

ROMANS 11:16-24

Romans 11 addresses both Jews (11:1-5) and Gentiles (11:13) who are believers. Earlier in this chapter Paul has emphatically stated (Romans 11:1-2, 11 using the strong expression "God forbid") that God is not through with Israel. In these verses Paul speaks to Israel as holy and that Gentiles were grafted in to the olive tree, partaking of the root. The root is the Abrahamic covenant, showing how foundational this covenant is for the Gentile and their spiritual blessings. One of the main thrusts of this section is that Gentile believers are not to become arrogant against Israel and Jewish people and, ultimately, at best, neglecting Jewish evangelism, or at worst denying Jewish evangelism, or God will cut them off just as He cut off Israel.

Romans 11:16-24

16 **For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.**

Firstfruit and root = holy

Lump and branches are also = holy

"Holy" qadosh - unique, different, distinct (it is intrinsically sacred)

- Exodus 19:6 "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation..."
- Exodus 20:8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."
- Psalms 99:9 "Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the LORD our God is holy."
- Isaiah 52:1 "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city..."
- Isaiah 57:15 "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy;..."

Whatever comes out of the "firstfruit" and "root" becomes holy. When someone "call [s] upon the name of the Lord," Romans 10:13, that person becomes a saint (holy, set apart).

Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology (in part): "SAINTS"

"The word 'saint' is derived from a Greek verb (hagiazo [αγιαζω] hag-ee-ad'-zo) whose basic meaning is 'to set apart,' 'sanctify,' or 'make holy.'

Saints, in the New Testament, are never deceased individuals who have been canonized by the church and given sainthood. They are living individuals who have dedicated themselves to the worship and service of the one true God as revealed through his Son, Jesus Christ.

On occasion, when discussing the atonement, Paul carefully differentiates between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians, calling the former saints and the latter believers. It was the saints, the holy people of God in the Old Testament, who brought the Messiah and redemption into the world, eventually extending the blessing to the Gentiles.

This usage may be seen in 1 Corinthians 1:2, which is addressed to "those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy [saints — Jewish Christians], together with all those [Gentiles] everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ Lord and ours." The same distinction is made in Ephesians 1:1: "to the saints [Jewish Christians] in Ephesus and the faithful [Gentiles] in Christ Jesus."

Colossians is also addressed to "the holy and faithful brothers" in Christ.

It is informative in this regard that Paul refers to this same collection in 2 Corinthians 8:1-4 as a sharing by the Macedonian churches with "the saints," not with the "other" saints. Paul's apprehension over whether the Jerusalem saints would accept such a contribution was based on the fact that Jewish Christians were being asked to accept the offering from Gentile Christians. The entire discussion of the issue in Acts 21 when Paul arrived in Jerusalem makes this clear.

Thus, although Gentile Christians are saints, too, because they were given access to the faith of Abraham and the people of the Old Testament, when redemptive history is discussed the Jews are specially designated the "saints" while the Gentiles are considered believers who were later admitted into this "holy" Jewish nucleus." <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/saints/>

A believer, Jew or Gentile, is holy (a saint) because he has "come forth" from the spiritual promises of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Although, both Jew and Gentile believers are on equal spiritual footing (Ephesians 2:11-22; Galatians 3:28) there are a number of times where Jewish believers and Gentile believers are addressed separately. This is the case in this section of Romans.

In the context the "firstfruit" and the "root" represent the Abrahamic Covenant and the Patriarchs through whom the Abrahamic Covenant was established (Abraham - Genesis 15) and promised (Isaac - Genesis 17:19; Jacob - Genesis 28:13-14).

Abrahamic Covenant - Genesis 12:1-3

- 1 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:
- 2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:
- 3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

"It is recognized by all serious students of the Bible that the covenant of God with Abraham is one of the important and determinative revelations of Scripture. It furnishes the key to the entire Old Testament and reaches for its fulfillment into the New.

The issue, in a word, is the question of whether Israel as a nation and as a race has a prophesied future. A literal interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant involves the permanent existence of Israel as a nation and the fulfillment of the promise that the land should be their everlasting possession."

Dr. John Walvoord, *Millennial Series: Part 12: The Abrahamic Covenant and Premillennialism*, <http://walvoord.com/article/49>

The Abrahamic Covenant is the most important of the Covenants for understanding the Bible. The rest of the Bible, from Genesis 12:4 through Revelation 22:21, is, in essence, commentary on how God brings to pass the three basic promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. The promises of the Abrahamic Covenant can be developed through the rest of the Scriptures in God's dealing with the Land of Israel, the Jewish people and the Messiah, and the salvation of Jews and Gentiles. The three other major covenants with Israel - Land, Davidic, and New - expand on the three basic promises of the Abrahamic Covenant.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT CAN NOT BE OVERSTATED!

The "lump" and the "branches" represent the nation of Israel which is holy (chosen of God).

lump φουραμα foo'-ram-ah - to knead; a mass of dough:--lump.

The "lump" or "dough" refers to Numbers 15:17-21.

- 17 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
- 18 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land whither I bring you,
- 19 Then it shall be, that, when ye eat of the bread of the land, ye shall offer up an heave offering unto the LORD.
- 20 Ye shall offer up a cake of the first of your dough for an heave offering: as ye do the heave offering of the threshingfloor, so shall ye heave it.
- 21 Of the first of your dough ye shall give unto the LORD an heave offering in your generations.

"Dough," of course, is bread dough! A part of the dough was offered to God as a token that all of it was acceptable. The "firstfruit" evidently refers to the origin of the nation: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. "Holy" has no reference to any moral quality, but to the fact that it was set apart for God. Now if the first fruit, or the first dough—that little bit of dough—was set apart for God, what about the whole harvest? Since Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were set apart for God, what about the nation? It all belongs to God, you see. God is not through with the nation Israel."

(McGee, J. V. Thru the Bible commentary. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. Vol. 4, Page 724. Nashville: Thomas Nelson)

"The reference is to (Numbers 15:17-21). The first part of the dough was to be offered up to God as a symbol that the entire lump belonged to Him. The same idea was involved in the Feast of Firstfruits, when the priest offered a sheaf to the Lord as a token that the entire harvest was His (Lev 23:9-14). The basic idea is that when God accepts the part He sanctifies the whole. Applying this to the history of Israel, we understand Paul's argument. God accepted the founder of the nation, Abraham, and in so doing set apart his descendants as well. God also accepted the other patriarchs, Isaac and Jacob, in spite of their sins or failings. This means that God must accept the "rest of the lump"—the nation of Israel."

Warren Wiersbe, http://www.preceptaustin.org/romans_1116-18

17 ***And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;***

The "some of the branches be broken off," in the entire context of this passage, are the Jews (the nation, with an unbelieving majority) and the "wild olive tree" represents the "church," but primarily the Gentiles who make up the vast majority of the church, which receives the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant (spiritual blessings). It is likely that "the branches broken off" speak of the nation of Israel (represented here by unbelieving Jews) and that the "branches not broken off" would be Jewish believers in Jesus (the remnant spoken of in verses 1-5) who are part of the church.

Charles Ryrie agrees that "The olive tree is the place of privilege that was first occupied by the natural branches (the Jews). The wild branches are Gentiles who, because of the unbelief of Israel, now occupy the place of privilege. The root of the tree is the Abrahamic covenant that promised blessing to both Jew and Gentile through Christ." (Ryrie Study Bible)

18 ***Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.***
19 ***Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.***
20 ***Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:***

A warning is given to the predominately Gentile church not to be "boastful" or "highminded (arrogant)" in speaking against Israel (Jews/branches).

"The olive tree represents in the broadest sense the people of God. In the Old Testament era, this was Israel, made up of both believers and unbelievers. It now is composed of the church in the broadest sense, made up of believers, but also of some that profess to believe, but are not true believers. These are the ones that Paul warns may be cut off. God is able to graft the Jews back into the people of God if they do not continue in their unbelief (11:23). But we need to stay focused on Paul's main purpose for this illustration, namely, to confront any spiritual pride on the part of Gentiles in the church; and, to confront any anti-Semitism stemming from such pride that would choke out zeal for evangelizing the Jews. Since the root of both problems was spiritual pride, we'll focus on how to guard against this dangerous sin."

Steven Cole, http://www.preceptaustin.org/romans_1116-18

If is a first class condition, which assumes that what follows is a fact. Indeed some of the branches, the natural Jews (Israel) were broken off by their unbelief and rejection of the Messiah. Notice that Paul makes clear that not all of the branches (the natural Jews) were broken off. This truth is also emphasized by his use of the phrase among them which refers to natural Jews who did believe in Messiah. There always had been a believing remnant in Israel.

Notice that the term "Broken off" is the equivalent of "fall" (Romans 11:11), "their failure" (Romans 11:12), and "their rejection" (Romans 11:15)." http://www.preceptaustin.org/romans_1116-18

21 ***For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.***

God set aside Israel in His plan because of their unbelief and He will do the same to the church (speaking primarily to the Gentile portion) if they become boastful and arrogant.

22 ***Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.***

Here we have a contrast between God's "goodness" and His "severity."

Israel's unbelief brought God's severity upon them.

God's goodness (usefulness) will remain with the church as long as the church remains useful. If not, the church will be cut off.

23 ***And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again.***

If Israel believes in Messiah, God will graft them back in to the Olive Tree. This is what God promises will happen (Isaiah 66:5-13; Ezekiel 39:25-29) and is detailed in later verses in this chapter.

24 ***For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?***

Logically, if God can graft in a wild olive tree to a good olive tree, which is not normal, certainly He can graft the natural branches (Jewish people/Israel) of the olive tree back in. The following verses establish this truth.