

The Purpose of God

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[0:00] We're into the tree which is wild by nature and we're grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree.

! How much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion.

That blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written, the Deliverer will come out of Zion and he will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

For this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins. Concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But concerning the election, they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy.

[1:17] For God has committed them all to disobedience, that he might have mercy on all. Oh, the depth of the riches. Now, I'm not going to go on from there, because then we get into this great doxology.

Now, this is a tremendous passage, isn't it? It's a long one, and you might be wondering, well, how in the world is he going to get through all of that here tonight? And I'm frank to confess to you that this is not an easy passage to preach, not because the truth is obscure.

It's very clear. In fact, it is just repeated over and over again in different ways. The difficulty is in trying to put it in a sermon form. And so basically what I'm going to do tonight is just take it verse by verse and just work our way through it very quickly, not dwell on any one verse for a long, long time, or we would be here a long, long time, but to kind of move through it pretty quickly.

But we need to review just a little bit, because it's been a couple of weeks. We skipped a week last Sunday, last Sunday night. And so since tonight is a continuation really of what was started two Sundays ago, let's do a little bit of review.

You might have noticed that verse 11 begins with a question. And the question there is very similar to the question Paul asked at the beginning of the chapter, there in verse 1 of chapter 11.

[2:49] And again, as I said a couple of weeks ago, we could phrase the question this way. Is God through with Israel?

That's how we could put it. That's basically what he's asking. Is God through with Israel? Boy, that S just really kind of... Well, anyway. Now, certainly the question here in verse 11 is worded differently, and yet the point is pretty much the same.

Paul asks, Have they stumbled? And that is simply a word that means to err, to sin, to make a mistake.

He says, Have they sinned or erred, stumbled, to this extent, that they should fall?

And that's more than just simply tripping and falling over, though the word is used in that sense, certainly, and it does mean that. But in this sense, *pipto* is the Greek word, and it means to fall to one's utter ruin, to be absolutely destroyed.

[4:01] Destruction. And so have they sinned to this extent, that they are utterly ruined? That's the question. If you have an NIV, I would quote the NIV, because I think it's a pretty good translation.

And the NIV, in its usual interpretive fashion, and that's one thing I have against the NIV sometimes, they interpret more than they just simply translate the Scripture.

But in this case, they got it right, and this is how they put it. Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? That's good. That's what he means.

Well, we might put it this way. They fail to rise no more, or to never rise again. And that's the question. And really, yes, they have failed.

All right, there's no question about the stumbling part. That's very clear. They have failed. They have rejected the Messiah. They failed. And we know all about that, don't we?

[5:07] And as a matter of fact, on that score, they continue to fail in that, in that they have rejected the one true Messiah, the one that came, you know, and they rejected Him.

And so they have failed. That's not debatable. They have fallen, yes, in this sense, because God has set them aside. All right, so there's no debate about the stumbling part.

That's not really the point of the question. The question is, have they failed utterly? And to that, the answer is no. Their failure is not final.

Their falling is not permanent. It's not a permanent condition. And that's the point of the question.

Or, again, is God through with Israel?

And Paul's answer is no. No, He's not. He's not at all. Certainly not, He says. God is not through with Israel. Israel's failure is not permanent, no matter how unbelieving they have become.

[6:11] And they really are unbelieving, aren't they? We think of Israel today, and we can't imagine them ever coming to Christ. And yet, one day they will. But the point here is, have they fallen beyond repair?

And they have not. And really, again, Paul is repeatedly arguing this point. All throughout these three chapters, they go together. Nine, ten, and eleven. He just over and over is going back to that same argument.

That's how he began his whole argument, way back there in chapter nine. And so he just keeps on with it, you know, about Israel, about their falling, and that failing, and that failing is not absolute.

And why is he so adamant about it? Because there's a lot at stake, remember. You might remember way back when we were looking at chapter nine. In case you don't remember that, look at verse six of chapter nine, where Paul said, but it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. That's chapter nine, verse six. That's how Paul began this kind of series of arguments concerning Israel, and their unbelief, and their rejection of Christ, and what has happened as a result.

[7:38] He started that argument way back there in chapter nine, verse six, with this statement, but it is not as though the word of God has taken no effect or fallen to the ground. And by the way, the phrase, has taken no effect, that's how it's translated in the New King James, that's one word in the Greek language.

And guess what? It's the same word we have in chapter 11 and verse 11. Exactly the same word, a little different form, because it's in a different tense and form and so forth.

The same word, a ptoe. And it means to fall, utterly fall, to fall to the ground, to have no effect.

And so here in chapter nine, verse six, he's using the word in reference to God's word.

And here in chapter 11 and verse 11, he's using the same word in regard to Israel. And so they're attached together. And so what is the idea? If Israel has utterly fallen, then God's word has utterly fallen.

And so that's why Paul is so adamant about this. Because if God's word has utterly failed and fallen, then the ramifications of that are unthinkable.

[8:48] Right? Unthinkable. All right, so then in chapter 11, we're in the middle of one of these arguments. In the middle of it, because we started it a couple of weeks ago.

And last time, we saw in verses one through ten that Paul argues that God's promise to Israel has not failed because even in their darkest time spiritually, there has always been a remnant who were saved.

And so God's word has not failed. Because again, hearkening back to chapter nine, God never promised that every individual Jew would be saved but just the remnant.

And then now here in chapter 11, verses 11 through 32, the passage I just read a moment ago, the passage we're going to get to eventually. Here in these verses, God's promise to Israel has not failed because God will one day restore Israel to belief and ultimately save and restore the entire nation, that is those who were living at the time, and guess what?

With them, the world. The world of the Gentiles. And he offers four proofs. Now three of them we saw last week.

[10:14] Let me remind you of these proofs. proof number one, the testimony of God's chosen preacher. And Paul said in verse one, for I also am an Israelite of the tribe of seed of Abraham, of

the tribe of Benjamin, and his point being, my conversion is proof that God has not utterly rejected all of Israel because I'm saved.

That's proof number one. Proof number two, the testimony of God's chosen people down through the ages. Verse two, God has not cast away his people whom he foreknew.

He preordained to be saved. He has not cast them away. And so, again, throughout the centuries of Israel's long and difficult and troubled history, God has always had his chosen few.

And God has always preserved a remnant for himself. Verse five says, even so then, at this present time, there is a remnant according to the election of grace. Four proofs then.

The testimony of God's chosen preacher, God's chosen people. Third, the testimony of God's chosen prophets. Verse seven, what then?

[11 : 32] Israel has not obtained what it seeks, but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. Now, he's speaking of Israel. Israel, a good portion have not obtained what they were looking for, and a portion of them, the elect, have obtained it, and the rest were blinded.

That's a pretty serious verse of Scripture. And then Paul calls on really the whole prophetic Scripture as a witness. And I say the whole of prophetic Scripture because in verse eight, he quotes a passage that is taken really from two places, from Deuteronomy and Isaiah.

That's the law and the prophets. And then he quotes verses nine through ten as a quote from the Psalms. And that's, in a nutshell, the major categories of the Old Testament.

The law, the prophets, and the Psalms. And so he brings those witnesses to bear. To say, Israel has not obtained what it seeks, but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded.

And so, the testimony of God's chosen prophets is simply this. God will bring to Himself, get for Himself those whom He has chosen for salvation.

[12 : 49] And He will grant the rest what they have chosen. Unbelief. And with it, blindness. Blindness.

That leads us to the fourth and final proof. And it is the part of the chapter that is the hardest to preach because your pastor, I don't know if you know this, but he is a slave to alliteration.

Did you know that? I bet you hadn't noticed that. But not only that, but I just love a neat outline. Whether all the words start with the same letter or rhyme or whatever, though I do prefer that, obviously.

But I do like a nice, structured, neat outline, but you just can't do it with this passage. Because it is as if Paul is kind of turning it over and over and over again.

And here is the proof. I need to name that and then we will get to it. The testimony of God's chosen purpose. God's purpose.

[13 : 59] And this is a big one. Now, it is as if, and maybe this is the best way to kind of conceptualize these verses.

At least this is the way I'm going to present it sermonically. Perceive it as a diamond. You know, a beautiful diamond. And it has to be a big enough one so that you, in your imagination, you can lift that up and look at it and turn it in the light and see how the light refracts through that diamond.

And one position there is a certain color and you move it just ever so slightly. And there is another little color, another hue. You move it again and it changes a little bit more.

And you can just take that diamond and move it around and around and see all of its multi-facets. That's what we need to do here with this passage.

this very lengthy passage. Think of it as a diamond. Now, even though you can take that diamond and turn it around and around and around and see all the different colors and hues, it's still the same diamond.

[15 : 20] It's one diamond. It's the same diamond. Just with different features and aspects of it. Now, here in this passage, there's one primary truth.

And it's the sovereign purpose of God. And Paul is kind of holding that up in the light like a diamond.

And he's moving it around, turning it around, and we see all the different features of it, of his purpose. And yet, it's the same purpose.

See, there's only one purpose here. And it is God's full plan and accomplishment of that plan, this plan of redemption.

It's his redemption. His plan of redemption. That's the one purpose. And there is one goal, by the way, as we get to the end of the chapter, and it's glory, his glory.

[16:27] And that's why Paul ends with a doxology. after presenting this gem of God's purpose in redemption that will include so many, then he just breaks out in praise.

All right. All right, so one purpose. And we just kind of move it around. All right. So, facet number one. Here's the purpose. And this is really not an outline.

I know we've got the pens ready. All right, what is it? It's not really an outline. In fact, it's one broad statement of this purpose, a statement that kind of encompasses all of these different facets.

That's incredible. They all work together. All right, here it is. Facet one, God rejected Israel. That's not really exciting, is it?

And yet, that's part of this gem, this purpose. God rejected Israel. Well, because Israel rejected Him.

[17:38] That's part of the purpose. That's not just something that happened simply as a result. It is part of God's purpose.

God rejected Israel. And we turn that diamond just a little bit and we see in order to save the Gentiles. God rejected Israel in order to save the Gentiles.

And we move it just a little bit more and we see in order to save Israel. Ah, that's a surprise. God rejected Israel in order to save the Gentiles, in order to save the Jews, the Israel.

Israel. And then there's one more in order to save the world. You turn this purpose in the light and let the light refract off of that jewel, God's redemptive purpose, and you see that God rejected Israel, yes He did, in order to save the Gentiles, in order to save Israel, in order to save the world.

It's incredible. And that is what we have in these verses. Now let's look at it. Verse 11, I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall?

[18:58] I've already explained what that means. Certainly not. But through their fall, you just have to follow along here. I'm just going to move kind of methodically through these verses.

But through their fall, that means there's a purpose here. Through their fall, that is their unrighteous rejection of Jesus, that's what the fall is speaking about.

And here's the statement of purpose. To provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. What's the purpose? To provoke Israel to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles.

There is that multifaceted all coming together in this gem. God rejected his people Israel when they sinned in order to save the Gentiles, in order to save Israel by making them jealous.

You know, the real question, really, I think we ought to ask ourselves is this, is there anything about us right now in the church today that would provoke Israel to jealousy?

[20:15] There's something to think about. Yet this is God's purpose and it will be fulfilled. This is his purpose of redemption. Israel certainly sinned.

They did fall. They did fail. They did reject the Messiah. There's no debating that. It's very clear. They still are in that rejection and God has rejected them. He has set them aside.

But he didn't just do that as a punitive measurement! against them. He did that as that but in order to save the Gentiles. And aren't you glad?

But he did that for a purpose too, didn't he? He did that to save the Gentiles in order to provoke Israel to jealousy so that they would be saved.

Or at least some of them. Ultimately at some point in eschatological history all of them will be saved. We'll get to that a little! later. Verse 12, now if their fall, their unrighteousness is riches for the world, that is the Gentiles, and he says it another way, their failure riches for the Gentiles, in the viewpoint of Scripture, the viewpoint of the Jews certainly, there are only two kinds of people in the world.

[21:36] There are either Jews or Gentiles. And so here's what he's! saying, now, if their fall, their failure, their unrighteousness, their rejection of Christ has resulted in this, riches for the Gentiles, which it has, their failure, riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fulfillment or fullness?

God now, you have to see what a contrast there is here. Because on the one hand, salvation has come to the Gentiles because the Jews have rejected Christ.

Now, isn't that a strange kind of thing? That is, Gentiles have come to faith because of the disobedience of Jews. Right? It should have been the other way.

That is, the Gentiles should have come to faith because the Jews were obedient to Christ and fulfilled their original purpose to be the missionaries of the world.

A purpose, by the way, they will get back to in the end times. But rather, he's saying, the Gentiles have been blessed, have been greatly enriched by their disobedience, their unrighteousness.

[22:57] And if that's the case, and it is, then by contrast, how much more in their fulfillment? That is, one day when they are saved.

And I believe that this is a reference to Israel's ultimate salvation, which he's going to mention a little bit later in this chapter. But their ultimate salvation, and that will be great riches to the world during the tribulation and on into the millennial reign of Christ.

And we've looked at Revelation 7. We're not going to look at that tonight, but God has chosen 144,000 for himself. And they great missionaries, and during the tribulation, and they preached the gospel, people and a number of Gentiles were saved.

The Bible says a number that cannot be counted. Thousands upon thousands, myriads upon myriads of Gentiles saved, not this time because of the unrighteousness of Israel, but because of their righteousness.

Not because of disobedience, but ultimately because of their obedience. obedience. And God using them in a mighty way. That's what he says. See, he's just moving this gem back and forth so we can see this great purpose of God.

[24:28] That God has rejected Israel in order to save the Gentiles, in order to save the Jews, in order to save the world. For I speak, he says, verse 13, for I speak to you Gentiles, and as much as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry.

Now, what in the world does he mean by that? Well, you see, right here in the midst of this argument, Paul is cognizant of the fact that there are those in his day who have mischaracterized his ministry and his calling.

That somehow because of his calling to evangelize the Gentiles, the thought is, or some are saying, that he had become completely detached from Israel.

They didn't care anymore for Israel. And Paul is saying that's not the case. There's some clarification needed here. And so Paul says, yes, I am an apostle to the Gentiles. And yes, I boast in that ministry, greatly magnify it, but there is a greater goal in view here.

And it's a greater purpose that goes beyond just the salvation of the Gentiles, and that is the salvation of Israel. And so he's making the same point here.

[25:42] And verse 14, if by any means, he says, I may provoke to jealousy, there is this same purpose here, to provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh, that is, my brethren according to the flesh, Israel, and save some of them.

Now, we haven't yet reached that verse where Paul says, and all Israel will be saved. Ultimately, that will happen. But Paul is speaking of the present, and he's not going to save all of them. And neither are we. If we evangelize the Jews, some of them will be saved. But not all of them, and this is Paul's point. He said, yes, I'm called to the Gentiles, the apostles of the Gentiles, and we're proud of that fact, proud of the Lord.

But you've got to understand that there is a greater purpose here. I'm a part of. And that is, I'm witnessing to the Gentiles so that by any means, I would provoke jealousy in the hearts of my brethren according to the flesh so that some of them would be saved.

Here's that purpose. It's over and over again. God rejected Israel in order to save the Gentiles, in order to save the Jews, in order to save the world, to restore and reconcile the world, which he's going to say here in just a moment.

[27:08] Verse 15, For if their being cast away or rejected is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

That means regeneration, salvation. that is, their rejection will be eclipsed by their ultimate salvation, this glorious event that will take place, their salvation.

Right now all we can see is their rejection of Christ, and that's foremost in our mind. And what a profound rejection of Christ. The more you think about it, the more profound it becomes.

And here they are, the Jews, and they have been awaiting the Messiah to come, and they've been looking for him, and longing for him, and then he comes, and they reject him.

What a colossal blunder sin. And yet, one day, when God's purpose is fully accomplished for Israel, their rejection of Christ will just pale in significance to their acceptance, their salvation.

[28:38] God rejected Israel in order to save the Gentiles, in order to save the Jews, in order to save the world. And then Paul uses a couple of analogies to further support his truth, this truth.

Verse 16, for if the first fruit, and that's how it's translated here in the New King James, or you might have the first piece of dough, and that's okay even though the word here is not dough, but the

translators are taking the whole verse and using the context and so understanding the first fruit as dough, because what does he say next?

The lump, and the word there is lump, lump of dough, is also holy. So, for if the first piece of dough, the first fruit, is holy, and it is according to the Mosaic law, first fruits, first piece of dough, and they would take that first lump of dough, and they would make bread, and that would be given to the priest to sustain them, and this was part of the Mosaic law, and so God is saying, if that first fruit is separated unto me, holy, then you need to know that the whole lump is holy too, all of it is holy, and then he uses this other analogy in this reverse order, and if the root is holy, now we're not talking about dough, we're talking about a tree, if the root is holy, then so are the branches, all right, so here's the kind of two analogies put side by side, and so the idea, if the lump and the root, if the lump in the first analogy and the root in the second analogy represent the patriarchs, I think specifically Abraham, I believe that's the case, then the idea is this, the descendants of Abraham are holy to God, the whole lump, or the whole branch, is holy, separated unto God, and so the idea is he's not forsaken them, see, it's still the same argument, just over and over again, I guess maybe, you know, his original readers just didn't get it, it just goes over and over, and maybe we don't either, and we need this repetition, he's saying they're holy to him, they're still, they're not forsaken, and they are still included in his plan, and what plan is it?

To save them, that's his plan, and through them, the world, verse 17, and if some of the branches were broken off, that is God's rejection of sinning Israel, that's the idea, branches broken off, they're branches of the tree, of the root, Abraham is the root, and growing up to a tree, this holy tree, and Israel are the branches, but he says if some of the branches were broken off, and broken off because of rejection, sin, and you, he says, look at it, now he's speaking of Gentiles, and you, Gentiles, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, grafted in to this holy olive tree, and with them became a partaker of the root and the fatness of the olive tree, the blessing of the olive tree, the covenant blessing of the olive tree, this is a pretty simple analogy, or metaphor, or illustration, here's the olive tree, it's Israel, and some of the branches are broken off because they've rejected

[32:27] Messiah, and the Gentiles have been grafted in to that holy olive tree, grafted in so that they are partakers with the natural branches, partakers of all the blessings, the covenant blessings of the olive tree, simple, verse 18, if that's the case, don't boast, don't be arrogant, against the branches, Israel, but if you do boast or you act arrogantly, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

I think he's identifying what we've seen in history all along. Anti-Semitism! really has been propagated by, more than any other group in the world, the organized church, the Christian church, have been some of the staunchest of anti-Semites over history.

The idea being, you know, that, you know, some had embraced a theology that since Israel had rejected Christ, and they're cut off forever.

And we've been grafted in, we've been included in salvation because we are superior than they. Paul is saying, don't act arrogantly.

You're not it. You don't support the root. It's the root that supports you. That is, you know, and I like the way MacArthur explained this, and let me just read it to you.

[34:09] As Gentiles, we are not the source of our own blessing any more than believing Jews have been or are the source of their own blessing. Not the source.

believing Gentiles are blessed because they are spiritual descendants of faithful Abraham. We're blessed because we have been grafted into the covenant of salvation that God made with Abraham and now graciously offers to all who believe in Abraham's God.

Galatians is a prime example of Paul's explanation of this. In Galatians 3 and verse 6, Paul said, just as Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness, therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.

He's the root. So, you see, we Gentiles not grafted in because we deserved it or because we were superior to the Jews or that, you know, we might be more beneficial to the tree than the Jews were. They, you know, they dropped the ball, but we won't. No, it's because of faith that we're sons of Abraham. Therefore, know that only those who are of the faith are sons of Abraham.

[35:27] And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand saying, in you all the nations shall be blessed. That's Gentile nations.

So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. So there's no room for arrogance here. At all. And Paul gives this warning against, I think, specifically anti-Semitism, or really it's more a prideful perspective of our salvation as Gentiles.

Verse 19 says, you, you Gentiles, will say then, branches were broken off that I might be grafted in. The idea being because of some level of superiority have been grafted in.

And Paul responds in verse 20, well said, that is, I'll concede that point with you, but only so far. He says in verse 20, because of unbelief they were broken off.

And you stand by faith. That's why you're there. Faith. Do not be haughty. For you have no reason to be haughty, he's saying. You don't have any reason to be haughty, no reason to be arrogant.

[36 : 37] Rather, you have every reason, good reason to be fear. Fear. Remember what Paul said or wrote to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 10, 12.

He said, therefore, let him who thinks he stands, take heed, lest he fall. So, what do we have, why do we have a good reason to fear?

Verse 21, for if God did not spare the natural branches, he may not spare you either. Verse 22, and we'll wrap this up, we'll just kind of go forward here quickly.

Therefore, consider the goodness and severity of God on those who fell, that is, those who completely were destroyed, went to utter ruin through unbelief.

What do they get? Severity. And by the way, the word severity means a lopping off, a cutting off, suddenly, permanently. Those who reject, those who are unbelieving, those who are not of faith, they fell, and severity is the result.

[37 : 49] But toward you, those whom God has bestowed grace, is what he's saying, goodness. Goodness. If you continue in his goodness, that is, as proof that your faith is genuine, that your profession is true.

otherwise, he says, that if it's not true, if it's false, then you also will be cut off. And what about Israel? Verse 23. They also, if they do not continue in unbelief, here's the opposite side, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in.

For God is able to graft them in again. Verse 24. For if you were cut out of the olive tree, which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, that's Israel, or God's covenant people, how much more will these who are natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?

That is, be grafted back in. It's their olive tree. How much more will they be grafted back in? Verse 25. For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant or uninformed of this mystery.

Not a mystery in the sense, but it's the as yet unfolding of God's plan. He says, I don't want you to be uninformed about this, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, your own estimation.

[39 : 18] That, and here it is, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. That is, all of the Gentiles that God has chosen before the foundation of the world are saved.

Now, the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. Verse 26. And so, when that's done, all Israel will be saved. They will be saved. That is, all that are alive during the time of the great tribulation who survived the judgment, the time of Jacob's trouble, the judgment.

judgment as it is written, he says, and he quotes Isaiah 59 and then Isaiah 27. The deliverer will come out of Zion and he will turn all ungodliness from Jacob, for this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.

Now, I know this has been tedious. I tell by the look on your faces. But this is Paul turning that gem of his purpose over, back and forth and it's over and over again.

God rejected Israel in order to save Gentiles, in order to save Jews, in order to save the world. And then he just kind of wraps it all up and caps it all off with these words, starting with verse 28.

[40 : 43] Concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. They're enemies for your sake. This is God's purpose. But concerning the election, they are beloved for the sake of the fathers.

For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. God is going to do what he purposed to do and promised to do. For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, Israel's disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you, they also may obtain mercy.

That is, it's going to bring about jealousy. And they too will receive mercy. For God has committed them all to disobedience, that he might have mercy on all.

That's the whole thing. Now can you tell me what it is? God rejected Israel in order to save Gentiles, in order to save Israel, in order to save all the world.
And then he's just going to go right into a praise and worship. A great doxology, possibly one of the greatest doxologies recorded in Scripture. .