

Mercy

May 3, 2020

Romans 11:17-32

The book of Romans was written by Paul to believers in Rome, almost certainly Gentiles. Though the gospel had reached Rome, Paul was not the one who started the church there. The gospel had taken root nonetheless, and the church blossomed to life.

There arose a growing divide between the relatively new Roman Christians and the Jewish community. To address this divide, Paul refers to the “root” of God’s kingdom. He then refers to followers of Christ as branches that have been pruned from the tree and some that have been grafted into it.

Paul informs the Roman Christians that God’s grace root is capable of saving any and all. God’s purpose for the Jews will be fulfilled. *“All Israel will be saved,”* (11:26), he proclaims.

Paul delves deeper into the mystery of God’s plan for redemption when he says, *“God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all”* (11:32). We are called to believe the unbelievable. That God, in his mercy, will see to the salvation of all who call on God’s name in Christ. [excerpts by Glen Schumaker]

Be Humble (Romans 11:17-21)

- Paul used two trees to illustrate the relationship of Jew and Gentile Christians
 - The olive tree – a symbol used by Israel on their coins, represents the Jews.
 - The wild or uncultivated olive tree represents the Gentiles
- ***“If some of the branches be broken off”*** – unbelieving Jews who rejected the gospel
- Paul then describes grafting new branches to the root and trunk of a tree. Grafting has been practiced at least since 4000 BC and maybe much longer.
- ***“thou being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them”*** – Gentiles had been grafted into the cultivated olive tree (Israel). Gentiles have now joined believing Jews as Christians.
- ***“partakes of the root and fatness of the olive tree”***
 - Gentiles partake in all the blessings given to Israel by God.
- Paul’s primary point was to discourage Gentiles from boasting they were superior to Jews.
 - The branches broken off were removed because of their unbelief.
 - Gentiles are only grafted in because of their faith in Jesus.
- We must be careful to not boast in our own accomplishments since we are saved by faith in Christ. It is a gift from God, we cannot boast.
- **Personal Note:** Leslie and I visited the Agia Triada (Holy Trinity) Monastery near Chania Crete in Dec. 2018. In the adjacent photo, the tree on the right had been grafted to bear 5 types of citrus fruit during the year.
- **Why does God call for us to be humble in our faith?**
- **Should Christians fear being removed from the tree?**

“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” See Luke 18:10-14



Agia Triada Monastery
Chania Crete, Greece

Be Thankful (Romans 11:22-24)

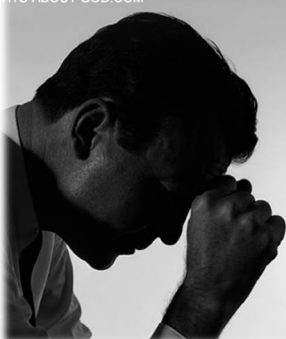
- ***“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God.”***
 - Paul wants us to reflect on God’s character. Goodness and severity both must be kept in balance
 - God’s kindness had been seen by inclusion of the Gentiles.
 - God’s severity is seen when he judged unbelieving Jews.
 - ***“God is able to graft them in again.”***
 - Paul was clear that Jews who turned from unbelief to belief in the gospel of Christ would be saved (grafted back in).
 - ***“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.”*** Romans 11:11
 - Paul in writing to the Roman Christians (and to us) cautions the Gentiles to love everyone and to share the gospel that all may be saved.
 - Even the unbelieving Jews can find a home in God’s family by turning from unbelief to belief.
 - Likewise, Gentile ‘christians’ who are arrogant and unrepentant would be judged.
 - ***“if thou continue in His goodness, otherwise thou shalt be cut off.”***
 - Paul emphasized equal treatment of Jews and Gentiles. Both believing Jews and believing Gentiles are grafted into God’s family.
- **In what ways do we show our gratitude for God’s kindness?**
- **Are you thankful that God brings both salvation and judgment?**



Be Aware (Romans 11:25-32)

- This passage can be difficult to interpret, but it is clear Paul did not want the Gentiles to be conceited and that God would continue to work to save His people Israel (Jews).
 - ***“ye should not be ignorant of the mystery”***
 - Paul used the word ‘mystery’ to refer to God’s plan of salvation that could only be understood by God’s revelation.
 - In Ephesians, Paul explained ‘mystery’ as inclusion of the Gentiles into the body as coheirs.
 - In Romans, ‘mystery’ relates directly to the salvation of Israel (Jews).
 - ***“All Israel shall be saved”*** - Paul was convinced God had not rejected Israel.
 - Salvation will always be through faith in Jesus Christ’s completed work on the cross.
 - ***“Through your mercy they may also obtain mercy”***
 - Israel’s disobedience led to the Gentiles receiving mercy.
 - Paul sought God’s mercy for Israel through the Gentiles witness to the Jews.
 - ***“For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all”***
 - All people (Jew and Gentile) are saved by God’s grace through Jesus.
 - Even though we were imprisoned by sin, God showed us mercy.
- **How can you share your faith in Christ this week?**

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Lord I pray we do not walk around the world angry and defeated. Lord I pray we walk in Your grace, full of Your love, mercy, and compassion. Lord, let us walk with You so our lives look more like You.

Biblical Truth: The gospel continues to be offered to all people, Jews and Gentiles.

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. Ephesians 2:4-5

GRACE
IS GETTING SOMETHING YOU
DON'T DESERVE, AND
MERCY
IS NOT GETTING WHAT
YOU DO DESERVE.