

# ROMANS

KNOW THE TRUTH

August 18, 2024

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SERMON: God is Both Kind and Severe

SCRIPTURE: Romans 11:16-24

**SUMMARY:** The Apostle Paul uses the metaphor of an olive tree in Romans 11:16-24 to describe the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in God's salvation plan. In this metaphor, the natural branches represent Israel and the wild olive shoots represent the Gentiles. Paul explains that some of the natural branches (unbelieving Jews) were broken off due to unbelief, allowing the wild olive shoots (believing Gentiles) to be grafted in among the remaining branches. This grafting allows Gentiles to share in the rich nourishment from the root, which symbolizes God's covenant promises to the patriarchs (Abraham, Issac and Jacob). Paul cautions Gentile believers against pride and arrogance, reminding them that they do not support the root; rather, the root supports them. He warns them to remain humble and faithful, noting that just as God did not spare the natural branches due to unbelief, He will not spare the grafted branches if they fall into unbelief. Paul also emphasizes God's kindness to those who continue to believe and trust Him and His severity toward those who stop believing and obeying Him. He concludes by expressing hope for the natural branches (Israelites), asserting that they can be grafted back into the olive tree if they do not persist in unbelief, highlighting God's power, authority and willingness to restore them.

### I. FRUITLESS BRANCHES THROWN INTO THE FIRE

ROMANS 11:16-17A

**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. **17** But some of these branches from Abraham’s tree—some of the people of Israel—have been broken off.

### JEREMIAH 11:16-17

**16** The LORD once called you ‘a green olive tree, beautiful with good fruit.’ But with the roar of a great tempest he will set fire to it, and its branches will be consumed. **17** The LORD of hosts, who planted you, has decreed disaster against you, because of the evil that the house of Israel and the house of Judah have done, provoking me to anger by making offerings to Baal.

### JOHN 15:5-6

**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. **6** If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

## II. GRAFTED BRANCHES RECEIVE NOURISHMENT

- **Nourishment** to bear fruit!

### ROMANS 11:17B-21

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.

### JOHN 15:5, 7-8

**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. **7** If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **8** By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

### III. GOD IS KIND AND SEVERE

- God Shows **Severity** to Those Who Disobey and **Kindness** to Those Who Trust

#### ROMANS 11:22-24

**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. **23** And 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. **24** You, 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.

• NEHEMIAH 9:16-21

### LIFE APPLICATION SERMON GUIDE:

1. **The Metaphor of the Olive Tree:** In Romans 11:17-18, Paul uses the metaphor of an olive tree to describe the relationship between Jews and Gentiles. How does this metaphor help us understand the interconnectedness and mutual dependence of all believers?

**Life Application:** Reflect on your role in your church. How can you contribute to a sense of unity and mutual support among believers, recognizing that you are part of a larger family rooted in God's promises? Identify specific ways you can encourage and support others, appreciating the variety of gifts and backgrounds within your church.

2. **The Warning Against Arrogance:** Paul warns Gentile believers not to be arrogant toward the natural branches (Romans 11:18-21). What are some current examples of spiritual arrogance and how can believers guard against it?

**Life Application:** Examine your own attitudes toward others who may have different backgrounds, beliefs or experiences. Are there areas where pride or superiority might hinder your relationships or ministry? Consider how you can cultivate a spirit of humility and grace all while pointing people to the only one who can save.

**3. The Role of Faith and Unbelief:** Romans 11:20-21 highlights the importance of faith and warns against unbelief. How do faith and unbelief impact your relationship with God and your place within His family?

**Life Application:** Reflect on areas in your life where you may be struggling with unbelief or doubt. How can you strengthen your faith and trust in God's promises? Identify practical steps you can take to deepen your relationship with God.

**4. God's Kindness and Severity:** In Romans 11:22, Paul emphasizes both the kindness and severity of God. How do these attributes of God compliment one another and how should they inform our understanding of His character and actions?

**Life Application:** Consider how God's kindness and severity have been evident in your own life. How can you respond to God's kindness with gratitude and obedience, while also taking His warnings seriously? Reflect on how you can live a life that honors God's holiness and grace.

**5. The Possibility of Restoration:** Paul speaks of the possibility of the natural branches being grafted back into the olive tree if they do not persist in unbelief (Romans 11:23-24). What does this reveal about God's desire for restoration and reconciliation?

**Life Application:** Identify relationships or situations in your life where restoration is needed. How can you partner with God in pursuing reconciliation and healing, both personally and within your church? Consider ways to actively seek forgiveness, extend grace and work towards restoring broken relationships.

**6. Understanding Our Place in God's Plan:** How does the metaphor of the olive tree help us understand our place in God's redemptive plan and our responsibility to live in a manner worthy of our calling?

**Life Application:** Reflect on how you can actively participate in God's plan, using your gifts and resources to advance His kingdom. What steps can you take to live a life that reflects your identity as part of God's family, rooted in His promises and purposes? Set goals for how you will contribute to God's work in your church and beyond.

**7. Encouraging Faith and Humility in Others:** How can we encourage others to remain faithful and humble, avoiding the pitfalls of arrogance and unbelief as described in Romans 11:17-24?

**Life Application:** Think of someone in your life who might be struggling with faith or humility. How can you support and encourage them in their spiritual journey? Consider specific actions you can take, such as offering prayer, sharing Scripture or providing accountability, to help them grow in faith and humility.

Rough draft of *Summary* and *Life Application* generated with OpenAI in *ChatGPT* (July 31, 2024) and edited for First Baptist Church Gulfport by Dr. James M. Stewart.