

How Gentiles Can Demonstrate God's Faithfulness to Israel

Many non-Jewish (Gentile) believers are hesitant to share the Good News of Messiah with a Jewish person.

Some are nervous that they may not know what to say should they be asked a tough question. Others do not share because they believe God has rejected the Jewish people and moved on to the Gentile church (see Romans 11:1-2 in response to this).

Regardless of the issues, many are not aware of the strategic calling God has given specifically to Gentile believers, one that, when fulfilled, will serve to bring about *"life from the dead"* (Rom. 11:15).

"I say then, have they (the Jewish people) stumbled that they should fall? God forbid! But through their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous" (Rom. 11:11).

Here, Paul explains that national Israel stumbled over Messiah, the stumbling stone (Rom. 9:32-33). To stumble and fall can make for great comedy. Yet, how does God feel about people who stumble? He loves us and desires to pick us up!

For these Jewish people, God chose the Gentile believers as His instrument to proclaim the only One who *"is able to keep us from stumbling"* (Jude 1:24). Although Scripture made this very clear, many Gentile believers chose rather to be arrogant against Israel and neglected their responsibility to reach out to the Jewish people in love. As the "apostle to the Gentiles," Paul took them to task, warning them against having an "I told you so" attitude toward the Jewish people (Rom. 11:18).

Paul raises the issue: Did Israel's stumbling over Messiah

mean the end of their place in God's plan? (Rom. 11:1) Sadly, from a Jewish perspective, many Gentile believers seem to think so. Once I was asked to speak at a church outreach in Kiev, Ukraine, around the time of the Jewish revival in the former Soviet Union.

Before I was invited to the front, the speaker before me told the Jewish people who were visiting, "You Jews missed it—and too bad for you! Sunday is the Sabbath now!" What a bizarre statement—both in its theology and attitude reflected.

On a different occasion, a pastor in the States told me: "When we go door-to-door to share the gospel, we skip the homes with mezuzahs (a small box containing a scroll with the words of Deut. 6:4-9, often nailed to the doorpost of Jewish homes) ... We would not want to offend [the Jews living there], our people would not know what to say, and they probably would not be interested anyway." What a witnessing strategy! Shouldn't the Jewish homes have been offended that they were skipped? This non-witness, though well-intentioned, actually implies that God is finished with Israel.

This, however, could not be further from the truth (Jer. 31:35-37; Rom. 11:1-2, 26). God's faithfulness to the Jewish people is evidenced in Jewish evangelism. Anyone can stumble, and everyone has, but the repentant sinner can be restored (Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:13). This is the Good News both for you and for national Israel. Though you may have rejected God, God has not rejected you. He proves this by His call for you to be saved through the proclamation of the Good News of Messiah.

When I share this truth, some have asked, "You don't mean to say that God saved Gentiles just to make Israel jealous, do you?" No, not quite. God saves Gentiles because of who He is; as it is written, "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son*" (John 3:16). God loves us all and He loves us all the same!

However, our salvation gives us a purpose and a calling. Even as God saved Gentiles through the means of Israel's transgression, He now gives Gentile believers an opportunity to demonstrate God's faithfulness to Israel. God intended the Good News to come to the Jewish people through faithful Gentile believers.

However, we do not often see Jewish people becoming all that jealous for what Gentile believers have in Messiah. Why is this? To help us understand, remember that God got jealous over Israel when they went after other gods (Ex. 34:14). This is because Israel belongs to Him (Is. 43:1).

In contrast, how can Jewish people get jealous over something that is not evidently theirs to begin with? Though some may be curious or even a little envious, Jewish people rightfully do not get jealous over Easter eggs or Santa Claus, because these things are not part of Jewish heritage, and actually function as a cultural substitute for that heritage.

On the contrary, when believers worship the Lord Yeshua, rejoicing in the God of Israel, and celebrating Messiah in the feasts of Israel (such as Passover and the Feast of Booths) as all the early believers did, this should provoke Israel to jealousy!

At Antioch, when Gentiles came to faith and were first called *christianoï* ("Christians," Acts 11:26), the term identified them with the Messiah ("Anointed One" in Greek). Think of it: to the ears of the Jewish community, which generally spoke Greek outside of Judea, the Gentile "Christians" were really "Messianics": they were a part of the Messianic Jewish community.

In other words, unlike today, this term did not separate them out as a foreign religion; rather, it identified them with Israel! Messianic Gentiles were and are meant to be the living witness of Israel's hope, sharing with Jewish people the mercy

they themselves have received in Messiah (Rom. 11:31). God's salvation of souls leads to a service of love.

In our ministry, Word of Messiah, as we reach out to Jewish people with the Good News and plant Messianic congregations, we want to edify and encourage all believers to be witnesses to the Jew first (Rom. 1:16). In light of this, we will be launching a new radio program beginning July 29, and available online for all to listen at Fridays at 7 p.m. EST. {eoa}

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