

SERMON NOTES:

VOL 4: Part 22: The Olive Tree: Grafted by Grace

BIG Idea: God's kindness in grafting us into His family calls us to humility, perseverance, and hope for restoration for all who will turn to Him.

Application: Stand firm in faith, walking daily in God's kindness, rejecting arrogance, and holding out hope for the restoration of others.

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"The great danger after the edict of Claudius in A.D. 49 was that Gentile Christians in Rome would believe that God had quite rightly rejected his first chosen people for people like themselves. So Paul must offer a tour-de-force argument to counter such prejudice, which is combined in a deadly amalgam with bad theology."¹

"Gentile anti-Judaism was common (including Roman contempt for circumcision and foreign customs in Rome), and Paul may seek to head off its presence among Gentiles in the church (perhaps especially threatening since churches formed without most of their Jewish element between 49 and 54 CE)."²

I. Israel's "Stumble" is Not the End

1. God's story is not finished with anyone.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (NLT)

³This is good and pleases God our Savior, ⁴who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth.

Romans 11:11-12 (NLT)

¹¹Did God's people stumble and fall beyond recovery? Of course not! They were disobedient, so God made salvation available to the Gentiles. But he wanted his own people to become jealous and claim it for themselves. ¹²Now if the Gentiles were enriched because the people of Israel turned down God's offer of salvation, think how much greater a blessing the world will share when they finally accept it.

"As Christ's death produced reconciliation, so did Israel's loss (5:10; 11:15). But just as Christ's risen life will produce even greater benefits than his death (5:9; 8:32), so also Israel's restoration will produce greater blessings than their failure (11:12)."³

II. Gentiles' Role and the Root of Faith (vv.13-16)

2. Our roots keep us grounded in grace.

Romans 11:13-16 (NLT)

¹³ I am saying all this especially for you Gentiles. God has appointed me as the apostle to the Gentiles. I stress this, ¹⁴ for I want somehow to make the people of Israel jealous of what you Gentiles have, so I might save some of them. ¹⁵ For since their rejection meant that God offered salvation to the rest of the world, their acceptance will be even more wonderful. It will be life for those who were dead! ¹⁶ And since Abraham and the other patriarchs were holy, their descendants will also be holy—just as the entire batch of dough is holy because the portion given as an offering is holy. For if the roots of the tree are holy, the branches will be, too.

III. The Olive Tree: Grafted by Grace

Romans 11:17-21 (NLT)

¹⁷ But some of these branches from Abraham's tree—some of the people of Israel—have been broken off. And you Gentiles, who were branches from a wild olive tree, have been grafted in. So now you also receive the blessing God has promised Abraham and his children, sharing in the rich nourishment from the root of God's special olive tree. ¹⁸ But you must not brag about being grafted in to replace the branches that were broken off. You are just a branch, not the root.

¹⁹ "Well," you may say, "those branches were broken off to make room for me." ²⁰ Yes, but remember—those branches were broken off because they didn't believe in Christ, and you are there because you do believe. So don't think highly of yourself, but fear what could happen. ²¹ For if God did not spare the original branches, he won't spare you either.

3. Pride is the enemy of perseverance.

IV. God's Kindness and Sternness

Romans 11:22 (NLT)

²² Notice how God is both kind and severe. He is severe toward those who disobeyed, but kind to you if you continue to trust in his kindness. But if you stop trusting, you also will be cut off.

*"There is no security for those who by their lives show that the grafting process of faith was apparent rather than real."*⁴

*"The Point Paul is making is that faith is not presumption. Throughout Romans, his whole argument about the Jews is: Though they were the chosen people, they began to think they were the choice people. They became confident that they were 'in' no matter how they lived, simply because they were Abraham's physical descendants. That is not the case. So now Paul says, Don't fall into the same presumption! He exhorts them to 'continue in [God's] kindness.' (11:22) The only way we know that God's sovereign love is upon us is that we continue; we persevere in seeking to be like Jesus, until the day we meet Jesus. If that continuing disappears - if we start to live for ourselves and live in sin, or start to rely on our own performance for our relationship with God - then we will and should begin to wonder if his kindness is upon us, if we were ever chosen."*⁵

"must not be understood in the sense that God will supply the kindness, man the faith. Salvation is ever God's gift. It is never a 50-50 affair. From start to finish it is the work of God. But this does not remove human responsibility. God does not exercise faith for man or in his place. It is and remains man who reposes his trust in God, but it is God who both imparts this faith to him and enables him to use it."
(William Hendriksen)⁶

*"I sincerely believe that this and other such explanations are nothing but theological double-talk. To say that this is a 'sound, biblical sense' in which salvation is conditional, and that such a system 'does not remove human responsibility,' is a sham. It is not enough just to say that God sets conditions for salvation. The Calvinist may begin with this premise, but then he declares that God unconditionally decides who will meet the conditions, and then unilaterally causes them to meet these conditions. In such a scenario there are no conditionality and human responsibility in any normal sense of these terms."*⁷

*"Just as becoming saved is conditioned upon faith, staying saved is conditioned upon continuing to believe."*⁸

V. God's Power to Restore

4. God's kindness is a call to continue.

Romans 11:23-24 (NLT)

²³And if the people of Israel turn from their unbelief, they will be grafted in again, for God has the power to graft them back into the tree. ²⁴You, by nature, were a branch cut from a wild olive tree. So if God was willing to do something contrary to nature by grafting you into his cultivated tree, he will be far more eager to graft the original branches back into the tree where they belong.

5. Restoration is always possible with God.

END NOTES

¹ Ben Witherington III, *Paul's Letter*, 279.

² Craig S. Keener, *Romans*, 135.

³ Craig S. Keener, *Romans*, 133.

⁴ Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, 222.

⁵ Tim Keller, *For You*, 94-95.

⁶ Jack Cottrell, *Romans*, 426-427.

⁷ Jack Cottrell, *Romans*, 427.

⁸ Jack Cottrell, *Romans*, 426.