

Chapters 9-11 have a single purpose—to answer the question—What about God's promises to Israel—Paul answers this by asserting—His promises are as sure as ever—God's word has not failed (9:6), and He has not cast off His people whom He foreknew (11:1-2)—but the bigger question becomes—Who constitutes this people—and Paul makes very clear that God's people, God's Israel, does not include EVERY Jew—but ONLY elect Jews—in whom God's promises to Israel are being fulfilled—and to whom believing Gentiles are being added...

Last week PM—I mentioned from v11-32—the apostle has two clarifications to make—[1] the Jews are NOT beyond salvation—simply because the majority of Jews in Jesus' day—rejected Christ and were blinded—this does NOT mean—that every individual Jews in subsequent generations is beyond salvation—that first generation stumbled—but the Jews in general have not so stumbled as to fall—that is—fall in such a way as to render all Jews of all times blinded by God's judicial hardening...

In fact Paul expressly believed that the salvation of the Gentiles—would "provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them" (v14)—that God is able to give them life from the dead (v15), graft them back in, providing they no longer continue in their unbelief (v23), and—that—"blindness in part has happened to Israel" (v25)—that is—there was and always will be—a remnant of ethnic Jews—trickling into the Kingdom of God...

[2] The Gentiles are NOT to be proud but humble—this is the theme Paul directly takes up in vv17-21 (a passage we will more fully consider this evening)—if Gentiles were grafted in from a wild olive tree (v17)—they mustn't boast (v18) or become haughty (v20)—but fear—"for if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either" (v21)...

Now—this morning I want to focus only on v17—a verse that provides clear insight into the relationship of the church and Israel—and shows beyond any shadow of a doubt—that the church is the continuation of God's true Israel...

- I. The Root and Olive Tree
- II. The Natural Branches
- III. The Wild Branches

I. The Root and Olive Tree

1. I mentioned last week—in examining v16—that the apostle continues in vv17-24 the imagery began in v16b...
2. The imagery concerns an olive tree—which has three parts—the root, the actual tree, and the various branches...
3. Now—let me say on the front end—the root is Abraham, the tree Israel as a whole, and the branches are individuals...
4. Or else—put another way—the root is Abraham—the tree Israel—and the branches Abraham's TRUE seed...
5. [1] The root is Abraham—as the first Jew, all other Jews have their origin from him, as a tree comes from the root...
6. Thus—Abraham is the father of the Jewish nation—we could say—the olive tree had its beginning with him...
7. Rom.11:1—"I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin..."
8. Notice how the apostle traces his heritage back to Israel (as the olive tree) and then Abraham (as the root)...
9. Thus—the patriarchs, and specifically Abraham, are the root—from which the olive tree, or Israel, grows....

10. MLJ—"Abraham is the father of the Jewish nation, he is the root out of which they have all come" John Murray—"Israel, with its rootage in the patriarchs, is viewed as the cultivated olive tree and the Gentiles as the wild olive..."
11. Isa.51:1-2—"Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek the LORD: look to the rock *from which* you were hewn [cut], and to the hole of the pit *from which* you were dug. 2 Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah *who* bore you; for I called him alone, and blessed him and increased him..."
12. Now—here I must clarify—that Abraham is the root and father in that—from Him would come the Messiah...
13. That is—as the first Hebrew or Jew—all of the promises made to the nation of Israel—were first made to him...
14. Thus—Paul is going to say—we partake of the richness of the root—that is—the promises made to Abraham...
15. [2] The tree is true Israel—that is—by "true Israel" I mean that Israel from which unbelieving branches were cut off...
16. In other words—by "olive tree" Paul does NOT refer to physical Israel—but that smaller Israel within Israel...
17. Now—here I must remind you—Abraham was the father of two nations—one physical, the other spiritual...
18. Abraham was and is—the father of every physical Jew—BUT—in another sense he is only the father of believers...
19. Jn.8:37-39—"I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. 38 I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father. 39 They answered and said to Him, Abraham is our father. Jesus said to them, If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham..."
20. In other words—while they were physical descendants they were not spiritual descendants—they were not God's true Israel...
21. Thus—it's VERY important to understand—that the olive tree in v17 is God's TRUE Israel and not physical Israel...
22. This can be verified in that—ONLY the living branches are left—while ALL dead branches are broken off...
23. That is—all physical Jews—who have never been made alive—or have never obtained the salvation of God...
24. Thus by olive tree is meant—God's true people—His true Israel—the elect remnant—Abraham's spiritual seed [Jer.11:15-16; Hos.14:5-7]...

II. The Natural Branches

1. The apostle expressly says—that only "some of the branches were broken off"—that is—the unbelieving branches...
2. Verses 19-20—"You will say then, Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in. Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off..."
3. Thus—the branches that were broken off—were unbelieving Jews—or—"the rest [that] were hardened or blinded..."
4. Now—here I must answer a question—In what way were these natural branches in the tree prior to being cut off...
5. Simply put—they were in the tree by way of national identification and NOT by a saving union with Jesus Christ...
6. For example, we shall see in v21-22—that Gentiles who make a profession of salvation may also be cut off...
7. That is—they may profess to be a part of God's people—but their attachment to the tree is merely external...
8. Jn.15:5-6—"I am the vine and you are the branches...If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned..."
9. That is—those branches who profess to be in the vine (or olive tree) but bear NO fruit—will be broken off...

10. Thus—the natural branches are individual Jews, circumcised into the old covenant—and yet—unconverted...
11. They are cut off from the tree—in connection with the grafting in of the Gentiles—and the induction of the NC...
12. Acts 3:22-26—"For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. 23 'And it shall be *that* every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' 24 Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. 25 You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' 26 To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one *of you* from your iniquities..."
13. The phrase "destroyed from among the people"—has reference to the removal of a man from the Israelite community...
14. In their OT setting—they refer to the death penalty—to be REMOVED from the people of God through death...
15. Here—they refer to the braking off of individual branches through unbelief—or stumbling at the stumbling stone...
16. In other words—in connection with the NC when THE prophet comes—unbelieving branches will be cut off...

III. The Wild Branches

A. Their identity

1. I trust it's rather obvious—that by "wild olive tree" is meant, the pagan and non-covenanted with, Gentile nations...
2. This becomes more evident in v24—where the "wild olive tree" is contrasted with the "cultivated olive tree"...
3. The "cultivated olive tree" refers to Israel—which was cultivated in the sense that it alone was nurtured by God...
4. He planted it, grew it, tended it, fed it, nurtured it, and trimmed it—all in CONTRAST to the—wild olive tree...
5. This he merely left to itself, Acts 14:16—"In the past, He let all nations go their own way [i.e. to grow wild]..."
6. Now—this will become a rather constant theme throughout v24—as Paul reminds the Gentiles of their past...
7. They were Gentiles—who never sought righteousness—but were busy pursuing after idols and immorality...

B. Their privileges

1. The apostle says—that believing Gentile, were grafted in "among them" and "with them" partake of the same root and tree...
2. The "them" used trice within this verse—refers to the believing Jewish branches—that were never cut off...
3. Thus—we find—that there is but one unified people of God—who together—share of the same root and tree...
4. In other words—believing and engrafted Gentiles—are NOT second-hand citizens—but equal covenant members...
5. Now—notice how Paul puts this within our text—"with them [you] became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree..."
6. That is—having been grafted into the tree—we then partake, NIV—"in the nourishing sap from the olive root..."
7. The Gk word rendered "fatness" (KJV) or "richness" (NAS) of the olive root—refers to covenant blessings...

8. The blessings that were first promised to Abraham—and enriched Israel—are now experienced by Gentiles...
9. Now—before I examine a few texts to illustrate these points—let me briefly suggest what this promise entailed...
10. Simply put—by the Abrahamic covenant is meant—the promise made to Abraham of Christ and His salvation...
11. Gal.3:13-14—"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree'), 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..."
12. That is—Gentiles partake of the blessing promised to Abraham—namely—the gift of the Spirit and salvation...
13. Notice—it is the SAME blessing promised to Abraham that has NOW come upon the Gentiles—by faith...
14. Gal.3:26-29—"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..."
15. That is—those united to Christ are partakers of the rich root—or are heirs of the promise made to Abraham...
16. Eph.2:11-13—"Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh – who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands – 12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ..."
17. [a] Natural Gentiles, v12—"that at that time [i.e. when you were Gentiles in the flesh] you were without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of the promise, no hope, without God in the world..."
18. [b] Spiritual Israelites, v13—"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ..."
19. Now—when Paul says they've been brought NEAR, he means—near to the FIVE things mentioned in v12...
20. These are what was promised Abraham—and together constitute—the FATNESS of the root and olive tree...
21. Now—each of these five necessarily include the other four—for example, if you have Christ, you have the others...
22. Let me focus upon one—"aliens from the commonwealth of Israel"—that is—they were non-citizens of Israel...
23. The Greek word rendered "commonwealth"—refers to the WEALTH that every citizen has in COMMON...
24. By nature—Gentiles were aliens to this commonwealth—they were foreigners and strangers to Israelite citizenship...
25. But—things have now changed—they have been brought near—and have become partakers of the commonwealth of Israel...
26. V19—"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God..."
27. Sam Waldron—"Paul directly asserts that Gentile believers are citizens of the commonwealth of Israel and no longer foreigners...They no longer occupy the status of the foreigners and aliens who are excluded from God's assembly and nation..."
28. For example—my wife was born a legal citizen of the Dominican Republic which she remained until 2004...
29. In 2004 when she became a citizen of the United States—she became a citizen just as much as I am a citizen...
30. In other words—although I am a natural citizen or American—she became a grafted in American with equal rights...

31. That is—all of the commonwealth of America became hers—she became in EVERY sense—an American...
32. Thus—Gentiles were NOT a part of Israel by birth—have been grafted into Israel—and are not equally Israelites...
33. Thus—we learn that believing Gentiles, have along with believing Jews, become partakers of the promises made to Abraham...
34. Lenski—"The marvel of divine grace, which the Gentile Christians are to note well, is that they together with the believing Jews are made blessed partakers of all that God originally gave to Abraham and to the great patriarchs of the covenant..."
35. Now—what I want to do is, briefly examine these promises—suggesting we can summarize them into three...
36. [1] Deliverance—that is—salvation or redemption from our enemies, through the blood of God's own Son...
37. Gen.22:17—"By Myself I have sworn says the LORD...blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies..."
38. Gill—"This was literally fulfilled in the times of Joshua, David, and Solomon; and spiritually in Christ, Abraham's principal seed, when he destroyed Satan and his principalities and powers; overcame the world; made an end of sin and abolished death; and delivered his people out the hands of all their enemies; and in all Abraham's spiritual seed, who are made more than conquerors over them, through Christ that has loved them..."
39. Lk.1:68-75—"Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, 69 and has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, 70 as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who *have been* since the world began, 71 that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, 72 to perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, 73 the oath which He swore to our father Abraham: 74 to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, 75 in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life..."
40. [2] Acceptance—this is the very heart of the promise—that God would be our God and we would be His people...
41. Gen.17:7—"And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you..."
42. This is the very heart of the covenant God made with Abraham and his true seed—or his spiritual descendants...
43. Now—this of course is related to the first promise—for we can never be reconciled to God until our sin is addressed...
44. Thus—He first delivers us from our sins—and He then adopts us into His family—He makes us His people...
45. [3] Inheritance—this was shadowed to Abraham in the Land of Canaan—which pointed toward the new earth...
46. Gen.17:8—"Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God..."
47. The physical descendants of Abraham received the land of Canaan as an inheritance—as we read in Joshua...
48. But—this land, as Abraham himself fully understood, was typical of a better land which his spiritual seed would inherit...
49. Thus we read, Rev.21:7—"He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son..."

C. Their responsibility [considered this evening]

IV. Lessons

A. There is but one, unified people of God

1. Now—I know that I've made this point recently more than once—but I think it's important enough to repeat...
2. There are not two peoples of God—there is a single people—God's Israel, the church—made of Jews and Gentiles...
3. But I want to drive home from this text is—Gentiles grafted in—actually become citizens of a NEW Israel...
4. All of the promises made to Abraham—are being fulfilled in the NEW Israel of God—or the Christian church...
5. For notice what Paul does NOT say—he does NOT say that God chopped down the olive tree and planted another...
6. Now—does he say—that God planted a similar, but temporary one alongside, but He grafted Gentiles into it...
7. [1] One flock, Jn.10:16—"And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd..."
8. [2] One family, Rom.4:16-17—"Therefore *it is* of faith that *it might be* according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all 17 (as it is written, 'I have made you a father of many nations') in the presence of Him whom he believed – God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did..."
9. [3] One man, Eph.2:14-15—"For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, *thus* making peace..."

B. There is but one, regenerate people of God

1. I take this from the fact—that the dead branches (the unbelieving Jews)—were broken off from the olive tree...
2. In other words—God's people DOES NOT consist of believers and their children—but—ONLY believers...
3. Now—remember what I said—there are TWO covenants—the OC with physical Israel and the NC with spiritual Israel...
4. The OC was temporal and included every physical Jew—the NC is eternal and includes every spiritual Jew...
5. Jer.31:33-34—"But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more..."

C. There is but one, privileged people of God

1. I trust this is an evident lesson from this verse—the church, both Jews and Gentiles, are a rich and blessed people...
2. That is—every OT and NT saint—together partake of the same root and tree—they share in one salvation...
3. This is to say—there are NO second rate citizens within this kingdom—every resident has EQUAL benefits...
4. The Jews don't get anything more than the Gentiles—and the Gentiles don't get anything more than the Jews...
5. They share TOGETHER—the same root and tree—they drink from the same well—they share the same Groom...