***God will not Spare Them who Violate His Word  
RO147-02***

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Our subject today is "The Olive Tree of Blessing." This is segment number two in Romans 11:17-21.

After the great Noahic flood, where the waters covered the entire earth over the highest mountains on earth, God selected the descendants of Shem to be the source of the Savior of mankind, which God had promised to send in Genesis 3:15. This Savior was to be born through the specific line of Abraham, the descendant of Shem. The descendants of Noah's other two sons, Ham and Japheth, would also receive salvation through the Shemite Savior Jesus Christ.

Satan, we pointed out last week, has dominated the Hamitic descendants who are under special divine curse. And he has used them in a very special way to corrupt, and to try to destroy the Jews as a people, in order to frustrate God's plan of sending this Savior. Not only have the Jews been blessed from Shem, but they have blessed mankind by producing the Savior Jesus Christ. But they will, furthermore, bless the world even more in the future, when they are under God's supreme favor and care, in the Millennial Kingdom, which will be on this earth, covering again this whole earth, and all of mankind will be enjoying a golden age of humanity.

The Jews, as a nation, have indeed had a very grand past in God's plan. But they have an even more glorious future before them. But the present is very bad indeed. They are under God's divine judgment because they have rejected the Savior, Who was sent through their family lines.

**The Tree of Blessing**

So, today, we begin looking at Romans 11:17-18 first. These describe to us a tree of blessing. Paul is going to illustrate what has happened to the Jews; and, consequently, what has happened to the gentiles. In verse 17, we have described blessings to the gentiles. Paul introduces his remarks with the word "And," which is really better translated as "But," introducing the divine provision that God has made for the gentiles. In verse 16, he has been speaking about a holy root, which we said was Abraham, and branches that grew out of the tree of that root, which was the Abrahamic Covenant of promise, and the branches where the Jewish people.

So, he picks up that same analogy, and he introduces it by saying, "But." And He's going to tell them now about a provision that God has made for the gentiles. Yes, he did a great thing for the Jews in giving them a very special person in Abraham to be the source of enormous blessings for the nation. But in Genesis 9:27, we were told that God shall enlarge Japheth, and He shall dwell in the tents of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant, which told us that Japheth, the basic line of the gentiles, was going to be blessed spiritually by the Shemite line.

So, he says, "But if some of the branches be broken off." This word "if" is that Greek particle "ei." In this case, it's a first-class gift. So, it means "since." This is something that is actually true. It is true that, off of the Jews' proper tree of blessing of God, they have been chopped off. Verse 17 is the condition part of the sentence? It's the "if" part of the sentence. Then the conclusion comes in verse 18. And that's how you can read these two. If all this in verse 17 is true, and it is. Since what is verse 17 is true, then there's a consequence that should follow in verse 18. That's the connection. But he says, "Since some of the branches." The word "some" refers to the Jews who were removed from salvation in the tree of God's blessing, which grew out of Abraham. The word "some" here, of course, includes most of the Jews, as we know. There are few Jews left in salvation blessing today. The word indicates, however, that also room has been made on this tree of blessing for someone else. And that would be, namely, the gentiles. These Jews are viewed as being branches, which is the Greek word "klados," which is the normal word for "branches" on the tree. This represents the Jewish people on God's tree of special blessing that grew out of Abraham in the covenant with Abraham.

In verse 16, remember that these branches are called "holy," meaning that they were set apart by God for a very special use. It didn't mean the Jews inwardly were all godly people. But they did have a special purpose with God. The Jews are very important people to God. And He put them together as a group that He was going to bless like He had never blessed any group of human beings on the face of the earth before. So, this is an amazing statement, in view of that, for Paul to say. And since some of these Jewish branches were broken off. Here they were in the tree of blessing, and suddenly, they were broken off. The Greek word is "ekklao," which means that you reach up there, and you just chop it off. It's a very pointed word. It means exactly what it sounds like. Somebody comes up with an ax, namely God, and He starts chopping these branches off the tree of blessing. This was done at the point in time when the Jews rejected Jesus Christ as their Savior. It is in the passive voice, which tells us that the Jews did not chop themselves off. They didn't say, "We don't want to be part of the Abrahamic blessing." Somebody took them off. God took them off.

The Jews, unfortunately, to this day, don't think that they've been chopped off. That is a very serious mistake. They still think that they are under a special care and blessing of God. This word refers to the same thing that we already read about the Jews in Romans 11:15, where they were described as having been "cast away by God." And in Romans 11:7, these Jews were described as having been "hardened by God," so that they would not accept the Savior.

So, the branches that were broken off from the tree of God's blessing are these set apart Jews who rejected the Messiah Savior, Jesus Christ. This is the same picture which is referred to in Matthew 27:22-25: "Pilate said unto them, 'What shall I do with Jesus, who is called Christ?'" Now, here are the Jews. They're all in the tree of blessing. They're all part of the great benefits of the Abrahamic Covenant. Here before them stands, bruised; beaten; and bloodied, the Messiah Savior that, for centuries, they have waited for. Here He stands now before them. Pilate says, "This man has done no wrong. He is a good man. Nobody has been able to bring any legitimate cause against Him. He certainly does not deserve to die. And you want me to execute Him." They have refused to accept Jesus on an amnesty basis. Instead, they chose Barabbas, the terrible criminal, and thief, or murderer. They chose him because Pilate always, upon their feast day, released some criminal, and gave him amnesty. They took the evil man. And Pilate says, "Well then, what do you want me to do with the Christ?" And Pilate even described Him in this specific way that God referred to Jesus – the purpose for which God sent Him. He is the Christ. In the Old Testament, He's called the Messiah; and, in the New Testament Christ, He's call the Christ. That is the same thing – the one sent to fulfill Genesis 3:15.

So, here the Jewish people are standing. What's going to happen? Here is their response: "They all said unto him, 'Let Him be crucified.' And the governor said, 'Why? What evil has He done?' But they cried out the more, saying, 'Let Him be crucified.'" The Jews yelled back at Pilate, "Don't confuse this with the facts. Our minds are made up. And they wanted Him crucified: "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, 'I'm innocent of the blood of this righteous person.'" He really wasn't, but he wanted to demonstrate to them that he knew that this was a wrong thing to do, and he was making a public protest about it. And he said, "See you to it." And here was the move that brought the branches off the tree.

**An Olive Tree**

Verse 25: "Then answered all the people and said, 'His blood be on us and our children.'" And when they said that, the ax of God began falling, and snipping off individual Jews from the place of blessing left and right. The context of Romans 11 uses the analogy of an olive trees to represent the place of God's special blessing to a certain group of people. And you need to have this in mind.

Here are some underground roots. That was Abraham. Out of this has grown a tree. That is the Abrahamic Covenant – the promise of blessing. And out of this has sprung all these many, many branches, which are the individual Jews who are in God's special place of blessing, feeding on the spiritual life from Abraham, and feeding upon the fatness of the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant, because they are attached to that tree. It all comes because of this faithful man, Abraham. He is the root system. That's the picture that you have. And this is described as an olive tree that the people in that time were able to relate to.

In the Old Testament, Israel is very specifically, and very clearly, described in this way. In Hosea 14:5-6, for example, God says, "I will be as the dew unto Israel. He shall grow like the lily, and cast forth his roots like Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be like the olive tree, and its fragrance like Lebanon." In the Old Testament, the people of Israel were viewed as a very lush, beautiful, prospering, fruitful olive tree. And it was a symbol of God's divine blessing. But the Old Testament also warned that God was a God who executes judgment.

So, Jeremiah 11:16-17 tell us that when Israel comes under divine discipline, then God views it as an olive tree whose branches are being broken off: "And the Lord called your name (speaking to the Jewish people) a green olive tree, fair and of goodly fruit. And the noise of a great multitude He has kindled fire upon it, and the branches of it are broken. For the Lord of Host who planted you has pronounced evil against you. For the evil of the house of Israel and the house of Judah (the northern and the southern kingdoms) which they have done against themselves to provoke Me to anger, in offering incense unto Baal" (offering incense unto the sex god Baal). "Of all things, these who stood in this prosperous olive tree of blessing, are off there worshiping a dumb idol devoted to illicit sex and perverted sex, as an approach to deity. So, Jeremiah says, "You, who have been the prosperous olive tree branches, are now going to be broken off, meaning that you're going to be taken out of it.

So, God the Holy Spirit comes over to the New Testament (with Paul, who knows these Old Testament passages well), and God the Holy Spirit takes the same analogy, and He guides Paul to use this as the illustration to help us to understand what is happening to the Jewish people since New Testament times. That does not make us anti-Semitic. That only makes us biblical. It makes us a people (a minority of people) who really do understand the condition of the Jews, and what is before them.

So, Israel in the Old Testament was viewed as a cultivated olive tree. The root symbolized the patriarch Abraham; the trunk symbolized the Abrahamic Covenant (the promises of blessings that we have looked at before); and, the branches are the Jewish people from Abraham. Israel's position of special divine blessing is based on the promise which God made to Abraham in that covenant that he made with Abraham in Genesis 12:2.

**The Wild Olive Tree**

In Romans 11:17: "If (and 'since'), some of the branches (the Jewish people) be broken off, and you." And in the Greek Bible, unless you want to emphasize a personal pronoun like "you," you don't write it out. It's just part of the endings on other words. But in this case, several times, this Greek word "su" is used. It is first person singular: "you." He keeps throwing it in there as a separate word, in order to lay great emphasis upon you: "But *you*" – gentiles, as a group, in strong contrast with the Jews as a group. The "you" is the same word that, in Romans 11:2 and Romans 11:13, are referring to the gentile Christians. They are used again there very emphatically. "You gentiles, you gentiles." So, he does the same thing again: "You gentiles, being a wild olive tree." Here is the condition that is different from the cultivated olive tree that Israel is. There are two kinds of olive trees. There is one that grows wild, uncultivated, and it has many weaknesses. There is a cultivated tree that the person who knows how to deal with trees has strengthened and improved the quality of the tree. So, there are two kinds of trees that are here. God looks upon the Jews as the cultivated tree. He looks upon the gentiles also as trees, but they are uncouth, and they are weak, and they are simply wild, and they are fruitless.

So, we translate this: "But since some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive tree (it is really a wild olive shoot)." It's this Greek word. We know that because this Greek word tells us that it's not really "tree" that he says here. It's "agrielaios." "Agrielaios" means "a shoot." He was referring to the fact that, out of the gentile Christians, God cuts off from their tree a wild olive shoot. This is an inferior stock. The gentiles had no compatibility with the quality of the Jewish trees. Gentiles are worthless. They have no claim to God. Ephesians 2:11-12 tell us how the gentiles were outside of everything. They were left out. They were not part of God's commonwealth. They have no claim upon God's blessing at all. They were totally wild tree.

Well, what does God do? He comes along, and he cuts off a wild shoot of the gentile, and He grafts it in among them' that is, He inserts it into the good, cultivated tree of Israel. Some of you are enough of a horticulturist type that you know that, normally, that is not what is done. And here is one of the mistakes that people used to point to in the Bible. You do not take a wild shoot, and insert it into a cultivated tree. What you do, if you want to get good results for what you want to improve, is that you take a good shoot, and you put it into the wild tree. Then it gives life to the wild tree, and it gives direction, so that it becomes fruitful. So, all of a sudden, here is the apostle Paul doing what seemingly is saying is a very dumb thing – just the opposite of what brings good results. However, I want you to realize that, a little later on, the apostle Paul points out, in verse 24, that what he is describing is contrary to nature. So, he knows that he's talking about this in a backward way. You're trying to give vitality to the wild tree, so you bring into it a good shoot. Paul describes a grafting procedure that is the opposite.

However, what God does is take this wild shoot, and He puts it into the cultivated olive tree of Israel. He puts it among them; that is, among the native Jewish branches. The wild gentile branches, in this way, receive salvation from God's olive tree, but they receive it along with some Jews. I want you to remember that not all Jews are cut out of the picture. It is just those who reject Jesus Christ. So, no matter what you want to say about the Jewish people today, it all comes down to that one basic thing. If you turn your back on Jesus Christ, and Him alone, and no matter what blessings you may have had in the past, and no matter how favored you were with God in that past, and no matter what a great future your Jewish nation has, you're completely lost. And there is no hope for you. But the two of us are brought together in the olive tree of blessing, in respect to salvation.

**Salvation**

You remember that, back in Genesis 12:3, what did God say to Abraham? "You are going to be a blessing to every family on earth." In what way? We are told in the New Testament that that was relative to salvation. So, in this respect, we share, as gentiles, in the Abrahamic Covenant blessing, and in that alone. The reason I'm stressing that is that I don't want you to make the mistake that the amillennialists are making, and saying, "Aha, the Jews are done with, and the church has replaced them. God has no future for the Jews." That's not true. And the church has not replaced the Jewish people.

In John 10:16, we have this unity between us pointed out. When the Lord says, "And other sheep I have that are not of this fold." The fold He's referring to here is Israel. Jesus says, "I have other sheep who are not of this fold that are My people. Them also I must bring. And they should hear My voice. And there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." Jesus said that He has other sheep that He's going to bring in, that also would become part of His people.

So, the idea is this, that Paul is explaining to us here in Romans 11:17. Paul says, "Some of the Jewish branches have been broken off by God. And you gentiles have been inserted in their place." So, we are told, that by being grafted in, we thereby partake of the root and the fatness of the olive tree. We become partakers of the root. Who is the root? Abraham. How do we become partakers? By taking over the Abrahamic Covenant? No. We become partakers because God already said that: "When I bring this Messiah through the Shemite line of Abraham, He will also be the Savior of the world, including the gentiles.

In Galatians 3:16 this is clarified. Paul says, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made" (to the Jews – not to gentiles, and not to Christians): "And he did not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, and to your Seed, which is Christ."

Then drop down to Galatians 3:29: "And if you be Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." We are seed of Abraham in the sense that we have been saved by the same provision that Jesus Christ made for the Jewish people.

In Romans 4:11-12, we have this reinforced again: "And he received (that is Abraham) the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet been uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they aren't circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed onto them also, and the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had, yet being uncircumcised." What these verses are saying is true – that Abraham is the father of the circumcised (the Jews), but he was saved when he was not a Jew: before he was circumcised.

Furthermore, it says that those who follow Abraham are his spiritual seed. So, you have this same principle being reiterated again and again – that Abraham is the root, and we gentiles are enjoying a spiritual nourishment because we have been grafted into the olive tree of blessing, which came from the Abrahamic Covenant, specifically the factor of the promise of salvation – the root of the nourishment of the olive tree. We outside gentiles have come into salvation blessing. The gentile does not received the national promises made to the Jews in the Abrahamic Covenant. You, as a gentile (you as a Christian), do not have a claim to the land of Palestine. You do not have a claim that you will have a nation forever. You do not have a claim that there will be a king who will be ruling over you and your nation forever. You don't have any of the material claims that God gave to the Jews. You have only the claim of the principle of salvation.

John 4:22 puts it well, when it says, "Salvation is of the Jews."

So, the picture here is that the gentiles are a wild olive tree – unfruitful in itself. A wild gentle shoot is cut out. It does not invigorate the cultivated Jewish tree, but the Jewish olive tree of blessing cultivates the wild gentile shoot. The worthless, wild olive branch then becomes a joint partaker of the spiritual roots, and the sap life of the Abrahamic tree of blessing. Now, the Jews lost their prominence as special objects of blessing, and they have, by and large, been replaced in this tree of blessing by the gentiles.

**Do not Boast Against the Jews**

In verse 18, Paul says, "But I must caution you about something. I must caution you, as gentiles, who are now in that tree of blessing, to be very careful. And he uses a very long Greek word, as to what he wants to caution them about. It is a compounded word, to be particularly emphatic in what he wants to say: "kauchaomai." "Kauchaomai" means "don't be arrogant." Get your big nose out of the air. Don't get snooty. Don't get pride. Don't look down upon the Jewish people. And it uses the negative with it. It connotes not viewing yourself as superior to another. Here, it is in reference to the Jewish people. And it is a divine command. In the Greek language, this word has a negative "me" with it. This is in the imperative mood, which means it is a command from God. And when you have these two things, an imperative mood and this particular negative together, it tells us that the Christians were already doing this. So, what he is saying is: "Now you Christians, stop being so proud and haughty. Stop looking down at the Jews. Stop making those smart-alec cracks and contemptuous remarks that you're making about the Jews, relative to the fact that they got themselves thrown out of the olive tree of blessing. Don't take that attitude: "Do not boast against the branches. The branches here are referring to the Jewish people who have broken out of their special place of blessing. The gentiles should not think themselves superior to the fallen Jews because God now favors them.

**The Amillennialists**

The separation of the Jewish nation from God's promised blessing in the Abrahamic Covenant is only temporary. So, there is no ground for pretending that the gentiles somehow becomes superior to the Jews. Those who do not believe that Jesus will ever rule upon this earth in an earthly kingdom – we call them amillennialists because they don't believe in a millennium. They promote a sense of superiority in gentile Christians over the rejected the Jews. The amillennialists clearly state that the Jew demonstrated that he was unworthy of this special blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant, so God has given it to the Jews. But that picture is very careful. It was a wild, useless, gentile shoot who was put into the good, cultivated Jewish olive tree. And it is the gentile who is prospering now because he has the root and the spiritual sap, and all of the blessings of God that belong basically to the Jewish people. He is not contributing to the tree. The tree is contributing to him. And the amillennialists' arrogance is turning God promises into symbols for the Jews, rather when the realities that they are.

The church, in other words, is not the new Israel replacing the ethnic Jews. The Abrahamic Covenant is still in force. We are just enjoying a part of its benefits. Some of the Jewish branches have been removed from the blessings, but the tree itself has not been uprooted. That holy root, Abraham, is destined for an eternal purpose apart from God's plan for the Jews and the church.

So, Paul says in verse 18, "Don't boast (don't brag) against the branches in the tree." But he says, "If you do choose to do this" (if you do choose to boast, and consider yourself superior). And there again in the Greek language, that word "you" listed separately to make a stress upon it: "But if you do," he says, "remember this: you don't bear the root, but the root bears you." You don't carry the branch. You don't carry the tree. You, a wild olive branch, do not carry the tree of Jewish blessing. But that tree of Jewish blessing carries you." The emphasis is upon the gentile Christians as a group. They are the product of the spiritual life of Abraham.

In the Old Testament, when all these promises were being given relative to Abraham, again, made that very clear. I want to point you to Genesis 22:18. Abraham is told, "And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." It was to Abraham that God said, "Because you have obeyed Me, Abraham, gentiles are going to have a chance to go to heaven. The olive tree of God's blessing grows out of the Shem line, not out of the line of Shem or Japheth, a gentile line. Gentiles have cause for great gratitude to God because God has graced them out with blessing in His tree of spiritual prosperity.

**The Power of Faith**

Then, in Romans 11:19-21, we have the power of faith. In verse 19, Paul refers to the viewpoint of an arrogant person: "You will save them. The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in." Paul says, "You might, in a very arrogant way, say, 'God has broken all those Jewish branches in order that I might be grafted in.'" And in the Greek language, the word "I" is separate, making it "very proud." The word "grafted in" means that God has inserted me, as a gentile, into the Jewish tree of blessing, because God considers me superior. The implication is that God finds the gentiles superior to the Jews. But I remind you, as Paul would remind you, that the Jews who were broken off of the tree of blessing were those who did not trust in see Jesus Christ. That's the only place the Jew misses out today – he is not trusting in Christ. I also want to remind you that no unbelieving gentile is grafted into the tree of blessing. Gentiles are blessed because we Christians are in there, oriented to the work of God, and giving a salt ability, and a preserving quality, to society. That's why other gentiles are blessed. The reason gentiles are blessed is because you Christians, who have been put into this tree of blessing, are responding to the Word of God. But no unbelieving gentiles is in this tree. But the issue is positive or negative volition to the gospel of the grace of God, which is based upon the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

In faith in Jesus Christ, the Bible says, "There is no discrimination unto salvation." Romans 1:16 tells us that whether you are Jew or gentile, if you trust in Christ, you'll go to heaven. Romans 3:22 says the same thing. When it comes to faith in Jesus Christ, God has no discrimination. And in unbelief toward Jesus Christ, Romans 2:11 says that there's no respect with God. God is not a respecter of persons. If you are a Jew and you do not trust in Christ, you're going to go to hell.

**Faith is Non-Meritorious**

Faith, I remind you, is non-meritorious. So, the one who is saved doesn't have anything over which to compliment himself. There's no self-exultation in believing God. The saved gentile has only ground for relief and humble gratitude that God chose him to enjoy part of the Abrahamic blessings.

**God's Discipline**

The Bible says that it's not wise for any of us, as gentiles, to consider ourselves superior to the Jewish people. There's a broader principle, however. It's not very smart for any of us to consider ourselves superior when we see God's discipline and judgment upon other Christians. And you would have to be very blind, and dumb, and out of it, not to see, even within the circle of your association of Christians, that God, from time to time, brings even members who are your fellow Christians, in your fellow congregation, under divine discipline. You cannot help but see it. And when you see it, you can understand, very often, why that discipline is there. You can go back and see the choices that have been made. And indeed you will shake your head and say, "I cannot believe that those choices were made."

I got a phone call yesterday from somebody in the past who was saying, "I made a terrible choice. I had the opportunity at Berean Church. I had the chance to know better. Now I'm trying to figure out where I am, and straighten it out. I should have stayed with the good thing I had. I was on track. And I had to take myself off track." Now, how should one react when you see somebody doing that, or you hear somebody say that? You might be tempted to say, "Yeah, you certainly were a real do-do. You're one of the all-time great ding-a-lings, and you deserve what you have coming." The Word of God says, in 1 Corinthians 10:12: "Let him that thinks that he stands, take heed, lest he fall."

So, the proper attitude is sympathy. Our hearts go out to people who have had an opportunity to know better, and then they make these terrible decisions in life. And I'm not going to catalog them for you today. You can think them through yourself. But they are decisions which now restrict the blessing that should come to you, because you doing this all with your blessing, and God can't let the sap of nourishment flow to you. You've cut yourself off. You've cut yourself off because of some relationship you've entered into in life. You've cut yourself off because of some practice that you're engaged in, in life. You're in a place of blessing as the Jews once were, and you're cutting yourself off – the easiest thing in the world to do. So, when we see the Jews, the Paul is saying, don't get your nose up in the air and think that you're something special. Don't say, "The branches were broken off, so that I could be grafted in. How lucky God is to have me."

Then we get to verses 20-21. Paul says, "Here is the viewpoint of reality." Paul says in verse 20, "Well." This is the Greek word "kalos." It's an adverb, and it means "quite right." Paul says, "Yes, you're right. What you say is right. They were broken off so that you could be put in. That's quite true." He indicates that he agrees with the opinion in verse 19 about the gentiles being substituted for the Jews in God's blessing of salvation. The Jews indeed murdered their Messiah. They did not believe the gospels, so they were removed from the special position of divine favor.

Hebrews 4:2 very specifically says that they lost out what they could have had. And why did they lose out? Here's the core that's the key problem for all of us. He said they lost out because of their unbelief (their "apistia"). Their "apistia" is their lack of faith in some object. Here is the sin nature in man. It creates a spirit of arrogance which questions the truth of the Word of God.

**Compromising Christians Justify their Evil**

So, we have the compromising Christian. We have the Christian who will not believe the principles of the Word of God. And I must confess that I cannot get over asking myself, when I see the mistakes that people make, and I see the grief, and the agony, and the problems they bring in their lives, after they sat right here and have been instructed, and have been warned, and have been taught, and have been guided, and have been directed, and I shake my head, and I cannot believe how they could make the mistake. Why? Because of their "apistia." That's why. Sure, they know the Word of God. They heard it, but they don't believe it. And when something very desirable to their sin nature comes along, they call it "meeting my need." Oh, yes, it may be a need, but it is a need that you should not indulge. The nature has all kinds of needs. And people talk about meeting their needs, and they justify their evil. They justify their associations because they are meeting their needs.

**You Stand by Faith**

The apostle Paul says, "You're right, they were broken off." But he says, "Because of belief is the reason they were broken off." And you stand by faith. And again, the word "you" is listed separately in the Greek text, to make that emphasis. "You stand by faith." They were broken off because of their unbelief. But you are indeed attached to that tree. You are in a position of blessing because of your faith (your "pistis"). That is just the opposite. This word means "trust." And I want to point out to you that the word "stand" is this Greek word "histemi." He says, "Yes, you stand;" meaning that you stand in salvation. You stand in the position where you're going to eternal life. And guess what tense it is? Perfect. "Histemi" is in that Greek tense that tells us immediately something about your future standing in salvation. This tense always say: here, at this point in the past, you took an action. Here it is faith and trust in Christ. Once you did that, that set in motion something that is going to go on forever. The perfect tense says that what you did in the past continues here, and here, and here, and here, and right out into eternity. It's the beautiful tense that tells us that once you're saved, you're always in the family of God. And the Bible consistently describes grace salvation in this way. It's not too complicated for you to remember that one great tense, and to know that when it says about you being saved, the Bible says that it's in the perfect tense. You've got it, and you're never going to lose it.

**Roman Catholicism**

Anybody who read the Greek language, in the New Testament time, looked at that and said, "That's really astounding, isn't it?" He's telling us that once we get it, we've got it. It is because you believed, and they did not believe. The object of faith is the Lord Jesus Christ. And I think stress to you that the lost sinner does not have to be good enough to deserve the salvation provided by Jesus Christ. It's an unmerited gift. If you were here with us last Sunday night, to see the film on the Middle Ages, you saw that, as Christianity was taken over as the state religion by the Roman Empire, and paganism began to be mixed with Christianity, the Babylonian beliefs began filtering in, and out of it evolved what is today the Roman Catholic Church. And one of the things that was brought in was, "Yes, Christ died on the cross as the Savior of the world, but only the people who deserve (who show that they deserve) to be saved are going to go to heaven.

**Mormons**

Do you know the word that the Mormons use? If you've ever been around Mormons, will find that this word is one that is frequently on their lips: "worthy." The Mormons say that, until you prove yourself worthy, you're not going to have the salvation of Jesus Christ. It's absolutely amazing – the closeness between Mormonism and Catholicism. It has a supreme pontiff – not a pope, but a president of the church, who is a direct communicator with God. His voice is the voice of God. It is the same setup, and the same principle. "Are you going to heaven? Christ had died for you, but until you live a good life, and until you prove that you're a worthy person, you will not be able to claim what Christ did for you.

However, the Word of God doesn't say that at all. Here, Paul says, "You who have no claim upon God at all – you're a bunch of olive shoots, and you have been grafted into the tree of blessing, because you believed the gospel" – not because you shaped up your life, and not because you are nice people, but because of faith. The Jews who had the opportunity were chopped off because they did not have faith."

So, Paul adds verse 20, and says, "So don't be high-minded." Then he says, "And." Here again, this is the same grammatical condition with not being high-minded, as we had before. It has the negative that tells us that they were already doing us. The Romans to whom Paul was writing were very snooty about the fact that they were in the tree, and the Jews were out.

So, Paul is trying to bring some stability. Instead, he says to them, "What you people should do is have an attitude of fear. You need to be a little afraid of God. You need to be fearful of breaking His rules. You need to have fear of failing to trust in the Word of God." Check Hebrews 4:1 and Philippians 2:12. These are the warnings about those who turn their back upon the Word of God.

**God will not Spare Them who Violate His Word**

Then, in verse 21 Paul says, "For if God spared not the natural blanches (these that did not fail to punish – the natural branches that were in the tree, take heed, lest he also spare not you." If God did not spare the branches of the Jewish people who had a right to be in this olive tree of Abrahamic questions, what do you think he's going to do to gentiles who, by nature, do not have a right to be in that tree, but by God's grace, have been given an opportunity to share in it? Do you think He will tolerate *your* disobedience, and that He will allow you to get away with murder, if He didn't let the Jews do it? What did He do to the Jews? What did being broken off mean to the Jewish people? For one thing, it meant that their nation was conquered by a foreign power. Hail the United States. It meant that the Jews lost their country to aliens. They lost their land to a foreign people. It meant that the citizens of Israel were killed or taken into slavery. "Broken off" means that the Jews were scattered all over the world. "Broken off" meant that their temples in the city of Jerusalem were completely destroyed. "Broken off" from the olive tree of blessing brought terrible consequences. The worst thing that "broken off" meant was that it brought a blindness upon the Jewish mind, so they turned their backs on Jesus Christ – their only way out.

Paul says, "If he didn't spare them, will He spare you?" And there the word is, again, listed separately in the Greek text, so that it's emphatic. The course of wisdom for the gentile Christians is to respect the holiness of God, and the truth of His Word – not to use grace to do evil. The gentile believers should learn from the example of the Jews that it's very dangerous to be negative to the Word of God. It is dangerous to be ignorant of that Word, and even more dangerous to be negative when you know it.

The potential loss of divine blessing by we gentile Christians, in our carnality, does not, of course, mean loss of our salvation. But we will suffer great loss in our rewards, and in other ways. God will not spare from discipline the reversionistic gentile believer anymore more than he did the Jews.

We close with a few striking examples, among many which could be selected. In order that I may be sure that we have established, at least, this point today – that we deal with a God who will not spare those who do evil. We deal with a God who will not spare those who violate his Word.

**The Exodus Generation of Jews**

Take, for example, the Exodus Jews (the Exodus generation) who were led out from slavery in Egypt. Moses is up on Sinai, getting the Law from God, including the moral code. And they're back down in the camp, worshiping a golden calf that they have had built. And they're engaging in a sex orgy in the worship of that calf. They're back to Baal worship. Exodus 32:25-28: Here is a God Who spares not: "And Moses saw that the people were naked, for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies. Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, 'Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come up to me.' And all the sons of Levi (the priestly group) gathered themselves unto him. And he said unto them, 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel: put every man and his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.' And the children of Levi did according to the Word of Moses, and there fell of the people that day about 3,000 men." That, folks, is a God who will not spare those who violate knowingly, deliberately His word.

**The Jews at Kadeshbarnea**

Think of the time when the Jews finally got to the entrance into the Promised Land. They stood at the port of entry, at Kadeshbarnea. They refused to go in, because the Canaanites seemed so fearful, and such a fierce enemy, even though God said, "Go in. they're nothing. I'm going to squash them. You'll win." They would not listen to Caleb and Joshua, who said, "Yes, there are powerful people there, but God will give us victory." They refuse to go in. In Numbers 14:22, the God Who spares one made His decision: "Because all those men who have seen My glory and My miracles which I did in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and they put Me to the test, now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice, surely they shall not see the land which I swore to give unto their fathers; neither shall any of them that provoked Me see it."

Verse 29: "Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness, and all who were numbered of you according to your whole number, from 20 years old and upward, who have murmured against Me." God said, "Here is the judgment. Those of you who are 20 years old and up, you should have known better. If you're 19, I hope your parents responsible. If you're 20, I hold you responsible, on your own. You should have known better. You're never going to come into this beautiful, wonderful land that I prepared for you."

**Korah**

A short time later, one of the popular leaders, a man named Korah, and his associates (some 250 men), said, "We're sick and tired of Moses and Aaron making all the decisions. Who do they think they are? We're just as smart as they are." And they opposed God's spiritual leaders. God said, "This is a terrible thing when you violate the people that I appointed to a responsibility of leadership. So, in Numbers 16:31, here is the God Who spares not: "And it came to pass, as he had finished speaking all these words, that the ground split open that was under them (Korah and his family), and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They and all that appertained to them went down alive into Sheol (Hades in the New Testament), and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the congregation. And all Israel that was around about fled at the screams of them. For, they said, 'Let the earth swallow us also. And there came out a fire from the Lord and consumed the 250 men that offered incense," those who had joined Korah in his rebellion.

**Esau**

In Hebrews 12:16-17, we have the sad record of what Esau did when he found that he had given up the right to be in the line that was to bear the Savior of the world – his birthright that he was willing to sell for a bowl of food to his brother, Jacob. Here is the God Who spares not, even when you say, "Oh, God, no, that was a wrong thing. I shouldn't have done that." They did that at Kadeshbarnea, by the way, and they said, "We were wrong." Moses said, "Yes, you were, but God is not going to give you another chance. Don't try to go in." They said, "Yes, we will." And they stormed in, and they were slaughtered left and right.

Here is Esau, saying, "Oh, God, give me another chance. I didn't realize what I was doing. Surely You will spare me:" Hebrews 12:16-17 say, "Lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. So, you know how, afterward, when he would have in inherited the blessing, he was rejected. For he found no place of repentance, so he sought it with tears." That's a very sad verse in the Bible. That's a very sad picture of this grown man shaking and sobbing, as he realizes how he turned his nose up at such a wonderful place in history (and in God's plan), and the blessings that would come to him from that.

**Reuben and Gad**

There is the warning that is so sobering here in Numbers 32:23, that I think we gentile Christians in the tree of blessing need to remember. This statement was made by Moses to warn the tribes of Reuben and Gad, who had asked to have their inheritance given to them on the eastern side of the Jordan River. And Moses said, "Okay, provided you come across with us, and clear the land on the western side first. Then you can go back, and you can have that.” Gad and Reuben said, "Okay, we'll build protective enclosure here for our wives and children and our cattle. We'll leave them here. We will go, and we'll help you fight the battles." And Moses says, "Okay."

Then, in verse 23, he makes that sobering statement: "But if you will not do so." If they do not keep their word before God, because this is what God said: "They can have the land if they help clear it: "Behold, you have sinned against the Lord, and be sure your sin will find you out." Do you know what that means? That means: "Be sure that you will get the punishment for what you have done." Nobody else may ever know about it, but you will get the punishment for what you have done. That's a bad thing. Now, that is a sobering statement.

**Ananias and Sapphira**

I leave you with one more in Acts 5. The New Testament church has begun. People are delighted. They're excited. They're all Jews, and they know that this is truly the Messiah, Jesus Christ. They know that something has happened now to their kingdom. It has been postponed. But they have been informed that they are part of a new thing, the body of Christ, the church, that God is now building. Later on in history, God will again pick up the Jewish people and go back to the kingdom promises. But here is Ananias and Sapphira. The church is in a very gracious, loving relationship. They see that there are people among them who need some material assistance. They need food; they need clothing; and, they need help. So, they say, "Hey, we're all Christians. We're going to gather together. Let's just pool our resources. I've got this. I can give this. I can give fund. And we'll distribute it through our deacons, and they will enable us to help the people among us who need help. We don't have to look to the outside world." And those who gave were, of course, greatly esteemed. And they were thanked, and they were honored for their generosity.

Along come Ananias and Sapphira. They sell a piece of property that belonged to them. They didn't have to sell it. They chose, indeed, to sell it. But then they chose to keep back part of the money, in case they got old. They said, "You know how the government is. You can't count on Social Security. We have to have some put aside." And Ananias says, "Well, Sapphira, that right. Don't trust the government. We have to hold some of this money back." So, they set it aside, but they lied to the congregation. They said, "This is what we got for the whole property. We're delighted to put it into this fund for the poor and for our mutual benefit. Acts 5:3-11 describe that for you. They tell how Peter asked, in verse 3, speaking to Ananias: "Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land?" They didn't think take they were lying to the Holy Spirit. They thought they were lying to the congregation, and that they'd never know it. They thought they were lying to their friends: they'd never know it. But God says, "Don't kid yourself, fella. You lie, and nobody knows that you're evil. I know it. And you lied to Me. Where do you think you're going to get with that?"

Well, the result was that Ananias dropped down dead. His wife came in a little later. She was a little delayed at home, bowing in front of the mirror before she could get to the service. She walked in, and the young men have already carried out her husband. And Peter put the same question to her. Verse 8: "'Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?' She said, 'Yes, for so much.' Peter said unto her, 'How is it that you've agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord?' She said, 'It was not the Spirit of the Lord. It was the congregation we were talking to.' Peter said, 'No, you weren't. You were talking to God the Holy Spirit.' She said, 'Do you mean that I have to do worry about God by the Holy Spirit all the time, as a branch in this tree of blessing?' Peter said, 'You got it, Buster. Behold, the feet of them who have buried your husband are at the door.'" Did you hear that? "'They just came from burying your husband. Now they're going to come and bury you.' She fell down immediately at his feet and died. The young men came in; found her dead; carried her our; and, buried by her husband." All morning long, these young men had come to the church service, and all they did was come in; find somebody dead; carry them out; and, bury them. They would come back; find another one; carry them out; and, bury them.

It was not very smart to try to be deceptive to God the Holy Spirit then, and it isn't smart today. And that's the principle. And the sad thing was, as Peter pointed out to them, "This was your property. You could have done what you wanted. You didn't have to give all the money, but you just shouldn't have lied to the Holy Spirit about it.

Well, verse 11 says, "Great fear came upon all the church, and from as many of heard these things." I can imagine how true that is. It's the principle of respecting the God Who spares not.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1988

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