



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

ROMANS 9-16

Week 2

When Zeal Gets in the Way

Romans 11:1-10

OPENING
up to the Word

Part of Paul's concern for the Jews is that their zeal for God and God's law prevented them from knowing God. How is it possible for people to try so hard to please God that they become oblivious to God's love? Has this ever happened to you?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How does Paul answer this question: "Did God reject his people (v. 1-6)?" Who were the first to accept Jesus?
2. How does the example of Elijah show God's broader perspective (vs. 2-4)? Was Elijah the only obedient Israelite in his day?
3. How was the "remnant," that smaller part of the nation, saved (vs. 5-6)?
4. Although Israel as the people of God earnestly sought to obtain grace, why did so many of them miss the message (vs. 5-10; see Ro 10:16-17)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. What are some ways that culture can make us calloused toward God or numb our ability to know God?
2. Just as the body can build up a physical callus, there can be an emotional or spiritual callus on the heart. Look closely at yourself and ask: What areas of my emotional or spiritual life are calloused?

WINDOW
on the Word

*In 11:7, the Greek word translated **hardened** is also a medical term for **callus**. When a callus is formed, that part of the body loses feeling and sensitivity. Thus, the ancient Israelites became calloused, that is, they became insensitive to God.*



“Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me.”

Romans 11:3

Holier-Than-Thou Attitudes

Romans 11:11-24

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you known anyone who exhibits a *holier-than-thou* attitude? Why do people become like that? Is it contagious? How can we be holy without becoming conceited?

DIGGING
into the Word

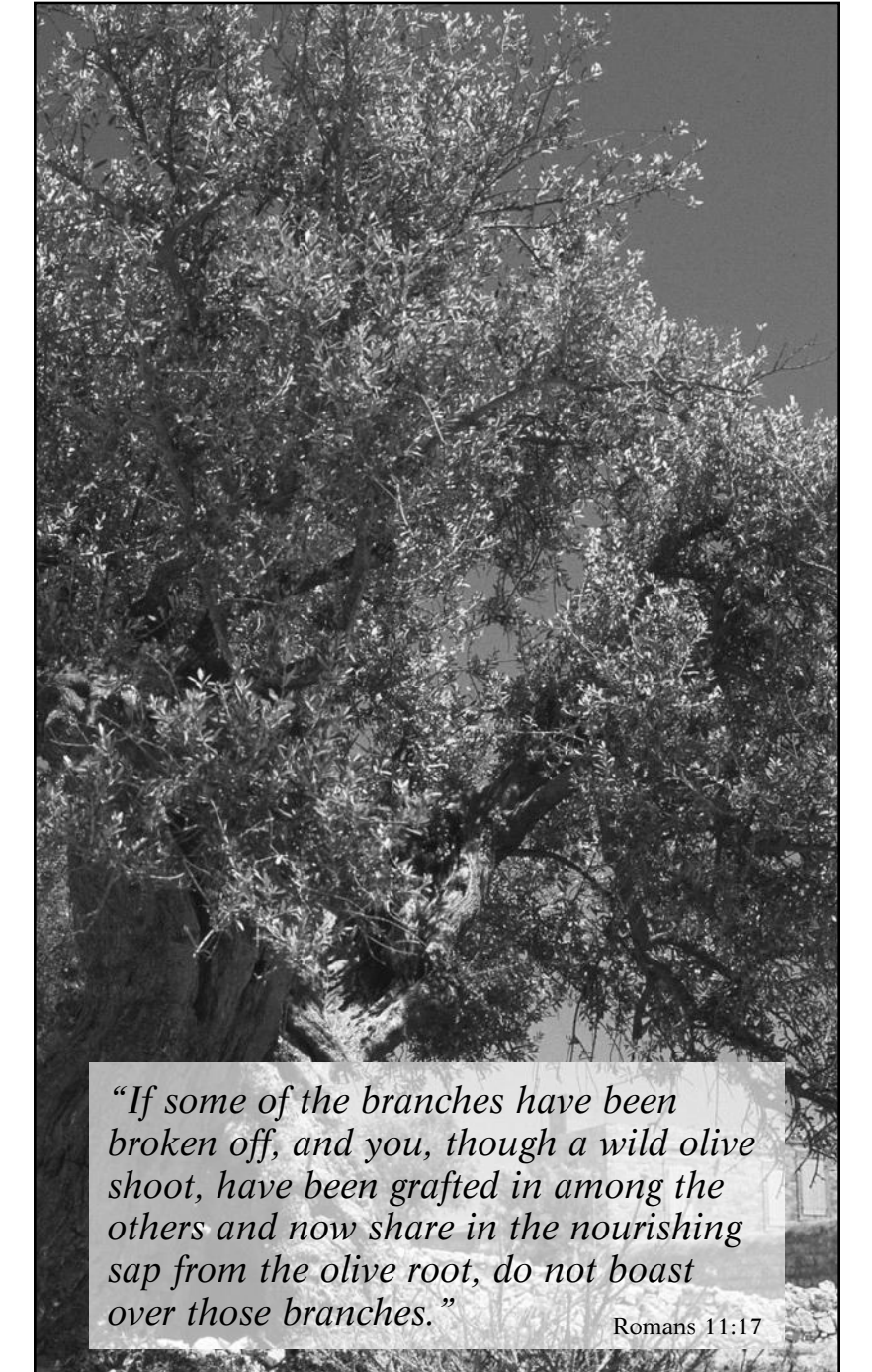
- 1.** Who is Paul addressing (v. 13)? What does he want for the Jews? Is the way to God left open for Israel?
- 2.** In the parable of the olive tree, how are Jews and gentiles connected?
- 3.** What warning is given to gentiles (v. 18)? Why do you think Paul issues this warning?
- 4.** How is God described in this section (vs. 22-24)? How does this reveal a just God who loves all people?

LIVING
out the Word

- 1.** What is your deepest hope and prayer for people who share your cultural background?
- 2.** The tragedy of the Jewish rejection of Jesus resulted in an opening of God's grace to non-Jews. How has another's loss become your gain?

WINDOW
on the Word

Olive trees were important to the economy of Palestine in the first century. Olives provided oil and fruit. The root of the olive tree is vital to its health, so Paul uses it to represent the Abrahamic promise fulfilled in Jesus. If branches were broken off in a storm, other branches could be grafted onto the olive tree. Paul portrays the nation of Israel as broken branches, and the gentiles as wild olive branches grafted on.



“If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches.”

Romans 11:17

The Grandeur of God

Romans 11:25-36

OPENING
up to the Word

As Paul addresses the belief in God that gentiles will have, consider the following quote from Mahatma Gandhi. “How can we little crawling creatures, so utterly helpless as he has made us, how can we possibly measure his greatness, his boundless love, his infinite compassion, such that he allows man insolently to deny him, wrangle about him, and cut the throat of his fellowmen? How can we measure the greatness of God who is so forgiving, so divine?”

DIGGING
into the Word

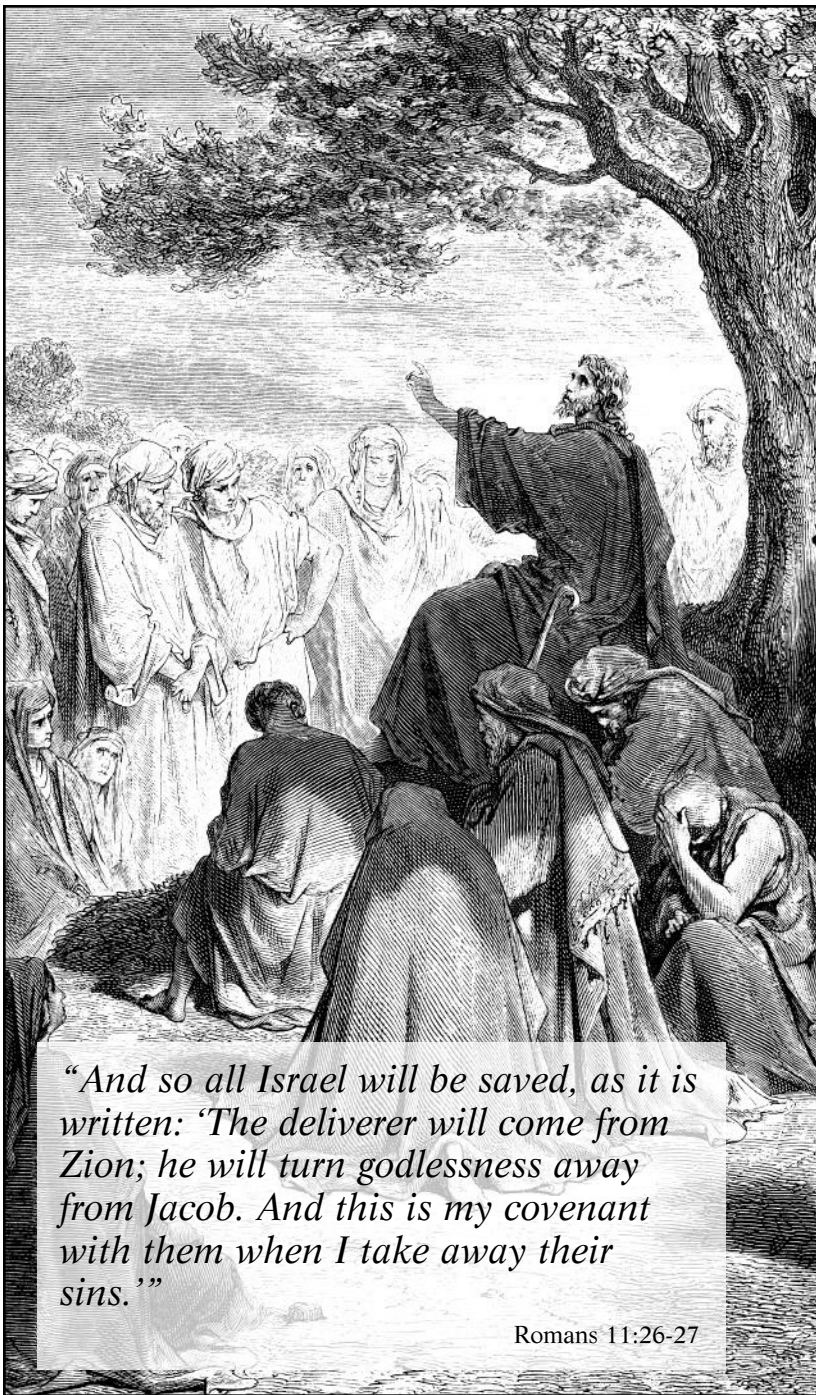
1. How important is the attitude that Christians exhibit to nonbelievers (vs. 25, 20-21)?
2. How is God’s purpose contained in the Old Testament passages that Paul quotes (vs. 26-27)?
3. What is the benefit of Israel’s “hardening” (v. 25)? When does Paul predict this hardening will end?
4. On whom does God have mercy (v. 32)?
5. How does the description of God’s attributes in verses 28-32 relate to Paul’s doxology (declaration of praise to God) on God’s wisdom (vs. 33-36)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Romans 9 through 11 is the story of Israel’s initial rejection of God and God’s continued loving pursuit of Israel. What does this tell you about God, and how can this information help you in your spiritual growth?
2. Imitate the apostle and write your own brief doxology (see vs. 33-36) celebrating the greatness of God.

WINDOW
on the Word

*In this passage we read that **God has called all peoples, both Jewish and gentile, to come to him. His purpose is to give salvation to all who submit themselves to receive his mercy. Paul concludes this section with a doxology honoring the grandeur of our great God.***



“And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.’”

Romans 11:26-27

DAY 11

Living Sacrifices

Romans 12:1-2

OPENING
up to the Word

Has anyone ever made a sacrifice on your behalf? What was it? How have you sacrificed yourself for another person?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How does Paul describe what is holy and pleasing to God (v. 1)?
2. What are Christians to do with their bodies? Their lives? Why does the apostle ask for this commitment?
3. How is a Christian to avoid conforming to the world (v. 2)? (a) no electricity, (b) no automobiles, (c) no rubber tires on automobiles, (d) live in isolation, (e) wear odd clothing, (f) no television or movies, (g) speak in a language that worldly people don't understand, (h) avoid only those things that are contrary to God's will.
4. What do these verses say about God's will? What actions help us understand his will (vs. 1-2)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. In what ways is conformity with the world at odds with the Christian life?
2. When have you succumbed to peer pressure and followed the herd? Are there times when it is okay—even wise—to follow the herd? How do you know?
3. Is your body “holy and pleasing to God” (v. 1)? Do you abuse your body or do you use it to worship God?
4. How do you come to understand the will of God in order to determine what is right?

WINDOW
on the Word

*Paul knew that the Romans were known to **sacrifice** animals to their gods. In contrast to this worthless act of idolatry, Christians were called by God's mercy to commit their time and energy as living sacrifices in service to God. The Greek word translated **transformed** (v. 2) is related to the English term metamorphosis, meaning “to change form.” As a caterpillar goes through a metamorphosis, so a Christian is transformed by his or her submission to God.*

One for All and All for One

DAY 12

Romans 12:3-8

“No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main,” wrote the poet John Donne. In what ways do you need other people, and in what ways do others need you?

- 1.** God has blessed Christians with many different spiritual gifts. What attitude must we have about ourselves (v. 3)? About others?
 - 2.** How does Paul use the analogy of the human body to explain the need for unity in the church (vs. 4-5)?
 - 3.** What gifts and talents are mentioned in this passage (vs. 6-8)? In your opinion, which ones are more significant? Do you feel this is intended to be a *complete* list, or are these merely examples of the kinds of gifts God gives?
 - 4.** What responsibility do Christians have toward one another (v. 3-8)?
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- 1.** What gifts do you have? What gifts do you wish you had? Is it possible that you have some gifts but have not developed them?
 - 2.** Of the gifts cited in this section, which have other people used to help you? Which ones have you been able to use to help other people?
 - 3.** Why are mercy and cheerfulness linked together? What is the danger of mercy without cheer or joy?
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Although **prophesying** (v. 6) sometimes means predicting the future, the word is applied to any person who brings a message from God. Thus, most of us can prophesy when we offer an encouraging word to someone who is discouraged or when we bring a word of comfort to someone in sorrow.

OPENING

up to the Word

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“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.”

Romans 12:10-11

Christian Life in Action

DAY 13

Romans 12:9-16

Can you think of a friend who exemplifies the Christian life? How has he or she influenced you?

1. List the virtues mentioned in this section. How does Paul pair or group concepts to explain the Christian life in relation to society?
 2. What vices are mentioned in this section?
 3. If you were a Christian in Rome and received this letter from Paul, would you find his comments offensive? Helpful? Confusing? What do you think was Paul's intention in writing this section to the Roman Christians?
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1. Ask yourself these questions and answer as honestly as you can:

- Is my love sincere?
- Do I honor others above myself or am I self-centered?
- Am I a joyful Christian or do I view life and people pessimistically?
- Am I one who truly empathizes with others?
- Am I spiritually mature enough to reach out to one who persecutes me?

2. How did Jesus exemplify the virtues cited in this section?

*The apostle encourages us to practice **brotherly love** (v. 10). The Greek word used here is *philostorgos*, meaning "family love." Christians love each other because they are members of one family.*

OPENING

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Overcoming Evil With Good

Romans 12:17-21

OPENING
up to the Word

Who is your enemy at this time? (a) communists, (b) a rival sports team, (c) the I.R.S., (d) the police, (e) a family member, (f) your obnoxious neighbor, (g) bureaucrats, (h) democrats, (i) republicans, (j) your boss, (k) pagans, (l) atheists, (m) Christians of another denomination, (n) all “stupid” people.

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Christians know they are to avoid evil. In this passage, how does Paul describe what is evil (vs. 17-21)?
2. How does Paul describe good Christian actions?
3. What do you learn about the nature of God from this passage (v. 19)?
4. What do you anticipate as the best possible result of responding to one’s enemies by doing good for them?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Which of these exhortations is easiest for you to follow? Which is the hardest? What command do you most wish that other people would follow?
2. In what ways can you influence attitudes and circumstances to “live at peace with everyone” (v. 18)?
3. Is it difficult not to counter a slight against you by fighting back? How do you keep from doing that?
4. What are some ways that we can feed an enemy or give him something to drink? Can you think of an example of someone who did this to an enemy?

WINDOW
on the Word

*In Romans 12:19, Paul quotes Deuteronomy 32:35. There, in Moses’ final message to the Israelites, he recites these words in a song. Throughout the song God is seen as **the Rock**, symbolic of his power and refuge against evil enemies (Dt 32). However, Israel had rebelled against the Rock (vs. 15-17). They had deserted the Rock (v. 18). Nevertheless, God limited the enemies’ victories over his people (vs. 27-31).*

“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Romans 12:21

