

97-01-26a

As we continue our worship service this morning, turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 5 for our Scripture reading. 2 Corinthians chapter 5. It would probably be helpful for me to make some connection between our Scripture reading and our study in Romans. As you know, we are in Romans chapter 11 and we are at that point of seeing the relationship between God's discipline and rejection of Israel, in a sense, and the resulting opportunity that has come to the Gentiles.

And Paul is about to illustrate that by talking about a tree and its branches, and branches being broken off, branches being grafted in. And it has the idea, as we're going to see this morning, of bringing people who were formerly not into relationship into relationship. And we want to see this morning exactly what that is.

What does the olive tree represent into which these branches are grafted and from which these branches are broken off? It's a very critical understanding that we need to gain. And part of this is related to the concept of reconciliation. And one of our classic passages on reconciliation is 2 Corinthians chapter 5. We're going to begin our Scripture reading this morning in verse 11 and continue through the end of the chapter, and actually a little bit into chapter 6. But Paul has been talking about the confidence that he has in the future hope of resurrection and presence with the Lord.

And he is talking to believers. One of the things that we always have to do when we go to the Scriptures, the New Testament Scriptures are under our gaze this morning. And it's important to see who it is that is being spoken to.

As Paul reviews the concept of resurrection and presence with Christ in the future, in 2 Corinthians 5, 9 and 10, he says, we make it our aim, whether we are present or absent, that's from the body, to be well-pleasing to Him. And, of course, that's the theme. That's our calling is to walk a worthy walk, to live a life that is pleasing in all things to God.

We see that in Colossians chapter 1 very clearly. And Paul gives the reason in verse 10, for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Now, if you review your systematic theology, who is it that appears at the judgment seat of Christ? What category of human beings? It's church-age believers, right? So that is the we that is being spoken to here.

So Paul is clearly in the middle of his second preserved letter to the Corinthians. And we know that he's talking to believers. It seems like a simple point, but it becomes very important as we continue through what we're going to read this morning.

So having talked about the resurrection, reminded believers that we in this age will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and will receive the things done in the body according to what we have done whether good or bad. This is the judgment of our deeds, our level of obedience, our level of faithfulness as believers. It is the place of reward.

It is also a place of discipline as we saw in Romans chapter 2. So our reading now picks up in verse 11. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord. Isn't that interesting? Verse 11 comes hard on the heels of 9 and 10, talking about the judgment seat of Christ.

And he says, Knowing therefore, that therefore refers us right back to the preceding concepts of resurrection and examination by the Lord. And he says, Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men, but we are well known to God and I also trust are well known to your consciences. For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you the opportunity to boast on our behalf that you may have an answer for those who boast in appearance and not in heart.

This has been the theme of our study in Romans. The contrast between those who strive for righteousness in appearance and those who strive for righteousness in the heart. That's the fundamental difference.

Do we do what we do to be seen by men, to be approved by our peers, to believe ourselves to have a good standing, or do we strive for purity of heart, for righteousness in the heart through faith? That's our subject. That's what we've been studying these many weeks in Romans. And Paul is consistent in the different churches that he ministers to.

He always addresses this same point. And why is that? Because that's our calling. That's the great viewpoint struggle that he was engaged in in his ministry was swimming against the tide of tradition and of expectation and of common belief and misunderstanding that pertained in the Jewish community and was being taught to the Gentile converts to Christ that you need to perform good deeds.

You need to have this appearance of righteousness. And some people go so far as to say, well, if you can get the appearance of righteousness going on the outside, it will work its way in, rather than understanding what Christ taught, that everything proceeds out of the heart, and the heart has to be straightened up first. So he is arguing for this righteousness by faith in the heart to these Corinthian believers.

And he says we're giving you the opportunity to boast on our behalf. He's teaching something different than a lot of the teachers that they hear. And he says we're not just trying to commend ourselves.

We're not trying to give ourselves a reputation and build ourselves up. Remember 1 Corinthians? We don't want you all to be divided and say, I am of Paul, I am of Apollos. We're not commending ourselves.

We're giving you the opportunity to boast so that you will have an answer for those who boast in appearance rather than in heart. There's a contrast in the message. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God.

If we are of sound mind, it is for you. Whether people understand this or not, if they say we're insane, we're crazy, we don't know what we're talking about, we commend ourselves to God. If we do come across as sound of mind, if you understand this message and it makes sense, then that's for you.

For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus, that if one died for all, then all died. And this harks back to Paul's statement, the death he died, he died to sin. And he died for all that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died for them and rose again.

Christ, the life he lives, he lives to God. And we should do the same. That's the righteousness in the heart that we focus on.

Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. You can't necessarily judge from the outside the thoughts and intents of the heart. I think those that we know well, those that we are married to, those that we spend much time with in our families or in our circle of friends, I think over time you come to an understanding because you have so many different ways of perceiving what may be going on in the heart.

But the basic rule of thumb is we don't judge according to the flesh. We don't look at someone who is all flying elbows and knees in service and say, well, that person must be exceedingly righteous and exceedingly satisfactory to God. We can't know that for sure unless we have insight into what's going on in the heart because someone can be doing a lot of hard work for the wrong reasons, out of guilt, out of self-justification, out of pride, out of asceticism, wearing a hair shirt and thinking, well, I'll make myself pleasing in God's eyes.

We just can't know unless we have some form of insight into the heart. So Paul says, from now on we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, we initially were impressed with Christ as the Son of God because of His works in the flesh.

But he says, we started out knowing Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, is what it says in the King James. And we have other translations.

The original King James said, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. And I think the New American Standard says something about being a new creature. But if you'll notice, all of those put the words he is in italics.

What it says is, therefore, if anyone be in Christ, and then it says, a new creation. There's a new creation. And what is creation? Creation is the universe.

It's the sphere of life in which we have consciousness and move about and make our decisions. And this is not talking so much about regeneration of the individual as the kingdom into which we

are transferred. Remember in Colossians where it talks about we've been transferred out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of the Son of His love, the kingdom of light.

If any man is in Christ, a new creation. We're in a different universe. There's a different reality that pertains to us.

And taking nothing away from the doctrine of regeneration and the fact that we are new creatures in Christ, as it were, this passage is talking about what matters, what constitutes a priority or a reality or a truth to us. If we're in Christ, we're in a new creation. We're in a new world.

There's a whole new set of realities that pertain to us. And that's what he's talking about here when he says if anyone is in Christ, it's a new creation. Old things have passed away.

Behold, all things have become new. And people have wrestled with this because they say, well, if you're saved, you're a new creature, and old things have passed away, all things have become new. Why is it that we don't immediately lose the predilections and the habits and maybe the sin patterns and things that were a part of our life before we got saved? Well, this passage isn't teaching that all those old things have passed away at the moment that we are placed into union with Christ.

The potential is certainly there to grow out of those things through the power of God's Word and the power of His Spirit. But what this is saying is you're in a different universe. You're judged by a different standard.

You're measured with a different measure. Different truths and different realities are now constructing what surrounds us. Old things have passed away.

Behold, all things have become new. What are these all things? Verse 18 tells us. These all things are of God who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

We can think of it this way. God dwells in the eternal. God dwells in the invisible to us.

And we start out as unbelievers in the visible world. We are tossed about by circumstance. We are slaves to sin.

We are in the kingdom of darkness. And that's our reality. We have no escape.

We're hopeless, helpless, useless. When we are placed in Christ, that passes away. We're in a new creation.

We're now living in the realm of the internal and the invisible. We're measured by a different standard. We have access to different resources.

And those things all come from God. And we have been restored. Restored would mean that we

had been there and left.

We have been initiated into the universe where God dwells, the eternal, invisible. We have been reconciled to Him and to the reality that surrounds Him, the eternal things of God. And we've been reconciled.

We've been placed into that environment where God is. And that's a whole new creation. It's a whole new set of opportunities.

And that's what he's talking about here. And Paul says that he has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. Think about the ministry of Paul.

How do you get into that universe where God dwells? It's the gospel of Jesus Christ by which we are saved and delivered from the lake of fire. How do we start to live in that universe? By learning the truth of God. And that was Paul's ministry.

He preached the gospel of salvation proper. And he also, the bulk of his ministry was teaching the truth of God, initiating people into the mystery doctrines of the church age. This is who you are in Christ.

This is what your potential is. This is what your hope is based on. This is what your judgment is based on.

This is where righteousness comes from. Here's faith and hope and love. And that is a ministry of reconciliation.

I have often used the example, but you can think of any organization that you join, whether it's the military and you sign on the dotted line and you're now a private or you're now a second lieutenant or whatever it may be. You are now a part of an organization that you weren't a part of before. You have new opportunities, new privileges, new responsibilities, a rank of some sort.

You're a part of a structure. You can now be given orders by superior officers if you join the military. Five minutes before, you weren't subject to that, but now you are.

You've entered a whole new universe. But at the point of initiation, we're almost completely blissfully ignorant of those realities, and we have to be trained and taught into it. And there's a sense in which that is a ministry of reconciliation.

It's the same idea. Once you've been made a part of something, you now have to learn what this new thing is that you're a part of. And that's what Paul does.

That's his ministry of reconciliation. God in Christ was reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. The big

barrier, the big wall between the physical universe in which we live as unbelievers and the eternal universe in which God dwells, what is it that separates us from God? What does it say in the Old Testament? Your sins, your iniquities have separated between you and your God.

Your sins have hid His face from you that He will not hear. And that was talking to believers. That was to the nation of Israel.

What was it that separated people and God, believers and God, in the Old Testament? It was trespasses. It was iniquity. Reconciliation, Christ came and solved the trespass problem.

He solved the sin problem for unbelievers and for believers. And reconciliation is breaking down that wall and uniting us with the eternal presence of God and the things of God. And that's the ministry of reconciliation, to preach the gospel, the good news that converts from unbeliever to believer and also for believers.

And this is the part that we so often leave out. There is still an ongoing ministry of reconciliation for us to learn and to grow into that creation that God has given us the privilege of being a part of. To learn about the invisible things and to start to function in that sense.

So Paul says in verse 20, Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. Who is the you here? When he says be reconciled, you'll see that the you is in italics and there's not a pronoun there for you, but the tense of the verb is clear.

It's a cohortative. It's an imperative mood here. It's the idea that the person you're talking to, the second person of the conversation, the you that's implied here, are these Corinthian believers.

And that's who we identified at the beginning of chapter 5. These who are going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. And each one is going to receive the things done in the body according to what he has done, whether good or bad. So Paul pleads with them and he says be reconciled.

Now they have been reconciled at the point of salvation. We all were reconciled at the point of salvation. Redemption, reconciliation, and propitiation are the three major ministries of Christ on the cross which we gain the benefit of at the point of our salvation.

But in each of those, to be truly redeemed and not only delivered on paper from the slave market of sin, but to be free from the power of sin in this life is something that we pursue as believers as we grow into our new universe, our new creation. Propitiation, the satisfaction of God's justice, took place at the cross for sin, but we still partake of that on an ongoing basis when we confess our sins and he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us. People have wrestled with this idea, well if I was forgiven based on the cross, why do I have to seek forgiveness on an ongoing basis? It's the difference between position and experience.

It's the difference between the fact of our eternal salvation and the experience of that salvation as we live day to day and pursue our calling and begin to learn about that new reality that God has placed us into. And the third of those ministries is equally true at the cross and an ongoing experience in life and that's reconciliation. We have been reconciled to God.

We have the right to be called the sons of God and yet we are called, as believers, to become sons of God. Look at here on down in chapter 6, verse 14. We're bracketed here with clear references to the fact that Paul is talking to believers and he says, You believers, do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? What communion has light with darkness? What accord does Christ have with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? The same people to whom he said, We implore you, be reconciled to God. He's saying, Don't be unequally yoked with unbelievers. This is in the middle of the letter.

He hasn't made any transition and said, Well, now let me speak to you unbelievers who are just false professors in the church or whatever. All of these things are consistent. He's talking to believers.

He says, You're going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Be reconciled to God. Don't be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

What we're about to see here is critically important. He's talking to unbelievers. What agreement has the temple of God with idols? You are the temple of the living God.

Clearly talking to believers. As God has said, I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God and they shall be my people.

Therefore, and he's using Scripture here, Old Testament Scripture, to affirm and to support this call to separate from unbelievers because we are believers. He says, come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean and I will receive you.

I will be a father to you and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty. What is the basis for this declaration? I will be a father to you. You shall be my sons and daughters.

If you come out from among them, if you separate yourself, if you touch not the unclean thing. Now is that faith for salvation or is that obedience which is a part of the call for believers? God says, if you obey, if you cleanse yourself, if you separate yourself, if you touch not the unclean thing, I will be your father and you will be my sons and daughters. What's he saying? This reconciliation that you're called to will take place through obedience.

We have reconciliation at the point of salvation in the absolute sense, but experientially and in terms of our calling and our function in God's plan, our sonship, our heirship, our priesthood, our

election in Christ is potential based on faith, righteousness by faith, and the obedience that springs from that and we are called to that and Paul calls believers to that. It's very unfortunate that in so many cases when we come to the Scriptures, we only focus on the salvation portion of that. That's all true, but it's so sad if we miss the call that God has given us.

We cannot rest in the positional reconciliation and propitiation and redemption that was accomplished and think that all things are ours and that we are going to enjoy inheritance and the full privileges of sons and daughters and so forth both now and in the eternal future. That is contingent on responding to the call. Paul the Apostle has a ministry of reconciliation.

It's an ongoing ministry and he exercises it here to believers. We're going to see as we continue our study in Romans that this is true there as well and we've spent a little bit of extra time here on our Scripture reading this morning because it's clear to us as we look throughout the New Testament Scriptures that this is a consistent theme. We're consistently called and unfortunately we have consistently misapplied much of the New Testament Scriptures and said, well, this is talking to unbelievers.

This is talking about the point of salvation. Paul is talking to unbelievers when he says, I'm imploring you to be reconciled to God. He's talking to believers.

It's clear. Read Chapter 5. Read Chapter 6 over and over again. He says, Brethren, we shall stand at the judgment seat of Christ.

You are the people of God and you are being called to be separate, to touch not the unclean things. Salvation and positional reconciliation is not based on obedience because salvation is not based on obedience. Salvation is based on faith.

And coming out from among them and being separate and not being unequally yoked with unbelievers is the calling of believers. And based on fulfilling that calling, God says, I will be your father and you will be my sons and daughters. Sons and daughters in the fullness of inheritance, in the fullness of relationship, in the fullness of fellowship and participation and reflection of the glory of God.

So let's continue now by turning over to Romans chapter 11 because that understanding will clarify some of the strange interpretation that we often encounter as we go through Romans and that continues right up through Romans chapter 11. We saw last time this idea of blind eyes. Why is it that Israel is blind? We saw in verse 7, Israel has not obtained what it seeks.

What does Israel seek? Paul told us earlier on in chapter 10, verse 2, I bear them witness, they have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge. They are ignorant of God's righteousness. They don't understand the basis for the declaration of righteousness by God which is through faith, not through works.

And they are seeking what? They are seeking to establish their own righteousness rather than appropriating the righteousness of God. That's what Israel seeks. They're seeking their own righteousness.

And of course our righteousness only comes by appropriating God's through faith. So he says here in chapter 11, verse 7, Israel has not obtained what it seeks. They're not going to be declared righteous.

But the elect have obtained it. Who are the elect? Remember our study in Romans 8? Whom he foreknew, he pre-designated to be conformed to the image of his son. Who is it that God foreknew? Look at the context.

It's those who would respond as believers to the call. Who would be the called indeed? Those who love God. Those who are the called according to his purpose.

They are the elect. They are the sons. The sons indeed that we saw there in 2 Corinthians.

So the elect have obtained it and the rest were blinded. Now we saw last time, and this is something of a startling concept, but basically all Israel are believers. The nation of Israel is comprised of believers.

The vast majority of them are disobedient believers. But Israel as a nation, they are believers. We're going to substantiate that in an upcoming study where we'll go through and document in Scripture that the nation of Israel, the Old Testament nation of Israel, basically every citizen of Israel is a believer.

And the discipline that comes on Israel, the call to Israel is never an evangelistic call. It's never a call to faith in God. It's always a call to obedience.

Why is that? Why is there no evangelistic ministry of the nation of Israel in the Old Testament? They are called to be a light to the Gentiles, but what happens when a Gentile responds to that light? He comes and joins Israel because Israel is the place where believers dwell. God's provision for believers, God's method of worship for believers, God's discipline for believers, the entire grace package of provision and support and blessing for believers is channeled through the nation of Israel in the Old Testament from Moses forward. So if you're a believer, where do you have to go? You have to go to Israel.

If you're in Israel, you are a partaker of those things and you are assumed to be, expected to be, a believer. There's no provision in the Mosaic law for evangelism, is there? Why is that? They're all believers. God, in orchestrating human history, knew ahead of time, without creating that decision or forcing that decision or being responsible for it, knew who would respond and have saving faith and He organized their birth and their life to be in the nation of Israel or to be in the periphery of Israel where they could come and join like Ruth or Naaman or Rahab or the other

Gentiles, Balaam for example, came into the periphery of Israel and received their sustenance and so forth through the nation of Israel.

And that is an important understanding to have because it explains to us some glaring omissions in the Old Testament Scripture. You don't have Israel commissioned to go forth to the nations. Israel isn't given a missionary call, are they? Why does the Mosaic law not say, train up men and send them out among the Gentiles, send them to the Assyrians, send them to the Hittites, send them to Egypt, send them to the far reaches of the globe? We know that there was a huge civilization in China that persisted throughout.

How would someone get the Gospel and become a believer and learn about God in the Old Testament days? What about all of those Hittites and Amorites and Hivites and all of the other ites that we know existed? There's no call to go evangelize them. Why is that? God so organized history and the location of the birth and life of people that believers grew up in Israel. Why did He do that? Because in His dealing with the nation, it's a picture of what He now does for people scattered throughout the globe.

And so those things that were the provenance of Israel, that's why God can contrast Israel and Gentiles in the New Testament and make Israel jealous. And that's why Paul can say, so all Israel will be saved. We don't have to qualify.

We don't have to explain. We don't have to dance around and try to figure out what He's saying. All Israel will be saved because all Israel are believers.

The difficulty is most of Israel was not obedient. So what does God do? God is going to make them jealous by those who are not Israel. God is going to open up His plan and now you don't have to be in the nation of Israel anymore to be a believer and to be sustained by God's grace.

You don't have to be in Israel to worship. You don't have to conform to the national laws and participate in the sacrifices and the offering and the circumcision and so forth. Those things have no meaning for someone who's an unbeliever, but they are the method of worship in the Old Testament.

They are the method of restoration. The 1 John 1.9 of the Old Testament is the sin offering and it is given to every Israelite. God doesn't call unbelievers to participate in the things that belong to believers, but God put that ordinance upon all Israelites.

And why is that? Because they're all saved. God doesn't say, well, you must tell the priest that you have faith in God and you really believe in Him and then you come under these things. If you're an Israelite, you're under the law and you're required to be circumcised.

You're required to observe the feasts and participate in the sacrifices and the ritual worship life of Israel. You're under the cleansing rituals and so forth because you're a believer and that's God's

calling for believers in that age. But we'll substantiate that from Scripture.

It was a startling concept to me when it finally gelled in my mind. But it's amazing how many things it clarifies when we understand that. And that's why God can deal with the nation as a group.

And there's no call for internal evangelism and there's no call for external evangelism because the saved are there. They grow up and come to a knowledge of God and express faith in Him and they're right in the nation. All of the provision, all of the teaching, all of the logistical grace or whatever you want to call it is already built in.

And if there is anyone on the outside such as Rahab or Ruth, they become attached to the nation. They are incorporated into the nation. Naaman the Syrian had to get special permission as a believer to live outside the land.

He talked to the prophet and the prophet gave him permission to continue to serve in the Syrian government. And he said, I'm not going to be able to come and worship. He understood that to be a believer was to be in Israel.

And the prophet told him, that's okay. You can continue your function outside. So, that's important.

But why is it then if they are believers that God gave them a spirit of stupor? Eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear to this very day. We went back to the Old Testament passages. We went back to Moses last week and saw that even though they had wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, Moses told them, as they stood on the brink of the Jordan and were preparing to cross over into the land, he said, God has been with you.

Your sandals haven't worn out. He's provided. He's protected.

You've had manna. You've had water. You've had preservation from enemies and so forth.

But God has to this day not given you eyes to see nor ears to hear. Having seeing eyes and hearing ears was conditioned on faith. Living faith.

Daily faith. They were the called. They were the chosen.

They were the people of God. They are believers. And yet, unless they turn to God and seek His face, unless they heed the truth that's contained in Proverbs chapter 2, My son, if you receive My words, if you lay up My commandments with you, if you incline your ear to wisdom, if you apply your heart to understanding, if you lift up your voice for wisdom, if you cry out, if you seek for it as silver, if you search for it as for hidden treasure.

Now, that's obedience. That's pursuit. That's something that we are called to after salvation,

right? Because salvation proper, deliverance from the lake of fire, is faith.

No strings. No obedience. No lordship.

It's faith. Recognizing who God is. Recognizing we're hopeless, helpless and useless.

We need to be saved by His grace. And we seize that. We accept it by faith.

But that call to search, to seek, to cry out, to apply, to lift up, that's a call to believers. And He says, if you do those things, then you will understand the fear of the Lord. Then you will find the knowledge of God.

Jesus told the Old Testament economy, ask and it shall be given. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened.

Those are actions. Those are works. It is a work to ask.

It is a work to seek. It is a work to knock. And it's a command.

It's an imperative to believers. It's not a part of salvation from the lake of fire. It's a part of salvation out of this evil age.

It's a part of salvation from our sinful nature. It's a part of our salvation from entrapment in the kingdom of darkness and enslavement to sin in our experience. And it requires obedience.

If we ask, it will be given. If we seek, we will find. If we knock, it will be opened.

Israel, by and large, as a nation, that body of believers, the majority of them did not do that. And the majority of them were not able to enter the land. And even after they got into the land, the majority of them were never able to enjoy the full blessings of the land, complete conquest over the enemies, complete peace and prosperity because they never obeyed in that sense.

And the nation went out under discipline. The northern kingdom went out. The southern kingdom eventually went out.

And God took away their sight and took away their ability to hear. It was discipline on believers. It was granted through faith and it was removed through faithlessness, through apathy, through complacency, through not prioritizing God, not loving the Lord their God with all their heart, all their soul, and all their strength.

Those Israelites that wandered in the wilderness, we saw it, I think it was in Deuteronomy 29. Moses said, even to this day, God has not been able to give you eyes to see and ears to hear because you've not yet trusted Him. You haven't asked and sought and not.

He says, now's your opportunity. And He goes through in chapter 30 and He says, if you obey, if

you pursue, you will understand and you will enjoy all of these things. It's conditioned on obedience.

It's conditioned on faith for believers. And believers can lose that. God has opened the eyes of our hearts, Ephesians chapter 1. The eyes of our hearts have been enlightened so that we can understand these wonderful truths.

But if we don't take advantage of that opportunity and that privilege, that can be removed and we can lose what we have. In Jesus' teaching, He said, to those who have, more will be given. But to those who have not, even what they have will be taken away.

Who was He talking about? What was the context of that statement? Do you remember the parable of the talents? You have three servants. They all have the exact same relationship to the Master, don't they? They're all servants. One of them is given five talents, invests them, comes back with five more.

Another one is given three talents, invests them, comes back with three more. The third servant, identical to the first two servants in terms of relationship to the Master, takes that one talent and buries it in the ground. And He says, I know that you are a hard man and you reap where you haven't sown and so forth.

He doesn't know His Master at all. Is that the way God is? No. He misunderstands His Master.

He doesn't comprehend what His Master is doing. He says, well, my Master must be reaping where He hasn't sown. That's not what the Master does at all.

That's not a picture of God. God doesn't reap where He hasn't sown. But this servant doesn't understand His Master and because he misunderstands the Master's operation, misunderstands His plan and His purpose, he takes the one coin and buries it in the ground.

He says, here it is, I'll give it back to you. And the Master says, take that coin and give it to the one who has five talents and who now has ten. For those who have, more will be given.

And those who have not, even what they have will be taken away. That talent is potential. That coin, that gold, is opportunity to do something that's productive in the plan of the Master.

And if we squander that and don't take advantage of it, that's going to be taken away. What does that mean to us in concrete terms? Where is our talent? What is our piece of gold? It's the Word of God and the Spirit of God. The power of God, if I've said this once, I've said it twice, the power of God comes into the life of the believer through the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

You can't go to a New Testament book and not find that truth expressed time and time again. The power of God comes into the life of the believer through the Spirit of God and the Word of God. If we disregard the ministry of God, the Holy Spirit, if we are apathetic and disinterested and don't

meditate and pursue an understanding of God's Word, our coin is going to be removed.

That's what happened to Israel. Moses told them, he said, this truth that I'm presenting before you today, it's not far off. You don't have to go over the sea.

You don't have to descend into heaven to get it. It's near you. It's in your heart.

It's in your mouth. So that you should make it the object of your faith and do it. They had it in front of them and they squandered it.

And as a result of that apathy and that faithlessness and that selfish pursuit of their own righteousness rather than the righteousness of God, God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear to this very day. He's quoting Moses standing there on the banks of the Jordan, the place of opportunity. And he says, you've had all of this time, you've had 40 years and even today you haven't yet committed to the life of faith.

You haven't placed your entire trust in God. We always say, well, that second generation that went into the land, they were the faithful ones. They didn't drop in the wilderness like the preceding ones.

That's not what Moses says. He says, God still hasn't been able to give you eyes to see and ears to hear. He's letting you go into the land.

But the quote-unquote conquest under Joshua was fraught with failures, wasn't it? Remember AI? Remember the fact that they never completely eradicated the enemies? All the way down in David's day 400 years later, in Saul's day there were still enemies throughout the land. Why was that? They never completed the conquest because they never fully exploited the promises of God by faith. And even when they got into the land, they failed.

And they ultimately were ejected from the land because they didn't seize it and hold it by faith. David says, let their table become a snare and a trap. What a curious thing to say.

We saw last time, what is the table? What does Psalm 23 say about the table? Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runs over. The table is the place of nourishment.

It's the place of blessing. It's the place of anointing. What's the anointing of the head with oil? Commissioning for service.

Israel was the people of God. They were the anointed ones. The table was the place of sustenance and the place of provision from God.

But what happened to their table? That that was designed to be provision and blessing turned into a snare and a trap. The very thing that should have moved them forward tripped them and

caused them to stumble. That's what happens to us today.

Look at Christianity around us. The Word of God is used to justify all sorts of weird, bizarre, strange, blasphemous things. The Word of God and the Spirit of God.

Look at what is the abuse that the Spirit of God has taken in terms of understanding Him and His ministry today. The Word of God and the Spirit of God are those things. That's our table.

And our table has become a snare and a trap today. And the bulk of believers who will be in glory and they won't go to the lake of fire are going to lose and have lost that coin, have lost that opportunity because the table has been abused and it has become a snare and a trap. And all sorts of weird things are justified by the Scriptures in regard to both the Word and the Spirit.

So, He says, Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a recompense to them. A recompense, a rebuke, a discipline. Let their eyes be darkened so that they are back always.

Discipline in time, misery in time, self-induced misery through apathy and a lack of focus on the things of God for believers. Now look at verse 11. I say then, Have they stumbled so as to fall? Certainly not.

Now here's something to chew on. Have they stumbled so that they fall flat? Certainly not. Meganoita.

God forbid. It's one of the strongest negatives in Greek. Absolutely not.

Israel has not stumbled so as to fall. But through their fall to provoke them to jealousy, deliverance has come to the Gentiles. And if your Bible says so, if you translate that deliverance, because we're not talking here about salvation proper.

We're talking about deliverance in a broad sense. It includes salvation from the lake of fire, but it's not limited to it. Just like reconciliation that we saw in our Scripture reading, which is going to come up here.

Through their fall. What is their fall? Actually, this is a bad translation. It doesn't even say through their fall.

And that's my new King James, and I haven't penciled it out here. But I told you last time, that word there is the word for trespass. Through their trespass.

They have not fallen. Paul has just strongly affirmed that they have not stumbled so that they should fall. And now the new King James turns around and says through their fall, deliverance has come to the Gentiles.

Not so. It doesn't say fall. Through their trespass.

They have trespassed. They're believers. And they've trespassed.

They've gone outside the bounds that God set for them. And through that trespass, to provoke them to jealousy. How do you provoke someone to jealousy? Who gets jealous? The classic green-eyed monster syndrome is when two people are married and one of the spouses gets jealous.

Why are they jealous? Because they have a relationship with someone and they think someone else is intruding into that relationship. Here's my wife and I think you're angling in on my wife and now I'm jealous. Right? Who is God provoking to jealousy? Israel.

Why? Because these Israelites who have stumbled and have trespassed have a relationship with Him. They're saved. They're believers.

We're not talking here about eternal salvation from the lake of fire. We're talking about people with whom God has a relationship and He's provoking them to jealousy. Many an apathetic husband... I mean this has been the fodder for countless sitcom plots where some apathetic indifferent husband is suddenly provoked to jealousy when the wife says, well, I'll make out like I'm interested in somebody else and wake him up.

Or someone with whom they're engaged or someone that they're interested in. I mean, it's a terrible illustration to use, but that's the idea. There's someone that you have a relationship with, someone that you care about, and you think they're not paying enough attention to you, so you say, well, I'll make them jealous and then they'll pay more attention to me.

In a way, that's the illustration that God is using here. I'll go make over the Gentiles. I'll open this opportunity for righteousness by faith to people outside the nation, and the people in the nation are going to wake up and smell the coffee.

They're going to recognize that they need to pay attention to their relationship with me. That's what God is doing. When God says, okay, you people here, I've organized all you believers here into the nation of Israel, and most of you are apathetic and indifferent.

I've just got a remnant here that understands what's going on. And you don't recognize the privilege and the opportunity that you have as believers. I'm going to wake you up.

I'm going to say, okay, you don't even have to be in the nation anymore. Now believers are going to be scattered all over the place. These Gentiles that you look down your nose at because you recognize that they're pagans and they're unbelievers, well, now some of them are going to be believers, and they're going to be pleasing to me, and they're going to be acceptable in my sight as believers, and you're not.

And that's going to make you jealous and wake you up to who you ought to be and what your

calling is as believers. That's who he's talking about. That's who he's provoking to jealousy.

You can't make that work in a salvation from the lake of fire sense. How are you going to provoke an unbeliever to jealousy? You can't make it fly, and it's so confusing, and it is sadly humorous to see a lot of commentaries when they hit this try to explain this idea of jealousy because they'll keep flipping back and forth between the believers and the quote-unquote unbelievers in Israel. And well, God's trying to evangelize the unbelievers in Israel by provoking them to jealousy through the Gentiles, and it gets so mixed and confused.

Several of the commentators come right out and say that they don't think Paul understood his own argument. I've got that in writing. Paul actually didn't know where his argument was going, and he got confused and didn't know what he was saying because they are confused by Paul's argument.

But this lays down and makes perfect logical sense if we just understand who is being talked about. This is in the realm of believers. This is in chapter 11 of a letter to believers talking about righteousness by faith after salvation.

And he is still arguing that point. He hasn't lapsed back over into salvation from the lake of fire. And this is why Israel believers can stumble but not fall.

What does it mean to fall? Fall means are they clear out of God's plan? Will they never be reconciled? Will they never fulfill their purpose in God's plan as believers? Certainly not. Meganoita, God forbid. But God is going to use their disobedience and their faithlessness and their apathy to open it.

He is working this together for good. You can go back to 8.28 and following. God is going to use the chosen, the remnant in Israel and the elect that come out of the Gentiles.

Not just any Gentile believer but those Gentile believers who pursue righteousness by faith and who are declared righteous in the sight of God. God is going to open this up and by creating this contrast and dismantling the barrier around Israel so that now you can be a believer anywhere, this deliverance in time, deliverance from the lake of fire, true enough, but also deliverance in time, deliverance from this present evil age, deliverance from the sinful nature, deliverance from a life of uselessness is going to be opened up to the Gentiles. And now all of the things that they're taking pride in as believers in their rituals and their traditions and their system and their heritage is going to be set aside because here are Gentiles that are being declared righteous by God who don't participate in any of that.

And it's a wake-up call. What stronger message could God send? We need the little button like the presidential campaign. It's the economy, stupid.

Well, it's the heart. That's what God wants to focus their attention on. It's your heart, not your

deeds.

Wake up, oh Israel. Let me unblind your eyes and unclog your heart. Turn at my rebuke, my reproof.

I will pour out my spirit on you. I will make my words known to you. Remember that? Exhortation from the prophet.

Have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not. But through their trespass to provoke them to jealousy, deliverance has come to the Gentiles. Now, if their trespass means riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, notice this is riches.

This is not just deliverance from the lake of fire. This is riches. This is the abundance of life.

This is blessing. This is reward. This is inheritance in the eternal kingdom.

This failure on the part of Israel as believers has focused like a laser on the importance of what goes on in the heart. Righteousness by faith. And by doing that, if God can take their failure and work this wonderful deliverance out for people all over the world, what do you think is going to happen when this jealousy takes place? When Israel wakes up and realizes what righteousness by faith is all about? This thing that they were seeking, their own righteousness and that they did not attain.

When they see the Gentiles crossing the finish line and seizing and taking hold of what they're seeking, and when they walk over and get on the right racetrack and start themselves grasping and seizing that great prize, how much greater glory do you think it's going to be? If God can take their failure and work it together for good, what do you think is going to happen when they wake up and understand the truth and pursue it? It's going to be so great. Paul is going to talk about that as we go forward in the chapter. We're going to pause here and take our break, and when we come back we're going to see exactly what this fullness is.

If their failure is richest for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness? We're going to see the olive tree and those broken branches when we come back from our break.