

# Abounding Grace Christian Church

## A Study through the Epistle to the Romans – Part 31

### I. Exposition of Chapter Eleven (Continued).

A. **Verse 13 – The Apostle to the Gentiles.** Paul recognized that God had called him primarily to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 26:17; Romans 1:5; 15:16; Galatians 1:16; 2:7-9; I Timothy 2:7; II Timothy 4:17).

1. The word “**apostle**” means; “**one who is sent forth to represent another.**” (See Part 1 of series).
2. “**...I magnify my ministry.**” – The word “**magnify**” means; “**to glorify**” or “**to honor.**” – Kenneth Wuest in quoting Marvin Vincent states; “**Paul glorifies his ministry in the sense that he honors it by the faithful discharge of its duties**”<sup>1</sup>

B. **Verse 14 – “If by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them.”** – It seems apparent here that Paul is looking at his ministry of reaching the Gentiles as a way of causing more Jews to come to faith by making them jealous. In other words, he didn’t see his ministry to the Gentiles as something contrary to where his heart was for the Jews but, on the contrary, he saw it as one of the tools God was using to win the Jews. Sometimes this may happen to us. We may be serving in a ministry that is not directly connected to where our heart or passion is, but it’s playing a part in it indirectly.

C. **Verse 15** – The words “**cast away**” here means; “**rejection**” or “**casting off**”. (This is a different Greek word than what is found in verses 1 and 2.) As we’ve seen, this is referring to a temporary setting aside of national Israel.

1. Picirilli states concerning this verse:

**“The ‘casting away’ is the same as the ‘fall’ in verse 12, and that looks back to the spiritual stupor of the majority of the Jews described in verses 7-9. The ‘reconciling of the world’ refers to the same thing as ‘the riches of the world’ in verse 12, and those riches were explained in verse 11: ‘salvation is come unto the Gentiles.’ The Jewish rejection had led, in God’s plan, to the open preaching of the gospel of reconciliation to the whole world.”**<sup>2</sup>

2. “**...what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?**” – The word “**acceptance**” means, “**receiving**” or “**taking to oneself**”. This seems to carry the same idea that we saw in **verse 12**. The Jews coming to their Messiah will bring even greater joy and blessings.

D. **Verses 16-24 – A Warning to Believing Gentiles, the Wild Olive Branches.**

1. **Verse 16 – “For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.”** Paul uses two illustrations (metaphors) here to show that he expects many Jews to come to Christ. (NOTE: The word “**holy**” here would mean “**consecration**” or “**set-apart**”.)

- a. The “**firstfruit**” and “**lump**” illustration goes back to **Numbers 15:19-21**. This is when the first portion of the new bread dough (after harvest) had to be given to the Lord for holy bread and was used by the priests. The dedication of the small portion served to consecrate the whole.
- b. In the same way, the “**root**” speaks of the consecration of the whole tree, including the “**branches**.”
- c. It seems that the “**firstfruit**” being referred to here would be Ancient Israel/The Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - cf. **Jeremiah 2:2-3**). The “**lump**” seems to be referring to Israel after that – Paul’s day up to today.
- d. In a similar way, the “**root**” seems to refer to the “**root**” of Israel, which I believe would be primarily Abraham and the Abrahamic Covenant. The “**branches**” are those who came after.
- e. What is Paul’s point? This seems to be his way of saying that God is NOT finished with natural Israel! **Kevin J. Conner states it the following way:**

- **The Root – Abraham.**
- **The Trunk – The United Nation of Israel.**
- **The Two Main Branches – The House of Israel and Judah.**
- **The Wild Branches – The Gentiles Grafted in.**<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 192–193.

<sup>2</sup>Robert E. Picirilli, *Romans*. (Nashville, TN: Randall House Publications, 1975),

<sup>3</sup>Kevin J. Conner, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Portland, OR: City Bible Publishing, 1999), 337.

2. **Verse 17 – The “broken off” branches would be speaking of those unbelieving Jews who are described previously as “stumbled” and “fallen” (slipped).** As mentioned, the Gentile believer is compared to a “wild olive tree” before coming to Christ and afterward have been “grafted” into the “tree” and have become a partaker of the “root” (the Abrahamic Covenant) and “...fatness of the olive tree.” The “fatness” is figurative of “blessing”.<sup>4</sup>
3. **Verse 18 – “[Do] not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.”** - Lest Gentiles think of themselves as superior to Jews, Paul also reminds them that the root supports the branches - not the other way around. The Abrahamic Covenant being the root is what has enabled us to be grafted in.
4. **Verses 19-20 – Paul makes it very clear that national Israel have been broken off “Because of unbelief”.** He warns the Gentile believer to “...not be haughty, but fear.”
5. **Verse 21 – “For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either.”** – Many believers may struggle with this statement but it is totally consistent with the rest of Scripture. **Verse 20** makes it clear that the Gentile has been grafted in because he stands “by faith.” It should be understood then that if after believing, we enter into unbelief we also will be “cut off”. (cf. **Hebrews 3:7-19**).
6. **Verse 22 – The goodness and severity of God.** The word “goodness” might be better translated as “kindness” and the word “severity” means; “sharpness” “to sever” and “cutting”. For the believer there is God’s kindness “if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.”
7. **Verses 23-24 – Israel can be grafted in again.**

**E. Verses 25-36 – A Future Spiritual Awakening for National Israel.**

1. **Verse 25** - Paul doesn’t want the believer to “...be ignorant of this mystery...” – The word “mystery” means; “something hidden or not fully manifest.”<sup>5</sup>
  - a. “...that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.” – The word “blindness” here is related to the word “blinded” in **verse 7** and means, “stupidity” and “callousness.” The phrase “in part” indicates that the blindness is not total and it’s not permanent
2. “...blindness...has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.” – I believe this means that there will be a time when all of the Gentiles who will be saved will be saved. The “fullness” means “completeness”. As to when this occurs, opinions differ depending on one’s end-times doctrine.
3. **Verse 26 – “And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written...”** – This doesn’t mean that every individual Jew is going to ultimately be saved. It simply means that all those of Israel who are going to be saved will be saved. (Compare “fullness of the Gentiles” – **verse 25** with “their (Israel’s) fullness” – **verse 12**).
4. **Verse 26 (cont.) – Quote from Isaiah 59:20 – Deliverance will come out of Zion. The Deliverer is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.**
5. **Verse 27 – Quote from Isaiah 27:9 – This is a prophetic word referring to the New Covenant. (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:1-8).**

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<sup>4</sup>Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, (AMG Publishers; Revised edition, 1993)

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.