

Copyright © Two Journeys Ministry

Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

[www.twojourneys.org](http://www.twojourneys.org)

Please use in accordance with the copyright policy found at [twojourneys.org](http://twojourneys.org)

## **God's Warning to Gentiles: Don't Be Arrogant**

### **Romans 11:16-24**

Introduction: The Most Obnoxious Human Attitude... Pride

God hates pride more than any human state... it stinks in His nostrils

There is no pride so offensive as pride in salvation

God through Paul labors to destroy both Jewish pride and Gentile pride

### **I. Paul's Goals: The Destruction of Gentile Boasting Over Israel and the Unity of the Church**

#### **A. Pride Rooted in Human Nature**

1. Augustine considered it the root of all sin

2. Definition

a. Self-centeredness: like an infant, totally focused on himself, like a toddler who wants every toy in the sandbox

b. Self-exaltation over others

i) Secondly, pride escalates into feelings of superiority over other people

ii) It results in competitiveness and boasting and arrogance

iii) Pride seeks to exalt oneself by putting everyone else down

c. Self-exaltation over God

i) Pride's ugliest form comes in its manifestation toward God

ii) Pride says to God "You will NOT rule over me!"

iii) Pride desires to take God's rightful place, to rule one's own life, do whatever we want to do

- iv) Pride displays especially an independent spirit toward God, that says to the Almighty “I don’t need you!”
- v) Pride ultimately reveals itself in our religion: atheism, which says “I am” and there is no God; or works religions which says “I can earn God’s favor without God’s help” or in idolatry, which says “I can fashion God after my own image”

3. God has made pride “heavenly enemy number one”

***Isaiah 2:12-18 The LORD Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty, for all that is exalted (and they will be humbled)...<sup>17</sup> The arrogance of man will be brought low and the pride of men humbled; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day,<sup>18</sup> and the idols will totally disappear.***

- 4. The ultimate goal of the gospel: salvation to the glory of God alone
  - a. God is intending a salvation that HUMBLER MAN TO THE CORE
  - b. God has saved us in a way that the only thing we can boast about is Christ, and Christ alone
  - c. God has humbled the Gentiles by revealing that we were on the outside, rejected, unfit for citizenship in Israel because of our uncircumcised bodies and hearts
  - d. God now humbles the Jews by binding them over to unbelief and stripping them from the Olive Tree of his people
  - e. In the end, God strips us all of nationalism and arrogance and boasting
  - f. That is the purpose of the climax of this chapter

***Romans 11:32 For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.***

B. Jewish Arrogance Over Gentiles Addressed Earlier

- 1. All of Romans 2 and much of Romans 3 is set up to humble Israel from boasting over the Gentiles
- 2. Jewish tendency to boast over Gentiles is well established
  - a. God had told Israel that they were his chosen nation:

***Exodus 19:4-6 Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine,<sup>6</sup> you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.***

- b. God had given Moses many laws that excluded Gentiles from participation in the worship of God
  - c. The Jews felt they had ample reason to boast over the Gentiles, whom they called “Uncircumcised dogs”
3. Paul stripped the Jews based on their inability to keep the Law of Moses

***Romans 2:17-24 Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God; <sup>23</sup> You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? <sup>24</sup> As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."***

***Romans 2:25-29 Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised.***

Paul there is laboring to strip Jews of their boasting over Gentiles

#### C. Now Gentile Arrogance Over Jews Addressed

- 1. Paul uses Romans 11 to ward off any reverse Gentile boasting over the Jews
- 2. The whole problem of Romans 9-11 is based on the overwhelming success of the gospel among Gentiles and the overwhelming failure of the gospel among Jews
- 3. The Gentiles could easily get to feeling that they had REPLACED the Jews in God’s plan

***vs. 19-20 You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." <sup>20</sup> Granted.***

In fact, there are several schools of thought in theology which teach a replacement theory... that the church has replaced Israel as God’s people

- 4. So Paul seeks to put Gentiles in their place

***Romans 11:13 I am talking to you Gentiles.***

#### D. Perhaps Disunity in the Church of Rome

- 1. Paul’s regular habit of speaking to Jews and then to Gentiles and again to Jews etc. in Romans shows that the church in Rome was mixed
- 2. Especially from this chapter, commentators have discerned the possibility of a Jew-Gentile split, even a divided church
- 3. So he labors to maintain unity by humbling both sides

### E. Biggest Concern: The Glory of God in the Salvation of Jew and Gentile

1. Gentile arrogance threatens the unity of the church
2. Gentile arrogance threatens their own security in salvation as well, since only as Gentile believers continue to stand by faith will they be permitted to remain among the people of God
3. BUT MOST OF ALL: Gentile arrogance over the Jews threatens to diminish the glory of God in salvation
4. Therefore, Paul knew he had to attack it vigorously

## II. The Sordid History of Anti-Semitism in Christendom

### A. The Most Graphic Form of “Boasting” Over the Fallen: Anti-Semitism

#### B. What is not Anti-Semitism

1. The New Testament
  - a. Claiming that the Jews were instrumental (as were the Romans) in the death of Christ
  - b. Claiming that Jesus is the only way to heaven

#### 2. Jewish Evangelism

A chaplain for the Washington Nationals, Jon Moeller, was dismissed from his ministry by the team because he affirmed that Jews who do not trust in Christ will be lost eternally. A Washington Post reporter put it in her front-page story and a Washington rabbi loudly stated that the Washington Nationals locker room was being used to preach hatred.” To the Rabbi, evangelism of Jews is anti-semitic

This is totally wrong! Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, died for sins, and anyone who rejects Him will be lost eternally, whether they are Jew, Greek, barbarian, Roman, Russian, Irish, Chinese or American

### C. A Long and Disgraceful History of “Christian” Anti-Semitism

#### 1. The Crusades

Beginning in 1096, Christian leaders launched a series of crusades against the Muslims to win control of Palestine, the birthplace of Jesus. On their way to the Middle East, the crusader armies attacked Jewish communities along the route. The First Crusade was especially bloody. Entire communities of Jews were forced to choose between baptism or death, and since few Jews would renounce their faith, the First Crusade resulted in nearly 10,000 Jews being slaughtered during the first six months alone.

Godfrey Bouillon, leader of the First Crusade, vowed "to leave no single member of the Jewish race alive," and ordered the synagogue in Jerusalem burned to the ground with its entire Jewish congregation trapped inside.

## 2. Medieval Europe

- a. Jews segregated and forced to live in ghettos with high walls
- b. Isolation led to further misunderstandings
- c. Gentiles blamed Jews for the Black Death, the plague that wiped out 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of Europe's population

## 3. The Inquisition

- a. Roman Catholic church in Spain instituted the Inquisition to root out heresy
- b. One of the groups most severely persecuted was the Jews
- c. Forced to wear long conical hats and subjected to public ridicule; sometimes Jews were also tortured
- d. Many fled for North Africa

## 4. Martin Luther: late in his life wrote terrifyingly bitter words against Jews

## 5. Late 1800s: the pogroms in Russia and Poland, organized with at least complicity from the church

The Jews were largely uprooted from their homes and farms and forced to wander or flee for their lives

## 6. The Nazis

- a. Hitler saw the Passion Play at Oberammergau

Adolf Hitler had visited the 1934 performance, a re-enactment of the Passion of Christ performed every ten years by residents of the small German village. Hitler gave it his eager blessing. "It is vital that the Passion play be continued at Oberammergau; for never has the menace of Jewry been so convincingly portrayed as in this presentation of what happened in the time of the Romans," Hitler had said.

To make matters worse, the Dachau concentration camp had performed its horrific duty not far from Oberammergau. While Hitler's brand of murderous anti-Semitism owed far more to scientific determinism than Christianity, he preyed on a history of faith-based persecution. When convenient, Hitler and his Nazi henchmen dredged up the anti-Semitic writings of an elderly Martin Luther to justify their hatred for Jews.

- b. The failure of the German church to stand against Hitler's laws and attacks is one of the great black marks in Christian history

#### D. The Threat to Those Who Boast: Eternal Condemnation

***Romans 11:20-21 Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. <sup>21</sup> For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.***

### III. Six Reasons for Gentile Humility Toward Unbelieving Jewish People

#### A. Israel's Lasting Consecration as God's Chosen People (vs. 16)

***Romans 11:16 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.***

1. Basic concept of "firstfruits" and "portion" offerings: everything belongs to God... Numbers 15:20-21, first batch of bread offered to God
2. "Holy" here means "sacred", "set apart for God's private use"
3. The part of the dough and the root: the patriarchs
  - a. Other interpretation: the part and the root = Jewish Christians
  - b. God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: the firstfruits of the whole lump of dough, the root of the tree
  - c. Earlier in Romans: Gentile Christians clearly linked to and associated with Abraham
    - i) Abraham's faith the pattern God followed for all saved people
    - ii) All saved people seen to be Abraham's children through faith in the promise... Gentiles become Jews spiritually through Christ

***Romans 4:16-17 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring-- not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. <sup>17</sup> As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations."***

- d. God isn't through with His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

***Romans 15:8-9 For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs <sup>9</sup> so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name."***

The patriarchs are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob... and we Gentiles are saved in view of those promises

The promises to the patriarchs were made in view of their descendents... and that first and foremost means the biological children

- e. Thus the firstfruits of the lump are the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and therefore the lineage is still holy to the Lord

**4. THEREFORE... Gentiles should not boast over the fallen state of the Jewish nation, because the nation as a whole is still holy to the Lord, even if individual Jews are evicted through unbelief**

B. The “Olive Tree” Is Jewish in Heritage (vs. 17-20)

1. Verses 17-20: Paul picks up on the gardening image and speaks of roots and a tree... an Olive tree; an unforgettable image
2. The Olive Tree is a living entity, with a development and a history
3. It grows year by year, developing branches, and on those branches the gardener expects to see fruit
4. Some fruitless branches have been stripped off, some wild branches have mysteriously been grafted in contrary to nature
5. But the tree REMAINS ALIVE... the tree was not chopped down, but it continues, it develops, it still draws moisture and nutrients from the soil and pumps life-giving sap through its entirety, so that every branch connected with the trunk literally derives its moment by moment existence and life from the tree
6. The tree represents GOD’S PEOPLE... His children by faith, and until recently in Paul’s day it was exclusively a Jewish tree... it is the Jewish history... it is the patriarchs, it is the Law of Moses, it is the Prophets, it is the history of God’s loving provision for the Jews... God’s people found their identity from the development of God’s promises to the Jews
7. The tree is not ISRAEL per se, for physical descendents of Abraham, unbelieving Jews have been cut out... in the tree means in right relationship with God, outside the tree means rejected by God...
8. But the tree is JEWISH by nature... it is a JEWISH tree; God worked salvation for the world through this one tribe descended from Abraham
9. Jesus made it very clear:

*John 4:22 salvation is from the Jews.*

**10. Therefore, Gentile Christians should not boast over fallen Jews because the tree of salvation is Jewish by nature... through the promises made to**

**the Jewish patriarchs, and through the development in Moses, David, and the Prophets**

C. Gentiles Are Wild, by Nature Excluded, by Grace Included (vs. 17-20)

*vs. 17-20 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, <sup>18</sup> do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. <sup>19</sup> You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." <sup>20</sup> Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid.*

***Romans 11:24 After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!***

1. The picture here is of the WILD BY NATURE Gentiles
2. The tree from which the Gentiles was cut was wild, which means not tended, not cultivated, and handled with care and developed with intelligence

Illus. Imagine going for a three-day hike through the deep woods and mountain ravines of West Virginia... the Blue Ridge mountains; and you stumble upon an apple tree in the midst of a wild clearing... it seems like no human being has been there for centuries, and you pick one of the insect affected apples, and inspect it... THIS UNTENDED TREE, left to grow in the woods is a WILD APPLE TREE; but suppose you drive to an orchard, park your car, buy a bag from the orchard employees, and go to a spot they direct you to go to and stand among neatly planted rows of apple trees, row upon row... these are CULTIVATED apple trees, are their plump, perfect, insect free fruit testifies to the careful and intelligent handling by the owner of the orchard

Israel is a tended, cultivated tree... tended by the Promises of God, by the Commands of God through the Law of Moses, by the Warnings of God through the prophets, by the Leadership of God through holy men like Joshua and Samuel and David... and disciplined by the Judgments of God through various calamities to train Israel to hate sin and love God

3. God did not guide the Gentiles, but pretty much left them to develop as they thought best... basically to go to hell in whatever way seemed best to them
  - a. Gentiles developed their own gods and goddesses
  - b. Gentiles developed their own mystics and histories and sinful habits and shrines and priests and priestesses... but they were never confronted by God through the Law and the Prophets... they were never judged and restored by the loving heavenly Father... they were left to grow wild, and they grew wild

In Lystra, when the pagans there wanted to offer sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas, thinking they were gods:

***Acts 14:15-16 "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. <sup>16</sup> In the past, he let all nations go their own way.***

4. Gentiles are wild by nature
5. YET Contrary to nature were grafted into a Jewish olive tree
  - a. "contrary to nature" means the two don't naturally go together
  - b. The most natural thing in the world is for a pagan to keep being a pagan and to go to hell for his sins
  - c. But suddenly, through the miracle of grace through the gospel of Jesus Christ, Gentiles of all things, have become spiritual Jews
  - d. Abraham has become our father, Jesus, the King of the Jews has become our King and Savior, the Jewish Bible has become for us the very word of God, the promises made to Abraham have become the hope of our lives and the joy of our hearts
  - e. AND the Holy Spirit has been given to previously wild Gentiles to make them conform to the perfections of God's holy laws... to give up sexual immorality, idolatry, emptiness and wild revelry... God has actually written the Law of God on our hearts
  - f. And this is "contrary to nature"... the second time this striking phrase has been used in Romans... the first was in Romans 1 where it spoke of (Gentile) sexual perversion, homosexuality, which was contrary to nature
  - g. Here, what is contrary to nature is that Gentile sinners like us have been 1) CUT OUT of our Gentile heritage as wicked sinners and 2) grafted into a Jewish Olive tree!!!!
6. **Therefore, Gentiles MUST NOT BOAST over the fallen branches off the cultivated olive tree, because we were by nature EXCLUDED, on the outside and rejected... we should be very very very humble, because the only difference between us and them is the mere sovereign grace of Almighty God**

D. Israel Supports Gentile Christians, Not the Other Way Around (vs. 17-18)

***vs. 17-18 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, <sup>18</sup> do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you.*

1. Gentiles derive all their spiritual life and vitality by being grafted into a Jewish olive tree
2. We derive **“nourishing sap”** from the Olive tree
  - a. Sap from the word of God
  - b. Sap from Christ, who was Jewish

***John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.***

3. We are **supported**, held up off the ground—out of the muck and filth of wicked sinfulness and idolatry—by our miraculous grafting into this Jewish tree; the root that supports us is the promise made to the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

**4. Gentile Christians should not boast over the fallen branches, the rejected Jews, because we derive our moment by moment life and health spiritually from being included in this Jewish Olive tree**

- a. Every day we turn to a Jewish book, the Bible, and suck life-giving sap from its pages, nourishing our faith on words written, for the most part, by Jewish prophets and Jewish apostles... our daily nourishment is JEWISH in nature
- b. Every moment, we turn to Christ to save us and keep us and protect us and give us life and make us fruitful; he is the vine, we are the branches... and He is Jewish, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham
- c. In this Jewish God we live and move and have our being! How can we boast over Jews who have rejected Christ??

**E. Gentiles Will Get No More Special Treatment Than Jews Did (vs. 19-23)**

1. Paul concedes that individual Jews were cut off from their own Olive Tree and are now lying on the ground, rejected by God
2. Paul goes deeper to ask WHY they were cut off?

***vs. 19-23 You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." <sup>20</sup> Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. <sup>21</sup> For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. <sup>22</sup> Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that***

*you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. <sup>23</sup> And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.*

3. Clear teaching: The Jews were cut off from their own olive tree because of unbelief... they refused to trust in Christ
4. The root of their unbelief was PRIDE... pride in the national heritage, pride in their lawkeeping, pride in their religious achievements, even pride in their national sufferings
5. Therefore when Christ came and said “Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish”, they were mortally offended and rejected the message
6. AND when Jesus died on the cross and hung there under a curse from God, they felt it was absolute airtight proof that He was NOT the Messiah
7. BUT when the apostles preached that He died taking their curse on Himself, dying the death of a condemned man because Jews and Gentiles were all equally sinful in God’s sight, this was BRUTALLY OFFENSIVE to the Jews
8. Jesus was the stumbling block to Israel because of one wretched state of the sinful human soul: PRIDE
9. BUT says Paul, what would the root of Gentile boasting over the fallen branches be but PRIDE... the exact same attitude that had resulted in their rejection of Christ and had caused God to strip them off their own Olive Tree
10. If Gentiles BOAST over fallen Jews, they are actually revealing something very plain: they have no faith and are not actually truly grafted into the tree

Next week, we’ll talk about the meaning of this severe warning to Gentiles who boast

We’ll deal with the question of how this fits into the doctrine of “once saved, always saved”

NOTE: Paul is not teaching here that genuine branches can be stripped off, that true believers can lose their salvation... rather he is warning that arrogant boasting proves that we were never saved to begin with

11. **Therefore, Gentile Christians should not boast over unbelieving Jews because God will not spare fake Christians any more than he spared fake Jews, and boasting people are not truly saved people**

F. God Is Able to Graft Jews Back In, and Someday He Will

*vs. 23-24 And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. <sup>24</sup> After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how*

*much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!*

1. The final reason Gentile Christians should not boast over fallen Jews is that God is able to graft them back in again
2. The whole issue in this passage is God's sovereign power, God's sovereign grace
3. If God can take us from our wild background that had NOTHING to do with this Jewish olive tree, how can we possibly imagine that He can't graft Jews back into their own Olive Tree?
4. God can take the branches lying on the ground and graft them in in a moment!!
5. He is able to save Jews any time He chooses... so the very branches you are boasting over may later today be saved through the preaching of the gospel
6. Saul of Tarsus heard of Christ crucified and REJECTED HIM, rejected him through unbelief, and was like one of these Jewish branches, stripped from the people of God and lying rejected on the ground
7. Then one day, Saul was breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples and began a journey to Damascus, and that very day, on the Road to Damascus, Christ saved him, grafted him back into the Jewish Olive tree... the true people of God
8. God can do that to any one of the presently rejected Jewish branches lying on the ground
9. Right now, they are rejected... but God's grace is more powerful than their unbelief... and if they do not persist in unbelief they WILL be grafted in, for GOD IS ABLE to graft them in again
10. What is more, Romans 11 says that that is precisely what God WILL do at the end of the world... He will scoop up a whole generation's worth of rejected branches and graft them back into their own Olive Tree by faith in Christ
- 11. Therefore, Gentile Christians should not boast over fallen Jews, because God is able any time to graft them in**
12. Furthermore, what kind of Gentile believer will it take to graft them in? Would it not be a humble, broken-hearted sinner saved by grace, who weeps for the lostness of Israel with the same kind of sorrow that Paul had, and whose constant prayer was for the salvation of Jews?

13. Arrogant Gentile believers disqualify themselves from any part or share in the ministry it will take to graft them back in again because they will do none of this weeping, praying, and witnessing

#### IV. Applications

##### A. Search Your Heart and Your Life for Spiritual Pride

1. Remind yourself frequently that you are merely a sinner saved by grace
2. Refresh your memory of all the sins that God has covered in your life by the blood of Christ
  - a. Sins of the mouth: slander, gossip, disrespect to authorities, unkind words, filthy language
  - b. Sins of the mind: unclean thoughts, covetousness, arrogance, selfishness
  - c. Sins of the wallet: self-indulgence, greed
  - d. Sins of the passions: anger, lust, immoderate behavior of any kind
3. Ask God to show you all these sins and then to show you times you have felt superior to someone else spiritually:
  - a. Perhaps you have said “I would never do such a wicked thing!”
  - b. Perhaps you have comforted yourself that at least you haven’t murdered or stolen or committed adultery (at least not with your body)
  - c. Perhaps you’ve heard a story about some sin that another Christian has committed and you excused yourself and felt superior
4. Come to the cross again for deep humility and brokenness

***Psalm 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.***

##### B. Search Your Heart and Your Life for Anti-Semitism

1. Maybe you have allowed yourself to think poorly of unbelieving Jews
2. Maybe you have found yourself despising Jewish people or scorning them
3. Maybe you’ve heard some unkind joke or slur or story and found secret or even open pleasure in it
4. Maybe you in some sense feel superior to Jews who have rejected Christ

5. Maybe you minimized in some way the immense suffering the Jews underwent in Nazi Germany
6. Perhaps these attitudes surfaces when there were protests against Mel Gibson's movie, "The Passion of Christ"

C. Ask God to Give You Paul's Stance Toward Lost Jews and Gentiles

1. Deep sorrow over their lostness
2. Deep yearning in prayer for their salvation
3. Consistent and sacrificial willingness to lead Jews and Gentiles to Christ through the faithful and courageous preaching of the gospel

D. Take God's Warnings to Heart

1. This chapter warns us that God will cut us off from Christ if we are arrogant
2. Don't let your theology "Once saved always saved" keep you from taking this warning seriously

***Do not be arrogant but be afraid.***