

1. Moses (Ex. 32:32), Jesus (Mt. 23:37-39; Lk. 19:41-42) and St. Paul were deeply pained by Israel's rejection of the Lord and His salvation. For St. Paul see Rom. 9:1-5. Jesus died to save them. Moses and Paul offered to give themselves to save them. Of course, if they rejected God Himself, the offer of Moses and Paul would do little good. But it does show their intense love for Israel.
2. Has God rejected Israel? By no means. See Rom. 11:1. When Elijah the Prophet complained that he alone remained faithful (Rom. 11:3) God said: "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." (Rom. 11:4) Then Paul adds: "Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace." Rom. 11:5. In each generation a remnant of Jews comes to faith in Jesus. For example, the great Bible scholar Alfred Edersheim in England or the great German musician Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. At Rom. 11:26 Paul says: "And so all Israel will be saved." Here the word Israel means the sum total of the elect, the believers in Christ.
3. In our text, vs. 17-24, Paul compares all mankind to two types of olive trees, domesticated olives and wild olives. He identifies the Jews with the domesticated trees and the Gentiles with the wild ones. Paul reasons in vs. 19: "You will say then 'Branches were broken off (the domesticated tree) that I might be grafted in'." And Paul answers "Well said." That is true. But Paul explains: "Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear." Unbelief amounts to rejection. The unbelievers in Israel knowingly and willingly rejected Christ. You stand by faith, says Paul. At Rom. 4:16 Paul said: "Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace." The grace of God and faith in Christ are correlative terms. Faith in Christ receives and believes what is undeserved and unearned. Paul said "You stand by faith." That means: "You were grafted into the domesticated olive tree ONLY because of God's kindness and love." Therefore Paul adds immediately: "Do not be haughty, but fear."
4. Vs. 32 of our chapter reads: "For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all." Who are "them? ALL MEN. Read Rom. 3:9-20. Paul begins by asking: "Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks (Gentiles) that they are all under sin." Then in vs. 10-18 Paul gives us the most devastating indictment of sinful man in the Bible. Then in vs. 19-20: "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin." What is the most impossible thing in the world? For a man to save himself from sin, death and the devil.
5. That is why Paul says in vs. 18 of our text: "Do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you." If either Jew or Gentile is saved it is only because of the root, the grace of God, that they are saved.
6. He warns in vs. 21: "For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either." A believing Gentile can fall away from the faith and be lost just as easily as can a Jew.
7. In vs. 22 Paul mentions the goodness and severity of God, the Gospel and the Law. Only the Gospel can save. But the Law condemns unbelief and haughtiness.
8. Vs. 24 does not mean that the Jews are better than the Gentiles or that God prefers the Jews to the Gentiles. It does mean that God has not broken His Covenant with Israel. He still holds His arms wide open to the Jews. He includes them in: "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Mt. 11:28.
9. NEVER BOAST ABOUT YOURSELF. IT IS VERY DANGEROUS!!
10. The "root" of vs. 18 could denote the faith of father Abraham, 4:17.

Theme: DON'T FEEL PROUD BUT BE AFRAID vs. 20

Introduction: Because of the pride of sinful flesh, mankind has a tendency to attribute his salvation to something in himself which he feels is better than what is found in other people. Like the Pharisee in the Temple all of us say, sooner or later: "God I thank you that I am not like other people." Lk. 18:11. Ever since the Jews rejected Christ there has been a tendency among Gentiles to say: "I am better than they." To this thought God says: "Don't feel proud but be afraid." vs. 20.

### I-Don't Feel Proud

A-You don't bear the root but the root bears you. Vs. 18. Rom. 4:9-25 speaks of Abraham the father of all believers, be they Jews or Gentiles. The text makes clear that by nature Abraham was godless but that his faith was counted to him for righteousness. God declared Abraham righteous. He did not make himself righteous. In that sense he is the father of all believers, the root that bears all believers. Don't feel proud. You don't bear the root. The root bears you.

B-The Jews were broken off because of unbelief. You stand by faith. Vs. 20. The readers had interpreted this to mean: "They were broken off so that I could be grafted on." Look out!! You must see the difference between unbelief and faith. Just as Mk. 16:16 says: "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He who does believe shall be damned." If a man is lost, it is his own fault. But if he is saved it is only by the grace of God, not because of something in himself.

C-God has not rejected his people. Rom. 11:1. Gentiles sometimes think that because many Jews rejected Christ, God has rejected all Jews. That is not so. God does not go back on His Word. He still holds out His loving arms to all who labor and are heavy laden. Mt. 11:28. Furthermore, God promises that elect Jews make up a remnant among the Christians today just as they did in the days of Elijah. 11:2-6. *he* Elijah thought that only remained faithful to God. He was mistaken. Seven thousand Israelites had not yet bowed the knee to Baal.

### II-Be Afraid

A-God has put all people in a prison of disobedience in order to be merciful to all. Vs. 32. This principle pervades Scripture. For example, Rom. 3:22-24 says: "There is no difference. All have sinned and therefore do now fall short of the approval of God but all are justified freely through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." All men are equally sinful. All men have been redeemed equally. This should make us stand in awe of God, plead for mercy and make us quit comparing ourselves with others. The Jew is not worse than the Gentile. The Gentile is not better than the Jew. All are equally sinful and all have equally been redeemed through Christ.

B-If God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you. Vs. 21. Do not forget the two main characteristics in the person of God: His kindness and His severity. He is infinitely kind to those who cling to Him. But He is very severe to those who reject Him. Vs. 22. It is so easy for mankind to forget these two attributes of God. God is like His Word. His Word is made up of Law and Gospel. The Law shows us the severity of God toward sin. The Gospel shows us the kindness of God to those who confess their sin.

Conclusion: Individuals, families, nations and ethnic groups have a tendency to consider themselves better than others. When they have success they attribute it to themselves. When others have failures they think that is because they are better than others. The unbelief and rejection of Christ by the Jews is a stern warning to us. But we should not feel proud but be afraid. God has not rejected Israel. He finds His elect among them. And I did not become a Christian because I am better than the Jew. That is only by grace through faith. DON'T FEEL PROUD BUT BE AFRAID.