

Romans 11

THE FUTURE SEASONS OF ISRAEL AND THE GENTILES

We are going to begin in verse 17 where Paul warns Gentile Christians that they should not be arrogant toward the people of Israel who have not come to faith in Jesus Christ. Let's take a look at the text.

17But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, 18do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you.

It is foolish to be arrogant toward the Jewish people. Why? Gentiles have become part of the Jewish faith. The truth is all followers of Christ are rooted in Judaism. The Jewish-ness of the Christian faith is seen in the metaphor of the olive tree, which is a symbol for the Jewish religion. We see this in several places in the Old Testament such as *Jeremiah 11:16* "***The LORD called you a thriving olive tree...***"

The fact that Paul uses a Jewish metaphor as a symbol for the church made up of Jews and Gentiles tells us something of the strong Jewish flavor of the church of Christ.

We are not a spiritually different people from the believing Jews. Our Savior is Jewish. All twelve apostles are Jewish. Jews wrote every book of the bible. When we are given faith to believe God, the bible calls us the "seed of Abraham". Apart from the Jews, Christianity would not exist.

It is false teaching to say that God totally replaced the Jews with the church. Paul says in *verse 18*, "***You do not support the root, but the root supports you.***" The Jews and God's work among them are the foundation upon which the church is based.

Let's continue for a moment to correct false teachings about the relationship of the church to the Jewish people. Some teach that the believing Jews and the church are totally separate entities. That separation was widely held at one time thanks to the influence of the study notes in the old Scofield Reference Bible. Thankfully, most of the institutions that taught that theology have adopted a more biblical view.

The metaphor Paul uses here is not about two separate people and two separate plans of salvation. It's about one group of people, the people of God, the church. There is ONE tree. When a Jew converts, they join the church of Jesus Christ. And when those last-days Jews come in droves to Christ they will join Christ's church. There is only ONE tree. It has a supporting Jewish root system and Jewish and Gentile branches. Through his church God has made one people out of the two.

Paul says in *Ephesians 2:14* of this Jewish/Gentile unity, ***“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility....”***

The truth is that there is one plan of salvation. That is through faith in Jesus Christ. There is one church. And that church is Jewish. But God made room for non-Jews to join the Jewish church. The roots are Jewish but there are Jewish and Gentile branches.

19You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." 20Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; 21for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either. 22Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.

Unless you artificially soften these words, you come out with a clear warning against these Gentile believers to stay faithful or they will end up like those Jews who were broken off the tree of salvation.

Paul says in ***Colossians 1:22*** that believers have been reconciled ***“by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation—IF you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.”***

Do you hear the conditional word “if” in the text? The condition for being presented holy before God is CONTINUING in your faith. What effect should this warning have on us?

GOOD WORKS DOES NOT KEEP YOU SAVED

There are two extremes we must avoid. The first extreme is to take these warning to teach that we must work our fingers to the bone every day to keep our salvation. The truth is that we are saved by grace and kept by grace. We do not keep salvation by good works. Ephesians 2 makes that perfectly clear. We do not work for salvation or work to keep our salvation.

DO NOT SKIP THE WARNING

The other extreme is to skip right over these warnings and say that they are irrelevant to us. People who do not take this warning seriously say things like: *“I’m not sure what Paul means by this warning, but I know I’m saved and since I can never lose my salvation, these words are irrelevant to me.”* I can say for certain that it is hazardous to skip any warning given in scripture.

So, what do these warnings mean to us? How do these warnings fit with our assurance of salvation? First, we must admit that the Scriptures teach there is assurance in Christ. But we must also admit that we do not

have a full assurance of salvation if our lifestyle does not generally look like we have been born again into a new way of life.

1 John 5:13, “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” That’s a wonderful promise of Scripture and it tells us that there is genuine assurance for the believer. There is assurance for the believer that if we are saved God saves us for good.

But in this same book of First John you have text after text that tempers that assurance with clear statements about what a believer will look like.

1 John 1:16, “If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.” Chapter 2:3, “We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.” 2:9, “Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness.” 2:15, “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 3:6, “No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.” 3:10 “This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother. 3:17, “If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?”

Those texts are virtually unheard of today in the church. We prefer to take the assurance but ignore the warnings and live any way we want. But Matthew 22:10 says; ***“he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”***

Our assurance of salvation is never realized and totally secure until we die and stand firm to the end. That is the final test of a true saint. That truth does not destroy our assurance of salvation, but it does inform and temper it.

Now, this is where we are tempted to get our blood pressure up and respond with, *“If I’m a believer, I will not fall away.”* That’s correct, IF you are a believer. But we just said the only time we can know with utter certainty is when we die and we have stood firm to the end. Many of us know people, even pastors who have fallen away. Yet, if you had asked them when they were in church, “Do you have assurance of your salvation?” they would have said without hesitation, “I sure do.” Yet, in retrospect, they were never truly born again.

Many modern day evangelicals are quick to rattle off the phrase *“once saved, always saved”* but have no place in their theology for any of these sobering warning texts. Very few believers would classify their spiritual lives as, *“work[ing] out [their] salvation with fear and trembling.”*

If I see myself as working out my salvation in fear and trembling, daily drawing on God’s grace and strength, I am far less likely to develop spiritual pride and apathy than the person who says, “Yep. I know I’m saved and that means its just a matter now of waiting for glory.” We are to see ourselves as children of God who are proving and confirming our salvation by the works God does in and through us.

23And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. 24For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?

It is truly amazing when God gives people who have not grown up as part of Israel the faith to believe. The people of Israel studied for centuries about the coming of the Messiah. All of their ceremonies pointed to Jesus Christ the Messiah. Yet we come along with no such history and we are given the faith to receive the Jewish Messiah for our salvation.

It is not difficult to believe then that God will at some point in history bring those with the knowledge and promises of God back to faith in their own Messiah.

25For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery--so that you will not be wise in your own estimation--that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

For some reason God has put a halt to the faith of many citizens of Israel. There is a veil over their eyes. That spiritual blindness will not be lifted until the exact number of Gentiles that God wants in heaven is actually saved. And then when the exact number of Gentiles that God wants in heaven is saved, he will turn to Israel and lift the spiritual blindness from their eyes so that in that generation Israel will become a Christian nation.

Paul quotes from Isaiah to prove his point that at some point in time the nation of Israel will turn to Christ.

26and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB." 27"THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS."

God is not done with the people of Israel. Many of them will be given the faith to believe in Jesus Christ and become part of the church of Jesus

Christ. They will be branches of the olive tree into which we have been grafted.

PAUL'S HYMN OF PRAISE TO GOD

33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! 34 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? 35 Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? 36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things

God is the Creator, Sustainer, and the beginning and end of all things. Everything comes from him and is for him to use for his glory. We often forget that we have been given this life to live for God and his purposes. We are like Amish horses that forget how to pull the wagon. We are like lawnmowers that refuse to cut grass for it's owner. We are guests in the house of our Lord. We are servants at his disposal. Each year, month, week, hour and minute of our lives have been granted and created for us so that we do what will glorify God.

Paul began Romans with a statement that God left his imprint on the world he created. By looking at creation one can clearly see there is a God. But human beings have chosen rebellion. In the past eleven chapters, Paul has explained God's plan for bringing the rebels home. God has chosen to "have mercy on them all" (11:32). What more can any believer; saved by grace, say than;

To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

TAKING IT HOME

1. Did you realize that there is one church with Jewish roots that was opened up by God for us to join?

2. Do you realize that at some point in history God will remove the spiritual blindness from Israel so that thousands if not millions of Jews will come to faith in Jesus Christ?
3. Do you see yourself as running out the clock on this life waiting for glory?
4. Practically speaking, on a daily basis how are you working out your salvation with fear and trembling?