CCLEB SERMON NOTES

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 8, 2026
ROMANS 11:1-24

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THE DANGER OF REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY



Have you ever seen a leisure suit?

For those of you who are too young to know what this is, this is called bad taste. This was a leisure suit from the 70s. It was all the rage. This was what you wore to go disco dancing, which, I promise you, I did not frequent.

So, let me ask you a question: what words or emotions does this jacket bring up in you? Be kind! How many of you would want this jacket? Not many hands. Who would want it, right?

And that leads to our opening question this morning: What about your faith? When you talk about your faith in Christ at work or with your friends, is it something they would say they want? Or would they look at it like this jacket and say, “Why would I ever want what you have?”

That is at the very core of Paul’s message today.

Before we dig in, I want to remind us how blessed we are to sit under chapter-by-chapter, verse-by-verse teaching. I taught through Romans many years ago, and I’m shocked at how much I’m learning this time around. So, let’s open our Bibles to **Romans chapter 11**, starting in **verse 1**.

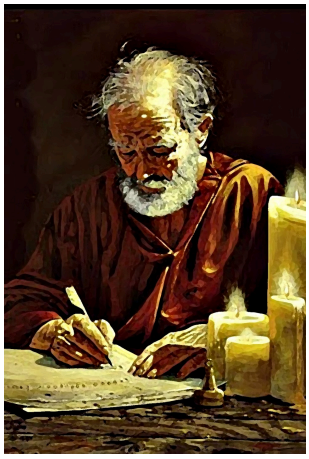
Romans 11:1-4

Notice Paul's writing style here. Some translations say, "God forbid!" Whenever you see Paul use that phrase, he has usually just built up his readers to a certain conclusion, and now he's about to do a 180 and completely overturn it.

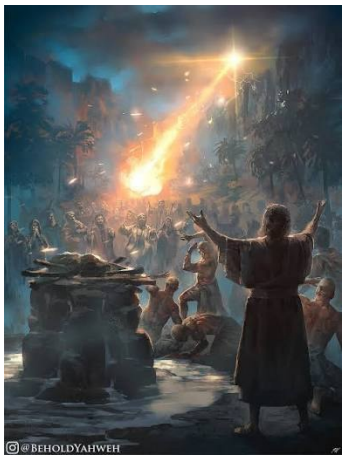
That's exactly what happens here. Paul ended chapter 10 with this: "All day long I opened my arms to them, but they were disobedient and rebellious." In other words, they turned away. So, the natural question is, "Has God cast away His people?" And Paul answers: **Certainly not!**

Then Paul gives his pedigree, which was very important to his Jewish audience: an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. And to prove that God has not walked away from His covenant with the Jewish people, he points them back to Elijah.

This comes from **1 Kings chapter 19**, the story of Elijah, Jezebel, and the prophets of Baal. If you remember, Elijah gets depressed. He says, "I'm the only one left. Just take me." And God shocks Elijah by saying, "No, you're not the only one. There are 7,000 others who have never bowed a knee to Baal."



And Paul's point is this: he is not the only Jewish convert to Christ. There are others. But, as verse 5 tells us, there are not many.



Romans 11:5-6

This is still true today. Very few Jewish people have turned to Christ. Statistically, about 1.3% of those born Jewish are Christians today, compared to about 31% of the world's population. So,

what Paul said to his Jewish audience in his day is still true in ours: a remnant, a few, are being saved because of God's kindness in choosing them.



And remember, the process is the same for them as it is for us. God looks down from heaven and sees a heart that is open and receptive. The Holy Spirit begins to call, draw, and woo that person to Jesus. They have the choice to accept or reject Him. When that heart becomes hardened, He turns away. When that heart becomes receptive again, the Holy Spirit comes back and draws them again.



And Paul's point in verse 6, and really his point in all of Romans, is that **grace and works are mutually exclusive**. It must be one or the other. There is no blending of the two.



So let me ask you: is that your understanding? Do you realize that you are saved by grace alone? If you are saved, you are saved totally by grace and totally apart from your good works.

And if you are lost, you are not lost because of your sins. You are lost because you have rejected God's offer to take away your sins through His sacrifice on the cross. You are lost because you refuse to believe in Jesus.

Jesus said this in **John 16:9**, "The world's sin is that it refuses to believe in me."

Look at **John 6:28-29**. The people asked Jesus for a list of works: "We want to perform God's works, too. What should we do?" And Jesus told them, "This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent."

And **John 3:18** says, "There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God's one and only Son."

That is Paul's exact point. The vast majority of his fellow Jews were not in a relationship with God because they refused Jesus' open arms offering to save them by faith in Christ alone. They stubbornly refused to come, just as we saw in **Romans 10:21**.

And as a result of their hard hearts, Paul tells them they are now in a very dangerous spiritual position.

Romans 11:7-10

Now, this almost sounds like God is making them blind, stubborn, and lost forever. Is that true?

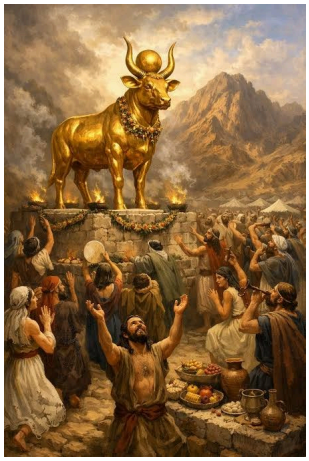


The key is the context of the Old Testament passage Paul is quoting. This comes from the book of Deuteronomy, Moses' last speech to the nation of Israel before he handed leadership over to Joshua.

Deuteronomy 29:2-4

Look how closely that lines up with Romans 11:8.

Moses' point was this: because of your 40 years of stubborn refusal to hear God, God has taken away your hearing. Because of your 40 years of stubborn refusal to see God, God has taken away your sight. And because of your 40 years of stubborn refusal to know God, God has taken away your understanding.



Paul is pointing to the hardness of the generation that wandered in the wilderness, and he applies it to the hardness of Jewish hearts toward the gospel in his own day.

And this brings up a very important point in the history of Christian theology.

What is Reformed Theology?

Generally, the churches that grew out of the 16th century revolt against the Roman Catholic Church are called “Reformed.” Their leaders saw themselves as reformed from what they believed were the defective practices of the corrupt church of the day: things like infant baptism, paid indulgences, the worship of Mary, and the Pope as the Vicar of Christ. Some of the names associated with the Reformation are Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, John Knox, and many others.

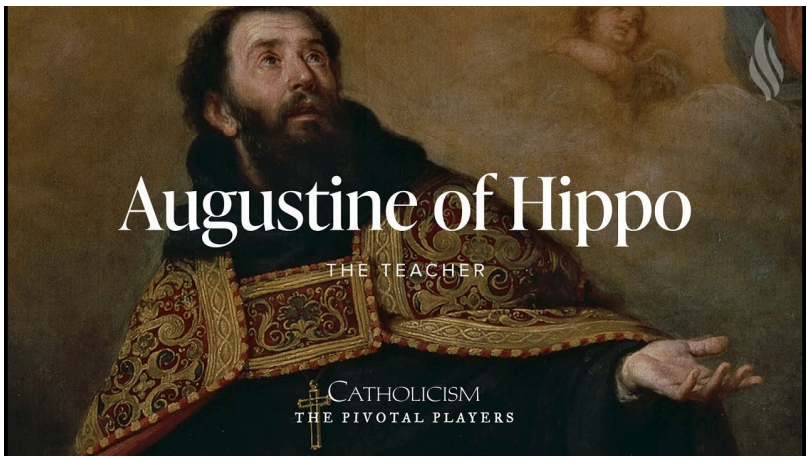


But one dangerous teaching that came out of Reformed theology is its position on Israel and Israel’s future. It’s known as **replacement theology**: the idea that the Christian church has replaced Israel in prophecy.

The classical view, which John Calvin and many others taught, is that the church is the spiritual fulfillment of Israel, and that there is no distinct prophesied future for the nation of Israel. All of the Old Testament promises to Israel have been transferred to the church, and as a result, all of God’s promises and covenants with Israel and the Jewish people have been cancelled.

How did this start?

It began with Augustine, a leading early church father who lived in the fifth century, almost a thousand years before the Reformation. Augustine was the inspiration behind much of the writing of the leading reformers.



To support replacement theology, Reformed theology has to hold to a position called **amillennialism**. This is the most widely held end-times view within classical Reformed theology. It teaches that there is no future millennial kingdom, no literal 1,000-year reign of Christ. The 1,000 years in Revelation is only a symbolic picture of the present church age.



To get there, amillennialism has to deny the literal meaning of these passages. In other words, when the Bible says 1,000 years, it doesn't mean 1,000 years. When it says Jerusalem, it doesn't mean Jerusalem. When it says Israel, it doesn't mean Israel.

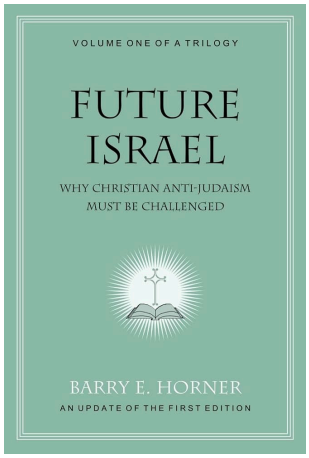
Listen, refusing to take the Scriptures literally where they can be taken literally will always put you on a very dangerous and slippery slope.

The reformers did not set out to make this an anti-Jewish issue. They tried to keep it a theological position, anti-Judaism rather than anti-Semitism. But the lines quickly became blurred.

So, what is replacement theology's bottom line? **God no longer deals with Israel as His chosen people.**

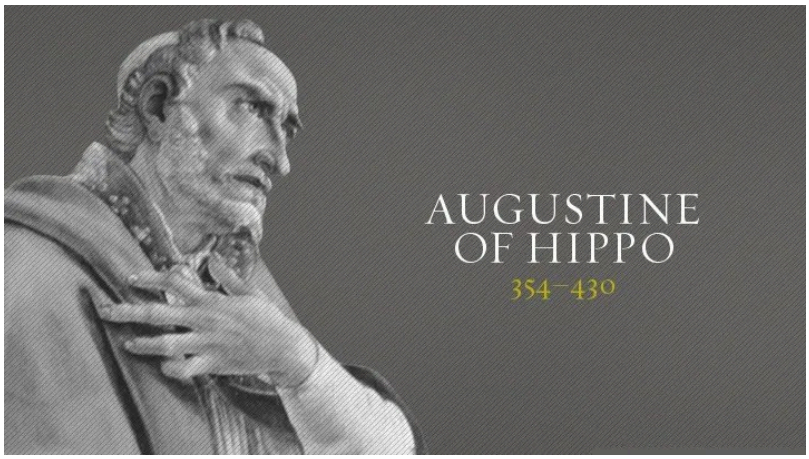
And the attempt to keep that idea from turning into anti-Semitism has never worked. Barry Horner, in his book *Future Israel*, writes that the wrong perception of Israel and the Jewish

people by so-called Christians has produced consequences of horrific proportions throughout church history, a shameful legacy that remains largely unconfessed. He says we ought to start apologizing to the Jewish people for the way the church has treated them through replacement theology.



I personally believe Satan has used replacement theology to help achieve one of his top objectives: the destruction of the Jewish nation and the Jewish people.

Horner also points out that Augustine compared the Jewish people to Cain, the first murderer in the Bible, who deserved death but was instead condemned to wander. Augustine taught that the Jewish people deserved to be destroyed for rejecting Christ, but should be preserved as wandering witnesses until the end of time.



Why is this history important?

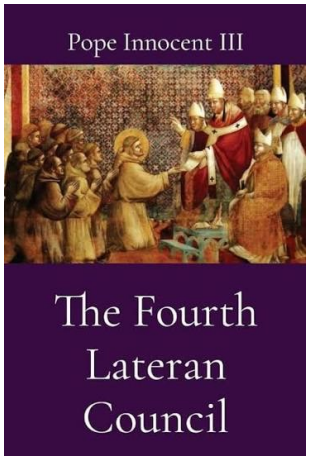
First, because of Genesis 12:3. God said, “I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt.” Look at the nations that have stood against Israel and where they are today.



Second, because if you have Jewish friends, you need to know how horribly the Jewish people have been oppressed and hated over the past 1,500 years under replacement theology. There's a very good chance your Jewish friends know this history, even if you don't.

In the 13th century, the Roman Catholic Church institutionalized what it called *servitus Judaeorum*, the perpetual servitude of the Jews. Jewish people had to be kept subordinate to Christians. They could not hold positions of authority, and Christians were to be "protected" from living, eating, or having relationships with them. This was church law.

The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 made this segregation official and required Jewish people to wear distinguishing dress. In Germanic lands, they had to wear a cone-shaped hat in public. Others were required to wear a yellow badge on their clothing, the color meant to symbolize Judas' betrayal of Christ for money.





In England, King Edward I's Statute of the Jewry required every Jewish person over the age of seven to wear a mark of yellow felt on their outer garment. This made them more visible and vulnerable to attack, limited their ability to travel, and pushed them into ghettos.

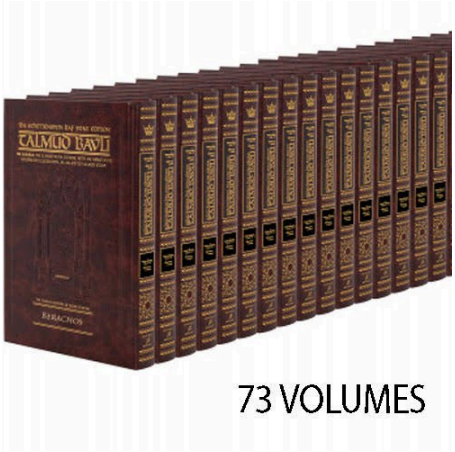


And if you think Martin Luther took a kinder, more loving position, you would be very wrong. In a work titled *On the Jews and Their Lies*, Luther gave this "advice" to Christians: set fire to their synagogues and schools, and bury whatever will not burn, so that no one would ever see a stone or cinder of them again. And he said this should be done "in honor of our Lord and of Christendom."

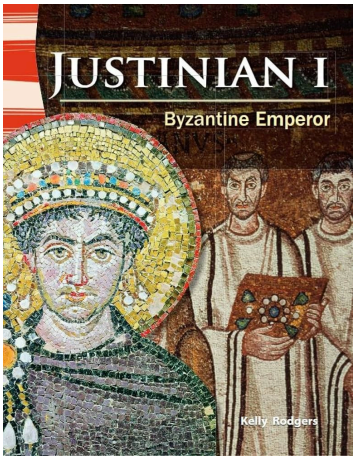


So, where did that hatred come from?

Much of it centered around what was written in the Jewish Talmud, a huge collection of oral law compiled in the centuries after Christ. Orthodox Judaism places enormous weight on the Talmud, in some ways even above the written Law. The rabbis taught, “My son, give heed to the words of the scribes rather than the words of the Law.”



The Talmud was written in the shadow of the explosive growth of the Christian church, and some of its statements infuriated the church. In the year 553, Emperor Justinian banned the spread of Talmudic books throughout the Roman Empire. In the 13th century, Pope Gregory IX and Pope Innocent IV condemned the Talmud for blasphemy against Christ and ordered copies to be burned.



Early versions of the Talmud called Jesus a fool, a magician, and a deceiver. They spoke of Mary as an adulteress. They described Gentiles and Christians in degrading terms, as unworthy to be called men and created only to serve. Over the centuries, many of these words have been softened, but there are still negative references to Jesus in the Talmud today (for example, in **Sanhedrin 43a** and **Gittin 57a**).



So, this is the other side of the story. There was plenty of hatred on both sides, and both sides played a part through the centuries.

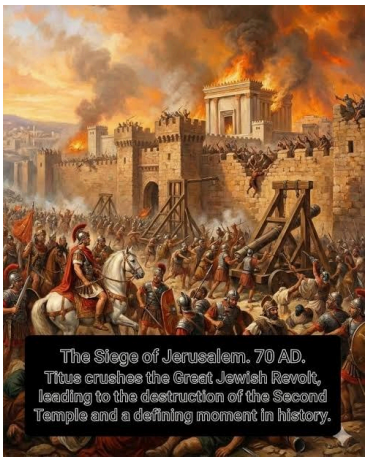
And tragically, that hatred eventually found fertile ground in the early 1900s through Hitler's Third Reich. By the time Hitler came along, many German Catholics and Protestants were already receptive to anti-Semitism because it had been ingrained in their culture for centuries. *Mein Kampf* was published in 1925, eight years before Hitler came to power in 1933. The German people knew what he believed, and they still voted for him.



So, with all of that as background, let's look to the truth of God's Word to give us a correct understanding of His view of, and His promises to, His chosen people.

Romans 11:11-12

So, what was this fall? I believe it was their failure to recognize Jesus as their Messiah, and as a result, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD. When the temple was destroyed, it closed out the entire Jewish sacrificial system. They fell hard.



But Paul asks, “Did they fall beyond recovery?” The Greek word for “fall” here (*piptō*) carries the idea of failing to take part in, of missing out on a share of the Messiah’s salvation. So Paul is asking, “Have the Jewish people lost their opportunity to share in the Messiah’s salvation?” And his answer is **no**.

Throughout the Bible, God has given strong promises to the Jewish people.

Genesis 12:2-3 “I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.”

Genesis 17:19 “But God replied, ‘No—Sarah, your wife, will give birth to a son for you. You will name him Isaac, and I will confirm my covenant with him and his descendants as an everlasting covenant.’”

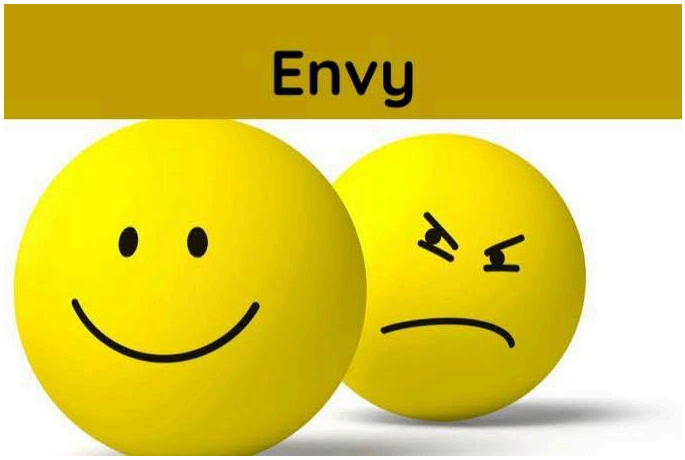
Jeremiah 31:36-37 “‘I am as likely to reject my people Israel as I am to abolish the laws of nature!’ This is what the LORD says: ‘Just as the heavens cannot be measured and the foundations of the earth cannot be explored, so I will not consider casting them away for the evil they have done. I, the LORD, have spoken!’”

Jeremiah 33:25-26 “But this is what the LORD says: ‘I would no more reject my people than I would change my laws that govern night and day, earth and sky. I will never abandon the descendants of Jacob or David, my servant… Instead, I will restore them to their land and have mercy on them.’”

These verses show the strong, irrevocable promises God has given to Israel. God has not given up on the Jewish people.



And we also see that you and I have a role in Jewish people coming to faith in Jesus. Verse 11 says God made salvation available to us so that Israel would become jealous of what we have and want it for themselves.



I've shared Christ with some of my Jewish friends, and two of them have told me something like this after a good conversation: "Tom, I understand what you're saying, but you don't understand my world. All my business dealings, all my social life, all my family are in the Jewish faith. I could not give that up." But then they said, **"You do have something I don't have."** They see it. It's the price they would have to pay that holds them back.

Romans 11:13-14

Then Paul goes on to say that even though the Jewish people have stumbled, it does not cancel God's promises to them.



Romans 11:15-17

Here's a crucial point, and it's a question I get asked often. Even though the Jewish people are still God's chosen people, the only way they can come to God the Father, the only way they will ever get to heaven, is through Jesus.



1 John 5:12 says, "Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life."

Also notice that verse 17 is the first time we learn that this tree is an **olive tree**. That's significant, because throughout the Old Testament the olive tree is a symbol of Israel. In **Jeremiah 11:16**, the Lord says, "I, the LORD, once called them a thriving olive tree, beautiful to see and full of good fruit."

And Paul says the Gentiles, you and me, were branches from a **wild** olive tree that were grafted in.

Now, that's not how grafting normally works. Usually, you take one plant chosen for its strong roots, called the rootstock, and graft in a cultivated branch chosen for its fruit. But Paul says the branch grafted in here was wild, not cultivated, and therefore not productive.



I remember reading a critic of the Bible who mocked this. He said Paul was so ignorant of grafting that he spoke of grafting wild branches into a good tree. Was Paul wrong? Was this an error in the Bible? No. Look at verse 24: Paul says “contrary to nature.” He knew exactly what he was saying.

And that lines up perfectly with **John 15:5**: “Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.” We are completely incapable of producing any fruit apart from being grafted into Jesus.

But there’s even more. Theobald Fischer wrote that, even at the beginning of the 20th century, it was still the custom in Palestine to revive an olive tree that had stopped producing fruit by grafting in a branch from a wild olive tree. The sap of that strong wild shoot re-energizes the rootstock, and the tree begins to bear fruit again. What a fitting picture of what Paul is describing!



Romans 11:18-22

Paul is saying there would be no such thing as Christianity if there had not first been Judaism. And our debt to the Jewish people can only rightly be repaid by bringing them to Christ.

Now, someone may read verses 21 and 22 and think, “I thought I couldn’t lose my salvation. This sounds like I can.” No. Here Paul is speaking about God’s position toward the Jewish people as a whole and toward the Gentiles as a whole. He is dealing with the **availability** of God’s grace, not the security of an individual believer living under God’s grace.

He's saying: don't brag, and don't be haughty. Remember what happened in the first place.

Romans 11:23-24

In this closing section, we clearly hear the heart of God for the nation of Israel. As we watch events unfold in the Middle East, it is important to remember that Israel was, and always will be, God's chosen people.

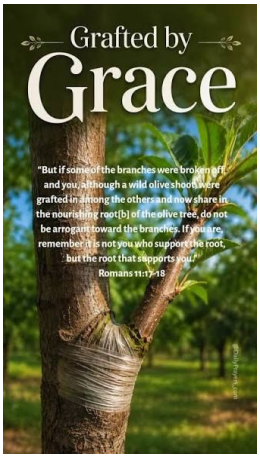


Now, there are things that have been said and done by Jewish people, as we saw today, that we cannot agree with. There are actions by extremists today that we cannot condone. And likewise, over the past 1,500 years, there are things that have been done to the Jewish people in the name of Christ that we do not agree with either. There have been many mistakes on both sides.

So here is the balance: **God's promises to the Jewish people still apply, but they can only be saved by turning to Jesus. And we are the instruments, the salt and light, God uses to draw them to the true Messiah.**

And you don't want to miss next week, because we'll discover that there will be a time in the future when all of Israel will be saved.

So, how does this apply to me? I want to finish with 3 points of application for you today:



1. Do You Appreciate Being on This Side of the Cross?

Do you ever think about that? If we had lived on the other side of the cross, we would be under the sacrificial system and never truly have our sins taken away. But we live on this side of the

cross, where Christ's blood takes away **all** of our sins.

Do you appreciate that He made room for you to be grafted in? We should.

2. Do You Have a Burden for the Jewish People?

Paul did. Boy, did he ever! Look at **Romans 9:3**, some of the most amazing words in the whole Bible: "For my people, my Jewish brothers and sisters. I would be willing to be forever cursed—cut off from Christ!—if that would save them."

Paul was saying, "I would be willing to spend eternity separated from Christ if that would bring my fellow Jews to Him." I read that and think: incredible.

Do you have a burden for the Jewish people? Are you praying for them? Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and ask God to use you to draw them to Jesus.

3. Does Your Life Make Others Want What You Have?

Has your life been so transformed by Jesus that others are jealous of what you have? Or is your Christian life about as attractive as this leisure suit?

Is your life so different that people notice? So filled with joy when others are despondent, so filled with hope when others are hopeless, so free when others are bound by addiction, that the people who know you want what you have?

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "One of the illusions of life is that the present hour is not the critical, decisive hour."

Listen, this isn't something for the future. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday… **this** is the critical, decisive hour. Let the fragrance of Christ in you draw others to Him.

Have you received Christ?

If you have never prayed to receive Jesus as your Savior, and God has been speaking to your heart, you can pray this prayer right now:

> *Lord Jesus, I confess that I have sinned. I have made so many mistakes, and I ask You to forgive me. I receive Jesus Christ and His death on the cross so that my sins could be forgiven. I receive that personally, for myself. Now, Lord, help me to live a life that honors You and pleases You. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

If you prayed that prayer, we'd love to pray with you and help you take your next step.

"May the LORD bless you and keep you. May the LORD make his face shine upon you and give you peace."

BONUS CONTENT

Why We Reject Replacement Theology

Romans 11 opens with a question: has God rejected Israel? Some Christians have answered yes. That view is called **replacement theology**, or **supersessionism**. It teaches that because most of Israel rejected Jesus, God set the nation aside for good, the church took Israel's place, and God's promises to Israel now belong to the church instead. Many who hold a version of this view prefer the term "fulfillment theology," and many of them love the Lord and His Word. We simply believe Paul answers the question differently.

WHAT THIS PASSAGE SAYS

- **God has not rejected His people (vv. 1–2).** Paul's first proof is himself: he is an Israelite who believes in Jesus.
- **God has kept a remnant (vv. 2–5).** Just as in Elijah's day, God has kept for Himself a faithful remnant of Israel, chosen by grace.
- **Israel stumbled but has not fallen beyond recovery (v. 11).** Their stumble opened the door of salvation to the Gentiles, and God intends that to stir Israel to jealousy and bring them back.
- **Gentile believers are added to Israel's tree, not substituted for it (vv. 17–24).** We are wild branches grafted into Israel's olive tree. We don't support the root; the root supports us. That leaves no room for pride, and God is able to graft the natural branches back in.

Paul finishes his answer in **verses 25–29**: a day is coming when Israel will be saved, because God's gifts and His call can never be taken back.

WHERE CALVARY CHAPEL STANDS

This has always been the Calvary Chapel position. In *Calvary Chapel Distinctives*, Chuck Smith said the confusion comes when people spiritualize Israel into the church and apply the prophecies about the nation of Israel to the church instead. As he put it, **"If the sun came up this morning, then God's covenant with Israel still stands"** (see **Jeremiah 31:35–37**).

WHY IT MATTERS

- **It's about God's faithfulness.** If God would break His promises to Israel, what confidence could we have in His promises to us? Romans 11 shows a God who keeps His word, and that's good news for all of us.
- **It guards our hearts.** Paul warns Gentile believers not to boast (vv. 18–20). Sadly, the church has often ignored that warning and treated the Jewish people with hatred and persecution instead of drawing them to Christ. We want to do the opposite: love the Jewish people, pray for them, and point them to their Messiah with humility.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- David Guzik, *Enduring Word Bible Commentary* on Romans 11 (free at **enduringword.com**), and his audio teaching "Romans 11:1–24 – God Will Restore Israel."
- Chuck Smith, *Calvary Chapel Distinctives*, chapter 8, "The Rapture of the Church."
- Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible: Romans 11–12* (audio and transcript at SermonIndex.net).