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Okay, we're ready now to resume in our study of Romans chapter 11. And we're noticing what Paul has to say about the nation of Israel. He's quoting the Old Testament scriptures.

He's quoting Isaiah. He quotes from Deuteronomy chapter 29. He quotes from Psalm 69, 22.

All of these passages talk about Israel as a nation of believers who have been called to obedience and who have failed in that call. None of these passages talk about people failing to come to faith in God or acknowledging Him as their creator and as their God and Father. It is in the area of obedience, in righteousness by faith, where they have failed.

The discipline on those believers was the taking away of the ministry of the Spirit to them, the inability to understand after repeated presentations of the truth. God says, all day long, I have held out my hands to a disobedient and stiff-necked people. This is apathy, it's faithlessness, it's disobedience.

In some cases, it's even rebellion on the part of believers in the nation of Israel. And part of their discipline, as we saw last time, that God gave them a stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear to this very day. And Paul characterizes the nation of Israel, and he's looking at them in their Old Testament sense.

And this is the nation all the way up to the day of Pentecost. This is the nation that crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, we come into a little bit of a question.

In fact, it's more than a little bit of a question. It's a big question when we think about Israel. And if we take for granted for the moment that they are believers, how do we account for the crucifixion of Christ and the rejection of Jesus Christ? And what do we say about that generation who refused to recognize Christ as the Messiah? And what's their salvation status? And what does that do to the whole argument that Israel is composed of believers? At the risk of looking like I'm squirting ink and disappearing behind it, we will study that in detail when we study this topic proper.

I will say this, however. Keep in mind what it is that Israel rejected when the issue of Jesus Christ came up. What was the message that John the Baptist presented the nation of Israel with? Presented Israel with? What was he putting before them as a decision point? Faith for salvation or the kingdom? Jesus Christ as king, as Messiah, was put before Israel.

Did Jesus, did John the Baptist come to evangelize Israel or to call them into the kingdom? That's the question. And I'll leave that for you to meditate on because there is a distinction. They are not co-equal.

The kingdom of God and participation in it are not synonyms for salvation. You can be saved and

not participate in the kingdom. Jesus told believing Jews, many of you will come in that day and say, Lord, Lord.

And what is that day? That day is the day of celebration, the day of participation in the kingdom. How can they come? If they were unbelievers, they're not even resurrected. They wouldn't have anything to say until the great white throne judgment, which takes place more than a thousand years after the kingdom has come and after the kingdom has gone.

That's the time of the great white throne. An unbeliever can't have the door shut in his face because he won't be there. He won't be there for the kingdom.

He will not have participated in the resurrection of the Old Testament saints to see the kingdom. Jesus told the Pharisees who were disinclined to accept his message. He said, you will see many coming from the east and west and north and south and sitting down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom and you yourselves thrust out.

Now, how can you be thrust out of the kingdom unless you're present to be there? You can't be across a great gulf fixed. You can't be in the grave. You can't be awaiting the great white throne judgment and be there for the door to be slammed in your face or be there to see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and to be thrust out.

That can't take place. This is loss of privilege. It's loss of participation.

It's loss of opportunity. Jesus said over and over again that there would be a wide spectrum in the kingdom. He said there are those who are first who will be last and those who are last who will be first.

And what does it mean to be last? To be last means no participation, no entrance. You will see the kingdom, but you won't enter the kingdom. You will see, but you won't participate.

There are those of us as church age believers who will see Christ in his glory, seated on his throne and ruling in the millennial kingdom. And we will not participate. Participation, sitting on a throne with Christ, walking with Christ in a robe of white, having the new name and the white stone and all of those other things in Revelation 2 and 3 are privileges for those who respond to the call, for those who are sons indeed, for those who move forward by faith and by obedience as believers.

Not all believers will have those things. Otherwise, how could you have first and last? Everybody would be the same. We're all rewarded with all rewards.

Not so. It depends on what we do in this life. And the same was true for Israel.

And in the same way that the majority of Israelites never caught on to their call as the people of God, the majority of us as believers, members of the body of Christ today, don't catch on to our

call to faith. Even when we start participating in ministries and so forth and get involved in the church and get active, many times we miss our call because our call is not first and foremost a call to active service. It is a call to be transformed.

There is so much going around today of joining God in His work. And the mission of God is defined as being evangelism and bringing the lost into the fold. And that to be an effective Christian, to be participating in God's plan, you jump in and help God bring the lost into the fold.

That's not our calling. Now, it isn't to say that it isn't a part of our function or that it isn't a wonderful and worthy thing that we should watch for opportunities to aggressively pursue. But that's not the definition of our calling any more than the calling of a soldier is to recruit others to be soldiers.

Recruiting is an important and necessary function, but it's not the mission. It's essential to the mission, but it's not the mission. And you can't substitute one for the other.

And our mission in this life is not evangelism. Our mission in this life is to be transformed. It's not joining God in His work in the world.

It is being the work of God. God is at work in us to will and to do His good purpose. And before we start looking around trying to join God in His work, we need to be sure that God is at work in us.

And that's righteousness by faith. It's learning about the new creation that we are a part of. It's amazing how different this physical universe is from God's universe.

And things that are considered to be wise and proper and important in this universe are not wise and are not important in God's creation, in God's invisible universe. And we have to learn the difference. Paul prays for the Thessalonians.

I pray that you will come to know the difference, that you will not just know right from wrong, but that you'll know the better things. What is the better part? What has a higher priority? Ministry is good. Witnessing and evangelism are good.

Family life and raising children are also good and important. Which one takes priority? Which one should you do at the expense of the other? Those are parts of God's invisible creation that we as believers need to learn. And if we jump in full force and try to be evangelists and lose our children or lose our marriage, have we in fact pleased God? Are we in fact going to be declared righteous by God? We're not because we've gotten our priorities mixed up.

God never calls us to evangelize at the expense of more important things. God has given every believer a clear command to be a good spouse, to be a good parent, to be a good child, to honor our parents and so forth. That's a clear, uncompromised, unmodified requirement for believers, that we do those things.

There's no out. There's no excuse for not doing those things. We don't have an imperative to evangelize.

It's a worthy function. It's a necessary thing. And I don't mean to diminish how important it is.

All of us got evangelized by somebody, thank the Lord. But we have to fit that in after we have observed the proper priorities, the absolute commands. We have discretionary things in God's plan that follow the absolute things.

The absolute is to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. The discretionary is to help others be transformed. And first things have to come first.

Israel didn't do that. Israel paid no attention. Israel sought their own righteousness by a superficial observance of the law, and they never got the message that it's in the heart.

It's the invisible creation that we have to observe and respect. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, all thy soul, all thy strength. Thou shalt have no other gods before me, and so forth.

That has to come first. Why is that the first commandment? Because it comes first. That has to take place first.

None of these other obediences. A man could go all through his life and never covet, never commit adultery, never murder. And if he didn't observe that first commandment, that's all for naught.

He's going to be wondering why he's on the outside of the kingdom, why he's living in the land of Put, or often Tibet someplace in the millennial kingdom, instead of in the historical boundaries of Israel. Why is he denied entrance to that specific millennial kingdom of the king of Israel? Because he didn't seize it by faith. Jesus said, you know, many are trying to force their way into the kingdom.

Israel, I mentioned this last time during the break, I think. I find it fascinating when you go back and study Jacob, and he's in this struggle with Esau, and he's trying to come back and be reconciled to his brother Esau. And in the middle of this, you have this odd episode.

Jacob sends his wives and his wife's servants, who also were mothers of his children. He sends all of that and all of his household goods and his servants and everybody across the river, and he's there by himself. Night falls, and it says he wrestled with someone until dawn.

He wrestles with a man. We've always said Jacob wrestling with the angel, but it just says a man. He wrestled with a man until morning.

And as dawn is breaking, this man says, let me go. Day is breaking. And Jacob says, I will not let you go until you bless me.

And eventually, he does get a sort of a blessing. He gets a new name, Israel, which means the one who strives with God. And he gets crippled in his thigh.

God, two chapters previously, blesses Jacob at Bethel. God, two chapters later, blesses Jacob again at Bethel. Jacob's latter episode is two chapters previously, and Jacob sets up an altar there.

But in the wrestling episode, what's he doing? He's literally trying to get a blessing by physical force. He says, if I can just hold on to you, if I struggle hard enough, you'll give me a blessing. And isn't that prophetic of what the nation of Israel has done historically throughout the Old Testament? I will, by my efforts, obtain a blessing from God.

And God says, here's your blessing. I'm going to give you a name that fits you. You strive with God.

It's quoted over in the Psalms, where it's rehearsing the history of Jacob. And he says, no, it's not in the Psalms. It's in the prophets.

It's in, I believe it's in Micah, where it's reviewing the history. And it's talking about Jacob. And it says, he's the one who is going to be recompensed by God.

He's going to come under discipline and personifying the nation of Israel, going back to Jacob himself. And he says, Jacob was the one who seized his brother by the heel, trying to supplant him. Esau came out first.

And Jacob's grabbing onto the heel, trying to be first, trying to get the blessing of being the firstborn. And he grabs onto his twin brother's heel. And he says, it's Jacob who strove with God.

And it's in a passage talking about that he's going to be recompensed. He's going to be disciplined for this. This is not a good thing.

We've often looked at the story of Jacob wrestling with the angel or with the man and saying, oh, look how fervent he was to get a blessing from God. That's the wrong way. Blessing from God comes through faith, not through effort.

And what did he get on that day? He got a name that says, you're the one that strives with God. That's what Israel means, he who strives with God. And Israel, rather than being the one who communes with God, rather than being the one who participates with God and fellowships with God, he's the one that's at odds with God.

He wrestles with him. He strives with him, trying to get a blessing. That's what the nation has

done.

That's what Paul is referring to here in Romans 11. And because of that, God hasn't been able to give them eyes to see and ears to hear down to this very day. That's the characteristic of the nation.

That's been the characteristic, the pattern of believers in the nation of Israel. And so they stumbled. They stumbled.

And in other places, it says they stumbled over that rock, the stumbling stone. But through that stumbling, to provoke them to jealousy, deliverance has come to the Gentiles. Now, if that stumbling is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness? So what are we talking about here? Does this understanding that we've gained hold true? Look at verse 13 of Romans 11.

I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry. If by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and deliver some of them. He says, I'm an Israelite.

I'm out of this nation that has been blinded and given the spirit of stupor. And I am a part of this ministry of reconciliation. I go to the Gentiles and I give the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ and the good news of salvation and the good news of opportunity to be the elect, to be the chosen, to have an inheritance, to fulfill the purpose and the calling of God.

And in verse 15, for if they're being cast away, is the reconciling of the world. That's what we saw in our scripture reading this morning in 2nd Corinthians. If they're being cast away, is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be? But life from the dead.

For if the first fruit is holy, the lump is also holy and if the root is holy, so are the branches. And then he starts talking about the branches being broken off and he talks about this olive tree and you've got native branches being broken off. you've got wild branches being grafted in.

And all of a sudden, out of nowhere, we suddenly seem to find ourselves in deep water here. What is he talking about? What does he mean that they are cast away? What does he mean that they are accepted? What is the tree? What does the tree represent? Now, the standard understanding that you often find in this passage is that the tree is the tree of salvation. Let's see if we can make that work.

Starting in verse 17, if some of the branches were broken off and you being a wild olive tree, you Gentiles, were grafted in among them and with them have become a partaker of the root and the fatness of the olive tree. So we know that this tree, whatever it is, has a root that's holy. Remember he says, if the root is holy, so are the branches.

And this root provides nourishment. It has fatness. It has the sap, the oil that permeates the tree

and that enables it to bear fruit.

And these olives themselves, that fruit are full of olive oil. Olive oil throughout scriptures, representative of the Holy Spirit. This tree is full of that oil.

It's full of that fatness. Okay, so with these native branches, these wild olive branches have been grafted in and now they partake of that nourishment. They partake of that ability to bear fruit.

What's the whole point of grafting a branch? Why do growers today, why do they graft in branches into a tree? What do you do that for? It's fruit, isn't it? It's bearing of fruit. It's not to, you know, this tree looks a little lopsided. If I could just graft in a branch over here, the tree would be nice and symmetrical.

That's not the purpose, is it? And it's not to keep the branch alive. Oh, look, this tree is about to die. Let me cut off its branches and graft them in over here and keep these branches alive so that they won't die.

I'll graft them into a living olive tree. That's not the point. The reason you do grafting at all is for the fruit.

It's the fruit that counts. It's the produce of the branch that you're after. The fruit is the issue.

It's not the life of the branch. You're not trying to save the branch. You're trying to make sure there's fruit.

That's exceedingly important. Hasn't that been the theme of this whole book of Romans, this whole letter, the fruit of the life of a believer? Are you fruitful or are you not? Are you sowing to the Spirit and of the Spirit, reaping life everlasting, life in the sense of fullness and blessing and partaking of eternal things? Or are you sowing to the flesh and of the flesh, reaping corruption, death? Remember that passage? Be not deceived. God is not mocked.

For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. Text I've momentarily lapsed on the reference for that, that you can find it in a concordance. That's smack in the middle of exhortations to believers.

And sowing and reaping, these are activities. That's not talking about faith, is it? If you sow to the flesh, you will reap from the flesh corruption. If you sow to the Spirit, you will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

And this is either talking about salvation by works or it's talking about believers and the decisions we make on a day-by-day basis. You're either gonna produce corruption or you're going to partake of the divine. You're gonna partake of that new creation.

You're gonna have life that's eternal, not in the sense of its duration, but in the sense of its

quality. Eternal life, most of the times you run across it in the New Testament is talking about the quality of life. It's the life of God.

It's the capacity to love and live and be happy that is a part of the divine life of God. That is our opportunity as believers. And we can either seize and take hold of it or we can miss it as believers.

That's what he's talking about here. This tree is the tree that bears fruit. It's the tree that bears olives.

It's the tree that is permeated. Both it and its fruit are permeated with the olive oil, which is the Spirit. The issue here, the reason that this illustration comes up is that believers have the opportunity to be productive or not be productive.

This isn't talking about whether or not you're going to the lake of fire. When these branches get burned, we're not talking about the lake of fire. We're talking about the same fire that burns the wood, hay, and stubble and that reveals the gold and silver and precious stones.

This is the fire of judgment. This is the fire of the analysis, the burning eyes of the Lord Jesus Christ. You see in Revelation chapter one, he has eyes like a flame of fire.

Why is it his eyes that are like a flame of fire? When he looks, it burns away everything that's non-essential. It burns away the temporary and the superficial and reveals, that's what fire does. It reveals what you're made of.

Is it something permanent or something temporary? Is it something real or something that is of no value? So, this root is holy. What does the root do? The root takes nourishment and turns it into what sustains the rest of the tree. This is a place of nourishment.

Remember the table that nourishes, that sustains. Why does God feed us? Why does God sustain us? So that we can produce, so that we can live a life that pleases him. He doesn't sustain us so that we can be ignominious vessels of wrath fitted for ruin.

His purpose in sustaining us is to sustain us and it isn't just so that we can go through and have a relatively trouble-free, happy life. We miss the point if we think that the whole reason for being here is to just somehow have a trouble-free life. Our purpose is to bear fruit to God and sometimes we're going to bear that fruit under pressure.

We're going to bear that fruit in an unlikely place. We're going to bear it at an odd season. Remember when Jesus was going into Jerusalem shortly before the crucifixion and he went to the olive tree looking for fruit and he found none and he cursed the tree.

Why? The scripture says it wasn't the season for olives and he went there looking for fruit, or I'm sorry, it wasn't the season for figs. It was a fig tree that he cursed. It wasn't the season for figs.

Well, why is he cursing the fig tree? Because that particular tree was supposed to be bearing fruit. It was supposed to be different than the rest of the trees. It was a special tree and it had leaves and had everything, what do leaves mean? It means it had all of the nourishment and all of the resources to have fruit and yet it had none.

It had been provided, it had been nourished. It was a special tree. It was supposed to have figs and it didn't.

And he went to that tree looking for figs. And Jesus is not dumb. Jesus knows whether or not it's the time and so forth and Jesus expected that tree to have figs and it didn't.

And it's a picture of Israel. Israel is the people of God. It's been given the nourishment.

It has the leaves, it has the branches. And when Jesus goes to it and finds no fruit, it comes under a curse. And that tree withered.

He said, because I can't eat of you today, let no one ever eat of you. And so it withers and within a day, that's pretty fast if you know trees. I've got a tree in my backyard that's been dead for two or three years and it's still standing and it's only now starting to really look bad.

That tree within a day withered and was noticeably dead and under the curse. That's what happened to Israel. Believers who were nourished, who were commissioned, who were given everything they needed to produce fruit but they didn't produce that fruit.

And those unfruitful branches are broken off. Broken off not in the sense of loss of salvation, but the whole reason you have a branch, the whole reason you plugged into the tree is to bear fruit. If you're not bearing fruit, you're wasting time taking the nourishment and you're gonna be cut off from the root.

You're gonna be cut off from the sap. You're gonna be cut off from the provision. Believers under discipline will lose logistical grace.

Believers under discipline will find themselves short on provision, short on monetary needs, short on security needs, short on those things that are a part of the promises of God to us. My God shall supply all your needs according to its riches and glory in Christ Jesus. If you look at the context of that verse, Paul says, if you're obedient and if you're exercising love and if you are generous toward these believers who are needy, my God shall supply your needs.

It's a conditional promise. It's conditioned on obedience. It's conditioned on production.

What better way to wake us up and to demonstrate to us that we need to make a change than to startle us with loss of provision. Israel got startled by the loss of God's provision. God promised them the land.

God moved heaven and earth. God put the plagues on Egypt. God parted the Red Sea.

God parted the Jordan to put them into the land of Canaan. And when they were apathetic and faithless, how did God wake them up? He kicked them out. They're not in the land of milk and honey.

They didn't have victory over their enemies. All of the things that God had promised them on that day back in Deuteronomy, when Moses said, I'm presenting you here with the opportunity to be productive or the opportunity to be disciplined. The word is near you.

It's in your heart and in your mouth. What you do with it will determine whether you continue to be blind and hard-hearted or whether you start to understand the things of God and be productive. The tree represents God's plan that bears fruit, that glorifies God.

It is the fruit-bearing arena. We're not talking about salvation. We're not even talking about physical life and death.

We're talking about the fruit that glorifies God, the fruit of John chapter 15. I am the vine, you are the branches. If you abide in me, you will bear much fruit.

We can be believers and not abide in the vine. We haven't lost our salvation. We lose our ability to produce fruit.

We're cut off from that which nourishes and sustains us. We no longer have peace. We no longer have joy.

We no longer have the fruit of the spirit in us. The fruit of the spirit glorifies God, and we'll lose that as believers. We haven't lost our salvation, but we've lost our ability to produce.

These branches in Israel that had been nourished up and given everything they needed to bear fruit weren't bearing it. And so those branches were broken off. The believers who dropped in the wilderness, who came out of Egypt under the blood of the Passover lamb and died in the wilderness and never entered the promised land were broken branches.

They didn't go in and produce fruit. They didn't go in and glorify God. They were believers.

They were redeemed under the blood and they perished. They were branches snapped off. They didn't bear fruit that glorified God.

And now, because that has been the pattern in Israel for so many hundreds of years, 1400 years of history up to the time of Christ, that was the general pattern in Israel except for the remnant. There have always been a few branches that bore fruit, but these unfruitful branches now are broken off. Some of the branches were broken off in verse 17.

And you being a wild olive tree. Now think about this. This isn't a fig.

It isn't an apple. It isn't a grapevine. It's a fig tree.

I'm sorry, it's an olive tree. Both of these are olive trees, but one is a cultivated olive and one is a wild olive. They both produce olives, but wild olives were not, they were only used as a last resort.

They were only eaten as a last resort because they had a bitter taste. They were dry. They didn't have a lot of oil in them.

They weren't satisfactory by themselves, but you could take those branches and graft them into a cultivated olive tree and they would suddenly, the blend was very good. And so they would do this. They would graft these in.

But they are branches in a wild olive tree. It's another olive tree, another of the same kind of tree. The same general genus of tree.

And what we're talking about here is that they are believers. They're Gentile believers and they're being grafted into the plan of God so that they can bear fruit, the same kind of fruit that Israel was supposed to bear, the fruit that comes by faith, righteousness by faith and become a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree. And so Paul says to these Gentiles that have now been included in God's plan, God has broken down the dividing wall around Israel and said, now you can be a believer anywhere.

I'm not going to pipe provision and the word of God and the mechanisms for restoration to fellowship and to function through the nation of Israel. I'm gonna open it up throughout the world. And so now Greeks and Syrians and Egyptians and Romans and all kinds of people can come and be believers and produce righteousness by faith.

He says, if you are one of these Gentile believers and you've been grafted into the plan of God now and you can produce this righteousness by faith, do not boast against the branches. Don't be pointing a finger at Israel and saying, well, they're all wet that God disciplined them. God has set them aside.

God has broken those branches off. He says, don't boast against the branches. If you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

The plan of God doesn't rest on your shoulders. You rest on the shoulders of the plan of God. And isn't this a misconception we have today that, well, the world has got to be evangelized by us.

We've got to go out and get everybody saved. We've got to go out and reform society. We've got to go out and bring in the kingdom in some segments of Christianity.

We've got to go. And when we get the world reformed enough, then Christ will return. That's your post-millennialist.

We think that everything depends on us, that, well, God's purpose just won't be accomplished unless I get out there and do the work, unless I go out there and join him in his work. Paul says, look, you're not supporting the tree. The tree supports you.

You will say then, but look, branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in. I'm special, I'm unique. God snapped off all these disobedient, faithless, apathetic Jews and grafted me in.

Look at me, I'm special. And he says, you're right. Because of unbelief, they were broken off.

Isn't that interesting? Because of apostasy, because of faithlessness. This doesn't mean they were unbelievers, quote unquote. This means they were faithless.

How do you produce fruit? Righteousness comes by faith, living righteousness. The righteousness that's the subject of this book, it comes by faith. They were faithless.

So what does that mean? They're an empty branch. There's no fruit. They are faithless branches.

They're fruitless branches. And that's why they're broken off. If they were unbelievers, they would have never been attached to the root in the first place.

Do we think that you're born saved and that because you become an unbeliever, then you're broken out of the tree of salvation? People who try to take this tree of salvation fall afoul of that inescapable piece of logic. To say that this tree represents salvation and that you're broken off as a dead branch and you never were saved, that means you must have been saved because you were a part of the tree. You can't be a branch unless you grew out of a tree.

Branches don't form by spontaneous combustion. They don't creep out from under rocks and then jump up into trees, do they? They grow out of a tree. These are believers.

You can't escape it. All of these branches are believers. There's no way around it.

If the root is holy, so are the branches. Isn't that what he introduced this with? They're holy. They're sanctified.

They're believers, but they're fruitless and they can be snapped off and burned even though they're holy branches. Why is that? Because they're faithless and they don't produce fruit. And this tree represents the production that is supposed to be a part of God's plan.

And so he says, well, you'll say branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in. Well said, because of unbelief they were broken off and you stand by faith. The only reason you're still in the tree is that you are producing fruit.

You're believing on a day-to-day basis. You're trusting God. You're living the life of faith and you're producing fruit.

That's how you stand. And what is he sort of threatening them with? He says, the only reason you're still in the tree is that you're producing fruit by faith. Watch out.

Watch out, believer. Watch out, Gentile believer grafted into the tree. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he may not spare you either.

You too can be snapped off. Now, if this tree is salvation, we've got to go with the idea that you can lose your salvation because you too can be snapped off. If he didn't spare the natural branch, if he snapped them off and burned them, he can snap you off and burn you.

So what is he talking about? If we become apathetic, if we ignore the word of God, if we disregard the ministry of the spirit of God, if we start seeking our own righteousness the way Israel did and get out in a flurry of works, we too can be snapped off. We too can have a non-productive life and be blinded and come under the same discipline that Israelite believers came under. If God presents the word to us time and time again and we ignore it, he's going to stop presenting it.

And when we do hear it, we're not going to understand it because why reveal something only for it to be rejected, only for it to be ignored, only for it to be explained away and disregarded. God doesn't cast his pearls before swine. And we as believers can be swine.

We can be unproductive branches and we can lose our ability to perceive the word of God if we continue to ignore it. It's a part of discipline. The wonderful promise is that if we turn at the reproof of God, this should be a wake up call.

If we find ourselves confused about the plan of God, we no longer know why we're here or what we're doing or how we got in this mess. That's a part of the reproof of God and it's designed to wake us up. It's not designed to just be a vindictive punishment.

We should wake up when we lose provision, when we lose whatever it is that God sustains us with, whether it's in the physical realm or the spiritual realm, it's designed to turn us. And God says, if you turn at my reproof, I will pour out my spirit on you. I will make my word known to you.

And we can have our sight restored and we can have our hearts made receptive once again by turning, but we have to turn. We have to recognize the rebuke and wake up and turn. And if we continue and are satisfied with our current path and our current pursuit and the type of fruit that we think we're producing, we're gonna be broken off branches.

Because of unbelief, because of faithlessness, I think is a better translation, they were broken off. And you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but fear.

We need to have a healthy sense of fear. We need to have a healthy motivation to examine ourselves and make sure we're bearing fruit and that we're functioning and being declared righteous by God through faith. If God did not spare the natural branches, he may not spare you either.

Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God on those who fell severity, but toward you goodness. If you continue in his goodness, if you continue, it's conditional. We don't lose our salvation, but we can certainly lose our blessing and provision from God.

We can lose the opportunity to produce. To those who have, more will be given. Remember when Jesus talked about the branches, every branch that bears fruit, my father prunes so that it will bear more fruit.

To him that has, more will be given. To him that has not, even what he has will be taken away. We sometimes lose sight of the potential severity of God's dealing with us as believers.

We revel in the security of our salvation and we revel in the knowledge that we're going to heaven and not going to hell, but we don't heed the warning passages of scripture. There is severe discipline. There is severe consequence of being apathetic towards God's plan and not actively asking and seeking and knocking and seeking to be a fruitful branch.

And that's what the warning is here. He's not talking about Israel was unsaved and was broken off and now you've been grafted in and you're saved because if you're broken off, you've lost your salvation and that just doesn't work. It flies in the face of every other scriptural reference to that subject.

Notice what he says here. You can be snapped off and then be grafted back in even after you're snapped off. Consider the goodness and severity of God on those who fell, severity.

That's discipline. Whom the Lord loves, he chastens. He skins alive with a whip every son whom he receives.

If you continue in his goodness, toward you comes goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. That's a promise.

We as believers, Gentile believers can be cut off from the opportunity to produce fruit if we're apathetic and faithless like these believers in the Old Testament were. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief will be grafted in for God is able to graft them in again. And who is he talking about? What's the context here in Romans? Jewish believers who came to faith in Christ, they're Christians, they're church age believers, we're in the church age now, have gone back to a system of righteousness by works.

They've fallen into the historical trap that Israel fell into in the Old Testament, seeking to establish

their own righteousness by works and not claiming the righteousness of God by faith as believers. Why does he tie the New Testament Jewish Christians in with the Old Testament believer Jews? Because they're making the same mistake. It's a different dispensation, but they're falling into the same error.

It's a historical trap for the Jews to think that you can be righteous by what you do instead of by what you trust. And they have been snapped out of the tree just the way their forefathers were snapped out of the tree of bearing fruit. This tree lives and grows throughout all the dispensations, righteousness is always by grace through faith, just like salvation.

And Paul is not making a distinction here between Old Testament saints and New Testament saints, he's talking about productive believers versus unproductive believers. And these Jewish believers who are trying to teach the Gentiles to follow the law, to be righteous, are making that mistake and they're being snapped out of the tree. Faithful Jews are still in the tree, those who understand righteousness by faith and who aren't hung up on the law.

And Gentiles are being grafted into the tree and producing fruit, producing the fruit of the Spirit by faith. And he says, you stand by faith, take heed that you don't get snapped out the way these believers are. If they do not continue in faithlessness, they will be grafted in for God is able to graft them in again.

They need to wake up, that's the purpose of this book. Paul has spent nine, 10 chapters trying to wake up Jewish believers. He says, look at your father Abraham, when did God declare him righteous? It was before he was ever circumcised, before he took Isaac up the mountain, it's when he trusted the promise of God.

Paul is trying to wake them up so that they can be grafted back in to this tree. Verse 24, if you were cut out of the olive tree, which is wild by nature, grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree? One of the reasons Paul is the greatest of the apostles is that although he's going to the Gentiles, he's got the heritage, he's got the Old Testament scriptures all permeating his soul. And the Jews who have this as their heritage have so much greater opportunity.

They've got two or three steps ahead of the race because of their heritage and because of what God has done. And if they're natural branches, they're supposed to be doing this. They didn't come to it late, they came to it early.

They're the first fruits. Well, we'll pick up with this. We're gonna go back now in the light of this and go back to this idea of the lump being holy and the root and the branches all being holy.

Now that we've got this in place and we'll take another run through this and complete chapter 11 next time, but we need to stop now and close in a word of prayer. Father, we thank you for the truth of your word. We thank you for the tremendous privilege and opportunity we have in this age

to be fruitful branches.

We thank you that you have made provision for us. You sustain us by your word and by your spirit. You've given us everything we need.

You have exhorted us and encouraged us in many cases rebuked and corrected us to make us fruitful, to prune us and to enable us to bear even more fruit. We pray that we will be alert and aware of these things day by day, that God, the Holy Spirit will afflict our conscience, will keep us aware and alert and that we will claim these things by faith and be declared righteous in your sight and be fruitful branches that bring glory to you and glory to our savior, Jesus Christ. We ask it in his name, amen.