

“God’s Holy People”  
Romans 11:16  
(Preached at Trinity, June 20, 2010)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In Chapters 9-10 and the beginning of this chapter Paul’s chief focus was directed to the condition of the Jews.
  - A. He expressed his grief over their rejection of the Gospel.

**Romans 9:2-3** – “That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. <sup>3</sup> For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”

**Romans 10:1** – “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.”
  - B. As **Chapter 11** opened Paul continued dealing with the subject of the hardness of the Jews and their rejection of the Gospel.
    1. Has their hardness resulted in their total rejection by God?

**Romans 11:1** – “I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.”
    2. Paul explained that just as in the days of Elijah God has continued to maintain a faithful remnant.
2. Beginning in **Verse 11** Paul suddenly introduces the subject of the Gentiles.

**Romans 11:11** – “I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but *rather* through their fall salvation *is come* unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.”

  - A. God is working out His purpose. He is saving a multitude of Gentiles that through their salvation the Jews might be provoked to jealousy.

NAS **Romans 11:14** – “if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them.”
  - B. As I’ve pointed out, one of Paul’s purposes in Chapters 9-11 is to promote harmony between the Jewish and Gentile Christians.

There was a tendency for both groups to see themselves as unique and separate

    1. The Jewish Christians saw themselves as the true heirs of Abraham. They were God’s true people.
    2. The Gentiles, on the other hand, were arrogant that the Jews had rejected and crucified their Messiah. They were now the outcasts.
  - C. Paul is making it clear that such division has no place in the Kingdom of Christ. Both groups are uniquely important in God’s redemptive plan and both are now one in Christ. God has one people who are united together.

**Galatians 3:28-29** – “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> And if ye *be* Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

**Ephesians 4:4-6** – “*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; <sup>5</sup> One Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup> One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*”

3. Remember, for Paul all of this had a direct bearing upon the present, that is, Paul’s current situation. In **Verses 13-14** Paul was speaking of his current ministry to the Gentiles—that through his work with the Gentiles the Jews might be moved to envy.
4. **Verses 15-18** must be read in the context of what Paul is saying here.
  - A. The Jews were hardened. They hated Christ, they hated Christians, and they hated the demands of the Law.
  - B. Paul says in **Verse 15** that through their hardness the Gentiles were being saved and because of their hardness their salvation was nothing short of a resurrection.  
Paul is describing the reality of regeneration.
5. **Verse 15** flows into **Verse 16**. The Greek word *δέ* serves to connect the two.
  - A. Unfortunately it isn’t reflected in the ESV or the revised NAS. The earlier NAS translated it “and.” The KJV translates it “for.”  
<sup>KJV</sup> **Romans 11:16** – “For if the firstfruit *be* holy, the lump *is* also *holy*”
  - B. In other words, **Verse 16** is connected to **Verse 15**. Paul is continuing to describe this “life from the dead.” It is a transformation, a complete change of heart and life. Last week we looked at some of the characteristics of this spiritual rebirth.
6. In **Verse 16** Paul adds another dimension – that of holiness  
**Romans 11:16** – “For if the firstfruit *be* holy, the lump *is* also *holy*; and if the root *be* holy, so *are* the branches.”  
Paul uses two metaphors to describe the two groups.
  - A. First he looks to the offerings of Israel.
    1. Under the Old Covenant God set forth laws to continually remind Israel that they were His distinct people. They belonged to God and everything they owned belonged to God.
    2. This was demonstrated in their offerings. Paul is referring to **Numbers 15**.  
<sup>NAS</sup> **Numbers 15:20-21** – “Of the first of your dough you shall lift up a cake as an offering; as the offering of the threshing floor, so you shall lift it up. <sup>21</sup> From the first of your dough you shall give to the LORD an offering throughout your generations.”
    3. God commanded Israel to give back the firstfruits of everything they owned. It was symbolic of the whole. If the first fruit was holy then the remainder was also holy.
  - B. The second comparison is that of a plant. If the root is holy it follows that the branches would be holy as well.  
Our minds are immediately directed to the metaphor of Christ.  
**John 15:5** – “I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”
  - C. In this passage the “first fruit” and the “root” is pointing back to Abraham, or more particularly, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the patriarchs. They were the holy root from which the rest of Israel came and ultimately the Gentile believers were grafted in.

4. How is it that this root was holy?
- A. The word “holy” literally refers to something set apart  
 Something set apart for God’s use was dedicated or consecrated and declared holy. God chose Abraham from among all other men upon the earth. He chose to make His covenant with Abraham
- B. God promised Abraham that his offspring would be set apart as God’s own people – Jacob’s name would be changed to Israel.
1. Israel received the promises, God spoke to them through the prophets, they were given the Law. All of this was great advantage.  
**Romans 3:1-2** – “What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit *is there* of circumcision? <sup>2</sup> Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.”
  2. God set his people apart for His own possession  
 God set them apart for His own use – consecration  
 God set them apart from the defilement of the pagan nations  
**Exodus 19:6** – “And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.”
- C. The believing Jews were living testimony to the faithfulness of God’s promise
1. Paul says they are beloved because of the promise  
**Romans 11:28** – “As concerning the gospel, *they are* enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, *they are* beloved for the fathers' sakes.”
  2. They were the natural branches
  3. They were set apart because of God’s promise
5. Does this mean that all of Israel, every Jew was (and is) holy unto God?
- A. No! The Old Covenant was conditional upon their obedience.  
NAS **Numbers 15:30-31** – “But the person who does *anything* defiantly, whether he is native or an alien, that one is blaspheming the LORD; and that person shall be cut off from among his people. <sup>31</sup> 'Because he has despised the word of the LORD and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt *will be* on him.”  
**Deuteronomy 11:26-28** – “Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; <sup>27</sup> A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: <sup>28</sup> And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.”
1. The majority forsook God’s covenant and all of their blessings. They became defiled and God hardened them.
  2. But God’s remnant, true Israel, were delivered from this hardness and transformed as life from the dead.  
 They became holy just as the fathers were holy
- B. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were considered holy in two ways
1. First, they were the heads of the covenant. They were chosen and separated.

2. Second, and more important, they were holy because they “believed” the promise of God. They were men of faith. They trusted in God’s promise that would be fulfilled in Christ. This was the means God used to justify them. They were saved by faith in Christ.  
Paul spoke of this in **Chapter 4**  
**Romans 4:3** – “For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.”
3. They were transformed by the grace of God  
They were raised from the dead.
6. When Paul says the branches are holy he isn’t talking about those branches broken off because of unbelief—**Verse 17**.
  - A. Those who were broken off were not true Israel.  
**Romans 9:6** – “For they *are* not all Israel, which are of Israel:”
    1. Paul is talking about those who believed—those raised from the dead. They are holy.
    2. Remember, there is no reason to assume that Paul is talking about some future dealing with Israel.
    3. As we’ve seen, there are those who presuppose that this passage must be talking about some point in the future.  
Well known pastor of a large congregation (Piper)  
“When it says, “If the root is holy, so are the branches,” it means, “If the Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (the root) are chosen and set apart for God in a special covenant relationship, so are the branches—that is, all of Israel at some future time.”
  - B. Paul is talking about those who believed in his generation—those raised from the dead. They are holy.  
It also includes Jews that would later believe.
    1. In this sense the Gentiles also share in this blessing. Not by being natural branches, that is, Abraham’s physical seed, but by being his spiritual offspring.
    2. In **Verse 17** Paul compares them to wild olive branches.
    3. Under the New Covenant all of God’s people are holy – Jews and Gentiles.  
**1 Peter 2:9** – “But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”
7. This morning I want to take the remainder of time to examine the holiness of God’s people
  - I. Under the Old Covenant God’s people were set apart
    - A. Circumcision marked God’s covenant people as being distinct, holy
      1. God demanded of His elect people holiness, separation  
**Leviticus 20:7** – “Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I *am* the LORD your God.”
      2. Circumcision was a mark of obedience signifying a trust in God’s covenant. It marked their full submission to God
        - a. It symbolized God’s mark upon His people. It was permanent and irreversible

- b. The other nations mocked and ridiculed Israel for such foolishness. Circumcision confounded the wisdom of the flesh – yet, it was pleasing to God. God demanded that His people be different.
- B. The problem was it was only an outward mark upon them.
  - 1. Circumcision did not affect the heart. God demands that His people love and obey Him with their whole heart.  
**Deuteronomy 6:5-6** – “And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. <sup>6</sup> And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart.”
  - 2. God was more interested in circumcised hearts  
**Deuteronomy 10:15-16** – “the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, *even* you above all people, as *it is* this day. <sup>16</sup> Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.”
  - 3. God promised that this would take place  
**Deuteronomy 30:6** – “And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.”
  - 4. This wouldn’t find its true fulfillment until the New Covenant.  
**Jeremiah 31:33** – “But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

## II. Let’s look at how this is applied in the New Covenant

- A. God demands absolute separation from us – that we be holy, consecrated unto Him
  - 1. Remember, circumcision was a type of the changed heart God demands of His people  
**Romans 2:28-29** – “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: <sup>29</sup> But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.”
  - 2. Christians are a people distinct and separated from the world  
God has set us apart as a holy people
- B. The great majority of the NT is made up of the Epistles which focus primarily on one thing: holiness and mortification of the flesh
  - 1. The main emphasis is not personal soul winning or evangelistic activities, although we cannot over emphasize the importance of these things.
  - 2. The great emphasis of the New Testament is gaining mastery over the flesh.  
**Romans 8:13** - "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."  
**Colossians 3:5** - "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth"
  - 3. Mortification is putting to death - inflicting a mortal wound upon the flesh.  
The flesh cannot be destroyed without doing violence to its affections

4. As the people of God we must give ourselves to the pursuit of holiness. It must become our chief business. We must train ourselves to that end.  
**I Timothy 4:7-8** - "Exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of life that now is, and of that which is to come."
- C. As God's people He demands that we be holy – absolutely separate
1. Christians are saved unto holiness  
**Ephesians 1:3-4** – "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: <sup>4</sup> According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."  
**Ephesians 5:27** – "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."
  2. There is a great distinction between the believer and the unbeliever  
We are in two different worlds – two different kingdoms.  
Our attitudes, beliefs, goals, motives – all are different  
Paul describes it in **Verse 15** as "life from the dead"
- D. God has placed His mark upon us
1. Under the Old Covenant all of the men in Israel were circumcised  
It was permanent and irreversible
  2. Under the New Covenant God places His mark upon His people in regeneration – it is permanent and irreversible
    - a. We have literally been recreated  
**2 Corinthians 5:17** – "Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."
    - b. Again, in **Verse 15** Paul likens it to being raised from the grave
    - c. Christians are a people distinct and separated from the world  
God has set us apart as a holy people  
**1 Peter 2:9** – "But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:"
    - d. Holiness is absolutely essential

### III. Does your salvation depend upon you attaining to some degree of holiness?

Yes and no – Scripture teaches both

- A. On one hand, no amount of our works or self-righteousness can merit our salvation.
1. You don't have to make yourself righteous before you come to Christ
  2. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in the merits of Christ alone.  
<sup>KJV</sup> **Titus 3:5** – "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;"

3. There is nothing we can do to merit anything from God  
KJV **Isaiah 55:1** – “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”
  4. This is justification – the imputed righteousness of Christ. It is all of Christ. You can do nothing to earn it
- B. On the other hand, the Christian is marked by consistent holiness – the mark of regeneration
1. Again, Paul describes it as “life from the dead”  
 It is a life consistent with every other Christian.  
**Romans 11:16** – “if the root *be* holy, so *are* the branches.”
  2. Without circumcision a man was cut off from the people of God.  
 Without the mark of regeneration today a man is cut off from the people of God.
    - a. Jesus made this clear  
**Matthew 7:19-20** – “Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. <sup>20</sup> Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.”
    - c. Although we have been declared holy through the work of Christ we are also commanded to strive after holiness – to be consecrated or set apart unto God – to be holy.
    - d. One of the great marks of regeneration is that we have a great desire for holiness. We have a great desire to please Christ.

#### Conclusion:

1. Over and over in the NT we are commanded to be holy  
**1 Peter 1:15-16** – “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; <sup>16</sup> Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”
2. Without holiness as the mark upon us we have no claim to be a child of God  
**Hebrews 12:14** - “Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:”
3. Paul is saying that just as the patriarch were holy, all connected to them were holy – both the natural branches and the wild branches  
 What was distinct about the patriarchs? They were set apart unto God.  
 Were they perfect? No, by no means. But they were consecrated unto God  
**Romans 11:16** – “if the root *be* holy, so *are* the branches.”
4. Are you holy?