

Striving for Jealousy

Romans 11: 11 – 12

- The people of Israel were the people of God's election, God's promise, and God's blessing, but a vast majority of Israel were missing out on the promised blessings because when their Messiah came, they rejected him.
- How do we explain this in view of the things that the Bible teaches us about God? For example, the Bible clearly teaches us that God is sovereign and all powerful so that as Job proclaimed in:

Job 42: 2 "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

- So, the Bible clearly asserts that God is sovereign. But alongside the doctrine of God's sovereignty, the Bible also clearly teaches the doctrine of God's election. Paul has taught that clearly here in the book of Romans, especially as he spoke of the plight of the Jews in Romans 9. Quoting Malachi in:

Romans 9: 13 "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

- And again quoting God's words that He spoke to Moses in:

Romans 9: 14 "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

- The doctrine of God's election is written large in the pages of the Bible. But many people, many Christians don't like that doctrine, and reject it, because they think it makes God seem arbitrary—picking some while passing others by.
 - They ask, "How is it fair for God to decide, before Jacob and Esau had even been born, that he would love Jacob and have no regard for Esau? How is it fair for God to show mercy and compassion to some, while, not just passing by others, but actually hardening their hearts?"
 - But remember, along with asserting God's sovereignty in election, Paul has also made it clear that God's sovereignty in election isn't arbitrary:

Romans 9: 11 in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls.

- God doesn't explain to us everything that He is doing, but we can rest assured that God has a purpose in it all, and because it is God, we can rest assured that His purpose is an infinitely good and wise one.
- But here is the stunning thought: Our salvation, our election to salvation, is not about us. It is about God and His glory.

Colossians 1: 27 – 29 God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. 30 And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 31 so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

- As Paul continues in Romans 9, he makes it clear that this isn't about us. It is about God and His glory.

Romans 9: 20 But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" ²¹ Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out

of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? ²² What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— ²⁴ even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

- God's purpose in election is to reveal His glory. It is to make known His justice, His Power, His Love, His mercy. This is why God saves us the way He does. Our salvation is completely dependent on Him, so all the glory is His.
- God owes us no explanation for His ways in salvation, but here in the verses that we are looking at today God gives us one, through the Apostle Paul. Listen to what Paul says as he speaks about God's ways of salvation in regard to Israel.

Romans 11: 5 – 12 So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. ⁶ But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. ⁷ What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, ⁸ as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day." ⁹ And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; ¹⁰ let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever." ¹¹ So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. ¹² Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

- Verses 11 and 12 mark a transition in Paul's thoughts about the Jews.
 - In verses 1-10, Paul has made it clear that, even though the Jews, as a whole, have rejected the Messiah, and rejected the Gospel, God's purpose, promise, and plan, have not failed because God has been at work throughout history preserving a remnant for salvation.
 - Now beginning in verse 11, and continuing on through verse 32, Paul transitions from a remnant that is being saved to:

Romans 11: 26 all Israel will be saved.

- God's purpose for the Jewish people is not finished yet. God has preserved a remnant of Israel, and a day is coming of great future blessing for Israel, when many Jews will come to know the salvation that God promised in Christ.
 - You can see Paul clearly express this thought at the end of verse 12.

Romans 11: 12 how much more will their full inclusion mean!

- Right now, it is just a remnant of Israel, but in the future, there will be a full inclusion. Think of the flow of Paul's argument here:

Romans 11: 11a So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles.

- Why has God allowed the Jews to stumble? So that salvation could come to the Gentiles. But Paul doesn't leave it there. Look what he says happens as salvation comes to the Gentiles.

Romans 11: 11b salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.

- God's purpose in allowing the Jews to stumble was to bring salvation to the Gentiles. But His purpose in saving the Gentiles wasn't just to save

them, it was to also save the Jews by making them jealous, which in turn will lead to great riches and blessing for Jew and Gentile alike.

Romans 11: 12 Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

- And what will all of this stumbling, jealousy, inclusion, and blessing lead to? Praise to our glorious God.

Romans 11: 33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

- Our God is so omnipotently powerful, that His plans succeed, even as we fail!

1. Israel has stumbled, but their stumble is not final.

Romans 11: 11a So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means!

- Throughout chapters 9 – 11, Paul has been speaking of ethnic, or national Israel, and, in the flow of his argument, that is who he is talking about here. With these words, Paul is assuring us that God is not done with the nation of Israel.
- Once again, we see Paul employ a rhetorical device that he has used often in Romans, the rhetorical question—a question that doesn't really require an answer because the answer is obvious. Yet, Paul gives us an emphatic, "By no means!"
 - Israel, the Jews, have taken a misstep. They have tripped, stumbled, but they haven't fallen. They are staggering, but God is not done with them yet. At the present time, they have rejected Jesus as their Messiah, but that rejection will not be permanent.
 - There is no other nation in the world with a history like that of the Jews. Because they stumbled and turned away from God and His Messiah, they have endured 3 mass deportations and exiles.
 - First in 722 BC the ten northern tribes of Israel were deported as a result of the Assyrian invasion. Then in 580 BC the tribe of Judah was deported to Babylon, and Jerusalem was destroyed.
 - By God's hand, they were reconstituted as a nation in the 400s BC, until they were once again defeated and completely dispersed by the Romans in 70 AD.
 - For 1,878 years, Israel did not exist as a nation. In fact, those who were dispersed endured ethnic cleansings, and the Holocaust, and yet miraculously the Jewish people survived and Israel sprang into life, as a nation, once again in 1948.
 - Is God done with Israel? History says not. More importantly Paul says not. They have stumbled but they have not fallen. God is still at work.

2. But their stumble had a purpose: it would be used by God to bring salvation to the Gentiles.

Romans 11: 11b through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles

- God's purpose was always that salvation would come to the Gentiles, through Israel. That purpose is clearly expressed in the promise God made to Abraham.

Genesis 12: 3 in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

- God chose Abraham and Abraham's offspring, the people of Israel to be objects of His blessing, but His purpose in blessing them was to be a blessing to the nations, the Gentiles.
- God reiterates this through the prophet Isaiah, in verses that actually point to the coming of the Messiah from Israel.

Isaiah 49: 6 I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.

- God blessed the nation of Israel, by bringing forth the Messiah, the light of the world, from her. But in the hardness of their hearts, they stumbled, and rejected and killed the Messiah, nailing him to a cross. But it was that stumble that allowed salvation to come to us.
- But crucifying the Messiah was only the beginning of the Jewish hardening and the Jewish stumble. In the hardness of their hearts, they also sought to persecute any who followed after Jesus. Even those who were their fellow Jews.
 - Nearly all of the first Christians were Jewish. We can tell this is true because in Acts 2: 46, we are told that "they continued to meet each day in the Temple courts. This is a place where no Gentiles would be allowed, but it was the meeting place of the early church. The early Jewish Christians observed all of the ceremonies, Sabbaths, rites, feasts, and holy days of Israel.
 - If nothing had changed, it is safe to assume that this would have continued, and Christianity would have been a minority sect within Judaism. But by God's judgement and God's hand, that's not what happened. Because they stumbled, and had hard hearts, ethnic Jews soon began to persecute Jewish Christians.
 - We see it begin to unfold in Acts 4, as Peter and John are brought before the Jewish authorities and threatened with harm if they continued to preach about Jesus. Acts 7 recounts the death of Stephen, who would be the first martyr of the Christian faith. As we keep reading in Acts, this, in turn, caused a general persecution to break out against Christians, and the result was the church was scattered out of Jerusalem.

Acts 8: 1 And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

- This scattering sent Philip, one of the first deacons in the early church, into Samaria, where Acts 8:4 tells us many came to faith. Philip then went to Gaza where he met the Ethiopian Eunuch and led him to faith.
- In Acts 9, we see Paul on his way to Damascus to persecute the early church, when Christ knocks him to his knees and brings him to faith. But as we keep reading in Acts 9, as soon as Paul starts preaching the Gospel, the Jews of Jerusalem try to take his life.
- Meanwhile, in Acts 10, God makes it clear to Peter that the Gospel is to go out to the Gentiles, and that is what the next 18 chapters of Acts detail for us.
- In Acts 13 Paul goes to Pisidian Antioch, a Gentile city, in Asia Minor.

Acts 13: 45 – 51 But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him. ⁴⁶ And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside

and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.” ⁴⁸ And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.... But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. ⁵¹ But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium.

- Everywhere you look in the book of Acts this same pattern repeats itself over and over again, at Iconium and Lystra, in Acts 14, at Thessalonica and Berea, in Acts 17, and in Ephesus in Acts 19. Paul goes to the Jews first, the Jews reject the Gospel, and Paul goes to the Gentiles. Gentiles begin to enthusiastically come to faith, and the Jews become jealous, stirring up mobs, running Paul out of town to the next town.
- In every place, it is the same story. The more people, in this case the Jews, try to oppress Christianity, the more it spreads.

“The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.”

The Early Christian Apologist Tertullian

- Think of this. Almost everyone here, if not all of us, are Gentiles, and we are saved, and brought into the church, because the Jews of Paul’s day stumbled, opening the door for the Gospel to spread throughout the Roman Empire.

Romans 11: 11b through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles.

- But remember what else Paul has said. The Jews have stumbled, they have misstepped, but they haven’t fallen. God is not done with them yet.

3. The salvation of the Gentiles will in turn lead to the salvation of Israel as a nation, which will lead to even greater blessings for the Gentiles.

Romans 11: 12 Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

- The Greek word that is translated in our Bibles as full inclusion is the word “pleroma,” and it literally means fullness. What does that word fullness mean? Does it mean that every Jew will be saved, or something else?
 - A little later in the chapter, we see Paul use this exact same word in regard to the Gentiles, and interestingly enough, there they translate it as fullness.

Romans 11: 25 a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

- The Greek word “pleroma” translated here as fullness, refers to something that reaches its saturation point. Presumably there is a point in history where the extension of God’s grace to the Gentiles will reach its saturation point, accomplishing all he desires, and then God will begin to work on the restoration of the Jews.
- So, in view of this, as we consider Paul’s use of the word “pleroma” in verse 12, we can safely assume that Paul isn’t necessarily speaking of literally all of Israel being saved, but rather a fullness of Israel, more, much more, than the remnant that has been saved previously by God.

- But the bigger questions for us this morning is how will this salvation of Israel take place and what will its result be? Let me address the last question first and then that will set the stage for answering the first question.
- What will be the result of the fullness of Israel coming to salvation?

Romans 12: 12 if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

- The result of the of Israel being saved is untold riches. How do we understand that? Well, think what Paul says first. The trespass, or better put the stumble (it is the exact same Greek word that is rightly translated as stumble in verse 11) means riches for the Gentiles.
 - The riches, Paul is speaking of, are the riches of Christ. Paul writes in:
- Ephesians 3: 8** To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.
- The unsearchable riches of Christ are what come to us through the apprehension and comprehension of the Gospel. In fact, the more you comprehend the Gospel, the more you understand the riches of Christ.

2 Corinthians 2: 9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

- The riches of Christ are the forgiveness of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the inheritance of Christ that are all ours by faith in Christ. As the Gospel gives us the ability to own our sin, because we no longer have to try to maintain a righteousness of our own, we stop deceiving ourselves and as a result see more and more of our sin.
 - The more we see of our sin, the more we see our poverty, and the more we see our poverty, the more we see the riches of Christ. Don't be afraid to own your sin. It is the gateway to seeing the more of the riches of Christ. Focusing on your goodness blinds you to the riches of Christ. Focusing on your sinfulness, opens our eyes to see the riches of Christ.
- These unsearchable riches of Christ are not material but spiritual. As we see in John 3: 16, and Romans 1 : 16, the unsearchable riches of Christ provide salvation to everyone who believes.
- These unsearchable riches are a gift that truly keeps on giving, as we are changed, by God's Spirit, into people who are filled with:

Galatians 5: 22 -23 the fruit of the Spirit love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control

- In the riches of Christ, God

2 Peter 1: 3 has given us everything we need for a godly life.

- Those are tangible things that we can see and have some understanding of today, but there are other parts of Christ's riches that we can only begin to imagine, because the unsearchable riches of Christ cannot be fully traced out.

Colossians 2: 9 In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.

- So, the riches of Christ include all that God is: the Glory of God, the Truth of God, the Wisdom of God, the Life of God, and the Love of God.

Ephesians 1: 3 (In Christ) God has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing.

Colossians 2: 3 (In Christ are) hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

- In some ways these riches are unsearchable. But yet, as Christians, we can truly say these things are ours today. Even though we may not realize their worth, we possess them today, because by faith we possess Christ.
 - But a day is coming when we will know much more fully the unsearchable riches that are ours in Christ.

1 Corinthians 13: 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

- When will that day come?

1 John 3: 2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

- We live in the now and not yet. Today we have a deposit of the riches that are ours in Christ. The riches are ours, but we have yet to come into their fullness. When will that happen? When the fullness of the Gentiles, and the fullness of Israel are brought into the Kingdom of God. That is when Christ will come again, and the not yet becomes the new now, and the riches of Christ become fully known to us. This is what Paul means in:

Romans 11: 12 how much more will their full inclusion mean?

4. How will this salvation of Israel take place?

- It will take place after the fullness of the Gentiles has been brought into the church, and into the blessings of God. God will use that to make the Jews jealous for Christ and the blessings of Christ. Remember what Paul said in:

Romans 11: 11 salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.

- Ordinarily, we use the word jealousy in a negative way. But perhaps a practical example will help us understand the difference between a good jealousy and a bad jealousy. If a husband sees another man flirting with his wife, he is right to be jealous, for only he has the right to flirt with his wife. This type of jealousy is not sinful. Rather, it is entirely appropriate.
- The same is true here with the Jews jealousy of the salvation of the Gentiles. It is a good jealousy that will spur them to embrace the gospel.
- What will cause the Jews to be enflamed with this good jealousy? They will see many Old Testament promises, that were first made to them, fulfilled in the Gentiles. They will see the riches of Christ in the lives of the Gentiles, and they will want those for themselves.
 - A possible example of this is Acts 6:1-7. After the early church sets apart officers (deacons) to care for the needy, we are told (v 7) that a lot of Jewish priests then converted to Christ. Why? The priests were supposed to bring the people's tithes and resources to the poor, but that did not happen as it should have. Now the Christians, under the power of the Holy Spirit, were being generous and creating a community in which every needy person was

cared for. That is what God said Israel was supposed to be in Deuteronomy 15:4-5! It seems the priests saw it and were “envious,” and convicted, and, as a result, listened to the gospel.

- So now this brings us to the so what for us. How are you striving in your life to make others jealous for the Gospel? We have already seen this is a good thing for us to do, so how are we striving to do that?
 - If we care about the Kingdom coming and care about the Jews and fullness of Israel being saved, the first thing we need to do is to work to see the fullness of the Gentiles come to Christ, and I live alongside you in Sturgis, so I know we each have lots of Gentile friends who need Jesus.
 - Who is your one that you are trying to make jealous for Christ?
- How do you make someone jealous for Christ? I thought you’d never ask. It is by displaying the riches of Christ in your life. You have been blessed to be a blessing.
 - Take hold of that for which Christ has taken hold of you. Peel back the layers of the onion, day-by-day, and see the truth of the sinfulness that lies beneath that veneer of righteousness that we each try to maintain. As you do that you will more and more experience the riches of Christ and the Gospel in your own life. That’s why my prayer for each of us is the prayer Paul prayed for the Ephesians.

Ephesians 3: 16 – 19 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

- As you experience the Gospel in your own life, let it cultivate and display those fruits of the spirit. Let it cultivate and display a heart of mercy and love. Most importantly, let it cultivate a broken and contrite heart.
 - Don’t be a poser. You have not yet been perfected in Christ.
 - Do you know what that means? It means you are going to mess up. You are still sinful. You are going to hurt others and hurt relationships, but rather than defending yourself and excusing yourself, trying to maintain a veneer of righteousness, like the rest of the world does, be humble and own your sin because as you do that, you will show forth the riches of Christ’s forgiveness in true repentance. Strip away the veneer and let the world see Christ as your righteousness.
 - Others are going to wrong you. Use those opportunities to show forth the riches of Christ’s forgiveness and mercy. Forgive as you have been forgiven. Let the power of the Gospel shine forth in your life, in your marriage, in your home, in your workplace, in the marketplace, so that others look at your life, your marriage, your home, and become jealous wishing that they had in their life, what you have in yours.
- You’ve been blessed in Christ, with the riches of Christ, to be a blessing. Savor and rejoice in what you have in Christ and then strive to make others jealous to have all that is yours in Christ.