

Rev. Lex DeLong / General Adult

Romans Road to Recovery / Romans 11:11–24

As "wild branches" grafted into God's ancient covenant promises, we stand by faith alone—not to boast in ourselves, but to marvel at the Root that supports us

### Notes

05/10 Rom. 11:11-24, Title: "The Grafted Branch," Subtitle: Humility in the Face of Kindness, Main Idea: As "wild branches" grafted into God's ancient covenant promises, we stand by faith alone—not to boast in ourselves, but to marvel at the Root that supports us, Scripture: Psalm 80:8-19

---

Your salvation was no accident—it was God's sovereign design. This Sunday at 10:30 AM, we are unpacking Romans 11:11-24. Come learn what it means to be a "wild branch" grafted into an ancient promise. See you there! 🙏🏠 #Grace

### Sermon Outline: The Grafted Branch

**Text:** Romans 11:11-24 | **Reading:** Psalm 80:8-19

**Main Idea:** As "wild branches" grafted into God's ancient covenant promises, we stand by faith alone—not to boast in ourselves, but to proclaim the marvel of the Root that supports us.

### Context

- Last Week (Romans 11:1-10): We established that God has not cast away His people. The hardening of Israel is partial. Just as in Elijah's day, God has preserved a Jewish remnant by grace (which included Paul himself).
- This Week (Romans 11:11-24): Paul shifts from addressing the partial nature of Israel's hardening to the purpose and temporary duration of that hardening. Last week we looked at the Remnant; this week we look at the Grafted Branches (the Gentiles) and God's ultimate plan to provoke Israel to jealousy.

### Introduction: The Turf War in Rome

- Happy Mother's Day! Today we celebrate the mothers, grandmothers, and spiritual mothers whose faithful prayers and quiet strength have functioned as the "roots" of our families—nourishing our lives and supporting our faith. There is a profound beauty in resting on a spiritual foundation you didn't build. But what happens when a family forgets its roots and the children grow arrogant, acting as if they own the house?
- **The Historical Context (The Edict of Claudius):** To understand what Paul is addressing today, we have to look at the history of the Roman church in Paul's day.

As Dr. Thomas Constable highlights in his Expository Notes on Romans, in A.D. 49, Emperor Claudius expelled all Jews from Rome. For five years, the Roman church was entirely Gentile. They grew comfortable and established their own leadership.

- **The Return of Priscilla and Aquila:** When Emperor Claudius died in A.D. 54, the edict expired, and the Jewish believers finally returned home to a massive cultural and theological turf war.
- Let's put a face to this history for a moment: think of Priscilla and Aquila. We know from Acts 18:2 that they were forced out of Italy by this very edict. They had to leave their home, their business, and the church they loved in the hands of the Gentiles. But by the time Paul writes this letter, they had moved back. Romans 16 tells us they were even hosting a house church in their own home! And when they opened their doors to worship, they were staring a new, ugly "Gentile Pride" right in the face.
- **The Gentile Pride (μὴ κατακαυχῶ):** The Gentile believers were functionally saying to the returning Jewish believers like Priscilla and Aquila, "We run this church now. Israel stumbled, and God has moved past you." In verse 18, Paul uses a present middle imperative with a negative particle: *mē katakauchō*. Dr. John MacArthur points out that in Greek, this carries the force of forbidding an action that is already in progress. Paul isn't warning them of a hypothetical danger; he is rebuking an active arrogance. He is telling them, "Stop boasting against the branches!" Paul is writing to protect faithful Jewish believers from being treated as second-class citizens in their own church.
- Paul uses the unnatural agricultural wonder about the process of grafting a "wild," unfruitful olive branch into a rich, cultivated tree to put these arrogant Gentiles back in their proper, humble place.

**The Main Idea:** And that brings us directly to the heartbeat of our text this morning. To cure this spiritual pride, Paul wants every Gentile believer—including you and me—to grasp one central, humbling truth:

**As "wild branches" grafted into God's ancient covenant promises, we stand by faith alone—not to boast in ourselves, but to proclaim the marvel of the Root that supports us.**

- Transition: But to truly marvel at that Root, we first have to understand the shocking way we were brought into the tree to begin with. Paul wants us to look at the Jewish rejection of the Messiah not with arrogant superiority, but with absolute awe at the sovereign plan of God. God did not condone their sin, but He did work it out for something good for us.

## I. It Was No Accident That God Used Israel's

# Stumble to Sovereignly Save Us (vv. 11-15)

- To grasp the magnitude of God's grace toward us, we must first ask a difficult question about Israel. When they rejected their Messiah, was God finished with them forever? Paul answers this in verse 11 by drawing a massive distinction.

Romans 11:11 "11 I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous."

## A. Israel Tripped up, But God Protected Them from Total Ruin (πταίω vs. πίπτω)

- Did Israel stumble so as to fall entirely and forever? Me genoito! (By no means!).
- In verse 11, Paul uses two very different Greek verbs to make a massive dispensational distinction. Πταίω (ptaiō) means to trip or stumble. Πίπτω (piptō) implies a total, ruinous, catastrophic, and final fall.
- Israel tripped ("stumble:" ptaiō), but God did not allow them to experience permanent ruin ("fall:" piptō).
- God used their stumble to swing the door of salvation wide open for you and me.

## B. Your Salvation Was God's Sovereign Design, Not a Divine Afterthought or plan "B"

- It is vital to understand that the Church is not an accident or a divine afterthought. Covenant theologians like Louis **Berkhof** and **Wayne Grudem** try to merge Israel and the Church together, claiming Israel was just the Old Testament version of the Church.
- But as **Dr. Ken Gardoski** notes regarding Ecclesiology, the Church is an entirely new entity. As we learn in the Gospel of Matthew, the Church Age is called a 'mystery' program, not to God, but to mankind.
- Beloved, **your salvation is that mystery, now revealed in you and me, the church of Jesus Christ.** You are not a Plan B. God didn't save you because He ran out of options; He designed this specific period—between Israel's rejection and their future restoration—to **pour His grace out on the Gentiles.**
- As Dr. Michael J. Vlach articulates, your presence in the church today is a sovereign mechanism in God's plan.
- Think with me for a minute, every time we gather together, this gives us reason for celebration, for gratefulness, for rejoicing. We revel in the presence, dare I say the

evidence of God's loving, merciful, gracious plan, not to reach just one ethnic group of people, but to reach the entire world. God has chosen to reach the world, not through angels or prophets, but through us.

### **C. Our Walk with Christ is Meant to be an Appeal of God, through us, to Provoke Others to Jealousy**

- Look at verses 12 through 14.

*Romans 11:12–15 "12 Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! 13 But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, 14 if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them. 15 For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?"*

- Why did God save you? Yes, first and foremost, to rescue you from the penalty of sin.
- But Paul says God saved you for a cosmic, historical purpose: to make the Jewish people spiritually thirsty for their own Messiah.
- We are saved to provoke the natural branches to jealousy.
- This demands a deeply personal question to be asked and answered: Look at your life. Does your joy, your peace, your obedience, and your walk with Christ look appealing enough to provoke anyone to jealousy, let alone God's chosen people?
- If our lives do not prove to the world that the resurrected Christ is as real today as He was two thousand years ago, then our faith is tragically lukewarm. Scripture warns us that a lukewarm faith is nauseating to God. It provokes no one. And worse, it robs us of the profound blessing of participating in God's grand design to reach the lost.

**Transition:** But there is another danger here. It is true that a lukewarm faith provokes no one, but an arrogant faith repels the very people God is trying to reach. We will never provoke Israel to jealousy if we act like we have replaced them. To cure this Gentile pride, Paul has to remind us exactly where our spiritual life actually comes from.

## **II. We Must Cling to the Ancient Foundation of Our Faith in Humble Surrender to God's Eternal Redemptive Plan (vv. 16-18)**

- Paul uses a brilliant agricultural metaphor in verse 16 to force these arrogant

Gentiles to look down at the dirt they are planted in. He points them to the 'Root' of the olive tree. But if we are going to humbly surrender to this foundation, we must first correctly identify exactly what this Root is...

## **A. The Root of your Faith is the Unshakeable Promises God Made Thousands of Years Ago (v. 16)**

Romans 11:16 *"16 If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too."*

- What exactly is the "Root" of this olive tree? It cannot be the Church, and it is cannot be Christ Himself—if it were Christ, branches being "broken off" would mean losing your salvation, which Paul explicitly denies in Romans 8. If it were the church, then all that God has promised that is in store for the church is a lie. If either of these were what the root is, then God would not be able to be trusted to be and speak the truth, and our faith would be in vain.
- However, if we let Scripture interpret Scripture, Paul defines the root for us without guess work, just ten verses later. In Romans 11:28, he says Israel is beloved "for the sake of the fathers." Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum definitively proves **this Root is the Patriarchs and the Abrahamic Covenant**.
- Your salvation is rooted in a real conversation God had with Abraham four thousand years ago. We haven't discovered something "new"; we have been invited into something "ancient."

## **B. You Were Grafted into This Ancient Redemptive Story by Grace Alone ("grafted," ἐνεκεντρίσθης) (v. 17)**

Romans 11:17 *"17 But 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,"*

- In verse 17, Paul says the wild branches "were grafted in." The Greek verb here (*enekentristhēs*) is in the aorist passive indicative. The passive voice is crucial: you did not graft yourself into this tree. You contributed absolutely nothing to your position except the dying and wild wood that needed to be rescued. The Divine Gardener did 100% of the cutting, lifting, and binding.
- In verse 17, Paul says the wild branches "were grafted in" to partake of the "rich/fatness" of the olive tree.
- This "richness or fatness" represents a vital exegetical distinction: the Abrahamic Covenant contains both national promises (a land and an earthly throne for ethnic Israel) and spiritual promises (blessing to all nations through justification by faith).

- **You were grafted in by grace** to share the spiritual sap of **justification by faith**. You did not inherit Israel's national promises, nor did you innovate your way into God's kingdom. You are simply a guest partaking in God's historical house.

## **C. You Must Never Forget That You Do Not Support the Root; the Root Supports You**

- We must not boast against the natural branches of Israel.
- True humility is recognizing that your spiritual life is entirely dependent on the foundation God laid through Israel.

### **Christianity is not a replacement of God's plan; it is the ultimate fulfillment of it.**

- We are feasting at a table where the natural branches belong by birth, have been called to by faith, and where we only belong by the miracle of adoption.

But knowing we are supported by the Root isn't always enough to kill our pride, because human nature always looks for a reason to boast. Paul anticipates the exact excuse these Roman Gentiles were using to justify their arrogance: they looked at the broken Jewish branches and assumed, "God made room for *me* because I must be better."

Paul violently rejects that thought.

## **III. We Must Reject Spiritual Pride Because We Stand only by Faith Alone (vv. 19-22)**

*Romans 11:19–22 "19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." 20 Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; 21 for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either. 22 Behold 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."*

This cutting off for both Israel and for Gentiles, is not that they were saved and somehow through their lack of merit, lost that inheritance. On the contrary, they were grafted in, but as dead branches, never trusted in the root (the promises), never took root in the tree, and remained dead. Their grafting never took root and were then pruned back off the tree as never having come to life in the tree of God's promises.

### **A. The Natural Branches Were Broken Off in severity of God because of Unbelief, Not because of wanting to Make Gentiles**

## Feel Special (vv. 19-20)

- Our fleshly temptation might be to say, "Well, they were broken off so I could be grafted in. I must be special."
- Paul completely rejects this spiritual pride: They were broken off for unbelief. You stand entirely by faith, not merit.

**Transition:** But recognizing that you stand entirely by grace rather than merit should do more than just kill your pride—it **should awaken a fierce sense of urgency in your soul**. This current season of Gentile inclusion is not a permanent new normal; it is a temporary, strategic window in God's prophetic calendar.

## B. We Are Living on Borrowed Time Before God Pivots Back to Israel

- Because this hardening of Israel is temporary, we need to realize we are living on borrowed time.
- God's grand narrative will eventually pivot back to the natural branches, which brings an extreme urgency to our current calling.

If we don't feel an urgency to to grow in our relationship with Christ, to openly fight for the souls of the lost around us, we are sorely falling short of God's intention for grafting us into His grace.

- What are you doing with the time and grace God has given you right now?

## C. We Must Hold a Biblically Balanced Fear of God's Severity (ἀποτομίαν)

- "Do not be haughty, but fear." Paul commands us to hold a biblically balanced view of God. He contrasts the gentle kindness of God with His severity.
- The Greek word for severity here is apotomia. As Dr. MacArthur notes, it literally means "to cut off." It paints the vivid picture of the sharp, abrupt, clean snap of the pruning shears.
- God's judgment against arrogant presumption is decisive. This should force us to ask ourselves: Are we resting in true, humble faith, or are we just presuming on God's grace?

If Paul stopped writing right there, we might all be terrified. If God is willing to cut off the natural branches, what hope do we have? But Paul's goal is not to make you doubt your salvation; his goal is to destroy your pride and light a fire of urgency that cannot be ignored, deep within your soul. Once your pride is dead, he wants to anchor your

soul in the ultimate, unshakable comfort.

## **IV. We Can Rest in Unbreakable Promises Because God's Restoration of Israel Guarantees Our Future (vv. 23-24)**

Romans 11:23–24 "23 And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. 24 For 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?"

### **A. We Must Reject the Arrogance of Replacement Theology**

- You might think the "Turf War in Rome" is ancient history. But it is alive and well today.
- In fact, not long ago, sadly there was a document called the Knox Seminary Open Letter that was signed by over 100 prominent theologians. It publicly declared that the Church is the "true Israel" and that the physical land promises to the Jewish people have been completely cancelled and spiritualized.
- Beloved, when we look at verses 23 and 24, we have to ask ourselves: Are we reading the same Bible? What Paul says here in vv. 23-24 is crucial. It overturns the thought of Israel's replacement in any age. God still has a lasting covenant with the ethnic nation of Israel that will remain and stand the test of time.
- Paul explicitly warns us as Gentiles not to boast against the natural branches. God is not done with ethnic Israel.

### **B. God Possesses the Power to Graft Israel Back In (v. 23)**

- If Israel turns from unbelief, God has the power to graft them back in.

**No one is beyond the reach of God's grace.**

### **C. It Is Only Natural That God Will Restore Ethnic Israel to Their Native Tree (πόσω μᾶλλον)**

- In verse 24, Paul uses a classic *a fortiori argument* (arguing from the lesser to the greater) with the phrase *posō mallon* ("how much more").
- If God is willing and able to do something entirely backwards and contrary to nature (grafting wild Gentiles like us into a Jewish covenant root), how much more natural,

fitting, and expected will it be when He finally grafts ethnic Israel back into their own native tree?

- There will come a time in the future that...

## **D. Christ Will Return to Reign Over a Literal, Earthly Kingdom in Jerusalem**

- The Church has not replaced Israel. There is coming a day when the natural branches will be fully restored.
- The human idea Supersessionism, or Replacement Theology, tries to tell us that the Davidic throne is just a spiritual metaphor for Christ reigning in heaven right now.
- But as Dr. Renald Showers points out, God's throne in heaven was established long before David was even born. David's throne is different than the heavenly throne in that it is definitively an earthly throne.
- When God grafts the natural branches back into their own olive tree, it will be for a literal, earthly, theocratic kingdom where Christ rules from Jerusalem.
- According to the prophet Daniel, it will put to the end, once and for all, all earthly kingdoms and rulers, and itself, submit and blossom under the sovereign rule of our sovereign Lord, Jesus Christ.
- The guarantee of our salvation is dependent upon the guarantee of God's ethnic promise to Israel.

## **E. God's Faithfulness to Israel is the Ultimate Guarantee of Your Salvation**

- Why does this matter for you today? Because if God were to cancel His promises to Israel and give them to the Church, how could you ever trust Him to keep His promises to you?
- But because He will literally fulfill the covenants for Israel, you can sleep at night knowing your salvation is eternally secure just like Israel's is. God keeps His promises to Israel, which guarantees He will keep His promises to you.

### **Conclusion**

- **Summary:** We are saved by an unmerited grace, sustained by ancient promises, and called to walk in profound humility, as we rest in the richness of God's gracious promises, as partakers of that grace, not as His replaced people.
- **The Call:** Repent of any spiritual pride or theological arrogance. Marvel at the kindness of God that reached out to the "wild branches."

- **Gospel Appeal:**

**The only way into the tree for anyone—Jew or Gentile—is by faith in the Messiah, Jesus Christ.**