

## Romans: Verse-by-Verse

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### Romans 11:15-16

#### Study Notes

- **Paul's Hope:** That his efforts would result in the salvation of at least some of his fellow Jews.

Romans 11:13-14: "Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them."

"Was Paul seriously downplaying his role in evangelizing his Jewish generation?"

**Two possible answers:** 1. Paul was a realist. 2. Paul viewed his efforts as a part of God's larger plan.

Pew Research Center study: 23 million people worldwide describe themselves as Christians. Only 350,000 Jews claim to be Messianic.

- **"The Reconciliation Of The World."**

Look at verses 15-16:

"For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.

In describing Israel's rejection of the gospel, Paul uses words like, "fall", "transgression" and "defeat". God has not completely rejected Israel because Israel has not completely rejected the Gospel: Paul calls it "the reconciliation of the world."

A phrase that appears in Paul's other letters: 2 Corinthians 5:19; Ephesians 2:14-17; Colossians 1:19-20

One of the ways Paul sees salvation is as a reconciliation: See: Romans 1:21-25.

The Gentile were estranged from God: They acted as if they had never known him. What was necessary? Reconciliation. It came in a way no one could have imagined,

When the majority of the Jews rejected the gospel ... the Gentile's discovered salvation, embraced the riches of grace, and found God's plan for the "reconciliation of the world."

- **"Life from the Dead":**

"If their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?"

Johan Stott: Three was of looking at that statement:

### **1. The Literal Interpretation:**

Paul may be referring to the general resurrection -- the final consummation, the resurrection of the dead, and the eternal life that follows.

### **2. A Spiritual Interpretation:**

Some scholars feel Paul is referring to our being 'raised' with Christ, which is one of his most prevalent views. In Romans 6:13, Paul spoke of Christians as 'those who have been brought from death to life.'

### **3. The Figurative Interpretation.**

Paul foresees that a previously "unimaginable blessing" that will affect the Gentiles. Israel's restoration will be a worldwide blessing that will

eclipse anything in past history.

A possible reference to Ezekiel chapter 37's vision of dry bones, in which Israel's restoration is pictured as a resurrection of dry bones that are given both flesh and life. (See: Ezekiel 37:13-14)

- **“Dough, Root & Branches”**

v. 16: “If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.”

Two metaphors to explain the relationship of the believing Gentiles to the believing Jews: Jewish Firstfruits and Root & Branches:

**Firstfruits:** When the Israelites practiced tithing ... the first 10% of all new crops and animals were to be segregated and offered to God. The firstfruits, then, represented the entire crop or flock.

**Root and Branches:** “If the root is holy, so are the branches.” “Root and branches” probably point to the Jewish patriarchs and their offspring: If the patriarch was set apart to God, all of his descendants bear the same sanctification.

The overall point: The Gentiles have joined True Israel in God's plan for salvation. The believing Jews represent the “firstfruits” and the “roots”, whereas the believing Gentiles represent the rest of what has been accepted and sanctified.

Paul is going to develop the second metaphor more closely in the next set of verses. That is what we will look at next time.