



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Grafted In

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Romans 11:11-24

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¹¹ So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. ¹² Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

¹³ Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry ¹⁴ in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. ¹⁵ For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? ¹⁶ If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

¹⁷ But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." ²⁰ That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. ²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. ²² 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. ²³ 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. ²⁴ 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.

(Pastor prays)

There are times when you look at the world and wonder, “What is going on here?” Or to put it in theological language as Christians, we might say it like this: “What is God doing?” Because if we were in charge, we certainly wouldn’t do it like this! That’s sort of what it feels like Paul is getting at in this passage. When it looks like God’s chosen people Israel are missing out on God’s given messiah Jesus!

And if God’s chosen people Israel miss out on God’s salvation in Jesus, what does it say about how God works? It feels confusing, especially if you know the Old Testament and God’s unbreakable covenant with His people. Because what we know about God doesn’t seem to match up with what’s going on in the world. We feel that a lot. We feel it at home, with our children. We feel it at work or lack of work.

That’s the emotion in this passage and here in Chapter 11. Paul is addressing so much more than Israel’s hardness. He is giving us an inside look into how God works and why we should trust Him.

And today, I’m hoping that we can get a big picture of God to ease our minds and strengthen our hearts as we look into the future. Today I want you to see...

God Never Quits and He’s Always Good

I’d like to offer several things to think about God from this passage. Let’s start with a big one.

God keeps His promises

Join me in verse 11. Let’s read the question and the immediate answer. “Did they stumble in order that they might fall?” By no means! To get at this, let’s identify some of the words. They – the “they” is Israel, God’s chosen people, and in Chapters 9-11, Paul has already said that Israel’s heart is hard toward Jesus. You find this in the Gospels and also in Acts.

And Paul realizes and anticipates the obvious question. Is God done with His chosen people? Look at the way he asks the question. Did they stumble in order that they might fall? Did their hardening (stumble) happen so that they might be abandoned (fall). Right here in the question is the answer. *Stumbling* and *falling* are not the same thing. And then Paul adds the emphatic, “By no means! No! Of course not!” So at the very top of his argument, Paul emphatically states that God keeps His promises to His people. The problems are not with the promises; the problems are with the people. They had not yet seen the fulfillment of God’s promises in Jesus, and that’s where all of this is heading – to Jesus.

Remember what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1:20. *For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.* The first promises God made to his people was Genesis 3:15. That the seed of the woman would crush the head of the seed of the serpent. Jesus did that at His cross and, there at the cross of Jesus, is where you will find God's promises fulfilled. You need to live your life under the promise of God found at the cross of Jesus. God never quits and He is always good. God keeps His promises.

God works in providence

Let me show you where I get this. It shows up starting in verse 11-12. ¹¹ *So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.* ¹² *Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!*

J. R. W. Stott called this a chain of blessing. The Jews reject Jesus. The Gentiles get saved. And verses 13-14 says the Jews are made jealous. ¹³ *Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry ¹⁴ in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them.*

God is working through terrible turns of history in ways that we would never think to do and would frankly call bizarre. There is plenty to see here and there is plenty that you could substantiate with Biblical history, especially in the Gospels and very specifically in Acts. But the main thing I want you to see is *providence*. We need to further develop our doctrine of God's providence: that He is always working in all things, even when it makes no sense to us and we would never do it like that.

The Puritans used to speak in terms of a "hard" providence or a "frowning" providence (when things were tough or didn't make sense) and in terms of a "smiling" providence or a "kind" providence when things were going well. And whether it was a *hard* providence or a *kind* providence, the recognition is that *God* is in control and working.

Romans 8:28 says, *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.* I want you to take a look around you and see the painful and enjoyable and know that God is working in all of it. Take a look at your

life, all that God has done and used to bring you right to this point. Some of you God is providentially working to bring you to the cross of Jesus. Because God keeps His promises and God works in providence.

And for my third point let me just use the Apostle Paul as a *person*.

God honors a burden

You find this in verses 13-14. Paul is writing to Gentiles about the Jews and notice the way he says it. ¹³ *Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry ¹⁴ in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them.*

“Fellow Jews” Paul is a fellow Jew, my own flesh. Paul has a deep longing to save some of them. Remember what Paul said at the opening of Chapter 9. It’s verse 1-3. *I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit— ² that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.*

It’s a burden to see people you love saved. *Save*. The term of deliverance that Christ brings at the cross. It’s forgiveness and reconciliation. Connie and I have six lost young people we pray for every day, trusting that God will save them. You won’t have to look far to find people close to you who are going to Hell. Ask God to give you a burden for them and then start praying. After the service I’ll post a guide you can use. It is praying the Bible for the *wayward*. God has always worked through people who have a burden to see others come to Christ. God never quits and He is always good. God keeps His promises. God works in providence. God honors a burden.

God saves by grace through faith

In verse 16, Paul begins with two illustrations from the Old Testament as to why Gentiles who are saved are saved by grace and why God is still being true to Israel. In verse 16, Paul mentions the first-fruit offering but then moves very quickly to the picture of horticulture of an olive tree and its branches. The olive tree describes Israel, God’s people. You see it in Jeremiah 11 and Hosea 14. And the root of this olive tree in verse 16 would be the patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And this has consequences for the descendants.

Now let's go slowly through verses 17 and 18. *¹⁷ But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, ¹⁸ 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.*

Humility and dependence. Christians don't replace Old Testament Jews as God's people. In Christ we are grafted in even though naturally we don't belong. By grace through faith, we, although wild olive shoots that are naturally not God's people, we have been bound at the root that is holy.

That's certainly what Paul said to the Gentiles at Ephesus in Ephesians 2:12-13 – *remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to 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.*

Remember that? This is taking us to the cross.

Now I want you to notice three important evidences of salvation found here in verses 18-20. We have already mentioned one. Let's start with it. **Humility**. It is mentioned twice in verse 18 and also in verse 20. God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble. Verse 18 reminds us of our dependence on God. Grace doesn't make you arrogant, it makes you humble because you realize what you *really* deserve. Grace doesn't make you *judgmental*, it makes you *merciful*. That could be *you* in that sin. Grace doesn't make you *frustrated*, it makes you *patient*. As you think of the patience that God has had with you. That's humility.

Let's look at another vital word. **Faith**. I want you to notice that the Jews' rejection and the Gentiles' acceptance all depend on faith. In verses 19-20, it's the Jews' unbelief in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Now go back and read verse 20. *That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear.*

Do you see how the Gentiles are grafted in? It's faith. The quality of faith is not measured by how *much* faith you have; it's measured by what you have faith *in*. More pointedly, Paul here is discussing saving faith in Jesus. It's His life for yours. His death in your place. His righteousness for your sin and His punishment for your acceptance. It's the great exchange by you putting your faith in Jesus.

So we have talked about humility and faith. Now let's talk about **fear**. Isn't it interesting that Paul would import the idea of fear in the same command where he's telling us not to be proud? At the end of verse 20 he says in contrast, don't be *proud* but *fear*. It's a lost practice to stand in fear of God even though the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. To fear. It has been said there are two kinds of fear: one for the lost man and another for the saved man. One is the fear of a slave and the other is the fear of a son. The slave fears the owner because of his cruel treatment. But a son or daughter fears her Heavenly Father because of His majesty, great goodness, endless power, bottomless wisdom, and His immeasurable love that He pours out on us in Jesus.

You see, God the father never quits and He's always good. God keeps His promises and God works in providence to win people to Christ. God honors a burden and God saves by grace through faith in Jesus.

(Pastor prays)