

## **Romans 11:17-21 – A Gentile Warning: Don't be Complacent**

Henry, TSK, GreekLexicon, Rienecker, Steele, Handfuls, Hendriksen, Vincent, Robertson, Trapp, Geneva, PNT, JFB, Koning, Calvin, Gill, Clarke  
Beloved in the Lord: **Have you ever seen anyone from a poor background given a good job and then he begins to act like he was the King of Spain?**

He quickly forgets from where he came and starts acting like everyone should be beholden to him!

**Even slaves who were freed in Rome 2000 years ago, and slaves who were freed in the US 200 years ago turned arrogant and had slaves of their own!**

Just so, **Gentiles Christians who were graciously freed by a Jewish man (from eternity in hell) then turned and mocked the Jewish people as inferior.**

This is the issue Apostle Paul addressed in our passage. **He tells them: "Don't be complacent, or you will fall."**

Our headings are:

**The Gentiles grafted into the Olive Tree**

**The Gentiles gloated about being in the Olive Tree**

**The Gentiles given a warning about gloating of being grafted in the Olive Tree**

Our goals are: That **you will humble yourself before God**, knowing you did not deserve to be saved, and instead, you will **produce fruits of obedience** to bring honor to the one who save you and joined you to his family.

### **The Gentiles were grafted into the Olive Tree**

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**,

**1. Christ's kingdom, pictured by the cultivated olive tree, started with the Jews, but some of their people (branches-not the whole tree) were broken off because of their constant rebellion against the Lord.**

The cultivated olive tree, a picture of Christ's kingdom, was planted, nourished, and established by God. And it grew!

**Hosea 14:6** His branches shall spread; His beauty shall be like an olive tree, And his fragrance like Lebanon.

**2. After some Jewish branches were broken-off, some Gentiles, wild olive branches,**

were grafted in, becoming part of the tree.

The new branches received the same nutrients-fatness from the plant, from the root, which is Christ.

Galatians 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Originally the wild olive branches looked like the good olive branch, but they were unproductive, with a firewood future.

3. Some people fuss that Apostle Paul said a wild olive branch was grafted into a cultivated olive tree since this was not something normally done; usually the cultivated branch was grafted into the wild tree.

Others try to defend Apostle Paul, arguing the wild branches was grafted into the cultivated tree to reinvigorate the tree.

But the point is not about those details. Christ isn't really a tree. You aren't branches.

Apostle Paul used this as an illustration to make a single point: Christians were grafted in by the work of God so they could become productive.

So don't take every aspect of a parable as fact. A parable has 1 main point!

Remember how Jesus used God to picture an unjust judge to whom the widow cried for justice? The point wasn't about God, but was about the persistency of the widow.

#### 4. Lessons:

a. Know your unworthiness before God. Don't forget from where you came: sin, shame, and misery!

b. To know your unworthiness, remember the Jews were the first people of God, they were the first Christians, and they were the first to preach to Gentiles. The Jews did not benefit anything from the Christians until later.

Galatians 3:14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

**c. Know your unworthiness. God had to give entrance to his kingdom before you could come in.** His Spirit grafted you in.

Matthew 21:43 "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.

**In this way Christianity is different from all other religions.** They all **require your good works.**

In **Christianity you must have the work of Christ and be grafted into his kingdom.** You are passive.

**d. Because of Christ's work, 2 nations became 1 in Jesus.** Ephesians 2. Praise God for the union! You have brothers.

### **The Gentiles gloated about being in 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.**"

**1. Gentiles, the wild olive branches, then boasted against the Jews who had fallen into rebellion against the Lord and were consequently expelled.**

*Even some believing Jews started becoming boastful and mocked the rebellious Jews for being rejected.*

Indeed, it was a form of antisemitism by Jews and Gentiles. (That was last week.)

Specifically, the Gentiles said: "**Branches were cut-off in order that we could come it.**"

But should they have boasted?

**2. Why should the Gentiles not boast against the Jews:**

**a. The Gentiles should have thought about their own deplorable condition before they were ingrafted.** They weren't intrinsically special!

**The Scriptures are explicit: The Jews were the original people to experience God's salvation!**

John 4: 22 "You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, **for salvation is of the Jews.**

**b. The Gentiles did not support the root, but the root supported them.** They did not have self-sustenance.

20 Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith...

**c. The Gentiles were ingrafted when the Jews were broken off, but it was because the Jews lacked faith that caused the Gentiles to be included; it wasn't anything special on the Gentiles' part.**

**The Jews weren't broken-off to make room in the kingdom for the Gentiles!**

Even **when the Gentiles were included**, it was because **they used faith God had given them** graciously in order to receive what Jesus did for them on the cross.

They weren't standing in their own strength.

Jeremiah 11:16 The LORD called your name, Green Olive Tree, Lovely and of Good Fruit. With the noise of a great tumult **He has kindled fire on it, And its branches are broken.**

**3. Lessons:**

**a. Never boast, "I'm not as bad as others." That's not God's standard!**

If you have no faith, you too will be cut off.

Just like birthright and covenant inclusion did not save the Jews, neither would church membership save you.

Habakkuk 2:4 "Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; **But the just shall live by his faith.**

**b. Don't be in a rush to condemn your brother when you see weakness in him.**

Romans 14: 1 Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. **3** Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has

received him. **4** Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand. **10** But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. **13** Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

**c. The Jews who were cut-off would more easily be re-grafted into the tree as they are the original branches.**

You were not the first in the kingdom, but the last in it.

Romans 11:24 For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, **how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?**

**The Gentiles given a warning about gloating of being grafted in the Olive Tree**

20... Do not be haughty, **but fear**. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either.

**1. Apostle Paul then bluntly warned the Gentiles of the danger they were in for gloating about the cutting-off of the Jews and the inclusion of the Gentiles into the kingdom.**

**2. Instead of gloating, they were to fear God, fear that is a holy reverence of God, not an uncertain emotion.**

Good fear protected them from arrogance, and ultimately, destruction.

**3. Instead of gloating, they were to remember they were no better than the Jews and they did not deserve to be in the kingdom, and if they rebelled, they too would be cut off from the kingdom as some Jews were.**

God wanted to make sure the Gentiles would give him the praise for what he did for them.

**4. And ultimately, God will exclude Gentiles who pretend to be part of the olive tree but didn't bear fruits.**

Remember what God did to the Jews in AD70 for rejecting him. It happened just as Jesus predicted. Even the source of Messiah, Israel, was rejected!

## 5. Lessons:

### a. Learn from the mistakes of others.

Jeremiah 7:12 "But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and **see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel.**

God will not automatically save you because you are in a "Christian" country. He will look for faith, real living, trusting faith!

### b. Nourish your faith so it does not die and you become firewood or dry bones (like Israel under Rome) and ultimately, hell.

Read God's Word.

Mediate on it.

Pray.

Worship!

Encourage each other to do so.

### c. Stop thinking proud thoughts of yourself or your abilities, or of your intrinsic value.

All you are is because of the Savior. Let grace make you humble, not proud.

1 Corinthians 10:12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

**Warning: If God would excommunicate such close people to him, surely he would do the same for people like we are, people who were farther from him.**

## Conclusion:

Gentiles, **wild uncultivated olive branches, were graciously grafted into Christ.**

They had **no ground for gloating about their position** – a 2<sup>nd</sup> position at best.

So God **gave Gentiles a warning not to gloat,** but to **continue to receive his benefits and produce fruits worthy of repentance,** for the glory of the Savior.

Beloved in the Lord:

**1. Thank God you were cut-off from the old stock and grafted into Christ, not through any work of your own, but by the gracious work of the Spirit.**

**2. Humbly serve the Lord now.**

All you are and own is because of him.

You aren't better than non-Christians because you are special of yourself.

Without Christ, you are nothing.

**3. One of the most significant ways you can serve the Lord is in bringing others in so the Olive Tree can grow, flourish, and cause men everywhere to praise God.**

**Finally, unless you are grafted into the tree you will be fit only to become dried and put into the furnace of hell for eternity.**

Wouldn't you ask God to pluck you out from where you are and graft you into himself, a place where you will be nourished, secured, and continue to produce fruit for eternity?