

“Grace & Peace to You”

A STUDY IN THE BOOK OF ROMANS

Voice of China and Asia

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ROMANS LESSON 73 PART 1: THE LESSON OF THE OLIVE TREE

ROM 11:11-16 *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.¹² 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!*

¹³ *Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an Apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry¹⁴ in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them.*

¹⁵ *For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?¹⁶ If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches.*

In this next section, Paul uses a number of metaphors to describe those who have rejected Jesus Christ, the Messiah. They are “**hardened**” ... they have “**stumbled**” ... they are like **Olive Branches** that have been “**cut-off.**” This is by their own refusal to believe. It would seem easy to place this full blame upon God, and to hold Him accountable. But that is NOT what is revealed by a close investigation of the Scriptures. What can we learn from these often-misunderstood verses?

DOCTRINE OF HARDENING

ROM 11:7-10 *“What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened...”*

We first return to the concluding insights from the previous section: “**Israel’s Hardness of Heart.**” The question again arises as to “**Who hardens whom?**”

➤ **11:8** *Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking... –*

- **EVERYTHING** they had learned and practiced as Jews was to Lead them to Jesus Christ [**GAL 3:24**]
- **THEY** sought righteousness through their OWN worth... *works / effort / THE LAW*
- They **SHOULD HAVE** sought Righteousness THROUGH the Redeemer of Israel – **THE MESSIAH**

➤ **The elect obtained it...** – Jews who had received Jesus Christ ... and the Gentiles who believed...

- **Elect...** – Same as above – they are “**Chosen / Elect**” because of the grace they have received BY faith in the Covenant Promise - **THE MESSIAH**...

ROM 1:17 – *The just shall live by faith...* – [**HAB 2:4 / GAL 3:11 / HEB 10:38**]

- **Obtained...** “**received it...**” – NOT receive as an “appointed gift” or an “earned payment” – it was “obtained solely by faith” – The HEARD... BELIEVED... were SEALED [**Eph 1:13**]

➤ **The rest were hardened...** – Jews who had heard and rejected... holding tightly to THE LAW...

Reading these passages, it becomes clear that their “**condition**” (*callousness / blindness / deafness*) **was NOT God’s initial intention** BUT **a result of their rebellion, sin, idolatry, and rejection of God’s Covenant...** To THESE God reacted with an increasingly more severe condition... He **HARDENED** their hearts

EPH 4:18 *THEY are **darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.***

➤ **11:8 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.”

[ISA 29:10 / DEUT 29:3-4 / JER 5:21 / EZEK 12:2]

➤ **11:9-10 And David says,**

“Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them;

¹⁰ let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see; and bend their backs forever.”

God will even cause their own “celebration of iniquity” to become an obstacle that further separates them from God.

The more they become angry... the more they sin... the angrier they become... Until they are “enslaved” in their own rebellion

God does not allow rebellious humanity to pursue their own way to righteousness without placing His Own limits. This mysterious “DOCTRINE OF THE HARDENING OF THE HEART” is proof that **God limits man’s defiance of His will...** they can never proceed beyond a certain point.

Though it is of course true that the hardening comes from man’s unbelief, yet here the Apostle ascribes it to the will of God.

But this, is nothing more than the solemn and inevitable outcome of God’s LAW OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

If we place our hand in the fire, we may say...

a) That the fire did it... *And that is true.*

b) That WE ourselves did it... *And, that is, at the same time, true as well. I am at fault*

c) That GOD did it... *And THIS is also true... It was by the Laws of Nature that God has established: that FIRE HAS THE POWER TO BURN US. God is at fault*

So, in the moral world, when we rebel, we set in motion God’s LAWS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS which act upon our soul and tend to blind and harden us.

HEB 3:15 *As it is said, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden YOUR hearts as in the rebellion.”*

HEB 4:2-3 *For good news came to us just as to them, but the message THEY heard did not benefit them, because THEY were not united by faith with those who listened.³ For we who have believed enter that rest...*

TO MAKE THEM JEALOUS

ROM 11:12-16 *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.*

➤ *Did they stumble... – YES! - a trespass* – a momentary failure – a lapse – they “stumbled at **THE ROCK...**” the Messiah God Revealed – [ROM9:32-33]

➤ *So that they might fall [utterly fail] – “Was it FATAL? NO!”* – Israel’s rejection of the Messiah DID NOT mean that ALL would be lost... That God was forever DONE with His people...

ROMANS LESSON 73 PART 2: THE LESSON OF THE OLIVE TREE

➤ *Through their [stumbling] salvation [was realized by] the Gentiles... –* What the Jews **rejected** the Gentiles **received**... having NO connection to **THE LAW by which to establish their OWN righteousness...** The Jews however, saw NO need for a Messiah to redeem them...

➤ *So as to make Israel jealous* - We normally think of “jealousy” as a negative thing – but here, Paul uses it in a positive light, as it often is used in Scripture. It is a *“desire to have what was offered to them, which they didn’t accept... but others did.”* (I didn’t want it until YOU had it) Notice within the passage “rejection” is a key word, and that their jealousy is meant to lead them to salvation.

12 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!

- BARCLAYS TRANSLATION **Vs 12]** *"If their fall has brought wealth to the world, if their failure has brought wealth to the Gentiles, how much more shall the whole world be enriched, when they come in, and the whole process of salvation is completed?"*

13 Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an Apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry ¹⁴ **in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them.**

- Paul magnifies his commission as an Apostle to the Gentiles, although he is a Jew. The words of direction he is to offer are FOR the **Gentile** hearers, but ABOUT the **Jews**. He wants both to hear him.
- Because he knows that **"Jewish Believers"** will also be reading his words, he wants them to understand that they have not been abandoned by God, but that the ministry to the Gentiles is the means God is using to **"draw them-in"**
- That the Gentiles could be **"made righteous by Faith instead of The Law"** is intended to make them WANT what they had formerly rejected... The Messiah!

15 For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?

- The **"rejection"** is NOT God rejecting them, BUT **their** rejection of Messiah – **saving grace..** [ROM 10:21]
- While the Jews rejected... God offered **"reconciliation"** to the World... *By means of FAITH*
- WHEN Israel finally accepts her Messiah [*partially now... fully at the 2nd Coming*] it will bring forth the Final Resurrection and the Millennial Kingdom

16 If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

- **The dough... / the Lump...** – When the initial Firstfruits was offered... SO the whole Harvest would be Holy
- **The Root... / the Branches...** – Abraham ... Jewish People (of the same faith) -

THE OLIVE TREE AND THE BRANCHES

Some Basics:

- Grafting was a common practice of their day... as it continues even today – the purpose is to use the "root" development of an older tree to produce fruit through younger branches that are grafted in
- **Natural Olive Tree...** **"The Root"** – Abraham – **"He believed, and it was counted as righteousness"** [GEN 15:6]
 - **The Branches** – The Jews as "religion" (*not just by ancestry*)
 - **Broken Branches** – Jews who rejected the Messiah – **"They were broken off because of their unbelief** [vs20]
- **Wild Olive Branches** – Gentiles who have received the Messiah –
- **"Contrary to nature..."** – In nature the **"Natural Olive tree"** refers to that which is **fruitful** ... the **"Wild Olive Tree"** was **fruitless**... Fruitless branches would NEVER be grafted into a Cultivated tree... they would still be fruitless and render the roots unproductive.
BUT God did JUST THAT! He took the **"unfruitful Gentiles"** and grafted them INTO the Cultivated Tree of the **"Roots of Abraham"** and MADE Them Productive...

ROM 11:17-24 *But if some of the branches were broken off...*

- The Day of Pentecost and multiple times since then Jews have realized Jesus as their Messiah...

- This will even precede through the time of The Tribulation... Multitudes will come to salvation...
- BUT many have followed the way of the Antioch Synagogue [*“you **count yourselves unworthy of Eternal Life** – ACTS 13:46*]

and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree,

- Gentile believers receive of the same **“Life”** as God has offered to the Jewish Believers...

18 *do not be arrogant toward the branches.*

- DO NOT now take a place of “rejecting” the Jews / Israel... **the Gentiles DO NOT REPLACE ISRAEL!**

If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you.

- Gentiles receive LIFE from the same source... **There are NOT “2” Churches but “1”** – The **BODY of CHRIST!**
- ALL of our richness and spiritual heritage comes from ONE source... the Heart of God

19 *Then you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.”*

- Some may contradict this saying...

20 *That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith.*

- BUT why were they “broken-off” – NOT because God was DONE with them... OR that He wanted “you” instead...
- It was their UNBELIEF... NOT because they were Jews / Israel ...

So do not become proud, but fear. ²¹ *For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you.*

- **Proud** – [Lit *Proud in thinking*] – a pride that can act abusively to others – seeing self as **“above those...”**
- **Fear** – A fear that realizes God and His Word as the Rule and Authority for life and conduct...
- It is NOT on basis of Race / Origin / Ethnicity / Status
- UNBELIEF on YOUR part will result in your Loss...

22 *Note then the kindness and the severity of God:*

severity toward those who have fallen...

- Those who have NOT Believed...

but God’s kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness.

- ONLY because of FAITH – NOT because you are Gentiles
- The ONLY way to continue in His Kindness is BY FAITH...

Otherwise, you too will be cut off.

- Gentiles as a group NOT individuals... If you think you are “safe” because you are Gentiles... Think Again...

23 *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.*

- HERE is a REAL Miracle... the JEWS can be **“re-grated”** – IF they BELIEVE!
- GOD has the Power... JUST as He had the Power to graft a **“wild Olive branch”** into the **True Olive Tree...**

24 *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.

- **God WILL restore Israel WHEN they Believe!**