

Jealous of Us?

Romans 11:11-16

September 19th, 2010



In the last lesson, I stated that Romans 11 is naturally divided in three sections. This lesson will cover the first half of the second section.

Scripture

"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. 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! Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches."

Have you ever noticed in our society that when we hear of a crash, we normally ask two questions: Was anyone hurt, and was the vehicle totaled? We always want to know the result of a crash. I remember my son's second truck; it was a black Ford Lightning, and he was so proud of it. On the streets of Benton one night, he wrecked his truck and called Dad first (as they always do). My first question was are you ok? He was ok. The second question was is the person with you ok? She was ok. My next question was did you total the truck? How quickly we can go from people to vehicles!

Israel's Rejection: Gentile's Acceptance

In this passage, Paul speaks of Israel's crash. In verse 11, Paul asked them if they stumbled in order that they might fall. The word, "*stumbled*", is not what we picture where someone trips, loses balance, and tries to keep from falling. Scholars say the word literally means 'to crash.' The Bible warned that God would send the Messiah, but the news of a crucified Messiah would be a stumbling stone, a rock of offense, to many people. Many Jewish people would run smack into Jesus as the Messiah, and they would reject Him for who He was. Paul is telling us the result of Israel's crash, or the rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. The thought is that if the Jews have rejected God and His Messiah, is it possible that He has rejected Israel?

The word, "*fall*", in this verse means 'to fall down without the possibility of getting back up.' Paul is asking if the Jews who were living at that time could be saved. Is it possible today for Israel to still be saved, or has God turned His back on the Jewish people forever? Because they have rejected Him, does salvation not exist for them anymore? To that question, Paul will say a big--absolutely not! Then he will teach a truth that to be totally honest with you just blows my mind. As a matter of fact, Paul will label this doctrine of how God has hardened Jews so that they will not accept Jesus as their Messiah a mystery. Why did God do that? Why has He rejected the

majority of His chosen people? Why is there only a remnant, a small minority that has been chosen by grace to be saved?

In the Bible, a mystery is a sacred truth that is not comprehensible by human reasoning, but only by the revelation of God. This means that we would have never done it this way. We would never have thought it up this way. The only way we can know it to be true is because God reveals it to us as truth. That truth is that God would harden His people, and verse 11 teaches that they fell, went astray, and trespassed so that salvation would come to the Gentiles.

- **To Make Israel Jealous**

Do you see this? God had ordained that by Israel's rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, we would be offered His grace as Gentiles. Because they are not in, you and I get in. Would you have ever dreamed the reason that Israel rejected the Messiah is so that Gentiles could be saved? You would have never thought of it, would you? You would have never believed that something good could come from the majority of a whole nation of people rejecting Jesus as the Messiah. Paul said that through their trespasses, salvation has come to the Gentiles; that is the purpose. But that isn't the ultimate purpose; verse 11 says, "*so as to make Israel jealous.*" That is the ultimate purpose. The purpose wasn't just for us, the Gentiles, to get in; it was so that ultimately that Jews would get in. More Jews will get in by God being patient with them and making them jealous! He will use you and I, Gentiles in the Church of God, to make them jealous...wow. Do you realize what an important part we play in the salvation of the nation of Israel?

Jesus talked about this. In Matthew chapter 8, Jesus met a centurion who had enough faith to tell Him that He didn't have to go to his house to heal his servant; He could just speak it and it would be so. Jesus said I haven't seen this kind of faith in all of Israel. He said that many will come from the east and the west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but the sons of the kingdom will be cast into outer darkness. Jesus knew that by

coming to the earth He would be rejected by those He came to save, the Jewish people. By their rejection of Him, literally, the door would be opened in the Gentile world to accept the salvation that God offers us in Christ.

Matthew 21:43 tells us the parable of the tenant who had been given a responsibility over a vineyard. Finally, it was taken away from him and given to someone else. God taught Israel that the kingdom would be taken from them and given to a people who would bear fruit. This is talking about the Church and the kingdom message being taken from the majority of Israel and given to a people who would literally broadcast it to the ends of the earth!

In the book of Acts, every time the Jews rejected the gospel, the people sharing it would turn to the Gentiles, and they would accept it. Paul knew he had been ordained to be an apostle to the Gentiles, yet in every town he visited, he went where the Jews were because he had a love for the Jewish people. He believed with all of his heart that even though the vast majority of those would not accept the Messiah, there was a remnant that had been chosen by grace, and when they heard the message of the gospel, they would believe it. Even further than that, Paul believed that God had a purpose in bringing Gentiles to salvation, which was to bring more Jews to salvation by making them jealous. That is why Paul said, "*I magnify my ministry...*" He is saying I put everything I've got in it; I put it under a microscope; I make it large so that I might persuade some of my fellow Jews and save some of them! He wasn't being pessimistic, he was being optimistic. He knew that even though he had been called to be a messenger to the Gentiles, God still loved ethnic Israel and had a plan for them to be saved, and that plan involves us.

The more I read this passage earlier this week, I had a feeling and I started to get down because I've suddenly realized that I don't have any Jewish neighbors. For the first time in my life, I have realized that it would probably be better for some if I lived somewhere other than where I live.

We have no Jewish people in my neighborhood. The reason most of the Jews live in large, urban, centers is because they believe they are the people of God and have been called to be a light to the Gentiles. They believe they have been called to influence the world, therefore, they make it their business to be in places of influence. Here is someone like me just wanting to live out where no one is around me! I began to realize that God has a plan for my salvation, but it wasn't for my salvation, it was for His chosen people. And yet, there is no one who is Jewish around me for God to influence. So I will trust that God will use me as a part of the Church to influence the nation of Israel. Even though they will never know me personally like they knew Paul, they will know me as part of the body of Christ. We must desire for God's ultimate purpose in our life to accomplish not our salvation, or that of our family, but the salvation of ethnic Israel, the physical descendants of Abraham. Don't ever believe that God has rejected Israel and that Jews cannot be saved today; they can be saved! But, they will be saved by God using us to make them jealous.

I don't say this boastfully, but I have never been in a relationship with someone where I got rejected and had to make someone else jealous. Therefore, I don't have clue about how to make someone jealous, other than from observing friends who had that problem. The love of their life rejected them and they decided to make them jealous to try to get them back, so they did all kinds of things to make them jealous. Let me just say right up front, be careful if you lose the love of your life and you try to make them jealous; it doesn't always work. Sometimes you can do it in the wrong way and they will turn you off forever. As a lover, God knows how to make the one He loves jealous. There is a way, a right way, to make in the person who has left you come to full understanding of what they left and what someone else now has. That is what this is dealing with.

Now, let's think about this; if I were going to make someone jealous, I think I would first have to do something to catch the attention of the person I am trying to make jealous. But to catch their attention, I would probably have to put my affection, for a short period of time, on someone

else. If I was going to try to make my wife jealous, I would choose someone she knew to do it. I would have to choose someone that was close to her, but not too close; close enough for her to be around from time to time. When I went somewhere with this person, it would have to look natural for us to just happen to be in the same place my wife is at. But knowing my wife, I would have to get her attention and I would choose someone who she would think (not who I would think) was a little prettier than her, or had just a little more of everything than she had in order to make her jealous. To make her realize how wonderful I was, she would have to think, *wow, I can't believe he got her!* So when she saw me with her, she would think, *wow, he could get her and I had him!* The moment she saw me with her, she would run back to me because she would see what an awesome person I am; that is how I would do it!

At first, I was blown away that God chose me to woo back His people! Then I looked at myself and wondered if I was better than a Jew, and then I realized that isn't what God did. A Jewish person would never believe there was a Gentile on the face of the earth who is better than him. God knew this, and I don't want to offend you, but the truth is that when God decided to woo Israel back to himself, He chose the Gentile part of the Church because the Jew would look at us and think *God wanted them? You have got to be kidding!* Israel was blown away that God in Heaven would love a Gentile. We Gentiles are self-centered; it's all about us. We were enslaved to sin and created our own personal idols. Isn't God genius? You wonder if we are that kind of people, how could God ever make Israel jealous?

Israel Witnesses a Changed Life

See, the word, "*jealous*", means to create a feeling of resentment because someone else has what you think only you deserve. Some translations translate this word 'envy.' That means 'to desire to possess what another has.' How can God saving the Gentiles create a desire in Israel to want what they have? How can it create resentment so that a Jew would feel

like they are the only ones that deserve what the Gentiles have? God took the Gentile, from the other side of the track, put them in His Son Jesus Christ, placed His Holy Spirit within them, and started working on them from the inside out. As they lived their lives in the midst of these Jewish people, they started seeing a transformation in them from paganism and sinfulness to a life of grace, and charm, and beauty. When the Jew came and asked what was going on, the Gentile could say we know Jehovah. When the Jewish person sees the change in the life of the Gentile, it creates in them the knowledge that our God is their God.

But the Jews turned their back on Him. But we have a message; He hasn't abandoned them. He wants them, but they won't talk or listen to Him. They have their mind so stuck on the Law of Moses that they cannot see the Spirit of God speaking to them in the person of Jesus Christ and the pages of the New Testament today. They can't see how Jesus fulfilled everything that the Old Testament said.

God knew that Israel wasn't talking or listening to Him, so He got the people around them talking about Him. Think about this; if I was trying to make my wife jealous and she isn't speaking to me, she isn't going to hear how wonderful I am. She won't let me tell her what an awesome guy I am and what a fool she is for abandoning me and that she needs to come back. She won't listen to me remind her of all the wonderful things that I've done for her and the plans I have for her. Since I can't tell her, I would have to have that person I chose to make her jealous with tell her! I hope that would cause her to want to come back to me. I have to be truthful with you; I know my wife and to really get the job done, I would plan that first date with the other woman really well. I would make sure that when my wife sees her that her hair is fixed to the max. I would get her that good makeup and make sure that her face features everything just right. I might even buy her a new dress, shoes, and a matching purse. When my wife sees me with her, I want her to say, "Wow!"

A Blessing to the Gentiles

Do you understand why God is doing what He is in your life? Why do you think God clothed you in the righteousness of His Son Jesus Christ? Why do you think He is working on your temper? Why do you think He is working on your attitude? Why do you think He is trying to humble you? It's because the way you looked when you got saved, you wouldn't draw anyone to Jesus Christ! But when the world sees you living a life with God and what He has done for you, when someone asks you what's happened, you get to talk about God, not a pastor, or teacher, or your church. You talk about God and what He has done for you! When the nation of Israel, or Jewish neighbor, or Jewish business person looks at the grace, beauty, humbleness, and holiness of a church, it will cause them to run to Jesus Christ. Paul's thought is (here is where eschatology comes in) that if the Gentile has benefited so much by the Jew rejecting Jesus, then one day Israel will be saved, and when they are, it will be like life from the dead. When that happens, it will blow your mind how great the Gentiles will be blessed.

God's plan to save His people is you and me. How dare you do what you are doing, thinking it's all about you. It isn't about you; it isn't about a one of us as a Gentile. The ultimate purpose of our life is to allow God to use us as a Church to bring others to the knowledge of His Son Jesus Christ.

Just who have you made jealous lately? Who have you so lived a life of grace, charm, and beauty before that their eyes have been opened to the truth of who God is; and not just how much God loves you, but how much He loves them? You don't think you are important or it matters how you live, but it does. Paul had this thought that if the 'dough' or the 'root' (talking about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) is holy and has been set apart to God, then the lump or the branches are set apart too. Don't ever think God will not save people who are physically descended from Abraham. He will, and He desires to. One day, because of the Church being used by God to create jealousy, the nation of Israel will have the blinders taken off their

eyes and their hearts will be softened. By large numbers, they will come into the Church the same way we did, which is by faith in Jesus Christ. When they do, there will be a great blessing to the Lord. That blessing will probably be the institution of the eternal kingdom of God where we will reign with Him forever, and ever.