



Romans 11:11-22
“Wild By Nature”

11 I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles.

12 Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!

13 For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry,

14 if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them.

15 For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

16 For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

17 And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree,

18 do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in."

20 Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear.

21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either.

22 Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.

Generally whenever we start reading these sections of Romans chapter 11, what people really want to hear about is what they teach about eschatology that is the end times, *will there be a mass conversion of the Jews just before Jesus returns* is usually the critical question addressed, and almost everything else gets moved to side. That's a shame, because these verses don't just teach about the future, but the past and present.

It's also a shame because when we use these verses to discuss eschatology we inevitably begin to speculate, and regardless of what the preacher says, his level of certainty begins to drop. So I intend, for the most part to postpone therefore the question of whether Paul is speaking of the salvation of a remnant of the Jews or of specific future ingathering of a huge number of ethnic Jews. Instead, I'll be discussing the past and present implications of these verses and leave the possible future meanings till next week.

One of the reasons why it's hard for us today, to fully appreciate what Paul is saying here is because the make-up of the church has changed so dramatically. Today when we meet a believer who is ethnically Jewish that's unusual. The norm is for Christians to be people with Gentile names and Gentile ancestry so when you run into a Christian whose last name is Cohen or Grossman it's unusual. But that wasn't the case when Paul was writing this letter, when he originally wrote a good proportion of the churches were made up of believing Jews. But the proportions were already beginning to change. While individual Jews, like Paul, were still being converted, the vast majority of Jews were steadfastly opposed to the Gospel and preachers like Paul. The Jews were incensed at the suggestion that a huge number of Gentiles were being brought into the Kingdom of God, even though the Old Testament had said that would happen. So as the church grew the proportion of Jews is declining and the proportion of Gentiles is increasing and the question inevitably pops up, *what is going on here?*

So Paul raises the question, "Is it possible that because of their repeated apostasy, their hardness of heart, and their rejection of the Messiah that God has finally had done with the Jewish people, have they finally stumbled and fallen FOREVER? Is salvation closed off to the Jews?" Now he asks the question using in Greek in a way that lets you know that the answer is NO! But he goes on to say absolutely not, *ME GENOITO* – May it never be, or God forbid!

In fact, he says something unexpected, if the turning away of Jews proved to be a blessing to the Gentiles who were brought in, how much more will the salvation of that remnant Paul spoke of prove to be a blessing. And an evidence of that is Paul himself. When Paul had still been Saul of Tarsus he rejected the Messiah and persecuted the church, and yet that had been a blessing to the Gentiles. How?

Acts 8:3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

4 Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.

It was because of his persecution that the believing Jews had scattered and brought the gospel to the nations as they did so. But now that Paul, the former Pharisee, was converted HOW much greater was the blessing as he Himself taught and spread the gospel as no other disciple.

So Paul starts speaking specifically to the Gentiles in the Roman congregation in verse 13. "I Speak to you Gentiles..." He's happy that he has been called to be an Apostle to the Gentiles, because of this opportunity to be a blessing to them, but he is also pleased because it is his hope that his ministry to the Gentiles will cause his Jewish countrymen to be jealous of the privileges God has bestowed on these Gentiles and thus he will be able to **"save some of them" as well.**

Please Note here, that Paul says here that it is his desire to "save some of them." Jews and Gentiles alike are both in need of salvation, it should go without saying but Jews are not saved by their ethnicity, they too need to put their faith and trust in Jesus – that is God's way of salvation. Also, when we do talk about what "all Israel will be saved" in verse 26 we will already know that it cannot mean that *every ethnic Jew who has ever lived will be saved*. That goes against what Paul himself has already been teaching, but common sense would set before us the example of plenty of ethnic Jews who we know for a certainty were not saved, and went to hell, and if Rob Bell is listening we do know that for certain because the Bible tells us. For instance, we have the example of Judas, the Son of Perdition, we also have the example of Esau a son of Isaac and a Grandson of Abraham, circumcised and part of the Covenant people, and yet God says of him specifically, "Esau I have hated."

Paul's desire is to be used in saving those elect Jews whom the Lord has chosen to be part of that **"remnant according to the election of grace"** that is spoken of in Romans 11:5

So envy could be used to bring some to salvation, that Remnant that God had chosen, but the larger part were not brought to faith by envy, most Jews who saw the Gentiles coming to faith were provoked to anger, it became commonplace whenever Paul used the "G" word around them, they went nuts:

Acts 22:21 "Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.' "

22 And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!"

23 Then, as they cried out and tore off their clothes and threw dust into the air,

But others saw and believed. They saw what God was doing amongst the gentiles, and like the Apostles the rejoiced and said *I want that*. Most coveting is evil, but coveting salvation and its fruits is a good thing! This was a radical change as Hendriksen puts it:

"Imagine for a moment the radical change here implied for these Israelites. They now love what they formerly hated. They hate what they formerly loved. Above all, they know that no longer are they God's enemies. They have now been accepted by the very God against whom earlier they had hardened themselves and by whom they had been further hardened. The change was simply astounding, as especially Paul, the former persecutor, knew by his own experience! It was a turnabout to life from the dead, a truly spiritual resurrection."

And there is a particular aptness to it, they are the descendents of Abraham, Abraham was their spiritual father in the Faith, from him the visible church which was compared to an olive tree, grew and they are branches that naturally grew from that Olive tree that God cultivated. Abraham was also like the firstfruits of the spiritual grain harvest, they were the later grain that was also consecrated to God.

the olive tree was incredibly important to Israel it provided food and oil, they live for ages and have deep roots.

Paul continues on using the metaphor of the Olive Tree for the Visible Church, and the church is a tree that may be damaged but it that never dies. Sadly these Jewish branches that rejected God were broken off, and in their place branches from the wild uncultivated formerly unproductive olive trees, that is the gentiles were grafted in through faith in the Jewish Messiah Jesus. Now they were part of the visible church and received its benefits. As I've been teaching OT Survey, I've been reminded again that the "Trunk" of my faith is Jewish, I am a branch grafted in.

This should be the death knell of genuine anti-semitism, but sadly it hasn't been.

So Paul warns Christians not to be haughty, historically the number of Gentile believers in the church continued to grow until the churches were overwhelmingly gentile believers, at this point many Jews, fearing that their ethnicity was in danger of disappearing left to form separate congregations. Eventually some of these congregations rejected the teaching of Paul and like the Judaizers of the Galatian church began to teach that one must observe the ceremonies of the law, including circumcision, in order to be saved. This became known as the Ebionite heresy.

Paul hadn't wanted that so he warns them not to be haughty (Jessie Ivory knows what that means! Yesterday I asked what the opposite of humble was expecting proud and she said HAUGHTY) Don't look down on the Jews, you were grafted in.

“Was not Peter...a Jew? ...Was not Paul, who even before writing his present epistle seems to have been in contact with many prominent members of the Roman church (16:3–16), a Jew? Is it not true that the very gospel of justification by faith was based on the Jewish Scriptures? See 1:1, 2, 17; ch. 4. And, according to his human nature, was not even “the Author and Perfecter of faith” a Jew? Is it not true, therefore, that “salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22)?... it was for lack of faith that they were lopped off, and it is by faith that you stand.” This faith, by virtue of its very essence, excludes all boasting, all arrogance or self-esteem. It includes godly fear, the kind of fear that is wholesome. See Prov. 3:7; Phil. 2:12, 13; Heb. 4:1; I Peter 1:17. Such fear leans wholly on God and his sovereign grace, and claims no merit of its own.”

Apps: 1) To be saved, we must be GRAFTED IN, Remember you and all men are “wild by nature” Wild by nature, v. 24. This was the state of the poor Gentiles, that wanted church privileges, and in respect of real sanctification; and it is the natural state of every one of us, to be wild by nature. 3. Conversion is the grafting in of wild branches into the good olive. We must be cut off from the old stock, and be brought into union with a new root. 4. Those that are grafted into the good olive-tree partake of the root and fatness of the olive. It is applicable to a saving union with Christ; all that are by a lively faith grafted into Christ partake of him as the branches of the root—receive from his fulness. But it is here spoken of a visible church-membership, from which the Jews were as branches broken off; and so the Gentiles were grafted in, *autois*—among those that continued, or in the room of those that were broken off.

2) To Be Fruitful we Must Remain in the CHURCH

Don't leave the Church:

The importance of staying attached to the Tree, not being lopped off

It is Christ who empowers the church through its ordinances, he is the one who gives the branches their “sap” The Vine

John 15:1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

3 "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

3) An Encouragement: It is often those *most* opposed to the Gospel, and most incensed by preaching of it and the way that others are being brought into the kingdom who are suddenly arrested by its power. John Skinner of Gloucestershire, was a strolling fiddler, going from fair to fair, and supplying music to any that would hire him. Having determined to incommode George Whitefield, who was going to preach, he obtained a standing on a ladder raised to a window near the pulpit; he remained a quiet, if not an attentive hearer, till the text was named, when he intended to begin his opposing and annoying exercise on the violin. It pleased God, while he was putting the instrument in tune, to convey the word spoken with irresistible power to the soul. His attention being diverted from its original design, and his purpose broken, that God's purpose according to election might stand, he heard the sermon out, after which he became altogether a changed character.