

*It is more profitable to know Jesus than to know about Him.*

## Weekly Edition – July 17, 2015

### Paul's Letter to the Romans

#### Ingrafted Branches

<sup>11</sup> Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. <sup>12</sup> But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!

<sup>13</sup> I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry <sup>14</sup> in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. <sup>15</sup> For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? <sup>16</sup> If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.

<sup>17</sup> If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, <sup>18</sup> do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. <sup>19</sup> You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." <sup>20</sup> Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble. <sup>21</sup> For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.

<sup>22</sup> Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. <sup>23</sup> And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. <sup>24</sup> After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!

#### Recap

- 1) In Romans 9 through 11, Paul deals with the problem associated with the condition of Israel.
  - a) What does it mean that Israel has missed its Messiah?
  - b) What does this say about God?
  - c) What does it say about Israel?
  - d) What does it say about our present position in God?
- 2) Drawing extensively on his knowledge and familiarity of Holy Scripture, Paul quotes the Old Testament Scriptures 31 times in chapters 9 through 11 and draws on 11 books (Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Leviticus, Isaiah, Hosea, Malachi, Joel, Psalms, 1 Kings and Job).

#### Outline of Romans

1. **Paul's credentials** (1:1-1:18)
2. **Justification by Faith (1:18-11:36)**
  - a. **Sin – the "need" for Salvation**
    - 1) of Gentiles (1:18-2:16)
    - 2) of Jews (2:17-3:8)
    - 3) universal need for Salvation (3:9-20)
  - b. **Justification by Faith - the "Provision" made for Salvation**
    - 1) God's Righteousness through Faith (3:21-31)
    - 2) Abraham as an Example (4:1-25)
  - c. **Freedom - the "Result" of Salvation**
    - 1) Freedom from Wrath (5:1-21)
    - 2) Freedom from Sin (6:1-23)
    - 3) Freedom from The Law (7:1-25)
    - 4) Freedom from Death (8:1-39)
  - d. **Jew and Gentile - The "Scope" of Salvation**
    - 1) God chooses to save Believers (9:1-33)
    - 2) Israel trusted their own Righteousness (10:1-21)
    - 3) Jew and Gentile can have Salvation through Faith (11:1-36)
3. **The Transformed Life (12:1-15:13)**
  - a. In relation to overall conduct (12:1-21)
  - b. In relation to civil authority (13:1-7)
  - c. In relation to fellow man (13:8-14)
  - d. In relation to weak brethren in the Body of Christ (14:1-15:13)
4. **Concluding remarks, instructions and benediction (15:14-16:27)**

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- 3) In Romans chapter 9 Paul shows God's sovereign choice of Israel as the vehicle of salvation for all mankind;
- 4) In Romans Chapter 10 Paul describes Israel's stumbling over Christ and rebelling against God, showing from Holy Scripture that this was God's plan of salvation from the beginning;
- 5) Now in Romans Chapter 11, Paul discusses prospect of Israel's restoration and God being glorified thereby — God has not totally rejected His people because of their unbelief.
- 6) This should be a cause of hope for all men, because it demonstrates God's steadfastness.

### **God's Purpose in Allowing Israel to Stumble**

- 1) Last week we asked the question: Does Israel's stumbling as predicted by Psalm 69 mean that they have fallen away permanently?
- 2) Certainly not! As Paul presents it here, there is a difference between *stumbling* and *falling*. Israel had stumbled, but they would not fall - in the sense of being removed from God's purpose and plan.
- 3) God had a specific purpose to fulfill in allowing Israel to stumble - so that salvation would come to the Gentiles.
- 4) Paul has shown that God is still working through a remnant of Israel today, but wants to make it clear that the majority of Israel who rejects Jesus as Messiah is not lost forever. "*Through their fall ... salvation has come to the Gentiles.*"
- 5) We should not forget that the Good News of the gospel went out to the Gentiles only after the Jewish people rejected it. (see Acts 13:46, 18:5-6, & 28:25-28).
  - a) In this sense, the rejection of the gospel by the Jews was riches for the Gentiles.
- 6) Furthermore, the Jewish rejection of Jesus as Messiah did not *cause* Gentiles to be saved. It merely gave more opportunity for the gospel to go to the Gentiles, and many Gentiles took advantage of this opportunity.
- 7) Yet, Paul's desire isn't only that these riches would be enjoyed by the Gentiles alone, but that the Jews would be provoked to a good kind of *jealousy*, motivating them to receive the blessings the Gentiles enjoyed in Jesus Christ — all the "freedoms" we enjoy as adopted sons of God and that we have previously studied in Romans chapters 5 through 8.
- 8) It ought to be a matter for profound regret for the Church that, just as Israel refused to accept this salvation when it was offered to them, so the Gentiles have all too often refused to *make Israel envious*.
  - a) Instead of showing to God's ancient chosen people the attractiveness of the Christian way, Christians have characteristically treated the Jews with hatred, prejudice, persecution, malice, and all uncharitableness. We should not take this passage lightly!

### **If the Root is Holy, so are the Branches**

- 1) Yet Paul anticipates the eventual spiritual recovery of Israel as a sort of national resurrection from the dead like those in ancient times which are written of throughout the Old Testament — when prophets of old called Israel back to their true God and Israel responded! (see Isaiah 26:19; Ezekiel 37:1-12 & Hosea 6:2)
- 2) For the Gentiles, yes, Jewish rejection of Jesus was made into a blessing for you and me. Yet consider how great a blessing their ultimate acceptance of Jesus will be: life from the dead (spiritual life). It will be like Lazarus, raised from the dead. He was dead and buried, but Jesus called Him back to life! Israel in rejecting Christ is lifeless, but will be raised again to fullness of life in God's ultimate plan of salvation.

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- 3) The first-fruit that Paul writes about represents the first Christians, who were Jewish. Their conversion was something holy and good for the church; all the apostles and most (but not all) of the human authors of Holy Scripture were Jewish. If the conversion of this "first-fruit" was good for the Gentiles, how much better will it be when the full harvest is brought in!

### A Wild Olive Tree

- 1) With the picture of the olive tree and the branches, Paul reminds the Gentile Christians that it is only by God's grace that they can be grafted into the "tree" of God - the "root" of which is Israel. (see sidebar on grafting)
- 2) The notion of grafting was well-understood in Biblical days. It was a common horticulture method in wide-spread use and the hearers of Paul's message would have understood what is described in the sidebar.
- 3) Paul pictures the Messianic people as an olive tree that is partially natural (believing Israel), partly engrafted (believing Gentiles) and partly dismembered (unbelieving Israel).
  - a) The common horticultural process entailed grafting invigorating new branches onto an old exhausted tree that was yielding less and less good fruit each season.
- 4) The Talmud speaks of Ruth, the Moabitess, as a "godly shoot" engrafted into Israel. Moabites were Gentiles, not Jews, and not part of God's chosen people. Yet Ruth accepted the God of Israel by faith and is commended as having been grafted into Israel by God.
  - a) In this way, Ruth is a pre-cursor to the Gentiles who now, in the days immediately following Christ's passion and resurrection, are being likewise engrafted into "God's chosen" by grace, even as it was God's grace that previously allowed a Moabite to be included as a full member of God's people.
- 5) The science is this – the fruit is the result of the branch grafted onto the root stock – not the root stock itself. Good branches produce good fruit. Bad branches produce bad fruit. Root stock merely supplies the branches with the nutrients needed to live and produce fruit consistent with the nature of the branch itself.
- 6) God's grace upsets the natural order. Here in Romans and also in the Old Testament book of Ruth, good fruit comes from bad branches grafted onto good root. That is impossible! Yet with God, all things are possible!
  - a) The analogy shows that Israel was not so much "demoted" from its favored nation status as the Gentiles were promoted to share in its blessings.

### No Room for Boasting

- 1) Paul sounds a caution to us: <sup>18</sup>*Do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you.*

### A Word about Grafting

*Olive trees have been grafted for over 7,000 years. The olive tree is an evergreen tree that usually is about 16 feet high. It has numerous branches that form a dense, shady tree. The tree has a very large root system that can get enough water even in dry, arid conditions.*

*In Biblical times, a branch from a good olive tree was taken and grafted onto a wild olive tree with an established root system. The wild olive tree, called *agrielaos*, did not produce very good fruit but had excellent roots. But the good cultivated olive tree, called *kallielaios*, produced very good fruit – yet would take decades for a seedling to establish a good root system in the desert climate. The solution? One or more branches from a good tree would be grafted onto the wild tree. The good branch would then produce excellent fruit while getting nourishment from the well-established wild tree root system.*

*In Romans 11 Paul writes that God took a bad branch (Gentiles) and grafted it onto a good tree (Israel). This was opposite of the way the first century people grafted olive trees because it goes against nature.*

*God had a good tree with a good root system. The nation of Israel was the tree with a strong root system comprised of the law and prophets but it was producing bad fruit – a self-made righteousness. The Gentiles were represented by the wild olive tree, those who were not part of God's "chosen people". God took the wild olive tree, (the Gentiles) and grafted them into the good tree and it's root system (the people of God represented by Israel). Hence a wild branch produced good fruit.*

*Only God has the power to graft a wild tree branch onto a good tree and have that branch produce good fruit. Nature does not produce that result – the fruit comes from the branch stock, not the root system. In nature, wild branches produce bad fruit and cultivated branches produce good fruit. The metaphor of grafting demonstrates the power of God's love which is extended to all people by faith in Jesus Christ.*

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- a) Lest Gentiles think of themselves as superior to Jews, Paul also reminds them that the root supports the branches - not the other way around.
- 2) “*Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith.*” Furthermore, any Gentile standing in the “tree” of God is there by faith only, not by works or merits, and not because Gentiles were included in the covenant promise of God with Israel.
  - a) Hence Gentiles are “adopted sons by faith” and not heirs by covenant promise like Israel.
  - b) But faith in Jesus is the great leveler, and God sees all people of faith through the lens of the atoning work of His Son, Jesus, as being members of His own family – whether by adoption (*Gentiles*) or by covenant promise (*Israel*): All enjoy equal benefits of being in the Royal Family!
  - c) If Gentiles are unbelieving, they will be “cut off” just as much as unbelieving Israel was.
- 3) Paul stresses the need to continue in God’s goodness; not in the sense of a salvation by works, but continuing to stand in God's grace and goodness to us - a relationship of continual abiding.
- 4) The idea of a continual abiding in the “tree” is also expressed by Jesus in John’s gospel:
  - a) *“I am the true vine, and My Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup> He cuts off every branch in Me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. <sup>3</sup> You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Remain in Me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me.*

<sup>5</sup> *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> If you do not remain in Me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. <sup>7</sup> If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> This is to My Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples.”* (John 15:1-8)
- 5) Paul summarizes his point from Romans 11:11-24: God's purpose in allowing hardening in part to come upon Israel is so that the fullness of the Gentiles can come in.
  - a) The notion of “temporary” is an important one; Israel's hardness is temporary. One day the Jews will realize their blindness and folly. They will accept Jesus Christ as Lord, and the glorious national restoration of these people will bring in the Kingdom Age.
  - b) When the fullness of the Gentiles has come in to God’s pasture, God will once again turn the attention of His plan of the ages specifically on Israel again, so that all Israel will be saved.
- 6) There is a distinction between national or ethnic Israel and spiritual Israel. Paul makes this clear in Galatians 3:7 and other passages. Nevertheless, God still has a purpose and a plan for ethnic Israel, and will bring salvation to them. We will pick up here next week.
  - a) Paul writes here of the ethnic Israel and not *spiritual Israel* – How do we know? Because Paul says this is a “*mystery*” - and it is no mystery that *spiritual* Israel will be saved.

### Discussion Questions

- 1) Why do I think that Paul used the horticultural practice of grafting to speak to what God has done in extending His fellowship to the Gentiles?
- 2) In Paul’s mind, what does the grafting analogy show?
- 3) If I am not ethnically Jewish, what do those Jewish roots make me as a believer in Christ Jesus? With what kind of awe then, am I to regard Judaism and in what kind of awe ought I hold the grace of God in me?