

The Branches of God's Tree

Lesson 9
December 8
Romans 11

Romans 11 is a conclusion in two ways. It's the last of three chapters (**Rom 9-11**) where Paul has been focusing on what the gospel of Jesus Christ means for the descendants of Abraham, but it's also the conclusion to eleven chapters of deep, foundational doctrine. Beginning in **Romans 12** and continuing through the rest of the letter, Paul will focus on how the gospel shapes everyday life. But first...

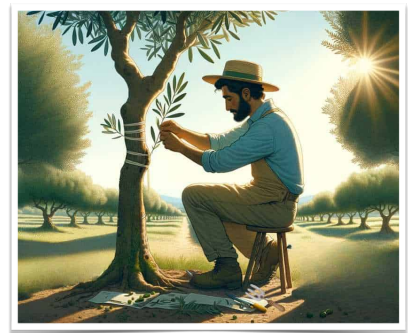
I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! (**11:1**)

Romans 10 ended with a quote from **Isaiah 65:2** that described the people of Israel as “a disobedient and contrary people” (**10:21**). Does that mean the door of salvation is forever closed on all of Abraham's descendants? By no means! Remember, Paul is writing and preaching “to bring about the obedience of faith” (**1:5; 16:26**). He has been encouraging everyone—Jew and Gentile—to be reconciled to God by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (**3:21-25; 11:5-6**).

Paul preached in **Acts 13**, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to [the Jews],” but they had “thrust it aside.” When some Jews who lived in Antioch were “filled with jealousy” that Gentiles were eager to hear the word of the Lord, Paul and Barnabas boldly said, “Behold, we are turning to the Gentiles” (**13:44-47**). That's what Paul is describing in **Romans 11**.

Beginning in **Romans 11:13**, Paul speaks directly to the Gentiles and he describes them as “a wild olive shoot” that has been “grafted in” to a tree by God. He warns...

...do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. Then you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree. (**11:18-24**)



The question is, who is willing to be shaped by God? Whether Jew or Gentile, who is willing to respond with the obedience of faith? Peace with God is available through Jesus Christ, but only for those who have been justified by faith (**5:1**). Paul brings this section of his letter to a powerful close by praising the deep wisdom and glorious ways of God (**11:33-36**). Let's talk about it...

For Class & Family Discussion:

- We heard about some unbelieving Jews being “filled with jealousy” that Gentiles were eager to hear the word of the Lord in Antioch back in **Acts 13**. Paul has brought up Israel being “jealous” in **Romans 11:11**. What is he talking about? In what way could their jealousy possibly develop into a good thing?
- Throughout **Romans 9-11**, Paul has been diagnosing the stumbling of so many Jews and their missing out on the grace of God. Let’s go back to **Matthew 13:13-17** and read the words of Jesus. How does that passage help us understand what was happening with many of the Jews?
- In **Romans 11:1-6**, what is Paul’s point in reminding his readers of Elijah’s words of despair and the LORD’s response in **1 Kings 19:9-18**?
- “So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace” (**11:5**). Who was this remnant and in what way were they “chosen by grace”?
- How were the Gentiles like “a wild olive shoot” (**11:17**)?
- How might the Gentiles grow to be “arrogant” toward the Jews (**11:18**) and why would that be a foolish thing? Is this still a potential pitfall? If so, in what way?
- “Note then the kindness and the severity of God” (**11:22**). Why should we always be sensitive to God’s kindness and severity?
- How is **Romans 11:33-36** a very fitting summary to the first eleven chapters of this letter?