black Lives Matter demonstrators, the sentiments, and even the slogans, are identical to those once spit out by Nazi sloganeers. And the chants of German and Italian Fascists echo those shouted out centuries earlier by European anti-Semites during the numerous pogroms and bellowed out in Muslim countries even to this day.

Perhaps we pastors have been remiss in instructing parishioners biblical doctrine intersecting with the Jewish people. It is sometimes difficult to dissociate the Jewish people from the State of Israel. Even in this, however, Christians should be cautious about rejecting Israel simply because it is a Jewish State. No individual will approve of every political decision in any nation—not even Canada. What must not be allowed, however, is slipping into hatred toward the Jew as God’s beloved people. We Christians are redeemed by the grace of God in Christ the Lord. God loves us, but we have not displaced Israel as the apple of God’s eye.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

At this time of national Thanksgiving, I am arguing that Christians must always recognise the grace that God has provided; and we must never forget that this grace was brought to us through His ancient people. Recognising God's kindness toward us, we should rejoice in the grace we have received and be grateful that He has used the Jewish nation to bless all mankind. We give thanks for this great salvation, and we give thanks that God used the nation of Israel to bring this salvation to us.

GOD HAS NOT REJECTED HIS PEOPLE WHOM HE FOREKNEW. Dr. James Montgomery Boice writes, "The present discussion began in Romans 9, following Paul's magnificent statement about the believer's eternal security in Christ in Romans 8. It began in response to an obvious question: How can we believe in the eternal security of the Christian if, as we can clearly see, Jews as a whole are not responding to the preaching of the gospel and thus are not being saved? If Christianity is true, doesn't this mean that God has rejected Israel? If God has rejected Israel, how can we suppose that he will avoid rejecting us as well? And if he can or will reject us, isn't it true that we must reject the doctrine of eternal security?" Thus, it is evident that the matter is very important if one will understand God's character and our relationship with Him.

Boice continues by arguing from what the Apostle has written that God's plans for Israel have not failed. Paul begins with **ROMANS 9:6**, where he states, "It is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel." Then, he presents multiple arguments for why God's historical purpose toward the Jewish nation has not failed.

1. God's historical purpose toward the Jewish nation has not failed, because *all whom God has elected to salvation are or will be saved* [**ROMANS 9:6-24**].
2. God's historical purpose toward the Jewish nation has not failed, because *God had previously revealed that not all Israel would be saved and that some Gentiles would be saved* [**ROMANS 9:25-29**].
3. God's historical purpose toward the Jewish nation has not failed, because *the failure of the Jews to believe was their own fault, not God's* [**ROMANS 9:30-10:21**].
4. God's historical purpose toward the Jewish nation has not failed, because *some Jews (Paul uses himself as an example) have believed and have been saved* [**ROMANS 11:1**].
5. God's historical purpose toward the Jewish nation has not failed, since *it has always been the case that even in the worst of times a remnant has been saved* [**ROMANS 11:2-10**].
6. God's historical purpose toward the Jewish nation has not failed, because *the salvation of the Gentiles, which is now occurring, is meant to arouse Israel to envy and thus serve as the means of saving some from among the Jewish nation* [**ROMANS 11:11-24**].
7. Finally, God's historical purpose toward the Jewish nation has not failed, because *in the end all Israel will be saved, and thus God will fulfil His promises to Israel nationally* [**ROMANS 11:25-32**].²

There is a tendency for Gentile Christians, the vast majority of contemporary Christendom, to become proud, even arrogant, when contrasting our situation with that of the Jewish people. To exalt our own relationship with God at the expense of the Jewish people is foolish in the extreme. Rather than pride, we should be filled with gratitude toward Israel. I am not suggesting that we become Zionists, apologists for the nation Israel; but I am saying quite plainly that we should recognise that God has shown us great mercy.

² Boice, op. cit., 1288-1289

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Going far back into history as recorded in the Word of God, we find Noah and his sons following the Flood. After the Flood had subsided, we read, “Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard. He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father’s nakedness. When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said,

‘Cursed be Canaan;
a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.’”

Most of us are familiar with the account of Noah’s drunkenness and his subsequent prophecy pronounced concerning Ham’s son, Canaan. Many preachers speak of this as a curse, no doubt because it begins, “Cursed be Canaan.” However, what Noah says is less a curse than it is a prophecy concerning the character of his sons. In this instance, Ham had seized the opportunity to laugh at his father’s incapacitated condition. Therefore, Noah prophesied that his own son would act similarly.

Less often do we read of Noah’s prophecy concerning his other two sons, Shem and Japheth. Therefore, we read, “[Noah] also said,

‘Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem;
and let Canaan be his servant.
May God enlarge Japheth,
and let him dwell in the tents of Shem,
and let Canaan be his servant.’”

[GENESIS 9:20-27]

This is an enigmatic blessing—sufficiently obscure as to cause many readers simply to pass by without considering what was said. Let’s take a moment to think through what was said. In the first place, Noah did not bless Shem; he blessed “the LORD, the God of Shem.” This particular construct is a Hebraic form of speech to indicate a close relationship between God and some individual. To verify that this formulaic language is ubiquitous throughout the Old Testament, one need but think of such common formulae as “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,” “the God of Israel” or “the God of the Hebrews.” The prophecy speaks of God’s presence with the descendants of Shem, or God’s presence with the Hebrew people. The blessing pronounced on Shem is ultimately a blessing on national Israel. Japheth, the progenitor of the non-Semitic Gentiles, would be blessed because of Shem’s relationship with God.

The rich blessing of all nations continues throughout the pages of the Old Testament. When the LORD first called Abram, He made a significant statement. “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” [GENESIS 12:1-3]. Focus on the final phrase: “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” This is nothing less than an iteration of the blessing Noah pronounced on Shem.

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Later, when God came to Abraham while he was tenting by the oaks of Mamre, God again spoke of how He would use Abraham to bless all mankind. Listen to God as He prepared to speak to Abraham. “The LORD said, ‘Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him’” [GENESIS 18:17-19]?

The promise of God is iterated after Abraham demonstrated his willingness to honour God, obeying when God commanded him to sacrifice Isaac. Again, the LORD promised, “By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice” [GENESIS 22:16-18].

The promise God made to Abraham was to be through Isaac; and the Lord delivered that same promise to Isaac. The LORD promised Isaac, “Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws” [GENESIS 26:2-5].

The Apostle recognised that this promise was fulfilled through the people of Israel, from among whom the Messiah arose. Writing the churches of Galatia, Paul affirmed, “Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed.’ So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith” [GALATIANS 3:7-9].

The Apostle clarifies what God promised by inviting his readers to focus on the language. Words matter! What is said is essential. So, the Apostle cites what was said to Abraham, noting the number of the noun employed. “Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, ‘And to offsprings,’ referring to many, but referring to one, ‘And to your offspring,’ who is Christ” [GALATIANS 3:16].

What does all this have to do with Israel? Why should we be so concerned about how we view Israel? It is true that we are Christians, called by this name because we follow the Christ. However, remember that Christ came out of the Jewish milieu; however, He fulfilled the Law. As we have seen in previous studies, Christ was quite open concerning the reason for His coming. “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” [MATTHEW 5:17]. Therefore, as the Apostle has said, “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” [ROMANS 10:4].

It is this Jewish milieu that must not be dismissed as somehow contemptible. Paul writes, “I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen” [ROMANS 9:1-5].

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Of Israel, in this passage Paul states that they are *descendants of Abraham* through Isaac and then through Jacob. The name “Israel” comes from the name that God gave Jacob after wrestling with the LORD at the Brook Jabbok [see **GENESIS 32:22-32**]. The Jewish people have distinguished themselves in almost every field of endeavour known to man. Surely, the blessing of God is evident to the unbiased. I began my medical studies at the Einstein College of Medicine, a division of Yeshivah University. Yeshivah University was established because Jews were excluded from studying in the centres of learning in the United States, so they established their own schools, which excel in preparing people for the various endeavours.

Again, the Apostle recognises that the Jewish people enjoy *the adoption*. God spoke of “Israel ... my firstborn son” [**EXODUS 4:22**]. Again, through Hosea, the LORD calls Israel His son [see **HOSEA 11:1**]. Israel was set apart to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” [**EXODUS 19:6**]. Christians speak of God as Father of the individual believer in Christ, but God does not identify Himself as Father of individual Jews; however, He does identify Himself as the Father of Israel.

Israel enjoyed *the glory of God*, undoubtedly referring to the Shekinah glory which accompanied them throughout the wilderness wanderings, at the giving of the covenant of law at Mount Sinai and in the Temple worship after Solomon had built that glorious structure.

Israel has *the covenants*, without a doubt a great privilege. Surely, these covenants are unprecedented in history. The people of Israel were privileged to point to *the Abrahamic covenant* [see **GENESIS 12:15-17**]. The *covenant of Law* was given to Israel through Moses at Sinai [see **EXODUS 19-31**]. The *covenant of an eternal kingdom* was given to David [see **2 SAMUEL 7:8-16**]. And it was through Israel that God’s *covenant of redemption* through His Son was at last given [see **JEREMIAH 31:31-34**]. It is not on inconsequential observation to see that the nation received these precious covenants, all of which bless all mankind to this day.

The nation of Israel was privileged through *the giving of the Law*. Through that Law, the mind of God was revealed. To this day, all mankind recognises the Ten Commandments as good and even foundational for national law, though an increasing number of western nations endeavour to hide these Ten Words, even removing them from daily life. We know that we cannot break God’s Law without serious and eternal consequence. Obedience of God’s Law brought Israel rich blessing, both morally, spiritually and materially; obedience brings blessing to all mankind to this day. To disobey this divine Law is to call down divine curses on a nation.

It would be good to recall the Word of the LORD to Israel concerning the Law He gave. “See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today” [**DEUTERONOMY 4:5-8**].

Again, Paul states that Israel received *the worship*, referring to the ceremonial system as practised in the Temple. God had promised, “[At the Tent of Meeting] I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory. I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar. Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate to serve me as priests. I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God” [**EXODUS 29:43-46**]. God did dwell among the people of Israel; and though Israel appears to have forgotten that today, it does not change the fact that God did dwell among a people.

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To Israel belong *the promises*, undoubtedly speaking of the spectrum of promises that revolve around Jesus the Messiah, who is our Saviour. The Messiah is the Promised One of whom Peter spoke at Pentecost: “The promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself” [ACTS 2:39]. The salvation which Jesus the Messiah has brought was also declared by Paul when he spoke to the Jews in Galatia. “We bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm,

‘You are my Son,
today I have begotten you.’

“And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way,

‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.’”

[ACTS 13:32-34]

The Apostle also reminds readers that Israel could claim *the patriarchs*—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. These men were the foundation on which rested the blessings that God would bring to all mankind through Israel.

Then, though listed last the final reminder is by no means the least, through Israel came *the Christ*. We must never forget that Jesus was born a Jew. Look at the precision with which Paul writes. “To [Israel] belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen” [ROMANS 9:5]. This One is “God over all.” Amen, indeed!

ISRAEL STUMBLER AND GENTILES ARE ENRICHED. God has not rejected Israel, whom He foreknew; nevertheless, Israel has stumbled. What is important for us today is to realise that though God did not cause Israel to stumble, He worked in the midst of their stumbling to ensure that His blessing would be given to all mankind. We Gentiles are recipients of grace, though Israel stumbled, and that knowledge should make us humble.

On multiple occasions Jesus warned religious leaders in Israel that the nation stood in jeopardy because of their unbelief. For instance, you may recall an instance when Jesus warned, “I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” [MATTHEW 8:11, 12]. When He spoke of many coming from east and west to recline at table with the patriarchs, it was obvious to those who heard Him speak that He was speaking of Gentiles—non-Jews—who would be accepted into the Kingdom of God, even as “the sons of the kingdom,” observant Jews, would be thrown into the outer darkness.

On another occasion, when Jesus was speaking with the religious leaders of Israel, He pointed to this exclusion of Israel while Gentiles would be accepted into the Kingdom. The parable was delivered only days before the Master was crucified. At that time, the Lord warned, “I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits” [MATTHEW 21:43]. The price of arrogance would be so steep that they could not afford it, but the gift of life would be given to those who did not expect life.

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You will recall, as well, that Jesus included other Kingdom parables that pointed to the salvation of Gentiles. For instance, we read, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.”’ But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’ And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So, the wedding hall was filled with guests.

“But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ For many are called, but few are chosen” [MATTHEW 22:2-14].

This vivid portrayal of Israel’s stumble and the acceptance of Gentiles into the Kingdom of Heaven enraged the religious leaders. They were so infuriated that they began to plot how they could trip Him up. Thus, we read, “Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words” [MATTHEW 22:15]. Likewise, the Sadducees also sought to destroy Him with their sophistry [see MATTHEW 22:23-28]. Then, from among the Pharisees a lawyer emerged with the goal of tripping up the Master [see MATTHEW 22:34, 35].

What is important for our understanding in this message today is that Jesus was not presenting some novel teaching that was esoteric or obscure; Jesus was forcefully bringing Israel back to the mission God had assigned from earliest days. God was not extending grace to us Gentiles as an afterthought; grace to those outside of the precincts of grace was always central to God’s plan. Nevertheless, the salvation of Gentiles, in the broadest sense, became a reality because the nation Israel rejected the Saviour.

You no doubt recall that we saw how God intended to bless the Gentiles even as He called Abram. God said when He called Abram, “I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” [GENESIS 12:3]. In Abram, all the families of the earth were to be blessed. God’s ambassadors to the families of the earth was to be Israel. Again, we saw that God said to Israel through Moses, “You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” [EXODUS 19:6].

One of the great statements of Israel’s responsibility to the world is given through Isaiah. “I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth” [ISAIAH 49:6]. These words are an iteration and expansion of what is written in ISAIAH 42:6. Among the Psalms is found a statement that anticipates what Isaiah wrote.

“[The LORD] has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness
to the house of Israel.
All the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation of our God.”

[PSALM 98:3]

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This is a prophetic statement that looks to the fulfilment of God's plan.

Paul was divinely appointed as Apostle to the Gentiles [see **ROMANS 11:13**]. Consequently, he would reach back to apply the purpose of God expressed through the portions of the Word just noted, as he spoke of God's salvation to the Gentiles. Early in his ministry, together with Barnabas, Paul went to the Jews in Pisidian Antioch. When they proved obstinate and combative, the missionaries testified, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying,

"I have made you a light for the Gentiles,
that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth."

[**ACTS 13:46, 47**]

When Jewish interlocutors proved bellicose and antagonistic, Paul shook out his clothing and declared, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles" [**ACTS 18:6**].

The Apostle's final recorded words spoken to his Jewish brothers are recorded in Acts. There, we read Paul's statement, "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet:

"Go to this people, and say,
"You will indeed hear but never understand,
and you will indeed see but never perceive."
For this people's heart has grown dull,
and with their ears they can barely hear,
and their eyes they have closed;
lest they should see with their eyes
and hear with their ears
and understand with their heart
and turn, and I would heal them.'

"Therefore, let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen" [**ACTS 28:25-28**].

Israel stumbled; and we Gentiles are enriched. However, we should be concerned lest we begin to imagine that we deserve God's acceptance. We begin to transform grace into merit, and we begin to think more highly of ourselves than we should. Soon, we begin to treat God with disdain, thinking that we are able to direct Him in His work. Of course, nothing could be farther from reality. Perhaps, as the Apostle suggests, God has worked as He has in order to provoke the nation of Israel to jealousy [see **GENESIS 11:13, 14**]. Rather than exalting our status, we should humbly reach out to the nation of Israel, seeking their inclusion again into the Kingdom of God.

DIVINE HORTICULTURE AND CHRISTIAN HUMILITY — With the passage of time, Christendom has grown arrogant, proud and boastful. Unconsciously, we begin to imagine we are the centre of the universe. We forget our Jewish roots. We begin to tolerate harsh statements against the people of God, because we are the people.

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Christians—especially Gentile Christians—are warned, “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, 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. Then you will say, ‘Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.’ That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So, do not become proud, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. 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. 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. 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” [ROMANS 11:17-24].

We Gentile Christians are the branches, grafted to the plant. The root is Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—the patriarchs. We do not support the root; the root supports us! Thus, we must not become arrogant. Rather, we have received the covenant of grace. We do not become Jewish. In fact, we are still “a wild olive tree.” We must recognise that all we possess, we possess by grace and not because we are somehow superior to Israel. Contrary to proper horticultural practise, God has taken us wild olive branches and grafted us onto the cultivated olive tree. We enjoy the spiritual blessings of the Jewish people, but we remain branches from a wild olive tree. We are not transformed into a cultivated tree. Yet, the churches of this day—churches that are predominantly Gentile—often adopt the identical attitudes that marked Israel in the day in which the Master walked in Judea. Just as Israel earned the divine rebuke for their attitude in that day, so the churches of this day must beware lest they receive the Master’s rebuke in this day.

There was a day when the churches of Canada were noted for their aggressive missionary advance. We sent missionaries with the message of life to many nations, declaring the mercies of Christ the Lord. Today, we are increasingly turned inward, focusing on our own comfort. This inward turning will result in our death, sooner rather than later. As long as we fulfilled the will of God to be a light to the world, we enjoyed His blessing. As we turn from being His light, we must ask how we can anticipate that we shall continue to honour His investment in us.

We must remember our former condition, refusing to return to those dark days. “We ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” [TITUS 3:3-7].

This is my grave concern for the Faith in this day. If we do not fulfil the mind of the Master, the blessings we have enjoyed will be withdrawn in favour of another. Moreover, if we forget gratitude toward our older brother, we will sacrifice blessing and honour. Every Christian must pray for God to work through the nation of Israel to accomplish His purpose, even as He works with us to the praise of His glory.