***The Firstfruits
RO146-02***

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Today, we are studying Romans 11:13-16. Our subject is "Israel, the Holy Nation."

**The Consequences of Negative Volition toward God**

It is a basic biblical principle that those who will not listen to God are eventually left by Him to the consequences of their negative volition. This is true of unbelievers. It is true of us as Christians. The all-time classic example of that, of course, was the Noahic flood. People who, for 120 years, just would not listen to the message of God delivered through God's messenger. Eventually, they were left to the consequences of their negative volition.

This is further illustrated in Romans 1:24-27, where we find that rebellious homosexuals and lesbians are eventually given over by God to suffer the physical consequences of their sexual perversion. In Romans 1:24, we read, "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves; who exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, Who is blessed forever. Amen. For this cause, God gave them up unto vile affections; for even their women did exchange their natural use for that which is against nature. Likewise, also, the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, turned in their lust, one toward another, men with men, working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error, which was fitting." In our day, we see this Scripture being brought to and applied very forcefully before our very eyes.

Another example of the consequences of persistent negative evolution is in Matthew 10:14-15. Here, Jesus directed His disciples, who were going out on preaching ministries, to symbolically separate themselves from those who are negative to God's message, and to leave those people to their just desserts. Matthew 10:14: "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when you depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily, I say into you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city." Here, the Word of God points out that this negative volition toward the Word of God is going to be worse for those people than even the judgment that God is going to bring upon those who are guilty of the depravity of homosexuality and lesbianism in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Another example of this principle is in Mark 6:5-6. The negative volition here of the people in Jesus's home town of Nazareth was so great that He could not bless their physical needs with miracle healings. So, He left them sick. Mark 6:5: "And He (that is, Jesus) could there (in Nazareth, His hometown) do no mighty work, except that He laid His hands upon a few sick folks, and healed it. And He marveled because of their unbelief. And He went round about the villages, teaching." The Lord Jesus Christ, in His humanity, said, "I just cannot believe this. I perform miracles. I am a Man against Whom they can bring no accusation (not a whisper of accusation) of sin. I am a Man who is perfect in every way – a Man Who has absolute credentials backing Him up about My claim of being the Messiah that God has sent." And yet, these people, with all this evidence staring them in the face, will not believe. This is negative evolution of a monumental nature.

**The Result of Disbelief**

What was the result? There were a lot of people who needed the physical healing so that Jesus Christ could bring to them, and relieve their agonies. So, they were left in that condition, because of their lack of responding to the Word of God.

We have one more in Matthew 23:37-39. Here, the Lord Jesus Christ declares that the Jews' rejection of him as their promised Messiah Savior has resulted in their nation being left desolate by God. Notice Matthew 23:37: "O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the Prophet and stone them you are sent onto you. How often would I gather the children together, even as a hen gathers for chickens under her wings, and you would not? Behold your house is left unto you desolate."

However, notice verse 39. That house, which today is desolate, is not a permanent condition for the Jewish nation: "For I say unto you, you shall not see Me henceforth till you shall say, 'Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord." And the time is going to come when the Jewish people will indeed say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And at that time, this nation will be restored."

So, this principle, of bearing the consequences of your negative volition toward the Word of God, is certainly exemplified in the Jewish people today who are reaping the results of their negative volition toward God's message about Jesus Christ. And that's what the apostle Paul has been explaining to us in Romans 9:10-11. The people of the Jewish nation today, as you know, are scattered throughout the gentile nations of the world. They live under terrible daily fears; hatreds; and, sufferings. And, worst of all, after death, they spend an eternity in the lake of fire. In Romans 11, where we are presently in the book of Romans, Paul has pointed out that the rejection by God of His rebellious nation, Israel, has resulted in blessings upon the gentiles. God is building a new body of special saints such as the Jews once were with Him. This new body is called the church. It's made up mostly of gentiles. The salvation through Jesus Christ, which has been rejected by the Jews, has been accepted by the gentiles. And God's favor toward born-again gentiles is quite evident to the Jews, and it makes them jealous.

Paul points out that since the fall of the Jews from God's favor has brought such great blessing to the gentiles, just imagine what their restoration in the Millennial Kingdom will bring to the gentile world. And his point is that it will bring even greater blessings at that point in time. So, Paul makes it clear by these statements that the present abandonment by God of the Jews is not permanent. The church does not replace Israel.

So, today, we pick up our study Romans 11:13, where we have, in verses 13-14 – the salvation of gentiles saves the Jews. Paul, first of all, in verse 13, points out that he has a special gentile mission. He begins with the word "For:" "For I speak to you gentiles. The word "for" this conjunction "de" in the Greek language. And it indicates to us that Paul is introducing a clarification of what he's been talking about. We could really translate that as "now." And what he says is that he is expressing a deep concern for the salvation of his fellow Jews. Paul has expressed that several times. We've see that in Romans 9:1-3, where he says, "I say the truth in Christ. I don't lie; my conscience also bearing witness in the Holy Spirit that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brother and my kinsman, according to the flesh." Paul says, "I could almost wish that I would exchange my salvation for theirs, if that were possible," for he was greatly burdened by the fact that the Jews were going to the lake of fire.

In Romans 10:1, he says the same thing: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved." Then he goes on and explains why they're not.

Now, someone might wonder if Paul is really genuine in his stated concern for the Jews, since he spends all of his time, primarily, ministering the gentiles. And that is what is behind verse 13, when Paul says, "Now let me pause a moment. I want to talk to you gentiles to clarify something. You might wonder if I'm really sincere in all this terrible feelings I express that I have, and concern over the Jews, since I don't really do too much toward them. My time is maybe spent dealing with the gentiles." But as you know, Paul, in fact had a special divine call from God, and a special appointment to evangelize the gentile world. But, in the process, he wants to point out, in doing that (reaching the gentile world), he was bestirring something in the observing Jews that was, in fact, eventually leading to their salvation and restoration.

In Acts 9:15, we have pointed out: "But the Lord said unto him, 'Go your way ,for he is a chosen vessel onto Me," speaking to an Ananias, who is being sent now to administer to the blinded Paul, who had been contacted and saved on the road to Damascus. And Ananias has some reluctance because he's heard about Paul. Paul has been taking Christians into prison. They've been executed. He is a little fearful. God says, "It's OK, go your way. For he (Paul) is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My Name before the gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." So, in the very process of stating the divine commission, in which Paul is going to communicate divine viewpoint truth of the church to the entire world, he also is thereby going to reach the Jews. And that's what Paul has already pointed out to us. The Jews are responding with a jealous attitude that's causing them to have second thoughts about rejecting Jesus Christ.

**Paul Speaks to the Gentiles**

So, in Romans 11:13, Paul says, "Now I speak to you gentiles. The word "speak" is the word "lego." And this particular Greek word stresses the message itself. It us not so much the words, but he says, "I want you to pay attention to what I am actually saying to you. I am saying something to you gentiles." This is the "ethnos." And the "ethnos is the word for all those who are non-Jews – the non-Jewish people in the world. Paul says, "I'm specifically now addressing those of you who are gentile Christians in Rome. Now I am speaking to you gentiles." Paul speaks specifically to them, because that's what God definitely called in to do. He called him to speak to the gentile world. We have that in Acts 26:16-18.

**An Apostle**

Paul, furthermore, says that, in the process of being called to speak to the gentiles, he does that under certain authority – that of an apostle. This is an important word: an "apostolos:" An "apostolos" was a special spiritual gift with authority to communicate divine revelations received directly from God before the New Testament Scriptures were completed. Apostles were very important. They had a very distinctive responsibility. It was a unique gift. They got direct communications from God. And that revelation created the New Testament Scriptures. This is one of the categories of spiritually gifted men that were appointed to minister to God's people after Jesus Christ returned to heaven. Ephesians 4:11 points this out – that one of the communicator gifts left behind by Jesus Christ to replace Himself was the gift of the apostle. A Christian man would receive the gift of apostleship directly from God. He never received it from other men. That is important. You never receive the gift of apostleship from other men.

So, when the Roman Catholic pope says, "I can lay my hands upon a priest, and convey to him the gift of apostleship, with all the authority that entails," the pope is mistaken. That's not true. Only God could appoint an apostle. It was a spiritual gift that only God can give, because it *was* a spiritual gift. You cannot come to some other Christian, and ask for some particular spiritual gift that you think you might like and enjoy using. None of us has the capacity or the authority to give you a spiritual gift. The apostle had direct revelation from God. It was an important gift, but it was not a gift that anybody gave him except God Himself.

Furthermore, you could not be an apostle unless you had seen Jesus Christ resurrected. If you had not, with your own eyes (with your own eyeballs) had seen Jesus Christ alive from the dead, you could not qualify as an apostle. So, you see what happens to all these churches today that talk about apostolic succession, like the Methodist Church, and like the Roman Catholic Church. These who are telling young men that they are delivering to them apostolic authority, and that they may exercise this authority in the church. That simply is not true, because none of them have seen Jesus Christ alive from the dead.

In Acts 1:22, when the early church decided that they should replace the fallen Judas Iscariot, on the apostolic band to complete the 12, Acts 1:22 indicates one of the qualifications necessary of the men they were considering: "Beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection." They said, "Not all of us are qualified. A few men here are qualified. They've been associated with Jesus Christ. They have seen Him die. They have known Him to be in the tomb, and they've seen Him alive." This is why it was important for the apostle Paul to be able to look up into heaven, on the Damascus road and see Jesus Christ. When he saw Him, he said, "I'm wrong. The rabbis have been lying to me. They did not steal His body. He's right there. I see Him. He's alive. So, immediately now, Paul, who was not a Christian at that time, was qualified to become an apostle, and he was given that spiritual gift.

So, this is an important thing when Paul says, "I am speaking to you as an apostle because that means I have personally seen Jesus Christ alive. I know that all this is true. I can testify to this not from other people's testimony, but from my very own eyewitness accounts. I have, furthermore, the supreme authority of receiving revelations from God.

The president of the Mormon Church; seer; and, revelator of the Mormon Church claims this apostolic gift. He claims to be one of the apostles. He claims to possess the supreme apostolic gift, which means he gets information from God.

Now, the kinds of information that the apostles received was not only what ended up in the New Testament Scriptures, but also was guidance. So, for example, when Ananias and Sapphira came and tried to lie to Peter in the early church, concerning how much they had received from the property they were selling, and the gift they were making to the church, the Holy Spirit spoke to Peter, as an apostle, who had all this information and insight. They could know what was true, and what was not true when a person was speaking. And Peter called upon it, as you know, immediately. And the result was their personal deaths.

Recently, in the past couple of years, the Mormon Church has gone through a very embarrassing experience. Their president (chief apostle) has been buying up false documents purportedly written by Joseph Smith and other early church writers. It was one of the all-time great con-jobs. There was a man named Mark Hoffman. This man was so clever and so capable that he could even beat a lie detector test. They sent his documents, that he brought, to the FBI in Washington, DC. The FBI sent it back, and said, "This a genuine document." And then the truth came out. They discovered it was a forgery. It was copied from other writings, and then the whole thing came apart. The church had bought something like 40 different documents from this man. He is one of the all-time great con-men. And the question was immediately raised, "Why didn't the chief prophet, who bears the apostolic gift of the Mormon Church, not immediately know that this man was lying instead of giving him thousands upon thousands of dollars for all these documents?" Well, they had no answer for it, because there is no apostolic gift that gives you that kind of absolute discernment such that you know what is going on even in the thinking of people.

So, the apostle Paul says, "I come to you as an apostle, Therefore, I come to you with an enormous amount of authority." One of the authorities that the apostles carried was that they established churches in various places. And upon all the churches they established, they were the absolute final authorities. They appointed who was the pastor-teacher in the church. They appointed the church officers. And they had this over many churches. Their authority was not limited to one church. It was a supreme authority over all the churches that they dealt with. So, it was a very great authority. You can read about this in 2 Corinthians 11:28 and Acts 14:21-23.

**There is no Apostolic Succession Today**

When the original apostles died off, the office and the gift ceased to exist. There is no apostolic succession today, and there are no apostles around today with that kind of authority. After the apostles did die off, you did have to have somebody who now came in and filled this vacuum of spiritual leadership. And that's where the pastor-teacher gift came in. It is the pastor-teacher who came in and filled this role of authority, but his role was limited to one congregation who recognize him as their leader in that particular church. The pastor's authority does not extend to some other church in some other area.

**Paul's Ministry**

So, Paul say, "Now I want to speak to you gentiles for a moment. And I want to do that since I am *the* apostle of the gentiles. I am *the* specific one who has been sent to you, and I come with all that that apostolic authority connotes." And Paul says, "Because I am an apostle, particularly send the gentile world, I magnify my office." The word "magnify" is this word "doxazo." "Doxazo" often translated as "to glorify." Here it really means "to make much of." Paul says, I am constantly making a lot of the fact that I am an apostle. He's doing that right here in this very verse, and he says, "I'm making a great deal of my office." But the word "office" is really the word the "diakonia," which means "the ministry." Paul says, "I make a great deal of the fact that I have a ministry over gentile Christians." Paul's extreme devotion to his gentile calling is one way that he can help his Jewish countrymen see the light about Jesus Christ. So, if somebody would question whether Paul was really that concerned for Jewish salvation, in view of the fact that he is so occupied with ministering to gentiles, he wants to make it clear that that ministry to the gentiles is causing the Jews to sit up and take a second look at the claims of Jesus Christ.

He says in verse 14, "If, by any means, I may provoke to jealousy them who are my flesh, and save some of them. This "if" is the Greek particle "ei." It is a third-class "if," So, it's a third class condition, which means that there is some uncertainty. Paul says, "Maybe I will; and, maybe I won't bestir some of the juice to decide to be saved. Mostly, we know, he won't, but some will respond. Paul's ministry to the gentiles may or may not secure a positive response from the Jews. But Paul's purpose is that if, by any means (somehow) he could provoke them to jealousy. This is the same word which we have had before: the Greek word "parazeloo," which means simply "to arouse" the Jews to an envious condition – to get them to be looking at the blessings that are coming upon the gentiles.

The Jews could not help but see that the gentiles were getting all the good things in life that they used to once have. The gentiles were in control. The gentiles had the conquering armies. The gentiles had the territory. The gentiles had the prosperity. The gentiles had the prestige and the esteem in the world. Those were all of those things they once possessed. Now the Jews are a bunch of dogs, under the heels of the gentiles. And some of the Jews are saying, "I wonder why that is." And some of them are making the connection: "It is because we have turned our back upon God's Son.

So, so Paul says, "I really try to get a lot of gentiles saved, because it is the Christian gentiles who are the ones that God prosperous and blesses the most, and I want the Jews to see that. So, if possible, by some means, I could say those who are my flesh," by which he means the people to whom he is racially related as Jews: "That if, by some means, they could be saved." The word is "sozo." And that refers to regeneration unto eternal life. Here is a potential condition for Jews. It is in the aorist tense. They will be saved at the point when they do one thing: trust in Jesus Christ as Savior." It is active. This is Paul's ministry. But it is subjunctive mood. It's potential. Maybe some of them will; but, maybe some of them won't. So, Paul is really exercising his gentile apostleship to a maximum degree when the Jews are provoked to trust in Christ and to be saved. Jewish salvation contributes to bringing about the restoration of the Jewish nation. Restoration of the Jewish nation to divine blessings will result in maximum blessing for Paul's gentile converts.

Thus, the gentiles have nothing to fear from Jews being restored to people, because when they are, things are going to be better even still for the gentiles. And the Christians themselves will always have a superior position to the Jews in the millennium.

Paul then takes up the holy origin of the Jews in verse 15-16. In verse 15, Paul goes on. Again, he begins with the word "For," indicating an inference: "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling all the world." This it is a first-class condition: "Since the casting away of them" is a reality. The Jews actually have been thrown out by God. The word "casting away" is this word "apobole." And that means that they have been literally cut off from access to God's special favor. You will find that this is the fulfillment of Matthew 21:43, where Jesus says, "Therefore, I say unto you, the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of it." So, this word "apobole" refers to their being cast out. And he says, "If the throwing away (the casting out) of them be the reconciling." This is the Greek word "katallage," referring to the reconciliation which is the adjustment to God's standard.

"The riches of the world, that verse 12 spoke of, we pointed out to previously, is the reconciling of unsaved people; that is, the adjusting of unsaved people to God's standard of absolute righteousness. So, he says, "If, when the Jews were cast away from God, it resulted in lost sinners in the world having a basis of becoming adjusted to God's standard of absolute righteousness, what in the world shall the receiving of then be?" This is the Greek word "proslempsis." And that means "the acceptance." This refers to the time in the future when God restores the Jewish nation to His favor. And he says, "What is the receiving of them going to be but life from the dead?" It's going to be like a person, who has been dead, coming back to life. And that's what Paul means. He says, "When this nation comes back into God's favor, it's going to be like somebody who has just come alive. Spiritually dead, inactive Israel is going to come back to spiritual life.

So, Paul argues from the lesser event (the lesser event was the casting away of Israel) to the greater event, the restoration of them. If the lesser event (the casting away) brought about gentile reconciliation to God's standard of righteousness, what do you think the greater event of their restoration to God's blessing will bring, but the great, tremendous, greater blessings of the millennium? Maximum spiritual activity of the world is in view when Israel returns to its rightful place.

**Holiness**

Then verse 16 makes a basic illustration of Paul's point, where he says, "For," And again he's introducing an explanation: "For if the firstfruits be holy." And here the "if" is again the first-class condition. It's true: "Since the firstfruits," The firstfruits is this Greek word "aparche" This refers to the first part of something – something that you take a part of from the mass, or the whole: "If the firstfruits (something you take away from a larger mass) is holy." This is the Greek word "hagios." The word "holy" in the Bible is not used only in the sense that people do no wrong. It is not only in the sense that they are godly. Basically, the word "holy" means "set apart." And it's important that you understand that that's the definition. So, something could be set apart to God, which in itself is not sinless. We are a holy people *now* in God's eyes. We are a holy priesthood. But are we perfectly sinless people" No. So, how can we be holy? We are holy in the sense that we are set apart to a special purpose that God has for us – to go to heaven, and all the rest that He includes in His plan of what He's going to do with us. We are a holy people in that we are set apart.

So, Paul says, "Here is a principle: If the first thing that you take (the first part that you set apart from the mass) is a holy thing, doesn't that tell you something about the whole lump?" The word "lump" is the Greek word "phurama." "Phurama" means "the whole mass of something." And this whole analogy comes from the offering of the firstfruits that the Bible presents in the book of Numbers. The Jews had an offering system which was designed to constantly remind them of what God was doing for them, and Who was the source of their blessing, and to express their Thanksgiving to God.

**The Offering of the Firstfruits**

So, one of the offerings they had was called "the Offering of the Firstfruits." And every farmer and every housewife was very careful to observe this Offering of the Firstfruits. In Numbers 15:17-21, you have this Offering of the Firstfruits described, which is the background of Paul's statement here in the book of Romans: "And the Lord spoke unto Moses saying, 'Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, 'When you come into the land in which I bring you, then it shall be, when you eat of the bread of the land, you shall offer up a heave offering unto the Lord.''" You are going to go out to the field, and you're going to bring in the harvest. But the first piece you cut down, you set aside, and you take it to the priest, and you say, "Here is the firstfruits of my field, and I wish to make it an offering to the Lord." The priest will stand before the altar. He will take your grain and he will make it a Wave Offering (that's really what it says). He will wave before God, and he will present it as your thanksgiving expression to God for what he has blessed you with in that harvest.

I've often used this, and I regularly do use this, at funerals – this particular heave offering; wave offering; or, firstfruits offering ceremony, because it is a perfect illustration of what it means when we Christians are compared to Jesus Christ, and He is called the firstfruits of the resurrection. The Old Testament Firstfruits offering told this: When he had that that bundle of grain in his hand, the priest knew that this was a sample of the field. Christ is the firstfruits of the resurrection. He is just a sample of human beings who are to be raised from the dead. Secondly, that bundle of grain was exactly like what was out in the field: the same quality; and, the same condition. It demonstrated exactly what the rest was going to be. It not only told that there was more coming, but it told what kind it was going to be.

Jesus Christ is not only telling us, as the firstfruits of the resurrection, that there are more people going to be raised from the dead. But when they are there, going to be just like He was – absolutely perfect in every way. As He was, in His resurrected state, so shall we be. Now that's great comfort at the point of a funeral service – to realize that some dead loved one is part of the firstfruits offering; and, that Jesus Christ has already demonstrated what this dead person is someday going to be like. He will be in the image of Christ, absolutely perfect, and that he is most certainly is going to follow in resurrection. There is no doubt about it.

So, that's what's here. Moses is instructed by the Lord: "When you come into this land, and you take your harvest, I want you to show your appreciation for what I've given you, by coming with a heave offering, and to realize what it tells you – that it's just the firstfruits of a huge reservoir of blessing yet to come.

Furthermore, verse 20 says, "You shall offer up a cake of the first of your dough for a heave offering, as you do the heave offerings of the threshing floor, so shall you lift it high. Of the first of your dough, you shall give unto the Lord a heave offering of your generations." Now, the wife was to take this grain. Here she is: "Hot dog, the harvest has come in. Here's the new grain. This is the first grain. We have the first flour, and we're ready to make the first dough." She makes the dough; she kneads it; and, she puts it together. But before she makes any of that, and puts it aside for the family, she breaks a chunk of it off. And that's the first part that is prepared. That's the first fruit. And that is presented as a special offering to God.

Now, again, what is going to happen> If she breaks off a piece of the dough, and she bakes it, and people break their teeth eating it, what does that tell you about the rest of the lump? It tells you that if you bake it, you will break your teeth on it also. Whatever the part broken off is like, the rest of the lump is like that. And that's the point of this illustration. The part you break off is a sample of what the rest is like.

**Abraham**

So, with this firstfruits background, which these people would understand, Paul is using this analogy here in Romans 11, when he says, "For if (first-class condition – 'since') the firstfruits be holy, the lump is also holy." Then he uses another similar illustration. But what's he referring to here? "If the first fruit is holy, then what it comes from is holy. Here, the firstfruits is a reference to the founder of the Jewish nation. This is referring to Abraham. He's talking about Jews in this context. And his point is that, if the firstfruits (if Abraham) was holy, then what about all the people who came from him as a nation? They, too, are holy. Now was Abraham holy in his conduct? We know that's not true. He was holy in the sense of the word "holy." He was set apart to God. And he was set apart to become the father of a great nation who would become the beacon of spiritual light to all the world. Through them would come the written Scriptures. Through them would come the Savior. Through them would come all spiritual enlightenment. And like the Bible says, "Salvation is of the Jews."

So, Paul is pointing out here that if the firstfruits (Abraham) was holy and set apart for a divine purpose, what is the rest of the lump (the Jewish nation) but holy also before God." If the portion of dough (Abraham) is holy, because he has been separated by God to a specific purpose, then the whole lump (the Jewish nation) is also holy to God.

Then he makes another comparison: "And if the root be holy." Again, that "if" is first-class condition: "Since the root is holy (the root of the tree is a holy root), what kind of branches is it going to produce? Holy branches? If the root is bad, the branches will be bad." And I think you can figure this out for yourself now. Who is the root? Abraham. Who is the branches? Israel. The root (Abraham) is holy to God. Therefore, the branches that are produced from him must also be holy. This holy status, I remind you, is still true of the Jewish people today, even though they are under enormous divine discipline.

Now notice the implication of that fact. Since the Jewish nation is holy to God (it has been set apart for a certain divine purpose), this nation cannot permanently be cast away by God. And that's why Paul is making this comparison. He want you to understand that when God has set something apart to a certain purpose, it's going to be executed. And you should be aware of the fact that, to certain degrees, all of us are holy to God; that is, God has set us apart to a certain purpose. And you can beat your brains out; get yourself a lot of misery in life; and, bring a lot of pain to your family, to your husband or to your wife, and to the people around you, as you ignore the holy purpose (the setting apart) that God has for you, and you pay no attention to, or when you begin to get the signal, you don't like what you're hearing, when you hear a biblical principle that would cause you to require to readjust something you're doing in your life, you reject it, you are violating the objective for which God has set you apart. You are violating His Holiness. Are you going to get away with it? No.

As we begin today: those who persistently refuse to respond to a spiritual principle (to the direction of the Word of God), ultimately are delivered by God to suffer the normal consequences that come from that. And a lot of people who are crying about why things are happening to them (Why is God doing this to me?), have lost their perspective on realizing that they did it to themselves? It isn't even the devil's fault. That poor devil – I feel sorry for him sometimes. He gets a lot of bad rap that he doesn't deserve. It is people doing things to themselves, bearing the normal consequences and the just desserts of their negative volition, and they're blaming somebody else for it. But if God has set you apart for something, that's where you're going to go, friend. Why waste a lot of time? Why waste a lot of effort and energy? Why bring a lot of distress into your life? Why not get on track? Why not say, "OK, what I have been set apart to as a holy object, that's what I want to do? I have employment. I earn a livelihood. That makes it possible for me to execute God's will in my life to which He has called me. But now I am free to use my gifts, and to invest my life for the things above – the things that are eternal."

The holy status of the Jewish people is still true today, even though they are under God's divine discipline. Since the Jewish nation is holy to God, all the amillennialists, who say that God is through with the Jews as a nation, are plumb wrong. He is not. God cannot permanently cast away the Jewish people. And the millennium will see the full restoration of maximum blessing to mankind through the holy Jewish nation. We will be there. We will be part of that scene. We will be reigning and ruling with Christ. We will be in a position, as Christians, far elevated above that which the Jew has. But never make the mistake of thinking that the Jew has been abandoned by God. He is holy. Abraham was holy. The people who came from him are set apart to that same destiny. Abraham, the root, was holy. The branches that have grown up from him are also holy.

However (and Paul is setting up a further analogy), a terrible, unbelievable thing has happened to the branches. That is a thing that the Jews could not believe was ever going to ever happen to them. It has shocked them. And when Paul said this to them, many of them recoiled with indignation, and they threw him out. That is because now Paul, in the verses which follow, will explain to us what's happened to these branches of the Jewish people in the olive tree of blessing. A terrible thing has happened to them. And this disaster is what the Jews live with to this day. The Jewish people here are set apart to God. They have a destiny. They are very special. They once were in the olive tree of blessing. But something terrible has happened, and we shall look upon that next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1988

[**Back to the Romans index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/romans.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)