

SESSION 9

Kindness

ROMANS 11:11-24

GOD'S PLAN FOR REDEMPTION INCLUDES ALL PEOPLE.



Who should be included on the invitation list? That question often puts event planners in a tough spot. They must determine how many invitations can be sent based on the event's purpose and the budget available. Ultimately, they're forced to wrestle with the difficult decision of who will receive an invitation and who will not. They would never simply declare that everyone is invited. Yet that's exactly what God does. His invitation is open to all.

*WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU RECEIVED AN UNEXPECTED INVITATION TO SOMETHING?
WHAT HAS GOD SHOWN YOU ABOUT HIS OPEN INVITATION TO EVERYONE?*

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In Romans 11, Paul raised two crucial questions about Gentiles who had been saved. First, he asked if God had rejected the Jews. He answered the question by pointing to himself. He was a Jew who had been loyal to Judaism when he gave his life to Christ. Then Paul mentioned God's encounter with Elijah. Elijah considered himself to be the last standing Israelite. God assured the prophet there were other Israelites who were loyal to Him.

Second, he asked if the Jews had gone too far in their rejection of Christ. The answer to this question sheds light on the truth about God's grace. Paul used the image of a tree with grafted branches to exhibit God's grace to Jews and Gentiles. Jews who rejected Christ would be like branches that had been removed from the tree. When they turned to Christ by faith, they would be restored to Him. In that way, God's grace would be extended to believing Jews as well as believing Gentiles.

Paul stressed that God had not turned His back on Israel. His mercy toward the Jews would never be smothered. Quite the opposite, His abiding love for them would always fuel the fire of His mercy toward them. His love for them reached all the way back to the original Old Testament patriarchs who followed His leadership during the formative years of Israel's history. Consequently, God showed his mercy to Jews and Gentiles alike.

Explanation gave way to adoration as Paul continued to write about God and His relationship with His people. The apostle praised God for His priceless wisdom and awe-inspiring judgments. He also glorified God because His relationship with His people enriched them in ways they would never be able to comprehend completely.



11 I ask, then, have they **stumbled so as to fall?** **A** Absolutely not! On the contrary, by their transgression, **salvation has come to the Gentiles** **B** to make Israel jealous. **12** Now if their transgression brings riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more will **their fullness** **C** bring! **13** Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Insofar as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, **14** if I might somehow make my own people jealous and save some of them. **15** For if their rejection brings reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? **16** Now if the **firstfruits** **D** are holy, so is the whole batch. And if the root is holy, so are the branches. **17** Now if some of the branches were broken off, and you, though a wild olive branch, **were grafted** **E** in among them and have come to share in the rich root of the cultivated olive tree, **18** do not boast that you are better than those branches. But if you do boast—you do not sustain the root, but the root sustains you. **19** Then you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” **20** True enough; they were broken off because of unbelief, but **you stand by faith.** **F** Do not be arrogant, but beware, **21** because if God **did not spare the natural branches,** **G** he will not spare you either. **22** Therefore, consider God’s kindness and severity: severity toward those who have fallen but God’s kindness toward you—if you remain in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. **23** And even they, if they do not remain in unbelief, will be grafted in, because God has the power to graft them in again. **24** For if you were cut off from your native wild olive tree and **against nature** **H** were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these—the natural branches—be grafted into their own olive tree?

A. Earlier, Paul told the Romans that Jesus and salvation by faith were stumbling blocks for the Jews (9:32). The logical question was, *Could they recover from this stumbling?*

B. The Jews’ rejection opened the door to salvation for the Gentiles. This would make Israel “jealous,” creating a spiritual longing that could move God’s people back toward Him.

C. Paul argued that while Israel’s rejection of the gospel brought blessings to the world, their eventual restoration would be even greater. (See v. 15.)

D. An offering taken from the initial reaping at harvest (see Num. 15:17-21). The holiness of the firstfruits (early Jewish believers) sanctified “the whole batch” (future Jewish believers).

E. When branches from one tree are joined to a different tree. Gentiles were like wild branches grafted into a cultivated olive tree, representing God’s family.

F. Gentiles were grafted only because they had faith in Christ.

G. God judged the Jews’ lack of faith, and He would do the same in regard to Gentiles (see v. 22).

H. Grafting is not a natural event. Likewise, God would move outside what might be considered normal to restore His people.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Rejection

(Rom. 11:11-16)

We can be assured that the gospel is for all people.

- **If God's plan of salvation embraces all peoples, what is one next step—prayer, conversation, hospitality, giving, or going—you will take to participate in that plan this week?**

2. Grafted

(Rom. 11:17-22)

As members of God's family, believers should embrace humility and resist spiritual pridefulness.

- **When might we feel boastful of our spiritual blessings? How can we turn from spiritual pride to genuine care?**

3. Restoration

(Rom. 11:23-24)

Believers can take comfort in knowing God has the power to save those who repent.

- **What do you learn about God's heart from His willingness to restore those who previously rejected Him? How might that influence the way you view people who have walked away from faith?**

Apply the Text

Share with your Bible study group how you will apply the truth that God intends for everyone to hear the gospel.

- **In what ways would a lack of humility prevent you from sharing the good news of Christ?**

KEY DOCTRINE: God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility. (See Ephesians 1:4-6; 1 Peter 2:9-10.)

BIBLE SKILL: Use multiple Scripture passages to understand a major doctrine.

This session emphasizes a Christian's eternal security once he or she has accepted Christ as Savior. Paul's teaching refutes the idea that true believers are in jeopardy of losing their salvation. Read the following Bible passages and note what each one teaches about the security of the believer: Matthew 10:22; 24:13; John 5:24; 6:37; 10:27-28; Romans 8:38-39; Philippians 1:6; 1 John 2:19; 3:9; Jude 1:24-25.

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Romans 11:33. What is something that amazes—even though you don't fully understand how it works?

Earlier in this chapter, Paul explained how Israel's rejection of the gospel resulted in the gospel being shared with the Gentiles. The Gentiles did not replace the Jews in God's plan—unbelieving Jews can repent and be saved by faith in Christ. God's plan of redemption includes both groups. This led Paul to praise. He marveled at the depth of God's wisdom and stood in awe of God's ways—that are too deep for us to fully understand.

When God's ways feel too difficult to understand, do you find yourself trying to explain Him or learning to trust Him?

The appropriate response to God's plan of redemption in Christ is humility and awe. Paul has affirmed that salvation depends entirely on God's grace rather than human effort. As we consider His redemptive plan, we are reminded that God's ways are deeper than our understanding and cannot be reduced to simple explanations. Instead, they draw us into worship—calling us to trust Him, to rest in His wisdom, and to respond with praise.

What does it look like to move from trying to explain God's ways to simply trusting and worshiping Him?

Read Romans 11:33 in different Bible translations, then put the verse into your own words.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Romans 11:11-12

Note the cause-and-effect relationships in these verses.

After answering the question about whether God had rejected the Jews, Paul went on to ask if they had gone too far in their rejection of God's gift of salvation through Christ. He answered the question decisively: "Absolutely not!" He acknowledged they had stumbled over Jesus instead of embracing Him. However, their transgression when they rejected Christ opened the door for the gospel to be shared with the Gentiles. When the Gentiles heard the message about salvation through Christ, they received Him. In turn, the Jews became jealous of them.

God transformed Israel's transgression into a blessing for the Gentiles, allowing them to experience the benefits that come with believing in Christ. The Gentiles brought spiritual richness to their lives. In this way, Israel's failure to turn to Christ opened the door for people across the world to come to Him by faith. From that point, Paul shifted his focus toward his hope for Israel's future. Although Israel's spiritual emptiness had not prevented others from being saved, he wondered what would happen when the Jewish people themselves embraced Christ and experienced the fullness of life found in Him.

What did Paul mean when he said Israel stumbled but did not fall?



Day 2: Romans 11:13-16

Compare these verses to Acts 9:15.

Paul's purpose in writing about the effectiveness of his ministry had nothing to do with selfish pride. He knew God alone deserved the credit for the victories in his missionary work. His interest in sharing the reports of salvation among the Gentiles centered in fostering jealousy among Jewish people. In their selfish pride, Jewish people had come to believe that God worked through them exclusively. Now they could see Him at work in the lives of others. Paul hoped their envy would give way to their surrender to Christ.

Paul pondered what would happen when the rejection of the Jewish people turned into their acceptance of Him. He compared it to something like resurrection. Their spiritual awakening would look like life that had been sparked from the dead.

The possibility of the Jews receiving Christ prompted Paul to reflect on the stewardship principle of firstfruits. In the Old Testament, God instructed His people to present a loaf of bread as an offering to Him from the first batch of dough after the grain harvest (Num. 15:17-21). By setting the first loaf apart to Him, they acknowledged that the entire batch had been made holy to Him. Paul elaborated on the principle by saying if the root of a tree had been dedicated to God, then the branches would be set apart for Him also.

What is one next step that you will take to participate in taking the gospel to people this week?



Day 3: Romans 11:17-19

Consider how these verses addressed the Gentiles' temptation to boast.

Paul compared Gentiles to a “wild olive branch.” God “grafted” them in so they could thrive as His people. Also, the “root” brought to mind the nourishing presence of God among His people. The grafted branch flourished because it enjoyed the privilege of receiving the same kind of nourishment that had enriched the “cultivated olive tree.” Paul intended for the cultivated tree to serve as a reference to Jewish people.

The Gentiles ran the risk of considering themselves to be better than the Jews. Paul referred to Jewish people as “those branches.” Boasting would show that Gentiles had forgotten the central truth about their salvation. It did not center in the branch. Instead, their salvation started in the root. The applause over salvation belonged to God. He had been like the root that sustained the branch.

Gentiles who boasted about being saved had become blind to the most important aspect of their salvation. They demonstrated that they had damaged their spiritual vision by considering themselves to be God’s favorites. Such a declaration would have suggested that God moved the Jewish people out of the way to make room for them. Using the image of the olive tree, they ran the risk of saying that God decided He would prune the Jewish branches so He could graft in the Gentile branches. Consequently, it would have wrongly implied that God loved Gentiles more than Jews.

Where do you feel tempted to feel spiritually superior to others? Why is that dangerous?



Day 4: Romans 11:20-22

Identify the two responses to God's grace in these verses.

Paul conceded that people who rejected Christ could have been compared to branches that were broken off the tree. However, God’s pruning of them was not because He didn’t love them. Instead, their unbelief led to their removal. By the same token, by His grace, He grafted Gentiles onto the tree according to their faith in Christ. Gentile Christians needed to beware of arrogance.

God would not spare Jewish people who rejected His way of salvation through Christ. He removed them even though they had been rooted in a relationship with Him that began in the early days of the Old Testament. Therefore, Gentiles needed to remember that He would not spare them either.

God demonstrated His grace with countless expressions of His kindness. He made no distinction between Jews and Gentiles regarding who would be saved. But neither did He exhibit any distinction regarding His severity. He would judge anyone who had fallen into the trap of spiritual arrogance. For that reason, Gentile and Jewish Christians demonstrated wisdom by responding humbly to God’s kindness.

How did Paul hold God's kindness and severity in balance?



Day 5: Romans 11:23-24

Note the conditional language in these verses.

For the Jews, being removed did not mean their relationship with God would never be restored. However, their restoration depended on their willingness to return to Him. Using the word picture of a tree once again, Paul assured believing Jews that they would be “grafted in” by God’s grace. In other words, the relationship that believing Jews had with Him would be restored.

The only fitting response that they could make to Him was to abandon their unbelief and put their faith in Christ alone. If they made such a response, they could trust God to be gracious and open His arms to them.

Paul turned his attention to believing Gentiles. They started as branches of their “native wild olive tree.” When Jesus came into their lives, something remarkable took place. Like branches that were “grafted into a cultivated olive tree,” they became members of God’s family. God did something that went against what farmers had learned in nature about olive trees. In those days, farmers would take a branch of a cultivated olive tree and graft it into a native olive tree. Grafting a branch in that way would make the native olive tree more productive. God grafted believing Gentiles into the cultivated tree with believing Jews. As a result, the tree that included Gentiles as well as Jews who trusted in Christ became stronger and more productive.

How might these verses impact the way you pray for unbelieving family and friends?

APPLY THE TEXT

As you reflect on God’s power to save anyone, who have you considered “unreachable”? Commit to pray for that person’s salvation. What barriers do you need to remove so you can share the gospel with that person?

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