

ROMANS - #11

ANTIOCH BIBLE CLASS

LESSON TOPIC

ELECTED BY GRACE

SCRIPTURE TEXT: ROMANS 11:1-36

MEMORY VERSE: ROM. 11:5. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter Paul continues his expression of remorse over the fact that his Hebrew kinsmen have not accepted Christ as their Messiah and believed in him as their propitiation for sins. The problem most of the recalcitrant Jews had was turning from their law and recognizing that Christ was its fulfillment. To them it really was almost the same as changing "religion". The difference was that they should have found in their law the very seed and types of Christ. Pride was a major portion of their failure; pride in the fact that they had been God's chosen people and to abandon that seemed to them like abandoning God. Pride is always a stumbling block where ever it gains an advantage. Through this their law was a snare unto them instead of a school master to lead them to Christ.

Paul presses the fact that both Jew and Gentile are in sin and need a savior. Along with this he shows that the works of the law are not the medium of salvation but instead faith in Christ is that medium. The Jews were so ingrained in the works of the law that it seemed like they were abandoning everything for the sake of "believing" in the gospel instead of performing the daily functions of the law. Being unable to reconcile themselves to this change, they opposed everything that pertained to Christ and his gospel. They were the ones who should have been able to see Christ as their Savior but instead they were the ones who were rejected because they could not or would not.

There is also a contrast in this chapter as to who is the real "Israel" of God. Paul teaches that it is not the natural Jew but instead it is that Jew of the heart who has been converted to Christ by faith in him and his gospel. In this light he declares that "all Israel shall be saved". "All Israel" in this case is those from both Jew and Gentile camps who have accepted the gospel of Christ and believed on him for their salvation and not depended upon the works of the law.

DAILY SCRIPTURES AND COMMENTS.

MONDAY. ROM. 11:1-6. A REMNANT ACCORDING TO GRACE.

SCRIPTURES.

V1. I say then, hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 2. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias, how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, 3. Lord they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. 4. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. 5. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 6. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work.

COMMENTS

God has not forsaken Israel, they have forsaken him. God's great desire for every Israelite in the world is that they might be saved. Religion and theology gets all bound up into itself to the point that it cannot see the real picture at hand. That is to say, we lose sight of the fact that salvation is a matter of our being totally transformed from our corruptible nature by repentance and faith in Christ, so that we are, indeed, new creatures in him. The Jew needs this transformation in the same way as the Gentiles do. That is what Paul has been teaching in the entire book of Romans. No one has an advantage in the sin business; we are all guilty, condemned and cannot free ourselves. It has nothing to do with "Jewish rights" as the people of God and everything to do with whether or not we are willing to accept the only remedy there is in this world for our sins, religious background and theology notwithstanding.

That remedy is through the Lord Jesus Christ and his atoning work at calvary for all who will believe it and obey it. This sets aside everything else by way of religion in the world and gives us a free opportunity to become transformed in all our being by the power of God. That opportunity comes to us because of the grace God has shown to all the world in that, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him may have everlasting life. The Jews, just like theologians today, got all bound up in their history, their place as the people of God, and their law. We do the same kind of things today, all the while overlooking the one simple fact that our salvation is found in the gospel and our surrender to its call.

So it was in Paul's day, as it has been throughout all history, there was a "remnant" according to the election of grace; a remnant which had heeded the call of a free opportunity to be delivered from their sins by the power of the gospel of Christ. That remnant answers to the requirements of the "election of grace" and is not some elite group waiting for some special day in the future. If you have surrendered your life to Christ and are saved, you are a part of the "election of grace".

TUESDAY. ROM. 11:7-12. THE FALL OF THE JEWS OPENED THE DOOR FOR THE GENTILES.

SCRIPTURES.

V7. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. 8. (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber; eyes that they should not see; and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. 9. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompense unto them. 10. Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back always. 11. I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. 12. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness?

COMMENTS.

Shall we conclude that Israel, through their blindness and rejection of Christ have thereby fallen with no hope ever to be lifted again? By no means! Even though their fall gave opportunity for the Gentiles to come into the grace of God for their salvation, yet they too can share in that grace which the Gentiles experience and thereby be saved. They have fallen because they did not properly understand and interpret the law and obey its principals of faith in the coming Messiah. If they but turn from this stumbling block and accept Christ, they may also be a part of God's elect.

If God, by some special providence, had allowed the Jews to continue on in their economy of the law and thereby accounted them righteous before God, then that would have been a stumbling block even worse than their fall. The facts are that it is impossible to become righteous by the precepts of the law. That attainment is not only possible but is the very purpose of the work of grace in our hearts. Therefore Paul could say that their diminishing meant riches to the Gentiles because it afforded them the opportunity to come to God. That fall, however, did not exclude the Jews from having access to the grace of God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

WEDNESDAY. ROM. 13-21. THE ROOTS AND BRANCHES OF THE OLIVE TREE.

SCRIPTURES.

V13. For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: 14. If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. 15. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead? 16. For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. 17. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; 18. Boast not against the branches, but if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. 19. Thou wilt say then, the branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. 20. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high minded, but fear. 21. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

COMMENTS.

If the fall of the Jews because of the blindness of their heart through

their refusal to accept Christ offers the Gentiles the opportunity to come to God by the election of his grace, then that same grace will do the same thing for the Jews who turn to Christ. If they had received the Lord Jesus, as the first (fruit) of his grace, then they would have been made holy and the Gentiles, being grafted into them, also would have been holy. The Jews, who first turned to Christ (like as at Pentecost) became the “tree” into which the Gentiles were grafted as branches of the same tree. Their being grafted in did not give them any grounds to be elevated in their feelings above the Jew, because their in-grafting was by faith in Christ. They had no reason to boast because they were just as sinful as the Jews and became the people of God when the Jews through their unbelief fell.

Paul is continuing his discourse in these verses which he has followed throughout the entire book of Romans, that is, that both Jew and Gentile are sinners for whom Christ died and the only chance for either of them is that they turn to Christ for the transformation of their sinful lives. The Jews rejected Christ because of their pride and ignorance through a misinterpretation of their law and then they (Gentiles) became the people of God who were not (formerly) a people. He is not a Jew who is one outwardly or nominally but who has been converted to Christ by faith through the preaching of the everlasting gospel. “All” Israel shall be saved, but they are not “all” Israel who are called Israel. The true Israel are those who have come to the saving grace of Christ. The works of the law could not save anyone, but by the grace of God through faith in Christ, all can be saved who believe in him.

THURSDAY. ROM. 11:22-33. “UNTIL THE FULNESS OF THE GENTILES IS COME IN”

SCRIPTURES.

V22. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. 23. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. 24. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? 25. For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of the mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. 26. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: 27. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. 28. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes. 29. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. 30. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: 31. Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. 32. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

COMMENTS

The entire Gentile world has been brought into the saving grace of God by the unsearchable riches of his goodness of his sacrifice at calvary. At the same time, the Jews, because of their unbelief in Christ as their Messiah and Savior, are, thereby, cut off; severed. Then Paul gives a warning to the Gentiles

not to boast of their acceptance in the beloved, but to remember that they stand by faith, a conditional quality that must be maintained in order to stand in good stead with God. Thus the goodness of God has fallen out to the Gentiles, while the severity (harshness, criticism, censuring) has fallen to the Jews. Note that if the Gentiles do not continue in this goodness (continue doing good as the gospel teaches) they also would be cut off or severed. Conversely, if the Jews do not continue in their unbelief, they also may be grafted in again.

The Gentiles were cut from a wild (ungodly) olive tree, and grafted into a good olive tree (the church). The Jews, which, by nature, should have been a part of the good olive tree, having the natural advantage of access to it first of all before even the Gentiles, could certainly be grafted in again as a part of the good olive tree.

The Jews are victims of their own blindness which has resulted in their being cut off. The Gentiles, on the other hand, must be careful not to ignore the truth that God is able to graft any or all of the Jews into the good olive tree (the church) when they turn from their unbelief to Christ. This blindness to the Jews has occurred, in part, that is to a part of them who were unbelievers as well as a part that would not at first accept Christ, but would have the opportunity to do so, even in a more Gentile economy. The whole point of all of this verbiage is that both Jew and Gentile may be saved by faith in Christ.

Verse 25 includes an interesting clause that has been used to point to a future day when the Jews will have another chance to be saved. That clause states: "that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in". This clause is interpreted by many theologians to say that the Gentiles will have a specified time allotted to them and then, after their day of grace, the Jews will be given another special chance with special conditions more conducive to their total salvation. However, that is not what the verse says, implies, nor what the context requires. The "fullness of the Gentiles be come in" has already occurred, as countless scriptures in this very book of Romans attests to. Over and over, Paul declares that the Gentiles are now the people of God, through the grace given to them in Christ. Their day or their time has come. Under the law, they had a somewhat limited method by which they could be brought into the economy of Israel, but they were not the fully invested people of the covenant of God. In Christ they are, for their time has come; a fact that no one could deny upon reading the accounts of the gospel to the Gentile world. It might help to notice one little point in the statement: "be come IN". To deny that this has already occurred would be to deny the entirety of the message of the gospel and all of its scope to both Jew and Gentile. Of course, the idea that is being put forward in this is that, the Gentiles have an allotted dispensation of time, after which the Jews will be a special people again. It just isn't the truth. At the end of the day and the end of the matter, there is only one plan of salvation and no special treatment or respect of persons is incorporated into that plan: it is for whosoever will.

FRIDAY. ROM. 11:33-36. THE INFINITE WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

SCRIPTURES.

V33. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! 34. For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counselor? 35. Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? 36. For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen.

COMMENTS.

These exalting words of Paul could be applied to God under any circumstances or age. However, they must apply to the arena he has been discussing in preceding portions of this book. That arena is the bringing of both Jew and Gentile into the grace of God for their opportunity of salvation. Both the Jew and Gentile are found to be guilty of sin. Both are in need of a savior, one as much as the other. The Gentiles have forever been estranged from God, having their own heathen ways and idolatrous worship, without God and without hope in this world. The Jews on the other hand, having had access to God and his miraculous providence and law for their lives through which God intended that they should be able to come to their Messiah, but who followed a path of unbelief which led them to the point of being cut off from God. With both of them aliens from God, he opens up to them by way of his infinite mercy and grace, a plan of salvation through the sacrifice of Christ at calvary. Thus all men everywhere and for all time have access to God and his eternal redemption if they will but come to Christ and his cross and surrender their lives unto him and, by faith, take their cross and follow him.

Nothing in all history can compare to this divine offer God has given to the entire human family. And to think that so much of the world disdains it and has no interest in it.

SUMMARY

This chapter is summarized in the thoughts of God's amazing mercy and wisdom by which he has provided a plan of salvation for Jew and Gentile. To the Gentiles Christ was foolishness and to the Jews he was a stumbling block. But to them who believed on him, he is the hope of eternal life and the redeemer of all who put their trust in the will of God. Miraculously, God has seen fit to call the entire Gentile world to his salvation in spite of their total alienation from him by their own sins. Just as miraculously, he offered to an unbelieving Jewish nation the same salvation, who also were blinded by their sins and unbelief and their table (of the law) became a snare and trap to them. The Jewish nation through the providential purposes of God, were the means of an open door for the Gentiles. And the fact that God showed mercy to unbelieving Gentiles, opened up the possibility for the Jews, who rejected his grace, to also be brought back to God by faith in Christ. Thus, the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God and his ways past finding out.

QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by the statement in this chapter that, "all Israel shall be saved", V26?
2. When is the expression in V25, "until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in", fulfilled?
3. What is the medium through which Jew and Gentile can be saved?
4. Who has been elected by grace?