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So having seen these things in Hosea with our Scripture reading in chapter 9 and in chapter 11, having seen God's warning and God's pronouncement of discipline on Israel, we're ready to resume our study in Romans chapter 11. This is a three-chapter section that deals specifically with Israel. Now, why does this come in? Why is Paul talking about Israel right in the middle of the book of Romans? Well, if we think back to the introduction of this book, to the things that we've seen, all of us hopefully by this point have some idea of what the book of Romans is about.

We know to whom it was written. It was written to believers in Rome. They were a mixed group of Jews and Gentiles.

And the reason Paul writes this is to preach the gospel. He says in chapter 1, verses 15 and 16, he says, I'm ready now to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome. He says, I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

It is the power of God for deliverance to everyone who is trusting. The interesting thing, we've always taken those verses as talking about salvation. And we think, well, the gospel, that means Christ died.

Believe in him and you'll be saved from the lake of fire. And we think that that's salvation and that's the gospel. And yet, as we have documented over our last several weeks of study, those words have a much larger meaning in the New Testament.

Salvation, deliverance, is not just deliverance from the lake of fire. It is deliverance in time. It's deliverance from the power of sin.

Even after salvation, we still find ourselves under the influence of sin. But we have something greater within us that can overcome it. And one of our goals in this life is to pursue that victory.

Our hymn this morning was Faith is the Victory that Overcomes the World. And that's what Paul is calling the Roman believers to. And he is projecting this message of the gospel, not only the gospel of the good news of salvation through Christ's work on the cross, but also the gospel of the victorious life, the life of faith that pleases God and that results in being declared righteous by God.

He's projecting that into a situation where these Jewish Christians, having come to Christ, having recognized him, are falling back into the old errors that Israel as a nation has fallen into for generations. A specific one in this case is the first error, which is superficial obedience, obedience that hits the marks and looks good to people around, but doesn't spring from faith, doesn't reflect a love for God and a desire to put him first, and a love for the people in the surrounding vicinity. In other words, the two great commandments, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and so forth, and love your neighbor as yourself.

All of the law and the prophets are summed up in these, Jesus says. Love fulfills the law. Now that's a key point if you think about it, and it's almost a reverse argument from that statement, because if love fulfills the law, and Jesus says that it does, then why did God give the law to Israel? To teach them about love, to tell them what love is like, what the characteristics of love are.

Someone who has love for God is going to come to God and acknowledge transgression, and is going to seek God's forgiveness after their salvation. That's the only basis they have for even approaching God, even coming near to the tabernacle or to the temple, is to have already been saved. But there's a need for restoration, and so when they transgress, they want to come to God and acknowledge the fact that God has made provision for that, and so they bring a lamb, and they recognize the principle that sacrifice is involved to be cleansed and to be restored to the place of blessing and the place of fellowship and the place of productivity before God.

And so it's a teaching tool, and it teaches them how to express love for God. Here is the means. We're not going to have the family priesthood anymore.

We're going to have the priesthood with the sons of Levi. And if you love God, here's the way to express it. If you love your fellow man, if you love your fellow Israelites, if you love the stranger and the sojourner in the nation, if you love your servants and care about their well-being, here's the way to express that.

Here's the way to reflect justice and righteousness in the way you deal with these people. And so the law is a description of what someone who loves does in their dealings with God and in their dealings with others. But what happened? That would be like today, seeing someone who loves their parents and saying, well, let's write down a description of what they do.

Well, they send a card on holidays, and they come up and help out when there's a need, and they spend time, they make time, they call and check on their well-being. And so we would write a list of maybe 10 or 12 things that someone who loves their parents, these things that they do, and then we could hand this out everywhere and say, okay, if you'll do these 10 or 12 things, you'll be a loving son or a loving daughter. And so people say, okay, you know, I don't really think much of my old man, but here it says, you know, send him a card on his birthday, get him a watch or get him a present of some sort.

So you go out, you get it, you send it. You say, okay, what's next on the list here? And it says help out if there's a crisis. Well, bottom just fell off his hot water tank.

I'll go up there and help him replace it. So you go and do these things because you're checking off things on the list, and it doesn't come from that genuine love. So you see the contrast, and you see the place where Israel fell short because they started going down the list and checking off the characteristics of someone who loves, and yet they themselves did not love.

And because their love for God had grown cold, it's only one step from superficial obedience into outright disobedience. Their apathy allowed them to compromise, and where they started out being superficial, they ended up compromising and saying, well, I've married this gal. She really likes her little teraphim, her little box of idols that she's got here.

Well, you know, I can tolerate that. That's not a big deal. I'll still run down and offer a lamb or a bull every so often, and we'll stay on the good side of God.

So they would tolerate these things. And then pretty soon, well, we're having a big feast for Ashtaroath, or we're having a big feast for Baal Peor here, and it's just a social gathering. There's not going to be a whole lot of talk about Baal and so forth.

Why don't you just come down and join me? And so the wife would drag the husband down, and first thing you know, or the husband would drag the wife down. It wasn't a one-way deal. But you can see where superficial attitude and a lack of developing capacity to love God and to really appreciate him and desire to serve him starts out with superficiality, and bit by bit erodes into apathy and then outright disobedience and ultimately rebellion and rejection.

This was the pattern that Israel had followed for generation after generation in the land. And Paul says, look, this thing is starting over in the church. Here we've come to Christ.

We're saved. We're in a new age. We have all of this potential, a new covenant, new promises, new hope, all these wonderful things.

And you've got these Jewish Christians who are teaching you that you need to check off the list. You need to get out the law and be circumcised, and you need to observe the feasts and offer the sacrifices. And Paul says, look, this is the first step down that road that Israel followed.

That's what he's talking about in chapters 9, 10, and 11 of Romans. And you can see how it fits into the argument of the book because his whole purpose in writing this letter is to wake people up to the fact that God declares people righteous when they trust Him, when they look to Him, when they put Him first and love Him with all their heart. Remember Romans chapter 4? Paul says, look, if you want to go back to the Old Testament and see the model, look at Abraham.

Abraham trusted God. And it's not a call to salvation because the reference that he makes there is not to when Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees and said, there must be a God in heaven, I'm going to trust Him. It was the promise that he would have a son, which was decades after Abraham's salvation, decades after he left Ur of the Chaldees.

He's nearly 100 years old when God says, you will have a son. And when God gives him that promise, Abraham says, I'm going to live in the light of that. I'm going to believe it.

I'm going to make plans. I'm going to get the nursery ready for my old wrinkly wife Sarai here. And he trusted God.

It's the kind of faith that led him to walk up the mountain with Isaac and be willing to sacrifice him because he trusted God. And he said, you know, God made me a promise that all of my descendants are going to come through Isaac. So, you know, I don't quite understand what's going on here, but if God says my seed is going to come through Isaac, then Isaac is going to have to live to have children.

Isaac doesn't have any children yet, so whatever's going to happen on this mountaintop is going to be okay because God has made a promise and I believe it. And Abraham trusted that promise in the face of human viewpoint, saying, look, if you slice your son's throat, you're history. Well, all of these promises are going to go down the tubes.

And Abraham says, well, I don't understand how the circumstances are going to work out, but I know God and I know His promise. And God has promised that in Isaac shall thy seed be called. So if God tells me to go up here and slit his throat, He must be going to resurrect him or do whatever He's going to do because I know that that promise is fact.

And that was the kind of faith that Abraham had. And so Paul points that out in Romans 4, and he says, look, it's faith that pleases God. It's trusting Him.

It's not this superficial obedience to a code. That's too easy. That's too superficial.

You're giving yourself an out to say, well, if I punch these five things, God will be pleased and I can go on my merry way. So when he comes, having talked about that and talked about the great hope that awaits those who seize on to that potential and that opportunity in Romans chapter 8, then he says, well, now what about Israel, these people that missed the boat? What about them now? What's going to be their fate? What about those who have missed the boat? And as we've seen in 9, 10, and 11 of Romans, he says the discipline that comes on the faithless has happened to Israel. They have been blinded.

They have been hardened. And that's a principle that goes throughout human history. If we as believers reject the truth of God, if we ignore the plan of God, if we disregard the potential and the calling that God gives us, the same thing will happen to us that happened to Israel.

We will be blinded. We will be hardened. It's not the reverse.

Some people like to think that there's a cause and effect there. Well, some people, God has blinded them and hardened them, and that's why they can't respond to the gospel, or that's why they can't be faithful believers. Not at all.

And we've documented this as we've studied both the Old Testament and the New, that apathy and superficial response to God will result in blindness and hardness. It's in the parables. Jesus, in the parable of the talents, the one who had the one talent, and he didn't go out and do what the

master asked him to do, he just buried it in the ground.

He said, take away that one talent and give it to the one who has ten. To him who has, more will be given. To him who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

And remember, all three of those men were servants. They had the exact same relationship to the master. And it's a sobering thought.

It's sobering like looking at Hosea is sobering. Because what does it mean? It means that God has very great discipline, very great wrath that will descend on His own children, will descend on us if we're disobedient, if we're apathetic, if we're superficial. Those three servants were all servants of the master.

They were all in his household. They all had a responsibility to him. They were each given a task.

Now, God doesn't assign a talent to unbelievers and say, go do something with this talent, does He? He does that with believers. And He takes that unprofitable servant and disciplines him severely. And even the little bit that he has, he loses.

And so we're not static. We don't stand still in God's plan as believers. We're either advancing or we're regressing.

We don't just sort of tread water and stand still. If we don't, as given us, if we don't respond to His call and live in the light of that hope that He's put before us, we're going to slip. We're going to be headed in the opposite direction.

There's no inertia in the sense of standing still in God's plan. This is what happened with Israel. God called them to account.

And He said, you've got to make progress. You need to bear fruit. You need to reflect My glory or bad things are going to happen.

So this is what Paul brings up. He says, if you don't respond to this message I'm giving you in this book, this letter I'm writing you, that righteousness comes by faith. If you persist in listening to and perhaps following along with this message you're getting from these Jewish Christians, bad things are going to happen.

Look at what happened to Israel. They were plugged into the tree and God expected them to bear fruit. Remember in chapter 11 of Romans when He says, we've got this tree and there were these dead unfruitful branches and they were snapped off because they weren't bearing any fruit.

And you Gentiles from the wild olive tree were grafted in. We don't have time to look at the passages, but if you want an interesting study, look at what the olive tree represents in the Old Testament. It's consistently a picture of Israel and by extension it's consistently a picture of

believers because the believers are in Israel in the Old Testament.

Isn't it interesting that there's no call to evangelism in the Old Testament? The Israelites are not told anywhere in the law to send missionaries out. Why? Because the believers are all there in Israel. That's where God designated their birthplace and their life.

It was convenient for Him. He could organize them all in one place, provide for them, encourage them, teach them, discipline them. They're all in one place.

In fact, if you want a scripture to support this, and none of these scriptures are going to be die-hard, clinching passages that you can nail up on the wall and say, see there, here's... But if you look back in Deuteronomy chapter 32, you'll see a passage that helps us understand how and why God has done this. This is in the Song of Moses. Right at the end of his life he's about to climb up the mountain and die and the Israelites are going to go under Joshua over the Jordan and into the land.

And Moses sings this song. And he leaves this as his legacy, his spiritual last will and testament for Israel. And look at what he says after the account of his saving of Israel.

He says in verse 7, Remember the days of old. This is Deuteronomy 32, 7. Remember the days of old. Consider the years of many generations.

Ask your father and he will show you. Your elders and they will tell you. When the Most High divided the inheritance to the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of God.

Now your Bible probably says Israel, but the original word here was Elohim, the sons of God. And the Masoretic text changed this because they couldn't figure it out. But the Septuagint, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the older witnesses to this text, God separated the nations.

He set the boundaries of the people according to the number of the sons of God. And the Lord's portion is His people. Jacob is the place of His inheritance.

And so when God looked at the human race and divided them up into nations, His people were divided into the nation of Israel. They are the sons of God. That's where they get put, is into the nation of Israel in the Old Testament days.

He found Him in a desert land. He encircled Him, instructed Him, spreading His wings over them and so forth. And He's following verses.

But look at verse 15. But Jeshurun, this is another synonym for Israel, grew fat and kicked. God saved Israel.

God took them into the land, gave them flowing milk and honey and peace from their enemies

and so forth. And what happened? They grew fat. You grew thick.

You are obese. Then He forsook God who made Him and scornfully esteemed the rock of His salvation. This is the nation of believers.

God is the rock of their salvation. And what did they do? In prosperity and in the land and all of these blessings and so forth, they forsook the God who made them. They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign gods, with abominations.

They provoked Him to anger. They sacrificed to demons, not to God, to gods they did not know, to new gods, new arrivals that your fathers did not fear. Of the rock who begot you, you are unmindful and you have forgotten the God who fathered you.

These are the sons of God. God fathered them. And this is the basis of their discipline.

And Moses is telling them this way back at the beginning, at the inception as Israel goes into the land. He's giving them this warning. And look at verse 19.

When the Lord saw it, He spurned them. Remember Hosea 9? Because of the provocation of His sons and His daughters. God's not rejecting Israel because they've turned into a nation of unbelievers in the sense of no salvation from the lake of fire.

God is spurning them and rejecting them because they are His sons and His daughters and they're apathetic. They're disobedient. They're superficial.

And they're walking down that road to compromise that ultimately leads to this great discipline. God says in verse 20, I will hide My face from them. I will see what their end will be, for they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faith.

This is the criteria that God is looking for, not the superficial obedience, but faith. Faith is the victory. Faith is what pleases God.

Faith is the basis of God declaring us righteous and it has been so in every generation. So as we see Paul's argument advance in the book of Romans and he says, look, remember what happened to Israel. They were the people of God also, just like you are.

They were redeemed. They came out under the blood. They had a permanent, eternal relationship with God and yet because they did not live by faith, they lost the blessings.

They lost the relationship with God that He hides His face from them. What an awful thing for a parent to have to hide His face from his own children. And it's part of the tremendous suffering of Christ on the cross that in bearing the sins of the people and in bearing our sins, God turned His face from Jesus Christ Himself in that act of judgment, in that act of payment, that act of satisfaction of the justice of God on our behalf.

God turned His face away from His own son and that's what God had to do with the nation of Israel. And so Paul tells the Romans in Romans 11, 17, some of these branches were broken off. And you being a wild olive tree, you're believers just like the olive tree in the Old Testament, but you're not the cultivated olive tree that represents Israel.

You're a wild olive tree. And notice they're an olive tree. They're believers.

They're not figs. They're not pomegranates. They're not apples.

They're olives. And what does this mean? They are believers. This tree and these branches that we're talking about, this is not salvation or no salvation.

This is the tree of God's plan. This is the tree of bearing fruit. This is the place of reflecting God's glory and fulfilling His purpose.

And it's not a matter when the branch is snapped off that it's lost its salvation. It's that it's not going to be in the place of blessing. It's not going to be in the place of opportunity for production.

Because it's plugged into the tree and has all the benefits of the sap and everything else and it's not bearing fruit, God's going to snap it off and put in a branch that will bear the fruit. And this is what God told Israel. I will take the kingdom away from you and give it to a nation who will bear the fruit of it.

Israel didn't lose their salvation. They lost their position. They lost their place in God's plan.

Some of the branches were broken off. You being a wild olive tree, you're believers from a different source. You're now grafted in.

Now you're getting the opportunity to bear fruit in God's plan. You're grafted in among them and with them you have become a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree. You're a partaker of the root and fatness, all of the provision and the blessing and the opportunity that comes from the fact that you're a believer and that you're given an opportunity in God's plan to do something meaningful.

And what's his point here? Paul has soundly refuted the teaching and the arguments of these people that say, well, if you want to be a good Christian, you need to go out and do good things. You need to get involved in today. Our parallel to this is you need to get out and get involved in ministry.

You need to be out there evangelizing. You need to go share the gospel with someone. You need to be down there ministering to the poor.

You need to be down there picketing the abortion clinic. You need to be down there feeding the hungry and clothing the naked and visiting the prisoners and so forth. And none of these things

are inherently bad things to do.

A lot of them are wonderful things to do if they're done out of faith and if they're done with a recognition of where they fit into God's plan. But to do them as items to check off the list, to say I am a good believer because I am pleasing in God's sight because of what I have done. This was the classic mistake that Israel made throughout their history.

I am good because of what I have done. All of these things I have kept from my youth. And Jesus exposes the rich young ruler's heart when he says, okay, one thing you lack.

Go sell all you have and come follow me. Where is your heart? If you had a choice between everything you've got and following Christ, which would you choose? And the rich young ruler goes away sorrowing. He had many possessions and he couldn't bear to part with those.

It isn't necessary, it isn't a requirement to be a righteous believer, to be pleasing in God's sight, to relinquish all of our goods. The reason Jesus gave him that particular thing was to expose the priorities in his heart. He says, oh yes, God's important to me.

Look, I've kept all these commandments. Well, is he most important? Is he more important than all the blessings you've received? He's not. And so he goes away sorrowing and he doesn't follow Christ.

What an opportunity to follow Christ for two and a half, three and a half years on earth and be one of his disciples. And this guy had the opportunity, had a personal invitation from Jesus Christ, looking right into his eyes and walked away. And he was sad over it, he was sorrowful, but he still walked away.

That's what Israel did. Israel walked away. Jeshurun grew fat and kicked, grew obese, became full of the blessings that God had given them as his people and lost sight of the goal, lost sight of the first priority.

So Paul, the reason he's talking about Israel here, he says, look, I'm not giving you this so that you can make fun of Israel, so that you can boast over these broken branches and say, look at these old poor, these Jewish Christians, they're second class citizens, they're part of this old rotten, dry tree that God had to snap off. We're the new branches, we're the young bucks, we're the new lifeblood in the plan of God here. You're Jewish, you're a has-been, God's written you out of his plan.

Paul says, I'm not giving you this example so that you can boast over them and think well of yourself because God has set them aside. He says, look, you will say to me in verse 19 of Romans 11, branches were broken off that I might be grafted in. He thinks I'm a better branch than them because I'm grafted in and they've been broken off.

Well said. Because of faithlessness, they were broken off. Apistia, faith with a negative in front.

No faith. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. My people are destroyed for lack of faith.

You stand by faith. The only reason you're still in the tree here is that you're exercising faith. You're trusting the promises of God.

You're putting God there on your priority list. Do not be proud. Do not be haughty.

Don't be complacent. Don't rest on your laurels because you stand by faith. You need to fear.

This doesn't mean sit there in quivering terror. It means respect the position that you're in. You stand by faith and without faith you will be snapped off just like they were.

If God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore, consider both the goodness and the severity of God. This is one of the big errors we make today in Christianity.

All we want to focus on is the goodness of God. And that's what Israel did. Israel got into the land and said, Boy, look at the goodness of God.

Land flowing with milk and honey. Look at all these great things. Look at all these beautiful women.

It's okay if they've got a few terrapheme in the closet. I can live with that. And they start encompassing all of these things and losing sight of the God who made them.

And the calling that they have is His people. And they lost sight of the severity of God. Countless times in the prophets, they're reminded.

God says to them, You're going along saying, God does not see. God's not worried about these things I'm doing. As long as I hit the marks with my sacrifices, He's going to be fine.

He says, Consider the goodness and the severity of God on those who fell severity, but toward you goodness if. The goodness of God is conditional, isn't it? It's not unconditional for believers. These people are believers.

They're branches in the tree. But the goodness of God is conditioned on continuing in His goodness. And that's an option.

The Israelites did not continue in His goodness. And they were snapped off. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.

And this is discipline on believers. See how Israel's been blinded and hardened because of their apathy and their rebellion? That same thing can happen to you, Paul says. But there's also that same element of hope.

We saw in Hosea this morning that even when God is pronouncing His severe discipline on Israel, He says, You know, I can't abandon you completely. You're still My people. I will eventually cleanse you.

I will eventually restore you. And that same element of hope occurs here. They also, if they do not continue in faithlessness, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

Now, people that try to associate this with salvation just have a very contorted theology here because they say, Well, you can have salvation and then you can be snapped off and lose your salvation. But if you turn, then you can be saved again. And so you can be saved and lost and saved and lost.

And what an uncertain status. Well, what if I get snapped off and I'm snapped off for three or four days and I get hit by a truck before I get the chance to... I mean, I was saved four or five times, but I just happened to be out at the moment that I died. I guess I'm lost forever.

This has nothing to do with salvation. It has everything to do with opportunity to bear fruit. The reason the branch is there is to bear fruit.

They're all olive branches and they're all saved. If you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, verse 24, 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? And these Jewish Christians in the first generation have been steeped in the law as boys, the men in the church had to memorize huge sections of the Old Testament Scriptures. And it's like the Apostle Paul.

One of the reasons Paul was so effective as an apostle was to look at the Old Testament knowledge he had to draw on. Once he figured out what was going on in the plan of God, all of these things that were his heritage that he talks about in chapter 9, verses 1 and following. Remember he says, My conscience afflicts me.

I have great sorrow and continual grief for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh. Why? They are Israelites to whom belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the service of God, the promises, of whom are the fathers, the example in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and Moses and David and so forth. And from them Christ came.

They're historically the people of God. They've got all of this background. They've got all of these resources to draw on.

And I grieve over them because with all of the advantages they're missing out. They're falling into the same old error. But wouldn't it be great if they respond? Wouldn't it be great if they catch and finally understand what God has been trying to teach them for centuries? That if they trust God, if they put him first, if they pursue him sacrificially if necessary, if they make the opposite decision from the rich young ruler and say, like the disciples did, Peter and James and John, say, Lord, we

have abandoned all to follow you.

What will be our portion? And Jesus says, Those who have abandoned these things to follow me will receive it again a hundredfold. Maybe not in this life, but if you've got your eye on eternity, if you've got your eye on the kingdom, what does it mean to lose someone's esteem in this life or to have someone's bad opinion because you're pursuing the things of God? We endure this momentary light affliction because we're looking at that eternal weight of glory that Paul talks about. That's the call.

And Paul says, if these Jewish Christians will just wake up and smell the coffee here and realize what the opportunity is, they can be grafted in again. What a great thing it's going to be if these natural branches get grafted back into the tree where they belong. And he says, I do not desire that you should be ignorant, brethren, in verse 25, of this mystery.

This is a truth that pertains to the church age. Blindness, in part, has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And he says, Israel is being set aside and their discipline is going to continue.

That hardness, that blindness that comes on those who are apathetic is going to continue until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in. And so all Israel will be delivered. All Israel will ultimately be saved.

Look at verse 28. Concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But concerning the calling out, concerning the choosing, concerning the designation, they are beloved for the sake of the fathers.

Now, how can this be? You can't have it both ways. If this is talking about salvation, are they saved or are they not saved? Well, he says they're enemies on account of the gospel. Well, they must be unbelievers.

No, he says they're chosen for the sake of the fathers. So these people get salvation by proxy. God loved Abraham, so these unbelievers are going to be saved anyway.

This verse and this whole passage have puzzled people for centuries because we're always trying to attach it to salvation. And we always think, well, gospel, that's salvation from the lake of fire. Not at all.

What is the gospel? It's what Paul has been talking about ever since chapter 1, verses 15 and 16. It's living in the light of God's truth. It's living as a believer to bear fruit.

Concerning that gospel, they are enemies. They've missed that. They've been blinded and hardened because they don't want to live by faith.

They don't want to put God first. They're believers, but they don't act like it. They don't walk in

love.

They don't fulfill the true intent of the law, which is to love God and love one another. So concerning that gospel, they are enemies for your sake because look what has happened. By their malfunctioning in the plan of God as believers, God has said, I'm going to let Gentiles out here become believers.

They're not going to have to come and be Israelites now to be believers and to worship and to be provided for and to have the guidelines and the teaching. I'm going to open it up to the whole world, and I'm going to make you jealous, you believers who have been given all these privileges and have ignored them. Now these rank, pagan, uncircumcised Gentiles, I'm going to make them believers.

I'm going to give them my spirit. I'm going to give them the opportunity to be in that tree and bear fruit, the fruit of the spirit, and that ought to wake you up. That ought to shock you out of your wrong thinking.

concerning the choosing, they are still beloved for the sake of the fathers. God promised the fathers, your descendants are going to be my people. And so all of these believers have been planted in history as descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

And they're beloved, they're believers, and they're beloved for the sake of the fathers. They're believers, and they're in that line, and God will not deny them their place as believers, but he's denying them their place as fruitful branches because they bear no fruit. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable, they can't be changed.

Just as you were once disobedient to God, now you have obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient that through the mercy shown to you they also may obtain mercy. And these and they are the same people, aren't they? The same ones that have been disobedient are going to be shown mercy. For God has committed them all to disobedience that he might have mercy on all.

And this all here is the same group he's been talking about all along. It's believers. God is trying to shock them awake by giving their promised blessings to Gentiles, Gentile believers, showing that these Gentiles are fruitful branches, encouraging them to get grafted back into the tree and bear that fruit.

Oh, the depth of the riches 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 who has become his counselor? Who has first given to him and it shall be repaid? Of him and through him and to him are all things, to whom God forever. And this is the point.

What is God looking for out of the tree? It's the reflection of his glory. And in this wonderful plan

that God has implemented in human history in designating a people to be his very own, in encouraging them to bear fruit, in disciplining them when they fail to bear fruit and going so far in this age as to set them aside and let others open up the tree to anyone who comes to Christ and is willing to trust God for the daily things, to develop that love for God and love for one another that God is looking for that constitutes the fruit, it should wake them up. And they're going to be awakened as a nation toward the end of human history, just prior to and during the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ.

They're going to see that. What do you think is going to happen in the 70th week of Daniel when Jewish believers see what God has done with Israel and see what God has done with the church? It is going to wake them up. This maneuvering that God has done in his plan is going to have its effect and these Jewish Christians, the Christians that come to faith in that last seven-year period are going to be completely aware of what God has been trying to tell them and they are going to go to their death as martyrs, many of them, making the decision that the rich young ruler would not make.

They will risk all, they will give up all to be faithful to their God. And the nation of Israel is going to be cleansed and when God raises them on day one of the millennial kingdom, they are going to see this written. Just as we look at the Old Testament and see the history of Israel, they are going to look at the Old and the New Testament and the record of this age and see what they have been missing and it is going to encourage them.

It is going to correct and rebuke and instruct them and they are going to get the chance to recognize that it isn't superficial obedience. It isn't putting on a good show. It isn't even being declared righteous by those around us that counts.

The only thing that counts is God's opinion. God who looks at the heart. God who looks at what we prioritize.

And we have to be willing to risk rejection, risk bad opinion, risk whatever we hold dear because that exposes the priorities in our heart. What is really most important to us? God's good opinion or something else? Let's pause here and take our break and when we come back we are going to conclude this section of three chapters and get ready to launch into Romans chapter 12.