

INGRAFTED BRANCHES

Thursday, June 8

Reading: Romans 11:13-24

Romans 11:17 *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, **18** 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.*

Paul illustrates his point about the Jews and Gentiles with the picture of a tree.

What does this tree represent? – Some would say it is a picture of salvation. But if this is true, then the branches being broken off would mean they lost their salvation and this clashes with what Scripture teaches. This tree is a picture of the blessing of God. Its roots are the promises God made to Abraham by which all the world would be blessed by the coming of Christ.

What do the branches represent? – The branches represent those who experience God's blessings. Many of the original branches (the Jews) were broken off because of unbelief (11:20) and wild olive branches (the Gentiles) were grafted in their place. Notice that not all the branches were broken off – thus Paul pictures the remnant of Jews who have believed in Christ and continue to experience God's blessings.

Paul warns the Gentiles not to gloat over being grafted into this place of blessing. He reminds them that they too stand by faith and receive God's blessing based on His promises to Israel. Jesus Himself said, "Salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22). God has not changed His original plan. Salvation is still based on the promise of Messiah God gave His people in the Old Testament and has always been received by faith. Any attitude of superiority from Jew or Gentile is inappropriate. Humble thankfulness is the only proper response to the blessings of God. If unbelieving Israel will turn back to their Messiah, they too will be grafted back into God's favor.

POINTS TO PONDER:

1. "Some of the Branches Have Been Broken Off." This illustration of the tree and the branches reminds us that people can experience the blessings of God and still ultimately reject His salvation. All the Israelites experienced God's blessings in the wilderness. They all ate the manna from heaven and drank the water from the rock. And yet most of them fell in the wilderness because of their disobedience and rebellion. So today, there are some who may sit in church and experience the blessings of hearing God's word and fellowshiping with God's people and yet they are not really believers and will not continue in God's blessing forever. One day God will "cut them off" from His blessings because they were never really His children. Today would be a good day to examine your heart to be sure you truly belong to God's family. Was your salvation decision a genuine heart-based decision that changed your life? Or was it just some words you said that really didn't have an impact on the way you live and think?
2. "Consider the Kindness and Sternness of God." God's love and kindness do not contradict His justice and wrath. God shows mercy to those who trust Him but must punish those who reject Him. The world wants a God of only love. But without justice, love would be meaningless. Discipline comes from the loving hand of God in order to draw people to Himself.