



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Romans 11

"The Future of Ethnic Israel, part II"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Now let's turn to Romans chapter 11 as we continue our study in Romans 11 and "The Future of Ethnic Israel." Last week we read the first ten verses of Romans chapter 11 and since the verses are not very lengthy and since I'm not going to cover a lengthy space tonight, I want you to listen as I read again these verses beginning with the first verse of Romans 11. Now I'm reading from the New International Version,

"I ask then," Paul says, "Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah—how he appealed to God against Israel: 'Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me'? And what was God's answer to him? 'I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.'" So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace. What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened, as it is written: 'God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day.' And David says: 'May their

table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution to them. May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever."

You can see from these verses near the end verses 7 through 10 that the apostle did believe in the doctrine of divine retribution. Now he learned that, of course, from the Lord Jesus where it is so plainly taught especially in the parables that he gave concerning the nation Israel in Matthew chapter 13. Now we continue in verse 11,

"Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring! I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?"

Now it is my opinion that 16th verse is a transitional verse and really is better taken with the verses that follow. So consequently, I'm going to stop the reading there and disagree with the paragraphing of the translators of this version just a little bit at that point. You remember, of course, when you study the Bible that the paragraphs are done by editors. That is, the translators themselves are responsible for the punctuation and for the paragraphing. Things like that. So interpreters of the Bible should remember that and not be slavishly subject to the interpretation of the editors. Editors are just human beings just as you and I are. They look just like we look and often times they make more mistakes than we do. So we should remember it is simply a man who has punctuated the text of the New Testament, arranged it into paragraphs, and therefore, that is not an infallible thing.

May the Lord bless this reading of his word and let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Our heavenly Father, we thank Thee for the hope that we have in the world of which we are a part with so many things that would cause us naturally to lose hope. We thank Thee for the great solid certainties of the word of God through the teaching of the apostles that we know and believe and which comfort us and console us and strengthens us in our day. We ask Thy blessing upon the whole church of Christ wherever the word of God is preached today not only here, but wherever Christ is lifted up and his saving sacrifice proclaimed. Bless those who minister and those who hear the word. Build up the church of Jesus Christ and increase the number of those who belong through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And Lord, we ask Thy blessing upon the sick, particularly, minister to them. Some are truly suffering, we ask that Thou will give them encouragement and physical help and spiritual uplift and consolation. We know that ultimately all of us face the deepest experience of life, death, unless our Lord comes. We pray, Lord, for those who are suffering at the present time. Commit them to Thee and those who minister to them, their family, and their friends. And Father, we pray for those who minister the word in the Chapel. We ask Thy blessing upon the meeting this evening and upon the ministries of the Chapel. May they be fruitful. We commit our day to Thee, our President, and all who are associated with him in government. Give them wisdom and guidance we pray.

Now, Lord, as we sing, as we hear the word of God minister to us the things that are important, the great spiritual truths of the word of God. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Now we're turning to our second in the series that is on Romans 11 and "The Future of Ethnic Israel." Last week I tried to make this plain that the apostle in Romans 9, 10, and 11 makes three points. First of all, in the first part of this section beginning with chapter 9, the apostle points out that Israel's failure as seen in their

absence from the church of God in large part is traceable to spiritual pride and self-sufficiency. That is the point primarily of chapters 9 and 10. You see, he has in Romans 1 through 8 given us a picture of the plan of salvation. He has spoken about all aspects of it; the doctrines of condemnation, justification, sanctification, glorification. But an Israelite looking at the plan of salvation as the apostle understood it would have immediately noticed that when he finishes with that great final section of Romans chapter 8 and the great doxology there that Israel is missing from the number of the people about whom he is speaking. So they would naturally have the question, what about Israel? Is it not true that the Old Testament is a book that has to do primarily with Israel's salvation? But as you have presented matters, Paul, Israel is practically missing from the company of the redeemed. What has happened to Israel? And so the apostle writes 9, 10, and 11 in order to answer that question and answer it in some detail.

So first, he says Israel's problem is traceable to spiritual pride and self-sufficiency. You know, pride is something that we hardly ever recognize. It's something we rarely recognize even as a sin. In fact, politicians can speak about being proud and humble at the same time and we don't think anything about it. There's a very well known politician who announced for presidency today, and he started out by saying that he was proud to be able to do this and humble at the same time. Now that's something that is very difficult to do, and only a politician could probably do that. But spiritual pride is something that we fail to realize is just as much a sin as some of the more heinous kinds of sins. We may say concerning a certain person that he is a proud man and we rarely think anything about it. If we were to say about another person, well he's a thief, we'd say what? What did you say? But actually the Apostle Paul puts these sins together. To be proud is like being a thief and a murderer, a fornicator. So Israel's failure is a very serious failure. Her failure is pride and self-sufficiency.

Now when the apostle comes to the 11th chapter near the end of his discourse on the relationship of Israel to the plan of God, he points out that Israel's failure first of all is

not total. We should not think because we do not see a great deal of Israel in the company of the elect in the present age that God has cast away his people. He begins the 11th chapter by saying, "I say then: God has not cast away his people, has he?" So Israel's failure he goes on to say is not total. It is true, she has failed. It is true that she is not a dominant force in the company of the elect at the present time, but nevertheless, God has not cast them off. He has not put them away. Her failure is not total. In fact, he states it positively in verse 5. For there he says after giving some argumentation, "So then, even in the present season there has come to be a remnant according to the election of grace." So in the company of the believing elect at the present time there is a remnant of Israelites.

Now that means for us today that there is a remnant of Israelites in the church of Jesus Christ. Now we know that is true, because there are converted Jewish Christians in the body of Christ. We named some of them last time. Many, many others are part of that body. So the apostle says Israel's failure is traceable to spiritual pride and self-sufficiency. It is, however, not a total failure. There is a remnant at the present time.

Well, beginning with verse 11 through verse 32 the apostle will point out that Israel's failure is not final. That is, there is coming a day when all Israel shall be saved. So his major points then that he makes are these: Israel has failed because of spiritual pride, her failure is not total, and her failure is not final.

Now, of course, that last point is the point that we want to try to reason through and about in the remainder of our studies. In verses 11 through 24 before he comes to the passage in verse 25 and following where he especially speaks about Israel's salvation, we have something like a little interlude devoted to the question of the purpose of Israel's rejection. For someone might say after having been told that God has not cast away Israel that her rejection or failure is not total, why is the situation as it is? And so here the apostle will devote himself to the question of the purpose of Israel's rejection. He will point out that it has a very distinct purpose in the plan of God, and in the midst of it since

he is going to speak about Gentiles being received by God, he will warn Gentiles that they better look out because the salvation they possess is a salvation that is really a salvation of the Jews.

Now that is very important. Incidentally, that's important for you who are sitting in this auditorium to remember. You have a salvation that is of the Jews, and you have, as Paul puts it later, have been grafted into the olive tree and possess the Messianic blessings as an unnatural branch. That's what you are, an unnatural branch grafted into the olive tree. But the tree is their tree not the Gentile's tree, and that is important to remember.

Now I think it's also important for us at this time that we bear in mind the debate over the ethnic future of Israel. We want to in our discussion of biblical doctrine; we want to speak broadly enough so we encompass viewpoints that exist within the whole of the body of Christ. We don't want to be so limiting that we speak only about the things that we agree about. We want to be broad enough to address ourselves to questions that are discussed in the whole of the body of Christ. It is very bad for a group of Christians to be prudential in their knowledge of Holy Scripture, and that's why it is important for us to be acquainted with what others who don't attend Believers Chapel, don't have the same kind of theology that we have, both on the liberal and conservative sides say about the teaching of Romans chapter 11 and the question of the ethnic future of Israel. And having in mind these different views I think we enable us to examine the claims for these views in the light of the text that is before us. Generally speaking, amillennialists that is those who do not believe there is going to be an earthly kingdom in the future in which the promises made to Abraham will be fulfilled on the earth. Generally speaking, amillennialists oppose the doctrine of an ethnic future for Israel. Now I've said generally speaking because it is not true of all amillennialists. In fact, I think in recent years more of them have been seeing an ethnic future in Israel than older amillennial interpreters did.

Premillennialists that is those who believe the Lord Jesus is going to come and establish a kingdom that will exist over the earth, premillennialists are almost universally affirmers of the ethnic future of Israel. I do not know of any premillennialist who does not affirm an ethnic future for Israel in some way or another.

Now it will be better I think for us to be specific in the things that we say, because as I said amillennialists differ in their views among themselves just as premillennialists do among themselves. So I'm going to take a somewhat random sampling of some well known interpreters and present their views and then I want you to hold these in your mind as we read and study through the remainder of Romans chapter 11. And I think it will be good to begin with John Calvin.

Now I don't know whether it can truly be said he was an amillennialist. He certainly was not a premillennialist, because here and there throughout his work constantly opposes the doctrine of the ecclesiast or the premillennarians. He did not believe there would be an earthly kingdom for a thousand years in which our Lord Jesus would rule and reign upon the earth in the specific fulfillment of the promises made to Israel in the Old Testament. Nevertheless, Calvin did affirm that there was to be a restoration of the Jews. He looked at this particular verse right here, verse 11 of chapter 11. "I say then: They have not stumbled so they should fall, have they? God forbid! But by their trespass, salvation has come to the Gentiles to provoke them to jealousy." On that particular verse he spoke about a restoration of the Jews.

Now he did, however, when he came to verse 25 and 26 and the reference specifically in verse 26, "to all Israel," he did affirm that the term "all Israel" was a term that was inclusive of both Jews and Gentiles. In other words, he read verse 26 as, "And so all the elect whether Jews or Gentiles shall be saved, as it stands written."

Now he did go on to say, also, that while it is true that the term "all Israel" is not only used of Israel, ethnic Israel, national Israel, but also includes Gentiles, he did say that the Jews were God's first born family and therefore, "they shall obtain," these are his

words, "they shall obtain first place in that salvation." So in that sense, John Calvin did affirm a restoration for the nation Israel, not a kingdom on the earth, but a restoration in the sense that there would be a large salvation of Jewish people at the end of time.

One of the outstanding theologians and I think really one of the outstanding interpreters of the Bible was John Murray who was Professor of Systematic Theology at Westminster Seminary. He was a premier Calvinist exegetical theologian. In fact, may well have been that of the last several decades of our Christian history. He affirmed, "Hence, nothing less than a restoration of Israel as a people to faith, privilege, and blessing can satisfy the terms of this passage." These were his comments on verse 12 of Romans chapter 11. "Since the stumbling was theirs in this context," Mr. Murray points out, "so is the fullness that is referred to here. So if we say that Israel stumbles and then we say that Israel has a fullness, then surely the fullness is of the same people who have stumbled." He pointed to the context of the term Israel in both the immediate context and then in the context of the Book of Romans and he wrote, "There is the sustained contrast between Israel and the Gentiles as has been demonstrated in the exposition proceeding. Whatever denotation could be given to Israel in the proceeding verse? It is of ethnic Israel Paul is speaking and Israel could not possibly include Gentiles. In that event the proceeding verse would be reduced to absurdity and since verse 26 is parallel or correlative statement the denotation of Israel must be the same as in verse 25."

Now what Mr. Murray is saying is that if you'll look at verse 25, you cannot read verse 25 as being of one thing and then verse 26 give the term Israel another connotation. Listen,

"For I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of this mystery, lest you be wise in yourselves. For hardness in part has come to be to the Jews and the Gentiles" (that's assuming it's of both) "the Jews and the Gentiles until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all the Jews and Gentiles shall be saved, as it stands written."

It wouldn't make any sense. So consequently, Mr. Murray's arguing that if the proceeding text which refers to the hardness in part that has happened to Israel is of national Israel as most take it, then in the next verse where we say "all Israel shall be saved," it must be national Israel that is to be saved. You cannot say it is the Jews in verse 25 and then say it is the Jews and Gentiles or the church in verse 26.

A third interpreter that we ought to be acquainted with that has a rather unique view is G. C. Berkouwer. Professor Berkouwer is still living. He is a Dutch theologian. He was Professor of Dogmatics at the Free University of Amsterdam, which was founded as a Christian university in the country of Holland in the city of Amsterdam. In the eyes of some, he is the leading reformed theologian in the middle quarters of the 20th Century. He together with William Hendrickson, who follows Professor Berkouwer, has taught that the term "all Israel" refers not to a future restoration of ethnic Israel, but to the total number of elect Jews throughout the present age. So what Professor Berkouwer says that this chapter is teaching is not that there will be a future turning of the nation Israel to the Lord. They at the present time being in the darkness of unbelief and rejection, but the reference "all Israel shall be saved" is a reference to the fact that there is a trickle of Jewish people, a remnant, being saved down through the years and at the conclusion of this age all Israel will be saved in the sense that as a remnant down through the age the final last one of the Jews who belonged to the remnant even at the end shall be saved. In other words, there is no great final end gathering of Jewish people in a vast number of them, but "all Israel" refers simply to the few Jews saved down through the centuries.

Now we're going to deal with that, not particularly tonight, but later on in a little more detail. But I'm going to try to answer that theory which has become very popular among a number of amillennialists. So he says that the term "all Israel" refers not to a future restoration of ethnic Israel, but to the total number of elect Jews throughout the whole of the present age, and so "all Israel shall be saved" means simply all the Jews who

have been elected, small number though they are, are in the present age since the time of Christ, they all shall be saved. Now that doesn't communicate too much to us, of course, because if they're elect, of course, they will be, but anyway, there is no vast future then for ethnic Israel.

Well, let's turn to the text now and spend a few moments of verses 11 and 12 tonight, and then next week the Lord willing we want to deal with the remainder of the section to verse 24 and talk about that unusual little parable or illustration of the olive tree. But tonight we turn to verse 11 and I read again, "I say then: they have not stumbled that they should fall, have they? God forbid!" Now Paul has in the preceding verses shown that Israel's rejection is not complete. It's only partial. There's a remnant. He will now show it is not final. It's only temporary.

Now notice that he begins verse 11, if you happen to have the Greek text before you and a number of you in Believers Chapel do, you will notice that in verse 11 he begins with the same expression that he used in verse 1. In verse 1, he said, "I say then." And then in verse 11, he again says, "I say then." Now in the New International Version, it renders it in verse 1, "I ask then," and in verse 11, "Again, I ask." It is not quite as clear in that version that the apostle is using the identical expression that he has used just above. It's clear that this is the division between the preceding section and the following section. "I say then." Well, now he's looked at the remnant above. He's explained that God has not cast away his people. There is a remnant who has believed. So you cannot say he has cast away Israel. Strictly speaking, God never cast away Israel in the sense that he gave them no opportunity. As a matter of fact, the Christian church was entirely Jewish in the beginning, was it not? On the day of Pentecost, it was a Jewish church. And in the early days, it was a Jewish church. It was only later that the gospel went to the Gentiles. God did not cast away his people. His people departed from him, but the elect of his people were brought to the knowledge of the Lord.

Well, now as I said he has looked at the majority who have stumbled just above. He's modified the question of verse 1. Now he is really going to ask it. Let me go back. I made a mistake then. I said he looked at the majority above. That's not true. He looked at the minority of the elect above, the remnant. Now he will look at the majority who have stumbled. He has modified the question of verse 1. Now he will answer it. God has not cast away his people, has he? It will help us to understand this section of Romans if we remember it has to do with national purposes not individual purposes primarily. And I want you to notice this; will you look at verse 11? Paul says, "I say then, they have not stumbled that they might fall, have they? God forbid! But by their trespass salvation is come," notice the plural, "to the Gentiles in order to provoke them to jealousy." Look at verse 12. "Now if the trespass of them be the riches of the word and the diminution decreasing of them be the riches of the," again plural, "Gentiles, how much more their fullness?" Then look at verse 13. "Now I speak to you Gentiles, as long therefore, as I am an apostle of Gentiles." See plural over and over. He's talking about Gentiles as over against Israel. So it will help us to remember, it will help us to understand this if we remember that the apostle is talking about national purposes not individual purposes primarily. And it will help us if we remember that God dealt with the human race through Israel before Christ.

Now let's turn back to John chapter 4 and verse 22. You'll remember this passage. It has to do with our Lord's interview with the woman of Samaria, and there is a rather interesting statement made in the 22nd verse. Now remember this took place before the time of the cross. The Lord Jesus says, "You worship what you do not know; we worship," this is John 4:22, "we worship what we know, for salvation is of the Jews." Salvation is of the Jews. The source of the salvation has come from the Jews. There are people who I think fail to understand the Bible because they fail to understand the relationship of that particularly truth to the biblical revelations. The worship of the Old

Testament was a worship that came through Judaism. If a man was going to enter into relationship with the Lord, he would become a Jewish man.

Now let me give you some illustrations from the Old Testament. Turn with me to the Book of Ruth. The Book of Ruth. Joshua, Judges, Ruth. Now you know, I think, the general outlines of the story of Ruth. I want you to notice one verse simply. I'm going to begin reading at verse 11.

"But Naomi said, 'Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons— would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord's hand has gone out against me!' At this they wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye, but Ruth clung to her. 'Look,' said Naomi, 'your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her.' But Ruth replied, 'Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.'"

Did you notice the order? It's not your God will be my God and your people will be my people, but in the words that she utters she expresses the fact that it is through Israel that salvation comes. It is expressed in the fact that she says, "Your people will be my people and your God, my God." It is through becoming identified with Israel that she came into contact with the true God, the Lord Jehovah.

Now this is not the only illustration of this. Will you turn over to 2 Kings chapter 5? This is the story of Naaman. 2 Kings chapter 5. In the midst of the account of Naaman's cleansing there's some very interesting things said. There's a rather remarkable

thing that happens. You'll remember that when Naaman first was told about the fact that he might get cleansing from the leprosy that he had, he was not too excited about it, but he finally out of desperation decided that he would go. He came and we read in verse 8 of 2 Kings 5,

"When Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message: 'Why have you torn your robes? Have the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel.' So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, 'Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed.'"

Now you must remember the Jordan is a dirty little stream, and so Naaman went away angry. And he said, "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy." He thought he would do something dramatic which would be fitting of a cleansing. And then he refers to the rivers of his own land. He says, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So he turned and went off in a rage." No. Our rivers are just as good as your rivers. But it was not to be because it was only through the Jordan River that he would receive his cleansing.

"Naaman's servants went to him and said, 'My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed!' So he went down and dipped himself,"

You know he humbled himself. He didn't say I am proud to enter this river and I humble myself in doing it. But it was necessary for him to humble himself and so he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times as the man of God had told him and his flesh was restored and he became clean like that of a young boy.

"Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, 'Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. Please now accept a gift from your servant.'"

Now in verse 16,

"The prophet answered, 'As surely as the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing.' And even though Naaman urged him, he refused. 'If you will not,' said Naaman, 'please let me, your servant, be given as much earth as a pair of mules can carry, for your servant will never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the Lord.'"

So he was going to take back a little part of Israel so that as he worshipped he would in effect be worshipping through the God of Israel. So he'd just take back some of Israel there and the Lord found it very good, very good. He recognized the same thing that the woman who had contact with the Lord Jesus that "salvation is of the Jews."

Now it is important to remember that if we are to understand what the Bible is all about. Now the paragraph that we're looking at here is in the form of a question and an answer in verse 11, and then an admonition. By the way, Romans chapters 9, 10, and 11 are not easy chapters. You know you will find this about interpreters of the Epistle to the Romans; they tend to skip Romans 9 through 11. Even Charles Haddon Spurgeon had practically nothing on Romans 9, 10, and 11, particularly on 11. Now Mr. Spurgeon once

or twice makes comments that he does believe that there is a future for the nation Israel, but he doesn't say much about it. He was not very much of a student of prophecy, and he use to make fun of people who were great students of prophecy. He made fun particularly of some of the so called Plymouth Brethren, who made a great deal over biblical prophecy. And he use to say of them, "Why stand ye men of Plymouth looking up into heaven?" He made fun of them because they were always talking about the second coming, but Mr. Spurgeon had never much studied the prophetic word. He spent all of his time studying soteriological types of truths and practical types of truths that had to do with the Christian life. The result was when he came to expound these chapters his mouth suddenly went silent.

Alexander McLaren was one of the great Bible expositors. In fact, I love to read Mr. McLaren's things. Mr. McLaren has a number of studies to the Epistle to the Romans. You can go and get his exposition of Holy Scripture; you will find that he has eleven messages on Romans chapter 8. He has twelve messages on Romans chapter 12, and he has none on Romans 9, 10, and 11.

Some years ago my wife went out to Sulfur Springs, Texas, which is just a little spot out in the east of Texas. I'm saying that because there are some people in this audience from Sulfur Springs, so I'm just kidding. Don't get mad at it. It's a nice little town out in east Texas, and my wife went out there a number of years ago and she taught a Bible class. There were a lot of women in the area who got interested in biblical things through Mary. She is an excellent teacher of the word of God. Well, there was such of a kind of revival in that little town that the women and then their husbands began to go to the preachers and ask them to preach on the Bible, and the Baptist preacher, he thought he was a biblical preacher and so he finally was prevailed upon to give a series of messages on Romans.

So he started out and he was going through Romans, but when he got through the 8th chapter and came to the 9th, he appeared in church on Sunday morning when he was

suppose to teach the 9th chapter and announced that the series on Romans was ending at that time that he had to admit, he said that I don't really know anything about Romans 9, 10, and 11. So he didn't say anything more about Romans. I admit that it is difficult, and I admit too, I am proud and humble to admit [Laughter] that I do not know everything about Romans 9, 10, and 11. Please do not understand me to be saying that I understand everything about these chapters. I do not. I can only say I've studied them a long time, and I should know a great deal more than I do. But I admit that they are difficult, but I admit also, that it is possible for us to understand in the important things if we will spend time at it.

Now let me see, my watch says I have about a minute or so. I want to say just a word about the opening statement of verse 11 because it's really important for us to get this. I'll repeat it again next week as we continue our study. "I say then, they have not stumbled that they should fall, have they?" Now there are two ways to take this. We could say that Paul is saying that this fall is an utter, irrevocably fall, and he is saying, "I say then, they have not stumbled that they should utterly and irrevocably fall, have they?" Now then, the answer to that will be, "No! They have not stumbled that they should irrevocably fall," because, of course, he goes on to say, "All Israel should be saved."

Unfortunately, however, in the 22nd verse he does say that Israel fell. He says, "Behold the goodness and severity of God upon the ones that have fallen." Severity, so we cannot say they have not fallen, but the question, I think, then is better put if we take another interpretation. Paul is reflecting on the more ultimate and the more gracious design of God in the stumbling and fall of the mass of Israel. What he is saying is, "I say then, they have not stumbled that they might irrevocably fall and that be the end of it and the end of their falling." No, no, he said, "God forbid! But by their fall or trespass salvation is come to the Gentiles to provoke them, the Jews, Israel to jealousy." In other words, what he is saying is that this view would lay great stress upon the last part and he is saying they have stumbled that they should fall but it is not that they should fall and

that be the end of it, but rather that they should fall and salvation should come to the Gentiles, and the salvation that the Gentiles possess should be the means of provoking Israel to jealousy so that they will return to the Lord. You know what that means? Well, that means one of the great purposes we have as believing Gentiles is to be the means for the provocation of the nation of Israel to jealousy.

Now if there is anything that the Christian church has failed in, it is in just that point. Israel in looking at the church down through the centuries has had precious few opportunities to say I'm really jealous of what they've got, because what we have is not shewn with the power that it should have. Well, I must stop. The time is up. Let's close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these great words that the apostle has written. Enable us to understand it, Lord, and enable us to find our place in the plan of God so that Thy name may be honored and glorified through us. For Jesus' sake. Amen.