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Okay, we are, we want to continue our study by looking at Luke chapter 14, verse 24, but once again this is in the time presented in the waning ministry to Israel, his presentation of promises to the nation of Israel, promises made to believers. And chapter, beginning in verse 16, he says, a certain man gave a break to God and sent his servant at suppertime to say to those who were invited, all things are now ready. But they all with one accord said to him, I have brought a piece of ground and I must go and see it.

Another said, I have brought five yoke of oxen and I am going to test them. He excused. Still another said, I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come.

He came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house said to his servant, go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, the lame and the blind. And still there is room.

Then the master said to the servant, go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in that my house may be filled. Those who were invited shall taste my supper. Now this parable of the supper and one of the things we see is an opportunity presented to those who are easily able to take advantage of it.

These are men who are well off. They can afford to buy oxen. They can afford to buy fields.

They are in a position to get married. They are prosperous. And they are self-contained and they are self-centered and they pursue their own goals.

It isn't important to them that this feast is taking place. It's more important to them to do things such as their fields, their new marriage and so forth. And so they make an excuse.

And so who is it that responds to the invitation to come? It's the poor, the lame and the blind. And in Jesus' teaching, these often represent those who recognize themselves as poor or lame or blind. Remember at one point he accuses the Pharisees and he says, if you were blind, you would have no sin but because you stayed in the mains.

Because they refused to acknowledge their need, they couldn't have their sin cleansed. They didn't have the operational forgiveness of God. One of the church leaders is accused of recognizing their blindness and nakedness.

And this was a city that was noted for its eye salve and yet they wouldn't recognize the fact that they were poor and blind and naked. And they needed God's cleansing. They needed God's forgiveness.

They needed the power of God. That is Israel's problem. And so Israel, like these invitees who refuse the invitation, is put aside.

And those who recognize their need and respond to the invitation are those who are going to enjoy the banquet. And it foretells also the opportunity that's going to come to the Gentiles here when after these poor and lame and blind come in, there is still room. The Master says, go out into the highways and the hedges.

This is outside the city proper. The first group came from the city, came from the immediate environment in which this householder dwells. And now he's going out into the highways and the hedges.

And that is a prophecy of the opening up of the invitation to come and enjoy the banquet to Gentiles. So that the house may be filled. What's the purpose of filling the house? If you're having a wedding banquet, what does it mean when there are a lot of guests? It's festive.

It contributes to the glory of the bride and the groom, the glory of the marriage event when there are many guests. If someone planned a big wedding and hardly anybody came, it sort of shames or embarrasses the marriage and those who are getting married and those who are putting the marriage on that nobody thought it was important enough to come. And this is a reminder that this whole picture is pointing to the reflection of the glory of God, participation in the glory of God.

That's what the goal is of having the feast. That's what the goal is of bearing the fruit. That God be glorified.

That the house be filled with guests. But those who were invited, they don't enjoy the supper. These are the ones that Jesus will close the door on like the foolish virgins.

Like those who say, Lord, Lord, in your name we did many wonderful things. And he's going to say, I never knew you. You didn't respond to the invitation.

You didn't recognize your need. And you didn't put the things of God first. You put your own things first.

Look back again at the passage we began with this morning in Hosea. Look at chapter 13. When Ephraim spoke trembling, he exalted himself in Israel.

But when he offended through bail worship, he died. Now they sin more and more, and they have made for themselves molded images, idols of silver according to their skill. All of it is the work of craftsmen.

They say, let the men who sacrifice kiss the calves. Therefore they shall be like the morning cloud and like the early dew that passes away. Like chaff blown off from a threshing floor and like smoke from a chimney.

Yet, I am the Lord your God ever since the land of Egypt. You shall know no God but me. For there is no Deliverer, there is no Savior besides me.

I knew you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. When they had pasture, they were filled. They were filled and their heart was exalted.

Therefore they forgot me. They became enamored of their own stuff. The things that constituted provision became an end in itself and a goal in itself.

So I will be to them like a lion, like a leopard by the road, I will lurk. I will meet them like a bear deprived of her cubs. I will tear open their ribcage, and there I will devour them like a lion.

The wild beast shall tear them. This is severe discipline in the wrath of God. Look at verse 9. O Israel, you are destroyed, but your help is from me.

I will be your king. Where is any other that he may save from all your cities? And your judges to whom you said, Give me a king and princess. I gave you a king in my anger, and I took him away in my wrath.

The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up. His sin is stored up. Remember Romans chapter 2? They are storing up wrath on the day of judgment.

And we talked about the fact that this is something a believer does, storing up wrath, multiplying judgment. If the issue is salvation, there's only one issue. It's accepting and rejecting Christ.

You can't store up discipline. You can't store up wrath on an absolute issue. It's A or an A when it comes to what thinking of Christ.

But if you're a believer, and you're called, and you repeatedly reject, you're repeatedly apathetic, you're repeatedly self-centered, you're repeatedly consumed and interested in other things, we store up wrath. We store up discipline. Because it's an ongoing call.

It's not a single absolute issue. It's not one question. It's a day-by-day issue.

It's a day-by-day call. And it's a day-by-day responsibility. And every day that we neglect it, every day that we reject it, we store up for ourselves wrath.

Iniquity is bound up, his sin is stored up. The sorrows of a woman in childbirth shall come upon him. He is an unwise son, for he should not stay long where children are born.

But even in the midst of these pronouncements of discipline, God offers promise and offers hope. I will ransom them from the power of the grave. I will redeem them from death.

O death, I will be your plagues. O death, I will be your destruction. Pity is hidden from my eyes.

Though he is fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come. The wind of the Lord shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up. Even though he is fruitful among his brethren.

This is what we have as a standard today in Christianity. This is what the Israelites did. To the surrounding believers, to the surrounding brethren, we look fruitful.

Oh, look at these scalps hanging from my belt. Look at the impact of my ministry. Look at the books I've published, or the tapes I've distributed, or the TV ministry I have, or the number of countries that I visited and had crusades in, or the number of people that assembled in the stadium and cheered, or whatever it might be.

We appear fruitful in front of our brethren, and yet there's going to be an east wind from the Lord that is going to render all of that dust at the judgment. That's what happened with the northern kingdom. His fountain shall be dried up.

He shall plunder the treasury of every desirable prize. Samaria is held guilty, for she has rebelled against her God. These are believers who are being disciplined.

There's so many reminders of this. It's amazing to me that we dismiss these passages and say, oh, these were unbelievers in Israel that God had to judge. The remnant were believers, and the majority were unbelievers, and they all went to the lake of fire.

These are believers. God is not making a distinction in terms of salvation from the lake of fire. He's distinguishing between faithful believers and unfaithful believers.

These idol worshipers, these Baal followers, these people who are concerned with their own ideas and their own goals are believers. They are held guilty because they have rebelled against their own God. They shall fall by the sword.

Their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child ripped open. This means no potential for the future. The generation of children is wiped out.

That cuts off your possibilities for the future. You don't have a heritage. You don't have a posterity.

You don't have something that lasts. You don't have fruit that remains. What's the point of building up an inheritance if there's no one to leave it to? And this constant image of losing the children and losing the next generation is the promise of God that this discipline means you don't have any fruit that remains.

You're not going to have anything that lasts, anything that counts in an eternal sense. And what's the call in chapter 14? O Israel, return to the Lord your God. It says return.

It doesn't say come to the Lord God for salvation. It says return to the Lord your God. These people are believers.

We emphasize that over and over. That's the situation in Israel, and that's the situation in much of

the New Testament, calls to obedience and calls to change of mind. They are calls to believers who have gone astray.

Did you ever wonder about that, by the way, that idea of going astray? We have the parable of the ninety and nine that safely lay in the shelter of the fold. One was lost on the hills far away. That song Tennessee Ernie Ford sang on a record when I was little.

And we have the picture of Christ as the good shepherd going out and coming to seek and to save that which was lost. And we say, oh, well, lost, they're the lost, they're the unbelievers, they're the ones that have never come to God. What does it mean to lose something? It means you had it and you lost track of it.

It's escaped from its rightful place. Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. What is it that's lost? It's something that used to be had and you've mislaid it.

You've misplaced it. It's gone away. It's been stolen or it has wandered off.

This one hundredth sheep that has strayed from the fold and that the shepherd is out looking for belongs to the shepherd. It belongs in the fold. This is not a new sheep that he's going out and redeeming and bringing into the fold.

That would be a wonderful picture of salvation. But Christ came to the people of God. Christ came to offer them the kingdom.

Christ came, John the Baptist came, to turn them back to their God. Jesus Christ coming to Israel is not an offer of salvation per se. It's an offer of fulfillment, of promise.

It's an offer of fulfillment, of covenant that is already established. They already have a relationship. They are the servants who have been left tending the Master's field.

They're not called to become servants. He's not coming to hire them and make them servants. He's calling them to fulfill their responsibility.

And it's a very important truth to remember about the coming of Jesus Christ at the first advent. And it heightens the irony that in their rejection and in their crucifying Christ, that turns out to be the means that God uses to secure their salvation, to secure our salvation, to bring about redemption and to bring about the occasion on which Christ pays the price for the sins of the whole world is that God turns that defeat into victory. He turns the death and the rejection of Jesus Christ by the nation of Israel, by believers, into the occasion by which their own redemption is secured and the pictures that they have rejected in their own worship life are fulfilled.

Now, how do you stumble? You have stumbled because of your iniquity. Now, how do you stumble except that you've been walking? You are walking along and then you stumble. That's what they have done.

You have stumbled because of your iniquity. Take words with you and return to the Lord. Say to Him, take away all iniquity.

Receive us graciously. We will offer the sacrifices of our lips. Assyria will not save us.

We will not ride on horses, nor will we say any more to the work of our hands, You are our gods, for in You the fatherless finds mercy. God says, I will heal their backsliding. In verse 4, I will love them freely.

Now, we all know what a backslider is. That's not a new convert, is it? A backslider is somebody who is saved and who falls away. I will heal their backsliding.

I will love them freely, for my anger has turned away from Him. I will be like the dew to Israel. He shall grow like the lily and lengthen His roots like Lebanon.

His branches shall spread. His beauty shall be like an olive tree and His fragrance like Lebanon. Those who dwell under His shadow shall return.

They shall be revived like grain and grow like a vine. Their scent shall be like the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do anymore with idols? I have heard and observed Him.

I am like a green cypress tree. Your fruit is found in Me. That's the point.

That's the purpose. That's the call that Israel had. And that's the point and the purpose and the call that they missed.

It's the call that Jesus Christ gave that final time in His life and ministry and that was ultimately rejected. Who is wise? Let Him understand these things. What a wonderful call to us.

Who is wise? Let Him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let Him know them. For the ways of the Lord are right and the righteous walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.

There are two categories of believers in Israel. You have the faithful remnant and you have the majority and every generation that unraveled, became distracted, became consumed with earthly things, with their own objectives, their own goals, bore fruit for themselves and missed the opportunity, missed the call of God. You can read any place in Hosea the difficulty that Israel had generation to generation to generation.

And God ultimately had to set them aside and give the kingdom to a nation bearing the fruit of it. And that nation is the church. It's a nation composed of every different tongue and every different tribe.

It includes believers from the stock of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and it includes Gentiles as well.

There's no longer Jew nor Greek, male nor female. And it doesn't mean that we don't distinguish those things anymore.

It means that it doesn't matter when it comes to inclusion in the church, when it comes to opportunity to bear fruit. So in Romans 11, when he says in verse 25, I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion. What does he say at the end of Hosea? If you're wise, pay attention to these things.

Know them. Learn from the example of Israel. Learn from the example of Ephraim.

Paul says, I don't want you to be wise in your own opinion. I want you to be truly wise. Blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

And what's he talking about here? There are some in Israel who are now in the church and who have responded and who understand the change in dispensation, who understand the mistakes that were made in the national life of Israel, who understand that righteousness comes by faith. And there has been that remnant in every generation. But hardness and blindness characterize the majority in Israel in every generation and continue to characterize them in this transitional generation to whom Paul is speaking.

And they are blind and they will remain blind until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. Now, he's talking historically here. He's looking at the sweep of Israel.

He's looking at the tree. And he's talking about these branches that have been broken off. This is God's historical discipline on Israel in every generation.

And he's saying, don't repeat the mistake of the past generations. You've got Jewish Christians now who are repeating the mistake of their forefathers. They're missing the point that believers are called to bear fruit, the fruit of righteousness by faith.

And people who miss that boat are blind. And they are going to stay blind. And they're not going to be unblinded until the fullness of the Gentiles come in.

When is it that all of these believers are going to see what they've been missing? It's at the resurrection, at the beginning of the millennium. It's at the resurrection of the Old Testament saints. Once the fullness of the Gentiles has come in during this church age, once the body of Christ is complete and Christ returns for His bride and the 70th week of Daniel, the final seven years of the age of Israel, runs its course and Christ returns and that great wedding banquet takes place, it is going to be open and evident to everyone.

All of these Old Testament saints that missed the boat, that followed the bales, that were dry branches, that were unfruitful and self-centered are going to see. And most of them are going to see it from a distance because they're going to be outside the kingdom. They're going to be on the outside looking in.

They're going to see many coming from the east and west and north and south and sitting down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom and they themselves cast out. And it's going to be plain and evident to them what God's standard of righteousness is. Not by works, but by grace through faith.

That's where righteousness comes and it's going to be clear and they're going to see it. And until that time, they're blind. And all of those Israelites, all of those unfaithful Jews are in the grave, but they're going to see it.

God is going to carve out the heart of stone, put in a heart of flesh. The passages, by the way, that I was referring to in the first session, you can include in that Jeremiah 21, which is one of the clear statements of the new covenant to Israel in Jeremiah 31. Verse 27 and following.

Jeremiah 31, 27, Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass that as I watched over them to pluck up, to break down, to throw down, to destroy and to afflict, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the Lord. Look at verse 31 of Jeremiah 31.

The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, even though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord. I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts and I will be their God and they shall be my people.

No more shall every man teach his neighbor and every man his brother saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity and their sin I will remember no more. And then he affirms that with several oaths there in Jeremiah 31.

But it's specifically Israel. And he says the time of discipline will pass and I will make that covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. That's what Paul talks about here in Romans 11.

He says that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. Verse 26, And so all Israel will be delivered from the least of them to the greatest of them. The most faithless believer in Israel that ever lived to the friends of God like Abraham and Moses.

They will all be delivered. As it is written, the deliverer will come out of Zion and he will turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.

Concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But concerning the election, concerning

the calling out, concerning the choosing, they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. God made a promise to Abraham.

God made promises to Isaac and to Jacob. And He said, your seed is going to be an eternal seed. It's going to multiply like the sand and like the stars.

And through you, all nations of the earth are going to be blessed. Through the seed of Abraham is ultimately going to come the Redeemer. And God made that promise and He's going to fulfill that promise.

How did He do it? He stacked the deck. He put all the believers in the Old Testament age from that point forward into that line with a few exceptions. But basically, that's where believers came.

God didn't make their decision for them. He didn't force their volition. He didn't arbitrarily say, I'm going to flip all these people positive toward me.

But those people that He knew when He created them, what their choice would be, He put them in the place of provision. He put them in the place of protection. He put them in the place of instruction.

And He also put them in a place of responsibility to Himself. They are believers and they're accountable. They're called to be God's chosen people.

They are brought up in a system that teaches them righteousness and that teaches them accountability, teaches them the need for forgiveness and cleansing, and teaches them their responsibility to bear fruit through faith. And He holds them accountable for that. That's why He can say the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Irrevocable. They can't be revoked because it's a calling of God. It's a gift of God.

It's a promise of God. And it applies to believers. Who is it in verse 31 of Romans 11 that's going to obtain mercy? The disobedient.

Now, if these disobedient, if these faithless and discipline-inflicted people in the Old Testament are the ones He's talking about, if those are the disobedient, how are they going to obtain mercy? They're not. If they were truly unbelievers, they're not in line for the mercy of God. They're in line for eternal destruction.

But Israel is composed of believers. And even the most disobedient believers of those generations are going to receive mercy because when the body of Christ is complete and when Jesus Christ returns and sets up His kingdom and oversees the rulership of the entire planet as He sits on the throne of Israel in Jerusalem, God's promises are going to be fulfilled. They are going to be resurrected.

They are going to see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They are going to see the Son of David on the throne. They are going to see that God has been faithful even though they were faithless.

He is going to resurrect them. He is going to give them eternal life. He is going to make good on His redemptive promises.

And it doesn't matter how disobedient they were in that sense. He's going to forgive their iniquity and cleanse them from their sin. And all Israel will be saved.

All Israel will be delivered. They're not going to be rewarded. Most of them are not going to inherit.

And they're not going to enjoy the fullness of the covenant blessings. But God has not cast off His people. And they have not stumbled so as to fall.

They're still going to be there because they're believers. They are a fulfillment by their very existence of the promises that God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And God has used their disobedience and worked it into His plan.

He's used their disobedience and their rejection to bring about our salvation on the cross and their salvation as well. He's used their disobedience to make a point. He's making a point of faith.

He's demonstrating something in this age through the church. He takes even our sins and even our failures and works them into His plan for good and for the reflection of His glory. And He's doing that with Israel.

"...as you were once disobedient to God," in verse 30, "...and have now attained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient." These disobedient ones, you can't try to distinguish here and say, well, it's the remnant that will be saved and the unbelievers in Israel aren't going to receive any mercy. He says the disobedient are going to receive mercy. And you can't get around it.

The disobedient in Israel, the apostate, the killers of the prophets and the rejecters of everything that God presented to them generation after generation, the disobedient and stiff-necked people are going to receive mercy. "...God has committed them all to disobedience that He might have mercy on all. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! Who has known the mind of the Lord or has become His counselor? Who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to Him?" If there's anybody that hasn't given God anything, it's these disobedient, stiff-necked, apostate, sin unto death category believers in Israel.

And yet, they're going to be recipients of grace. They're going to be delivered. They're going to be saved.

If anything makes God's point in human history, it's the salvation of apostate Israelites. They're believers, but they never make any advance whatsoever. And yet, they're still recipients of mercy.

And they see the fulfillment of God's promises because God is faithful. And the fulfillment of those promises depends on Him, not on them. "...Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever.

Amen." What's the point here for us? We can't simply say, well, like the Israelites, I may be disobedient and apathetic and I've still got my salvation. That's not the point that Paul is making here, is it? He's talking about bearing fruit. He's saying look at the tragic example of Israel.

Yes, God is faithful. God has not cast off His people. They haven't lost their salvation.

But look at the opportunity that they missed. They were a vineyard planted by God. They were a tree designed to bear fruit.

And they never fulfilled that potential because they got occupied with their own pursuits. God, even in the midst of their disobedience, offers them mercy, encourages them to turn, disciplines them for the purpose of turning them, and they don't respond. And they're hammered, and they're hammered, and they're hammered, and they die and they go out.

And they miss out on all the blessings that God has for them in this life. And they miss out on many of the things that are part of the covenant promises in the next. And yet God is faithful.

And God does not cast off His people. But why come in at the skin of the teeth, saved yet so as by fire level like these Israelites are? Why be the negative example, the vessel of wrath fitted for ruin, category of believer? Why not seize the day? Why not seize the opportunity and seize the potential that God has for us in this life? That's what this example should motivate us to do. Is it really worth the temporal goals that we prioritize and that we think are so important? Is it really worth trading that eternal weight of glory for someone's good opinion or for some material gain or for some perceived benefit in this life? It's just not worth it.

Look at Israel and look at what they threw over. That's the call. That's the lesson that we can draw from these chapters dealing with the fate of Israel.

Why repeat that mistake? That's been done. God's glory in terms of revealing His righteousness and His justice in disciplining these vessels of wrath has already been made. The unexploited opportunity is to fill the house at the banquet.

There's still room in that house. There's still an opportunity to reflect the glory of God on the positive side of the ledger. That's where we want to be.

And life is short and the time is at hand and it's imperative for us to realize the urgency. We don't know how many more hours and days we have left in this life, but why not go for the gusto? Why

not be one of those that comes into the banquet hall and reflects the glory of God? Why not be a fruitful branch and make whatever sacrifice is necessary? Take whatever hit we might perceive we're going to take in circumstances because these are insignificant compared with that great significance that's a part of the eternal things. Let's close in prayer.

Next time we'll begin with Romans 12. Father, we thank You for the graphic illustration both of Your mercy and of Your justice that we find in the pages of the Old Testament. We see in the example of Israel the great potential both for bearing of fruit and reflection of glory and for being set aside and disciplined and missing out on the things that You have for us as Your people and as Your children, particularly in this age as members of the body of Christ with the indwelling Spirit, with the completed canon of Scripture that reveals all truth.

And if anyone in history has no excuse, it's us for fulfilling Your purpose and reflecting Your glory. We pray that these things will convict and motivate us. We pray that God the Holy Spirit can take these things to transform us by the renewing of our minds, motivate us to make ourselves living sacrifices, living examples of Your grace and Your glory.

We pray that as a result of these things our Savior Jesus Christ will be glorified both now and in the eternal future. We ask it in His name, Amen.