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Okay, we are ready now to resume in Romans chapter 11. We are examining this concept of the tree and the branches and the fact that Israel as a nation by and large is a broken branch. Israel has been snapped out of the tree.

Their last and ultimate opportunity came when Jesus Christ came. John the Baptist as the herald called Israel to change of mind. Do you recall anything in the message of John the Baptist having to do with eternal destruction? He said, the one who comes after me is greater than I. I am not worthy to latch his sandals.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. We sometimes think that that fire may be the lake of fire type of fire. But to whom did John the Baptist come and preach this message? Was it to the world? It was to Israel, wasn't it? Specifically to Israel.

To whom did Jesus come and offer himself and the kingdom? To Israel. Some Gentiles wanted to get in on the opportunity there. He said, I am sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Why is that? Weren't there hundreds of thousands of other people on the planet? Weren't there Chinese? Weren't there Egyptians and Moabites and Edomites and people up in Tyre and Sidon and so forth? Weren't there Greeks and barbarians living up in the wild regions of Europe at this time? What about them? The point is that God dealt with believers through the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. This is something we want to explore a little bit because this helps us understand what is being said here in Romans chapter 11. For me at least, it has been something of a startling concept that pretty much, and I qualify this because I'm still in the process of sorting through the dozens and dozens and dozens of passages that talk about Israel, but it appears, and certainly for the sake of teaching, that Israel represents believers.

We've acknowledged this as we have interpreted the Scriptures. Israel coming out of Egypt under the blood of the Passover lamb. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are recipients of the covenant of promise by faith.

How did Israel get started? We're looking at Israel here. Has God cast off his people whom he foreknew? He has not. They've been broken off so that the Gentiles can be grafted in, but they will be grafted in again.

We need to be sure we have a grip on the concept of what Israel is in the Old Testament. One thing that all of us should know and should probably commit to memory is the origin of the nation of Israel. Where does it originate? If somebody said, well, where did Israel really begin in the Old Testament? To what passage would we turn? Well, the origination of the nation of Israel begins with Abraham.

Therefore, the passage we want to turn to are those passages that detail the Abrahamic

covenant, the promises that God made to Abraham. The story of Abraham begins in Genesis 12. Probably one of the clearest statements of the Abrahamic covenant is in Genesis chapter 17.

You might turn with me back here to Genesis 17. When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, I am almighty God. Walk before me and be blameless, and I will make my covenant between me and you and will multiply you exceedingly.

There's been a lot of talk about conditional and unconditional covenants, and the Abrahamic covenant is generally classified as an unconditional covenant. It's absolutely going to happen no matter what. But what does it say here in verse 1 and 2? He says, I am almighty God.

Walk before me and be blameless, and I will make my covenant with you. And this is a condition that Abraham met. Abraham walked before God and he was blameless.

Now you say, wait a minute, didn't Abraham go down to Egypt and didn't he lie about Sarah and said she was his sister? Didn't he get into trouble on various counts? Didn't he go off and have relations with Hagar and have a son and so forth? How can he say he's blameless? We've seen this principle before when we studied the life of David. We can stand before God and be blameless if we have claimed the cleansing and the restoration and the purging ministry that comes through the blood of Jesus Christ in our daily lives. We have been sanctified and regenerated at the point of our salvation through the work of God the Holy Spirit based on Christ's sacrifice on the cross, but we incur blame and we incur guilt as we go through life and fail when we sin, when we fall short, when we are faithless, when we are disobedient or rebellious.

But we can have that blame and that guilt, that operational blame and guilt eradicated through claiming the work of Jesus Christ. Our passages on this, 1 John 1.7, 1 John 1.9 and so forth, this has been a consistent principle throughout human history. David says, purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

Why is he asking for purging and cleansing? Because he has incurred blame, he has incurred guilt. But once he is purged and cleansed, he's now blameless. And that's an important principle for us because many times we think, well, things are not going well in my life or I seem to be suffering some consequences of bad decisions that I made perhaps even years ago.

I wonder if God is visiting my sins on my head. I made some mistake last week, last month, last year, ten years ago, twenty years ago. Now it's coming home to roost.

God is punishing me for this mistake that I made. Not so. Look at these biblical examples.

Look at David. Look at Abraham. It is possible to stand before God and be blameless, to be clean and it comes on the basis of claiming that cleansing of God.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful unto us to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us not just from the claimed errors but from all unrighteousness. Now if God cleanses you from all

unrighteousness, it doesn't come back later and un-cleanse you. You've got to go make some new mistake to not be clean and not be blameless.

But once God cleanses, it stays cleansed. So if we make a mistake, if we commit a failure, however gross, however exceedingly bad, at the point that we go to God with that attitude of change of mind and with that desire for restoration and cleansing and we acknowledge that this comes not on our own merit, not because we have worked it off or that we've compensated God in some way or not that we have felt sorry enough to be cleansed, but based on the work of Jesus Christ, he will forgive us and he will cleanse us. And once we're cleansed, that episode, that issue is closed, never to reoccur.

We cannot ever look at some bad circumstance in our life, regardless of where or how it originated and say, well, this comes from some mistake I made years ago, if we have already cleared that off the books, if God has cleansed us. That's why God can require Abraham to walk before him and be blameless. It doesn't mean that Abraham can never make another mistake.

He's going to make many. But he can still walk before God and be blameless. Why? Because he can be cleansed.

He can be made whole. He can be purged by coming to God and claiming that cleansing, which was anticipatory. It anticipated the work of Christ in the Old Testament.

We have the opportunity to look back at the cross and claim that same cleansing, that same purification. This is what Jesus pictured in the upper room when he washed the disciples' feet. You remember when he stripped to the waist and took the basin of water and began washing the disciples' feet? And he came to Peter and Peter said, Lord, you're not going to wash my feet.

And the Lord said, Peter, if I don't wash your feet, you have no part with me. You have no fellowship with me. And Peter said, well, in that case, wash me all over.

Wash me from head to toe. And Jesus said, no, you don't need that either. Someone who's had a bath doesn't need another bath.

You just need this dust on your feet cleansed. And it's a picture of operational dirt, operational failure, the failures that we commit as believers. We've already had the bath of sanctification and regeneration.

We've already been cleansed at the point of salvation. But to have fellowship, to have a part with Jesus Christ, we need this cleansing that comes as a result of walking through the world and accumulating dirt. And Jesus, when he concluded that in the upper room, he said, as I have done for you, so you should do for one another.

Now we can't save each other, can we? But we can forgive each other. We can wipe the books

clean and not bear a grudge and not hold an issue against a fellow believer, not hold an issue against a group of believers or a class of believers or a denomination or a fellowship or any other organization of believers, to sit there and have a grudge and be boasting over the branches as it were. Jesus said, I forgive you of your operational mistakes and I cleanse you and you stand before me blameless.

That's what you should do for one another. Now all of us at some time or another have an issue with another believer, maybe with several believers or maybe with a whole group of believers. We may hold a grudge against some church we used to go to or some group that we find particularly offensive.

Jesus Christ doesn't hold our failures against us when we come to him for cleansing. We can't hold a grudge. We can't bear ill will and keep blame present against others, especially if they have come to us and have acknowledged that.

But regardless, it's up to us to not fail to do what Christ did. And it takes humility, doesn't it? That's often pictured. There's a statue down in the center of the campus of Dallas Theological Seminary that's just been put there in the last few years.

It's a beautiful bronze sculpture and it shows Jesus Christ washing Peter's feet. And it is universally acknowledged as not only a picture, many people don't understand that it's a picture of forgiveness, but everyone understands that it's a picture of humility. It takes a special attitude to take on the role of a servant and to do something that was a lowly, demeaning sort of job.

It requires desiring that person's good over one's own. Jesus didn't say, well, I'm the Lord, I'm the deity, I'm the hypostatic union, I don't wash feet. I delegate that.

Somebody else washes feet. He did it himself and he took on the form of a servant. And so there is, and it's accurate to see in that a picture of humility and it requires humility on our part to forgive and to hold blameless those who have wronged us.

We cannot fulfill the injunction to love those who hate us, to do good to them and to pray for them if we don't have humility and recognize that there's something larger than our rights and our props, what's new us. There's something bigger and larger at stake and to be willing to wipe the slate clean on someone's behalf. So God tells Abraham, walk before me.

This is an imperative. Walk before me and be blameless. He doesn't say never sin, but be blameless.

When you do fail, you've got to take advantage of the cleansing and the purging that's available. And I will make my covenant between me and you and will multiply you exceedingly. Participation in the covenant and the blessings of the covenant is contingent on walking before God and being blameless.

It's contingent on claiming God's grace. It's the same thing we saw in our first session this morning. How can you be a part of the choosing out of grace? We have to seize it.

We have to take hold of it. It's being offered to all. We have to claim it.

We have to respond and by our choice, honor God. God can then honor us. God says walk before me and be blameless and I will make my covenant with you.

Verse four, as for me, behold, my covenant is with you and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful.

What a wonderful picture it is when we think about the faith of Abraham and spiritual fruit that is born through faith. That Abraham in the physical sense is a picture of that. Abraham is a man of faith.

Abraham walks before God and is blameless and God makes him fruitful. Abraham is the ancestor of millions and millions and millions of people and God brought that about. God preserved his line.

God preserved Isaac and Jacob and the twelve tribes through thick and through thin. It wasn't Abraham's energy. It was Abraham's faith that qualified him to be that progenitor of Israel and of all of these other nations.

I will make you exceedingly fruitful. I will make nations of you and kings shall come from you and I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you in their generations for an everlasting covenant to be God to you and your descendants after you. Abraham and Abraham's descendants are going to have Yahweh Elohim as their God.

The God that is now speaking. I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger. All the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession and I will be their God.

This is one of the first mentions of what has been called the Palestinian covenant or the land covenant, the promise of the land specifically to Israel. God said to Abraham, as for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant which you shall keep between me and you and your descendants after you.

Every male child among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised.

Every male child in your generations. He who was born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. Notice God does not prohibit the purchasing of slaves here.

He incorporates it into the Abrahamic covenant. Not very politically correct. He who was born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant.

He who was born in your house and he who was bought with your money must be circumcised and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised male child who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people. He has broken my covenant.

Who decides whether an eight day old baby gets circumcised or not? The baby? It's the parent, isn't it? And yet God says if this child is not circumcised, he will be cut off from his people. He's cut off with no conscious action on his part, right? What's going to happen when that child reaches an accountable age and recognizes who God is and where the covenant lies? He can come and do just what Abraham is doing at the age of 99, can't he? He can enter the fellowship of Israel. He can participate in this covenant by coming and being circumcised.

We have several records in the Old Testament of men who made this decision. Moses himself and with his sons is going to have to get them circumcised at a point well beyond the eight day prescription. But this is very interesting because to be counted as under the covenant, one has to be circumcised.

And it's not just the lineal descendants of Abraham, but those who are redeemed, those who are bought with Israel's money. And in the same way that Abraham and being fruitful is a picture of what happens in the spiritual realm, this prescription in the covenant is also a picture because Israel can purchase foreigners and bring them under the covenant. Israel's money will buy someone and bring them under the covenant.

Gentiles can be redeemed into the covenant by purchase. Isn't that an interesting provision? Foreigners who are bought with your money can be circumcised and enjoy the same blessings as the racial descendants of Abraham. And that identifies the people of Israel.

From this point forward, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that line and we've discussed the decisions that were made by Isaac versus Ishmael, by Jacob versus Esau that established this line of covenant. Those are the ones who participate in these blessings. These are the ones who are in the tree of God's plan and are in a position to bear fruit.

And those of Abraham's descendants who reject that are broken off and cast aside. Now, what does God say about these people, these covenant people who are His by circumcision? You might notice also that these are the males. And again, this is sort of politically incorrect.

What about the covenant for all the ladies? They make up at least 50 percent of Israel in every generation. What's their sign of the covenant? What's their participation in the blessing and the promise? God doesn't say anything about them, does He? He says the males, even these males that are purchased from foreigners, are under the covenant. What about the ladies? This seems

like a pretty male-dominated society here, doesn't it? This is God speaking, isn't it? Who is the responsible person in the household? It's the male.

He's responsible for keeping the covenant. He's responsible for observing the covenant. He's responsible to see to it that His male sons are circumcised on the eighth day.

And all the rest of the members of the household come under that blessing. And it isn't that the ladies have no blessing or have no participation in the covenant, but the sign of the covenant is with the male. And there's a very interesting parallel and relationship between this and what Paul talks about in the New Testament with the relationship of the husband and the wife and the woman praying with her head uncovered, shaming her head, which is her husband, because she's operating outside the bounds of the way of life for the church.

She's out from under her husband's authority. And he says if she's going to pray with her head uncovered, she might as well shave her head. She might as well look like a prostitute.

A prostitute is someone that has no husband and acts as though everybody in the world is her husband. They used to shave the heads of the prostitutes. Why is that? If she stands up and operates out from under her husband's authority, which is symbolized by the covering of the head at that time, she is acting as though she has no husband and she shames her husband.

She shames her head. But that's a passage for another time. But what we're talking about here is the nation of Israel.

And in this age, the male, the father, the head of the household is circumcised. And God uses this to symbolize the entire people. What's going to happen when Israel comes out of Egypt under the blood of the Passover lamb? How many people are redeemed by the blood in Israel on that first Passover night when death comes and strikes the firstborn? How many people escape death through the blood of the Passover lamb? How many people were in danger of death? Everyone? Everyone in Israel? If they didn't have blood on the doorpost, would the entire household be dead? Who would die without the blood? It's the firstborn.

The firstborn is representative of the life of the family, isn't he? He's the firstborn son. He is the one that receives the inheritance. He's the one that receives the responsibility for the family.

He's going to be the patriarch of the next generation. And if the firstborn is cut off and dies, that is symbolic of cutting off that line. So he symbolizes the entire family.

The firstborn represents the future. He's the pride and joy. He's going to be the and-son, so-and-so and-son in a business name.

He's the and-son. And if you cut off the and-son, what's going to happen to the business? In the same way, in the Abrahamic covenant, the male who is circumcised represents responsibility in the family for pursuing the things of God. It's a representative analogy.

And it's very interesting that God could just as easily have instituted Passover for everyone and said, if there's not blood on the doorpost, everyone is going to die. But he concentrates that on the firstborn. So what about the people of God? We see that the covenant is based on walking before God and being blameless and being a descendant of Abraham.

And my understanding of this, which I will freely tell you I am still working on, is apparently God has placed believers in the Old Testament age in the line of Abraham so that he could deal with them as a group. He provided for them as a group. He incorporated them into a nation.

And their worship, their provision, their instruction, their blessing or their discipline is all accomplished as a unit in Israel. That's why we don't see a call to evangelize the Egyptians or the Chinese or the barbarians of northern Europe and so forth. Because the people who are going to come to faith in God, God has orchestrated their birth and their life to be in the nation of Israel.

And he deals with them and they are assumed to be believers. They are never called to a saving faith in God, are they? They are always called to obedience. You can see how it would be easy for Israel to begin to think that obedience is righteousness and that righteousness comes by doing things because that's always their call.

They are always called to keep the law. They are called to obey. They are called to know the commandments and to do them.

And so they think, well, if I do the commandments then I'm righteous. And we're going to spend a little bit of time on that whole concept upcoming, but for now recognize that God's covenant is with a single nation. It's the nation of Israel.

God makes no covenant with Egypt. He makes no covenant with the Hittites. He makes no provision anywhere in the Old Testament for their evangelism except as people are purchased or as people come to Israel and sign up to be an Israelite.

If you wanted to be a part of the people of God, if you wanted to come under the covenant of opportunity and blessing and provision and protection, you came to Israel. Israel is the place of life and function for believers in the Old Testament from the time of Abraham forward. And that's just a given.

You look in vain to find examples in Scripture of anything else. Even when you look at Jonah and Nineveh, that is not a call to salvation. That is a call to reform, to abandon the gross immorality that was a part of their lifestyle.

But all they do is change their minds about their practices. We don't know that this is a whole generation of Ninevites who are now believers. They simply recognize that they've got an evil society and they clean up their act.

But the whole point of the book of Jonah is not the repentance of the Ninevites. It's the apathy of Israel. God says, look, I can go to the pagans and they're more responsive than you are.

That's the issue in Jesus' day. Look at the feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000. Jesus talks about the centurion and he talks about the woman, the Gentile woman who comes and he says, I have not seen this great of faith anywhere in Israel.

And Israel is rebuked by the greater response and greater faith of the Gentiles. Here's somebody who's not even a part of the covenant who's more responsive to God than you who have been born to it and are a part of the natural tree. So turn with me to 1 Samuel 12, verse 22.

People who participate in this covenant have a wonderful opportunity for blessing and they have a wonderful relationship with God and they are named by His name. They become His people. In 1 Samuel chapter 12, we have Samuel speaking to all Israel on the verge of the monarchy, the inception of the kingship of Saul.

Samuel said to all Israel in 12.1, Indeed, I have heeded your voice. I have made a king over you. Here's the king walking before you.

I'm old and gray. And he begins with his valedictory speech here. This is his final instruction and blessing on Israel.

And in verse 6, Samuel said to the people, It is the Lord who raised up Moses and Aaron and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt. Now therefore stand still that I may reason with you before the Lord concerning all the righteous acts of the Lord which He did to you and your fathers. When Jacob had gone into Egypt and your fathers cried out to the Lord, the Lord sent Moses and Aaron who brought your fathers out of Egypt and made them dwell in this place.

And when they forgot the Lord their God, notice these are believers, He sold them into the hand of Sisera, commander of the army of Habor into the land of the Philistines and into the hand of the king of Moab. And they fought against them. Then they cried out to the Lord and said, We have sinned because we have forsaken the Lord and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths.

Notice it isn't that they never believed in the Lord, but they forsook Him. You can't forsake something unless you started out with it. These are believers.

We served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, but now deliver us from the hand of our enemies and we will serve you. The Lord sent Jeroboam, which is Gideon, Bedan, Jephthah and Samuel and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side and you dwelt in safety. And when you saw that Nahash, king of the Ammonites, came against you, you said to me, No, a king shall reign over us when the Lord your God was your king.

Now, therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen and whom you have desired. And take

note, the Lord has set a king over you. If you fear the Lord and serve Him and obey His voice and do not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, is this faith or is this obedience? I'm talking about saving faith in the sense of deliverance from the lake of fire.

This is a call to faithfulness and obedience for believers, isn't it? If you do not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then both you and the king who reigns over you will continue following the Lord your God. However, in verse 15, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against you as it was against your fathers. Now, therefore, stand and see this great thing which the Lord will do before your eyes.

Is today not the wheat harvest? I will call to the Lord and He will send thunder and rain that you may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the Lord in asking a king for yourselves. Samuel called to the Lord, the Lord sent thunder and rain that day and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. All the people said to Samuel, pray for your servants to the Lord your God that we may not die, for we have added to all our sins the evil of asking a king for ourselves.

Samuel said to the people, do not fear, you have done all this wickedness, yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart. Walk before me and be blameless, God said to Abraham. And that's the call to Israel.

Do not turn aside from following the Lord, serve the Lord with all your heart and do not turn aside, for then you will go after empty things which cannot profit, they cannot deliver, for they are nothing. For the Lord will not forsake His people for His great name's sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you His people. Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you, but I will teach you the good and the right way.

Only fear the Lord and serve Him in truth with all your heart, for consider what great things He has done for you. But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king. This is a promise to the people of God.

You will either be preserved and continue before the Lord if you choose Him and honor Him and serve Him. If you disobey Him, if you stray, if you forsake Him, you will be swept away. That was the condition of the covenant from the very outset, wasn't it? Walk before me and be blameless and I will make my covenant with you.

Be circumcised and I will keep covenant with you. Without circumcision, without obedience, you'll be cut off from the people. There is a condition for being included in the blessing, the provision, the opportunity, and the faith and the hope that is a part of that covenant.

It is contingent on response. They are the people of God. They are His chosen, His special, a kingdom of priests.

They are the light that will eventually shine to the Gentiles and be the source of the Messiah if they continue, if they pursue, if they respond to the grace of God that is held out to them on a daily basis. If they are apathetic, if they are faithless, if they are disobedient, they will be swept away. Look at Jeremiah chapter 31.

Remember Jeremiah, the weeping prophet? Why is he weeping? Why does he write lamentations? Because they got the latter half of that promise of God. They were not walking in His ways. They didn't know His covenant and perform it.

They rebelled and went astray. Jeremiah 31, verse 35, Thus says the Lord who gives the sun for a light by day, the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, who disturbs the sea and whose waves roar, the Lord of hosts is His name. If these ordinances depart from before me, says the Lord, then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before me forever.

Thus says the Lord, if heaven above can be measured and if the foundations of the earth can be searched out beneath, then I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all they have done, says the Lord. Now what's the point here? What are the ordinances of the Lord? That's the Word of God, right? The Word of God lives and abides forever. Heaven and earth may pass away, but my words will not pass away.

The ordinances of the Lord are eternal and unshakable. They never change. They never disappear.

If they depart from before me, says the Lord in verse 36, then the seed of Israel shall cease from being a nation before me forever. Those ordinances are never going to cease and depart, are they? Therefore, Israel will always be the nation before God. They will never stumble so as to fall.

They will never be obliterated. There are people who claim that while Israel has been set aside and now the church is the new Israel. Not so.

God says that nation is as eternal and unshakable as His ordinances and His Word. His Word lives and abides forever. Israel is going to live and abide forever.

If heaven above can be measured, if the foundations of the earth can be searched out beneath, that can't happen. You can't measure heaven, can you? It's infinite. It's the dwelling place of God and God is infinite.

God can't exist in a container smaller than Himself, can He? The heavens are unmeasurable. The foundations of the earth can't be searched out. Science still has no explanation for the foundations of the earth.

They still can't explain the binding force of the atom. They don't know what holds the nucleus of an atom together. You've got all those little positive charged particles.

You can read all the science books on earth and nobody can explain what holds those together. They can make use of it. They can split the atom and make an atom bomb or make a nuclear reactor, but they don't know where that energy came from.

Where did the tremendous energy that holds the nucleus of that atom together, where did it come from? What brought that atom together in the first place? All of those positive particles that by nature repel one another. There's something holding them together and they don't know what it is. That's the foundation of the earth.

It can't be searched out because it's a part of the eternal plan of God, the eternal creation of God that He has made. If you could search that out, if you could measure the heavens, then God could cast off the seed of Israel for all that they have done. It doesn't matter how bad they get, there's still the seed.

There's still eternal promises and covenants that God is going to fulfill. Turn over a few pages to Jeremiah 33, verse 24. Moreover, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying, Have you not considered what these people have spoken, saying, The two families which the Lord has chosen, He has also cast them off.

This is the northern and southern kingdom, the two families. Thus they have despised My people as if there should no more be a nation before them. Thus says the Lord in verse 25, If My covenant is not with day and night and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth, then I will cast away the descendants of Jacob and David My servant, so that I will not take any of his descendants to be rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

I will cause their captives to return. I will have mercy on them. God's promise to Israel is unshakable.

It's eternal. The only way you can consider this covenant to be broken and abrogated and not be fulfilled is to say that God has not appointed the ordinances of the earth, that He hasn't appointed day and night, that God isn't the sponsor of those things. If day and night cease, that's when the covenant with Israel will cease.

It's an unshakable covenant. This is what Paul is thinking about when he says, Has God cast off His people whom He foreknew? Heaven forbid. God has not cast off His people because these covenants are eternal and unshakable in spite of how disobedient and apathetic, in spite of that discipline in Amos 9 that we saw in the first session.

What does that tell us? You can't lose your status as a child of God. It doesn't matter what you do. You can be a Baal worshipper.

You can pull up the asterisk. You can be as disobedient as the Israelites were. It isn't going to abrogate the covenant of God.

You will be brought back from discipline. You will be returned from the sword and from famine and from all of the great and terrible judgments of God. No matter how disobedient we get, it never shakes the covenant of God.

We've gone through a lot of passages talking about eternal security. Look at God's covenant with Israel. Israel are the believers of the Old Testament.

Look at how bad off they are. Look at how disobedient and faithless and the severe discipline they get from God, but they're never cast off as His people. They will be brought back.

God's covenant with them is as eternal as creation itself. Even though the northern kingdom went out, even though the southern kingdom went out, the nation disappeared, it doesn't change the fact that they're God's people and they will be brought back into the land. That's how unshakable and eternal our salvation is.

When we see these branches broken off and burning and all of this, we cannot construe that as loss of relationship with God and loss of salvation and being changed from being a child of God to being a child of destruction. It just doesn't happen. It's as eternal as God Himself and His decrees.

If you look at 2 Kings 23-26, all of these are restatements and reemphasis on the covenant that God made with Israel. 2 Kings 23-26, this is after Israel had suffered under many evil kings and then you had King Josiah and his great reformation. This is after Israel had escaped out of Israel and renounced its secular forms and he came in and wiped out the idol worship and restored the temple.

They found the book of the law and he heated its injunctions and he got rid of the abominations that were in the land of Judah and Jerusalem so that he could perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the Lord. Verse 25 of 2 Kings 23, Now before him, Josiah, was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses, nor any after him did any arise like him. Nevertheless, the Lord did not turn from the fierceness of his great wrath, with which his anger was aroused against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked him.

And the Lord said, I will also remove Judah from my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem, which I have chosen, and the house of which I said my name shall be there. God says, they're going out under discipline, I'm going to cast off Israel, I'm going to cast off the temple, I'm going to cast off this house where my name is called. Does this mean that the covenant was abrogated? Not at all.

The discipline can be severe, and they can disappear as a nation, they can disappear as a city. The temple can be destroyed so that one stone does not remain on another. It doesn't change

God's faithfulness.

His covenant is eternal in spite of this. Sometimes people come to this passage and say, well see, God says he's cast off Jerusalem, he's cast off the temple, and the covenant is gone. We have to look at the other statements of Scripture where God says these things may come to pass, but it doesn't change the fact that they will one day be brought back.

Amos chapter 9, I may take them like seed and scatter them throughout the nation, but I will not lose the smallest of those seeds. I will sieve them out and bring them all back, and they will dwell in the land, and I will fulfill my covenant promises to them. to His covenant.

This is a statement of that destruction and that discipline, where they are scattered and the city and the temple are destroyed, but the people themselves will still be brought back, and these promises will be fulfilled. Look at Psalm 77 verse 7, will the Lord cast off forever, and will He be favorable no more? Has His mercy ceased forever? Has His promise failed forevermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? And I said, this is my anguish, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the works of the Lord.

Surely I will remember your wonders of old. I will also meditate on all your work and talk of your deeds. Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary.

Who is so great a God as our God? You are the God who does wonders. You who have declared your strength among the peoples. You have with your arm redeemed your people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph, Selah.

Even in the face of discipline, even in the face of situations so severe that they question whether God has forgotten His promise, what's the purpose of it? What is it designed to do? It's designed to turn them and recall to mind who they are and what God's promises are, and that's what this psalmist does. He says, things are so bad I'm wondering if you've forgotten the covenant, but I will turn my mind, I will remember your wonders of old, I will meditate on your mighty works and on your promises, your greatness as a God and your redemption of the people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph. In verse 20 he says, you led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

And the answer to those questions that he asks in verses 7 through 9, God has not forgotten to be gracious and He has not in anger withdrawn His compassion forever. Turn a few pages over to Psalm 89. This entire psalm, we don't have time to look at the whole psalm, but he begins by talking about the mercies of the Lord and His faithfulness to all generations.

And as you look in this psalm, you find in verse 30, if his sons forsake my law and do not walk in my judgments, if they break my statutes and do not keep my commandments, I will punish their transgression with a rod and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving kindness I will not

utterly take from him, nor allow my faithfulness to fail. My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of my lips.

Once I have sworn in my holiness, I will not lie to David. His seed shall endure forever and his throne will be as the sun before me. It shall be established forever like the moon, even like the faithful witness in the sky.

And once again, you have this tie to the ordinances that God has established in creation itself. Look at verse 38, but you have cast off and abhorred. This is the psalmist talking to God.

You've cast us off and abhorred us. You've been furious with your anointed. You have renounced the covenant of your servant.

You have profaned his crown by casting it to the ground. You have broken down all his hedges. You have brought his strongholds to ruin.

All who pass by the way plunder him. He's a reproach to his neighbors. You've exalted the right hand of his adversaries.

You've made all of his enemies rejoice. You've turned back the edge of the sword and have not sustained him in battle. You've made his glory cease.

Cast his throne down to the ground. The days of his youth you have shortened. You've covered him with shame.

How long, O Lord? Will you hide your face forever? Will your wrath burn like fire? Remember how short my time is and with what futility you have created all the children of men. What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his life from the power of the grave? Lord, where are your former loving kindnesses which you swore to David in your truth? Remember, Lord, the reproach of your servants. How I bear in my bosom the reproach of all the many peoples with which your enemies have reproached, O Lord, with which they have reproached the footsteps of your anointed.

Blessed be the Lord forevermore. Amen and amen. It appears to Israel as though these covenant promises have been abrogated, that they're not going to be fulfilled in the midst of discipline, in the midst of punishment.

Israel for 2,000 years has not existed as a nation, and yet God's covenant promises are faithful and he will bring them back. This is what Paul is talking about in Romans chapter 11. They have been snapped off.

They are believers and they are broken off, they are disciplined for not operating in faith. They begin by being superficial, by observing the law in a superficial way and not out of love for God, but out of a desire to be declared righteous in the eyes of others and in their own eyes. And bit by

bit, as they stray from the life of faith, they compromise and at the end of that road lies death.

At the end of that road, they are idolaters and they're fornicators and they're adulterers and they are as far from God as they can get. But God has not cast off his people forever. No matter how disobedient they are, even though they are snapped off as branches, God's covenant promises will be fulfilled.

They are believers and they are under severe discipline, but it doesn't change the fact of their salvation. It doesn't change the fact that if they wake up and recognize that they have need of change of mind, God can graft them in again and make them fruitful. And so Paul says in verse 24 of Romans 11, if you were cut out of the olive tree, which is wild by nature, and were 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?