

THE BOOK OF ROMANS
The Indestructible Nation – Hopeful
Romans 11:16-24

Review

1. Let it be repeated that the nation Israel still does have a place in God's program. Both Paul and Elijah confirm this (vv. 1-4). What the nation could not gain, the election did (vv. 5, 6).
2. But the nation failed to believe God, hence a judicial hardness, as a judgment of God, has come to them (vv. 7-10). Admit it – Jews are bowed down always (v. 10).
3. Yet there is room for praise. The stumbling of the nation is neither permanent nor is it without purpose (vv. 11 – 15). God's agenda includes Israel's "fullness" and Gentile salvation.
4. Meanwhile, how does the text describe the nation of Israel? Two metaphors are employed (v. 16). 1) "Firstfruit" and "lump." 2) "Root" and "branches." Now the "first fruits" appear to be patriarchal Israel (cf. Num. 15:19-21; Jer. 2:2, 3) while the "lump" is the lineal descent from the patriarchs. As for the other figure, the "root" surely respects Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:1-3) and the "branches" all of his descendants. Whether the Hebrew () or Greek (ἁγία hagia), the word "holy" signifies separation and purity. Truly God is not finished with the "holy" nation. While grace has brought the Gentile in, that same grace has not abandoned the nation.
5. Where does that bring us? Right to the text where some needed warnings (to Gentiles!) are recorded:

1. WARNING: About Boasting vv. 17, 18

a. Due to Breaking v. 17a

Here is the first of eight "ifs" in this passage (cf. vv. 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24). It is a first class condition, therefore assumed to be true. Thus, "some" (τινες tines) branches were broken off – but not all! There is no doubt that the nation has failed (cf. 10:1ff) and therefore has suffered divine judgment. They have been knocked down, but not knocked out!

b. Due to Grafting v. 17b

The emphatic personal pronoun "you" (σύ su) speaks of Gentiles (cf. v. 13) who are a "wild olive." Nonetheless, they have been grafted in (ἐνεκεντρίσθης enekenstristhes, aorist passive). With an additional "in" (ἐν en) Scripture affirms Gentiles are among the Jews, but not instead of them (Replacement theology). Moreover, having been grafted in, the Gentiles have become (ἐγένου egenou) partakers or co-partners with the Jews (Eph. 2:13-16). Mind you, Gentiles are not monopolizers. Note three successive genitives: of the root, of the fatness, of the olive." What an incredible act of God for Gentiles!

c. Due to Bearing v. 18

Two second person emphatic pronouns are used ("thee", "thou") to aver that the root (Abraham) bore the Gentiles and not vice versa (cf. Gen. 3:16, 29; Ro. 4:11, 12). Since this is factual, the present middle negative imperative is forceful (μὴ κατακαύξῃ me katachauchō) – "stop the habit of glorying against (over) the branches." No one who knows the facts can boast (John 4:22).

2. WARNING: About Pride vv. 19:21

a. Due to Breaking v. 19

The particle "then" (οὖν oun) serves as an advance in the argument. The verb "break off" is the same as in v. 17. Using a purpose clause (ἵνα hina) and an emphatic first person pronoun,

Gentiles might say that the "break" came for them to be "grafted in." This is unbridled pride by the Gentiles. The "broken off" branches were the occasion, not the cause of the blessing coming to the Gentiles.

b. Due to Believing v. 20a

The point must be taken "well" (καλῶς kalos) that the Jews were cut off because of unbelief and not because the Gentiles were better than the Jews. The Gentiles actually remained standing (perfect tense, ἔστηκας hestekas) entirely by faith. Hence they were no better than wrongly despised Jews.

c. Due to Thinking v. 20b

Here is a direct present tense negative imperative "do not keep on thinking high (proud) thoughts" (ὀψιλοφρονέει hupselofronei). Rather (adversative "but") "keep on fearing" (present active imperative). Fearing God prohibits high thoughts of oneself.

d. Due to Sparing v. 21

The divine personality of God is affirmed by the definite article with "God." Further, the first class condition states the bald fact that God did not spare the natural branches (note: according to nature, κατὰ φύσιν kata fusin) . Thus, on the same ground, He will not spare the Gentiles – and they are grafted in, hence not "natural." Note "thee" is an emphatic pronoun. There is no room for pride!

3. WARNING: About Presumption vv. 22-24

a. Due to God' s Personv. 22

Attention is grabbed by the use of "behold" (ἴδε ide). Two of His attributes are given: 1) His "severity" towards (upon ἐπὶ epi) Israel because they fell (not stumble!). 2) His goodness towards (upon ἐπὶ epi) "you" (emphatic pronoun σε se) Gentiles. Amazingly, there is a third class condition neatly pointing to a possible contingency. The thought is clear: God' s goodness is associated with the expectation that the Gentiles continue (ἐπιμένοντας epimeinas) in His goodness (i.e. stand by faith, v. 20). To apostatize from sound doctrine and holy practice will lead the Gentiles to be cut off!

b. Due to God' s Power v. 23

Ah, this is good news. Another third class condition suggests Israel may not remain (same verb and tense as v. 22) in unbelief. If that scenario comes, then God is able to graft the Jews in again as a nation. Wonder of wonders, stubborn as Israel seems, the roadblock of unbelief can be removed by God. There is nothing too hard with the Lord (Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32: 17, 27). All glory to His thrice-holy Name.

c. Due to God' s Plan v. 24

Here is the equation: "If" (first class condition assumed true) God took the Gentiles (wild olive tree) from idol worship and gross immorality and grafted them into a good olive tree, how much more (an a fortiori argument) could God take Israel (natural branches) and graft them into their own (ἰδία idia) olive tree. It would be no problem to restore Israel. The truth is – He will!

Conclusion God has His own people, Israel, as first fruit/lump and root/branches. This has not changed. Gentiles have been brought into partnership with the Jews on the occasion of Jewish unbelief. This should not make Gentiles boastful, proud, nor presumptuous. If they do not remain by faith, they will be cut off. Moreover, God looks to restore Israel. He is able. Hallelujah!