

## ROMANS 11:16-36

*Paul concludes his analysis of the problem of the lost condition of the Jewish nation and how it turned out as riches for the Gentiles to hear the gospel and be saved. He will end by giving exalted praise to God for His wisdom and knowledge.*

### I) The Olive Trees – Grafting in the Broken Branches (11:16-24)

- A) Firstfruits and lump are holy; root and branches are holy – Israel set apart by/to God as his special people (OT Israel likened to an olive tree in Jeremiah 11:16-17 and Hosea 14:4-6)
  - 1) The good olive tree has a “holy root” – Abraham and the promise given to him by God to bless all nations; it came via the faithful remnant of OT Israel through whom the fulfillment of the promised messiah/Christ was realized for Jew and Gentile
  - 2) Some of the branches [individual Jews] were broken off – sin, unbelief
- B) Gentiles were a wild olive tree, and faithful, obedient Gentiles were grafted in among the natural branches of the good olive tree (faithful Jews) to partake of the root and fatness
  - 1) Wild branches = Gentiles; natural branches = faithful Jews
  - 2) Branches grafted in (Gentiles) are not to boast against the branches (Jews)
  - 3) If boast, remember that they do not support the root, but the root supports them
    - a) “Root” – faithful Jewish remnant through whom was fulfilled the messianic promise
- C) Gentiles will claim that Jewish branches were broken off that they might be grafted in
  - 1) True, but Jews broken off because of unbelief (not race), and the Gentiles stand by faith
  - 2) Should not be arrogant, but fear (take heed lest they fall – 1 Cor. 10:12)
    - a) If God did not spare natural branches (Jews), He may not spare the Gentiles
- D) Consider the goodness and severity of God
  - 1) Severity toward those who fell; goodness toward the Gentiles, **if** they continue in His goodness; otherwise, they will be cut off
  - 2) If Jews do not continue in unbelief (repent), God is able to graft them in again
  - 3) If Gentiles cut out of wild olive tree can be grafted **contrary to nature** into a good olive tree, how much more the natural branches (Jews) be grafted into their own olive tree

*Paul now employs an illustration of two olive trees, one wild and one good (cultivated). The good olive tree has a “holy root” indicating that gospel salvation is “rooted” in the promise to Abraham and the Old Testament remnant of faithful Jews. Some of the original branches had been broken off of this good olive tree – these were unfaithful Jews.*

*The Gentiles are represented in the wild olive tree, and faithful Gentiles were “grafted in” among the branches of the good olive tree to enjoy the blessings of God’s salvation. “The grafting in (Romans 11:17, 19, 23-24) that Paul speaks of is the engrafting or implanting of a new branch (scion) into an established, but aged root or trunk. This practice is known as oleiculture. The process is basically this: first, a branch is cut off an older tree leaving a stub a few inches long; second, the stub is split a few inches leaving a place for the new engrafted branch to be inserted; third, a small branch is cut from another tree and the cut end is shaped into a wedge that will slide into the split; fourth, the wedge end of the new branch is forced into the split and the joint is tightly bound with string to encourage the old tree and the new engrafted branch to grow together. The result of grafting is the rejuvenation of the aged stock and the production of useful fruit” (C. Reeves). “The normal process of grafting would call for the cultivated branch to be grafted in the wild olive tree. However, this is not what occurred; rather, the wild olive was grafted in the cultivated olive. This is contrary to nature...” (Clinton Hamilton, Romans, 658)*

*The Gentiles needed to be careful not to boast against the Jews, even when claiming that the Jews had been broken off to graft them in. This is because the Jews had been broken off due to unbelief, and the Gentiles needed to fear. If God did not spare the natural branches, He will*

*not spare the branches grafted in if they fall into unbelief. All must consider the goodness and severity of God: goodness if we continue in His will, and severity if we do not and are cut off.*

*The best news is that the Jews who had been broken off could be grafted in again, if they repent of their unbelief. If the wild branches (Gentiles) could be grafted in again – contrary to nature – then all the more the natural branches could be grafted in again!*

## **II) Divine Mercy on All Men and the Depth of God’s Wisdom (11:25-36)**

- A) Paul did not want the Gentiles to be ignorant of this mystery, lest they be wise in their own opinion
  - 1) The mystery was that the hardening in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles had come in
  - 2) God’s purpose revealed concerning the means to accomplish the spiritual fullness of Gentiles and Jews
- B) “And so [in this manner] all Israel will be saved” – faith and repentance (v. 23) and being grafted back into the good olive tree by God
  - 1) Not that Israel as a whole is going to be saved, but that “in this way” (faith in Christ) each individual Jew can be saved and grafted back in if he believes and repents
  - 2) Quotes Isaiah 59:20 and 27:9 – salvation in Christ made available to the Jews
- C) Concerning the gospel, the Jews were the enemies of the Gentiles, but concerning the election of God, they were beloved for the sake of the fathers (Abraham, et. al.)
  - 1) Why? The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable (irreversible) (cf. Rom. 9:6-13)
  - 2) As the Gentiles who were once disobedient to God but obtained mercy through Jewish disobedience, even so the Jewish disobedient will obtain mercy through the mercy shown the Gentiles
  - 3) God committed them all to disobedience (3:9, 23), that He might have mercy on all!
- D) Paul proclaims the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God
  - 1) His judgments are unsearchable (Eph. 3:8) and His ways past finding out (unknowable and untraceable by human wisdom and effort, Eph. 3:19)
  - 2) Quotes Isaiah 40:13 and Job 41:11 – we are totally dependent upon God to reveal His unsearchable wisdom to man (1 Cor. 2:7-13; Eph. 3:3-5)
  - 3) All things are of, through, and to God (He is the source, medium, and goal of all things), to whom be the glory forever. Amen!

*The hardening of the hearts of the Jews was until the fullness of the Gentiles had come in. This was all according to the purpose of God in bringing salvation to all, Jew and Gentile. “And so all Israel will be saved” has reference to the means of salvation – that “in this way” would all Israel be saved, that is, by faith in Christ, and being grafted back into the good olive tree. “The point is not when all Israel will be saved, but how” (Cottrell, Romans, 436). “Those among Israel that are saved will be saved or delivered in the manner referred to. This future does not put all the salvation of all Israel at some future point. Rather, the idea that those to be saved henceforth will be saved in the same manner as those who have been saved heretofore” (Hamilton, Romans, 663).*

*The disobedient Gentiles had found mercy and salvation through Jewish disobedience, and the disobedient Jews would find that same mercy and salvation through the mercy shown to the Gentiles. All were condemned in sin, that all might enjoy the mercy of God in Christ. This grand plan was all perfectly arranged and executed by a God of unparalleled wisdom, knowledge, and love.*

*Paul ends this section with a soaring doxology about the unsearchable depths of the wisdom and knowledge of God. To God, who has made all things possible for man to be saved from the death of sin, belongs all the glory. This ends the doctrinal part of the epistle.*