



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Romans 11:11-24

"Parable or the Illustration of the Olive Tree"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] For the Scripture reading this morning we are turning to Romans chapter 11, verse 11 through verse 24. And for those of you who are refugees from your mother's arms, [Laughter] we are studying the Epistle to the Romans. We're glad to have you this morning; we hope to have you again at Christmas. [Laughter] We are studying Romans and we are in the 11th chapter and at the 11th verse. Now, this is a great day. It is Mother's Day, and we do appreciate our mothers.

Now, we were looking at Romans 9, 10, and 11, and as you know, I've been trying over about five or six messages now to make the point that Israel's failure is, according to Paul, is according to spiritual pride and self-sufficiency. That's the reason. And then, after doing that, in chapters 9 and 10 of the Epistle of the Romans, he's launched into another discussion of Israel's condition. He has pointed out that Israel and her failure is not a total failure. And in the final part of the chapter he will deal with the question, "Is Israel's failure final?" And he will show that it is not final, but that all Israel shall be saved.

Now, we are intending to spend some more time on the latter part of the chapter, but this morning we want to look at the parable or the illustration primarily, of the olive tree, which the apostle uses. So Romans chapter 11, in verse 11, he writes, "I say then." That little three-word

phrase, which is the translation of a two-word phrase in the original text, is precisely the same as that which began the chapter in the 1st verse, "I say then." So these are the two points of division in the chapter. "I say then, Hath God cast away his people?" verse 1. Now, verse 11,

"I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them (the “them” refer to the nation Israel, of course) be the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness? For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off (Now you can see that the apostle is giving us here two figures, but since the second figure is suitable for distinguishing among the branches between the nation and the nations, he uses the second figure in the illustration. Verse 17): And if some of the branches be broken off and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. (In the original text, there is a little bit of stress upon the first person pronoun, "I.") Well, because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. (Now lest I do not have time to say anything about this, when Paul speaks about being cut off after having been grafted in, he is not talking about the individuals primarily. He's talking about national relationships,

and so he's talking about the cutting off of Gentile salvation and not necessarily about an individual who has believed in Christ, who once having been grafted into Christ is forever grafted into him. These are his national purposes that he has in mind, as the context makes quite plain. I'll read verse 23 again,) And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?"

Will you particularly notice that last expression, "their own olive tree." We'll say something about that later on. May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

[Prayer removed from audio.]

[Message] Our subject this morning in the exposition of the Epistle to the Romans is the "Parable or the Illustration of the Olive Tree." I won't labor those points again, which I just again mentioned for the tenth time, I suppose. The apostle is now speaking of the divine purposes in the call of Israel and of the call of the Gentiles and of the relationship that existed in the divine program between the nation Israel and the nations. This is probably the major point that he is seeking to make in showing that Israel's failure is not total, and that it is not final. One of the interesting things about Romans chapter 11 is the reaction of many of the outstanding expositors of the word of God to it.

For example, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, one of my favorite sermonizers; I don't know if I have read everything that Mr. Spurgeon read by a long shot, there are certain things I know I have not read. But I think I have read scores and scores and scores of his sermons and some of his other works as well. And he is one of my favorite commentators and sermonizers. But when Mr. Spurgeon comes to Romans chapter 9, 10, and 11 he suddenly becomes a different kind of

interpreter. There are a number of studies in the preceding chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, but when he comes to Romans 9, 10, and 11, there are very, very few sermons on this section, because Mr. Spurgeon was for a large part of his life troubled over whether Israel really had a future or not. In some of his writings he does finally make the statement that he does believe that there is to be a kingdom of God upon the earth, and therefore he finally aligns himself upon that side, but so far as messages are concerned, he has very few studies in these verses where it really counts. For example, in his studies through Romans 9, 10, and 11 he has no studies at all on Romans chapter 11, and the thought of the apostle in these chapters.

Alexander McLaren is another of the great expositors of the word of God, and I would like to acknowledge my debt to McLaren. I've gotten many wonderful points from him through the years. When he comes to Romans chapter 8, he has eleven studies on Romans chapter 8 in his expositions of the Scriptures. And then there is nothing on Romans 9, 10, and 11, and 12 studies on Romans chapter 12 as he goes on through the Epistle to the Romans. There was a preacher out in east Texas about ten to fifteen years ago who came into contact with a very close friend of mine. And he determined as a result of some instigation from the friend that he should turn to the exposition to the word of God in his Sunday morning ministry. And so, he began to preach on the Bible. It was a rather unique thing in this particular church.

Yesterday I looked at a book in a book store, it's a fairly well-known book written by a professor at Union Theological Seminary, and it entitled *The Strange Silence of the Bible in the Church*. And there were a number of little illustrations about individuals who sought to find something in the church that would enable them to understand the Bible but could find none. Well, this young preacher began to expound Romans, and he expounded Romans chapters 1 through 8, but when he came to Romans chapter 9, he told his congregation that he was sorry, but he was going to have to stop the study of the Epistle to the Romans at that point, because Romans 9, 10, and 11 was something that he did not understand at all.

One of the difficulties is that we have built up within us as Gentiles, a prejudice against the idea of the ethnic future of the nation Israel. Now, I think that the apostle makes it very plain that Israel has an ethnic future. And surprisingly, this is something that not only do premillennialists agree with amillennialists, but even such outstanding postmillennialists as professor John Murray, perhaps the premier Calvinistic exegete of the 20th century, he too agreed that Romans chapter 11 predicts very plainly an ethnic future for the nation Israel. Well, that's my illustration; I want to turn to the question that the apostle raises in verse 11, because this is the beginning of the section that we want to look at.

He asks the question, after he has shown that Israel's failure is not total, he an Israelite is saved. There are seven thousand, too, that have not bowed the knee to Baal, as was the case in Elijah's day. "I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall?" Now, this is a very interesting question. "I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall?" Before we look at the answer to that question, I want to make a couple of things clear, or try to. We must recognize, as I mentioned during the reading of the Scripture, that this passage has to do with national purposes, not individual salvation primarily. But of course, we cannot have national purposes apart from individual participation in them. But the primary thing the apostle is speaking about is the relationship between the nation Israel and the Gentiles. And by the way, he is not speaking about the church per se, because he does not use the term church. He is talking about the Gentiles in this body of the elect. So it's national purposes, not individual primarily.

And then of course, to understand this we must remember that God dealt with the human race through Israel, before Jesus Christ came and offered his sacrifice on Calvary's cross. The greatest authority for this is our Lord himself. When he had his interview with the woman of Samaria, in the course of which she said, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, and you say that Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." She refers to the Samaritan views. The Lord did not sidestep the question, and he did not answer it in the way that many modern theologians would have liked to have had the question answered. Jesus

clearly recognized the national limits of salvation which existed in his day, and the geographical isolation of God's blessings at that time. Some would have liked to have had him say, "Well, all religions are good, and if you are a good Samaritan you will be saved, just as if you are a good Israelite." Or we would say today, "If you are a good member of your church or your religion, whatever it may be, you shall be saved, just as a good member of ours shall be saved." But he did not say that. He said, "Salvation is of the Jews." He made a very clear distinction, and he said that the source of salvation is of the Jews. So the Lord Jesus is really support for that.

In fact, worship of the true God was through the nation Israel, or through the Judaism of the Scriptures. Let's just take some illustrations. Let's take, for example, Ruth. Ruth was a Moabitess, she determined to accompany Naomi. And when Naomi sought to dissuade her, Ruth replied in one of the most beautiful passages in the Bible, one that is often used in our marriage ceremonies because of the principle involved in it. Ruth said, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee. For whither thou goest, I will go. And whither thou lodgest, will I lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God." Now, notice the order in which she put those words. The order is, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God shall be my God." It's almost as if she was saying she could not say, "Your God shall be my God until your people are my people." She recognized the identity of the two. In other words, the change in nationality preceded the change of God on the outward side of things.

Well, let's take Naaman, the Syrian. What an interesting man Naaman is, afflicted with leprosy, looking for some cures, he had tried them all; and finally, the little Israelite girl who was in the employ of the great man suggested that he go down to Israel. There was a prophet down there who might be able to cleanse him. And so, he gathered together his entourage, and the great man went down to the prophet Elijah and knocked on his door, and Elijah didn't even bother to answer him. In the Bible, you know, the important person is not the king or the prince, the important person is the prophet or the man of God. That's still true. It's still true that the most important things are said from the pulpit, not from the news conference in Washington. Truly important issues

are discussed here. Well, finally Elijah dained to speak to Naaman, and he said, "You'll have to dip seven times in the River Jordan." Well, Naaman was from Syria and he was from Damascus, and they had the beautiful rivers Abana and Pharpar, and he looked over at that little dirty creek of the Jordan River, and he said, "You mean I've got to dip seven times in the Jordan River." "Yes, seven times in the Jordan River." And he wouldn't do it. Finally, he had a servant who had a little sense and he said, "Look if he told you to do some great thing, you would have tried to do it, wouldn't you? Now, all he tells you to do is just do that." So Naaman said, "All right, I'll do it." So he dipped himself seven times in the Jordan River, and of course, he came up his skin was just like a baby's skin, remarkable miracle of healing.

But now, what happens? Well Naaman's got to go back home, and he's got a big story, but there's something else that's very important for him. And so he says, now he's got an entirely different attitude. Now he says, "Now let there be given unto your servant two mules' burdens of earth, because," that's really the important word in the statement, "Give me two mules' burdens of potting soil." I can imagine his wife or whoever saw him coming back to Syria with the mules and over each side these sacks of soil from the south. Palestine was not noted for its fertility, and they must have thought he had gone crazy. But anyway, potting soil, so he comes back and he has his soil. But the text says, "Because." "Because henceforth your servant will not offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any God but Jehovah." And so you can see that Naaman, this is all just illustrative of course, but Naaman when he gets back. He picks a little spot in the palace or in the room wherever he was, he puts the ground over there, and when he wants to offer a little sacrifice he'll get on his knees to pray. He goes over and kneels down on Israelite soil to acknowledge that his God now has been changed.

There is Esther, with Haman hanged and Mordecai exalted, the Jews were delivered from the great danger that had been over them. And we read, "The Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor, and in every province and in every kingdom wherever the king's command and his edict came, there was gladness and joy among the Jews; a feast and a holiday and many from the people's

of the country became Jews for the fear of the Jews had fallen upon them." So now, when we think about what Paul is talking about, we must remember that salvation is of the Jews.

Now, with that as a kind of background, we look again at the question, "I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall?" Well, there is no question but that they stumbled at the stumbling stone of the cross, the nation did, and they turned their back as a whole upon Jesus Christ, and they have come under the discipline of God, and they have been sent to the four corners of the earth. And that generation is a lost generation. Now, later they are called "fallen." Verse 22, "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity." That is, that generation that rejected Jesus Christ, they are monuments of the judgment of God. So Paul's question is, "I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall?" Well, yes, they have stumbled and they have fallen, no question about it. But Paul says, "God forbid." So the apostle is not stressing the stumbling and he is not stressing the fact of the falling, but he's looking at the purpose back of it. Have they stumbled in order that they should fall and that be all, is the point. They have stumbled and they have fallen, but is that all. "I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall?" So the stress rests upon the purpose of Israel's fall. And he answers, "God forbid." They have not stumbled and they have not fallen that that should be the end of everything, but rather through their fall, salvation is come to the Gentiles to provoke them, Israel, to jealousy.

What a magnificent program God is working out. Israel has fallen, Israel has stumbled. The Gentiles, as a result of it, have been brought into the saving plans of God. The Abrahamic promises which said, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed," are being fulfilled. Gentiles are now within the purpose and plan of God, and he is working through them, but he is working through them to a further end, to provoke them, Israel, to jealousy in order that they might have their glorious future that the Abrahamic promises have set forth.

Now, I think that there is little to provoke the Jews to jealousy in Christendom today. They're not even preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. You listen to the pulpits and the Lord Jesus Christ is not preached as the way of salvation. No one is disturbed over the kind of Christ who is

being preached today, because the kind of Christ who is being preached today is just a good man who had some good advice for some good people. But the Christ of the Bible is one who condemns men because of their sin and affirms that they are going to hell if they do not respond to him.

Now, that is an entirely different kind of Messiah. But among the Christians, what is there among us to provoke Jews to jealousy that they might return to the God of their fathers? Well, perhaps very little. We are interested in other things. We are interested in big buildings. We are interested in success according to the world. The things in which we are interested are not really the ultimate things. We are not interested in the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the way that the apostles and prophets and our Lord preached it, and the result is that they are not provoked to much jealousy. But let me say to you that from the standpoint of God, there is a damper in the Father's house until the elder brother is brought back in. And God will not be satisfied until the nation Israel is brought again to harmony with the divine purposes. So Paul says, "God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke the Jews to jealousy."

Now, Paul, of course, gave as the reason for most of his thinking the Scriptures. And he, here, there he appealed to Deuteronomy 32:21, for God had said that that was precisely what he would do. See, I've been saying this over and over again. I can't help but say it. It's not in my notes, it just comes. It just arises to the surface inevitable. The reason that we find difficulty with Paul is we don't read our Bibles. Twice in this section he has referred to Deuteronomy 32:21. God, in the Old Testament, said there will come a time when, "I will," speaking with reference to Israel, "I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a people." That's what he's doing now. That's why we Gentiles have been saved, in order to provoke Jews to jealousy. Humbling isn't it? But true.

"Now," he says, "if the fall of them be the riches of the world," present Gentile salvation, "and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness?" That is, when they enter into the fullness of blessing. If we have worldwide Gentile salvation as a result of Israel's fall, what a great outpouring of salvation there will be when Israel returns to the Lord God. I'm speaking to you Gentiles, Paul says. That's what I am doing this morning. There are probably

some Jewish Christians in this audience. "But I'm speaking to you Gentiles," he said, "because I'm an apostle of the Gentiles, and I'm magnifying my service, not office, service. If by any means I may provoke to jealousy them who are my flesh and save some of them." In other words, the apostle sensed that he was living in the age in which a few, a remnant, he has just spoken about them, are coming to faith. The day of the mass conversion of the nation lies in the future.

And then finally, in the 15th verse, "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world." In other words, if their rejection be the reconciliation of the world of the Gentiles as today, "what shall the receiving of them be, but such a thing as life from the dead?" It's going to be like a gigantic resurrection when the whole of the nation comes to faith in the Lord God in the future. The nation, as a whole, we shall learn next week, Lord willing.

Now, you can see from this that the apostle has in mind a magnificent future for the nation Israel, and I think also, since as you know, I want to assure you that you must not blame anyone else for the things that I preach. I'm to be blamed for them. And I hope that of course if you should react negatively, I hope that you are reacting negatively to the apostles and to the prophets. Because I hope that is what I am preaching. I think that is what I'm preaching. Sometimes because we preach the sovereign grace of God and the fact that he is not frustrated in accomplishing his purposes, he always does his will, people get the impression that what he is saying is, talking about the elect, that there are just going to be a few people in heaven. We know all those stories that men talk about, the few people in heaven. The apostle did not have such a doctrine. He preached that the sovereign grace of God was directed toward a definite group of people, but that group of people shall be ultimately so numerous that you cannot number them. Our great God of sovereign grace has included a multitude which no man can number of every kindred, tribe, tongue, and nation. It may well be that there shall be far more people saved than are lost. Even though in the present day, God's company, as our Lord said in his day, was relatively a little flock. But God's great purposes encompass the reconciliation of the world, such a thing as life from the dead. But Israel is the instrumentality.

Now, the apostle at this point says, "For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches." And the readers of the Bible today in 1981 say, "Paul, what in the world are you talking about? The first fruit be holy. The lump is also holy. And the root is holy, so are the branches." Does it not appear that Paul is, I'm going to use a word intentionally; does it not appear that Paul is obfuscating issues? In other words, does it not appear that he's just trying to make it difficult? Come on, be honest. Do you understand exactly what he's talking about? Well, if I know human nature, the answer is no, but do you know why? Because we don't read the Bible; we don't realize that all Paul is doing is just drawing illustrations from the Bible. If you were familiar with Numbers chapter 15, you would know precisely what he is talking about when he says, "If the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy." He refers to instructions that God gave Israel, "Now when you come in the land, and when the time comes for the harvest and you're going to bake your loaf of bread, you're going to have to take a first fruits, that is a piece of that lump and dedicate it to the Lord God in token of thankfulness, recognition that it all belongs to him." But that dedication communicates its consecration to the whole of the lump.

And furthermore, well that's what he means when he says, "If the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy." And then he says, "If the root be holy, so are the branches," and launches into the discussion of an olive tree. Why the olive tree? Well, because in the Old Testament in more than one place Israel is likened to an olive tree. Hosea in the last chapter of his book likens Israel to an olive tree. Jeremiah, in his book, likens Israel to an olive tree. In other words, the olive tree was the characteristic illustration of the nation Israel. So when he says, "For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches." He's speaking about the fact that Israel began with a definite call of God, a first fruit and with a root, and later on he will make plain, if you don't already anticipate it, that he's referring to the fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Verse 28 is concerning the gospel, "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the Father's sakes." God made promises to Abraham which he has not forgotten. Abraham and the Abrahamic promises are the root of the divine program. They are

also the first fruit and the call of Abraham, and the call of the patriarchs extends the consecration of God to the whole of the people of God whether believing or not, in the sense that as a nation they have become the people of God. The holiness that he refers to there is external and relative, but of course, it must become internal and absolute through personal faith, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called," and so on. We don't have time to go into that. That should be obvious to you.

So he's talking about the Abrahamic blessing. He's talking about the fact that God has made a certain covenant with Abraham and confirmed it with the fathers, and he's going to carry it out. And we think, again, of the great event in Genesis chapter 15 when God confirmed that covenant. He said to Abraham one night, "Look at the stars Abram, so shall thy seed be." Abram believed in the Lord, it was reckoned to him for righteousness. And God said, "Now I want you to bring some sacrificial animals. Bring a she-goat. Bring a ram. Bring a heifer, each of three years of age; a turtledove and a pigeon. Cut the animals in two." Nothing is said about the birds, we assume one was laid on one side; one was laid on the other. That was the customary way to make a sacrifice. In fact the expression, both in Hebrew and Greek, for making a covenant is to "cut a covenant," or to cut oaths in Hebrew. In Jeremiah chapter 34 he refers to the cutting of animals. And then when individuals had agreed on something, after they had cut the animals, they walked between the pieces in token of their union in the promises, of the fact that they were giving their lives, typically unto death, for the fulfillment of the provisions. If I made an agreement with you we might slay an animal put one half over here and one half over here. We'd both pass through it. That meant that we would be faithful to our words of our agreement up to death. We were untied in the terms of the agreement.

Now, this was an ancient custom, not simply in Israel. After Alexander died, there was a famous conflict between Perdiccas and the cavalry and the infantry under Meleager, and they almost came to blows in the succession of Alexander. And finally, they agreed and they took a dog and they cut the dog in half. Isn't that nice for the Society for the Prevention of Animals? At any rate, that's

what they did. They cut a dog in half, and the infantry and the cavalry passed between the pieces in token of harmony, union in that agreement, and of their willingness to carry out its terms.

Well, now God told Abraham to do that, and then Abraham waited. He waited all day long, because it was night time when he saw the stars, and it's not until the next afternoon as the sun is about to go down and Abraham, finally his eyes are so heavy. And finally, he falls a little bit to sleep, and he hears some words from the Lord God, "Abram, I'm going to give you the land from the land of Egypt to the River Euphrates. From the River of Egypt to the River Euphrates, it's all going to be yours." And then he has something very much like a nightmare, for a harrow of great darkness came upon him, and the birds of the heaven came down to attack the animals, typical of satanic attempts to overthrow the purpose of God. But Abraham drove them off, and then it's not long before, as he's looking at those pieces, suddenly the light of the day is gone. He looks off and there is something like a burning firepot, a furnace, and smoke and flames are belching forth from it, anticipatory of the pillar of cloud in the day and the pillar of fire in the night, symbols of the divine presence. And that furnace passes between those pieces and Abram, this is the significant thing, Abram is not invited to follow. Why? Because this is a covenant in which the whole responsibility rests upon God.

You know, you don't often have orthodox and unorthodox men agreeing on anything about the Bible. C. F. Kyle, an orthodox man says, "God alone went through those pieces, not Abram also." H. C. Lupold, the Lutheran, a believing man, said, "God binds himself. God's priority is the point of this sacrifice." But the German Von Ranke, who was not the member of any evangelical church, truly, not an orthodox evangelical believer, he said, "The complete passivity of the human partner is the point stressed in this sacrifice." You see, Abraham is deliberately excluded. He is the astonished spectator to what God is doing. That's the Abrahamic covenant. That is what God is doing. Now, let me say this. You Gentiles or Jewish believers, there is not one thing that you can possibly do to prevent these purposes from being carried out. They will be carried out. You can

preach against them. You can fight against the people, you can overthrow the movement humanly, but it will come to pass. You can be sure of that.

Now, what shall I do? One minute to twelve. [Laughter] I shall do what most preachers do, give up. [Laughter] The apostle now introduces the illustration from horticulture for the simple reason that this second illustration is one that is suitable to distinction between the individuals involved, whereas in the case of the first illustration of the first fruit and the lump, that is not. So he picks up the second of the branches and the olive tree, and from this parable of horticulture, governed by grace, he sets forth the fact that if the Gentiles have been saved, and they have been, if they've come into the center of God's program, it's more to be expected that Israel shall be restored.

So I'll read through it, listen to what he says. "And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them," that is the Gentiles among the Jews. Notice the Jews are not cut off entirely, a remnant is being saved. And that remnant is receiving the promises of Abraham. The Gentiles are grafted in among them. And notice the next clause. Now, I have some good friends who like to say, "Israel and the church are so distinct," now I believe they are distinct as you know, "But they are so distinct that Israel has different blessings, different promises, and a different destiny from the church." I ask you to look at this text in the light of it. "Were grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree." It is clear, from Paul's language that he conceives of the Gentiles as participating in Israel's blessings.

Now, in the Abrahamic covenant, in the Davidic covenant, in the new covenant, provision was made for this, Israel first, then the Gentiles. That's what's happened in this age. Israel in the day of Pentecost, now the Gentiles, that's the program. "Don't boast yourself against the branches. But if you boast, you don't bear the root, the root bears you." He's trying to make the Gentiles feel humbles, isn't he? Yes, "You will say then, the branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in." That's something like Luther said. He made some remarkably sad statements about the Jews in his day. He did not understand what is set forth here. He said some things about the Jews that he would love to take back now, but he's in heaven. [Laughter] "The branches were broken off that I

might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee." And we know that that is exactly what is going to happen, because in the future, God is going to deal with the nation Israel again. "Behold therefore," Paul says, "the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity;" that generation lost and lost forever. "But toward thee, Gentiles, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." You see, there is no safety in the promises of God other than through the perseverance of the saints.

Now, we read, "And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again." Furthermore, he is not only able, but it is to be expected, he says. "For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree." Incidentally, people say Paul didn't understand the way that grafting takes place, because it's only possible to graft a cultivated scion onto a wild stock, not wild scion onto a cultivated stock.

Well, Paul is talking about horticulture contrary to nature. He understands horticulture. But he wants to use another illustration. So he says, "For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?" So, if you can take unnatural branches, and contrary to nature, graft them into the good olive tree, Israel, then how much more is it to be expected that the natural branches will be grafted into their own olive tree. Listen, the blessings that we enjoy today are Israel's blessing, directed to them. As Paul said, concerning Jesus, "He came to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, and that they Gentiles might glorify God on account of mercy.

You know, we have our blessing, because this great God, overflowing in mercy, has not only determined to bless Abraham, Isaac, and the seed, but Gentiles. How thankful we ought to be that we were included. You know, it's very much like, many years ago I was just a little kid. The first football game, college football game I had ever attended. I was just about that high, and my father

said, "The University of Alabama is playing a postseason game against Center College." Now, you know how long ago that was. [Laughter] That was in the last millennium. [Laughter] It was a postseason game in Birmingham, and I was told at the first of the week that I was going, the first college game that I was to ever attend, and I was really keyed up. And my uncle, from Jasper Alabama, a lawyer who came, cruel man, came to our house, he was going to the game, and he said, "I understand that you thought that you were going to the game." I said, "What do you mean?" I guess I said; I was so nonplussed. He said, "Your ticket has been given to me, in case you didn't know that." Well, I was so crushed that I went into a blue funk. [Laughter] And I raced into the bedroom, believe it or not, I can still remember it, and I raced into the bedroom and got under the bed. [Laughter] And it was all that they could do to get me out. I was so crushed.

Well, now, look at it another way. Suppose a person comes home and there are a group of kids around that had never seen a big football game like a cowboy game. And father comes home and there are six kids there, and he says, "I've got five tickets to the game. Now I think in the light of the fact that I've got these five tickets to the game, that the five oldest ought to go first." And so the five oldest are given, and there is one little boy sitting over there and he's thinking, "Boy I wish I had one." Finally, the father comes down to number five and there is still one and he says, "Wait, I've got six. You can go too." And the joy of being included.

That's the way Gentiles ought to feel. God has included us. We partake of the root of the fatness of their, Israel's olive tree. And we ought to be so happy and so joyous over it that we go out, and Israel as they cease the blessing of God upon the children of God, Israel is provoked to jealousy. And by means of salvation to the Gentiles is brought back to the Father's house. And the damper on the Father's joy is removed when the elder son comes home. That's the way it's going to be in the future. We will look at that next week, the Lord willing. Sorry, I apologize for keeping you five minutes over time today.

[Prayer] Our heavenly Father, we are so grateful to Thee for the wonderful way in which Thou hast revealed the truth of God to us and enabled us to enter in and anticipate some of the great events of human history. We thank Thee. We are grateful. Deliver us from pride and arrogance. May, O God, our lives be such that Israel is provoked to jealousy, and they do come to believe in their Messiah and our Messiah. If there are some here who do not know him, O give them no rest until they, sensing their own need...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]