



ROMANS Part 103

Chapter 11:9-11

Israel trips, but doesn't fall.



And David is saying, Let their table become a trap and a mesh, And a snare and a repayment to them: 10 Darkened be their eyes, not to be observing, And their backs bow together continually. 11 I am saying, then, Do they not trip that they should be falling? May it not be coming to that! But in their offense is salvation to the nations, to provoke them to jealousy.

David was pissed, and not in the English sense of being drunk. He was furious at his own people who hounded him as though he were a criminal. (He got drunk later.) David's enemies were jealous of him just as Joseph's brothers despised "daddy's boy." God smiled upon David and everyone knew it. He must have had a glow about him, that king. We know that, in spite of all of David's failings, God loved him. God showed David

a small preview of the grace that He would later lavish upon us. David returned the favor by writing songs.

Jealousy is a typical Israelite trait which God ends up using "against" them in this very chapter, which of course turns out to be *for* them (thus the quotation marks) because it inspires them to appreciate their native calling when God at last glorifies non-Israelite darlings from among the nations and returns Israel onto the front burner of the conian timeline. Israel, realizing what it missed with the body of Christ, latches onto its native Abrahamic promise as though it's the last great hope on Earth—which it is.

"Let their table become a trap and a mesh, and a snare and a repayment," says King David in Psalm 69:22. This is one of those quiet psalms composed by David in the early morning hours—when his anger was most wrath, apparently—while banging upon his lyre. What follows is a passage from this very psalm, heretofore unpublished, recovered by your's truly, written by David in the manner of our modern-day rap tune—

Make it uphill for these enemies—I watch it joyfully,
 Make 'em choke on their pork chops while I live royally.
 Catch 'em in a trap so they can't squirm out of it!
 Serves 'em all right, and now see if I give a s**t.
 Make their backs look like question marks, so the fools can't get up,
 In the meantime, please help me with my Bathsheba hook-up.
 If You can, please see clear, rub pie in their faces,
 In the meantime, keep me hot in Your Yahweh-ish graces.
 Make it dark like night so they bang into refrigerators,
 Quote my words later, I'm a top-notch communicator.



What David said about the Jews came to pass. Their table *has* tripped them up, sending them onto rabbit trails where not even rabbits venture. The "table" here speaks not only of the Jews' breakfast, lunch and dinner

spreads, but every little bauble that tickles their souls. Back in the day, a table was a large mat rolled onto the floor where good stuff got placed. One lounged in front of such a table and feasted one's eyes upon whatever dainty occupied it. Eating and lounging at such a setting meant communion with others of a like mind, not to mention casseroles stuffed with sweet noodles. "Their table" speaks of Israel concentrating on temporary earthly thrills rather than upon God. This traps them in a debilitating cycle of pleasure-seeking. They get so caught up in her own kicks that, after a while, it seems normal to them and they no longer desire the salutary disciplines of God. Those are "old fashioned" and "not very fun at all."

GRUMBLENUTS

Before God temporarily cast away Israel, He disciplined them and they grumbled constantly. There were no casseroles in the Sinai desert. Israel ate God-murdered birds (quail) and weird "bread" (manna) that miraculously appeared on the ground. It was embarrassing and ridiculous. None of the other nations ate these things,



in this way. It seemed to them that God was being arbitrarily mean to them. The other nations had it "a lot better than us" (I'm quoting them here), including casseroles and properly slaughtered fowl. Lots of things went right for the Jews (their clothes never got old; they always had enough to eat and drink; Moses was a responsible leader), but all they could see was their stock free-falling in the world market. They were not keeping up with the Joneses. Worse, the surrounding nations ("the Joneses") made fun of them. Israel was a small nation, but did they have to be stupid too?

"LET'S TRY HAGAR"

Above all people, God destined Israelites to be "somebodies" in the world—even more than other "somebodies." But Israel says, "When is this ever going to happen?" Their patience is long exhausted. It was the same with Abraham as he waited for his promised son. God told Abraham, "You're going to produce offspring that will become lots of people, and I'm talking, *tons*." After a ridiculous amount of years transpired waiting for this, Sarah and Abraham said, "When is this going to happen?" Patience was lost and Sarah convinced her husband that maybe he should "have a go" at her handmaid Hagar. The couple went through with the plan, but the outcome was not the son of promise, but just an average kid named "Ishmael." The promised seed ("Isaac") came later when Abraham and Sarah had completely exhausted their options.

Apply all of this to Israel. Israel keeps asking God, "When are we going to be great and not an embarrassment?" They can't wait forever (according to them), so they take things into their own hands, just as Abraham did. Their goal now is to become wealthy by their own machinations and to enjoy as many sweet noodle casseroles as they can. For dessert, they will inaugurate the millennium without divine assistance. They'll come close to doing just that in Babylon, but this pseudo-monarchy will merely be Ishmael with a foundation, tall buildings, and a false temple. The nations that Israel cavorts with are Hagar. Great for a lay, but not exactly the higher path.

In the wilderness and ever since, "the Joneses" have looked upon the Jews as freaks. (For revenge, the Jews created Baskin-Robbins and Facebook.) Nothing irritates a Jew more than to be looked upon as a freak. God disciplines those He loves and the love of God is tough, but it's still better than God waving you bye-bye as you head off to sea in your homemade boat. This is just what Israel has done, and they're still adrift. *That will teach God!* they think. They do throw a lot of well-attended parties out there in the middle of nowhere, but they're surrounded by icebergs, any one of which will cut them to pieces. The only worse thing than a wrecked table *with* God is a lavishly set banquet without Him.

DEAL WITH THE DEVIL

People oftentimes mistake cornucopia-like blessings for God's favor. *If a bunch of colorful fruit is stuffed into a basket that is shaped like a ram's horn, it must be of God.* No, not really. Satan has mastered the art of well-arranged



fruit. A woman recently told me, “Things haven’t been going so well with my real estate business, and friends say I should get back to church.” I said, “Sign a contract with Satan and you could be the best-selling realtor in South Florida.” That I would equate church with the Evil One hardly shocked her; she was aware of my book, *How to Quit Church Without Quitting God*. What shocked her was how sure I was about it. Jesus wasn’t kidding when He told people to forsake stuff (Luke 14:33). James wasn’t kidding when he said that friendship with the world (church is the world) is enmity with God (James 4:4). Paul doesn’t throw law into our faces, but he does tell us to be content with simple and necessary things like sustenance and shelter (1 Timothy 6:8). Church is neither simple nor necessary. Wander off this trail and you’re up for grabs. The boogie man *will* get you. He cannot possess you, but he can savage your high calling, sending you onto sidetracks. This real estate lady did not exactly do cartwheels at my suggestion that she avoid church. She played the fellowship card, saying, “The people are so *nice*.” I told her, “You can find fellowship in a bowling league. Lots of bowlers are *also* nice. And they don’t tell you to ‘believe in God or else.’ They don’t threaten to dunk you in a lake or make you sign a statement of faith.”

“But they do insist that I wear strange shoes,” she said.

“Hmm. That *is* a problem,” I agreed.

If you’re an Israelite, you needn’t sign a contract with Satan. Simply draw up a blueprint for a pre-Millennium millennium without Jesus, and Satan shows up like an Encyclopedia Britannica salesman. He’ll be so excited to finance such an operation. The door will open for ominous influences. Satan has dispensed with contracts. Movies like *Bedazzled* are passé; Satan reads from a different playbook now. You will be successful as hades, you Israelites—for a while. For a while, the world will beat a path to your motion picture production company and your social network platform promoting peace and plenty. It isn’t as though God would chuck His pre-planned program to accommodate your whining, but God *has* decided that human beings are well-served in the long run by experiencing relatively brief periods of time (brief when compared to the totality of the eons) without Him. “See what it’s like without Me,” God says. That’s you now, Israel. It’s not a permanent condition. You’ll be so much smarter on the other side of it.

WANDERING OFF THE FARM

This is precisely what happened to the prodigal son. The parable of this boy’s adventure parallels Israel’s experience. The kid had had enough of the rules and regulations of his father and decided to cash in his inheritance and see what “the big world” had in store. What it had in store (and what it will always have in store) was lots of food, mixed alcoholic beverages, and some really fascinating naked women. Everything went fine for a while, but one quickly learns that there is no substitute for love no matter what you mix it with or how long its legs are. The prodigal soon realized that maybe life with a loving father wasn’t so bad after all. He repented and returned home, falling thankfully into his father’s waiting arms.

No one can deny, or should deny, that the boy was better off for the experience of having left and returned. On the other side of the fence, the prodigal’s brother “did the right thing” and never squandered a cent of either money or morality, and yet he resented the grace shown his sibling. See? The prodigal was better off having left, squandered, and returned. Israel is *supposed* to “wander off the farm.” She’ll be better in the end because of it and won’t end up like the elder brother whose even and consistent life disserved him. The parable of the prodigal

is not only a microcosm of Israel's future eonian course, but smacks of her past as well.

KING KONG

It started when Israel wanted a king like the other nations. What prompted this? It was that embarrassing trek through the wastes of Sinai, for starters. The wilderness was tough on them, but at least they had God. They were the laughingstock of the world, yes (eating quail and manna and building an elaborate, mobile temple made of animal skins), but at least the Sovereign of the Universe camped with them. Not a bad neighbor to have, if you ask me. Borrow a cup of sugar? Sure. But Israel simply couldn't take the world's ridicule. They hated being different. They wanted a king like everyone else—



But the people refused to hearken to the voice of Samuel; they said to him, “No, for there should be a king over us, that we too would become like all the other nations. Our king will judge us and go forth before us and fight our battles.” When Samuel heard all the words of the people, he spoke them in the ears of Yahweh. And Yahweh replied to Samuel, Hearken to their voice, and give them a king to reign for them (1 Samuel 8:19-22).

In the interest of teaching them something, God gave them King Saul—

Now there was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Becorath, the son of Aphiah, the son of a Benjamite, a mighty man of valor. He had a son whose name was Saul, a choice and handsome man, and there was not a more handsome person than he among the sons of Israel; from his shoulders and up he was taller than any of the people (1 Samuel 9:1-2).

Whenever Israel bases any decision on the flesh, the results are disastrous. This people turns being hard on oneself into a national pastime. This is what David means when he writes (quoted by Paul here in Romans 11), “And their backs bow together continually.” As Paul says concerning the accumulation of wealth, “Those intending to be rich fall into a trial and a trap” (1 Timothy 6:9).

Just when you think you've taken the easy path in life, it transmutes itself into a problem. This is a law of life. Discipline is easy and “shortcuts” are hard. (Just ask the Donner party.) I know this is counterintuitive. We're looking at long versus short term here. Living wantonly has a frighteningly brief shelf life. For Israel, this “short” life has been the two thousand years since the murder of Christ. Again, it's only short when compared to the eonian times.

EASY IS HARD

On some days I can't stand the thought of going out for a run. It seems easier to stay home, and some days I do just that. But if I stay home for too many days in a row, the system breaks down. My resolve crumbles, followed by my body, then my mind. Life eventually gets hard. Get this: *not* doing something hard, is hard. Indolence makes me fat and lazy. This bends my back, literally and figuratively. So I do the “hard” thing and lace up the shoes. This ends up being the easiest thing in the long run because, in this funny life of contrasts and paradoxes, hard is easy and easy is hard. With running, a small investment of time and effort—45-90 minutes—pays dividends for the remainder of the day. One hour invested brings twenty-three hours of the satisfaction of a job well done. Israel has “had it easy,” without God, for two thousand years. Where is the Kingdom? Where is the head and not the tail of the nations? Had she done “the hard thing” two thousand years ago—surrendered her power and bowed to Christ—we'd be one thousand years beyond a one-thousand-year rule of Israel over the Earth.

Hard is easy and easy is hard.

Saul's reign eventually caved to David's. When Samuel anointed Jesse's least-likely son, David was just a kid tending the flocks. He was the opposite of the stately Saul. Here, finally, was God's kind of king. He would do things "the hard way."

PAUL RESCUES DAVID

David comes hard against his own people in Psalm 69:22, quoted here by Paul in Romans 11, but Paul rescues the king by asking the question, "I am saying, then, Do they not trip that they should be falling? May it not be coming to that! But in their offense is salvation to the nations, to provoke them to jealousy."

On a recent run, I tripped but did not fall. It was a really hard trip. I caught a sidewalk seam and the next thing I knew my torso was parallel to the ground. Staying vertical became a circus act, starring my legs. My recovery had to have looked awkward to witnesses. On the other hand, I may have scored 9.5; 9.5; 9.0 and 10 by a panel of independent judges. I do have a measure of pride and succeeded in not killing myself.

This is Israel. She has more than a measure of pride and yet has tripped profoundly in front of the whole world. (I was merely on 3rd Street in Fort Lauderdale.) The account



of Israel's massive stumble is described in excruciating detail in the best-selling book in history, the Bible. Poor Israel. But by a remarkable, last second circus act executed by God (also known as "the New Covenant"), she will not fall. (In the meantime,

there is the remnant.) A fall would mean, "God is finished with Israel." Many think that Israel is already flat on the sidewalk, never to move again. These people are called "Preterists." Another name for "Preterist" is "unbeliever." These people refuse to believe what God says, through Paul, concerning Israel. Israel has *not* tripped so as to fall (Romans 11:11). The Preterists imagine that God has substituted the body of Christ for Israel. They are wise in their own estimation, these Preterists.

"SALVATION TO THE NATIONS"

"In their offense is salvation to the nations, to provoke them to jealousy" (Romans 11:11).

The only reason that you and I have the rare and bombastic promises from God that we have, is due to the offense of Israel. Think about it. If the kingdom had come in the days of Messiah at the testimony of Christ and the twelve—as it was "scheduled" to come—then where would you and I be? Humanly speaking, there may not even have been occasion for our birth. So thank God for the stumbling of Israel! True, we would all still receive eternal life because of our association with Adam and consequent association with Christ (Romans 5:18-19), but I'm talking about ruling and reigning among the celestials. Our calling blows Israel's calling out of the solar system. To what shall we credit Israel's stumbling? God yanking them temporarily off of Earth's stage made room for us. This is the secret brought to us by Paul. He calls his very work, "the administration of the secret" (Ephesians 3:9). No prophet ever got wind that Israel would trip for two thousand years. Why in the world would *that* ever happen? God's plans for the nations were a secret until Paul.

These were God's plan from the beginning, however. It's not as though Israel's stubbornness surprised Him and He thought to Himself, "*Now that the kingdom is delayed, perhaps permanently, how will I occupy Myself? I know! I'll do something completely unexpected with non-Israelites.*" It's not that way. The body of Christ occupied God's mind the whole time (from before the disruption of the word—Ephesians 1:4), but He did not want to lead with it. There were vital lessons to teach concerning law and grace and human nature. For this, Israel became His object lesson. When she finally predeterminedly failed, God had cleared the way for the fun thing that had been bubbling in His heart from Day One: bless complete unworthies with a superlative destiny. With Israel on the back burner, God rubs His mitts together with glee and says, "Finally!" Having divorced the descendants of Abraham, God now romances other lovers. Does He forever abandon the former wife? Never. The re-marriage is already scheduled (Revelation chapter 21). This is the New Covenant on steroids. In the meantime, God enjoys this "wicked little" affair with the unwise, weak, ignoble and stupid (1 Corinthians 1:26-29). Israel will one day realize this after we're gone. She'll get her knickers in a twist, for sure, but the demon jealousy will drive her hard to her own evangel.

Quite the opposite of a fall, I would say. —MZ