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**Not Final but Temporary
(Part 2)
A Warning to Gentile Believers
Romans 11:16-22**

Introduction:

The **category 5** killer storm named “**Hurricane Camille**” literally decimated the city of **Pass Christian, Mississippi** on the **Gulf of Mexico**, late on the night of **August 17, 1969**. Earlier that night a group of **twenty or so** people were having a “**hurricane party**” at the posh **Riche-lieu Apartments**, which were directly in the line of danger since they faced the beach less than **250 feet** from the surf.

The wind was **howling** when **Police Chief Jerry Per-alta** pulled up **after dark** and ordered the people to **leave** immediately, for the **storm** was getting worse. But they just **laughed, boasted** in their ability to ride out the storm, and **dared** him to arrest them. Since they **refused** to leave he made sure he wrote down their names and next of kin.

Later that night at **10:15pm** the **front wall** of the storm hit shore and the **scientists** who clocked **Camille's wind speed** said it was more **than 205 miles-per-hour**, the **strongest** in recorded history. **Raindrops** hit with the force of **bullets**, and **waves** off the Gulf Coast crested between **twenty-two** and **twenty-eight** feet high. **News reports** later showed that the **worst damage** came at the **little settlement** of **motels, bars, and casinos** known as **Pass Christian, Mississippi**, where some **twenty people** were **killed** at a **hurricane party** in the **Riche-lieu Apartments**. **Nothing was left** of that three-story structure

but the **foundation**; the **only survivor** was a five-year-old boy found **clinging** to a mattress the following day.

What a **tragic example** of **arrogant pride**! **Arrogance** is the **sinful attitude** of being **puffed up** in pride, thinking **more highly** of yourself that you ought, **boasting** in yourself, and **looking down** on others with contempt. **Arrogance** not only leads to **physical death**, but also **eternal death**, as we will see in the passage we will be looking at this morning. Turn in your Bible to **Romans 11**.

In **Romans 11:16-22** we see ***three facets*** of Paul's stern warning to **Gentile Christians to not be arrogant toward believing and unbelieving Jews**. The ***first facet*** is:

I. The Illustrations that Set the Scene (v. 16)

- A. Look at **v. 16**: If the **first** piece of **dough** is **holy**, the **lump** is also; and if the **root** is **holy**, the **branches** are too.
1. This verse is a **transitional verse** in that it **concludes** what Paul said in **vv. 11-15** about Israel still having a future and it also **introduces** what he will be talking about in **vv. 17-24**. Thus, Paul furthers his argument that Israel's rejection of Christ is **not final but temporary** by giving **two parallel illustrations** that drive home this point.
 2. Paul's **first illustration** is, "If the **first piece of dough** is **holy**, the **lump** is also," which was taken from **Numbers 15:17-21**. In this illustration it is **best** to see the "**first piece of dough**" as representing the **patriarchs**.
 3. God established His permanent relationship with Israel through His covenant with **Abraham**, and **reaffirmed** it also with

Isaac and Jacob. This is **confirmed** in v. **28** where Paul says that Israel is “**beloved** for the **sake** of the **fathers.**”

4. Now the **patriarchs** are “**holy**” (hagia) in that they were **set apart** or **consecrated** by God as the **recipients** and **transmitters** of the **promises** of God.
5. The “**lump**” then represents the **descendants** of Israel, who have come from the patriarchs. Thus, they were **set apart** or **consecrated** as a people in the **consecration** of the patriarchs.
6. The **principle** is this: the first part **sanctifies** the whole (Lev. 19:23-25). In other words, the patriarchs **sanctify** Israel as a whole.
7. Paul is not here **asserting** the **salvation** of every Israelite but the continuing **special identity** of the people of Israel in the eyes of the Lord. Therefore, the **unbelief** and **rejection** of Christ by the Jewish majority cannot **annul** the continuing **holy purpose** of God destined for His people as a nation.

B. Paul’s **second illustration** has to do with an **olive tree**. He says, “...and if the **root** is **holy**, the **branches** are too.”

1. Since this illustration is **parallel** to the first, the “**root**” suggests the very **foundation** of the **people of God** and also represents the **patriarchs** and the **covenant promises** that God gave to them. And the “**branches**” also represent the **descendants** of Israel, the nation as a whole.
2. It is in the character of Israel as a covenant people, whose “**root**” (the patriarchs) is “**holy**” (set apart or consecrated by God) that Paul sees future hope for the “**branches**” (the nation as a whole). In other words, the believing forefathers of the Jewish

people **sanctify** the whole people in the sense that they are destined to fulfill God's purpose as a covenant nation.

3. **Thomas Schreiner** accurately states, "Thus **both illustrations** make the **same point**: the election of the patriarchs sanctifies Israel as a whole. Ethnic Israel is not cast off but **still remains** the elect people of God because of the **promise** made to the fathers (vv. 28-29).

4. Therefore, for God to **forsake** Israel would be for Him to **renege** on His covenant promises to the patriarchs. This is something His holy character will not allow.

5. Paul then goes on to **expand** this second illustration of the **root and branches** in **vv. 17-24**. He does so by comparing the people of God to an **olive tree** that has both **natural** and **wild branches**.

C. Look at **v. 17** where Paul speaks directly to Gentile believers saying: 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**,

1. The **olive tree** was the **most common** and **most useful** tree in the **Mediterranean** world. In the Old Testament Israel is identified as the olive tree (Jer. 11:16-19; Hos. 14:6-7), and here the **olive tree** represents the true, spiritual people of God.

2. Now **Israel** with its **root** being the **patriarchs** and God's promises to them is viewed as the **cultivated olive tree** and the **wild olive tree** is the **Gentile world**. In this verse we see that the **cultivated olive tree** has experienced both a **pruning** and a **grafting**.

3. **First**, Paul says, “**some** of the **branches** were **broken off**.” Although the word “**some**” here refers to the unbelieving **Jewish majority** that **rejected** Christ and His gospel, Paul is simply stressing that **not all** the **natural branches** have been cut off.
4. Again Paul is showing that Israel’s rejection of Christ is not **total** but **temporary**, for God has always **preserved** for Himself a **remnant**. Here, the **remaining** natural branches are **Jewish Christians**.
5. **Second**, Paul states, “...and **you** (speaking about **Gentile believers**), being a **wild olive**, were **grafted in among them** and became **partaker** with them of the **rich root** of the olive tree.” The **wild olive tree** was notoriously **unfruitful**, and thus, this was a **good symbol** of Gentiles **prior** to God’s grace in their lives.
6. Now concerning the grafting process, Paul **knew** very well that what he was talking about was not the “**normal horticultural process**” of **grafting**, for he says in **v. 24** that this is, “**contrary to nature**.” Normally, **grafting** was done by taking a healthy fruit-producing branch from a **cultivated** olive tree and grafting it into a **wild olive tree** to invigorate it to produce fruit.
7. However, Paul **reverses** the process here in saying that **wild olive branches** are grafted into the **cultivated olive tree**. The historian **William Ramsey** states that this **reverse process** was also practiced “in **exceptional circumstances**. . .

to **reinvigorate** an olive tree (cultivated) which is ceasing to bear fruit.” (Stott pg. 300)

8. But Paul wasn't so focused on stating the **correct process** as he was in getting his **point** across. **Thomas Schreiner** states, “That Paul was **uninterested** in adhering to the **actual practice** of grafting in his day is **apparent** since he speaks of **regrafting** branches that were previously broken off” in **vv. 23-24**. (pp.604-605)
9. Therefore, Paul's point is that the **grafting** of **wild olive branches** into the **cultivated olive tree** refers to the Gentile believers who have been **incorporated** into the true, spiritual people of God. Now **who** did this breaking off and grafting in?
10. The one Greek word translated “**were broken off**” (exeklasthesan) and “**were grafted in**” (enekentristhes) are both in the **passive voice**. These are what is called “**divine passives**,” indicating that it is **God Himself** who has done this without **explicitly** using His name.
11. God has **pruned** or **broke off** the branches of the Jewish majority from the olive tree and **grafted in** the branches of Gentile believers. Now Paul says that we as Gentile believers, who once had **no natural relationship** to the patriarchs and the promises given to them, were “grafted in **among them**” referring to the **remaining** branches of **believing Jews** or the **remnant**.
12. Notice that we also “became **partaker with them** of the **rich root** of the olive tree.” As Gentile believers, we are now **fellow sharers** in the **rich root**—the spiritual strength and

nourishment God has provided in His covenant promises given to the patriarchs. This will be described further in the **next verse**.

13. Now the **major force** of all this imagery is to **set the stage** for the **second facet** of Paul's stern warning to Gentile Christians, which is this:

II. The Command to Not be Arrogant

- A. Look at **v. 18: do not be arrogant** toward the **branches**; (Stop there)
 1. Now the "**branches**" that Paul **commands** Gentile Christians to **not be arrogant** toward are both the **unbelieving Jewish majority** who has been broken off and the **Jewish Christians** whose branches remain in the tree.
 2. The word "**arrogant**" (katakaucho) means to pridefully boast against or brag. It speaks of arrogantly seeing oneself as better and superior to others and looking down on them with contempt.
 3. Now why were Gentile believers **arrogant toward the Jews**? **Douglas Moo** describes this well, saying, "These Gentile Christians appear to have **concluded** that the **unprecedented degree** in which the **doors** of salvation were **open** to Gentiles after the coming of Christ meant the **closing** of those **same doors** to Jews. At the same time, these Gentile believers were apparently **convinced** that they **belonged** to a **new people of God** that had simply **replaced Israel**. Those Jews who **believed**, they apparently assumed, could become **part of their community** and on **their terms** (14:1-15:13)." (pg. 704)
 4. Certain Gentile believers saw themselves as especially **prized** in **God's sight** since He **exerted** so much effort to include them as

wild branches into His family. So since they (**wrongly**) perceived themselves as **replacing** the Jews, they were therefore **better than** and **superior to** them.

5. So in essence they were saying, “**Junk** those **old branches** we are the **new branches!**” But in doing this they fell into the same sin as the Jews, which we saw earlier in Romans.
6. Just as the Jews **boasted** over the Gentiles because of their **heritage** as God’s chosen people and their God-given **privileges**, so the Gentiles were doing the **same thing** as they arrogant boasted over the Jews because of their **privileged position!**
7. **Arrogance** of any kind is always **sin**. And this sinful attitude is the **complete opposite** of a **humble** and **loving** heart toward others that is to **characterize** God’s people. For Jesus said in **John 13:34-35**, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”
8. And **Philippians 2:3-4** states, “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”
9. The **third facet** of Paul’s stern warning to Gentile Christians is this:

III. The Reasons why Arrogance is Wrong

- A. The **first reason** is because Gentile believers are: **Dependent** on the **root**. Look at the end of **v. 18**: but **if** you are **arrogant**,

remember that it is not **you** who **supports** the **root**, but the **root supports you**.

1. Paul isn't saying here that **every** Gentile Christian in **Rome** was arrogant toward the Jews; he is simply stating that "**if**" this is a **present problem** then deal with it! Here's **one thing** to do: "**...remember** that it is **not you** who **supports** the **root**, but the **root supports you**."
2. Understand that to **arrogantly boast** over the Jews is to **demonstrate** an attitude of **superiority** and **contempt** for the **Jewish heritage**. Yet it is this **very heritage** upon which every Gentile believer **depends** for his or her spiritual standing.
3. Jesus said in **John 4:22** that "**salvation** is from the **Jews**." As wild olive **branches**, we as Gentiles had **no spiritual life** in ourselves apart from the **root**.
4. Yes, the Jews are as sinful as everyone else and deserve eternal punishment, as we saw earlier in Romans. And yet, we are **dependent** on the **root**!
5. It was only by God's **grace** that He **grafted** us into the **one tree** of His redeemed people. It is the **root** that continually **supports** (present tense) every believer as we receive spiritual strength and nourishment in the **covenant promises** of God given to the **patriarchs** of Israel.
6. For it was God's **promise** to **Abraham** in **Genesis 12:3** that "**in you** all the families of the earth shall be **blessed**."
7. We as Gentiles are **blessed** by God because we have been grafted into the **covenant of salvation** that God made with **Abraham** and now **graciously offers** to all who believe in Abraham's God.

For **Abraham** is called “the **father** of all who believe” (4:11-12, 16-17; Gal. 3:6-9, 13-14).

8. Therefore, **Charles Hodge** rightly states, “...the **Jews** were the **channels of blessings to Gentiles**, and not the **reverse**.” (pg. 369)

9. We who are Gentile believers are truly **indebted** to Israel; Israel is **not indebted** to us.

B. The **second reason** arrogance is wrong is because Gentile believers are: **Secure** only by **faith**. Look at **vv. 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**. (Stop there)

1. Anticipating what an imaginary Gentile believer might say to justify his feelings of superiority over the Jews, Paul states a hypothetical objection in **v. 19**: “Branches were broken off **so that I** might be grafted in.”

2. What **arrogant pride!** This person actually sees God as specifically **taking people out** in order that he can be **inserted into** their place.

3. This is how **important** and **special** he sees himself to be. Now although God did **intend** to graft in Gentiles as the Jews were broken off (v. 11), notice the **real reason** that Paul says they were included into the people of God in **v. 20**: **Quite right**, they were **broken off** for their **unbelief**, but **you stand** by your **faith**.

4. The real reason Gentiles were included is because of the Jews “**unbelief.**” It is the issue of **faith** in Jesus Christ that makes **all** the difference; it is the **decisive factor.**
 5. Whereas **unbelief** or **lack of faith** in Christ led the Jews to being **rejected** by God; it was **faith** in Christ led the Gentiles to being **accepted** by Him. **Never forget** that our **salvation**, our **secure standing** before God, is by God’s **grace alone** through **faith alone** in **Christ alone.**
 6. **Ephesians 2:8-9** says, “For **by grace** you have been saved **through faith**; and that not of yourselves, it is the **gift** of God; not as a result of **works**, so that no one may **boast.**” (3:27)
 7. Because we **stand** before God only by **faith**, Paul then gives **two more commands** at the end of **v. 20: Do not be conceited, but fear.**
 8. In essence he is saying, “**Stop** your proud high-minded way of thinking, and instead, have the **proper attitude** of **fearing** God in your daily life. The word “**fear**” (phobou) means reverential awe and respect for Almighty God.
 9. The **fear of God** is the **antidote** to pride. And this kind of **fear** is an **essential attitude** for **holy** Christian living (2 Cor. 7:1; Phil. 2:12; 1 Pet. 1:17).
- C. Paul now goes on to **explain why** every Gentile Christian should **fear God** in **v. 21** and then gives the **specific content** of this fear in **v. 22.** Look first at **v. 21: for if** (if and it’s true or since) God did not spare the **natural branches**, He will not spare **you**, either.
1. We as believers should fear God because if He did not tolerate **unbelief** and spare judgment upon the **natural branches**, His

- own chosen people Israel, what makes us think that if we as **wild olive branches** do the same thing that He is going to **spare** us?
2. **John Murray** rightly declared, “The **same** judgment **will** overtake the Gentiles if they fall into the **same** kind of self-righteous confidence (9:32-33; 10:3, 21).” (pg. 87)
 3. Therefore, the **fate** of the **natural branches** could so easily become that of the **grafted-in branches**.
- D. Paul then further **describes** what this **fear of God** is in **v. 22**: Behold then the **kindness** and **severity of God**; to those who **fell**, **severity**, but to **you**, **God’s kindness**, if you **continue** in His **kindness**; **otherwise** you also will be **cut off**.
1. These are **very scary** words! But this is a **warning passage** against **false security**; it is **not meant** to give believers **insecurity** but rather **biblical security**.
 2. Notice how in this verse God’s **kindness** precedes His **severity**. The **kindness of God** refers to His goodness, mercy and grace in sovereignly grafted into the true, spiritual people of God, the cultivated olive tree, a great number of Gentile branches who put their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.
 3. While the **severity of God** refers to His wrath and judgment upon all those who **reject** Christ. This flows from His perfect **holiness** and **justice**.
 4. **Thomas Schreiner** wisely observes, “The **kindness of God** cannot be truly appreciated as a **gift** of his **grace** unless the **severity of God** is contemplated as the **just penalty** for forsaking him.” (pg. 608)

5. Now notice that Paul then **reverses** the order and says, “...to **those who fell, severity.**” Again this refers to the **Jewish majority** who has **rejected** Christ and His gospel, and as a consequence **receives** God’s **severe judgment** upon them in that they are **broken off** from the tree.
6. Then Paul states, “but to **you, God’s kindness.**” This refers to God’s **saving grace** to every Gentile believer.
7. But just because people “**profess**” to be **Christians** doesn’t mean they are! Notice the **warning statement**, “...**if you continue in** His kindness.”
8. Now it is **important** to understand that Paul isn’t saying a true Christian can **lose** his salvation, but rather those who are **truly saved** will never completely walk away from the Christian faith.
9. Paul often warns “**professing**” **believers** of the necessity of **continuing** in the faith in order to be **saved** (1 Cor. 10:1-12; Gal. 5:2-4; Col. 1:23; 1 Thess. 3:1-5; also Jn. 8:31; 15:5-6; Heb. 3:6, 14).
10. The **reality** of true saving faith is **tested** and **affirmed** by its **continuance**. It is the **perseverance** of the saints that gives **evidence** of their genuine conversion.
11. Concerning this warning, **John Murray** states that this “...is a **reminder** that there is no such thing as **continuance** in the **favor of God** in spite of **apostasy**; God’s saving embrace and endurance are correlative.” (pg. 88)
12. And **Douglas Moo** is correct in saying, “For the goodness of God is not simply a **past act** or **automatic benefit** on which

- the believer can rest secure; it is also a **continuing relationship** in which the believer must **remain.**” (pg. 706)
13. Therefore, for true believers who **continue** in God’s kindness there is God’s **kindness.** But what if they are not?
14. Paul says at the end of **v. 22**, “...**otherwise** you also will be **cut off.**” Those who do not **continue** in the faith **reveal** that they were never **truly saved** to begin with.
15. For **1 John 2:19** says, “They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.” And in doing so, they will ultimately receive the **severe judgment** of being **cut off.**

Conclusion:

In closing, God will **keep** His **covenant promises** to the **patriarchs**, and because of that God is not **finished** with Israel. There is a **bright future** ahead for Israel, as we will see **next time.**

But we as **Gentile believers** must **remember** that **our God** is the “God of **Abraham**, and the God of **Isaac**, and the God of **Jacob**” (Ex. 3:6; Matt. 22:32). Therefore, we who have been **blessed** by God and His **grace** to be grafted into the **one root** and **one tree** of the true, spiritual people of God have **no reason** whatsoever to **boast** over the Jews. There is absolutely **no place** for **arrogant pride** in the life of any believer. We are what we are solely by the grace of God. May our hearts simply be **full** of **humble gratitude** and **praise** to God for **all He has done** for us in Jesus Christ in saving us from our sins.