

Romans
Faith, Family, and Fullness
Part 10
Romans 11

Sanctification

- Set apart wholly for God and His purposes.
- Filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

1. The Genuines.
 - *Romans 11:1-12*

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West Valley Church
08/06/23
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Romans: Faith, Family, Fullness

Part 10: Romans 11¹

We are on the downhill side of our summer long series exploring the Bible letter to the Romans, written to the church in Rome from the Apostle Paul. I want to thank Pastor Casey for doing such a great job preaching on chapter ten last week. He did that in between coming home from vacation, dealing with a blown engine on his car, and then he left that Sunday after church to take 28 of our children to summer camp.

If you've missed any of our sermons in this series, you can go to our website or to our YouTube channel and you can watch or rewatch or read the sermons.

I want to remind you that Paul planned to visit the church in Rome, but he hadn't been there yet. The church in Rome was going through pretty serious multi-cultural divisions between the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians, so Paul wrote this letter to set them straight, get their focus on the right thing, and restore multi-cultural unity to the church before he arrived.

We're calling this series, "Faith, Family, and Fullness," because the main points of this letter are that we are justified by faith in Christ (that's how we become Christians), we are a new multi-ethnic family of God, and we are to live in the fullness of the Spirit filled life.

Everything in chapters 1-7 led up to the critical and vital issue of the believer's sanctification, which is really laid out in chapter eight. Remember our definition of what the Bible calls sanctification. God uses that word in the Bible to explain that as Christians we can be free from sin and that we can fully live in God's love; so much so that his love can consume us, and his love can be what drives everything we think and say and do. Remember that we've talked a lot about what...

Sanctification

...involves; it means to be...

- Set apart wholly for God and His purposes, and

¹ Resources:

NT Wright, *Paul for Everyone: Romans Part 1: Chapters 1-8* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004)

William Barclay, *The Letter to the Romans*, 3rd ed. fully rev. & updated., The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002)

William M. Greathouse and George Lyons, *Romans 1-8: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition*, New Beacon Bible Commentary (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2008)

John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, Fourth American Edition. (New York: J. Soule and T. Mason, 1818)

Clarence L. Bence, *Romans: A Bible Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 1996)

John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016)

- To be filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Romans is all about this: that we are justified by faith, we are now in a new multi-cultural family of God, and that we can live this fulfilled life of sanctification.

So in Chapter 11, Paul returns to his concerns for his own people, the Jewish Christians, he does some attitude correcting for the Gentile Christians, and he reminds both of what God has done, is doing, and will do in and through them. That's a lot, I know, and we'll take this chapter a section at a time.

The first thing Paul is addressing is what he calls "the Remnant," or what we're going to call...

1. The Genuines.

– those who are genuine in the faith. Let's look at this section of Scripture, and then we'll talk about what it means for us. Would you stand with me as I read this passage? Thank you.

I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what Scripture says in the passage about Elijah—how he appealed to God against Israel: "Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me"? And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal." So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

What then? What the people of Israel sought so earnestly they did not obtain. The elect among them did, but the others were hardened, as it is written:

"God gave them a spirit of stupor,
eyes that could not see
and ears that could not hear,
to this very day."

And David says:

"May their table become a snare and a trap,
a stumbling block and a retribution for them.
May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see,
and their backs be bent forever."

Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!
(Romans 11:1-12, niv)

Thanks for standing; you may be seated.

Okay, this chapter might be hard to follow if you haven't been with us so far or following along in your own Bible readings, so let me give a bit of context for this. Remember that Paul was a highly trained Jewish religious leader, who then met Jesus and his life was transformed. Not only did God save him, but God called him to be an apostle to the Gentiles, which is interesting, because if anyone would be good at understanding what Jews are thinking, it would be Paul. (In the society of the New Testament times, there were really only two cultures: Jews and everyone else (Gentiles). That meant people were either of Jewish ethnicity or they were of Greco-Roman ethnicity. So Paul was commissioned by Jesus to go share with all the non-Jews, the Good News of God's saving love. But still, Paul couldn't give up on his people. In the book of Acts, you see that every new town that Paul went into to start a church, he first went to the Synagogue in the hope of introducing the Jews to Jesus. But they would reject him and the Gospel – often violently – and Paul would *then* go to the Gentiles and start churches.

So it's understandable that, as Paul is writing this letter to the church in Rome which had both Jews and Gentiles, that he would keep coming back to his love and concern for his own people. Remember, the church in Rome was struggling with unity over the cultural differences and religious practices between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians.

Paul has been writing a lot about how the Jews have historically missed out on the blessings of God because of their disobedience, disloyalty, and now because of their rejection of Jesus, their long-promised and prophesied Messiah.

It's with that thought in mind that Paul begins this section. He's pointing out that those who were God's chosen people were not just because they were of Jewish ethnicity or religion, but because of their faith in God and his promises. Paul is taking us on a bit of a history journey, showing God's plan through the Jews. He's reminding his readers that the Old Testament prophets spoke about how there never was a time, and never would be a time, when the *entire* nation of Jews would be true to God, but there was always a remnant of his people – a small group of the genuine Jews, who would remain faithful to God. God always knew there would be a remnant, and because of that, he continued to do his work that would lead to salvation for the entire world. There was always a remnant.

I told you that Shelly and I went camping last weekend – we have a little 20ft R-Pod from 2015 that's just enough room for her and me and our dog – a 14-year-old black lab. So we went to a campground in Pacific City at the beach on the central Oregon coast. It is a beautiful area and a great campground. But we discovered when we got there and got everything all set up, that we had absolutely no cell phone coverage there. None! We both had planned to get some work done while we were there, but we had no access to the internet and no cell phone coverage. Occasionally a text might come through – but it was only spam! We had to drive the ten minutes into Pacific City just to get two bars on our phones, or drive the 30 minutes north to Tillamook or 30 minutes south to Lincoln City. We were in a dead spot. We really tried to see it as a blessing!

We asked the campground manager about it, and he said that they have tried to get cell phone companies to set up boosters, but they just aren't interested. But, he said, if you go to campsite B-11, you can get one bar on your phone – enough to get texts in or out.

Our only connection to the outside world was that ONE bar of reception at campsite B-11. That little remnant of connection was enough to do it. That's what Paul is pointing out here in this section: there has always been a little remnant of genuine Jews through whom God has been able to carry out his plans. Through that remnant came the birth of his one and only Son, Jesus Christ, and included Paul, and the Jewish Christians in the early Church, and every Christian since, including us.

Not all Jews were God's chosen people; only those who were genuine. Here's the point for you and me: not everyone who calls themselves Christian is genuine.

In one of Jesus' teachings in Matthew he said this:

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On (the last) day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'" (Matthew 7:21-23)

Just saying you are a Christian is not enough.

The Bible talks a lot about knowing whether or not a person is a genuine Christian by the fruit they bear in their life. Just because someone says they are a Christian, doesn't mean they really are; you will know them by their fruit. What is that? The Bible says it is the Fruit of the Holy Spirit:

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23)

The fruit of what? The Spirit. What is the sanctified life? To be set apart wholly for God and his purposes and to be filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The marks of a genuine Christian are the growing fruit of the sanctified life. Those are the *genuines*. Then in verse twelve, Paul uses the word "inclusion" in describing the church – listen now: that means that the church is filled with sanctified people and are inclusive of all cultures. For Paul, it was Jews and Gentiles. For us in West Valley, it is the Caucasian community and the Hispanic community. We are to be an inclusive church of sanctified believers, serving together to bring glory to God.

Then Paul then turns his attention from the Jews to the Gentiles, or what he calls...

2. The Grafted.

Let's look at that next passage, and would you stand with me again as I read it?

I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? 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.

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, do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. 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 tremble. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.

Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree! (Romans 11:13-24, niv)

How does it feel knowing you are a wild olive shoot?! Thanks for standing – have a seat you bunch of wild branches.

Even though it breaks God's heart that so many of the Jews have rejected Jesus, God has used their disobedience to open the door for everyone in the entire world to be saved. To make that point, Paul uses the metaphor of an olive tree. This might sound familiar to you; it echoes Jesus' teaching in John 15 about the true vine and the branches, and in that teaching, Jesus talked about how the branches that did not produce fruit would be pruned to make way for abundant branches. So Paul is saying that the olive tree is God's plan, and the branches are the Jews, and when the olive tree's natural branches are not bearing fruit (not all of them – remember, there's a remnant), but those branches are broken off and replaced with wild branches – the Gentiles, or the rest of the world, who accept the great news of Jesus.

The use of an olive tree as his metaphor was really smart – it was something both Jews and Gentiles would understand. Some of the Old Testament prophets referred to Israel as an olive tree (Jeremiah 11:16; Hosea 14:6). For Gentiles, the olive tree represented fruitfulness or athletic success (an olive wreath was placed on the head of the first-place winner of an event in the Olympics). For both Jews and Gentiles, the olive tree was a significant part of the entire economy, creating the fruit to eat and also the oil for a huge number of purposes, from cooking to lubrication to lamps and fuel.

God knew what he was doing when he inspired Paul to use this analogy to make this point.

The tree itself was started by God through Israel, so Paul is making clear that the Jews would not be completely removed from God's plan. But Paul uses this analogy to also make it clear to the Gentiles that they have no advantage or privilege as Christians over the Jews; if it weren't for the Jews, there would be no Christians, whether Jewish Christians or Gentile Christians. So they – we – have nothing to boast about or to feel superior about. The ONLY reason we are grafted into the tree at all is because of the love and grace of God, the master arborist and orchardist.

If anyone understands this analogy, it ought to be us here in Yakima with our fruit trees where there is so much pruning and grafting; our orchardists often graft one type of branch

or shoot into the trunk of a different tree. It would be silly for a branch to start bragging that it is the entire tree, when it was really only because of the orchardist that it even made it onto the new living tree, right? So too for us.

The key statement for us in this passage is this:

“Do not be arrogant, but tremble. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.” (Romans 11:21)

Be genuine! Keep being sanctified! And remember, the only reason you and I get to be a part of God’s multi-cultural family of faith is because of...

3. The (sheer) Grace and the Glory of God.

Let’s look at this last part of chapter 11 together, and again, would you please stand with me for the reading of God’s Word? Thank you:

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written:

“The deliverer will come from Zion;
he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.
And this is my covenant with them
when I take away their sins.”

As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for your sake; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable. Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God’s mercy to you. For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

“Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?” “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?”

For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen. (Romans 11:25-32, niv)

Thanks for standing one last time; go ahead and have a seat. This final passage takes the hardest work to unpack and yet is the most beautiful and sweeping and meaningful.

Paul starts out talking about a “mystery” – what is he talking about? He’s referring to a lot of what he’s been writing about in all the chapters up to this point: that God’s chosen people, the Jews, have the free will to accept or reject his salvation and abundant life for them; that even though they are God’s chosen people, they can still forfeit that gift. In fact,

God has used their disobedience to open the door for us. It's this hard-to-understand reality of how the sovereignty of God exists side by side with our free will and responsibility. Somehow, Israel's choice to rebel against God has served God's purposes. God didn't want them to turn away, but still, their turning away allowed room on the tree for us to be grafted in. So God's people rejected Jesus, allowing for all of us to become God's people, which will in turn create opportunity for God's original chosen people to return and be part of God's chosen people. Come to think of it, I guess "mystery" is a good word, because it can be confusing.

We've talked before about what "predestination" means; it does *not* mean that God has destined some people to salvation and some people to hell and there's nothing anyone can do about it. Remember what I said about my grandma predetermining for us that we would go to the buffet restaurant? Paul's coming back to that thought here. In fact, Paul talks about "double predestination" – that God has predestined EVERYONE to be condemned because of our sin, and at the same time he has predestined EVERYONE to be saved to new life and freedom from sin. The choice of which is up to us; we have the free will to choose.

The bottom line though is this: because of Jesus, we can be justified by our faith in him, we can become a part of God's family, and we can now live in the fulness of a transformed life by the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit within us as we set ourselves apart wholly for him. God has predetermined that for us. And all of this – *all of this* – is made available to us because of the sheer grace and glory of God. We need only accept it!

So Paul does something that happens a lot in Romans and his other letters; he gets so worked up that he just can't help himself; he overflows into this rapturous description of God's grace and glory, by launching into a doxology about God's wisdom. He actually combines two quotations from the Old Testament – one from Isaiah 40:13 and one from Job 41:11. Both of these quotations celebrate that God is exalted and has all wisdom over all creation. Which means the key is this: that the creatures (including us!) *must* remain dependent on the Creator. We have no right to assume His role as Creator or judge; we must never, never, think that we ourselves are God or that we can stand in judgement of anyone else nor can we judge anything that God does. We do not even have anything to offer God that He might need. So in light of God's greatness, *all* humanity must recognize God's grace and mercy and glory – all of which God demonstrated by offering Christ so that all who believe may be saved.² Be genuine because you have been grafted in – because of God's grace and for his glory!

Sometimes, we end our worship services by giving you an opportunity to come forward to this altar and pray. We call that an "altar call" – a call to everyone who wants to pray, that they can come to this special place of prayer, talk to God, ask him to do a work in us, and solidify a response to him. And that's a very good thing to do.

But today, I want to do a *reverse* altar call. Instead of calling you to walk up here and pray, I'm calling you to walk out of here and obey. Instead of asking you to come make a

² John D. Barry et al., [*Faithlife Study Bible*](#) (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), Ro 11:33–36.

prayerful decision, I'm asking you to make a living decision. We need to walk out of here, having set ourselves apart wholly to God for his purposes, asking him moment by moment to fill us and empower us with his Spirit, walking in step with the Spirit of God himself. We must live out our lives as genuine Christians, living life as people grafted into the family tree of God, in his grace and living for his glory. Let me say that again: We must live out our lives as genuine Christians, living life as people grafted into the family tree of God, in his grace and living for his glory.

Prayer

Receive this benediction for your reverse altar call:

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable his judgments,
and his paths beyond tracing out!
"Who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been his counselor?"
"Who has ever given to God,
that God should repay them?"
For from him and through him and for him are all things.
To him be the glory forever! Amen.

(Romans 11:25-32, niv)