

Romans: Verse-by-Verse

Romans 11:19-21

Study Notes:

As we finished the last section, we saw three things that apply to the Jewish and Gentile Christians:

1. The Gentiles are drawing from the Jewish covenant.
2. There Is No Room For Boasting
3. Who Is Supporting Whom?

Paul's warning to the Gentiles: 1. Spiritual pride 2. Consequences of setting Faith Aside.

Verses 19-21:

"You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either."

- The blessings the Gentiles have received because of Israel's disobedience will not prevent, or even compare to what God still has in store for Israel's repentance and restoration.
- The blessings of the Gentiles are connected to the welfare of the Jews.

Paul warns the Gentiles not to rejoice at the downfall of Israel, because they have benefited from it. The Gentiles should desire Israel's restoration so that even greater blessings will come about with their repentance and restoration.

This is the analogy of the root and the branches: What happens to the

roots feed the branches. If Israel is restored, the process will also manifest itself in the well-being of the Gentile Church.

- **Lessons From Israel's Failures:**

Verses 19-20: "You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith."

Bob Deffenbaugh gives us four principles that cover what follows:

- ***First, Paul is speaking of Israel and the Gentiles collectively more than he is speaking of men individually.***
- ***Second, Paul is speaking generally of the privileges and blessings which God bestows on His people.***
- ***Third, the larger context of Romans 9-11 stresses the sovereignty of God and the certainty of His blessings despite the failure of His people.***
- ***Fourth, the problem underlying these words is that Gentile believers, like the Jews, may soon forget that God's blessings in their lives are by His grace through faith and not of works.***

Now that we can see the general thrust of this passage, let's look in greater detail to what Paul says in his warning to the Gentile Christian based upon Israel's failures.

In Deuteronomy 4, Moses warned the Israelites they would soon forget that God's blessings were based upon grace and not upon their personal worth. In Deuteronomy 8:11-18, Moses warns them against forgetting God and his blessings.

Moses' words in Deuteronomy 8:17: "He did it so that you would never feel that it was your own power and might that made you wealthy."

The Israelites didn't pay attention to those warnings.

1. They turned from God to idols.
2. They forgot God's grace and became proud of what they thought were their own accomplishments.
3. They believed God blessed them because they were better than any other people on the planet.

What happened when Jesus came? He offered them grace and forgiveness, but most Israelites didn't think they needed those things. They were looking for a military and political Messiah – and Jesus didn't fit the bill. See: John 8:32-36

Think about it. These men were talking with their very Messiah, but they didn't want a Messiah like Him. They rejected any idea that they were slaves to sin ... that they needed to be set free.

The Jews and the Gentiles changed places: The Jews were cut off and the Gentiles were offered the same forgiveness and salvation by grace through faith.

- **Paul's warning to the Gentiles:** It's all too easy to forget that God's blessings are by grace alone. Paul warns them not to look down on the Jews who have not believed and who are suffering God's discipline. If they become arrogant about their privileged status, they will be repeating the sin of the Jews.

- **An Analogy: The Olive Tree and Its Branches:**

Two ways Gentile arrogance will be apparent:

Verses 17 and 18: Gentile Pride and Error - A Jewish branch was broken off from the tree. A Gentile branch, which is inferior—a "**wild**" olive branch, was grafted into the tree.

The Gentile branch starts to feel arrogant toward the branches. It fails to see that it was grafted in **among** the Jewish branches. In addition, it fails to understand that Israel's failure is temporary and partial.

A Second Form of Gentile Pride: Verses 19-21.

If the first error was in misunderstanding the relationship of the grafted branch to the tree, the second error is in misunderstanding the relationship between the “**broken off**” (Jewish) limb to the “**grafted in**” (Gentile) limb.

A Jewish limb is broken off. A Gentile limb is grafted into the trunk of the olive tree. The Gentile limb begins to reason something like this:

“A Jewish limb was broken off. I, a Gentile limb, was grafted in. I took the Jewish limb's place. I must be a better limb than the Jewish limb.

The problem with that thinking: The breaking off of the one limb and the grafting in of the other has nothing to do with the worth of the limb! There's no real difference between an unfruitful “natural” limb and a worthless “**wild**” limb.

The real issue is faith.

- The Jewish limb was removed because of **unbelief**.
- The Gentile limb was grafted in because of **faith**.

Saving a sinner identifies how gracious God is – not the individual glory of the person who is saved by grace.

Salvation by grace doesn't give a believer any basis for pride: See 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Next Time: Paul expands this warning to the Gentiles about spiritual pride.