

Romans 11:16-18 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

- [Romans 11:1](#)
- [Romans 11:2](#)
- [Romans 11:3](#)
- [Romans 11:4](#)
- [Romans 11:5](#)
- [Romans 11:6](#)
- [Romans 11:7](#)
- [Romans 11:8](#)
- [Romans 11:9](#)
- [Romans 11:10](#)
- [Romans 11:11](#)
- [Romans 11:12](#)
- [Romans 11:13](#)
- [Romans 11:14](#)
- [Romans 11:15](#)
- [Romans 11:16](#)
- [Romans 11:17](#)
- [Romans 11:18](#)
- [Romans 11:19](#)
- [Romans 11:20](#)
- [Romans 11:21](#)
- [Romans 11:22](#)
- [Romans 11:23](#)
- [Romans 11:24](#)
- [Romans 11:25](#)
- [Romans 11:26](#)
- [Romans 11:27](#)
- [Romans 11:28](#)
- [Romans 11:29](#)
- [Romans 11:30](#)
- [Romans 11:31](#)
- [Romans 11:32](#)
- [Romans 11:33](#)
- [Romans 11:34](#)
- [Romans 11:35](#)
- [Romans 11:36](#)

Summary of Romans 9-11

Romans 9	Romans 10	Romans 11
Past Election	Present Rejection	Future Reception
God's Sovereignty Israel's Election by God	Man's responsibility Israel's Rejection of God	God's Ways Higher God Not Rejecting Israel

Romans 11:16 **if** the **first piece** of dough is **holy**, the **lump** is **also**; and **if** the **root** is **holy**, the **branches** are **too**.

Greek: [ei de e aparche hagia, kai to phurama: kai ei e rhiza hagia, kai oi kladoi.](#)

Amplified: Now if the first handful of dough offered as the firstfruits [Abraham and the patriarchs] is consecrated (holy), so is the whole mass [the nation of Israel]; and if the root [Abraham] is consecrated (holy), so are the branches.

ESV: If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

ICB: If the first piece of bread is offered to God, then the whole loaf is made holy. If the roots of a tree are holy, then the tree's branches are holy too.

NIV: If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.

NKJV: For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

NLT: And since Abraham and the other patriarchs were holy, their children will also be holy. For if the roots of the tree are holy, the branches will be, too.

Phillips: If the flour is consecrated to God so is the whole loaf, and if the roots of a tree are dedicated to God every branch will belong to him also.

Wuest: Now, in view of the fact that the firstfruit is holy, also the lump, and since the root is holy, also the branches.

Young's Literal: and if the first-fruit is holy, the lump also; and if the root is holy, the branches also.

ROMANS ROAD to RIGHTEOUSNESS				
Romans 1:18-3:20	Romans 3:21-5:21	Romans 6:1-8:39	Romans 9:1-11:36	Romans 12:1-16:27
SIN	SALVATION	SANCTIFICATION	SOVEREIGNTY	SERVICE
NEED FOR SALVATION	WAY OF SALVATION	LIFE OF SALVATION	SCOPE OF SALVATION	WORK OF SALVATION

Related resources...

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- [Zechariah 13 Commentary](#) - on site
- [Zechariah 14 Commentary](#) - on site
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- Spurgeon on the Attributes of God
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Online Book by Dr John Walvoord - Israel in Prophecy

- [Chapter I The New State Of Israel](#)

- [Chapter II The Promise To Abraham](#)
- [Chapter III Israel's Future As A Nation](#)
- [Chapter IV The Promise Of The Land To Israel](#)
- [Chapter V The Kingdom Promised To David](#)
- [Chapter VI The Suffering Of Israel](#)
- [Chapter VII The Glorious Restoration Of Israel](#)
- [Selected Bibliography](#)

Online Articles by Arnold Fruchtenbaum related to Israel

- [Israelology: Part 1 of 6 Introduction: Definition of Terms](#)
- [Israelology: Part 2 of 6 Israel Present \(Note: Article begins on Page 2\)](#)
- [Israelology: Part 3 of 6 Israel Present \(Continued\)](#)
- [Israelology: Part 4 of 6 - Israel Future \(Part One\)](#)
- [Israelology: Part 5 of 6 - Israel Future \(Part Two\)](#)
- [Israelology: Part 6 of 6 Other Relevant Topics - Illustrations of Israel \(including marriage\)](#)

Are you confused about God's plan for Israel? Then I highly recommend Tony Garland's 12 Hour Course on **Romans 9-11** in which he addresses in depth the question of **What Will Happen to Israel?** ([click](#)) or see the individual lectures below)

- [Romans 9:1-5 Paul's Sorrow Concerning Israel](#)
- [Romans 9:6-13 Children of the Promise](#)
- [Romans 9:14-24 The Potter and the Clay](#)
- [Romans 9:25-33 A Remnant Will be Saved](#)
- [Romans 10:1-13 The Righteousness of God](#)
- [Romans 10:14-21 Has Israel Not Heard?](#)
- [Romans 11:1-6 God Has Not Cast Away The Jews](#)
- [Romans 11:7-15 Life from the Dead](#)
- [Romans 11:16-24 Two Olive Trees](#)
- [Romans 11:25-36 The Salvation of Israel](#)

Note that when you click the preceding links, each link will in turn give you several choices including an **Mp3 message** and brief transcript notes. The Mp3's are long (avg 70+ min) but are in depth and thoroughly Scriptural with many quotations from the Old Testament, which is often much less well understood than the NT by many in the church today. Garland takes a literal approach to Scripture, and his love for the Jews and passion to see them saved comes through very clearly in these 12 hours of teaching! Take your home Bible Study group through this series if you dare. Take notes on the tapes as the transcripts are a very abbreviated version of the audio messages. This course is highly recommended for all who love Israel! I think you will agree that Tony Garland, despite coming to faith after age 30 as an engineer, clearly has been given a special anointing by God to promulgate the truth concerning Israel and God's glorious future plan for the Jews. Garland has also produced more than 20 hours of superb audio teaching in his verse by verse commentary on the [Revelation](#) (in depth transcripts also available) which will unravel (in a way you did not think was possible considering the plethora of divergent interpretations) God's final message of the triumph and return of the our Lord Jesus Christ as the King of kings and Lord of lords! Maranatha!

AND IF THE FIRST PIECE OF DOUGH BE HOLY THE LUMP IS ALSO: ei de e aparche hagia kai to phurama

- Exodus 22:29; 23:16,19; Leviticus 23:10; Deuteronomy 18:4; 26:10; Nehemiah 10:35-37; Proverbs 3:9; Ezekiel 44:30; James 1:18; Revelation 14:4
- [Romans 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

The **Amplified Version** helps understand Paul's meaning translating this as...

Now if the first handful of dough offered as the firstfruits [Abraham and the patriarchs] is consecrated (holy), so is the whole mass [the nation of Israel]; and if the root [Abraham] is consecrated (holy), so are the branches.

This is a difficult verse for me to understand, but [John MacArthur's](#) explanation helps me understand Paul's point...

As always, Paul's logic is irrefutable. **If the first piece of dough be holy**, he points out, **the lump is also**. First

piece of dough translates the single Greek word *aparchē*, which literally means a firstfruit (as in the kjv) offering of any kind, animal as well as grain. It refers to the first portion of an offering which was set aside specifically for the Lord.

Through Moses, God instructed His newly-delivered people: "When you eat of the food of the land, you shall lift up an offering to the Lord. Of the first of your dough you shall lift up a cake as an offering; as the offering of the threshing floor, so you shall lift it up. From the first of your dough you shall give to the Lord an offering throughout your generations" (Nu 15:19-21). Those cakes, or loaves, were given to feed the priests, who served—and thereby represented—the Lord in their unique ministry in the tabernacle and later in the temple. Therefore, before any bread would be eaten by a household, a special portion, **the first piece of dough**, was first consecrated and presented to the Lord.

Although only a portion of that special **piece of dough** represented the entire loaf (the lump), all of which was acknowledged as being from the Lord. In other words, they were giving back to the Lord a representation of all He had provided for them. It is for that reason that **the lump is also holy** ("set apart").....

Another, and somewhat reverse, analogy is given using the figure of a tree or vine. **And if the root be holy, the branches are too.** If the foundational part of a plant (**the root**) is **holy**, then that which it produces (the branches) must likewise (**too**) be holy.

But Paul's specific use of the analogy in this passage points up the truth that, if the firstfruits and root of Israel—perhaps symbolizing the first patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob)—were **holy**, consecrated to the Lord, so were all their descendants, the people of Israel. Therefore, for God to forsake Israel would be for Him to renege on His promises to those patriarchs—something His holy character will not allow.

Even John Murray, a leading amillennialist (one who does not believe in a literal, 1,000-year earthly kingdom promised to the Jews and ruled by Christ on the throne of David in Jerusalem, but who generally believes that God's dealing with the nation of Israel ended with their rejection of Jesus Christ), cannot resist the power of the marvelous truth that Paul stresses here. In his commentary on Romans, Murray amazingly observes that *"there cannot be irremediable rejection of Israel. The holiness of the theocratic consecration is not abolished and will one day be vindicated in Israel's fulness and restoration"* (The Epistle to the Romans [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965], p. 85).

In order to be faithful to His own Word, the Lord must provide a future salvation for Israel Israel has not yet completely fulfilled God's covenant promise to Abraham or His countless reiterations of that promise to redeem and restore Abraham's descendants. **If the root**, Abraham and the other patriarchs, is holy, then **the branches**, their descendants, **are holy too**. They were divinely called and set apart before the foundation of the world and God's work with those branches will not be complete until they bear the spiritual fruit He intends to produce in and through them, until the end of the age when they actually become the holy people they were destined to be. ([Romans 9-16 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))(Underlining added by me for emphasis)

Warren Wiersbe has a shorter explanation - 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. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

MY COMMENT: ISRAEL WAS "SET APART" (HOLY) DESPITE THE FACT THAT OFTEN THEIR LIVES WERE ANYTHING BUT HOLY! PAUL'S POINT IS THAT THEIR UNHOLINESS DID NOT NEGATE GOD'S SETTING THE NATION OF ISRAEL APART FROM ALL THE OTHER NATIONS. GIVEN THAT FACT, ONE CAN SEE THAT GOD CANNOT GO BACK ON HIS PROMISES MADE TO THE PATRIARCHS (SYMBOLIZED BY IS NOT FINISHED WITH THE NATION OF ISRAEL AND AT THE END OF THIS AGE THEY WILL BE SPIRITUALLY HOLY ("ALL ISRAEL WILL BE SAVED"))

LET'S REPEAT THE **Amplified Version** TO HELP UNDERSTAND PAUL'S POINT - "Now if the first handful of dough offered as the firstfruits [**Abraham and the patriarchs**] is consecrated (holy), so is the whole mass [**the nation of Israel**]; and if the root [Abraham] is consecrated (holy), so are the branches."

J Vernon McGee has simple explanation of Paul's argument which he uses to support his basic premise in Romans 11 that God is

not finished with Israel - "**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. (See [Thru the Bible commentary](#))

John Witmer in The [Bible Knowledge Commentary](#) explains that

"Paul was convinced that Israel's stumbling is temporary rather than permanent and that the nation will be restored as God's people. With two illustrations Paul showed why he believed this. His first illustration was taken from God's instructions to Israel to take "*a cake from the first of [their] ground meal and present it as an offering*" (Nu 15:20) after they entered the land of Canaan and reaped their first wheat harvest. This offering was to be repeated each year at their harvests. The cake made from the first ground meal of the wheat harvest was sanctified or made holy by being offered to God... Paul's second illustration was that of a tree: If the root is holy, so are the branches. **In both illustrations the principle is the same:** what is considered first contributes its character to what is related to it. With a tree, the root obviously comes first and contributes the nature of that type of tree to the branches that come later. With the cake presented to the Lord, the flour for the cake is taken from the ground meal, but that cake is formed and baked first and presented as a firstfruit. Since it is set apart to the Lord first, it sanctifies the whole harvest. The **firstfruits** and the **root** represent the patriarchs of Israel or Abraham personally, and the **lump** and the **branches** represent the people of Israel. As a result Israel is set apart (holy) to God, and her "stumbling" (rejection of Christ) must therefore be temporary. (See [Bible Knowledge Commentary - Page 484](#))

See [Steven Cole's explanation below](#).

Paul is alluding to the practice of setting apart a portion of the dough in **Numbers 15** where we read...

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 18 "Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'When you enter the land where I bring you, 19 then it shall be, that when you eat of the food of the land, you shall lift up an offering to the LORD. 20 'Of the **first of your dough** you shall lift up a cake as an offering; as the offering of the threshing floor, so you shall lift it up. 21 'From the **first of your dough** you shall give to the LORD an offering throughout your generations. (Numbers 15:17-21)

First piece (536) (**aparche** from **apó** = away from + **árchomai** = to begin) is the first fruit, which in Biblical terms describes an offering of any kind, animal as well as grain. It represents the first portion of offering set aside specifically for Lord. The first portion of the harvest was regarded both as a first installment and as a pledge of the final delivery of the whole. Here the **first** fruit and the lump speak of **dough**, not of fruit or grain.

Holy (40) (**hagios**) means set apart (that's what "sanctify" means) from profane common use by God and for God. Hagios is translated "saint" which describes every believer's position in Christ - we are set apart from that which is secular, profane, and evil on one hand and on the other hand dedicated to worship and service of God. "Saints" are not some special, elite group of men and women! Your name in fact is "St. _____."

AND IF THE ROOT BE HOLY, THE BRANCHES ARE TOO: kai ei e rhiza hagia, kai oi kladoi

- Ro 1:17; Genesis 17:7; Jeremiah 2:21; 1Corinthians 7:14
- [Romans 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Root = The patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

Root (4491)(**rhiza - word study**) is the literal word for a root (source of a plants life and nutrition) but here refers figuratively to the patriarchs.

Branches = The patriarchs' descendants: the nation of Israel.

If the foundational part of a plant (the **root**) is **holy**, then that which it produces (the **branches**) must likewise (too) be **holy**. (SEE EXPLANATIONS RELATED TO THE FIRST PORTION OF DOUGH IN THE PRECEDING COMMENTS - THE POINT IS THE SAME).

To repeat John MacArthur's comment -

In order to be faithful to His own Word, the Lord must provide a future salvation for Israel Israel has not yet completely fulfilled God's covenant promise to Abraham or His countless reiterations of that promise to redeem and restore Abraham's descendants. **If the root**, Abraham and the other patriarchs, is holy, then **the branches**, their descendants, **are holy too**. They were divinely called and set apart before the foundation of the world and God's work with those branches will not be complete until they bear the spiritual fruit He intends to produce in and through them, until the end of the age when they actually become the holy people they were destined to be. ([Romans 9-16 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#)) (Underlining added by me for emphasis)

Steven Cole - Years ago, Dr. H. A. Ironside, who was pastor of the prestigious Moody Church in downtown Chicago, felt that he was not as humble as he should have been. So he asked an older friend what he could do about it. The friend suggested, "Make a sandwich board with the plan of salvation in Scripture on it. Put it on and walk through the business district of Chicago for a whole day." Ironside followed his friend's humiliating advice. After he got home, as he took off the sandwich board he caught himself thinking, "There's not another person in Chicago that would be willing to do a thing like that."

Spiritual pride is an insidious enemy that we all continually must guard against and fight. It was one of the main sins of the Pharisees. They thought that they were a notch above their fellow Jews (John 9:28-34) and far above the despised Gentile dogs. To confront such pride, Jesus told the parable of the Pharisee and the publican who went up to the temple to pray (Luke 18:9-14). The Pharisee thanked God that he wasn't like the publican. But how many times have you read that story and thought, "Thank God that I'm not like that Pharisee!" The apostle Paul apparently knew from some of his contacts in Rome that there was a problem with creeping spiritual pride on the part of the Gentile Christians against their fellow Jewish believers (he deals with this more in Romans 14-15) and also against unbelieving Jews. Left unchecked, this attitude would lead to division in the church, to anti-Semitism that would choke out witness to the Jews, and to the spiritual ruin of those who continued down that path.

In our text, Paul counters this problem with an illustration of an olive tree and its branches. He shows the Gentiles that they are not the root, but rather are branches from a wild olive tree that have been grafted into the cultivated tree, supported by the root. Three times (Ro 11:18, 20, 25) Paul directly warns Gentile believers against spiritual pride. They were no better than the Jews, but were grafted into the tree by God's grace alone. And if the Gentiles do not curb their pride, they could be broken off as the unbelieving Jews were. He also encourages evangelism toward unbelieving Jews by showing that in God's sovereign plan, the branches that were broken off because of their unbelief will be grafted back in when they believe (Ro 11:23). In fact, God is moving salvation history toward that end (Ro 11:25-26). **Applied to us, Paul's message is:** Guard against spiritual pride by remembering that salvation is by grace alone and by maintaining faith and fear before the God of kindness and severity. Illustrations ought to make the truth clearer, but sometimes they can have the opposite effect, especially if we try to figure out the details beyond the intent of the illustration (James Boice, Romans: God and History [Baker], 3:1343-1344). It's easy to get mired in the details of Paul's illustration here and end up with all sorts of problems. For example, some authors say that the olive tree represents Israel and at first glance this seems reasonable. But if the tree is Israel and Gentile believers are grafted into that tree, then we become Jews. Also, some point out that when a wild olive branch was grafted into a cultivated olive tree, it was to reinvigorate the old tree. But that would mean that Gentile believers give new life to Israel, when Paul states that the unbelieving Jews have been temporarily broken off the tree. On the other hand, if the tree represents believing Jews you have a problem, because then Paul would be teaching that believers can lose their salvation. Some of the branches were broken off. Some solve this by saying that Paul is talking in terms of nations, not individuals, which is partly true. But that weakens Paul's exhortation against spiritual pride, because it's easy for individuals to shrug off national warnings by saying, "That may be true generally, but it doesn't apply to me." Also, if Paul is only talking in national terms, it would imply that the Gentiles have now replaced Israel in God's program, which could result in the anti-Semitism that Paul is combating. So we need to be careful not to press the details of this illustration too far. 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.

1. Guard against spiritual pride by remembering that salvation is by grace alone. Spiritual pride creeps in when we forget that salvation is by grace alone, not because of anything good in us. God is in charge of salvation history, working according to His sovereign, gracious choice (Ro 9:11-24; 11:7, 28). No one, whether Jew or Gentile, deserves salvation. It is always by God's grace alone.

A. GOD'S GRACE TOWARD ABRAHAM WAS THE BASIS OF THE JEWS' PRIVILEGED POSITION AS GOD'S CHOSEN

PEOPLE. You may be wondering, "Where in the world does Steve find Abraham in these verses?" I confess, I didn't see him here at first, but virtually all commentators agree that the root (Ro 11:16) refers to Abraham or also to the patriarchs Isaac and Jacob. In Ro 11:28, Paul says that from the standpoint of God's choice the Jews "are beloved for the sake of the fathers." This goes back to Genesis 12:1-3, when God called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees and told him to go to the land He would show him. God promised to bless Abram and make from him a great nation, so that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed. Later, Moses told the Israelites (Deut. 7:7-8), "The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." In other words, God didn't love the Israelites and choose them because of something worthy in them. Rather, He chose them and loved them for the sake of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And He chose those men not because of anything meritorious in them, but simply by His sovereign grace alone (Ro 9:11-13, 16).

So in Paul's illustration, Abraham is the root and the branches are the people of God in the broadest sense, descended from the patriarchs. But we need to back up and figure out what Paul means by the first piece of dough and the lump (Ro 11:16). Paul is referring to Numbers 15:20-21, where Moses tells Israel to offer the first of their dough to the Lord.

Although the Old Testament never explicitly states it, Paul infers that if the first piece of dough is holy, then the rest of the lump is consecrated, too. But what does he mean? He may be referring to the Jewish remnant of believers as the first fruits that signify that eventually the entire nation will be set apart unto God. But most commentators agree that the two illustrations in 11:16 are parallel. The first piece of dough and the root both refer to the patriarchs. The lump and the branches refer to the nation of Israel. "Holy" in this context does not refer to personal or inward holiness, but rather to the fact that Israel as a nation was set apart to God in an external and relative sense (Douglas Moo, The Epistle to the Romans [Eerdmans], p. 701). As such, Israel had been adopted as sons, they saw God's glory in the wilderness and in the tabernacle, they had received God's covenants and His law, and through them the Savior had come to earth (Ro 9:4-5).

Paul's point in Ro 11:16 is that God will keep His promises to the fathers by keeping their descendants as His people and saving the bulk of them at the culmination of history. (ED COMMENT: ACTUALLY GO WILL NOT SAVE THE BULK OF THEM - Zech 13:8-9+ INDICATE THAT 2/3'S OF THE JEWS WILL BE CUT OFF AND ONLY 1/3 WILL BE SAVED)> And if any Jews were inclined to boast in their privileged position, they needed to remember that their privileges were not due to anything in them, but only to God's grace shown to their forefathers, who didn't deserve it either.

B. GOD'S GRACE TOWARD THE GENTILES IS THE BASIS OF OUR RECEIVING THE BLESSINGS OF SALVATION. Paul deflates Gentile pride in several ways. First, in Ro 11:17 he calls them a wild olive and says that they were grafted in among the Jews so that they became a partaker of the rich root of the olive tree. Normally, a branch from a cultivated olive tree would be grafted into a wild olive tree, but Paul's illustration goes against nature, as he later states (11:24). God's grace in grafting the "wild olive" Gentiles into the cultivated tree is obvious. It was contrary to expectations. They didn't do anything to deserve such blessings.

Paul also deflates Gentile pride by saying (Ro 11:18), "But if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you." We only can receive God's salvation because He chose to be gracious to Abraham and He promised to bless all the nations of the earth through him. As Jesus said, "Salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22). For 2,000 years virtually all of the Gentiles around the globe were shut out of God's covenant promises to the Jews through Abraham. But through Christ and because the Jews rejected Christ, the gospel has now gone out to the Gentiles (Ro 9:11-12). ([Guarding Against Spiritual Pride](#))

Romans 11:17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree,

Greek: [Ei de tines ton kladon](#) exeklasthesan, [su de agrielaios on](#) (PAPMSN) [enekentristhes](#) (2SAPI) [en autois kai sugkoinonos tes rhizes tes piotetos tes elaias egenou.](#) (2SAMI)

Amplified: But if some of the branches were broken off, while you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among them to share the richness [of the root and sap] of the olive tree,

ESV: 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[2] of the olive tree,

ICB: Some of the branches from an olive tree have been broken off, and the branch of a wild olive tree has been joined to that first tree. You non-Jews are the same as that wild branch, and you now share the strength and life of the first tree, the Jews.

NIV: If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root,

NKJV: And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree,

NLT: But some of these branches from Abraham's tree, some of the Jews, have been broken off. And you Gentiles, who were branches from a wild olive tree, were grafted in. So now you also receive the blessing God has promised Abraham and his children, sharing in God's rich nourishment of his special olive tree.

Phillips: But if some of the branches of the tree have been broken off, while you, like shoots of wild-olive, have been grafted in, and don't share like a natural branch the rich nourishment of the root,

Wuest: Now, since certain of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became joint-partaker with them of the root of the fatness of the olive,

Young's Literal: And if certain of the branches were broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wast graffed in among them, and a fellow-partaker of the root and of the fatness of the olive tree didst become--

BUT IF SOME OF THE BRANCHES WERE BROKEN OFF: *Ei de tines ton kladon exeklasthesan (3PAPI)*

- Ps 80:11-16; Isaiah 6:13; 27:11; Jeremiah 11:16; Ezekiel 15:6-8; Matthew 8:11,12; Matthew 21:43; John 15:6
- [Romans 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Branches... broken off ~ unbelieving Israel

Wild Olive ~ believing Gentile

Rich root of the Olive Tree ~ The place of divine blessing. God's covenant of salvation made with Abraham (John MacArthur)

But - Always pause to ponder this **term of contrast**.

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)

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**" (Ro 11:11), "**their failure**" (Ro 11:12), and "**their rejection**" (Ro 11:15).

AND YOU BEING A WILD OLIVE WERE GRAFTED IN AMONG THEM: *su de agrielaïos on (PAPMSN) enekentristhes (2SAPI) en autois:*

- Ps 80:11-16; Isaiah 6:13; 27:11; Ezekiel 15:6-8; Matthew 8:11,12; ; John 15:6
- Deuteronomy 8:8; Judges 9:8,9; Psalms 52:8; Zechariah 4:3; Jonah 1:16; Revelation 11:4
- [Romans 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

And you being a wild olive - Gentiles.

Wild Olive (65) (**agrielaïos** from **ágrïos** = wild + **elaïa** = olive tree, olive) is Paul's metaphorical way of referring to the Gentiles who had believed in Christ.

Moule on wild olive tree - A scion (a detached living portion of a plant joined to a stock in grafting and usually supplying solely aerial parts to a graft) of a race alien from the special Covenant of Salvation. This word, from St Paul's pen, implies no Pharisaic contempt of the Gentiles. He merely points to the Divine choice, equally sovereign for nations and for persons, which had willed that Israel, and not Greece, Rome, or India, should be the recipient and keeper of Revelation; the heaven-cultured subject of its

privileges and ordinances. Not merit, but grace, made the difference. But a real difference it was, none the less, and it left the wonder and mercy of the call of the Gentiles as great as ever. ([Romans 11 Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges](#))

Centuries earlier God had warned His people through His prophet Jeremiah that their continued unbelief and idolatry would reap an unwanted harvest ...

What right has My beloved (Israel who was to have been His faithful wife) in My house when she has done many vile deeds? Can the sacrificial flesh take away from you your disaster, so that you can rejoice? (God was not interested in their sacrifices but in their broken and contrite hearts)" 16 The LORD called your name, "**A green olive tree**, beautiful in fruit and form"; With the noise of a great tumult He has kindled fire on it, and its branches are worthless (Paul has explained in Romans 11 these were broken off). 17 And the LORD of hosts, who planted you, has pronounced evil against you because of the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have done to provoke Me by offering up sacrifices to Baal. (Jeremiah 11:15-17)

Jesus over 600 years later warned His Israel that "the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it. (Matthew 21:43).

W E Vine - The Gentile who, though now a believer, is, naturally, a member of those nations which God had suffered to walk in their own ways (Acts 14:16), and who therefore remained unfaithful to God. The wild olive being a tree of comparatively little value, this part of the metaphor sets in contrast the glorious position of relationship into which God had brought Israel on the ground of covenant promise. The process of grafting is almost invariably that of putting the good shoot into the inferior stock. Whenever the reverse process was adopted it was to invigorate the fruitful stock and not to fertilize the wild shoot. What is set forth here, therefore, does not correspond actually to either method, but is selected in order to suit the subject, namely, the enrichment of individual Gentiles by their admission to the blessings forfeited by some of God's ancient people through their unbelief.

AND BECAME PARTAKER WITH THEM OF THE RICH ROOT OF THE OLIVE TREE: kai sugkoinonos tes rhizes tes piotetos tes elaias egenou (2SAM1):

- [Romans 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Partaker ([4791](#)) (**sugkoinonos** from **sun** = with + **koinonos** = companion, partner) means co-participant or partaker together with others.

The **New Living Translation** phrases this verse this way...

But some of these branches from Abraham's tree, some of the Jews, have been broken off. And you Gentiles, who were branches from a wild olive tree, were grafted in. So now you also receive the blessing God has promised Abraham and his children, sharing in God's rich nourishment of his special olive tree.

The discerning reader **needs to be careful** when reading some of the commentaries on this section of Romans. For example the respected devotional commentary by Matthew Henry has some very confusing statements on Romans 11:17. Henry writes that...

"those that God **grafts into the church** he finds wild and barren, and good for nothing. Men graft to mend the tree; but God grafts to mend the branch. The **church of God** is an **olive-tree**, flourishing and fruitful as an olive (Ps. 52:8; Hos. 14:6)... The Gentiles, being grafted into **the church**, partake of the same privileges that the Jews did, the root and fatness. The **olive-tree** is the **visible church** (Henry, M. Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged)

Clearly **Matthew Henry** is misinterpreting **the rich root of the olive tree** as the **church**. Notice also that Henry goes so far as to find the "**church**" in Old Testament passages like Hosea 14:6 which are clearly (incontext) speaking of the **nation of Israel**. In a sense Matthew Henry is doing the very thing Paul warns Gentile believers against in this section of Romans.

Warren Wiersbe agrees and cautions that

To say that the **olive tree**, with its natural and grafted branches, is a picture of the **church** would be a **great mistake**. (Wiersbe, W. W. The Bible Exposition Commentary. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books) (Bolding added)

It should also be noted that the fact that true believers living today are spiritual children of Abraham does not mean that the church is "spiritual Israel." Yes as Paul said "if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise." (Gal 3:29) Gentile believers who are not **physical children of Abraham** are his **spiritual children** in the sense that they have followed the pattern of his faith. All believers, Jew or Gentile, in fact are heirs of the spiritual blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant. The **Bible**

Knowledge Commentary (on Galatians 3:29) however cautions that...

Any discussion of the seed (offspring) of Abraham must first take into account his natural seed (offspring), the descendants of Jacob in the 12 tribes. Within this **natural seed** there is a believing **remnant** of Jews who will one day inherit the Abrahamic promises directed specifically to them (cf. Ro 9:6, 8).

But there is also the **spiritual seed** of Abraham who are not Jews. These are the Gentiles who believe and become Abraham's spiritual seed. They inherit the promise of justification by faith as Paul explained... (cf. Gal. 3:6-9). **To suggest, as amillenarians do** (Ed note: and as many of the older commentators like Matthew Henry), **that Gentile believers inherit the national promises given to the believing Jewish remnant** (Ed note: e.g., the specific promises of the land in [Genesis 15:18](#)) promises which God has not yet literally fulfilled but which He will fulfill in the **Millennium**) —**that the church thus supplants Israel or is the “new Israel”**— **is to read into these verses what is not there.** (Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. The Bible Knowledge Commentary. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) (Bolding added) (See also discussion of the phrase **Israel of God**)

Paul will now go on to warn the Gentile Christians of the danger of repeating the sin of the Jews--boasting of their privileged position (Ro 11:18-21). He will also explain that if God, by cutting off the branches of the natural olive, has made room for Gentile believers, how much easier will it be for him to restore the natural branches to their place in the cultivated olive (Ro 11:23-24)!

Romans 11:18 do not be [arrogant toward](#) the [branches](#); but [if](#) you are [arrogant](#), remember that it is not you who [supports](#) the [root](#), but the [root](#) supports you.

Greek: [me katakaucho](#) (2SPMM) [ton kladon](#); [ei de katakauchasai](#). (2SPMI) [ou su ten rhizan bastazeis](#) (2SPA) [alla e rhiza se](#).

Amplified: Do not boast over the branches and pride yourself at their expense. If you do boast and feel superior, remember it is not you that support the root, but the root [that supports] you.

ESV: 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.

ICB: So do not brag about those branches that were broken off. You have no reason to brag. Why? You do not give life to the root. The root gives life to you.

NIV: do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you.

NKJV: do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

NLT: But you must be careful not to brag about being grafted in to replace the branches that were broken off. Remember, you are just a branch, not the root.

Phillips: don't let yourself feel superior to those former branches. (If you feel inclined that way, remind yourself that you do not support the root, the root supports you.)

Wuest: stop boasting against the branches. But, assuming that you are boasting, you are not sustaining the root, but the root you.

Young's Literal: do not boast against the branches; and if thou dost boast, thou dost not bear the root, but the root thee!

DO NOT BE ARROGANT TOWARD THE BRANCHES: [me katakaucho](#) (2SPMM) [ton kladon](#):

- Ro 1:20; 3:27; 1Kings 20:11; Proverbs 16:18; Matthew 26:33; Luke 18:9-11; 1Corinthians 10:12
- [Romans 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Do not be arrogant - This **present imperative with a negative** is which signifies stop being arrogant or don't let this begin to be your mindset! Do you know any Gentile believers who are arrogant toward Israel?

Arrogant - exaggerating or disposed to exaggerate one's own worth or importance in an overbearing manner. Don't manifest a feeling of superiority. Could the false doctrine of replacement theology be a variation of arrogance toward the branches, the Jews? (See introductory comments at **Romans 11**)

Arrogant (2620) (**katakauchaomai** from **katá** = against + **kauchaomai** = boast over a privilege or possession. The root is **auchen** = neck which vain persons are apt to carry in proud manner) means to exult or boast against or to boast arrogantly. In Ro 11:18 the Gentile believers are contrasted with the "**branches**" those Jews who rejected Christ. The verb is in the with a negative which can be more accurately translated as "*stop being arrogant toward*" the unbelieving Jews. The point is that this aberrant attitude had already begun to creep into the Roman church which by all of Paul's testimony was a good church. How easily this leaven of subtle anti-Semitism can begin to permeate even the best of churches today! We must diligently guard against this attitude toward the Jews or the nation of Israel.

How could a Gentile, a wild olive, who had been grafting in (by faith) demonstrate his or her arrogance? One way is by saying that the Jews who did not believe should have believed! Another way is to assume a holier-than-thou attitude toward the Jews.

It is tragic and lamentable that, throughout much of church history, Jewish converts to Christ have often been subjected to attitudes of Gentile superiority and been shunned or reluctantly accepted into Christian fellowship. Paul anticipated that, in spite of this clear truth, some of his Gentile readers would continue to argue against him (see Romans 11:19).

As an aside I would pose this question: What happened in this regard to the Early Church Fathers? Why did not many of them see this truth? Even Martin Luther in his latter years wrote a vicious pamphlet vilifying the Jews because they would not accept Messiah! (See a [sample link](#) from a non-believing Jewish source) If Martin Luther could fall into such deception, let every man take heed lest he fall!

William Newell - How few of us Gentile believers understand and bear in mind that we are beneficiaries of those promises which God lodged in Abraham as a root of promise, --all the promises we inherit in Christ! ([Romans 11](#)).

Steven Cole - WE SHOULD FEAR BECAUSE WE ARE SO PRONE TO COMPARE OURSELVES WITH OTHERS RATHER THAN WITH GOD. Paul says (Ro 11:18), "Do not be arrogant toward the branches" "The branches" refers to the Jews who had rejected the gospel and were temporarily cut off from God's mercy. It's easy for us who believe to look down on unbelievers with disgust and to think, "Stupid people! They deserve to be judged!" (As if we didn't!) Have you noticed that when we compare ourselves with others, we always pick those who in our minds are worse sinners than we are? We rarely compare ourselves with the godly. And what if we compare ourselves with God? If He had not chosen to have mercy on us, we would be darkened in our understanding, excluded from the life of God, and hardened in our hearts (Eph. 4:18). ([Guarding Against Spiritual Pride](#))

BUT IF YOU ARE ARROGANT REMEMBER THAT IT IS NOT YOU WHO SUPPORTS THE ROOT BUT THE ROOT SUPPORTS YOU: ei de katakuchasai (2SPMI) ou su ten rhizan bastazeis (2SPAI) alla e rhiza se:

- Ro 4:16; Zechariah 8:20-23; John 10:16; Galatians 3:29; Ephesians 2:19,20
- [Romans 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Root = spiritual promises and blessings that flow through the Abrahamic Covenant. In a sense even the New Covenant was also actually given to Israel first. E.g. Jeremiah writes...

"Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, (with who? is it with the Gentiles?) 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. (for more on this subject see the **New Covenant in the Old Testament**) (Jeremiah 31:31-32)

And who did Jesus inaugurate the New Covenant with? Were there any Gentiles present? And who did the Spirit Who was promised as part of the blessing of the New Covenant first come upon in Acts 2? And who composed the predominant makeup of disciples in the early church (probably until about 100AD)? (Answer: Jewish believers). Clearly we Gentiles are "Johnny come lately" and thus have no grounds whatsoever for spiritual pride in regard to our salvation.

There is never any ground for a believer from among the Gentiles to hold a Jew as such in any measure of contempt or inferiority. Paul warned the Gentiles that they were obligated to Israel, and therefore they dared not boast of their new spiritual position (Ro 11:18-21). The Gentiles entered into God's plan because of faith, and not because of anything good they had done. Paul was

discussing the Gentiles collectively, and not the individual experience of one believer or another.

No matter how far Israel may stray from the truth of God, the roots (the covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were made by a covenant keeping God!) are still good. God is still the "God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Ex 3:6 Mt 22:32). He will keep His promises to the patriarchs and to any and all natural Jews who enter in by grace through faith.

Praise God that His the keeping of His covenants does not depend on us but is rooted in His attributes such as Faithfulness, Love, Mercy, Immutable, Good, Eternal